

CHAPTER 7

1973

During 1973 the Union continued to fight for the twin policies which had emerged as the major issues of 1972. These were, greater control of the industry, specifically embodied in workers' control, union-hire, and permanency demands; and the maintenance of their environmental bans. These two struggles resulted in the May and October lockouts, the two biggest confrontations with the employers since the 1970 strike.

These disputes were exacerbated by the atmosphere in which they were waged. 1973 could quite correctly be called the year of the great workers' control hysteria. Work-ins, demonstrations and workers' control conferences were taking place in many industries.¹ The Liberal Party produced a policy paper on Workers Control² which claimed that, for the B.L.F., it already existed. The Bulletin reported "growing agitation... for worker control" and also cited the B.L.F.³ The Employers' Federation and the M.B.A. saw both building industry lockouts in terms of who was to have ultimate control of the industry. This made their resistance more stubborn and the resulting conflicts more severe. Joe Owens reports that in the 1973-74 period no negotiations took place with the M.B.A., "they wouldn't talk to us...by that time there was nothing we could settle because they only wanted to settle on terms of us abdicating all our positions - especially the green bans".⁴

Apart from the attacks of the already affected builders, new environmental bans brought new outbursts and new enemies.

New enemies were exactly what the Union did not need because in addition to the lockouts, 1973 was also the N.S.W. Branch's election year and the leadership was being opposed by a well organised pro-Gallagher team. The federal body was blowing hot and cold over support for the N.S.W. Branch in deregistration proceedings, and the Branch's relations with the B.W.I.U. were at an all-time low.

All this took place in an uneasy fever pitch of building activity. Bob Pringle, commenting on the boom, voiced the Union's apprehension:

1 Munday spoke at Workers Control Conferences in Newcastle in April (Newcastle Morning Herald, 12 April 1973) and Armidale in July (Armidale Express, 13 July 1973).

2 Liberal Party of Australia, Research Section, N.S.W. Division, Workers' Participation or Workers' Control, September 1973.

3 The Bulletin, 24 March 1973. It cited "the disruptive activities of the B.L.F. in N.S.W. serving as a model of how employers can be crunched".

4 Interview: Joe Owens, 24 January 1978.

We don't welcome booms or busts. We want stability in the industry ...We are using up employment for the future; we are doing it now on overtime.⁵

The fact that the Union maintained a vigorous political involvement and continued to place environmental bans at an ever increasing rate is quite remarkable in the circumstances.

Job-site disputes tended to occur over the same issues as in previous years. Encroachment strategies such as de facto union hire and refusal to accept dismissals continued to cause altercations of varying intensity with employers. One incident, involving union hire of a safety officer caused a strike on a large Concrete Constructions project which lasted almost a month.⁶ Another, over the dismissal of seven riggers, caused 300 labourers on fourteen Concrete Constructions sites to engage in protracted stoppages over the Christmas period.⁷ Spontaneous mass walk-offs from building sites in the metropolitan area occurred one day when the temperature reached 40°C. Bob Pringle endorsed these actions, warning employers that the workers would strike if they were not paid for the day.⁸

However it was Newcastle that really showed the way as far as spectacular and well-publicised individual job disputes went. As well as major disputes in January, July and November, the press reported a "work in" in March;⁹ police being called to a site in April;¹⁰ and "a confrontation involving police, workers, union officials and employers"¹¹ in November. Also, ex-Newcastle organiser Ron Dumbrell, with the help of his father, managed to black ban a mining company and "confiscate" a compressor in lieu of wages¹² in isolated Grenfell, a notable act.

In pursuit of a more pleasant environment, as well as healthier conditions for their members, the Union embarked on a campaign to silence jackhammers. It threatened to ban work on all sites where equipment was not fitted with noise and dust control devices by 1 May.¹³ In its press statement, the Union pointed out that because excavation work was increasing and going deeper than previously, "there has been an alarming increase in the number of excavation workers being dusted (i.e. affected by silicosis)". It also mentioned "noise-induced deafness" as a further danger.¹⁴

5 Sydney Morning Herald, 2 May 1973.

6 Sydney Morning Herald, 6 March 1973.

7 The Australian, 10 January 1973.

8 Broken Hill Miner, 6 February 1973.

9 Newcastle Sun, 1 March 1973.

10 Newcastle Sun, 6 April 1973.

11 Newcastle Morning Herald, 12 November 1973.

12 Grenfell Record, 9 February 1973.

13 The Australian, 19 April 1973.

14 B.L.F., Statement on Excavation for Press Release, n.d. (April 1973?).

On 3 May the Union inspected excavation sites to ensure that their demands were being complied with. A photo of a somewhat embarrassed hard hatted Jack Munday testing "the quietest jackhammer in Sydney" graced the pages of the Melbourne Age.¹⁵ Because of the large number of Greeks and Italians in the excavation industry the Union printed translations of their new regulations in the next Union journal.¹⁶ The campaign was hard fought and took some time to be properly effective. In July the Union announced that in all, fifty jobs throughout the city had been stopped¹⁷ as part of the campaign.

A serious dispute occurred in August when Bob Pringle and Tony Hadfield were arrested on a Kell & Rigby site in Darling Point while inspecting safety conditions. The sixty workers immediately struck in protest. Later that day Viri Pires was arrested at another Kell & Rigby site in Marrickville.¹⁸ Pringle, Hadfield and Pires were all charged with trespass under the Summary Offences Act and remanded to 19 September. The leadership saw the incidents as a serious attack on the right to organise. They produced a large poster headed "Police Interference in Union Affairs" which graphically illustrated the unsafe trenches which were under inspection at the time of the arrests and asked the question "Would you work here?"¹⁹

In its circular to job organisers, the leadership ascribed a further motive for the arrests:

It is not by accident that the employers use police at the time of the triennial elections.

It is widely known that the employers and big developers are extremely keen to try to have the N.S.W. leadership defeated.²⁰

These claims could have some validity as arrests of union officials under the Summary Offences Act were not common in 1973 and to cause such controversy over a safety issue would normally be considered an unwise action for the employer. Both the poster and circular urged workers to stop work or send delegations from their jobs to court on 19 September "to demonstrate their support for the right of workers to

¹⁵ Age, 4 May 1973.

¹⁶ The Builders' Labourer, June 1973, pp.41 (Italian) & 45 (Greek).

¹⁷ Rydge's, August 1974.

¹⁸ Sydney Morning Herald, 25 August 1973.

¹⁹ B.L.F. Poster, Police Interference in Union Affairs, n.d. (September 1973).

²⁰ B.L.F. Circular to All Job Organisers, No. 19/73, 31 August 1973. Pringle made similar claims outside the court when he accused the M.B.A. of involving the police in Union affairs "as a deliberate effort to discredit the federation's present leadership in the light of Union elections to be held next month". (Sydney Morning Herald, 25 August 1973).

organise".²¹

The right of workers to organise was seen in a different light by M.B.A. director John Martin. He made no secret of his belief that "systematic disruption of the building industry" was being used by "some union leaders for political ends. Unions have adopted the tactic of selective strikes in their attempt to force worker control".²² It is small wonder then that the M.B.A. decided to "take on" the B.L.F. on the issue of overtime. Martin saw the M.B.A.'s decision as a justifiable response to the "selective strikes" described above: "The issue at stake is the union's efforts to impose worker control of the building industry".²³ M.B.A. official Ray Rocher described the B.L.F. as encroaching on employer prerogative by using nuisance tactics. "The labourers would ban overtime, stop work at lunch time, break a concrete pour or ban overtime for a weekend."²⁴ The M.B.A. felt it was time to take a stand:

We came to a conclusion, subsequently shown to have some merit, that overtime in fact was helping to feed the strikes and stoppages on the normal workdays. So we decided on a united course of action that the best way was to cut out all overtime and if they wanted to go on strike they could do it during the week at normal time and they weren't going to get double time on Saturday or Sundays. So it was a very successful tactic from our point of view.²⁵

On 5 May the M.B.A. announced that they were banning weekend work until "sanity is restored" to the industry and "all bans and limitations on our members are lifted". Martin indicated one particular limitation, which he alleged was used to enforce workers' control:

The unions often insist that they have the right to nominate men for particular jobs and that anyone not sent by the union does not get the job.²⁶

Pat Clancy made a predictable statement on the issue: "It is directed against one union, but it affects all unions in the industry and the inevitable effect will be discontent".²⁷

Bob Pringle accused the employers of "industrial anarchy" and argued: "This strike by employers is a disgrace to the industry. Their action is completely unwarranted".²⁸ Joe Owens claimed that the M.B.A.'s ban

21 B.L.F. Poster, Police Interference in Union Affairs, n.d. (September 1973). Their urgings were obviously successful as the court was described as "packed" (Sydney Morning Herald, 20 September 1973).

22 "The Anatomy of a Political Strike", Rydge's, July 1973, p.24.

23 Ibid.

24 Ray Rocher: Interviewed by Pat Fiske 1980.

25 Ibid.

26 Sun-Herald, 6 May 1973.

27 Ibid. Also Rydge's (July 1973, p.26) described the other unions as "hopping mad at losing their incomes".

28 Sunday Telegraph, 6 May 1973.

was not successful, that eighteen member companies had continued weekend work as normal and only about five companies had stopped.²⁹ However, the ban quickly spread. Within a week builders in Newcastle, Wollongong and Goulburn joined the ban.³⁰ Other country areas were not affected.³¹

The B.L.F. leadership never really believed the dispute was about overtime. An Executive meeting on 7 May agreed that the overtime ban:

...is of a diversionary nature to prevent serious discussion of permanency which our Union has been advancing...the Master Builders are scheduled to meet us next Monday to give their reply on permanency.³²

The meeting also decided to seek \$30 wage increases to make up for the lost overtime on all jobs subject to the ban.³³

The B.T.G. requested a meeting with the M.B.A.³⁴ although Tom McDonald (acting N.S.W. Secretary, B.W.I.U.) said he had "little hope the dispute would be settled".³⁵ Nothing came out of the meeting.³⁶

The M.B.A. inserted large advertisements in the morning papers headed "Do You Want Freedom of Choice?" It accused the B.L.F. and the crane drivers of wanting to elect their own foremen and of contesting the employers' right to transfer men from site to site. It appealed to "responsible union members on the job" who were "being misled on this issue" to restore stability to the industry.³⁷ The M.B.A. also produced 20,000 pamphlets in English, Greek, Italian and Yugoslav, which were handed to workers with their pay.³⁸

The Union labelled these actions "provocative"³⁹ and began organising an "indefinite"⁴⁰ strike for the following week. A leaflet titled "Builders Labourers under attack" called for stop work meetings in Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong for 16 May. It asserted that "it should be possible for building workers to earn a living wage for a

29 Sydney Morning Herald, 7 May 1973. The M.B.A. however claimed 26 companies (95% of members) had imposed bans. The Australian, 9 May 1973.

30 Sun-Herald, 13 May 1973.

31 Central Western Daily, 30 May 1973 and Champion Post (Parkes), 1 June 1973.

32 B.L.F. To State Executive, Organisers and Office Staff, 7 May 1973, lp. roneod.

33 Ibid.

34 Daily Mirror, 9 May 1973.

35 Sun, 9 May 1973.

36 The Australian, 10 May 1973.

37 Advertisement authorised by John Martin, M.B.A., The Australian, 9 May 1973.

38 The Australian, 11 May 1973.

39 B.L.F., Provocative Actions by M.B.A., n.d. (May 1973?), lp. roneod.

40 Daily Mirror, 10 May 1973.

for a 35 hour week and not have to work any overtime". It called the M.B.A. bans a "smokescreen" to divert attention from the Union's "pressing claims" for permanency, the establishment of a Building Investigations Committee, green bans and workers' control. Workers' control they defined as the belief:

...that builders labourers who spend their entire life in the industry should have control of the industry. We believe we are more competent to control safety on projects, to elect people whom we believe can best safeguard safety and to elect people who are best fitted to be leading hands on the job.⁴¹

Such a description probably describes self-management better than workers' control but it is interesting that the Union was prepared to use the phrase that was being made much of by the Master Builders in their increasingly alarmist propaganda. By this time Martin was claiming: "We realise that if we lose this fight everything is lost...This is a fight for the industry itself".⁴²

At the Permanency Conference, chaired by Commissioner Wilson on 14 May, Glover from the M.B.A. commenced by stating that "no further discussion would take place with the N.S.W. Builders Labourers on the issue of permanency". He added that "the M.B.A. was not prepared to hear J. Munday or any other official address the Council meeting",⁴³ although Commissioner Wilson had previously directed this.⁴⁴

The B.L.F. responded by pointing out that the Union had temporarily suspended union hire to allow negotiations for permanency to take place with the M.B.A., but that "it is now very obvious that the M.B.A. is not serious in having discussions re permanency". It added that the Executive would have to consider what recommendation to put to that week's stop work meetings "about continuing the struggle for union hire, which is the first step towards permanency".⁴⁵ Consequently the leadership decided to propose to the mass meetings that "as a first step to permanency, we re-impose union hire on all organised projects".⁴⁶ The day before the stoppage the M.B.A. advertised again in the morning

41 B.L.F., Builders Labourers Under Attack, n.d. (May 1973?), lp. roneod.

42 Australian Financial Review, 11 May 1973. Martin was not alone in his position. The Newcastle Director of the M.B.A., Bill Hollinworth, described the B.L.F.'s demand for union hire as "quite preposterous" and "a direct confrontation on the employer's democratic and undeniable right to select his own employees". He argued that union hire led to "gangsterism and graft of the worst kind". Newcastle Sun, 24 May 1973.

43 B.L.F., Permanency Conference, 14 May 1973, lp. roneod.

44 B.L.F., Provocative Actions by M.B.A., n.d. (May 1973?), lp. roneod.

45 B.L.F., Permanency Conference, 14 May 1973, lp. roneod.

46 B.L.F., To Executive Members and Organisers, 15 May 1973, lp. roneod.

papers. This time they were even clearer that their opposition was to the leadership per se, a position not insignificant in the Branch's election year. The advertisements asked "Can You Rely on all Your Union Leaders?"⁴⁷ In this atmosphere there could be only one result. The well attended mass meetings voted overwhelmingly⁴⁸ (in Newcastle, unanimously)⁴⁹ to re-impose union hire and to send a deputation to Canberra to request the Federal Government to "initiate action for the early implementation of permanency in the building industry throughout Australia".⁵⁰

Because of these decisions, Rydge's accused the Union of "swapping horses". It argued that the overtime bans had affected "the weight of the pay packet" and that the rank and file were showing "little enthusiasm" for workers' control:

That seems to be why the cry went out for permanency instead of the "worker control" (51) which had been the generally accepted aim a few days before the strike got going.⁵²

To the Union, the issues of union hire and permanency were inextricably linked. They had been implementing union hire as a means towards eventual permanency. Originally this had been through the encroachment strategies described in Chapter 6 but following the closing of the books in October 1972 and later the strike by Concrete Constructions workers in December and January a "yellow card system" was initiated.

This system of employing only financial unionists who were unemployed, forced the M.B.A. to discuss with the Builders' Labourers Union the broad question of permanency.⁵³

The two issues remained linked in the Union's campaigning. Bud Cook explained to the B.T.G.:

Certain jobs have...made decisions that new labour on building sites can only come through the Union Office. We support and endorse these actions as we see them as giving some measure of permanency to our people in this industry.⁵⁴

47 Advertisement authorised by John Martin, M.B.A., Daily Telegraph, 15 May 1973.

48 B.L.F., Circular to all Job Organisers, No. 9/73, 17 May 1973.

49 Handwritten comment on B.L.F. Recommendation: Mass Meetings, 16 May 1973.

50 B.L.F., Resolution Carried at Mass Meeting 16 May 1973.

51 Rydge's, July 1973, p.26 claimed that workers' control "sounded great down at Trades Hall". Either the anonymous writer had a wry sense of humour or absolutely no understanding of the prevailing ideology of the Sydney Trades Hall.

52 Rydge's, July 1973, p.26.

53 Pamphlet, Concrete Destructions, n.d. (March 1973?), 2pp. roneod. Authorised by Concrete Constructions' delegates and A.B.L.F., N.S.W. Branch.

54 Correspondence: H. Cook to S. Vaughan, 1 March 1973.

While permanency was being continually discussed as "the most important single thing before the Union at the moment"⁵⁵ its practical manifestation, union hire, was beginning to take its toll on the M.B.A. In February the M.B.A. informed the B.T.G. that "in recent weeks the Members of this Association have had to endure a campaign by the N.S.W. Branch [of the B.L.F.] in respect of union hall hiring". The correspondence concluded:

A likely consequence of the Federation's campaign is that it will lead to extensive unemployment in the industry as our Members are quite adamant that they will protect their rights of employment.⁵⁶

The M.B.A. also decided to increase pressure on the Union through the courts. In March it notified the Commission of a dispute over the Union's claim "that the Company [Allen Constructions] employ a Builder's Labourer sent from the Union Office",⁵⁷ and requested a presidential member of the Commission to hear the case. In the face of these attacks and in order to gain what they saw as the ultimate goal, i.e. permanency, the Union agreed to temporarily suspend union-hire to allow negotiations to take place on the possibility of permanency. As the Concrete Construction workers summed it up: "We hope that the talks will be successful, but if they are not, then it seems that industrial action will need to be taken on a broad basis to win permanency".⁵⁸ That was exactly what the M.B.A. was fearing. In a pre-emptive move, a week before the proposed conference on permanency was due, the M.B.A. overtime ban was announced. It is significant that the overtime ban was announced a week before the permanency meeting at which they refused to discuss the issue with the N.S.W. Branch. When the mass meetings of 16 May decided to re-introduce union hire they were not changing the emphasis of their campaign, they were simply responding to what they felt was the M.B.A. reneging on their agreement. The M.B.A. rejected the demands of the mass meetings and Munday responded: "We call on all our members to take appropriate action with their employers to enforce union hire".⁵⁹

55 B.L.F., Circular to All Job Organisers, No. 5/73, 9 March 1973. It was also listed as No. 1 Agenda item for the February Job Organisers and Activists Conference. B.L.F., Circular to All Job Organisers, No. 3/73, 12 February 1973.

56 Correspondence: J. Martin to S. Vaughan, 20 February 1973.

57 Correspondence: J. Martin to Deputy Industrial Registrar, Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, 1 March 1973.

58 Pamphlet, Concrete Destructions, n.d. (March 1973?). Authorised by Concrete Constructions Delegates and A.B.L.F., N.S.W. Branch.

59 Sydney Morning Herald, 17 May 1973.

The Financial Review predicted mass stand downs and an eventual shutdown of the entire industry.⁶⁰ The following day a meeting between the M.B.A. and the B.T.G. "failed to prevent...union hire being introduced by the B.L.F."⁶¹ Disputes arose on several major city jobs. It is not clear how. The M.B.A. claimed that B.L.F. members were breaking concrete pours,⁶² making unreasonable pay demands,⁶³ calling lightning strikes,⁶⁴ and using "irresponsible blackmail tactics".⁶⁵ The B.L.F. argued that the disputes were caused by the employers sacking dogmen,⁶⁶ asking members "to do work not normally required of them"⁶⁷ and locking out five hundred workers on three major sites.⁶⁸

Both parties agreed however on what the state of affairs was. Martin declared: "We're almost in a state of war with the B.L.F."⁶⁹ and Munday replied that there would be "no improvement in industrial relations in the industry until builders accept the principle of permanency". He accused the M.B.A. of making inflammatory statements and using union hire "as a political move to attack the B.L.F."⁷⁰ Pringle claimed that the M.B.A.'s dismissals "were a deliberate provocation by the M.B.A."⁷¹

The B.L.F. argued that their union hire system was working "smoothly" and that fourteen new men had been recruited through the system in one day.⁷² They claimed that two major employers had already accepted their proposals,⁷³ and that "a leading member of the M.B.A." had also made a verbal agreement with them.⁷⁴ They claimed, both in a newspaper advertisement⁷⁵ and in a special leaflet produced to explain their

60 Australian Financial Review, 17 May 1973.

61 Sydney Morning Herald, 18 May 1973. Either this report is misleading or the B.T.G. here were acting in the archetypal role of "managers of discontent".

62 The Australian, 19 May 1973.

63 Sun-Herald, 20 May 1973 and The Australian, 19 May 1973.

64 Sydney Morning Herald, 16 May 1973.

65 Advertisement, Sydney Morning Herald, 18 May 1973. Authorised by J. Martin, M.B.A.

66 Sydney Morning Herald, 19 May 1973.

67 Daily Telegraph, 19 May 1973.

68 Sydney Morning Herald, 19 May 1973.

69 Sun-Herald, 20 May 1973.

70 Sydney Morning Herald, 21 May 1973.

71 Sydney Morning Herald, 19 May 1973.

72 Ibid.

73 Daily Telegraph, 19 May 1973.

74 Age, 22 May 1973.

75 Advertisement, Sydney Morning Herald, 23 May 1973 and The Australian, 24 May 1973. Authorised by N.S.W. B.L.F.

position to the public that:

Some of the more thoughtful employers have already agreed to hire new labour through our Union and have accepted the principle of Permanency. But the M.B.A. still thinks in terms of the Masters and Servants Act of the last century.⁷⁶

Much of the B.L.F. literature of this period referred to a speech made to the M.B.A. by the Federal Minister for Housing, Les Johnson. He had stated: "We are moving into a new era, and old-fashioned attitudes towards unions evolving radical and novel ideas about the role of unionists will not induce industrial harmony". He had urged the serious examination of the question of permanency and had implicitly supported green bans by criticising the building of office blocks when there was a housing shortage.⁷⁷

The militancy of the M.B.A. is indicated by another advertisement which appeared in the ongoing "industrial struggle via the media" campaign. This one referred to "subversive tactics", "illegal disruptions", "trained agitators", "jobs for the boys" and of course "industrial anarchy".⁷⁸ Then the M.B.A. cut back over-award payments traditionally paid to the lofty crane drivers⁷⁹ who were members of the F.E.D. & F.A. and solid supporters of the labourers in their campaigns. Jim Dennis, President of the Building Crane Drivers Association, accused the M.B.A. of "using us to try to shut the industry down".⁸⁰ Jack Cambourn, F.E.D. & F.A. State Secretary, claimed the M.B.A. had adopted "provocative tactics in a dispute with the B.L.F."⁸¹ The crane drivers stopped work and the B.L.F. began organising for a strike to begin on the 28 May "because of the worsening situation in the industry, caused by the provocative action of the M.B.A. in locking out large numbers of our members".⁸²

With the N.S.W. building industry virtually shut down over the B.L.F.'s claims for permanency, Gallagher called an F.M.C. meeting earlier than planned to discuss "the serious situation".⁸³ The Federal Executive met and decided that permanency would be a national issue. Gallagher

76 B.L.F., Why the Strike in the Building Industry, n.d. (May 1973?), 2pp. roneod.

77 Speech reprinted in B.L.F., Statement by N.S.W. B.L.F., 22 May 1973, 2pp. roneod.

78 Advertisement, Sun, 23 May 1973. Authorised by J. Martin M.B.A.

79 Sydney Morning Herald, 23 May 1973.

80 Daily Telegraph, 23 May 1973.

81 Sun, 23 May 1973.

82 B.L.F., Circular to All Job Organisers, No. 10/73, 23 May 1973.

83 Correspondence: N. Gallagher to J. Munday, 23 May 1973.

announced: "The federation is prepared to use its industrial muscle around this matter",⁸⁴ and assured the N.S.W. officials that "his Union would not stand by while employers tried to wreck the N.S.W. Branch".⁸⁵

Gallagher actually had little choice but to become involved. By this time, although the crane drivers had returned to work,⁸⁶ the employers had begun dismissing labourers and a meeting of four hundred B.L.F. delegates had voted to recommend a state-wide stoppage at the 28 May stop work meetings.⁸⁷

Six thousand labourers on eight hundred projects in Sydney were dismissed on 24 May.⁸⁸ Newcastle⁸⁹ and Wollongong⁹⁰ employers appear not to have joined the M.B.A.'s campaign. Other companies that "broke ranks" with the M.B.A. were Civil & Civic, Parkes Development, Stocks and Holdings and T.C. Whittle. Munday was hopeful of "driving a wedge" between the builders. He was also hopeful that the strike would spread to other states on 28 May.⁹¹ The M.B.A. advertised yet again in all the newspapers. This time, under the heading "Commonsense v. Chaos", it featured a quote from the "Communist promoted" Easter Workers' Control Conference at which Munday had spoken. The M.B.A. hammered home the line that "worker control, not permanency is the issue" and added "sabotage", "intimidation of workers" and "property damage" to its growing list of accusations.⁹²

At this stage, the Federal Government promised to intervene⁹³ in response to the B.L.F.'s request. Because of the stand down situation the B.T.G. had also called for Government intervention.⁹⁴ In the light of these developments, 3,000 members at the 28 May Stop Work meeting in Sydney unanimously resolved that all members not locked out return to work pending the F.M.C.'s meeting in Canberra, and a \$20 levy be paid

84 Sydney Morning Herald, 23 May 1973.

85 The Telegraph (Brisbane), 24 May 1973.

86 Sydney Morning Herald, 24 May 1973.

87 The Australian, 24 May 1973.

88 The Australian, 25 May 1973.

89 Newcastle Morning Herald, 25 May 1973.

90 Illawarra Mercury, 25 May 1973.

91 The Australian, 25 May 1973. South Australian Secretary Les Robinson said the strike spreading to South Australia would be "a very real possibility if the M.B.A. tried to wreck the N.S.W. branch". Adelaide News, 25 May 1973.

92 Advertisement, Daily Mirror, 25 May 1973. Authorised by J. Martin, M.B.A.

93 B.L.F., Recommendation to Mass Meeting of Builders Labourers, 28 May 1973, lp. roneod.

94 Advertisement, Daily Telegraph, 28 May 1973. Authorised by T. McDonald, B.W.I.U.

by those working to assist those locked out.⁹⁵

During the discussions in Canberra between the A.B.L.F. and the Government, Munday was "cautiously optimistic"⁹⁶ of the outcome and announced that the Housing Minister favoured "a permanent work pool plan".⁹⁷ He also declared that "a national strike was inevitable"⁹⁸ unless the Government was able to break the deadlock. Gallagher supported this claim. "We are as one on this issue" he emphasised, "the Union intends to give full support to the N.S.W. Branch."⁹⁹

Eventually the Government and the M.B.A. agreed to the setting up of an independent inquiry into permanency to be chaired by Mr Justice Aird.¹⁰⁰ Both the B.L.F. and the M.B.A. agreed to other conditions for resumption of work which basically re-established the status quo before the overtime bans, except that Munday agreed "in a spirit of compromise" to cease claiming union hire while the permanency inquiry was under way.¹⁰¹

The B.L.F. resolved at a mass meeting of 2,000 members on 4 June to return to work as agreed¹⁰² but there was a last minute hitch when the crane drivers decided to stay out. This was eventually resolved,¹⁰³ but not before the M.B.A. had advertised the fact in an otherwise totally blank full page of the newspapers.¹⁰⁴ The next day the M.B.A. advertised again, and according to the B.L.F., "grossly misrepresented" the conditions of return to work.¹⁰⁵ Amongst other distortions, the M.B.A. claimed that the B.L.F. had dropped "all claims for worker control".¹⁰⁶ Commissioner Wilson who was present when the agreements were made "severely reprimanded the M.B.A. for their misrepresentation of the truth".¹⁰⁷

95 B.L.F. leaflet describing result of 28 May Meeting, No title, n.d., lp. roneod.

96 The Australian, 29 May 1973.

97 Sun, 29 May 1973.

98 The Telegraph (Brisbane), 29 May 1973. Munday was more certain about Federation unity than was probably warranted. For instance Queensland officials said "no similar action" (on permanency) was planned there "because of full employment". Ibid.

99 The Australian, 30 May 1973.

100 Sydney Morning Herald, 31 May 1973.

101 B.L.F., Agreements Made in Canberra and Melbourne May 29 & 31, Between the Master Builders and the Builders Labourers.

102 B.L.F., Recommendation to Meeting of Builders Labourers, 4 June 1973, lp. roneod.

103 Sun, 4 June 1973.

104 Advertisement, Daily Telegraph and Daily Mirror, 4 June 1973.

105 B.L.F., Agreement Made in Canberra and Melbourne May 29 and 31.

106 Advertisement, Daily Telegraph, Sun, Sydney Morning Herald, 5 June 1973.

107 B.L.F., Agreement Made in Canberra and Melbourne May 29 and 31.

The industry returned to an uneasy peace. The N.S.W. leadership obviously believed that the setting up of the Permanency Inquiry was a concrete achievement. Their celebratory leaflet "Lockout Beaten: Moving up for Permanency" contained statements such as: "The M.B.A. were left with no alternative...permanency has now become a public issue" and "the B.L.F. membership is to be congratulated on the solidarity by which they knocked over the M.B.A.'s lockout". It concluded: "Continuation and extension of this militant spirit can bring the crucial victory in winning permanency".¹⁰⁸ They also wrote to Les Johnson congratulating him on his "valuable assistance" in raising the issue of permanency.¹⁰⁹

In a critical analysis, the Permanency Inquiry would have been an important achievement if the Federal body had continued to support the N.S.W. Branch's efforts.¹¹⁰ On the other hand the M.B.A. spent a huge amount of money (if only on advertising) for very little result. If they thought their all-out attack on workers' control had succeeded in quietening the B.Ls on the jobs then they were to be rudely surprised.¹¹¹ Another two years of encroachment struggles were to take place before Federal Intervention solved the problem for the employers.

One positive aspect for the M.B.A., however, was the further worsening of the relationship between the B.W.I.U. and the B.L.F. which occurred during the dispute.¹¹² The B.W.I.U. publicly called upon the B.L.F. to suspend action on union hire and permanency,¹¹³ and continually argued that the real issue which caused the overtime bans was their own claim for long service leave¹¹⁴ even though the M.B.A. replied that long service leave had already been conceded in principle and "is not an issue

108 B.L.F., Lockout Beaten: Moving Up for Permanency, n.d. (June 1973?), 2pp. roneod.

109 Correspondence: J. Munday to L. Johnson, 4 June 1973.

110 Discussed in chapter 10. The documentary result was disappointing in both the length of time it took and its lack of conviction. Only three pages out of 86 were devoted to "The Case for Permanent Employment". The Honourable Elizabeth Andreas Evatt, Interim Report of the Inquiry into Employment in the Building Industry, April 1975.

111 Bob Pringle made the interesting observation that the overtime ban had caused many B.Ls to think twice about continually working Saturday overtime. "They had a taste of what a two day week-end was like", Interview: 8 March 1978.

112 Discussed in more detail in chapter 10.

113 Advertisement, "Positive Proposals to Stop Building Closedown", Daily Telegraph and Sydney Morning Herald, 28 May 1973.

114 Sun, 14 May 1973.

in the present dispute".¹¹⁵

Another significant occurrence was the organisation of the first public meeting in support of the B.L.F. This was organised by the Victoria Street Action Group and was chaired by Wendy Bacon. The leaflet which advertised the meeting explained the situation about permanency and the Union, and added:

The other building industry unions have refused support for the builders' labourers and have, in fact, asked them to shelve their demands. This makes it even more urgent for the public to make it clear it supports the B.L.F. - the union that cares about people.¹¹⁶

About three hundred people attended the meeting in the Trades Hall "and people from the different groups got up and made speeches of appreciation of the B.L.F."¹¹⁷ The radical newsletter Scrounge described it as the "B.L.F. Love In". It reported that:

Representatives from the following groups and unions spoke: Plumbers rank and file; black community in Redfern; Metal Workers Union; Centre for Workers Control; Coalition of Resident Action Groups; Women Workers; Victoria Street Action Group; Newcastle Resident Action Group; Rocks R.A.G.; Teachers Federation; Painters and Dockers Union; Wolloomooloo R.A.G.

Scrounge also recorded that a committee to continue active support for the B.L.F. was formed.¹¹⁸ This support group played a larger role informally than it ever did as a "committee".

The N.S.W. B.L.F. continued to pursue the permanency issue seriously. All four union journals produced during the year contained large sections on the subject.¹¹⁹ Special pamphlets were produced in foreign languages;¹²⁰ a poster was printed;¹²¹ and it was treated as a number one priority in all general literature.¹²² Even Gallagher demonstrated enthusiasm for

115 Sydney Morning Herald, 17 May 1973. George Crawford, General Secretary of the P.G.E.U.A. (Plumbers) agreed with the B.L.F. that the permanency campaign was necessary. Editorial, Plumbers News, Vol. 12, No. 2, August 1973, p.1.

116 Victoria Street Resident Action Group, Support The Builders' Labourers, n.d. (May 1973?), lp. roneod.

117 Interview: Wendy Bacon, 16 January 1978.

118 Scrounge, No. 1 (June 1973?), p.20. Scrounge described itself "as an information service and a communication link for political and social action groups in Sydney". It was basically put together by ex-Push or Tharunka people involved with Victoria Street.

119 The Builders' Labourer, March, June, August and September-December 1973.

120 B.L.F., Our Concept of Permanency, n.d., 2pp. In Greek, Italian, Yugoslav and Spanish.

121 B.L.F., Builders Labourers Want a Sane Civilized Permanent Industry, n.d., lp. roneod.

122 Examples, B.L.F. Circular to All Job Organisers, No. 10/73, 18 June 1973 and B.L.F. Vigilante, n.d. (July 1973?), 12pp.

the issue. The July F.M.C. had agreed unanimously that the Union's main concentration be on permanency and a \$2 levy was struck to finance the Permanency Campaign.¹²³ Gallagher even produced a leaflet emphasising the importance of the issue.¹²⁴ There was no hint of his later opposition to the campaign.

The pro-Gallagher team¹²⁵ in the N.S.W. Branch elections actually listed permanency as one of their major policy items.¹²⁶ The team led by John McNamara, Ron Donoghue and Joe Ferguson denied they were "Maoists" ("I don't even know what that means" said McNamara)¹²⁷ but their propaganda was couched in terms that suggested otherwise. A leaflet authorised by the N.S.W. B.T.G. Rank and File, one of the various titles used by the opposition team, concluded: "Workers be masters of your own destiny. Unite and fight capitalism - imperialism and partners in crime - revisionism and fascism. Away with all Pests!!!" The leaflet also made complimentary references to both Gallagher and Les Robinson who had opposed "the Scab herding Reactionary Boss class in Adelaide".¹²⁸

It is probably true that some of the new faces on the opposition team were not Maoists. The old opponents of the sixties Joe Ferguson and John McNamara had been joined by Ron Donoghue, a former Vice President who had publicly announced that he had resigned his post "because of influences of an 'outside party' [presumably the C.P.A.]¹²⁹ in placing black bans on building projects that...deprived building workers of much needed employment".¹³⁰ However this public position appears to contradict his letter of resignation in which he stated "I resign in protest against the Civil & Civic Agreement which our Union saw fit to sign..."¹³¹

This position of disagreement with the leadership over the handling of some individual dispute was also common to the rest of the opposition team. For instance, twelve candidates¹³² out of the team of sixteen came

123 B.L.F., Circular to All Job Organisers, No. 12/73, 17 July 1973.

124 A.B.L.F., Newsletter: Permanency - What it's all About, 5 October 1973, 4pp. Authorised by N. Gallagher.

125 Eight of the sixteen candidates worked with Gallagher during Intervention

126 Building Workers Rank and File, Ten Policy Points, n.d. (mid 1973?), lp. roneod.

127 David Armstrong, "Rank versus File", The Australian, 1 October 1973.

128 N.S.W. B.T.G. Rank and File, Munday Machinery Attacks Federation, n.d. (mid 1973?), lp. roneod.

129 Some media described Donoghue as "a right-wing candidate", The Telegraph (Brisbane), 23 September 1973.

130 Rank and File Document quoted in Rydge's, July 1973, p.25.

131 Correspondence: R. Donoghue to J. Munday, 12 February 1973.

132 Joe Ferguson, Frank Zymula, Fawas Hasan, John Lombardo, George Papadopoulos, Vince Ashton, Steve Black, Eddie Gunnery, Willie Denver.

from the Metropole building site where earlier in the year four members had been suspended from the Union for three months "for disruption and refusal to abide by democratically arrived at decisions".¹³³ Although these suspensions were upheld by mass meetings, the four involved, Keenan, John McNamara, Domican and West became even more bitter in their opposition towards the leadership.¹³⁴ Domican was also involved in a difference of opinion over the handling of a dispute at Longspan (Bankstown).¹³⁵ This was significant in that it was a demarcation dispute with the A.W.U. and graphically illustrated the different attitudes taken by the leadership and the opposition to demarcation problems. To the opposition team, the A.W.U. were "Australian Lackeys [of] the U.S. Imperialist monopoly Pioneer Concrete",¹³⁶ and a major policy demand was: "Retention of our work...No encroachments by other unions",¹³⁷ In contrast, the leadership avoided, whenever possible, demarcation issues.¹³⁸

Some of the opposition candidates¹³⁹ had been involved in the 1971 Trades Hall brawl and were resentful of their suspension by the N.S.W. Branch. However it is significant that one of the leadership's scrutineers in the election, Bobby Baker, had been similarly dealt with by the Branch and was still a strong supporter.¹⁴⁰ Another opposition candidate was Fred McNamara, John's brother.

So the opposition team was composed of candidates with various political, industrial and personal grievances against the leadership. They were however united in opposition to certain of the green bans.¹⁴¹ They explained their distinction thus:

We have no disagreement with bans which stop demolition of workers'

133 B.L.F., Resolution: Branch Meeting 6 February, 1973, 2pp. roneod. Dean Barber, delegate on the Metropole site, believed that McNamara deliberately engineered "a fruitless strike" and that 69 out of 80 labourers on the job refused to support his actions. Interview: Dean Barber, 18 December 1976.

134 See Building Workers Rank and File, Ten Policy Points, "No more Kangaroo Courts. Our union has attempted to expel members from the union for the only reason that they oppose their bureaucratic actions".

135 Leaflet, A.W.U. Takes Over Builders Labourers Work: Longspan Dispute, n.d. Authorised by the original B.L. Longspan Workers, 2pp. roneod.

136 N.S.W. B.T.G. Rank and File, Mundey Machinery Attacks Federation, n.d., lp. roneod.

137 Building Workers Rank and File, Ten Policy Points, n.d., lp. roneod.

138 See chapters 6, 8 and 10.

139 Keenan, McNamara and Gledhill.

140 B.L.F., Circular to All Job Organisers, No. 13/73, 25 July 1973.

141 One ban specifically mentioned was the Opera House Car Park. Leaflet, Authorised by B.T.G. Rank and File, n.d., lp. roneod.

importance of the green bans, the permanency campaign and the right of women to work in the industry.¹⁵⁰ Candidate for the Executive, Denise Bishop, was featured on a major election poster.¹⁵¹

The opposition group's campaign centred around allegations that the Munday leadership were involved in "rackets and corruption" and had been "standing over builders for protection money, and loaning large sums of union money to their mates". They accused organisers of "shooting through with union money",¹⁵² and argued that "...our Union Money should be used to improve our wages and conditions, not to line the pockets of Munday and Owens' mates!" They gave no evidence for any of these allegations except to resurrect Askin's claims that a Pedy contractor in Redfern had paid \$500 to a union sponsored appeal.¹⁵³ Posters were produced which asked: "Why don't the union produce a balance sheet...and an auditors' report?"¹⁵⁴

In reply to these charges, Munday and Pringle produced a statement pointing out that "every half year the finances are audited and sent to the Federal Body" and that "the auditor has praised the Union for its improving financial membership".¹⁵⁵ They also produced a summary of the financial position of the Branch which they asked job organisers to place on notice boards.¹⁵⁶

To counter the charges of corruption, the leadership circulated a press statement and called a stoppage of all labourers in the Metropolitan area for 24 September.¹⁵⁷ The week before the meeting, Vince Ashton, one of the opposition candidates, announced to the press that "someone tried to kill him on Sunday".¹⁵⁸

150 Poster, Hoist: Builders Labourers Rank and File Candidates, n.d. (mid 1973?). Authorised by Noel Olive; and also The Builders Labourer, August 1973, p.11.

151 Poster, Women are People: Vote Denise Bishop. Authorised by the Builders Labourers Rank and File Women's Collective.

152 These allegations were the same as those made in 1972 when Joe Ferguson charged the Executive with "corruption and maladministration". (Telegram: N. Gallagher to J. Munday, September 1972.) These charges could not be substantiated so were dropped but were amended slightly and formed the basis of the charges which "justified" Federal Intervention in 1974. The Equity Court found in 1975 that there had been no financial mismanagement by the N.S.W. Branch. More details in chapter 8.

153 Leaflet: Where is Our Money Going?, n.d., lp. Unauthorised.

154 Reported in National Times, 17-22 September 1973.

155 B.L.F., The Real Financial Position of the N.S.W. Branch, n.d. (September 1973?), lp. roneod.

156 B.L.F., Circular to All Job Organisers, No. 19/73, 31 August 1973.

157 B.L.F., Press Statement, 20 September 1973.

158 Daily Telegraph, 19 September 1973.

The stop work meeting "overwhelmingly...supported the policies of the present leadership".¹⁵⁹ The media, although giving much coverage to the opposition's accusations¹⁶⁰ actually pinpointed the real issue in the election as being the green bans. The Australian argued: "The middle-class 'greenies' have an unusual stake in the elections...among the...builders labourers in N.S.W."¹⁶¹ All newspapers carried reports such as "green bans imposed on building projects valued at \$3000 million would be reviewed"¹⁶² if the opposition won. The Bulletin after discussion of the green bans, remarked succinctly: "The developers must certainly have an interest in the election".¹⁶³

The M.B.A. made it perfectly clear where their support lay. In the middle of the balloting period it inserted full page advertisements in the daily papers addressed "To all Building Workers: A Message of Concern". The advertisement then referred to the June lockout and criticised the N.S.W. B.L.F. for disregarding the terms of the June agreement, the Arbitration Authorities, and orders to return to work; and for failing to turn up for court hearings. The advertisement concluded with a warning, "...if the current situation continues - then the M.B.A. will be forced to take action to protect its members".¹⁶⁴ The implications were obvious. If the membership supported the leadership's policies by voting for them, then the M.B.A. would force another lockout situation, which is exactly what happened.

The leadership team was returned by a 2-1 majority. Pringle received 1270 votes to Donaghue's 622 while Owens defeated John McNamara 1258-634.¹⁶⁵ 20.15% of those eligible to vote, did so, a high return for an itinerant unskilled union.¹⁶⁶

159 Sydney Morning Herald, 25 September 1973.

160 Headlines such as "Intimidation claimed in Union Ballot Fight", Sydney Morning Herald, 19 September 1973; "Swindle Claimed in Union Ballot", Sunday Telegraph, 23 September 1973; "Union Poll 'Rig' Claim", The Telegraph (Brisbane), 24 September 1973 and "Shots Fired at Union Rebel", Daily Telegraph, 19 September 1973.

161 David Armstrong, "Rank versus File", The Australian, 1 October 1973.

162 Sunday Telegraph, 23 September 1973.

163 The Bulletin, 29 September 1973, p.29.

164 Advertisement, Sun, 2 October 1973. Authorised by J. Martin, M.B.A. Joe Owens (Interviewed by Pat Fiske 1980) claimed the employers also "put notices in wage packets advising B.Ls to vote for the 'responsible team'".

165 B.L.F., 1973 Triennial Election : Returning Officers Declaration, 9 October 1973.

166 Figures handwritten on Returning Officers Declaration. 9272 Ballot papers were posted. Obviously claims such as those made by The Manufacturers' Monthly, 15 November 1973 about "the weakness of the vote" were expected because also written in the margin was "A.M.W.U. got 2.18% voting".

However, strong membership support was not enough to deter the M.B.A. from another series of confrontations. On 8 October, three days after the results became known, five members of the B.L.F. were arrested under the Summary Offences Act. It was not just its timing that caused this dispute to appear part of a strategy of confrontation on the part of the employers. First of all, as in the arrests earlier in the year, the issue over which the dispute occurred was the delicate one of safety. Secondly, the men voted to call off the strike and return to work but were locked out. Thirdly, rumours of another deregistration application were started on the same day and fourthly, the dispute was linked with the unpopular power workers strike and became part of the anti-union rhetoric that was occurring at the time because of the state government elections.¹⁶⁷

These arrests turned out to be merely the curtain opener, because on 16 October the developer, Silverton Ltd, broke the Rocks green ban and began demolition of old garages at the "Playfairs" site opposite the Argyle Terrace.¹⁶⁸ Immediately, "more than 100 labourers walked off seven city developments at noon to protest against private contractors demolishing the garages".¹⁶⁹ Later, Bob Pringle and two other labourers were arrested for refusing to leave the site. Tom Hogan recalls:

I picked up the megaphone and said something which I didn't think we could do - "We'll show you. We'll stop the City". But I was too late, it had stopped of its own accord. There wasn't one job left working in the city when I walked through it to the Trades Hall.¹⁷⁰

The Herald estimated that 4,000 labourers "walked off the job".¹⁷¹ The men "smashed open a double gate and occupied the site" until the director of the Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority (S.C.R.A.), Magee, agreed to halt demolition.¹⁷² The following Monday another clash occurred when resident activists and builders labourers occupied the site. This time, fifty eight¹⁷³ people were arrested including Munday and Owens.

167 Daily Mirror, 9 October 1973. The Summary Offences Act was very much part of the election campaign with Askin pushing a strong law and order line.

168 Lance Norman, "B.L.F. Outflanked at the Rocks - forward defences crumbling", Australian Financial Review, 18 October 1973.

169 Sydney Morning Herald, 18 October 1973.

170 Interview: Tom Hogan, 28 October 1977.

171 Sydney Morning Herald, 19 October 1973.

172 The Australian, 20 October 1973.

173 Age, 26 October 1973, reported 77 arrested.

Two demonstrators climbed a tree and refused to come down for fourteen hours.¹⁷⁴ The "Battle of the Rocks" received massive publicity and Munday claimed in court that the State Government was manufacturing a crisis "to suit its law-and-order election campaign".¹⁷⁵

The M.B.A. applied yet again to have the Union deregistered and cited the Rocks dispute as part of its argument,¹⁷⁶ and announced a ban on all weekend overtime.¹⁷⁷ A stop work meeting of Sydney builders labourers was called. An advertisement authorised by S.C.R.A. appeared the next day proclaiming: "The Red Ban on the Rocks: Beware of Phoney Issues!"¹⁷⁸ Gallagher indicated that he was not prepared to support the N.S.W. Branch "in such a parochial matter".¹⁷⁹

About 500 labourers and resident activists¹⁸⁰ demonstrated outside the Commonwealth Arbitration Court where the Union was called to a compulsory conference with the M.B.A. When "a large crowd of builders labourers" was prevented from entering the Court, Munday walked out of the proceedings. Replying to Mr Justice Aird's ruling that the Conference was private, Munday argued:

The problem of our environment is close to us all. It cannot be whittled down to unionism in a small room...We won't be dictated to by courts or anyone else. This is a new dimension, a social issue, and goes past the bounds of a conciliation commission.¹⁸¹

The Union organised a Mass Rally in the park at Circular Quay. This was attended by residents, students, waterside workers, B.L.F. supporters and "city workers". Jack Cambourn and Frank Bellins (President A.M.W.U.) were among unionists who spoke in support of the B.L.F. and the Rocks Green Ban. Meetings were held on university campuses and some other unionists including metal workers and plumbers, stopped work to attend the rally.¹⁸²

174 The Australian, 25 October 1973.

175 Ibid. Munday's assertions are substantiated by the fact that the D.M.R. moved to break the Expressway green ban on the same day. Both the S.C.R.A. and the D.M.R. are State Government authorities. This statement does not contradict the Union's position that the M.B.A. engineered the confrontation. It was in the builders' interests to break the green bans and in the Government's interest to create a crisis situation.

176 Sydney Morning Herald, 19 October 1973.

177 Sydney Morning Herald, 22 October 1973.

178 Advertisement, The Australian, 26 October 1973. Authorised by the Director, S.C.R.A.

179 Australian Financial Review, 25 October 1973.

180 Daily Telegraph, 24 October 1973.

181 Sydney Morning Herald, 24 October 1973.

182 Denis Freney, "Builders Labourers Fight Back", Tribune, 30 October-5 November 1973.

Later, 2000 supporters marched up Pitt Street and "surged across Macquarie Street shouting "Green Bans in - Askin out". Twenty one people including Pringle were arrested.¹⁸³ The evening papers predictably headlined the events as "Union Riot"¹⁸⁴ and "Mob Scenes".¹⁸⁵

At Labor Council that night Munday appealed without success to the other unions to oppose "scab" labour at the Rocks and to endorse an all-in conference, proposed by Tom Uren.¹⁸⁶ This was interpreted by the media as "Labour Council disowns B.L.F."¹⁸⁷ and "Unions oppose...violent tactics".¹⁸⁸ It is necessary, in interpreting this, to bear in mind the way Labor Council operates. The conservative unions have a majority of two to one and vote unfailingly along those lines.¹⁸⁹ To illustrate this point the Newcastle Trades Hall Council has a similar majority for the "radicals" and consequently voted a motion of support for the B.L.F. and green bans.¹⁹⁰ The B.L.F. would have moved the motion at Sydney's Labor Council for form's sake but with no real belief that it would be passed. John Ducker, who as acting Secretary had "criticised the B.L.F. for the violence that occurred",¹⁹¹ sought armed police protection in case the builders labourers stormed his office.¹⁹²

The F.E.D. & F.A. announced its sympathy with the green bans and called a stoppage for the following Monday. The B.L.F. held another mass meeting of 1200 and decided to stay on strike "at least" until the next Thursday.¹⁹³

The combined effect of these four mass demonstrations within a week had an extraordinary effect on the media. Everything the B.L.F. did was news. The Sydney Morning Herald devoted five editorials in a fortnight to attacks on the B.L.F.¹⁹⁴ and the other media were similarly

183 Sydney Morning Herald, 26 October 1973.

184 Daily Mirror, 25 October 1973. It estimated the crowd at 3000.

185 Sun, 25 October 1973. The Sun editorial (26 October 1973) called the week's events "some of the most repulsive mob scenes Sydney has known".

186 The Australian, 26 October 1973.

187 Sydney Morning Herald, 26 October 1973.

188 The Australian, 26 October 1973.

189 After 3 years as a delegate to Labor Council I have never seen the voting pattern differ by more than a dozen votes out of two hundred (a normal weekly attendance), except on the occasional issue that splits the Right, such as the S.D.A. - A.W.U. dispute. This voting pattern has not differed greatly since the right gained control in the 1940s.

190 Newcastle Morning Herald, 2 November 1973.

191 Sun, 26 October 1973.

192 Daily Mirror, 26 October 1973.

193 Newcastle Sun, 26 October 1973.

194 Editorials, Sydney Morning Herald, 24 October; 1, 7, 8, 9 November 1973.

critical and sensationalist. All recorded in detail Gallagher's attacks on the N.S.W. Branch and the green bans.

This was the first time Gallagher had criticised the N.S.W. bans so publicly and so severely. He called some of the bans "unjustified and stupid"¹⁹⁵ and indicated he wanted "some if not all" of the bans lifted.¹⁹⁶ He also said he had "reprimanded" Jack Munday¹⁹⁷ and that "resolutions from Mr. Munday at yesterday's F.M.C. meeting had been defeated because of lack of a seconder". He argued: "This must show lack of confidence in Mr. Munday who is also Federal Treasurer".¹⁹⁸ At the F.M.C. meetings held during the period, Federal officials "argued that the Union could maintain its Federal registration only if the Branch called off its green bans". Jack Waterford of the Canberra Times confidently predicted that at the next F.M.C. meeting "Gallagher is expected to insist upon the dissolution of the branch, and its being taken over by the committee [and]...present officials are likely to be sacked..."¹⁹⁹ Gallagher indicated as much when he announced that the Council would instruct N.S.W. to lift some of its green bans and if they did not "some action will have to be taken against the Branch". He complained, "we can't carry the whole conservation movement on our backs".²⁰⁰

Despite these obvious warning signals the N.S.W. Branch remained adamant. Bud Cook announced: "We have a commitment to the people of N.S.W. and we are not prepared to hand that over..."²⁰¹ Joe Owens was less high minded but probably more to the point when he claimed that "Gallagher was 'falling' for the attacks by the M.B.A. and the Askin Government on the N.S.W. branch".²⁰²

Apart from Gallagher's repeated criticisms of the N.S.W. green bans there is other evidence that he was backing away from his own environmental policy, under the pressure of Australia-wide adverse publicity. On the same day that the "union riot" erupted in Sydney, Gallagher refused

195 The Australian, 20 October 1973.

196 Sun, 22 October 1973.

197 Melbourne Sun - News Pictorial, 23 October 1973.

198 Age, 23 October 1973.

199 Canberra Times, 25 October 1973. This prediction is particularly likely to have been based on "inside information" because Waterford enjoyed a close relationship with Don McHugh who was supporting Gallagher on the F.M.C.

200 Sydney Morning Herald, 27 October 1973.

201 The Australian, 20 October 1973.

202 Daily Telegraph, 23 October 1973.

to support an appeal by the Port Phillip Conservation Council to ban work on a restaurant at Point Ormond.²⁰³ This was despite the fact that another left-wing union, the Furnishing Trades Society, had already banned the project.²⁰⁴ Gallagher, who had in the past frequently placed bans with no support from other unions, now refused to join in a ban which had Trade Union and National Trust support and which was concerned with the issue of alienation of parkland which he had always claimed was a legitimate green ban issue. Gallagher's statement to the press exemplifies the difference between his reaction to pressure and that of the N.S.W. Branch. Although three hundred conservationists demonstrated at the site,²⁰⁵ Gallagher argued that there was not enough "true public support"²⁰⁶ and explained:

I've always been against alienation of parkland. I spent 14 days in jail in 1971 for my views. But the union cannot support every plea for a black ban. We would never get any buildings erected.²⁰⁷

In the face of Gallagher's obvious intentions the N.S.W. Branch took precautions. It withdrew all its funds from the bank in what Munday called the Branch's "fight for survival".²⁰⁸ The Branch instructed members throughout the state to remain on strike indefinitely "until all scab labour is removed from the Rocks area".²⁰⁹ A meeting of 1200 labourers decided to telegram Gallagher to stop attacking the N.S.W. Branch. Gallagher was reported as commenting that the N.S.W. Branch was "becoming completely isolated from the rest of the trade union movement".

Two other incidents no doubt reinforced Gallagher's intention to intervene. Firstly, Tom Uren's attempts to hold a conference between the residents, S.C.R.A., the State Government, the B.L.F. and the F.E.D. & F.A. broke down because the State Government refused to co-operate.²¹⁰ Secondly, "in spite of picketing and rowdy demonstrations on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, demolition work is continuing at the Rocks".²¹¹

From this position of weakness the N.S.W. Branch fought back.

203 Melbourne Herald, 26 October 1973.

204 Melbourne Herald, 10 October 1973.

205 Melbourne Sun - News Pictorial, 29 October 1973.

206 Melbourne Herald, 26 October 1973. The Age, 29 October 1973, reported that 41 people had volunteered to guard the site in a 24 hour vigil and others planned to stand in the path of bulldozers.

207 Melbourne Herald, 26 October 1973.

208 The Australian, 27 October 1973.

209 Ibid.

210 The Australian, 31 October 1973.

211 Melbourne Sun - News Pictorial, 27 October 1973.

Resident activists and other supporters held meetings and decided to travel to Melbourne in order to demonstrate outside the F.M.C. meeting which was to decide the Branch's fate. Melbourne resident activists also held a meeting and decided to join the pro-N.S.W. Branch protest.²¹² Gallagher labelled these moves "disruptive tactics"²¹³ and Munday replied, perhaps undiplomatically in the circumstances, that "sometimes he [Gallagher] talks more like a merchant builder than a unionist".²¹⁴

Meanwhile, before the F.M.C. meeting began, the M.B.A. made its next move. It dismissed nearly all the lofty crane drivers on Sydney building sites.²¹⁵ This move presumably had two motives: to serve as a "punishment" or warning to the F.E.D. & F.A.;²¹⁶ and to cause stand downs of other tradesmen and create disruption and divisions among the building unions.

Munday announced to the crowd of banner waving residents outside the F.M.C. meeting that the N.S.W. Branch would "stand firm on every single green ban we have".²¹⁷ As if to prove their determination on the issue the Branch announced that it intended to impose the "blackest of black bans" on the proposed maximum security block (Katingal) at Long Bay Gaol. Munday described it as belonging to the "medieval past".²¹⁸

The F.M.C. meeting resulted in something of an anti-climax. In the face of growing support for the green bans, and in the face of the N.S.W. Branch's intransigence, the Federal officials made an ambivalent decision. The Council affirmed its "complete support" for the bans on the Rocks, Kelly's Bush, National Trust classifications, inner city housing and threatened parklands. All other bans would be "subject to review by the Federal Council". It resolved by ten votes to three to uphold "a balanced campaign on conservation issues"²¹⁹ and warned that Council would intervene in Branches that did not comply with F.M.C.

212 Melbourne Sun - News Pictorial, 29 October 1973.

213 Sun, 29 October 1973.

214 Evan Whitton, "The Greenies' Hero is Fighting for Survival - and so, some say, is Sydney". National Times, 29 October 1973.

215 Sydney Morning Herald, 30 October 1973.

216 Fork lift truck drivers at Tooth's Kent Brewery had called a 24-hour stoppage in support of green bans. Sun, 29 October 1973. Fork lift truck drivers are F.E.D. & F.A. members.

217 Melbourne Herald, 30 October 1973.

218 The Australian, 30 October 1973. This view was not accepted by the other building unions and the labourers had to wait five years, until the Nagle Commission drew a similar conclusion, before their actions were vindicated.

219 Advertisement, "Notice to Builders' Labourers", Daily Telegraph, 1 November 1973. Authorised by N. Gallagher, General Secretary.

decisions.²²⁰ Munday claimed the decision was a "moral victory" but admitted that he was disappointed that the green bans did not get unequivocal support.²²¹

Gallagher warned Munday that the N.S.W. leadership must also attend a Commonwealth Arbitration Commission Conference called to investigate the N.S.W. Branch's handling of industrial disputes: "The N.S.W. leadership is not yet out of the woods. If they refuse to attend today's conference we will take appropriate action against them".²²² Munday argued that he would not attend unless local residents, involved in green ban areas were invited.²²³ He said that the resident groups which had originated the green bans imposed by the builders' labourers would continue to get the Union's full support, but that the green bans, as such, were not a matter for discussion by any industrial tribunal, since they were a social rather than an industrial matter.²²⁴ Gallagher was adamant that "outsiders" should not be allowed to take part in the conference.²²⁵ The Branch officials attended the Conference but Munday announced: "Not one of our green bans will be lifted and others will be imposed".²²⁶

At a mass meeting of more than 600 labourers and residents, the labourers voted 450 to five²²⁷ to return to work on five conditions. These included a total ban on Silverton Constructions until it dismissed "scab" labour; F.M.C. endorsement for all the N.S.W. green bans; no recriminations against Union members or Rocks residents; the Arbitration Court to accept that it had no authority over green bans; and endorsement of Tom Uren's formula for breaking the deadlock over the Rocks.²²⁸ They also voted unanimously to campaign actively against the Askin Government in the State Election.²²⁹ This was no doubt of great comfort to the state Labor politicians who had been conspicuously absent in statements of support for the green bans or the Union. The opposition

220 Daily Telegraph, 31 October 1973.

221 Ibid.

222 Sun, 31 October 1973.

223 Ibid.

224 Australian Financial Review, 31 October 1973.

225 Sun, 31 October 1973.

226 Daily Mirror, 31 October 1973.

227 Daily Mirror, 1 November 1973. The report made it clear that although residents attended the meeting, only B.L.F. members voted. A common Gallagher accusation was that "residents sheilahs and poofsters" voted at these meetings. See chapter 8.

228 Daily Mirror, 1 November 1973.

229 Ibid.

leader, Pat Hills, had ignored Munday's encouragement to campaign on green bans "because the question of the environment could win them the election".²³⁰ The Sydney Morning Herald in fact saw the B.L.F. as the "biggest albatross round the party's neck at the moment".²³¹

As part of the M.B.A.-Askin strategy to isolate the B.L.F., the M.B.A. decided at a secret meeting to close down their high rise projects in Sydney.²³² The Master Builders also advertised "A Message of Grave Concern" where they claimed the B.L.F. "believed in the right to strike but not in the right to work". They recalled the May lockout "when the B.L.F. tried to usurp...the employer's right to select who works for him" and concluded:

Many people with a genuine concern for the environment have been led into supporting the B.L.F. Red Bans and illegal actions because of the B.L.F.'s cynical misuse of environmental issues.²³³

The M.B.A. lockout caused the swell of public support for the N.S.W. Branch to increase dramatically. Resident Action Groups wrote letters to the newspapers,²³⁴ as did sympathetic architects, environmentalists and doctors.²³⁵ Institutions as different as the University of New England Student's Council²³⁶ and the Newcastle Trades Hall²³⁷ moved motions of support. Federal ministers Cameron,²³⁸ Uren,²³⁹ Johnson²⁴⁰ and Cass²⁴¹ all gave verbal and sometimes practical assistance. The Counter Culture media wrote admiring articles²⁴² and even the Commonwealth Department of Urban and Regional Development gave the green bans its seal of approval,²⁴³ which the Herald interpreted as "Endorsing Sabotage".²⁴⁴ A group of supporters, including Anne Summers and Wendy Bacon produced "The Little Green Book"²⁴⁵ which detailed the forty green

230 Daily Telegraph, 24 October 1973.

231 Editorial, Sydney Morning Herald, 1 November 1973.

232 Daily Telegraph, 1 November 1973.

233 Advertisement, Daily Telegraph, 1 November 1973. Authorised by J. Martin, M.B.A.

234 Daily Mirror, 8 November 1973.

235 Sydney Morning Herald, 13 and 17 November 1973.

236 Armidale Express, 12 November 1973.

237 Newcastle Morning Herald, 2 November 1973.

238 A.B.C., This Day Tonight, 2 November 1973.

239 The Australian, 31 October 1973, and Document: Statement by the Minister for Urban and Regional Development, Tom Uren M.P., n.d. (October 1973?).

240 Sydney Morning Herald, 9 November 1973.

241 Melbourne Herald, 9 November 1973.

242 A good example is Grant Evans "Don't Knock the Rocks", The Living Daylights, Vol. 1, No. 3, 30 October-5 November 1973.

243 Daily Telegraph, 14 November 1973.

244 Editorial, Sydney Morning Herald, 9 November 1973.

245 Anne Summers, Wendy Bacon, Dave Morrissey, Ruth Gregory, and Syd Shelton, The Little Green Book: The Facts on Green Bans, n.d. (November 1973), 32pp. Its publication was reported in The Australian, 13 November 1973.

bans and defended the B.L.F. with gusto. Finally Patrick White wrote to the media that:

It is a sad reflection on our so-called civilization that residents of Sydney...are forced time and again to turn to the B.L.F....

It is a rare thing to find a union with so advanced a social conscience. But how much longer can the citizens of Sydney ask these men to endure the responsibility for protecting a citizen's right to live comfortably and without anxiety.²⁴⁶

Another letter from White was read out at a rally of several hundred B.L.F. supporters in Centennial Park which was organised by C.R.A.G., a coalition of more than one hundred Resident Action Groups. The chairperson, Joan Bielski, told the gathering: "We are not asking for a new era - just a nice tomorrow".²⁴⁷ The Rally called on the M.B.A. to have discussions with Labor Council and resident groups about environmental protection in the state. It also criticised the state Liberal and Labor Parties for not bringing forward "well thought out plans of environmental protection", and called upon the parties "to guarantee...every citizen's right to participate in planning his own environment".²⁴⁸

Far from guaranteeing these rights, Askin announced in his election policy speech that he would introduce "drastic anti-strike legislation soon". Joe Owens' reaction was:

It simply proves what so many people have thought for a long time - that Sir Robert has one of the finest minds of the nineteenth century.²⁴⁹

Despite efforts by the B.T.G., the lockout continued²⁵⁰ with over 10,000 building workers stood down. The B.L.F. claimed that the only sites in dispute as far as they were concerned, were two where officials and members had been arrested under the Summary Offences Act.²⁵¹ Tom McDonald announced that the B.W.I.U. was not prepared to "become the captive of the M.B.A. and the B.L.F." He said if the dispute was not settled quickly his union and others would consider taking joint action against the B.L.F. leadership and the M.B.A.²⁵²

The M.B.A. eventually gave reasons for their lockout. The reasons were so demanding that no union would have consented let alone the

246 Sydney Morning Herald, 5 November 1973.

247 Ibid.

248 Document: Draft Resolutions for Public Meeting, Centennial Park, 2.00 p.m. Sunday 4 November 1973. lp. roneod.

249 Murwillumbah Daily News, 3 November 1973.

250 Daily Telegraph, 3 November 1973.

251 Sydney Morning Herald, 3 November 1973.

252 The Australian, 3 November 1973.

B.L.F. The conditions included lifting of all green bans on M.B.A. sites. It seems more likely that their real reason was related to that struggle for control of the industry which was so evident in the May lockout, or as Ray Rocher put it, "...when they returned to work we decided to keep them out for as long as they'd been on strike".²⁵³

Apart from applying for deregistration of the M.B.A.,²⁵⁴ the labourers used other tactics such as "work ins". The tradesmen decided not to participate in the "work ins"²⁵⁵ and attacked the "go-it-alone" policy of the B.L.F. which they said continuously threw tradesmen out of work.²⁵⁶ By this stage Mr Justice Aird had urged employers to allow work to start on all but the green ban sites²⁵⁷ and Tom Uren had also warned the M.B.A. about their lockout tactics.²⁵⁸ The M.B.A. replied to Uren with yet another advertisement which implied that he was confused on the issue and that green bans should not be decided by "self-appointed dictators".²⁵⁹

Eventually the tradesmen's unions decided to condemn the lockout, but B.W.I.U. spokesman Stan Sharkey repeated the claim that the B.L.F.'s contemptuous and divisive attitude to other unions "helped the boss and harmed trade unionism".²⁶⁰

Nineteen labourers were arrested on the first day of the "work ins". These arrests took place on the Lanray and City South Telephone Exchange projects although other sites such as Qantas had also "worked in".²⁶¹ Those arrested were represented in court by Jim Staples who felt compelled to inform the magistrate that:

I know that the song goes "When they gaol a man for striking its a rich man's country yet" but when they gaol a man for working its a mad man's country yet.²⁶²

The "work ins" continued with labourers taking over sites,

253 Ray Rocher: Interviewed by Pat Fiske, 1980.

254 Daily Mirror, 5 November 1973.

255 Daily Telegraph, 7 November 1973.

256 The Australian, 6 November 1973.

257 Sydney Morning Herald, 6 November 1973.

258 Canberra Times, 6 November 1973.

259 Advertisement, Sydney Morning Herald, 7 November 1973. Authorised by J. Martin, M.B.A.

260 Sydney Morning Herald, 7 November 1973.

261 Sun, 7 November 1973 and Daily Mirror, 7 November 1973. The Sun reported more than 400 police patrolled the building sites. Those sites that remained at work levied themselves to provide strike pay for those B.Ls who were locked out. B.L.F., Collection Sheet, 13 November 1973.

262 Conversation: Jim Staples, 26 July 1975.

sometimes peacefully and sometimes after initial confrontation. Some of the largest building firms, which were not members of the M.B.A., had not participated in the lockout and their sites were working as normal.²⁶³

The Federal body of the B.L.F. threatened a national strike if the lockout continued.²⁶⁴ The national strike was deferred for 24 hours²⁶⁵ and then for a further period to allow for talks to take place.²⁶⁶ The National Strike never did eventuate.

The M.B.A.'s advertising became increasingly sensationalist. On 11 November another advertisement appeared:

THIS DISPUTE IS ABOUT ANARCHY and the destruction of democratic processes. We believe an element of the B.L.F. is engaged in anarchy. This is the Communist way - issues come and go but the eventual goal of communism is to destroy the existing political system. Green bans are just a political tool to create anarchy.

The final comment however was a fitting tribute to the B.W.I.U.'s role in the affair: "We applaud the initiative, restraint and moderation of the Building Trades Group..."²⁶⁷

Eventually the A.C.T.U. was asked to consider a B.W.I.U. draft proposal for a national joint union code of relationships. Clancy, criticising yet again the "one out" action of the N.S.W. B.L.F. explained that thousands of tradesmen had been stood down through no fault of their own, and "we want to prevent this sort of thing happening again - in our industry or any other".²⁶⁸ His proposed code was rejected by both Owens and Gallagher who said they favoured the general concept of an inter-union code but "any such code must not threaten the autonomy of individual unions".²⁶⁹

The final settlement of the dispute, which came on 14 November, left a number of issues, particularly in the area of inter-union relationships, wide open. The terms and conditions were to be discussed between the state and federal B.L.F. officials and A.C.T.U. representatives

263 Australian Financial Review, 8 November 1973.

264 The Australian, 8 November 1973.

265 Daily Mirror, 9 November 1973. The S.A. Branch was evidently not keen on the idea because Les Robinson announced "there was no possibility of S.A. becoming involved unless by a Federal Branch ruling", Adelaide Advertiser, 9 November 1973.

266 Sun-Herald, 11 November 1973.

267 Advertisement, Sunday Telegraph, 11 November 1973 and Sun-Herald, 11 November 1973. Authorised by J. Martin, M.B.A.

268 Sun, 13 November 1973. Clancy appears to have been opposing the idea of other unions ever having to be stood down during another union's dispute - an unrealistic object for an experienced union official like Clancy even to contemplate.

269 The Australian, 14 November 1973.

later, but the M.B.A. did agree in part to the tradesmen's demands for stand down pay. The N.S.W. B.L.F. welcomed the M.B.A.'s major decision which was to reopen all jobs except those covered by green bans.²⁷⁰ Joe Owens called it "...the most unsuccessful expensive experiment... that the M.B.A. has ever undertaken".²⁷¹

However it was obvious from the tone of Gallagher's remarks that more was expected of the N.S.W. Branch than was actually agreed to at the settlement conference. He advised the Branch to "quieten down" and added "we are sick and tired of having the N.S.W. Branch involve this Union in irresponsible acts". He called the settlement "reasonable" and said he expected the N.S.W. Branch to observe it.²⁷²

The next day the M.B.A. sought to insert a "no strike clause" during the hearing of the settlement terms before Mr. Justice Aird in the Arbitration Commission. The N.S.W. Branch was adamant that it would "not accept this under any circumstances". Pringle argued that they had returned to work on Aird's recommendation but their return had no conditions attached.²⁷³ Whether some secret agreement had been arrived at between the M.B.A. and the Federal Branch can only be a subject for speculation but on the day that the settlement took place Gallagher announced that the Union's Federal Conference would "review" the Sydney green bans.²⁷⁴ Another aspect of the agreement that the N.S.W. Branch felt should have been opposed was a clause in the B.W.I.U.'s draft code which had been agreed to by Gallagher at an A.C.T.U. Federal building unions' conference. This section stated:

That if a strike involves men whose work involves carrying other workers in lifts, hoists or other such transport, sufficient personnel will be left on the job to perform this work.

The N.S.W. leadership argued, "if we agreed to this it would be tantamount to strike breaking".²⁷⁵

When the A.C.T.U. Executive endorsed the inter-union code, the N.S.W. Branch announced that the code would only apply to industrial bans and not green bans. The Herald pointed out, correctly, that as most disputes in the N.S.W. building industry centred around green bans, the code could end up a "paper tiger". Bob Hawke claimed that the attitude of the N.S.W. B.L.F. was "not in line with that of their

270 Sun, 14 November 1973.

271 Sydney Morning Herald, 15 November 1973.

272 Melbourne Herald, 14 November 1973.

273 Sun, 16 November 1973.

274 Daily Telegraph, 16 November 1973.

275 Bob Pringle, quoted in The Australian, 17 November 1973.

federation's Federal Secretary...We can do no more than accept the word of Mr. Gallagher". The Herald commented that, "...there is general agreement that the non-coverage of green bans by the code is a significant weakness which will cause trouble".²⁷⁶ The Manufacturers' Monthly, with unusual perception, saw the situation's long term implications clearly:

The Jack Munday led builders labourers in N.S.W. are slowly being encircled, with the noose getting tighter. With the M.B.A. prepared to close down indefinitely, other unions have moved against the B.L.F. with at least tacit support from the A.C.T.U.²⁷⁷

There is plenty of evidence that the N.S.W. leadership was also aware of the "noose getting tighter" but basically they were in a position where to yield at all would have entailed the abandonment of most, if not all, of the green bans.

The pressure was really on - but what could we do? To do what Gallagher and Clancy wanted would have meant the end of the green bans.²⁷⁸

They saw the bans as a matter of principle, not political expediency. As Joe Owens remarked, "we made plenty of wrong decisions but we never made an unprincipled one".²⁷⁹

In private discussion, the N.S.W. leadership saw several factors acting against them in the Rocks dispute. These included the B.W.I.U. position, the M.B.A.'s determination to lock-out the industry, the violent media attacks and the lack of support from their Federal body. In their favour they could only cite residents' support (and the fact that the Rocks was of national importance) and Judge Aird's decision that green bans were not industrial issues.²⁸⁰

Many of the rank and file expressed similar views to Mick Curtin:

The three weeks lockout was a trying period. I thought we'd really had it then. The bluntness and frankness of the elected leadership helped us to survive. We fully supported them.²⁸¹

The N.S.W. Executive's report to the membership remarked upon "the great deal of confusion in the industry following the lock out"²⁸² and

276 Sydney Morning Herald, 28 November 1973.

277 Manufacturers' Monthly, 15 December 1973, p.17.

278 Interview: Jack Munday, 13 August 1975.

279 Interview: Joe Owens, 24 January 1978.

280 B.L.F., Handwritten notes of meeting, Points, n.d. (October 1973).

281 Interview: Mick Curtin, 27 February 1976. There is no evidence of divisions among the Sydney labourers at this time. All the mass meeting decisions were near-unanimous. This had not prevented the leadership discussing the possibility. One of the handwritten Points mentioned above was "Cracks could appear in Sydney B.L.F.".

282 B.L.F., Letter to All Job Organisers and Activists, No. 23/73, 28 November 1973.

pointed out that:

The M.B.A. have given misleading information to the Industry in leaflet form to the effect that the B.L.F. agreed to a no-strike clause. This is incorrect...the only agreement to date with this Branch is,

1. Disputes in the first instance to be dealt with at job level.
2. If the dispute is not settled, the employer may contact the M.B.A. for discussion with the Union.
3. If the dispute is not solved by these steps, parties take whatever action they desire.
4. The M.B.A. have agreed that financial unionists would be employed on all jobs.²⁸³

This was basically the same disputes procedure arrived at after both the 1971 "no strike clause" dispute and the May 1973 lockout. As Tom Hogan recalls, the Union dealt with it by simply initiating so many disputes, "that the M.B.A. got sick to death of tearing all over Sydney to our jobs".²⁸⁴

The leadership also informed the members about the "Code of Inter Union Relationships". An interesting change, presumably brought about by N.S.W. B.L.F. pressure, had occurred in this code since Gallagher's original consent. Point 3 was summarised as: "Lift or passenger lift drivers may only be left on site by agreement with the B.L.F." The Executive also stressed that "this code allows each union to retain its autonomy in any dispute whilst ensuring that discussion takes place with other unionists".²⁸⁵

This emphasised the main problem which arose out of the Rocks Lockout. This was the Branch's obviously deteriorating relationship with the B.W.I.U. and its own Federal Body.

The Federation and the Branch had come into conflict over many issues during the year, apart from the handling of the May and October lockouts.

In March Gallagher announced his opposition to the A.C.T.U.'s plan to build low-cost housing on land provided by the South Australian and Tasmanian Governments. He said a ban would probably be imposed and argued "I'm opposed to foreign capital being used".²⁸⁶ Munday originally rejected Gallagher's statement claiming, "...Mr. Gallagher has no right

283 B.L.F., Circular to all Delegates, No. 24/73, 5 December 1973.

284 Interview: Tom Hogan, 28 October 1977.

285 B.L.F., Circular to all Delegates, No. 24/73, 5 December 1973.

286 Sydney Morning Herald, 13 March 1973. The Victorian and South Australian Branches recorded their detailed objections to the scheme. A.B.L.F. (Victorian Branch) Unity, Vol. 16, No. 2, May 1973, p.16 and A.B.L.F. (South Australian Branch) Newsletter, March 1973, pp.1-2.

to say that. It is his personal opinion and certainly not that of the Federation". He proposed a meeting between the A.C.T.U., the Federal Government and the building unions on ways to approach the scheme.²⁸⁷

At the F.M.C. meeting Munday eventually agreed to go along with the Federation's opposition to the scheme but managed to get his proposal for a Conference with Federal ministers included in the resolution.²⁸⁸

He described the Branch's conciliatory position on the Housing scheme:

The F.M.C. had lengthy discussion on this matter and while we appreciated the A.C.T.U.'s concern re the housing problem we felt that...this can only be done properly by National Federal Government action.²⁸⁹

The two bodies also clashed over the payment of fines levelled against two Canberra builders' labourers who had been arrested during the 1972 Canberra building industry strike. The total fines and compensation came to \$1,200 and the N.S.W. B.L.F. paid this, although one of the labourers belonged to the A.C.T. Branch. The N.S.W. Branch "paid the fine because the local union had insufficient funds", but the Federation should have been the responsible body. According to the N.S.W. officials, "the Federal Union offered no financial support".²⁹⁰

The most serious clash occurred however in September, when the building industry representative on the A.C.T.U. Executive was due for election. Clancy had been the representative since 1969 and was the choice of the "left" ticket at the Congress.²⁹¹ However Gallagher nominated, and unexpectedly won the position by 38 votes to 37.²⁹² There is little doubt that this result was achieved by Gallagher promising to deliver his supporters' votes to extreme right-winger Ralph Marsh who was standing for Vice President against the left-wing candidate, the incumbent, Jack Petrie. In return, the right-wing building industry delegates would vote for Gallagher against Clancy. Not one newspaper queried whether this deal had occurred. Typical reports contained explanations such as:

A curious combination of extreme-Left and extreme-Right forces brought about the one vote defeat of the sitting member for the building group.²⁹³

In fact Gallagher virtually acknowledged the deal by announcing that he

287 The Australian, 14 March 1973.

288 Document, Resolution, 21 March 1973, lp. ronoed.

289 B.L.F., Circular to All Job Organisers, No. 6/73, 27 March 1973.

290 Canberra News, 12 March 1973.

291 Adelaide Advertiser, 6 September 1973.

292 Minutes, A.C.T.U. Congress, Sydney September 1973, p.28.

293 Adelaide Advertiser, 6 September 1973.

did not need to put out any ticket and he would be "nobody's man" on the Executive.²⁹⁴ Because of the "unprecedented bitterness" that this act earned amongst the "left" unions he later proffered the weak²⁹⁵ excuse that: "I'm supposed to have done a deal with Ducker and Marsh. I never even spoke to Ducker and Marsh throughout the Congress or for 12 months before...I think its sour grapes".²⁹⁶

The left was particularly annoyed that Gallagher's deal had allowed another right-winger John Ducker on to the Executive as the N.S.W. representative in Marsh's place, when Marsh moved up to Vice President.²⁹⁷

Mundey and McNamara, the N.S.W. delegates, immediately circulated a statement dissociating themselves from Gallagher's "wheeling and dealing":

If we had known of the arrangement to trade votes with the right-wing, we would have denounced it at the time. But in fact we were not told of the arrangement...until after the voting was concluded when D. McHugh...told us of the exchange agreement. This agreement was consummated with the right-wing A.S.C. & J. delegate checking the voting of the other nine Builders Labourers delegates for the Marsh/French ticket.²⁹⁸

Mundey also told the media that Gallagher's election had been the result of "crass opportunism".²⁹⁹

A group of unionists involved with the S.P.A. produced a leaflet which accused "certain leaders of the B.L.F." of a "treacherous" deal:

...the B.L.F. leaders were prepared to sacrifice the interests of the centre left force and of the working class as a whole, for their own narrow selfish purposes. This we condemn.³⁰⁰

The implications were that Mundey and McNamara had been part of the deal. There was no mention of Mundey's denials or of his public criticism of the act.

Caught like the meat in the sandwich between Clancy and Gallagher, the N.S.W. Branch saw their position deteriorate even further as a result

294 Ibid.

295 Weak because "deals" at these conferences are not done directly by the proponents but by intermediaries. Hence he was denying an act which was not significant.

296 Geoffrey Gleghorn "The best steak is tenderised: Norm Gallagher on strikes and J. Mundey", National Times, 10 December 1973.

297 Document, Who's Wheeling Who?: A.C.T.U. Congress, (hand dated 2.10.73), 2pp. roneod. Authorised by D. Dawson.

298 Document, Gallagher's Wheeling and Dealing, 7 September 1973, lp., roneod. Authorised by M. McNamara and J. Mundey.

299 Melbourne Sun - News Pictorial, 7 September 1973.

300 Document, The Deal Which Betrayed the Progressive A.C.T.U. Forces, n.d. (September 1973?), 2pp. roneod. Authorised by T. McDonald, B.W.I.U. and 27 others.

of the M.B.A. offensive in October. Yet, with all the indications pointing to a Federation attack on the green bans at the November F.M.C., the N.S.W. Branch received "unexpected backing" from their Federal Council. A resolution, framed by N.S.W., was passed which expressed "concern at the failure to preserve historic buildings...which are part of our cultural and historic development". It called for "more effective legislation and use of existing power to achieve this objective". Although this resolution carried no policy instructions, delegates at the meeting "said it unequivocally cleared the way for other branches of the B.L.F. to impose green bans on projects which endanger buildings of historic interest". The same unnamed delegates "pointed to the fact that the fairly conservative Tasmanian branch had agreed to the ban on the whole Battery Point area".³⁰¹

The N.S.W. Branch interpreted the resolution as "a national green ban was placed on the demolition of all historic buildings and historic precincts"³⁰² and that "the green bans...are here to stay".³⁰³

Despite these optimistic interpretations, the F.M.C. decision was much more favourable to the N.S.W. Branch's bans than had been expected. Why was this so?

The reasons are complex. First of all, it was obvious that N.S.W. would not concede any ground on the green bans without the total intervention of the type which occurred in 1974. Given that deregistration proceedings were still under way Gallagher would not want to have intervened before the decision was made because basically he did not want to lose registration.³⁰⁴ He was wary of becoming embroiled in what could have been a violent affair while there was still hope of retaining registration. After deregistration, of course he had nothing to lose. Next, Gallagher was keenly aware of the amount of public support that had been generated by the N.S.W. Branch. He did not want to be seen as the man who killed green bans. He was immensely proud of his own bans. He often claimed responsibility for the militant environment policies of the Union,³⁰⁵ and continually mentioned his gaol sentence over the Carlton Park affair. He even consented to publicity acts that might have made Munday blush. The Federal Council Minutes record:

301 Australian Financial Review, 22 November 1973.

302 B.L.F., Circular to all Delegates, No. 24/73, 5 December 1973.

303 B.L.F., Circular to Job Organisers, No. 22/73, 19 December 1973.

304 Details in chapter 8.

305 Age, 7 September 1973.

...the honour of making our secretary, Norman Leslie Gallagher "King of Carlton" who rode a camel for such an historic occasion, was in reconciliation of the days spent in jail by himself and Cde Mick Lewis...³⁰⁶

Not only was Gallagher aware of the residents' support for the N.S.W. leadership but he was also aware of the rank and file support they enjoyed in the Union. His own team had been swamped by them 2-1 and this raised another problem which he had to face. N.S.W. accounted for 45% of the total membership of the Federation, yet only had four out of fifteen federal councillors. At a mass meeting held during the N.S.W. Branch elections, a motion had been passed which called for proportional representation at a national level.³⁰⁷ This did not directly threaten Gallagher because any change in representation would have to gain the consent of the F.M.C. which he totally controlled, but taken in conjunction with another N.S.W. demand, the rank and file election of Federal officers,³⁰⁸ he had real problems. This was because Clyde Cameron was intent on introducing a clause in the Federal Government's Conciliation and Arbitration Bill which would abolish collegiate voting systems for senior union officials and replace them with direct rank and file elections. Munday, of course, supported Cameron's proposal³⁰⁹ whereas Gallagher remained silent on the issue. Gallagher's position on green bans was important in terms of Cameron's proposal. If he was seen to back away from a militant stance on green bans he would lose rank and file support, particularly in N.S.W., and in the event of a popular election being held he would very likely lose his position to a N.S.W. challenge.

Gallagher, in fact, controlled the F.M.C. tighter than most other union officials controlled their Federal bodies. For instance the voting figures at the 1973 Conference were 13-4 against Pringle when he stood for General Secretary and the same against Owens when he stood for Treasurer.³¹⁰ Most other unions allow their largest affiliate some position in the hierarchy. Many even rotate positions such as President between the states³¹¹ but when the N.S.W. Branch proposed such a

306 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1973.

307 Sydney Morning Herald, 25 September 1973. News Weekly (10 October 1973, p.10) saw this demand as particularly significant "Proportional representation would give Munday almost half the numbers on the Federal body, and from that position he believes he could squeeze Gallagher out".

308 The Australian, 25 September 1973.

309 Sydney Morning Herald, 11 May 1973.

310 Sydney Morning Herald, 22 November 1973.

311 Within the building industry this practice is adopted by the P.G.E.U.A.

rotation system³¹² the motion was lost.

So keeping all his options open, Gallagher bludgeoned the N.S.W. delegates with his hefty majority on the Federal Council but publicly supported their stand on the environment. He capitalised on the popularity of the green bans when he produced a leaflet on the deregistration case. Headed "Fight De-Registration - Save the Environment", the leaflet emphasised the Union's role in imposing environmental bans³¹³ (never referred to as green bans because that was considered a N.S.W. term).

The Manufacturers' Monthly probably summed up the real position between the state and federal bodies with its November headline, "Battle for Control of B.L.F. Not Finished Yet".³¹⁴

In actual fact the headline was appropriate in more ways than one. The year had witnessed a polarisation of the community over the subject of green bans and the B.L.F. The Union came under attack from editorials, letters to the editor, advertisements by the M.B.A. and the Employers' Federation, and from individual columnists.³¹⁵ Most of these criticisms involved the Union's attack on management prerogative, either in their union hire campaign or their environmental bans. One group of builders began legal action to sue the Union for losses they had suffered from the Union's "job-control" philosophy.³¹⁶

Criticism came, once again, from State Parliamentarians. This time Liberal M.L.A., L. Barraclough, alleged that the B.L.F. was blackmailing companies and individuals by placing bans on building projects and then extorting money from the companies. The money was to go to the Total Environment Centre. "People are paying out in fear to avoid B.L.F. black bans."³¹⁷ The Union replied with a press statement which totally rejected "the latest cowardly attack made, under Parliamentary privilege, on this Union". The statement then went on to detail the facts about a green ban on proposed industrial development at Merrylands where the company involved had indicated that it was willing to modify its proposals

312 B.L.F., N.S.W. Agenda Items for Federal Conference 1973, Item 17.

313 A.B.L.F. Fight De-Registration - Save the Environment, n.d. (December 1973?), 2pp. Authorised by N. Gallagher. The leaflet listed the Omega bases as worthy of a ban.

314 Manufacturers' Monthly, 15 November 1973.

315 Tom Mead and Patricia Giffney were particularly lavish in this regard.

316 Sun, 18 May 1973.

317 Sydney Morning Herald, 17 August 1973. In a curious sophistication of anti-Communism, Barraclough declared "Mr Munday is a Trotskyite". Daily Telegraph, 17 August 1973.

and have an environmental impact study made. The Union had told the company that it was for the residents to decide whether or not the amended propositions were satisfactory and gave the company the names of two environmental organisations who could do such a study, one of which was the Total Environment Centre:

At no time and in no discussion with us have the company or ourselves made any mention of payment of any money. Mr. Barraclough's allegation of "blackmail" is contemptible and false.

The Union then called for an inquiry into the building industry which should "thoroughly probe the facts...including the commercial rampages by developers while community needs go neglected".³¹⁸ Munday challenged Barraclough to repeat his allegations outside Parliament but Barraclough did not. Munday said that they were the sort of false allegations which had been made time and again against the Federation, "ever since we have been applying our industrial strength to help environmentalists and other community groups".³¹⁹

Despite such pressure, the N.S.W. leadership continued to play an active part in political life.

In January, the Union joined enthusiastically with other "left" unions in a campaign against American business interests in protest against the U.S. bombing of North Vietnam. During the campaign, job-site meetings were held on projects controlled by two of the biggest American firms, Dillinghams and Mainlines.³²⁰

In April Bob Pringle and later Tony Hadfield³²¹ became involved in an issue which on the surface was almost comical but about which Bob Pringle felt strongly. It began when Pringle, although a long-time member, was refused admission to the Eastern Suburbs Leagues Club because his hair "fell below the collar line".³²² Pringle was "most upset" and called the ruling "a denial of a man's human rights".³²³ Because others had also complained he began a sustained campaign to have the rule changed, arguing that "...under the present rules...Einstein, Captain Cook and even Jesus Christ, would have been barred".³²⁴ He was eventually successful in having the Club call a referendum.³²⁵ This was narrowly

318 B.L.F., Press Statement, 17 August 1973, 2pp. ronoed.

319 Sydney Morning Herald, 18 August 1973.

320 Daily Mirror, 3 January 1973.

321 Hadfield, who was also refused entrance, was actually a former Eastern Suburbs player.

322 The Telegraph (Brisbane), 3 April 1973.

323 Daily Mirror, 3 April 1973.

324 Melbourne Herald, 3 April 1973.

325 Daily Telegraph, 20 April 1973.

lost but 46.2% of the members supported his stand and he stated that he would "continue to fight against the ban".³²⁶ Although it was commonly assumed that the Union had banned work on extensions to the Club as a reprisal, this was only ever used as a warning and was never implemented as an actual ban.³²⁷ Although Pringle's hair was only an inch over his collar, he refused to use the club's facilities (while still paying his membership dues) rather than cut his hair. During correspondence with Ron Jones, the club manager, he argued the referendum had been unfair because female "associate" members of the club had been refused the right to vote. Later when urging Jones to reconsider the matter he asked that another referendum be held as soon as possible before (referring to his rapid thinning on top) "the subject matter disappears completely".³²⁸

Now while this dispute appears simply a larrikin gesture, it is important in that Pringle and the Union publicly committed themselves in support of "the longhairs", which in those days still carried connotations of youth and rebellion. It meant that they were prepared to step over the traditional line of what constituted respectable "left" union behaviour in a struggle against what they saw as an infringement of civil liberties.

In May, they returned to traditional union political involvement but, as usual adopted the job-site, rank and file approach which so often distinguished their political activity from other "left" unions. They joined with other "left" unions in approaching the A.C.T.U. to organise protests against French atom bomb testing in the Pacific.³²⁹ They agreed to send George Crawford of the Plumbers' Union to France³³⁰ to discuss the situation with the French Trade Unions "who could bring considerable pressure to bear on their Government through protests and industrial action...We must prick the conscience of the French people as a whole".³³¹

The Union also held stop work meetings on the Warringah Mall project which was being built by Citra Construction, a giant French company.³³²

326 Daily Telegraph, 28 May 1973.

327 Newcastle Morning Herald, 28 May 1973. It was one of the "bans" opposed by the opposition group during the 1973 election.

328 Correspondence: R. Pringle to R. Jones, n.d.

329 Sydney Morning Herald, 2 May 1973.

330 Report of Federal Management Committee decision in B.L.F. Circular to All Job Organisers, No. 8/73, 3 May 1973.

331 Jack Munday, quoted in The Australian, 26 April 1973.

332 Daily Mirror, 2 May 1973.

They organised a deputation of workers from the site to ask the Company to publicly denounce the French tests or face industrial action on all its projects. These actions were supported by the B.W.I.U. and the Plumbers' Union.³³³ Shortly afterwards, when the State Government announced that the new Markets at Flemington were to be built by Citra, Joe Owens denounced the move as "an insult to the union movement and the people of Australia".³³⁴ The Union also produced a job circular headed: "Precautions to be Taken against the French Bomb Tests" which gave detailed information to its members about how to "eliminate most of the risk".³³⁵

The rank and file were again involved later in the year when two Chinese women were evicted from their flat, and the Tenants Union approached the B.L.F. for assistance. Pringle discovered that the owner of the building was a director of Stocks and Holdings. Stop-work meetings were immediately held on Stocks and Holdings sites throughout the city. These meetings "had the effect of quickly finding a new flat for the Woo sisters, plus reimbursement of any loss they suffered through being evicted from their home". In commenting on this situation the Victorian A.L.P. Socialist left newspaper Scope concluded in admiration: "Once again a trade union has stepped in to take up the cause of people who would be otherwise without muscle to oppose the system".³³⁶

In October, the B.L.F. signed a statement in support of the rank and file power workers who were engaged in a campaign for a 35 hour week. The power workers were under great pressure from the conservative unions to call off their campaign because of the inconvenience it caused and its probable effect on the State election. It is an indication of the isolation of the power workers that the only signatories to the advertisement were all C.P.A. members.³³⁷

333 Ibid. The normally ultra-conservative state plumbers' union was probably goaded into action by its General Secretary, Crawford, who was deeply involved in the anti-bomb campaign.

334 The Australian, 22 May 1973.

335 B.L.F., Circular to All Job Organisers, No. 14/73, 25 July 1973.

336 Scope, No. 125, 25 October 1973.

337 Advertisement, The Australian, 10 October 1973. Authorised by Joe Owens, B.L.F.; Jack Cambourn, F.E.D. & F.A.; Merv Nixon, South Coast Labor Council; Keith Wilson, Newcastle Labor Council; Bill Smale, Miners' Federation and Bill Holley, Sydney Centre for Workers' Control. An interesting discussion of the Power Workers' campaign is contained in Rod Pickette, Rank and File Organisation in the N.S.W. Power Generation Industry: With Particular Reference to ECCUDO, B.Ec. (Hons) Thesis, Sydney University, 1975 (unpublished). The leading militants were in the C.P.A.

A similar C.P.A. connection can be discerned in action which took place after doctors announced a 25% fee rise. A motion to black ban building work on the homes or surgeries of any doctor who charged fees above those recommended by the Federal Government, was passed by the Union's monthly Branch meeting at which two hundred members were present. They also called upon the Federal body to extend the ban to other states.³³⁸ However the only union which took similar action was the Queensland B.W.I.U. which was also a C.P.A. influenced union.³³⁹ The South Australian Branch of the B.L.F. announced through Secretary Les Robinson that it was not considering banning work for doctors, and Gallagher who had waxed eloquent on the subject of doctors earlier in the year,³⁴⁰ took no action either.³⁴¹ The N.S.W. ban affected "only one or two doctors' places in the eastern suburbs...but we made our point".³⁴²

In November, the Union was forthright in their support of the Kings Cross strippers' strike. The leadership and activists even participated in picket lines and demonstrations. Once again, this was considered not very respectable behaviour by most of the other unions. When the Staccato Club was firebombed during the strike, the Union banned any reconstruction work until the strippers' claims were met and in protest against the "bashing" of an Actors Equity official.³⁴³

The Union also banned reconstruction work on the Woolworths' supermarket in Warringah Mall following a fire in which two female employees were burnt to death. Owens announced that "the Federation would pull the burnt-out building down but it would do no other work until it had assurances that everything possible to prevent fire was incorporated in the new building".³⁴⁴

In addition to this political activity during the year the Union remained as involved in environmental issues as always. By May the word "green ban" was being used regularly to describe the Union's actions.³⁴⁵

338 Sydney Morning Herald, 9 August 1973.

339 The Telegraph (Brisbane), 8 August 1973.

340 Advertisement, "Open Letter to the Medical Profession: A Plea to Doctors to Serve the People", The Australian, 19 July 1973. Authorised by N. Gallagher, A.B.C.E. & B.L.F.

341 Bob Pringle tells the story that during the period of the doctors' ban he had to undergo minor surgery connected with the effects of one of his many assaults. When he regained consciousness he felt "so sore all over" that he was convinced "the doctors had jumped on me in retaliation".

342 Interview: Joe Owens, 4 April 1978.

343 Daily Telegraph, 1 December 1973.

344 Sydney Morning Herald, 6 December 1973.

345 May is the first written evidence of the use of the word although Munday believed it was used earlier. Canberra News, 23 May 1973 referred to a "green" ban being placed on the Black Mountain Tower.

Some green bans such as the Redfern Black Housing scheme³⁴⁶ and the Colonial Mutual Life Building³⁴⁷ were lifted during the year after acceptable solutions were achieved. Others such as the high rise pensioners' flats at Waterloo³⁴⁸ and the 21 storey home units at Manly³⁴⁹ ran into problems but these were eventually resolved. The main physical action occurred in May when B.L.F. officials and members were involved in the "occupation" of Mick Fowler's home in Victoria Street. This was described somewhat colourfully by The Australian headline as "Laborers Defy Karate Experts in Bid to Save Old Home".³⁵⁰

The major bans placed during the year were:

- January: Mt Druitt.
- February: Woolloomooloo.
East End (Newcastle).
Waterloo high rise.
Port Macquarie high rise.
- March: Eastlakes (enlargement of original ban).
Helen Keller Hostel.
- April: Victoria Street.
East Sydney - Eastern Expressway.
- May: Black Mountain Tower.
Newcastle Expressway.
Macquarie University (expulsion of homosexual student from College).
Pyrmont-Ultimo Expressway.
- June: Sydney University (Controversy over Women's Course).
- July: Cook Road, Centennial Park.
- August: Darlinghurst, Woolloomooloo and Kings' Cross.
Merrylands Factory.

346 In March the Federal Labor Government agreed to buy the disputed houses from the developer, I.B.K. Construction Company, and fund an aboriginal housing scheme under aboriginal control - the first such initiative in this area. Daily Mirror, 21 March 1973.

347 The building was retained with its interior renovated but its facade untouched.

348 Under pressure from the Housing Commission, the pensioners eventually voted to lift the ban. The B.L.F. did not agree with the decision but in line with their policy of complying with residents' wishes, they removed the ban.

349 There were disagreements amongst the workers on the job. After many meetings and discussions, the labourers retained the ban.

350 The Australian, 4 May 1973.

September: House next to Balmain Primary School.
October: Manly Home Units.
December: Riley's Island near Woy Woy.
Dr Busby's Cottage - Bathurst.
Royal Australian College of Physicians.

Other bans were imposed on high rise schemes at Mascot and South Sydney, Pongrass Industries at Botany, resumption of land at St Georges Hall and Dunbar Park at Ryde.

No wonder Joe Owens and Bob Pringle in their Christmas circular to the members wrote:

1973 has been an extremely tough year for builders' labourers. On behalf of the Executive we take this opportunity to pay tribute to the manner in which builders' labourers have conducted themselves against the persistent, unrelenting attacks of the employers. There is no doubt that if it was not for the strong social conscience so vigorously expressed by builders' labourers in N.S.W. the people of this state would have suffered under the ravages of the developers and their friends, the Askin government. In the years ahead, the actions that the builders' labourers took in 1972 and 1973 will become a proud part of Australian History.²⁵¹



May Day, 1973

