

# 5

# WORKING



Activities associated with work practises & labour



## THEME 5.1: LABOUR

The relevant National theme is *working*. The relevant state theme is *labour*. Local themes within this theme are activities associated with work practises and organised and unorganised labour. The following activities and places in the former Botany Bay LGA are relevant to this theme:

- Wool and Basil Worker's Federation of Australia

Other relevant themes:

Industry  
Commerce

### 5.1.1 WOOL AND BASIL WORKER'S FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA

This body is the most significant, and oldest, union to have come out of Botany. It was formed in 1890 and covered all employees in fellmongering and its allied industries. It originally operated as 'The Fellmongers, Woolclassers, Scourers, Curriers and Tanners' Association of New South Wales' however in 1893 its name was shortened to the 'Wool and Leather Workers' Association of New South Wales'. The Association ceased in 1896, only to be re-established in 1901. John Dacey, Member for Botany and after whom Daceyville was named, was Honorary Secretary. The Union continued to progress and in 1902 it was renamed as "The Wool and Basil Workers' Association of New South Wales" and was registered as a Trade Union under the Industrial Arbitration Act. ('Basil' was the name of a part of the woolscouring process.)

In 1912 the state branches amalgamated and achieved federal registration as the "Amalgamated Fellmongers, Woolsorters and Woolscourers' Union of Australia". Finally, in 1918, the Union underwent another name change – to the Wool and Basil Workers' Federation of Australia. John Dacey was once again involved in organising the Sydney branch.

In 1913 the Union was involved in a demarcation dispute with the Australian Textile Workers' Union, with which it was aligned, over work done at Botany woollen mills.

In the 1930s and 1940s the Union was highly vocal about the pubs and hotel industry in Botany. Its membership was working class men, and part of the regular working day routine was to 'knock off' with a beer at the local hotel, of which there were many. This integral relationship that existed between the Botany Bay hotels and their Union-member patrons was most strongly demonstrated when strikes, bans and legal action was taken by the Union against the hotel industry at various times throughout the course of two decades.

The matters varied over the years, however major recurring issues were the hotels' serving of adulterated liquor, non-opening on Saturdays, restricting hours of trade "*so that working men cannot get a drink*" and allegedly refusing to sell beer to locals in pints, half-pints or schooners and preference being given instead to non-locals. The Union also alleged that beer was being sold on the black market.

A formal Union Black Ban was imposed on several hotels in the wider Botany Bay area, however the most publicised were those against the Pier Hotel, the Tennyson Hotel at Mascot and the Lakes Hotel in Rosebery.

The actions of the Union, although at times dramatic and violent, were ultimately successful. After picketing for five weeks in 1948, and despite publicans stating that they were under no obligation to open certain hours or serve certain sizes, the Union was ultimately successful in obtaining their demands. The Union was also successful in securing better working conditions and a reduction in weekly work hours from 48 to 44. In 1976 the Wool and Basil Workers' Union merged with the Australian Workers' Union.

## Strike If Hotel Black Ban Broken

**M**EMBERS of the Wool and Basil Workers' Union employed at Swinbourne and Stephen, Botany, have threatened to walk off the job if a member of their union is seen entering Mascot hotels declared black.

At a meeting, union secretary Mr. E. Glasson, told the workers that one particular union member was being encouraged to break the black ban.

## UNION'S BAN ON BOTANY HOTEL

The Wool and Basil Workers' Union has declared black the Pier Hotel at Botany.

The secretary of the union, Mr. E. Glasson, said yesterday that the members of his union employed in factories near the hotel had been circularised by their shop stewards and asked to carry out the boycott.

The union alleges that the management of the hotel had called in the police to settle arguments; had not opened the hotel at the right hours; and had sold beer to visitors and not to local residents.

The black ban operated from Thursday morning. It has not become effective because of the shortage caused by the strike, but the union intends to continue with the ban after the beer strike has been settled.

Fig. 5.1.1 News articles describing the threat by members of the Wool and Basil Workers' Union to walk off the job if any member of the Union is seen entering hotel that had been declared 'black'. (18 February 1948, Tribune, p.3)

Fig. 5.1.2 The timing of the Ban on the Pier Hotel was considered carefully: when the Pier Hotel was declared Black, it did not become effective until the beer strike (a separate matter) had been settled. (9 March 1948, Sydney Morning Herald, p.4)

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