

Labour History Project AGM 20th July Wellington Museum 2017

Slide One, Slide Two - Introduction to the Labour 100 project – **Slide Three** – in order to publicise the project I've set up a Facebook page where people can upload photos and memories of the NZLP. Glenda Fryer, a city councillor from Auckland and a long time NZLP member has been recruited as an editor for the page. The Labour History Project have also been kind enough to allow me to upload materials to a Labour 100 page on their website.

Slide Four personal experience of the project – told friends and family I'd started this work, and immediately had email from my Aunty Helen Martin in Auckland with this photo attached – this is her father Douglas Murdoch Martin marrying Marjorie in 1944 at St Andrews in Wellington. Anyone recognise the handsome fulla on the right? Bill Sutch, public servant, economist and public intellectual. Doug was an editor for the People's Voice, the Communist newspaper, involved with the Carpenter's Union and for a time the Chair of Miramar Branch of NZLP until he was expelled. In 1941 he was jailed with one year hard labour for seditious utterances, as he protested publicly the arrests of Christian Pacifist Movement leaders for anti-conscription speeches. Doug was a Presbyterian Minister and regularly visited inmates at Mt Crawford before being imprisoned there. In my Aunty's archive is a type-written letter with many hand written corrections which appears to be a draft of a piece Doug sent to Shirley and Helen Sutch, Bill's widow and daughter, after Bill's death. Through talking to Richard Hill who is one of the subcommittee which oversees my project I was encouraged to apply for Doug's SIS file, which is rather thick and demonstrates that he was monitored closely for many years. The fact that Bill was his best man is noted more than once in his file. I don't know if Doug knew he was surveilled, but he certainly mentions the C.P and his own involvement in it in this letter which I have copied and have here today if people are interested. He knew Sutch from the 1930s but it's unclear where or how they met.

Today I want to focus on three people who have deposited materials in archives as part of the Labour 100 Project

Slide 5 Firstly Richard Northey – MP for Onehunga and Eden, Auckland Regional Council person, Waitematā Board member, student of Robert Chapman at UoA and wrote his MA on NZLP Conferences in the 1960s. I visited Richard's family bach on the Coromandel over the summer to have a look at his records, which are wide ranging and very thorough. In early January after going through materials from the early 1980s period and having my interest piqued by a telegram from Bill Rowling from 1981 to Richard, I asked him if the party had tried to influence his involvement in the 1981 Springbok Tour protests, since he was standing for the first time as a Labour MP candidate in Tamaki against the sitting PM Rob Muldoon.

“Funny you should say that” he said. Apparently a couple of days before the Hamilton game Jim Anderton, the Party President had called Richard and asked him not to attend the protests. Richard pointed out he’d been involved in anti-apartheid protests since 1965, associated with CARE (Citizens Association for Racial Equality), and it was therefore a matter of conscience to attend. That phone call ended. A few minutes later, Bill Rowling, Party leader called and asked him not to attend the protests. Richard repeated his answer. Bill then asked Richard not to go on the field in the grounds at the game. This he agreed to as a compromise. In looking through the Island Bay Branch records, there are at least two items regarding their disagreement with the Springbok Tour and their support for the protests that were occurring in Robert Logan’s materials.

Richard explained that he grew up in Orakei and his parents still lived there in the 1980s, so he was happy to stand knowing there was a very slim chance that “a rookie politician” would beat Muldoon. Later as an Eden MP he describing attending Orakei Marae celebrations and the happiness of the Ngati Whatua kaumatua who had Bastion Point returned to them. Richard wept, telling me this story of the kaumatua weeping with happiness.

Although not a Christian, he was involved with the Student Christian Democrats because he said they “tried to live their beliefs” and “they put on a great protest”. It reminded me of the Christian Pacifist Movement and their protests against conscription in WWII which Russell Campbell illustrates in his documentary ‘Sedition’. Richard was also very involved in Nuclear Disarmament, and supporting youth, Māori and Women’s voices in the NZLP and continues with anti racism activity and attending every NZLP Youth camp.

Materials about these specific groups are all part of Richard’s files, and this is significant because in the earlier days of the party, Māori and Women’s committee reports were not official documents of conference, so he was collecting them because he attended those discussions and they will not be part of every person’s files of conference proceedings. Richard also sat and worked out who was voting which way for each remit, and these notes are still within his archive.

Richard is an example of someone who stayed in the party and pursued local government and national means to make the social justice changes he felt significant to the country. I admire his idealism and passion for justice. His materials are being deposited in the University of Auckland Special Collection since he is an alumnus of that institution, and his MA Seminar from 1969 for Bob Chapman on Labour and the Rātana Movement is being published in the next Labour History Bulletin in its entirety.

Slide 6 - Our second Richard sits in contrast to the first in some ways. While both are university educated, both activists emerging from socialist youth movements and anti nuclear and anti racism protests, Richard Hill resigned from the Chair of the Kelburn Branch in the 1980s, and in fact the entire branch went into abeyance at that time. Known as radicals (sometimes called 'ginger groups') among the party members, Richard and others had fought extremely hard from the late 1970s to the late 1980s to ensure the leadership of the NZLP stayed true to the socialist and social justice oriented roots of the party and this is reflected in his materials. Within Richard's archive are many examples of the grassroots policy development work they were doing through various fora such as the 'Economic Policy Network' to try and influence leadership. But it became clear to many Labour stalwarts during the 1980s I have talked to that the Richard Prebble and Roger Douglas led restructures of the country were highly destructive. An item from Richard Hill's collection which exemplifies the despair felt in the 1980s by many within the party is Hector MacNeill's letter of resignation from the Wadestown Branch written on August 16th 1987. Hector describes the 'Friends of Capitalism' within the Party (others referred to these as the 'Backbone Club') and his 20 year involvement with Labour in Britain and NZ, his efforts with others to initiate the 'Labour Fightback' campaign in 1985, and the 'insufficient' number of activists prepared to keep the pressure on. He felt that the 1984 manifesto and constitution of the party were being ignored, and despite he says, W. Rosenberg's book [I presume this is Wolfgang Rosenberg's analysis (1986). *The magic square: what every New Zealander should know about Rogernomics and the alternatives*. Christchurch, N.Z.: New Zealand Monthly Review Society – the Island Bay records have a letter from Jim Anderton fundraising to get it printed] and the articles and speeches of Peter Harris which Hector felt "demolished the arguments of the capitalist Labourites", there had been a lack of dissemination of this material and failure to communicate effectively their concerns to the wider membership. Within Richard Hill's archives are the letter to David Lange asserting the need for Roger Douglas to be expelled from the Party and Hector also mentions this in his letter.

Hector finishes on a note which will have resonance today as we watch developments for the Labour Party in Britain— ‘If Socialists work effectively within the Labour Party to rid it of capitalist infiltrators then the results can sometimes be spectacular indeed. I draw your attention to the record of Lol Duffy, a Socialist and Marxist member of the Brit. L.P. who stood for the Wallasey constituency in 1982 on the Mersey. This seat had been held by the Tories since it was created in 1918 and he came within about 300 votes of winning it from Tory shit-person Lynda Chalker. Duffy achieved a swing to Labour of 39% the greatest in England if not the UK (the national avg swing to Labour was slightly over 3% so he did 13 times better than that.) Duffy by the way is not a supporter of Militant but is linked to the Socialist Organiser Group’.

It has been striking to me that throughout this project, archive materials have raised discussions of Communist, Socialist (Trotskyist and otherwise) versions of left wing ideologies, and how these conversations have sometimes been overt, and other times only apparent in private correspondence such as this. This letter was one of very many which were written in the 1980s as left leaning people felt that the Labour Party no longer stood for the values they believed in. I think history has proved them to be right to challenge the leadership of the time, but whether or not it was best to walk away is a debate that is ongoing.

Richard’s materials have been received by Sue Hirst on behalf of the J.C.Beaglehole special collection of Victoria University of Wellington library as Richard is an alumnus and Professor of that institution.

Slide Seven – So those were two Richards, and now to Therese. Therese O’Connell’s archival materials also include Socialist information and Communist materials as well as Feminist discussions and Irish freedom literature. Currently a member of the Rongotai Women’s Committee of the NZLP, Therese has been involved with the protest and union movement since 1971. Just like the woman herself, her archive is full of colour, including badges, posters of protests, and photographs as well as literature and correspondence. Her mother kept Therese’s letters home to New Plymouth, and these have been useful to Therese as she wrote a chapter of the collectively written book soon to be completed on the Working Women’s Charter development of the 1980s. I have personally found Therese’s material particularly moving, as I navigate being a woman speaking about feminist values today. How, I asked her, did she manage to cope with some of the treatment she experienced from male union leaders as much as male opposition in the 1970s and 1980s period? Often for Therese her response was humour and she and her fellow union women would voice their protest at decisions being made within the labour left through songs they wrote and performed at, for example, Federation of Labour conference socials. Examples of these songs have been performed this year by those women, Grace Millar and myself alongside them, bringing the archive to life. We

sing the songs and in between, the women who wrote them or first sung them describe the context in which they were originally penned. Grace Millar, historian of women's protest had previously found during her archival research the lyrics to 1970s anti-abortion protest Christmas carols which we have also now performed. Therese will be the speaker for the Rona Bailey Memorial lecture this year, and some of those songs will be performed there I imagine! I won't steal her thunder by telling you anymore about her archive today, I just hope you'll come to the lecture and hear her for yourselves. Therese's materials have been deposited with the ATL, and some also at the Beaglehole.

Slide Eight – There have of course been challenges as well as enjoyable moments during this project. Despite enthusiastic Canterbury and West Coast NZLP members wanting to learn about and archive their materials, earthquakes have restricted access and halted deposits and donations to all Canterbury archives and museums as well as the Hokitika and Greymouth museums. Shantytown is still offering to take materials but it is not a council or government institution, so this creates a different focus for their collecting and different rules regarding ownership and access. Rotorua Museum is in a similar position and has laid off half of its staff and are not collecting donations. A second challenge is the digital archiving world, which changes so very quickly. I have been approached by people who have large collections of NZLP photos they want to donate, but they have already scanned them and thrown away the originals and negatives. This is a shame as scanning technology improves so fast, that an image we would have thought to be state of the art 5 years ago seems very low quality today. A take home message to you is physical objects still matter, but this doesn't mean electronic archives such as emails and word documents and other files cannot be accepted by repositories. Jess Moran from the National Library is an expert on this area, and offers training and information about digital archive practices. Finally, election campaign hoardings are amazing things as you can see from Enzo's picture, but they are hard for archives and museums to store. In most cases they would recommend a high quality digital image be taken and would not accept the hoardings themselves.

Slide Nine - By the end of this project, we will have a full listing of materials offered or deposited in institutions, and the Facebook page will continue as a forum for people to share information and materials (though I'm quick to remind people it is not an archive given that it is owned by a large private corporation). We have also published some material from the archives we've discussed so far, and hope to publish more.

Slide Ten - through just these three very different Labour Party members and their archives I have learned so much about the history of the party, and the wider left in New Zealand which I think offers lessons for our politics today. Getting their material into archives means others will have the

similar experience of the 'archival jolt' of learning that those who came before us are not so different, and often face recognisable challenges to those we experience today.

Working on the archival material of those who are living offers the added bonus of talking through the materials with those who collected them. It is, I think, this context that can be gleaned from the discussion as people see something they may not even have remembered owning until that moment, that allows the spark of the archive to emerge and make history come to life. To this end I always encourage people to record the discussions they have as they look at their materials and sort through them, and archive this recording along with the materials they choose to donate.

I've loved working on this project, it's been an absolute delight and I thank everyone involved for their advice and support. I'm happy to take questions or just chat afterwards with you.