

*Menzies, the Kremlin
and the Waterfront*

Dr Zachary Gorman, Historian
of the Robert Menzies Institute
At the University of Melbourne



The Waterfront in the Menzies era

- Less than 1% of workforce make up 21% of lost hours
- Waterfront the essential bottleneck of the Australian economy
- Jim Healy open Communist & Waterside Workers' Federation General Secretary from 1937-61
- Editor of the *Maritime Worker* Rupert Lockwood appear before the Petrov Royal Commission



Tom Sheridan & the historiography

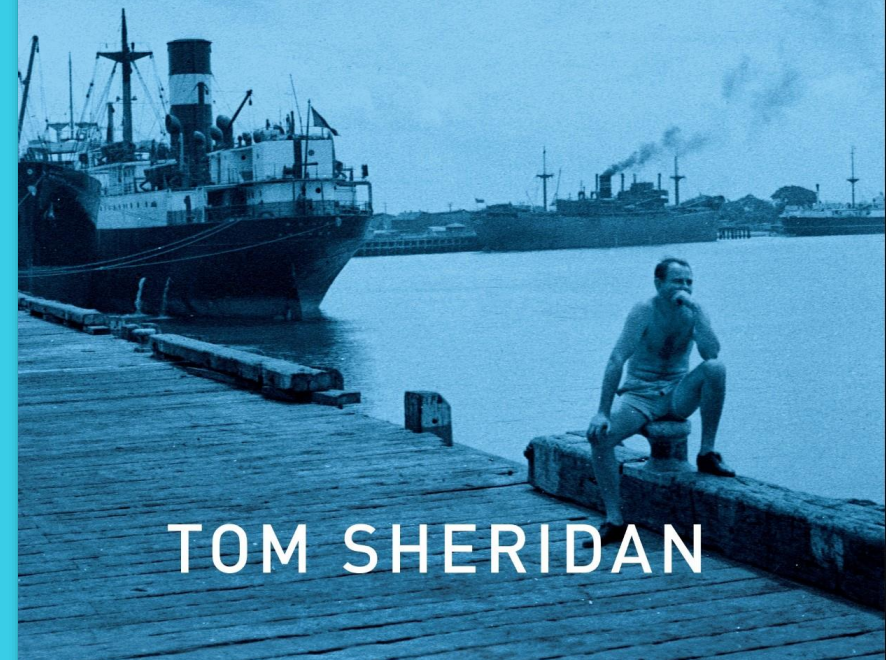
- An argument over Correlation v Causation
- ‘In studying Australian industrial activity for 40 years I have come across no more capable and attractive figure than Healy’
- Decentralised nature of the WWF
- Backlash from the Depression combine with labour shortage of full employment
- ‘Belief in a red plot could perhaps be sustained if the coverage of foreign affairs in the *Maritime Worker* were taken as typical’ of wharfies’ views

No site of industrial relations has been so fiercely contested as the waterfront, no aspect of Australian history has been so thickly encrusted with legend. And no one could explain the battles of the 1950s and 1960s better than Tom Sheridan. His account is highly original, compelling and instructive.

STUART MACINTYRE

Australia's Own **COLD WAR**

The Waterfront Under Menzies



Menzies's Early History with WWF

- Grandfather John Sampson prominent unionist
- As lawyer take cases for both sides
- Approve of Conciliation & Arbitration system but want it thoroughly applied
- Egon Kisch as representative of communism's international reach
- 'Communism connotes revolution' - ideology was inherently anti-parliamentary democracy
- 'Antifascism' ironically used to denounce the rearmament necessary to fight fascism



Dalfram Dispute

- WWF not confined to industrial issues affecting its members
- Soviets fight border war with Japan until September 1939
- Menzies see no gain in unilaterally provoking Japan, & need trade relationship for Australia's munitions program
- 'Pig Iron Bob' cost Menzies considerable political capital
- Succeed Lyons in spite of this



USSR as a De Facto Axis Power

- Molotov Ribbentrop Pact function as harbinger of War
- Soviets involved in carving up Poland & invading Finland
- Communist Party of Australia denounce 'imperialist war' in which we were no better than the Nazis
- Trades Hall rally championing attack on Finland met with 'wave after wave of applause'



CPA undermining of the War effort

- Concept of the 'phony war' deliberately inhibit mobilisation
- 'during the war, industrial stoppages were regarded by the Communists as being of prime importance as a political weapon rather than as an immediate objective in themselves' Paul Hasluck
- Cabinet submission on the presence of Communist cells within the army
- All three services call for a ban, which came into effect 15 June 1940



Barbarossa

- Time lag in CPA ending denunciation of British imperialists even after Russia joined the Allies (& Russia notably not join war with Japan until August 1945)
- Sheridan point out WWF disruptions continued as proof it wasn't a Soviet puppet
- Menzies keen to ensure that misdeeds of Russia & the CPA not forgotten despite heroics on the Eastern Front
- 'When your sons were wounded or dying in Libya or Greece these men were actively opposing production on the home front'



*Rush British arms
to **RUSSIAN** hands*

Communist Party Dissolution Act

- Aimed at Healy & the WWF
- Menzies's change of attitude towards ban based on heightening of Cold War
- 1949 coal strike see Healy gaoled & Chifley send in the army
- Dissolution Act rely explicitly on the Defence Power
- Dissolution Act may have been legal under modern interpretations of the Constitution

