

CONCLUSION

As A.F. Davies has observed: "Conviction lies in the detail". It is only in the detail of struggle that the N.S.W. B.L.F.'s "new concept of unionism" can be discerned and it is in this "new concept" that the answers to the questions posed in the Introduction can be found.

By what criteria does one evaluate revolutionary actions in a non revolutionary situation? An obvious response is to examine what the protagonists themselves believed to be important. Jack Mundey claims that "the concept of the social responsibility of labour" was the Union's greatest contribution to revolutionary strategy. Joe Owens argues that the Union's act of "breaking down the false distinction between us and them...[and] extending the union to the community" was the major achievement. Bob Pringle believes that "the revolution that went on in people's minds" was what counted.

The Union's actions can be evaluated on two levels. Firstly the threat they posed to Capital and the consequent response from the ruling class; and secondly the mobilising effect they had on the Union's membership and on other radical movements in Sydney at the time.

Of the wide range of tactics employed, the activities of the Union most threatening to the employers were encroachment strategies such as union hire and work-ins; demands for workers' control; demands for permanency; attempts to regulate the industry through the monitoring of safety procedures; election of safety officers; election of foremen; the pre-meditated destruction of non-union construction; the use of vigilante gangs; the use of guerrilla tactics such as the breaking of concrete pours; and the refusal to abide by Industrial Court decisions. However the most important and most obviously revolutionary action taken by the Union was to impose the green bans and to defend them physically. Here, the employers' prerogative was not being encroached upon; it was being totally denied.

The force of the ruling class response indicates the extent of the threat to capital posed by the Union. The sharpest responses were the lock-outs; the arrests; the allegations of corruption; the calls for Royal Commissions; the Parliamentary attacks; the physical assaults; the attempts to enforce a no-strike clause; the deregistration threats; the incessant media attacks; and finally the employers' support for Gallagher during Federal Intervention.

In relation to its membership, the Union's mobilising effect was

spectacular. For the rank and file builders labourers, the leadership's policies which encouraged real participation in the decision-making process elicited a remarkable response. Continually, mass meetings of B.L.F. members voted to impose green bans in support of environmentalist objectives or to aid some oppressed group - women, prisoners, aborigines, homosexuals and migrants. They denied themselves work opportunities in pursuit of these policies. Not even during the recession of late 1974 or under the pressure of Intervention did mass meetings vote to lift green bans. This rank and file support for the green bans was partly a result of respect for the leadership, but it also reflected the leadership's success in educating the members on issues such as the environment, women's rights and racism. There was a broad strategy of opposing bourgeois ideology on all levels. Economic demands were being supplemented by political demands. Trade union consciousness was becoming revolutionary consciousness. The class of itself was becoming the class for itself.

For the Union's other supporters the B.L.F. had become a rallying point - a symbol of working class revolutionary potential. The green ban movement had a style and spirit of hope essential for the success of great missions. It was a truly counter-hegemonic movement. One of the Union's great achievements was that, despite a hostile media, they managed to communicate to others what the green ban movement was about. This was partly because of the ability and "star quality" of the leadership but also because, unlike other unionists whose media stance is mostly geared towards either their membership or their opposition (the employer), the B.L.F. leadership were essentially concerned with enlightening the public. And their message came across.

So, in evaluating the Union's threat to Capital and its mobilising capacity, I have already answered the next question which is: "Were the B.L.F. revolutionary?" They were.

In analysing whether revolutionary unionism is possible I have argued that those factors which normally inhibit revolutionary unionism may always have been historically present but need not necessarily be so. I claim that the B.L.F. successfully overcame those inhibiting factors. By policies such as limited tenure, temporary organisers, non payment of officials during strikes, tying the officials wages to B.L.F. awards, and democratic decision making procedures, the leadership obviated the dangers of the "iron law of oligarchy". By refusing to fraternise with employers; to dress differently from the membership, to

accept "respectability" or the "perks" of office they avoided co-option. By vigorously opposing demarcation disputes they negated much of the force of sectionalism and by raising the consciousness of the members on issues unrelated to their own employment they broke free of restricting "economism".

Further I argue that simply BECAUSE the B.L.F. was a union as opposed to a vanguard party it had the advantage of conforming to existing social patterns, and therefore was able to espouse revolutionary philosophy without appearing alien. To Australian workers a vanguard party is a somewhat alien experience - a militant trade union, no matter how radical, is part of their historical tradition.

Finally, on the question of whether the B.L.F. was destined to be destroyed I have to answer "yes". Though they made minor tactical errors their eventual defeat was not the result of the leadership's mistakes. A revolutionary union operating in a non-revolutionary situation cannot remain so. In the existing climate of conservative Australian trade unionism and especially because of the lack of support of the other building unions, the outcome was inevitable. They could either draw back from their revolutionary position (i.e. lift the green bans) and become like the rest of the trade union movement, or they could be annihilated.

The Union refused to alter its green ban philosophy even under extreme pressure from the employers, the State Government, the police, the established trade union movement, the other building unions and the Federal body of its own union. It was therefore destroyed.

The employers would not have been satisfied with "lifting just a few bans". It was a situation of either total victory or total defeat. The leadership consciously chose the course it did. They could have given in under pressure just as other unions have done in order to retain the structure intact. Some socialists argue that revolutionary organisations have a duty to survive. There is no point in survival if the philosophy has been deserted and only the shell remains.

It is probably stretching a point to make the equation, but just as Marx's attitude to working class struggle was changed by the events of the Paris Commune; and just as Lenin ameliorated his views on revolutionary unionism after the 1905 Revolution; so did many participants and observers change their views on the possibility of the existence of revolutionary trade unionism as a result of the N.S.W. B.L.F.'s activities during the early seventies. I was one.

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APPENDIX A

Prefiguration and Realpolitik: The 1950s

The N.S.W. Builders Labourers' Federation is one of Australia's oldest unions, being formed in the 1870s when it was known as the United Labourers. In 1912 it changed its name to the Builders Labourers' Union, and in 1926 joined with labourers' unions in other states to become the Australian Builders Labourers' Federation.

During the 1930s the Union in N.S.W. was under "centrist" leadership. It was the second world war that dramatically changed the nature of both the building industry and the unions involved.

Union membership was low because the industry itself was at that point after the depression fairly stagnant and the scattered nature of small job-sites throughout the state made organisation difficult. One old builders labourer even described the Union in 1941 as "not a viable organisation".¹ During the war years, this low membership led to the two main unions in the building industry, the Builders Labourers and the Building Workers Industrial Union (B.W.I.U.), discussing proposals for amalgamation. However, the large amount of construction work undertaken by the Allied Works Council and the introduction of compulsory unionism greatly increased the membership of both unions and so amalgamation plans were dropped.

After the war, the Union became known for the rough behaviour and corruption of many of its officials. In Jack Munday's opinion the Union became "close to being a criminal outfit"² and those who were members of the Union at the time such as Les Robinson and Harry Connell remember many incidents of bashing and intimidation.³ These conditions were not well reported, and the evidence exists mostly in the memories of those who survived them. Martin reminds us that firm evidence of corruption or violence in union affairs is hard to come by.⁴ The reason much of this chapter is based on oral evidence is because as successive leaderships came to power in this period, the previous administration would "burn the books" leaving no printed trace of their corrupt practices and little joy for later researchers.

Although much of what follows comes from interviews with people opposed to the Thomas, Foster, Bodkin regimes, there is little need to

1 Keith Jessop, interviewed by Pat Fiske, 1976.

2 Interview: Jack Munday, 13 August 1975.

3 Interview: Les Robinson, 20 February 1978; and Harry Connell, 12 February 1978.

4 Ross M. Martin, Trade Unions in Australia, pp.58 and 129-30.

doubt their word.

I have never heard of any builders labourer's attempt to defend the record of the leadership in the 40s and 50s, neither have the leaders nor their families ever sought to clear their names despite written allegations of brutality and corruption. For instance, in an official Union publication in 1973, Pete Thomas wrote of the 1950s: "In those days, the union in N.S.W. was controlled by a bloody-minded rightwing group, operating by standover practices. To oppose those who were then in charge was to invite a bashing".⁵ The view that the leadership of the forties and fifties was also extremely conservative as well as corrupt is reinforced by the B.W.I.U.'s claims that: "In the late forties and early fifties...the building unions...came out jointly and called on B.W.I.U. members to remove the militant leadership of the B.W.I.U."⁶

It is also important to note that reports of this period do not differ in details or analysis, even from observers who are now ideologically opposed to each other such as Jack Munday and Les Robinson. The picture as it emerges from retrospective accounts is as follows.

Munday claims that Fred Thomas, who became Secretary in the late 1940s had only been "a short time in the B.Ls". He proceeded to build around himself a coterie of "standover men" and "thug types".⁷ Les Robinson describes Thomas as "just a crook"⁸ and Munday says that symptomatic of the period is an anecdote "Speed" Morgan⁹ loves to tell about how it was his job to turn off the lights during the meetings whilst the others used to "slip in and bash up the militants". In this period, Thomas installed Jack Williams as Federal Secretary. Williams was an ex-sergeant of police who had left the force to buy a hotel in Moree. He became Federal Secretary without working one day as a builders labourer. Many members of the Union in that period allege that Thomas and Williams did not just employ physical intimidation. In collusion with the employers they arranged for militants to be driven

5 Pete Thomas, Taming the Concrete Jungle, p.65.

6 Building Industry Branch of the Socialist Party of Australia, Six Turbulent Years, p.11.

7 Interview: Jack Munday, 13 August 1975.

8 Interview: Les Robinson, 20 February 1978. Munday enlarges upon this statement by describing how "Thomas was kicked out of the Fire Brigade for thieving the hose".

9 "Speed" Morgan is so named because of his alleged practices as a professional cyclist. He was sent by the N.S.W. right-wing to Tasmania to "stop the Left there" (Munday, 13 August 1975). He was Tasmanian secretary of the B.L.F. until his death in 1980.

off building sites and denied jobs around the city.¹⁰

It was commonly known that the leadership bribed men who were not builders labourers to go to Union meetings by offering "either a few quid or a free beer". They would issue these men with a "ticket" and retrieve each ticket at the end of the meeting.¹¹ It was only in the late 1950s that this practice was eventually halted by the militants in opposition who were then able to outnumber the leadership grouping even with their false members.

The expansion of the building industry and the growing influence of the Communist Party amongst the rank and file led to a strengthening of the opposition within the Union.¹²

A Rank and File Committee was formed as a result of a dispute over wet weather at the Dunlop Tyre Factory in 1951. Prominent Communists, Joe Ferguson, Les Robinson and Don McHugh are mentioned as being among the founders of the Rank and File Committee.¹³

There seems general agreement that the C.P.A. was an important element in the Rank and File struggle. Laurie Aarons perhaps puts it most strongly when he claims: "There wouldn't have been a sustained campaign against the gangsters if it hadn't been for the Party - there's no doubt about that". Aarons added that the C.P.A.'s struggle against the corrupt leadership had been "more or less continuous" from the forties onwards and that "it was the Party and virtually only the Party involved".¹⁴

The Builders Labourers' Federation was particularly important to the C.P.A. because the other main union in the building industry, the Building Workers Industrial Union, was led by C.P.A. member Pat Clancy who was fighting both deregistration and the formation of the "scab" Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners. Aarons explains, "it was important to strengthen the Party position as a whole...in such an important industry".¹⁵ Joe Owens points out that the C.P.A. had strength

10 Interviews: Don Crotty, 7 March 1978; Harry Connell, 12 February 1978; Ralph Kelly, 13 December 1977.

11 Interview: Jack Munday, 13 August 1975.

12 The conditions which brought about the changes in the Union are more extensively discussed in chapters 3 and 10.

13 Interview: Les Robinson, 20 February 1978.

14 Interview: Laurie Aarons, 28 December 1977. Although this is a natural claim for the secretary of the C.P.A. to make, I have never heard anyone deny this claim.

15 Interview: Laurie Aarons, 28 December 1977; Also a very influential publication within the C.P.A. at the time emphasised the need to win leadership of trade unions, Lance Sharkey, The Trade Unions, pp.12-13. Although originally published in 1942, the booklet was reprinted seven times in the 1940s and 1950s.

nationally in the building unions at the time, mentioning Gerry Dawson from the Queensland B.W.I.U. and Paddy Malone and (later) Norm Gallagher in the Victorian B.L.F.¹⁶ However there is no evidence that the C.P.A. ever planted cadres in the B.L.F. in the fifties or later.

Clancy was respected by the junior militants in the B.L.F. and regarded as "almost a father figure".¹⁷ He gave encouragement and advice to them in their work of organising amongst the rank and file.¹⁸

C.P.A. policy since 1951 had involved united front tactics with other unionists, "even with the Groupers", in order to obtain common goals.¹⁹ Consequently, although the Communists were the largest grouping, the Rank and File Committee contained many non-Communists. Tom Hogan describes the Committee as a "loose coalition of forces",²⁰ and Munday describes it as "diverse and broad". The Committee produced Hoist, a regular roneod news sheet which was widely distributed, and started to organise members to attend the monthly branch meetings and pass resolutions that would force reforms in the Union and the building industry in general.²¹ Munday claims that the majority of workers at the Branch meetings "were now sincere, not necessarily militant, workers opposed to the corrupt Thomas leadership".²²

Possibly under this sort of pressure, Thomas responded by burning the minute books and allegedly absconding with £8,601.²³ This could not be proved however and the Rank and File decided to write the loss off as "experience" and set about the task of winning the leadership.

"Banjo" Patterson, who had worked with Thomas, became acting Secretary after Thomas and, according to Jack Munday, "moved to the left" and this consequently led to a "breakthrough" for the rank and file.²⁴

Even though there were some of the old leadership remaining, the Rank and File had high hopes for the 1958 election. However yet another setback for the Rank and File occurred. Another non-labourer, in fact an S.P. bookmaker, from an old Labor family in Newtown, W.F. (Bill) Bodkin, "came from oblivion" as a candidate. A fellow

16 Interview: Joe Owens, 24 January 1978.

17 Ibid.

18 Interview: Laurie Aarons, 28 December 1977.

19 Alistair Davidson, The Communist Party of Australia, p.139.

20 Interview: Tom Hogan, 28 October 1977.

21 Keith Jessop, interviewed by Pat Fiske, 1976.

22 Interview: Jack Munday, 12 July 1975.

23 Ibid. No reports in media.

24 Interview: Jack Munday, 13 August 1975.

bookmaker, C.D. Water, was elected returning officer at a huge Branch meeting. He won by 230-170. There were more postal votes from the South Coast than there were members and all were filled out and posted at the same time.²⁵ The inevitable occurred and despite the fact that the Rank and File were widely expected "to clean up", Bodkin romped home. There was a move to challenge the ballot from the Rank and File and also from Stan Winter, an independent right-wing candidate. The "left", however, being ideologically opposed to court-controlled ballots, decided not to go ahead with the challenge but to begin building up the Rank and File to win the 1961 elections.²⁶ Paul Gardiner, writing in the Financial Review referred to the "Bodkin Regime" as being, "an inheritance of the 1950s":

There are still dark mutterings about the regime, all of them probably libellous...²⁷

The Rank and File in this period gained "many hundreds of supporters in the inner city". Men like Munday and Bert McGill were "paid off"²⁸ by Rank and File collections,

for weeks at a time to go round Newcastle, Wollongong and city jobs, delivering Hoist, getting to know workers and getting them along to meetings....We controlled every monthly meeting in that period and the decisions were just ignored.²⁹

The Bodkin-Sheean regime evidently resorted to very much the same tactics as Thomas had used.³⁰ Because the Rank and File put so much emphasis on gaining majority decisions at the Branch meetings the leadership responded by deliberately misleading the membership over meeting dates and times by inserting contradictory advertisements in the Sydney Morning Herald, but this ploy was mostly foiled by the vigilance of the Rank and File.³¹ If it was not for the existence of Rule 13 which states that each state branch "must hold an ordinary meeting at least once each calendar month" it is very likely that Bodkin

²⁵ Interview: Jack Munday, 13 August 1975.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Paul Gardiner, Australian Financial Review, 8 June 1973.

²⁸ "Paid off" is an expression used to describe the action of paying a rank and filer his usual wage to temporarily undertake union work.

²⁹ Ibid. Don Crotty describes how his job Yoeman's Construction at Double Bay, a large (13 storey) job with 47 labourers, collected significant amounts of money for the Rank and File because every labourer contributed.

³⁰ Alleged by Les Robinson, "they used thugs to biff blokes"; Don Crotty, "we were shouted down at meetings"; and Don McPhee, "it was a known fact that tickets were given away for the price of a drink".

³¹ Tribune, 16 August 1961.

would have ruled totally by executive fiat. As it was the excessive secrecy of the Bodkin clique was countered by imaginative and harrassing tactics on the part of the Rank and File. During Executive meetings Munday and others would wait outside the meeting room and demand to read the minutes as soon as the meeting ended.³²

Robinson claims that the Rank and File, under Munday's influence, became one of the first groups in the trade union movement successfully to use pressure-group tactics. Apart from the monthly meetings he mentions "catching the Secretary in the pub during working hours" (one of the Rank and File's criticisms was Bodkin's continual drunkenness), "forcing the leadership into silly errors", and "building a self-supporting organisation that [politically] conscious rank and file Builders Labourers were really proud to be in".³³

Rank and File meetings used to be held in various places, sometimes in Hyde Park or in Hotels such as the Great Western, the Town Hall or the Grand. These "vigilante" meetings would be attended by job reps who would be paid by the workers on the job-site out of their own wages to attend the meeting.

Being a militant delegate or job rep in those days was hard work. As well as being under constant attack from both the boss and the Union, morale on many jobs was very low. Tom Hogan describes how he was elected delegate on one of the biggest jobs in town, the Hotel Menzies:

Just after I was transferred to the main contractor, the delegate pissed off with the dough. I was elected delegate - men regarded me with suspicion then - it turned out that the last three delos had shot through with the subs.

He pointed out that, although there were 120 Builders Labourers on the job their politics and activity were totally bound by the confines of that job.³⁴ Lack of support from the Union over many years had led militants and non-militants alike to adopt self-survival tactics restricted to their own particular situation. It was only the existence of the Rank and File committee which enabled militants such as Tom Hogan, Don McPhee and Don Crotty³⁵ to become involved outside of

32 Interview: Jack Munday, 3 April 1978.

33 Interview: Les Robinson, 20 February 1978. Robinson adds that "the development of the Rank and File movement was one of the highlights of the Builders Labourers Federation and it developed people for later on".

34 Interview: Tom Hogan, 28 October 1977.

35 Both McPhee and Crotty describe how they became involved in Rank and File activities through the encouragement of men like Munday and McGill. Other Rank and File activists at this time were Kevin Gledhill, Peter Smith, Harry Connell, Steve Cleary, Darcy Duggan and Jack Dempsey.

their own jobs. Although many Rank and File activists were in the C.P.A., there were still many militants whose ideology was from the C.P.A. point of view, basically unformed, "they had union consciousness but no political consciousness...the only thing they had in common was a tendency to get sacked".³⁶ To a less determined bunch their task would have appeared overwhelming.

The Bodkin leadership, secure behind a strategy of rigged meetings and ballots, indulged in all sorts of petty tyrannies and minor lurks. Ralph Kelly claims they extorted money from workers, particularly migrants, whom they referred to as "wogs". They would demand £1 for the right to work or they would put the worker off the job (with the employer's co-operation). There was also a story at the time that bosses would look out the window and say "oh God, here comes Stan Winter [union organiser]...get a spin out of petty cash and shunt him off". Kelly maintains the organisers picked up a £5 note from each job and never worried about the safety conditions "or anything else".³⁷

Even the largest job in Sydney, the Opera House, was totally ignored:

The leadership had no contacts on the job...never came near you... the only time you saw them was when you paid your dues...and when you went down to the Trades Hall all you saw were standover men with bodgey tickets - they were not builders labourers(38) they were obviously a straight out bunch of gangsters. You could see them hanging around the Clubs at the Cross.³⁹

The failure of the Bodkin leadership to undertake normal Union business is nicely exemplified by one of the few official Union files to escape the successive burnings. The file on Builders Labourers' Federation disputes decisions under the Conciliation and Arbitration Act contains five cases covering the period 1943-1961 and 42 between 1961 and 1969.⁴⁰ A closer survey of three of these pre-1961 disputes shows:

- (1) Builders labourers at Clyde Oil Refinery having a lunch-time payment suddenly rescinded and the employer's action being upheld by the

36 Interview: Darcy Duggan, 12 July 1977. Tom Hogan adds "the industry was such that if you opened your mouth you'd be fired - so all militants ended up on about 100 jobs a year", a slight exaggeration.

37 Interview: Ralph Kelly, 13 December 1977.

38 It was pointed out to me that the industry was very small at the time and because there were not many job-sites around, it was much easier to identify a non-builders labourer.

39 Interview: Don McPhee, 6 December 1977.

40 A.B.L.F. (N.S.W.) Documents: File, Decisions: Disputes, n.d. (1943-1961).

Board of Reference, although the decision does continue "if the employer has been in the habit of making some payment to the Builders Labourers because they are working in company with other employees receiving the payment, you might like to consider whether it is a wise practice to make a change".⁴¹

- (2) Builders labourers working for Kell & Rigby, stripping formwork in a 16" space where it was "necessary for the men to work lying on their backs and on rough ground", were awarded a special rate of 7½d an hour instead of the claimed 1/6.⁴²
- (3) Builders labourers working for Civil & Civic on Blues Point were denied the same height allowances as the carpenters on the same site even though it was acknowledged that builders labourers were "more exposed to the elements than are carpenters and joiners, in as much as they frequently work on the extremities of each floor".⁴³

With decisions such as these it is no wonder that conditions for builders labourers remained appalling. Safety, especially, began to loom large in many job disputes. As buildings became higher the accident rate soared. There were many deaths in the industry.

Safety was non-existent...the D.L.I. [Dept of Labour and Industry] were meant to check safety precautions but there were very few prosecutions. Builders flouted safety regulations...we lost a lot of time just to get handrails or overhead protection.⁴⁴

The practice of dogmen "riding the hook" because employers' refused to hire two dogmen for each crane, led to an estimated dozen deaths a year during the 1960s.⁴⁵

These sorts of practices were encouraged by the meanness that the tender system of contracting engendered. Another practice commonly associated with tender contracting was "body hire". To avoid payment

41 The Conciliation and Arbitration Act of 1904-1956, Board No. 33 of 1958: In the Matter Builders' Labourers (Construction on Site) Award: A dispute between DA Constructions - and - the Australian Builders Labourers' Federation 27 February 1958.

42 The Conciliation and Arbitration Act of 1904-1956, Board No. 119 of 1958: In the Matter of Builders' Labourers' (Construction on Site) Award: A dispute between Kell and Rigby Pty Ltd and the A.B.L.F. 1 September 1958.

43 Conciliation and Arbitration Act 1904-1960: A.B.L.F. - and - Civil & Civic Pty Ltd: N.J. Hoad, Conciliator 5 June 1961.

44 Interview: Don Crotty, 7 March 1978.

45 Paul Gardiner, "Union Power and Developers (once naughty words) beat bad old days" The Australian Financial Review, 7 June 1973; and also John Martin, executive Director of the M.B.A. (N.S.W.) letter to the Editor, Australian Financial Review, 2. June 1973.

for idle labour in wet weather, or for public holidays and other award-fixed working conditions, the contractors would employ men under a one hour hire and fire rule. This money-in-the-hand mentality was always one of the Rank and File's main attacking points and eventually led to their "Civilize the Industry" campaign in the 70s.

Other problems most frequently mentioned were the fly-by-night contractors and the difficulty of getting a job in the first place. Munday says "workers buy the local paper at anything up to 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning...and then tramp round the streets looking for the next job".⁴⁶ He explains that he found this personally distasteful and he could see also that the most active fighters against this sort of degradation were the Communists. Like many others at this time he was drawn towards the Party. "I think had I at that time met people from other organisations who impressed me like the Communists I would have joined them."⁴⁷ Tom Hogan describes a similar experience:

the thing that made me join the C.P. as a very humble member of it was the fact of the hard work...the hours that fellows were prepared to put into it. They were giving the real leadership on those jobs. There seemed to be Communists and Communist detractors...the people I had been warned against were the people I felt closest to - Jack, Bert McGill, Joe Ferguson, Kevin Gledhill and Harry Connell.

He agreed that "what the bosses were doing to us" was the reason that militancy was bound to arise, "I think it was the reason a person like Jack was thrown up in the first place - and others after him".⁴⁸

Although taller buildings brought worse accidents they also brought about conditions whereby it became easier for the Rank and File to organise. Builders labourers became clustered in large groups instead of being spread out through cottage building in the suburbs. Many of the early large buildings were concentrated around the Quay area, in particular the Opera House, the A.M.P., British Tobacco, Goldfields House and the State Office Block. This led to large numbers of builders labourers drinking and talking together in the Quayside pubs.⁴⁹

There were other technological reasons⁵⁰ why builders labourers began to see more of each other at work, and hence socially. A

⁴⁶ Quoted in Caroline Graham, Anatomy of a Revolutionary Union: A Post Mortem on the BLF 1968-1975, B.A. (Hons) thesis, University of Sydney, 1975.

⁴⁷ Interview: Jack Munday, 3 April 1978.

⁴⁸ Interview: Tom Hogan, 28 October 1977.

⁴⁹ For a full discussion of the way the boom in the C.B.D. changed the character of the industry see chapter 10.

⁵⁰ See chapter 10.

camaraderie grew up amongst the builders labourers of the fifties and sixties that was vital to the success of the Rank and File committee and later to the defence of the Green Bans.

One of the first successes engendered by these new conditions was the election at a branch meeting in February 1960 of two temporary organisers from the Rank and File committee. Several months before, Communist activist Bert McGill had been elected at a General Meeting of the Branch. Munday reports the vote as being 39-36. The Executive sacked McGill as soon as the Branch meeting ended. Because "anti-Communism was rife at the time", McGill did not persist but during the next month he came to terms with "independently worried" non-Party labourers from the large Stock Exchange job-site.⁵¹ This job-site included Mick McNamara. Don McPhee describes the February Branch meeting:

There was a big roll-up. Mick [McNamara] brought about twenty bodgies, that is long-hairs, down from his job and was talking very militant. McGill and Williams [a Bodkin nomination] stood for organiser and McNamara threw his name up. McGill saw the light and said 'Alright this city's getting bigger - you'll need more organisers. Instead of going for one we'll go for two'.⁵²

A motion calling for two organisers was passed and in the ensuing vote McGill and McNamara were elected and Williams was defeated. Although McGill was a Communist, McNamara a twenty year old, "left-A.L.P." member was a "cleanskin" and Munday believes his nomination was totally spontaneous.⁵³ The two were sacked the next day by the leadership so the same thing happened the following month at the branch meeting. McGill became known as "Knockout" McGill because workers believed that every time they elected him, the Executive would "knockout" him.

The March general meeting of the Branch ended at 9.50 p.m. and at 10.05 p.m. the Executive Committee began a special meeting. The Executive decided not to act on the decisions of the earlier general meeting.⁵⁴ The main decision had been the re-appointment of McGill and McNamara.

This time the Rank and File decided to take the matter to the Commonwealth Industrial Court. Eventually the court ordered the

51 Interview: Jack Munday, 20 June 1978.

52 Interview: Don McPhee, 6 December 1977.

53 Interview: Jack Munday, 13 August 1975. The following account of the events leading up to the 1961 election are all from the same interview.

54 Daily Telegraph, 7 April 1960.

Executive to implement the decision of the general meeting. The judges pronounced: "We think it is clear that the decisions of the general meeting prevail over those of the executive committee". The Court ordered Bodkin and the Executive to recognise McNamara and McGill as Branch organisers and to pay three quarters of the legal costs of McNamara (the applicant).⁵⁵

The Sydney newspapers heralded this triumph for the Rank and File by concentrating on McNamara's extreme youth. The Telegraph headlined "At 21, He is Youngest Trade Union Official" and quoted him as saying that he would work as an organiser before deciding which political party to join.⁵⁶

McNamara believes the Bodkin leadership deliberately set out to capitalise upon his youth and inexperience:

They made life difficult for us. They sent Bert [McGill] who was experienced out to the Cronulla sandhills to keep him away and me, who was inexperienced, into the City. They hoped I'd chuck it.⁵⁷

This situation was discussed with the older militants in the Rank and File and McNamara gained in confidence and experience. Then the Executive decided to move McNamara out of the City. At this arbitrary act, "eight or nine big jobs stopped and marched on the office". They caught the officials in the pub and unceremoniously discussed the problem with them. McNamara reports that he was immediately sent back to the City as organiser.⁵⁸

The election of two Rank and File organisers certainly helped both morally and organisationally and the Rank and File set about attracting supporters for the 1961 elections. However majority decisions made at the Branch meetings were still being ignored. Hundreds of rank and filers would turn up at the meetings and because the Bodkin group no longer had sufficient money to bribe enough people to win votes they used other tactics instead. The President, W. Sheean, would "chair" the meetings starting with a drunken report from Bodkin. Then whenever an opposition member moved that the question be put, Sheean would rule that the noes had it. When a division was demanded the meeting would break down in uproar. Sheean's tactic of persistently ignoring majority votes reduced the procedure to a farce and meetings would only last about ten minutes.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Sydney Morning Herald, 7 April 1960.

⁵⁶ Daily Telegraph, 8 April 1960.

⁵⁷ Mick McNamara: interviewed by Pat Fiske, 1976.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Interview: Jack Munday, 13 August 1975.

The Munday group realised that this could not go on. They were losing members because they could not get decisions enforced. They decided that more positive action would have to be taken.

In January 1961, a general meeting was called to endorse three delegates to Federal Council. It was attended by 200 Union members.⁶⁰ The Rank and File prepared a circular pointing out that the move to appoint the Federal delegates was an attempt to delay Union elections. The circular advocated "throw out the officials who are bringing the Union into dispute".⁶¹

The President, Sheean, refused to accept a point of order that the meeting was unconstitutional and irregular. When the Federal Secretary, T. Foster, who was present by invitation of the Executive, tried to address the meeting he was angrily received. It was obvious that the Rank and File had a huge majority at the meeting. Sheean closed the meeting and tried to leave the building "but men blocked the doorway and he was forced back on to the platform".⁶² Munday relates his version of the events, "Bodkin kept descending the stairs and I kept picking him up, carrying him back and sitting him in his seat". The "crim elements" ran out the back because five carloads of the 21st Division arrived on the scene. The Rank and File told the police to stay out and went ahead with conducting their own meeting,

it was the first democratic meeting ever held in the Builders' Labourers...we kept them [the Bodkin group] sitting in their seats til 10 o'clock with the 21 Division down below...it was the first time we hit the headlines.⁶³

Other allegations made by the newspapers were that "during the wild meeting, brawls involving as many as 150 members broke out every few minutes...Federal and State officials were struck by members as they tried to bring the meeting to order".⁶⁴

Officials blamed "Left-wing factions and Communists"⁶⁵ for the disorder and Sheean announced after the meeting that several members of the Union would be expelled. Munday believes that this incident was the turning point because the next day the rank and file held a big march of about 500 labourers from the Quay to the Trades Hall.

60 Sydney Morning Herald, 11 January 1961.

61 Daily Telegraph, 11 January 1961.

62 Sydney Morning Herald, 11 January 1961.

63 The headlines were "Unionists in Brawls" Daily Telegraph, 11 April 1961; and "Uproar, Blows at Trades Hall: Police Halt Stormy Meeting of Unionists" Sydney Morning Herald, 11 January 1961.

64 Daily Telegraph, 11 April 1961.

65 Ibid.

Ironically, as they approached the Trades Hall, who should emerge out of the Bourke Hotel but a rather drunken Bodkin. The hapless Secretary was pursued down the street by a large crowd of irate builders labourers. The Rank and Filers held an overflow meeting in the main auditorium of the Trades Hall and decided to concentrate all their activities on removing the Bodkin leadership in the election to be held in September of that year.

A high level of activity was kept up during 1961. The first of the Rank and File preselections, which later became a feature of the New South Wales Builders Labourers' Federation was held. Any Union member was eligible to vote or nominate in this preselection and it was understood that anyone who stood for preselection and was not chosen would not stand against the Rank and File pre-selected candidate.

In this period there were several other groupings apart from the Rank and File committee, although the Rank and File was quite clearly "the most coherent grouping". It consisted as it had in the past of C.P.A. members, "left" A.L.P. members and non-party militants. The "centre" A.L.P. forces provided another faction under the leadership of Jack Stephensen and Terry Foster, who had moved towards the centre from the right. There was also a right-wing A.L.P. grouping under the leadership of Stan Winter,⁶⁶ who for some time had functioned as the ideological leader of the non-gangster right-wing. He held a certain amount of sway, particularly on individual jobs such as the Hotel Chevron.⁶⁷ This group was supported by Colbourne, the state Secretary of the A.L.P. and hence had the de facto official A.L.P. imprimatur.

All these factions were opposed to the "rump" of the Bodkin forces. In late 1961 the Rank and File held discussions after their own preselection, with the "centre" A.L.P. group and in order to put forward the broadest possible front the Rank and File dropped some names from their ticket and included some of the "centre's" candidates. The final Rank and File ticket was headed by Vince Henneberry (centre group) as President and Mick McNamara as Secretary.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Don McPhee actually described Winter as "a paid organiser for Santamaria", (Interview: Don McPhee, 6 December 1977.)

⁶⁷ According to Tom Hogan who worked on the Chevron, Winter had remarkable control over the job. Control of jobs to the extent that their collective "nature" is determined by a B.L. or group of B.Ls, is a feature of the industry. See more in chapter 10.

⁶⁸ Unidentified News Clipping headed "August 1961", McNamara Papers (see Notes on footnoting).

The nomination of Mick McNamara as Secretary arose out of a series of compromises between the various factions. There was a certain amount of disagreement about who should be Secretary. Les Robinson claims that Munday was the obvious candidate and therefore he (Robinson) was opposed to McNamara's nomination from the start, "I had misgivings at the time. Most people thought Jack Munday was the logical choice. But apparently they thought it was better to put Mick up and get the A.L.P. vote".⁶⁹ Munday himself claims that it would have been "adventurist" for him, as a known communist to take the Secretary's position,⁷⁰ and Laurie Aarons maintains "it is not a bad idea, when there is a big change in a Union, to have a fairly broad and representative leadership".⁷¹

The policy of detente with non-communist "progressive" forces is very much the C.P.A. line of today, but it was not so then. In 1958 the official (1951) party line towards A.L.P. unionists had changed from moderation and unity back to the intransigent stance of the late forties.⁷² This hard-line period lasted from about 1959 to 1964.⁷³

Within the Builders Labourers however it is obvious that the period of co-operation during the mid-fifties had had a lasting effect. Friendships had been made and bonds forged so that the Rank and File worked successfully even during the late fifties and early sixties. For one thing, they were fighting a particularly oppressive and corrupt union opposition and for another, leading communists within the Rank and File such as Jack Munday, Tom Hogan and Harry Connell were certainly not the old style communists who uncritically accepted the central committee's fluctuating policies.

With a "broad left" Rank and File team chosen, the election campaign started in earnest. It soon became obvious that the Bodkin leadership was quite at a loss in the credit squeeze conditions of 1961. Although the squeeze did not hit the Sydney building industry

69 Interview: Les Robinson, 20 February 1978. He also claims that his drifting away and eventual split from the N.S.W. leadership was caused mainly by his objection to McNamara's secretaryship. Speaking of the 1961-63 split away of the "China-liners" he said "I think it started off as an industrial position over McNamara...we didn't oppose Jack, my argument was that Jack should take over the leadership".

70 Interview: Jack Munday, 13 August 1975.

71 Interview: Laurie Aarons, 28 December 1977.

72 For a fuller discussion of the C.P.A. see chapter 10.

73 Alastair Davidson, The Communist Party of Australia, pp.157-158. In Six Turbulent Years, p.11, the Socialist Party of Australia incorrectly ascribes popular front tactics to the C.P.A. for the entire Lance Sharkey era since 1949. "This line of patient building of the widest possible united support for militant policies, in fact, remained the line of the C.P.A. up until the leadership of L. Sharkey was replaced by that of L. Aarons." This is merely a minor example of the S.P.A.'s rewriting of history.

as badly as it did other cities (because of its size), it created unstable conditions that the old guard was unable to deal with by their usual strategies. They were not getting around the job sites. Don Crotty believes they were probably at a disadvantage because none of them had ever worked on a multi-storey building whereas the majority of the rank and filers had.⁷⁴ Intimidation no longer worked as effectively as it had. Workers began actively opposing the Bodkin team at job meetings. Bob Pringle relates:

I was on a building site when Harry Connell came and spoke about the election. I always remember Harry...there he was on his Pat Malone [alone]...a little bloke in shorts and a briefcase. He was confronted by these two guys - big heavy types - probably Bodkin and Foster. All the blokes were on Harry's side.⁷⁵

In August, the Bodkin Executive attempted to deprive the membership of the right to elect returning officers and scrutineers by changing meeting dates and failing to advertise for the election of these officers. The Rank and File displayed its usual initiative by holding a meeting in the absence of the Executive and elected a Returning Officer, Les Robinson, and two scrutineers, Brian O'Shea and Harry Connell.

As a result of Bodkin's dishonest practices, a member of the Stan Winter ticket, Charles Leary, applied to the Commonwealth Industrial Registrar for a court controlled ballot. In granting this application Mr Justice Joske made comments that reinforce the allegations made by Munday and others about the dishonesty and corruption of the Bodkin regime. The judgement is worth quoting at some length:

I am satisfied that they
 . Deprived the meeting of August 1, without justification and for their own purposes, of the opportunity of electing the returning officer and scrutineers at that meeting.
 . Left the time and place of the meeting on August 24 unstated in order that at a propitious moment and in their own way they would be able to call it and get their supporters to it so as to obtain the election of their own candidates.
 . Again for their own purposes, did not give proper notice of the meeting on August 22.
 The conclusion at which I arrive is that they are thoroughly untrustworthy persons.⁷⁶

Ballot-rigging, as a final way out for Bodkin, was eliminated and the die was cast. At the election the entire Bodkin grouping was defeated.

74 Interview: Don Crotty, 7 March 1978.

75 Interview: Bob Pringle, 8 March 1978.

76 Sydney Morning Herald, 22 September 1961.

With three exceptions, the Rank and File/Centre ticket swept the poll for the thirteen main positions in the union. The extent of the landslide can be seen by the outcome of voting for the Secretary's position. McNamara received 720 votes and Bodkin 187.⁷⁷ Despite this result McNamara still maintains that the ballot was interfered with because the voting was inconsistent.⁷⁸

Jack Munday was one of the three beaten members of McNamara's ticket. He received 442 votes and came ninth out of sixteen candidates for the six organisers' positions. He ascribes his defeat more to anti-communism than to ballot-rigging:⁷⁹ "Even though I travelled furthest and had been most active I got beaten. I think it was because I was a known Communist. It was an anti-Communist vote."⁸⁰ It may have been partly an "anti-communist" vote but it was very much a C.P.A. inspired victory. Both Aarons and Robinson maintain that, although objective conditions were ripe for a change, it was the organisation of the communists that allowed it to happen. It must be remembered that the Party had not split then. It was larger and more powerful within the trade unions. Pat Clancy and the B.W.I.U. were in support, many other N.S.W. unions were on side and even Norm Gallagher had sent up financial aid from Victoria.

The delicate manoeuvring that had taken place between the Communists and the left-A.L.P. members was to become a feature of B.L.F. leadership throughout the sixties. Although Caroline Graham claims that McNamara's nomination was the result of a tacit agreement in the Rank and File that the membership would not accept overt Communist Party leadership⁸¹ much of the delicacy of the situation was not engendered from within the Union but from without. The bitter divisions within the Labor Party were responsible for most of the problems presented during the actual campaign. McNamara was accused by Jack Kane of the D.L.P. of standing on a unity ticket with McGill. He challenged the A.L.P. to act on the "revelation".⁸² The situation necessitated the

77 The N.S.W. Builders Labourer, Vol. 1, No. 1.

78 Mick McNamara: interviewed by Pat Fiske, 1976.

79 One of the other defeated candidates was Keith Jessop, also a Communist.

80 Interview: Jack Munday, 13 August 1975.

81 Caroline Graham, op.cit., p.7.

82 Unidentified News Clipping headed "October 1961", McNamara Papers.

production of tickets from McNamara and the other A.L.P. members advocating the election of only A.L.P. members. This enforced duplicity caused a situation where there were four rival A.L.P. tickets and one "rank and file ticket which had Communist Party support".⁸³

The final line-up of forces in the new leadership was described by Munday as one right-winger, Stan Winter, four centrists and sixteen Rank and Filers. President was Vince Henneberry; Vice President, J.B. Williamson; Trustees, R. Prendergast and T. Austin;⁸⁴ Guardian, J.H. Stephensen; and Treasurer, M. Lynch. Maurie Lynch actually defeated the incumbent Federal Secretary of the Union, T.J. Foster, for the position of Treasurer by seventeen votes.

The new officials took office with £9 in the bank and debts amounting to £15,000.⁸⁵ It was not an auspicious beginning.

83 Unidentified News Clipping headed "November 1961", McNamara Papers.

84 Theo Austin was described by Munday (13 August 1975) as "an old fence sitter from the Bodkin era".

85 Unidentified News Clipping headed "November 1961", McNamara Papers.

APPENDIX B

Consolidation: 1961-69

In November 1961 the Rank and File team took "office" and discovered that the departing right-wing had left as its legacy the bare minimum of bureaucratic information, little or no industrial organisation, no office staff and burnt minute books. As Bob Pringle describes it "the Union was on its arse".¹

The N.S.W. branch of the B.L.F. was to embark on its rebuilding process in an Australia-wide atmosphere of industrial stagnation and with a mixed team of C.P.A. and A.L.P. members at a time when both parties were suffering uncertainties within their own ranks and towards each other. The Union's struggle for financial solvency, improved status and industrial militancy must be viewed in this light.

As Rawson points out, the late fifties and early sixties were less marked by serious industrial disputes than any other period for half a century.² It was not that unions were in an unfavourable tactical position. Both domestic and external markets were running high and the demand for labour was strong.³

Factors which contributed to the low level of industrial disputes were the relative affluence of the fifties; social and technological changes which profoundly affected class attitudes among workers; the intensification of the Cold War and the resulting low profile adopted by domestic Communists; and most importantly, the threat (implied and actual) of the penal powers.⁴

In 1956 the Menzies government overcame a High Court ruling against penal sanctions under the Conciliation and Arbitration Act, by replacing the old Arbitration Court with an Arbitration Commission and an Industrial Court. After that there was no doubt about the Court's authority to jail those who refused to obey its orders, and to fine workers who went on strike or officials who advised them to do so.

The A.C.T.U. Congresses of 1957 and 1959 condemned the new legislation but neither took nor advised direct action to counter the clauses. James Hagan believes that the A.C.T.U. probably reacted mildly because employers' organisations heeded its warnings and in the fifties

1 Interview: Bob Pringle, 8 March 1978.

2 D.W. Rawson, Labour in Vain?, p.96.

3 Ian Turner, In Union is Strength, p.110.

4 For a full discussion of the effect of the Penal Powers on the union movement in general see J. Hutson, Penal Colony to Penal Powers.

did not make much use of the penal clauses. But in the sixties they began to use them far more frequently. In 1967 the Court levied \$10,000 in fines and in 1968 the total came to almost \$100,000.⁵

As will be shown, the experience of the N.S.W. B.L.F. with the penal clauses was typical of many "left" unions. During the early sixties, cowed by the Court's ability to levy prohibitive fines on their already overstretched funds, and lacking the support of any general campaign of defiance by Trade Unions against the penal powers, the B.L.F. often succumbed to adverse Court decisions which later they were able to defy with impunity.

The second factor of importance in an understanding of the early Rank and File leadership period is the way in which a delicate balance was maintained between the C.P.A. and "left A.L.P." members of the Executive.

One of the strains on this tentative coalition was the ideological tension being experienced by the C.P.A. as a result of the C.P.S.U. Twentieth Congress in 1956. The decisions of that Congress were diametrically opposed to the previous "sectarianism" of the C.P.A. leaders. The decision that socialism could be attained by peaceful methods and that each party should make policy on the basis of national peculiarities conflicted with the Australian party's rigid adherence to Russian traditions. In attacking Stalin, Krushchev was obliquely attacking also the Sharkey leadership, which was essentially "Stalinist".⁶

At first the Party leadership followed the Chinese interpretation of the Twentieth Congress resolutions. Sharkey, the Party Secretary, agreed with the Chinese that, whatever Stalin's errors, he had benefited communism. Sharkey also continued to guide the Party towards sectarianism. The 1958 C.P.A. Congress spoke of an "ever growing crisis", economic, political and social. Socialism, which could be attained only through a coercive People's Government, was the only solution to this crisis. The trade unions would be the key component in the people's movement. A genuine alliance of equals with the A.L.P. would depend on that party's prior acceptance of Marxism-Leninism as defined by the C.P.A.⁷ This intransigent line towards the A.L.P. was reiterated at the following (1961) C.P.A. Congress.

5 James Hagan, The A.C.T.U.: a Short History, p.75.

6 Alastair Davidson, The Communist Party of Australia, pp.148-9.

7 C.P.A., Australia's Path to Socialism, Sydney, 1958.

By 1961, with the Sino-Soviet split well under way, the Congress started to reflect this international dissension. Sharkey, having moved gradually towards the Russian position, stressed unity of the international communist movement and attacked "leftism" as exemplified by Ted Hill, the leading proponent of the pro-Chinese stance. Hill emphasized the need for Marxist-Leninist purity and attacked moderate communism and revisionism.⁸ This division became plainer over the following years, leading to Hill's expulsion in August 1963 and the formation of the pro-Chinese Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) in January 1964. The Central Committee of this new party included Paddy Malone, Victorian Secretary of the B.L.F. Although the C.P.A. (Marxist-Leninist) never had much organisational strength in Sydney, what few adherents it had seemed to be concentrated in the B.L.F.

During this major struggle, a quieter and possibly more important change was taking place in the C.P.A.⁹ A less dogmatic, more flexible, almost pluralist, version of communism was beginning to be espoused by Eric and Laurie Aarons. Anti-bureaucratism and democracy within the Party were beginning to be discussed.¹⁰ The seeds of what later was to be called the "Aarons line" were sown in the early sixties. There was a gradual shift of power away from the old Sharkey leadership and towards Laurie Aarons.

Prompted by Labor's defeat in 1963 Laurie Aarons wrote an important pamphlet called Labor Movement at the Crossroads where he broke significantly from previous C.P.A. policy by advocating co-operation with the A.L.P. in working towards the common goal of socialism.¹¹ By the next Congress (1964) the Party adopted Aaron's viewpoint and rejected the "sectarian view that there is no difference between the Labor and the Liberal Parties".¹²

Two factors caused this change of heart. Firstly the C.P.A., after the Russian invasion of Hungary and the formation of the C.P.A. (M-L), was at a low ebb in membership and influence. Davidson reports a marked decrease in C.P.A. influence at the 1961 and 1963 A.C.T.U. Congresses.¹³ Secondly, the C.P.A. (M-L) line on co-operation with the

8 Alastair Davidson, op.cit., p.153.

9 For a fuller discussion of this aspect see chapter 10 of this thesis.

10 Eric Aarons, "As I Saw the Sixties", Australian Left Review, No. 27, October-November 1970, pp.61-7.

11 L. Aarons, Labor Movement at the Crossroads, Sydney, 1964.

12 Resolution, 20th Congress, Communist Party of Australia, June 1964, p.31.

13 Alastair Davidson, op.cit., p.157.

A.L.P. was rigidly confrontationalist. It emphasised that communism's worst enemy was the A.L.P., which it described as capitalism's second party. Opposition to Maoist extremism and a desire to re-ingratiate itself with the labour movement made the C.P.A.'s 1964 decision almost inevitable.

The A.L.P. in return still retained official hostility towards the C.P.A., especially in N.S.W. where the right-wing had held the Party bureaucracy under firm control since the split in the fifties.¹⁴ Left-wing A.L.P. members who stood on "unity tickets" with communists in union elections were regularly cited and expelled. Within the B.L.F. the Bodkin regime had been associated with the A.L.P. right-wing so the A.L.P. hierarchy had little reason to welcome the newly elected left-wing McNamara team.

It was in this extremely hostile environment that the new B.L.F. officials set out to overcome the effects of years of neglect. Besides hostility from the N.S.W. A.L.P., they also experienced attacks from the Right within their own ranks, vexatious law suits from a renegade Trotskyist; disapproval from the Federal branch; criticism from rank and file Maoists; employer-initiated harassment of union organisers and continuing financial problems. On top of all this, the building industry took much longer than other industries to recover from the 1961 credit squeeze and Union membership reflected this slump.

Although official C.P.A. policy in this period involved opposition to co-operation with the A.L.P., the B.L.F. leadership seemed scarcely touched by such sectarianism. The coalition seems genuinely to have been a successful one. Laurie Aarons, speaking in retrospect, claims that the C.P.A. had no desire to change "this more or less representative leadership". He denied any attempt by the Party to impose tighter control and claims that the Party was "happy with the Union at that period".¹⁵ Further evidence to justify this possibly rosy view comes from other people involved during the period - both A.L.P. and C.P.A. members. A.L.P. member Darcy Duggan remembered the Communists as "healthy for the Union - they stopped people getting too lazy".¹⁶ Pringle (A.L.P.) referred to the "delicate balancing act" during the period and said "we all thought the same way though".¹⁷

14 Robert Murray, *The Split*, p.352 writes "The 'right' was centred on N.S.W. where the A.W.U.-Colbourne alliance continued to provide a traditionalist anti-communist base". He also reports that the A.L.P. "left" broadened with the influx of "men" who left the C.P.A. after 1956.

15 Interview: Laurie Aarons, 28 December 1977.

16 Interview: Darcy Duggan, 12 July 1977.

17 Interview: Bob Pringle, 8 March 1978.

These views are reinforced by the Executive minutes. McNamara and Lynch (both A.L.P.) moved a motion in 1964 condemning the Government for refusing to grant visas to overseas delegates to the C.P.A. Congress,¹⁸ and McNamara and Prendergast (A.L.P.) moved that the branch donate £12 to the C.P.A. for an election campaign.¹⁹ Such acts of solidarity were quite common throughout this period. A similar tolerance was shown by the C.P.A. Mick Tubbs (C.P.A.) claims that non-communists were brought into the leadership "because it was recognised they had something to give".²⁰ Jack Munday echoed this view in 1964 when he congratulated Labor Party B.Ls for "carrying out the wishes of the members of the Union at the A.L.P. Conference. He said he sincerely believed in representative leadership, and that no one party should control a trade union".²¹

The reason for this comradely behaviour is straightforward. Ideologically and in practice very little difference existed between the left-A.L.P. members and the C.P.A. Many of the A.L.P. activists later joined the C.P.A.,²² and those who did not, continued to support the predominantly C.P.A. leadership of the later period. Only Maurie Lynch ever turned away from the C.P.A. leadership and all claim this was for personal reasons.²³

The close co-operation that was built up during the Rank and File period remained just as strong during the leadership days. It was probably this ideological closeness that led to the standard slander that Mick McNamara was in fact a secret member of the Communist Party.²⁴

For the A.L.P. members within the B.L.F. it was their own party hierarchy, not the Communists, of whom they had to be wary. Mick McNamara had been cited for appearing on a unity ticket during the 1961 Union election and he and Maurie Lynch were again cited in 1964.²⁵ After a by-election in 1962 Prendergast, Robinson and McHugh were expelled for the same offence.²⁶

18 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 9 June 1964.

19 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 29 October 1963.

20 Interview: Mick Tubbs, 26 October 1977.

21 Minutes: General Meeting, 7 July 1964.

22 Including Bud Cook, Dick Prendergast, Les Robinson and Don McHugh.

23 Interviews: Bud Cook, 5 March 1978; Jack Munday, 13 August 1975; Laurie Aarons, 28 December 1977.

24 Caroline Graham, *op.cit.*, p.7.

25 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 20 October 1964.

26 Interview: Jack Munday, 3 March 1981. Munday claimed that Robinson was in fact a dual card holder at the time.

The C.P.A. members of the leadership were much better organised than were the A.L.P. or non-party members. Rank and file communists still remained active in support of the leadership's policies. One of the longest and most militant job-sites during the period, the State Office Block, had "quite a few C.P. members amongst the labourers and carpenters".²⁷ "Good organisation", "hard work" and "mobile"²⁸ were some of the descriptions used by non-communists about the Communist group in the B.L.F. when explaining the attraction this group held for the membership. Mick Ross claims that most of the C.P.A. influence was wielded at the monthly B.L.F. Branch meetings which in that period were well attended, "a hundred at least".²⁹ Certainly the minutes of Branch meetings, scanty as they are, indicate more interest in non-union political events than do the Executive minutes but this probably reflects the nature of Branch meetings as policy making events as opposed to the administrative nature of Executive meetings. Another factor was that Jack Munday regularly attended Branch meetings and raised social and political issues.³⁰ It was not until 1964 that any of the men who became the leaders of the 1970s, began to appear on the Executive.

There are no substantiated indications that the C.P.A. hierarchy interfered in any way with the Union's management. The B.L.F. was not a large or powerful Union. It was not at this time the gem in the C.P.A. crown that it was later to become. The C.P.A. still controlled the maritime unions, the miners, the B.W.I.U. and many smaller unions. Help and support were offered to the McNamara team but control and interference were minimal.³¹

The way the C.P.A. exerted most influence on their members within the B.L.F. was through the building branch of the C.P.A. This group consisted of all communists who belonged to any of the ten (later nine) unions affiliated to the Building Trades Group of the Labor Council of N.S.W. The dominant union in both the C.P.A. building branch and the

27 Interview: Brian Rix, 20 December 1977.

28 Interviews: Les Robinson, 20 February 1978; Tom Hogan, 28 October 1977; and Joe Owens, 24 January 1978.

29 Interview: Mick Ross, 29 July 1977.

30 See Minutes: General Meetings 6 August 1963, 3 September 1963, and 1 September 1964.

31 Doreen Anderson, an experienced office administrator who previously worked for the B.W.I.U. came to work for the B.L.F, "to help them on their feet". (Interview: Paula Rix, 25 January 1978)

B.T.G. was the B.W.I.U. and the dominant personality in the B.W.I.U. was Pat Clancy. It is important to understand the ideological position of both Clancy and the B.W.I.U. because the relationship between the tradesmen (B.W.I.U.) and the labourers (B.L.F.) became very important during the seventies.³²

Pat Clancy had a "very creditable revolutionary past".³³ In the late forties and fifties he was the only left-wing union leader at a time when the building industry as a whole was under extreme right-wing leadership. The B.W.I.U. was deregistered in the early fifties and a "scab" union formed in opposition, the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners (A.S.C.&J.). Caroline Graham believes that:

his isolation in those years no doubt led him to prefer the "united front" approach with its emphasis on patient building of unity and alliances, rather than rocking the boat with advanced actions.³⁴

Mundey explains the B.W.I.U. position slightly differently. Whilst acknowledging that the B.W.I.U. had been militant in the fifties he claims that it "lived off the fat" for the next decade. Clancy had to undertake not to engage in militant activity in order to win back registration. He did not hold a mass meeting of construction workers for fourteen years. The B.W.I.U. still had the name of a militant union but the reality was otherwise. Clancy, who had come to office as a young man, became entrenched and, as the leadership aged, the union became less likely to take militant action.³⁵

Mundey explains his own position thus: "I was in the same party as Clancy and went along with the thinking of that period...which was ideologically Stalinist". He believes that "with Mick [McNamara] as a 21 year old secretary, the immaturity of the Union showed through...and for the first three years tended to be pretty much a B.W.I.U.-advised show."³⁶ B.W.I.U. statements regarding this period substantiate Mundey's views. In Six Turbulent Years, the writers claim:

...when Jack Mundey's leadership came to office...the B.W.I.U. promptly gave a wide range of assistance. This included providing the know-how and personnel to modernise their whole administrative system which had become antiquated under previous right-wing leaderships...most of this was done free of any charge as a

32 A fuller discussion of the relationship between the B.W.I.U. and the B.L.F. is in chapter 10.

33 Caroline Graham, op.cit., p.30.

34 Ibid.

35 Interviews: Jack Mundey, 13 August 1975 and 3 April 1978. Mundey claims that observing the way Clancy became entrenched and conservatised led him to consider the advisability of "limited tenure of office".

36 Interview: Jack Mundey, 13 August 1975.

fraternal helping hand to a new young union leadership.³⁷

The same spirit of comradely co-operation is echoed by Builders Labourers when questioned about the period. Mick Ross mentions the "good feeling" at the C.P.A. Building Branch meetings and recalls the presence of several B.W.I.U. officials apart from Clancy. He also mentions officials from other B.T.G. unions including Sid Vaughan from the Painters who became Secretary of the building branch. He estimates attendance at an average of "40 to 50" at each meeting and emphasises that "we were united at this stage - it was before the split".³⁸

In much the same way the B.L.F. relied upon the Building Trades Group more than in later years. The Executive minutes record repeated references to the B.T.G. which fade as the sixties progress. For example in 1963 the Executive formally thanked the B.T.G. for helping them to win a paid Picnic Day,³⁹ and sent a general message of thanks to the Painters' union for the help which had been given throughout the year.⁴⁰

Solidarity acts with other C.P.A. controlled organisations and unions also occurred during the period. The Waterside Workers were supported in their struggles around containerisation.⁴¹ The C.P.A. newspaper, Tribune was sent items of news about the Union's activities⁴² and front organisations such as the Australia Soviet Friendship Society, the Union of Australian Women and the Peace Committee also received support.

The Executive's attitude towards the A.L.P. was more ambiguous. Their general attitude was one of critical support but on occasions they came into open conflict with the state Labor government. McNamara described as "most vicious"⁴³ the way the state government opposed height money and dirt money for workers at the Opera House. The Executive also urged the Labor Council to "take the state government to task over the Public Works Department".⁴⁴ In another incident the

37 Building Industry Branch of the Socialist Party of Australia, Six Turbulent Years, p.48. The fact that the McNamara leadership is referred to as "Jack Munday's leadership" is a representative example of the factual inaccuracies of this publication.

38 Interview: Mick Ross, 29 July 1977.

Joe Owens, (Interview, 4 April 1978) also recalls the "good branch meetings".

39 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 12 November 1963.

40 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 17 December 1963.

41 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 4 June 1963 and General Meeting, 4 June 1963.

42 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 2 July 1963.

43 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 21 January 1964.

44 Ibid.

Executive sent a protest letter to the A.L.P. complaining about the way a deputation of builders labourers had been abused by Tony Mulvihill (Assistant General Secretary of the N.S.W. A.L.P.).⁴⁵

However the B.L.F.'s most important confrontation with the state Labor government came in September 1964 when a General Meeting of the Union decided to refuse to pay a fine of £500 which the State Industrial Commission had imposed for a series of strikes at the Opera House. The meeting decided to ask the Premier, Mr Renshaw, to honour his promises that he would modify the penal clauses of the Arbitration Act under which the Union was fined.⁴⁶

On the whole the Union displayed remarkable tolerance towards the A.L.P. The same state Labor Government that was in the process of imposing penal sanctions on the Union, was supported unanimously in an Executive motion in February 1964:

[The] Executive...expresses its resentment at the daily attacks from the press against the N.S.W. Labor government. As an affiliate to the A.L.P. we possibly agree with some of the criticisms raised against the State Government and its members, but this Executive is very critical of information being given to the press that is not in the best interests of the labor movement in general...realising that all governments have shortcomings...this Executive expresses its utmost support for the State Labor Government.⁴⁷

The Union displayed even stronger support for the Federal A.L.P.⁴⁸ Throughout the 1960s, A.L.P. news figured heavily in the Union journal and support for Arthur Calwell as A.L.P. leader was strong.⁴⁹ In February 1964 Jack Munday moved that the Union "call upon the entire membership to mount the best possible campaign to help defeat the Menzies Government, and elect a Federal Labor Government". The Union called upon members of the A.L.P. and Communist Party to exchange preferences "so ensuring a united working class vote against Menzies, the D.L.P. and other anti-working class groupings".⁵⁰

At a time when the C.P.A. was intransigently hostile towards the A.L.P. and the A.L.P. was responding with a very tough line on "unity tickets" the B.L.F. adopted its own independent course.

45 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 19 May 1964.

The deputation was about the Green Valley Housing Project.

46 Sydney Morning Herald, 2 September 1964. When Renshaw did decide to "liberalise" the penal clauses he made unions not liable if they or their officials were not party to stoppages.

47 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 25 February 1964.

48 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 25 August 1964. They sent a letter of protest to A.W.U. Secretary, Charlie Oliver, about his statements attacking Federal Labor policies.

49 Builders Labourer, Vol. 1, No. 1, December 1961 to Vol. 4, No. 20, December 1969.

50 Minutes: General Meeting, 5 November 1963.

There were many A.L.P. members active in the Union but Bud Cook remembers "even in those days it was difficult to get A.L.P. members to front up to conferences, be the delegates...the ones that were around the most, the militants, were the communists".⁵¹

Although the right-wingers did not have numerical support they proved very disruptive. In elections between 1961 and 1964 for casual vacancies,⁵² delegates to Labor Council, A.L.P. Conference⁵³ and Federal Council;⁵⁴ and for returning officer,⁵⁵ right-wing candidates were trounced by margins like 212-64 and 61-4.

However, with Kenny and White on the Executive and Stan Winter as organiser, the Right had maintained a high profile.⁵⁶ The minutes contain much evidence of nuisance tactics at Executive and Branch meetings.⁵⁷ A good example was the Right's reaction to a motion by Munday to allow a speaker from the C.P.A. controlled Waterside Workers Federation ten minutes to address a Branch meeting about the current waterfront stoppage (a common Union practice). Terry Foster amended the motion to a half minute and when that was defeated, Stan Winter moved an amendment of five minutes. Eventually Munday's original motion was carried⁵⁸ but this type of delaying procedure was often used.⁵⁹

Possibly the most "confrontationist" episode occurred in July 1962 when the Vice President resigned and a dispute broke out about how his successor should be elected. The President, Henneberry, one of the centrists elected in 1961, announced that he would act as returning officer and conduct the ballot whereas McNamara claimed that the Branch meeting must elect the returning officer. Henneberry went ahead with the election and declared Stan Winter elected "amid uproar".⁶⁰ Scenes reminiscent of the Bodkin era then occurred with the Left declaring

51 Interview: Bud Cook, 5 March 1978.

52 Minutes: General Meetings, 2 July 1963 and 2 June 1964.

53 Minutes: General Meeting, 5 May 1964.

54 Minutes: General Meeting, 2 June 1964.

55 Minutes: General Meeting, 4 August 1964.

56 Another Executive member who sometimes aligned with the Right was Vince Henneberry, the President. Munday describes Henneberry as ideologically "a better all-rounder than Keith Miller", (Interview: 13 August 1975)

57 For example Minutes: General Meeting, 7 May 1963 and 6 August 1963.

58 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 4 June 1963 and General Meeting, 14 June 1963.

59 After one particularly obstructionist incident Jack Munday appealed to Winter and Henneberry to be more constructive and "deal with the problems of builders labourers". Minutes: General Meeting, 7 April 1964.

60 Sydney Morning Herald, 18 July 1962.

that Arch Harding was the duly elected Vice-President and the Right supporting Winter. Henneberry walked out of seven Executive meetings and three General meetings in support of this claim. Eventually the Commonwealth Industrial Court ruled that neither had been properly elected and in the ensuing ballot Harding won easily.⁶¹

Although this event was spectacular and attracted media coverage it was Winter, using his position as organiser to undermine the leadership, who proved most time-consuming and disruptive. Complaints were continually laid against him in the Executive. At first he was coyly referred to anonymously as "some organisers had shown laxity",⁶² and "some organisers had told workers to return to work"⁶³ but later the complaints became more open. The Boronia Park Housing Commission job-site asked for an organiser other than Winter because he did not know the award rates.⁶⁴ Various officials and delegates accused him of "mucking up the filing system",⁶⁵ being in the wrong areas for organising⁶⁶ and telling a foreman that two builders labourers were receiving too much money!⁶⁷ Finally he had to be rebuked for failing to turn up to work for four weeks.⁶⁸

Winter was also busy distributing the Guardian which was described by McNamara as being the organ of "the Industrial Groupers who supported Bodkin and Co."⁶⁹ This journal was produced by Winter, Kenny and White and mainly appeared during the election year, 1964, and contained "vicious attacks on the Executive".⁷⁰ McNamara reported that meetings had been conducted on jobs and the B.Ls were unanimous in condemning the Guardian and supporting the leadership.⁷¹ Some Executive members wanted to lay charges against the B.Ls who were delivering the Guardian as it was not an official document of the Branch.⁷² Munday believes that Winter should perhaps have been charged for distributing a non-union document in paid union time but that generally "the lies" should just have been answered through the Rank and File paper Hoist.⁷³ That this

61 Ibid.

62 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 17 March 1964.

63 Minutes: General Meeting, 1 October 1963.

64 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 28 July 1964.

65 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 11 August 1964.

66 Ibid.

67 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 18 August 1964.

68 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 6 October 1964.

69 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 10 March 1964.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.

72 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 17 March 1964.

73 Interview: Jack Munday, 30 March 1978.

happened, and vigorously, is undoubted. Kenny was obviously singled out for attack in one edition⁷⁴ even though he had resigned from the Executive.

Winter's final effort before total eclipse was his campaign during 1964 for a court-controlled ballot. The Executive declared that it opposed members' collecting signatures for a petition for a court controlled ballot and doubted if signers had been told the true position.⁷⁵ A General Meeting condemned court-controlled ballots⁷⁶ and several job-sites held meetings which unanimously condemned Winter's actions.⁷⁷

An executive representative was sent to Canberra to counter Winter's story that Canberra B.Ls would be disenfranchised unless they supported his petition.⁷⁸ The Executive decided not to charge Winter because "that must be done by the members themselves" and would entail the "unnecessary expense of litigation".⁷⁹ Justices of the Peace were sent round jobs in Sydney and Canberra to aid people who wanted to remove their name from Winter's "court-controlled ballot deceit".⁸⁰

The factionalism that these incidents induced was deplored by Munday. He spoke about the reactions of people on the jobs to the situation. He said the unions should be united and that, because the leadership's ideas were continually being supported at meetings, people who opposed the leadership were doing a job for the boss. He believed that in progressive unions "there would not be anyone not carrying out union policy".⁸¹ This belief in consensus was shared by many others in the Union and came to be one of the most significant characteristics of the 1970s-style leadership.

On the whole, Winter's actions were a major "disruptive force"⁸² and were "partially successful in restricting the development of the drive to improve the financial position".⁸³ The Union had to contend with yet another disruptive influence in the form of Jack Wishart, described variously as an "independent right-winger"⁸⁴ and as a Trotskyite.⁸⁵ Wishart was a barrister as well as a builders labourer

74 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 10 March 1964.

75 Minutes: General Meeting, 7 April 1964.

76 Ibid.

77 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 28 April 1964.

78 Minutes: General Meeting, 7 April 1964; Executive Meeting, 21 April 1964; Executive Meeting, 5 May 1964.

79 Minutes: General Meeting, 5 May 1964.

80 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 7 July 1964.

81 Minutes: General Meeting, 5 May 1964.

82 Interview: Bob Pringle, 8 March 1978.

83 Minutes: Federal Council Meeting, November 1964, N.S.W. Report, p.54.

84 Interview: Jack Munday, 30 March 1978.

85 Interview: Sid Davis, 8 August 1979. Davis was involved in the same Trotskyite group as Wishart. Another member was Alan Thistlethwaite.

and continually brought up points of order at meetings and challenged the rules by "the use of provisions of the Conciliation and Arbitration Act aimed at hampering the work of the new administration".⁸⁶

The 1963 Federal Council Meeting drew attention to the "excessive litigation"⁸⁷ of the N.S.W. branch and its consequent strain on the financial situation. The Federation's lawyer, Ted Hill, appeared for the N.S.W. Executive in one case of *Wishart v. the Union*.⁸⁸ Wishart's litigious activity evidently subsided after eighteen months but his disruptive and sometimes drunken⁸⁹ presence remained at meetings.

The democratic and collective nature of the leadership became apparent very early. Although McNamara, as "the youngest union secretary in Australia" received much media attention,⁹⁰ his image within the Union was much more subdued. In fact he was often overshadowed by the ebullient personality of Jack Munday. One of the reasons for Munday's influence in this period is that in 1962 he was elected as temporary city organiser, and as Ralph Kelly points out, "any city organiser who's any good, will have more effect than the Secretary".⁹¹ The explanation for this is that, because of the building boom in the Central Business District, the main strength of the Union lay in the relatively small number of large, and therefore easily organised multi-storey buildings. The city organiser who has constant day-to-day contact with these few key jobs becomes much better known and often more popular than the Secretary.

Munday's ability as an organiser soon became apparent. Mick Ross remembers;

Jack was a wonderful organiser, he never ever lost his temper with a boss. He'd argue sanely and reasonably, he was a very hard man to down. He could pick things up very quickly. If the boss made a faux pas then Jack would be right onto it.⁹²

Joe Owens adds to this:

Jack Munday in those days was a very impressive man - good organiser - shithouse seats, lost time, travelling time. If you wanted a basic job done and you rang Munday up you could count on it.⁹³

86 Minutes: Federal Council Meeting, November 1964, N.S.W. Report, p.52.

87 Minutes: General Meeting, 4 February 1964.

88 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 1 October 1963.

89 Minutes: General Meeting, 4 February 1964.

90 See Sydney Morning Herald, 30 November 1963.

91 Interview: Ralph Kelly, 13 December 1977.

92 Interview: Mick Ross, 29 July 1977.

93 Interview: Joe Owens, 24 January 1978.

Don McPhee mentions that if Munday made a promise he'd back it up, "he'd go to the gate with you"⁹⁴ and Tom Hogan claims that "Jack injected the belief that workers could struggle and could win - particularly at a grass roots level".⁹⁵ Even his later opponent, Les Robinson, concedes that Munday was responsible for the atmosphere of loyalty and honesty amongst the organisers.⁹⁶

The fact that Munday was an avowed Communist did not diminish his popularity as an organiser. Darcy Duggan believes that builders labourers he worked with might have had reservations about Munday being a Communist but never objected to any of his actions.⁹⁷ Don Crotty agrees with this assessment and adds that Munday's communism was "immaterial" to city B.L.s, "He was a good man on the job and people on the job will elect you without knowing your politics so long as you are doing a good job".⁹⁸

Both Peter Barton and Bud Cook, who later became significant in the leadership, claim that Munday introduced them to unionism. Cook explains, "Jack felt people's ability, gauged them, and pushed them into things even if they didn't want to".⁹⁹ Bob Pringle had felt this same Munday pressure when working alongside him on a job at the University of N.S.W. in 1961. Munday, who was the delegate, had signed Pringle into the Union. When Pringle got the sack, Munday encouraged him to "bat on" about reinstatement even though he was quite happy to leave the job. Eventually Munday forced the employer to apologise to Pringle and give him his unwanted job back.¹⁰⁰

Munday's vigour and determination were not just confined to his organiser's task. At Branch general meetings and within the administrative and organisational framework he was equally energetic. Phrases such as "power behind the throne",¹⁰¹ "the driving force"¹⁰² and "example in leadership"¹⁰³ are used to describe his activities. Bud Cook believes that McNamara and Munday had a good understanding but that McNamara resented his own dependence on Munday.¹⁰⁴ Ralph Kelly

94 Interview: Don McPhee, 6 December 1977.

95 Interview: Tom Hogan, 28 October 1977.

96 Interview: Les Robinson, 20 February 1978.

97 Interview: Darcy Duggan, 12 July 1977.

98 Interview: Don Crotty, 7 March 1978.

99 Interview: Bud Cook, 5 March 1978.

100 Interview: Bob Pringle, 8 March 1978.

101 Interview: Bud Cook, 5 March 1978.

102 Interview: Les Robinson, 20 February, 1978.

103 Interview: Ralph Kelly, 13 December 1977.

104 Interview: Bud Cook, 5 March 1978.

tells a revealing story: "Jack had to go away downstate or somewhere while Mick was secretary and Mick said 'who the hell's going to give me my bloody orders while you're away'".¹⁰⁵

Although McNamara was considered to have "good ideas"¹⁰⁶ and was a "skilful orator"¹⁰⁷ and "good industrial thinker"¹⁰⁸ it was Munday who began to have the most effect on policy formulation within the branch:

One particular man exerted influence on the direction of the B.Ls in N.S.W. at that time - Jack Munday - because of his own political convictions which we found more and more that we were sharing with him.¹⁰⁹

Even Robinson concedes that Munday had "new invigorating ideas and put them into practice".¹¹⁰

McNamara and Munday remained on good personal terms. Munday believes that there was a "genuine desire to bring about a collective leadership"¹¹¹ and that the men in the leadership influenced each other's ideas in different ways. As he explained to Colin Hughes in 1974:

Because of the way in which the crime element [had] controlled our union it meant that we had to develop a highly democratic alternative and that had traditionally lingered on.¹¹²

Munday maintains that, in the fluctuating political atmosphere of the early sixties the B.L.F. had been "lucky to have like-minded people coming into the melting pot at one time".¹¹³ With the exception of Winter, and possibly Theo Austin, the organisers were all highly regarded by the membership.¹¹⁴ They were respected for "the enormous amount of hard work they did over those turbulent years".¹¹⁵ They were not only hard workers but they used their time to good effect - building up social contact with their membership. Munday says:

We tended to try and have lunch on the job - always trying not to end up in pubs too much with workers but using that as a vehicle - unlike the B.W.I.U. who had a rule of not drinking in working hours.¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁵ Interview: Ralph Kelly, 13 December 1977.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Interview: Bud Cook, 5 March 1978.

¹⁰⁹ Interview: Ralph Kelly, 13 December 1977.

¹¹⁰ Interview: Les Robinson, 20 February 1978.

¹¹¹ Interview: Jack Munday, 13 August 1975.

¹¹² Jack Munday: interview with Professor Colin Hughes 1974, cited in Caroline Graham, *op.cit.*, p.10.

¹¹³ Interview: Jack Munday, 30 March 1978.

¹¹⁴ See Interviews: Mick Ross, Don Crotty, Darcy Duggan and Bob Pringle.

¹¹⁵ Interview: Mick Curtin, 29 February 1976.

¹¹⁶ Interview: Jack Munday, 13 August 1975.

Their hard work and many hours of unpaid overtime, induced right-winger Jack White to move that organisers' wages be raised. This was rejected by the organisers themselves who felt that the Union could not afford it.¹¹⁷ Munday reflects on this aspect of leadership ideology when he comments "there was less opportunism than existed in other trade unions".¹¹⁸ Once again, this reluctance to indulge in feather-bedding became a well-known characteristic of the Union in the seventies.

Another important aspect of later leadership "style" which was apparent in the sixties was the leadership's reliance on the rank and file for collective decision making. A description of the painful task of rebuilding democratic structures within the union framework is contained in a Joint Statement which arose out of a visit to the N.S.W. Branch by two Federation officials in February 1964. As this document is a good indication of what the N.S.W. leaders felt to be their priorities, it deserves lengthy quotation:

Despite these difficulties [right-wing disruption] the new leadership took steps from the beginning to set the Union on a new path towards strong and progressive unionism. Steps were taken to strengthen job organisation by the election of job delegates, the convening of job delegates' conferences, the development and extension of democratic union practices aimed at giving the membership the fullest right to active participation in the Union affairs.

Job struggles were developed, industrial agreements were negotiated, and the Union began to take an active part in the campaigns of the Trade Union Movement in general and the Building Trades Group of the Labor Council of N.S.W. in particular.

A long sustained campaign was waged in opposition to a number of unsatisfactory features of the Federal Award. This campaign embraced hundreds of meetings, many demonstrations, conferences and other actions. An example of this activity was the march through the city streets and Wynyard Park Rally of builders labourers addressed by the leaders of the Building Unions.

The administrative chaos has been overcome, and there is a steady improvement in this work. Job organisation has been greatly improved and at the present time there are 130 job delegates.¹¹⁹

This statement, emphasising rank and file activity in decision-making, is backed up by evidence from the minutes and by articles in the Branch journal Builders Labourer which was founded soon after the new team took office. The first issue was produced in December 1961 and despite difficulties in production¹²⁰ the journal became an important link between the leadership and the members. It was used as an

117 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 21 April 1964.

118 Interview: Jack Munday, 13 August 1975.

119 Joint Statement, 5 February 1964. Signed by N. Gallagher, P. Malone, M. McNamara and M. Lynch.

120 See Minutes: Executive Meetings, 4 June 1963 and 4 August 1964.

educative, informative and social vehicle. Much of Munday's influence arose out of his writings in the Builders Labourer after his election to the journal committee in 1963.¹²¹

The February 1962 edition of the journal gave great publicity to the first N.S.W. delegates' conference which was held on a Sunday and was attended by over forty delegates.¹²² This success was repeated with later delegates' conferences¹²³ which began to become a regular feature of the decision-making process. Life members were encouraged to attend¹²⁴ and B.Ls who were active around certain issues such as aboriginal rights and youth activity were also invited.¹²⁵ In order to encourage the greatest attendance, Munday suggested that delegates' meetings should be held in mid-week instead of at weekends.¹²⁶ Resolutions were normally carried unanimously because Winter, White and Kenny did not attend the meetings.¹²⁷

Regular organisers' meetings were also held,¹²⁸ and these became more assertive. Organisers began to attend Executive meetings which formally they were not supposed to do.¹²⁹ On the whole, the evidence certainly supports McNamara's claim that "the policy of this branch, since this leadership assumed office has been to encourage the utmost democracy and rank and file control".¹³⁰

Even the atmosphere in the office was egalitarian. This was partly induced by the circumstances in which the office staff came to be employed. When the newly elected officials arrived in the office on the Monday morning following their election they discovered that the female office employees had walked out and refused to work for the new leadership.¹³¹ They had even destroyed all the dues accounts which they had prepared for mailing.

The officials managed the office work for a short while until Judy Willcocks (later Munday) was employed. Judy attributes the "community feeling" within the office to the fact that everyone

121 Minutes: General Meeting, 3 December 1963.

122 Builders Labourer, February 1962.

123 Minutes: Executive Meetings, 13 August 1963 and 21 July 1964.

124 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 21 July 1964.

125 Minutes: General Meeting, 7 July 1964.

126 Minutes: General Meeting, 2 July 1963.

127 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 21 July 1964.

128 Minutes: Executive Meetings, 27 October 1964 and 3 November 1964.

129 Interview: Jack Munday, 30 March 1978.

130 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 17 December 1963.

131 Unidentified News Clipping headed "November 1961", McNamara Papers.

started raw and ignorant together. The young officials had no idea how normal office hierarchies operated and Judy, who was eighteen and had little job experience, was not imbued with a sense of her "inferior position". The officials were impressed that she could do shorthand, typing and bookkeeping and afforded her due respect. The officials never expected her to make the tea or to call them "Mr" which was common practice in unions at the time.¹³² The natural egalitarianism of the committed militants would also have contributed to this comradely behaviour. As other women joined the staff the same behaviour patterns continued and it was not until the boom in membership and consequent doubling of staff in the late sixties that any problems occurred to mar this close relationship.¹³³ Judy Munday remembers that she and Doreen Anderson were invited to attend delegates' conferences and rank and file meetings which they often did. The staff also felt quite free to question decisions and make suggestions. She believes that the leadership never developed a strict division of labour concept and saw her as a worker for the Union rather than just a clerk.¹³⁴

As the membership of the Union became involved in decision making through regular delegates' conferences and lively branch meetings, the impetus behind the Rank and File Committee began to founder. As Jack Munday describes it "the contradiction which has plagued the Rank and File set in".¹³⁵ He explains "why should workers go to yet another meeting when in fact they had expression for their views at Branch meetings?" The fact that the right-wing still remained a small dissident group within the leadership meant that there were still some uses for the Rank and File Committee. Meetings were held irregularly and Hoist was still produced, particularly in election years.

After the 1964 election, when the Rank and File team won complete control, the distinction between the Rank and File Committee and the Union's other organs became so meaningless that it was decided to keep the Committee in abeyance and to work within the organs of the Union.¹³⁶ Its main role then became the pre-selection of candidates for the triennial Union elections.

One important aspect of the Rank and File's activities remained

¹³² Interview: Judy Munday, 13 March 1978.

¹³³ For further information on this aspect see chapter 9.

¹³⁴ Interview: Judy Munday, 13 March 1978.

¹³⁵ Interview: Jack Munday, 13 August 1975.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

however. This was its social role. Huge money-raising barbecues, attracting up to five hundred members and their families, were held at Joe Dryburgh's place at Balmain. These group activities engendered a sense of "social belonging"¹³⁷ and helped develop a feeling of camaraderie which was so apparent during the Green Bans period. The men began to identify themselves as builders labourers or "B.Ls", and even the terminology was significant. Previously the term most commonly used about their occupation was "labourer" but during the sixties they became "B.Ls". Jack Munday feels that it was a pity that this social activity declined during the seventies when the political pressure began to build up. He believes that B.Ls tended to lose their sense of "belonging".¹³⁸

The main reason that B.Ls began to change their self image¹³⁹ was the growing importance of their own work within the building industry. As buildings grew taller and construction methods changed, B.L. activities such as scaffolding, rigging, dogging and concreting became more skilful occupations and often the vital element in trouble-free and efficient erection of buildings. Hence their industrial muscle increased as that of tradesmen waned. The percentage of sub-contractors in the industry grew dramatically. In August 1964, the President of the M.B.A. announced there were 4,000 people in N.S.W. who called themselves master builders even though only 1300 were members of his association.¹⁴⁰ This situation caused a certain amount of disarray in the ranks of the traditional employers for they had no control over these newcomers who could "grace themselves with the title of 'master builder'...by paying a \$10 registration fee".¹⁴¹ Competition among sub-contractors led to low tenders being made and the result of this was a downward pressure on wages, conditions and safety on the job-sites. Consequently most of the campaigns waged by the B.L.F. in this early period were around simple wages-and-conditions demands. Men from the large jobs of the period, in particular the State Office Block and the Opera House tended to be in the forefront of these struggles.

137 Ibid. When Joe Dryburgh got married "over 100 building workers, seamen and other friends gathered at that well known address 71 Elliot St", Builders Labourer, November December 1966, p.17.

138 Ibid.

139 In the fifties and early sixties it was quite common for B.Ls to be referred to as "shit labourers" both by themselves and by the tradesmen.

140 Daily Mirror, 1 August 1964.

141 Ibid.

Although the Union, as it began to find its feet, assumed increasingly militant industrial positions, at this stage it never really moved out of the arena of traditional "left" union activity. It involved itself in peace groups, aboriginal rights activities, solidarity committees and so on but did not resort to the physical action in support of these campaigns for which it later became so famous.

The most important aspect of the Union's activities in this period was the development of democratic decision making structures within the Union. The consequent trust and politicization which developed within the membership was crucial in later developments.

On the whole, much of what became known as the "B.L.F. style" is pre-figured in this period. It was only when the 1964 election swept away the last of the right-wing disrupters, that this "style" was given the chance to flower and develop.

The 1964 Triennial election of the Branch was to embroil the Union in a controversy that was more related to internal Labor Party warfare¹⁴² than it was to the Union. Two polls were to be held in October, one for federal councillors of the State Branch and one for the state officials. Stan Winter, the only remaining right-wing organiser, decided to nominate against McNamara as Secretary. He circulated a petition for a court controlled ballot. As McNamara reported:

...the Branch used much energy carrying out A.C.T.U. and Federation policy fighting against the court ballot. A fight for the withdrawal of names from the petition commenced, daily smoko and lunch time job meetings were held explaining court ballots. As can well be imagined, much of the officials time was taken up opposing these obnoxious attempts to take our affairs out of the Union's control.

A life and death struggle for the Branch was on in earnest.¹⁴³

More than 700 signatures were obtained for the petition and it was submitted to the Commonwealth Industrial Registrar in July.¹⁴⁴ In August the Branch was informed that the ballot for state officials would be conducted by the court.¹⁴⁵ McNamara explained:

Though we were unsuccessful in defeating the imposition of the court ballot - and we have real doubt about the existence of the 700 signatures - we lifted the awareness of the membership and showed the members what our opponents really stood for.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² The Internal dispute was between the Federal Body of the A.L.P. and its right-wing N.S.W. Branch under the control of W. Colbourne and C. Oliver.

¹⁴³ Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1964, p.55.

¹⁴⁴ Unidentified News Clipping headed "July 1964", McNamara Papers.

¹⁴⁵ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 11 August 1964.

¹⁴⁶ Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1964, p.55.

The media predicted a dilemma for the State A.L.P. officers when they had to decide whether to support Winter, who was President of the Darlinghurst West branch of the A.L.P., or McNamara who was Vice President of the Mosman branch. The June State A.L.P. conference had decided that the N.S.W. Branch should issue certificates to bona fide A.L.P. teams in Union elections.¹⁴⁷

The September Branch meeting of the Union expressed concern about the rumour that the state A.L.P. President was to issue certificates to A.L.P. tickets in their election.¹⁴⁸ Their fears were justified.

State A.L.P. secretary W. Colbourne wrote Winter a letter which concluded:

As officers of the party we have never had any reason to doubt your efficiency and loyalty...We appreciate your efforts to have elected an executive and officers of your union who are sympathetic to the platform and policy of the Australian Labour Party and we convey to you our best wishes for success in the forthcoming ballot.

Colbourne, when questioned, said it "was not a 'certification' or 'endorsement'" but McNamara protested against what he called "unwarranted and blatant interference" in his Union by the state A.L.P. and announced that he would ask Federal Labor leaders to intervene. He claimed:

I have not asked for endorsement on a political basis because I would much prefer to be returned on my industrial record, and not because I belong to a certain political party.¹⁴⁹

The Sydney Morning Herald expressed the view that Colbourne's letter might be ruled a breach of a Federal Executive directive in August that the June State Conference decision to endorse candidates in union elections involved a change of policy and should not be put into effect until the issue could be referred to the next Federal Conference.¹⁵⁰ This directive had been issued because the State Conference decision had been made "with a wild outbreak of fist fighting disrupting the counting".¹⁵¹

Colbourne's letter was the first letter of support given to a union candidate since the State Conference and "might provide a 'test

¹⁴⁷ Unidentified News Clipping headed "July 1964", McNamara Papers.

The A.L.P. officers gave some indication of their preference when they allocated positions on their how-to-vote card for the N.S.W. central Executive of 40 members. Winter was placed at 43 and McNamara at 79.

¹⁴⁸ Minutes: General Meeting, 1 September 1964.

¹⁴⁹ Sydney Morning Herald, 22 September 1964.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Daily Telegraph, 22 September 1964.

case' between Federal and State officials".¹⁵²

The Union Executive discussed the affair¹⁵³ and expressed its "grave concern at Mr. Colbourne's letter" and condemned his action in allowing it to be used. It also condemned "in the strongest terms" the A.L.P. officers who supported Colbourne's action.¹⁵⁴

McNamara complained to the Federal President, Jim Keeffe. Keeffe told the Herald: "If the facts are as stated it would appear to be a breach of Federal policy". McNamara reminded the press of the 1962 Federal Executive resolution:

The branches are warned that the A.L.P. does not officially endorse candidates in union election, and that no action should be taken to discriminate between A.L.P. members who may be standing for union office.

McNamara claimed that both Colbourne and Oliver had voted for the resolution. In rebuttal, Winter argued that McNamara "had only five A.L.P. members in candidates named for 21 positions on his how-to-vote card" whereas he had nineteen A.L.P. members.¹⁵⁵

When the Federal Secretary, Cyril Wyndham, called for "copies of all documents in the dispute",¹⁵⁶ the state A.L.P. officers sent him a breakdown of candidates for the 21 positions, showing that Winter had on his ticket eighteen A.L.P. members and three non-party candidates. McNamara was shown as running only nine candidates, eight A.L.P. and one not belonging to a party. The breakdown claimed that there were twelve non-A.L.P. left-wingers running for those positions that McNamara's ticket was not contesting.¹⁵⁷

Wyndham made it clear that no action would be taken to force Colbourne's letter to be withdrawn. The Australian having remarked that McNamara was "a left-winger reportedly unpopular with members of the N.S.W. Labor hierarchy" ventured that, "it seems certain that Mr. Wyndham and the Federal president, Mr. Jim Keeffe have decided to avoid a Federal versus N.S.W. A.L.P. brawl on the eve of the Senate election".¹⁵⁸

The two Federal A.L.P. officials decided they did not have the power to deal with the charges and held the decision over until the next Federal Executive meeting which would not take place until after the

¹⁵² Sydney Morning Herald, 23 September 1964.

¹⁵³ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 22 September 1964.

¹⁵⁴ Sydney Morning Herald, 23 September 1964.

¹⁵⁵ Sydney Morning Herald, 23 September 1964.

¹⁵⁶ Sydney Morning Herald, 24 September 1964.

¹⁵⁷ Daily Telegraph, 25 September 1964.

¹⁵⁸ The Australian, 25 September 1964.

Union ballot had been declared.¹⁵⁹ The Sydney Morning Herald quoted "Federal Labour [sic] members of Parliament" who said that the two had "obviously acted to 'cover up' until these ballots were over. It looks as if the N.S.W. officers have at least the tacit backing of Mr. Wyndham and Mr. Keeffe".¹⁶⁰ The Telegraph, always more knowledgeable (and vindictive) about A.L.P. affairs, pointed out that opponents of A.L.P. intervention in union ballots were in the majority on the Federal Executive and that if Colbourne's "nominee" lost the election the Federal Executive was certain to

- * Reprimand the N.S.W. A.L.P.
- * Warn the N.S.W. A.L.P. not to repeat the offence.
- * Warn the N.S.W. A.L.P. that if it repeats the offence it risks Federal intervention.¹⁶¹

It also argued that A.L.P. officers in N.S.W. were almost certain to be forced to abandon their plan to endorse party candidates in union elections because:

The officers were severely censured by a strong section of the central executive on Friday night. Only after a hostile two-hour debate were they able to get the executive to endorse their action in the B.L.F. ballot. The executive...is usually under tight control by the officers.¹⁶²

Obviously, the right-wing had overstepped the mark in what has always been a delicate area of the labour movement - the relationship between the A.L.P. and individual Party members who are also union officials.¹⁶³

The row within the A.L.P. had produced another problem for the B.L.F. After McNamara's complaint to Keeffe about Colbourne, the Winter faction retaliated by laying unity-ticket charges against McNamara and Lynch. Winter informed the media:

We have established that certain members of the A.L.P. attended the Graphic Arts Club on August 23 with known members of the Communist Party to draw up their 'ticket' for the B.L.F. ballot.

Winter and White, the right-wing candidate for President, argued that they had been forced to reveal that they had laid charges "in fairness to the N.S.W. A.L.P. executive officers". McNamara challenged Winter to name him specifically, as having attended the 23 August

¹⁵⁹ Daily Telegraph, 25 September 1964.

¹⁶⁰ Sydney Morning Herald, 25 September 1964.

¹⁶¹ Daily Telegraph, 25 September 1964.

¹⁶² Unidentified News Clipping headed "26 September 1964", McNamara Papers.

¹⁶³ This point was reinforced for me when Labor Council Secretary Barry Unsworth created enormous controversy in October 1979 by publicly attacking the left-wing Federal body of the Plumbers' Union which was in dispute with the right-wing State body. Both factions were led by A.L.P. members. Even right-wing delegates at Labor Council expressed unease.

meeting, and accused him of "smearing me as a fellow traveller of the Communists without having any proof to offer".¹⁶⁴ He presented a letter to the A.L.P. Central Executive which alleged that "these rumours are being circulated at this present time because the union's ballot is about to begin...[and] to smear myself and place some doubts in the minds of the members of the union". He demanded that the charges be heard immediately so that he could clear himself before the ballot began.

Colbourne refused to discuss McNamara's letter and the State Executive referred the charges to the Party's Disputes Committee.¹⁶⁵

In a separate, but obviously related move, McNamara was removed from his position as Vice-President of the Mosman Branch. The Branch had made the decision under a rarely-invoked A.L.P. rule, because McNamara had not attended three consecutive meetings. McNamara complained that the Mosman Branch meetings coincided with his Union meetings at which his attendance was crucial,¹⁶⁶ but to no avail.

Another effect that the A.L.P. dispute had on the Union election was to confuse the campaign material quite remarkably. In order to escape Winter's unity ticket charges, McNamara and the left-A.L.P. group who had been pre-selected by the Rank and File were forced to produce a false how-to-vote ticket. "We put out a Rank and File ticket and also put out a separate one to cover ourselves with the A.L.P. We only gave them to certain people."¹⁶⁷ The fake ticket, a handsome blue dodger with a smiling picture of McNamara and prominent A.L.P. headlines, urged voters to "reject the opportunists and splitters" and to "keep our Union independent". It reassured members that "Mick McNamara's team is opposed to the policies of the D.L.P. and the Communists". As if this heavy irony was not enough the actual voting order would have caused many informed chuckles. W. Bodkin, the discredited former Secretary was the preferred candidate for President. Vince Henneberry who had presided over the infamous 1962 by-election, got the nod for Trustee and, of course, not one Communist received a mention. It was almost a case of overload when the pamphlet promised "sincere leadership".¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ Daily Telegraph, 24 September 1964.

¹⁶⁵ Daily Telegraph, 26 September 1964.

¹⁶⁶ The Australian, 29 September 1964.

¹⁶⁷ Interview: Bud Cook, 5 March 1978. Cook pinpointed this incident as a contributing factor in his eventual transfer to the C.P.A. "The dishonesty of it rankled...what's the good of being in a party like that."

¹⁶⁸ Document: Builders' Labourers Support these A.L.P. Men, hand dated 29 September 1964.

The Rank and File publication Hoist contained, by contrast, a detailed attack on Winter, accusing him of "Barry Goldwater rantings about 'Reds, Reds, Reds'" and of sneering at the Union for interesting itself in world peace. It alleged that, as an organiser he had refused to carry out Branch and Executive decisions and had supported court interference in Union elections. It claimed that "only the Master Builders and other building employers could welcome this person's election" and commented:

It is understandable that this person should get so much space in the Daily Telegraph for his policies are the complete opposite of the Union's leadership and in line with the Daily Telegraph which supports the extreme right-wing of Trade Unions.¹⁶⁹

At the October Branch meeting, "interference by outside people around the present ballot" was condemned and the National Civic Council and the New Settlers Federation were mentioned in addition to the A.L.P.¹⁷⁰ Munday refers to 1964 as "a real challenge from the right" and admits that Winter had built up "some support".¹⁷¹

McNamara labelled the affair as "the most serious attempt to interfere in Trade Unions since the defeat of the notorious Industrial Groups".¹⁷²

Winter used Colbourne's letter to some advantage. He roneed copies of it and distributed them around the job-sites.¹⁷³ N.C.C., D.L.P. and right-wing-A.L.P. Trade Union leaders came out in direct support of Winter. His supporters used door-knocking as a campaign method so McNamara's team responded similarly. McNamara explained:

The Rank and File Committee, a militant organisation including practically every representative in the State (140) and other active workers raised £600, which was spent on leaflets, letters, How-to-Votes, Italian and Greek pamphlets, posters, booklets, rank and file workers addressing jobs, visits to the country areas and the like.

He admitted that this concentration on "the prime task of defeating the disrupters" had affected to a certain extent their general Union work,¹⁷⁴ and restricted the development of the drive to improve their finances rapidly.¹⁷⁵ One of Winter's tactics that particularly disturbed

¹⁶⁹ "A Bleak Winter Indeed", Hoist: A Builders' Labourers Journal Supporting Stronger Trade Unionism, (Published Continuously since 1950), July 1964.

¹⁷⁰ Minutes: General Meeting, 6 October 1964.

¹⁷¹ Interview: Jack Munday, 13 August 1975.

¹⁷² Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1964, p.55.

¹⁷³ Sydney Morning Herald, 23 September 1964.

¹⁷⁴ Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1964, p.56.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p.54.

McNamara was his misrepresentation of the 1963 Federal Conference decision to investigate the N.S.W. Branch's finances:¹⁷⁶

Industrial Group forces brought out a newsheet Guardian which painted a picture of the Federal body attacking our Branch and the "investigation" being virtually a vote of no confidence.¹⁷⁷

However, despite Winter's significant support from outside the builders labourers, his standing within the Union was not sufficient to overthrow an obviously popular Rank and File team. Although Winter polled much better than Bodkin did in 1961 this can be explained by Bodkin's reputation for incompetence and anti-democratic behaviour. Winter on the other hand was simply a committed conservative who, in the Cold War atmosphere of the early sixties, would have proved attractive to rank and file members uneasy about their communist tainted leadership.

The first ballot to be declared was the Branch-run election for four Federal councillors.

The Rank and File team outpolled Winter's group by 2-1 with W. Ahern, who was also on Winter's ticket, receiving 957 votes, McNamara 931, Lynch 885 and Harding 872. Winter received 388, White 353, A. Maxwell 335, and W. Shields 194.¹⁷⁸

The Sydney Morning Herald saw the result as a "severe rebuff" for State A.L.P. leaders¹⁷⁹ whilst the Telegraph claimed that the ballot, "fought on a top party level, further strengthens the hands of inter-state opponents of the N.S.W. right-wing". It tied the controversy over the Union ballot to moves by N.S.W. to have Calwell replaced by Whitlam as Federal leader. It concluded: "Last night's union ballot result is the worst reverse the N.S.W. leaders have had with the left wing".¹⁸⁰

Winter announced immediately that his supporters would ask the Industrial Registrar to inquire into the ballot.¹⁸¹ He also wrote to the Telegraph complaining about that paper's claim that the result would "embarrass the right wing party officers". He pointed out that the Federal ballot papers had been posted five days before Colbourne's letter was made public: "Therefore the effect of this letter can only be taken into calculation in respect of the branch officers' election".¹⁸²

176 See Appendix C.

177 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1964, p.54.

178 Sydney Morning Herald, 7 October 1964.

179 Ibid.

180 Daily Telegraph, 7 October 1964.

181 Sydney Morning Herald, 7 October 1964.

182 Daily Telegraph, 8 October 1964.

He obviously had great faith in the effect that Colbourne's letter would have on the second poll. However, he was badly mistaken. When the branch officers' ballot was declared ten days later he was again defeated, this time by McNamara's 833 to 439. Not only did he fail to become Secretary but he also lost his position as organiser, coming seventh in a poll for six vacancies.¹⁸³

The Rank and File team had "a clean sweep"¹⁸⁴ victory with according to McNamara, "all the dead wood completely got rid of".¹⁸⁵ Harding defeated White for President by 800-485, with Bodkin receiving only 35 votes. McHugh became Vice-President and Lynch Treasurer.¹⁸⁶ The six organisers were Prendergast, Munday, McHugh, Austin, Smith and McGill. The four delegates to the Executive were Robinson, Ferguson, J. McNamara and Cook.¹⁸⁷

The spinoff for the A.L.P. from this election result was to direct media attention to the Federal Executive meeting held the following week. The evening papers reported that Federal Secretary, F.E. Chamberlain, was expected to "demand the disciplining of the N.S.W. branch". N.S.W. delegates were "just as determined to have a showdown over what they regard as undue interference by the Federal Executive in the affairs of the N.S.W. Branch". Although Colbourne's letter to Winter was the centre of the dispute, the Victorian President, R.W. Holt, was also reported to be determined to have the issue of unity tickets in Victoria "dealt with effectively" by the Federal Executive. The Victorian problem involved an alleged unity ticket in the Victorian branch elections of the Waterside Workers' Federation.¹⁸⁸

The Federal Executive's eventual decision effectively forced N.S.W. to back down from its original position.¹⁸⁹ The Executive requested from N.S.W. assurance that it would obey A.L.P. policy on non-interference in trade union elections which had been a rule since 1954.¹⁹⁰ The Executive would not accept Colbourne and Oliver's

¹⁸³ Sun, 16 October 1964.

¹⁸⁴ Interview: Jack Munday, 13 August 1975.

¹⁸⁵ Mick McNamara: Interviewed by Pat Fiske 1976.

¹⁸⁶ Sun, 16 October 1964.

¹⁸⁷ Minutes: General Meeting, 3 November 1964.

¹⁸⁸ Unidentified News Clipping headed "20 October", McNamara Papers.

¹⁸⁹ One clipping headed "23 October 1964", describes the decision as "two compromises". The other compromise presumably was that the Executive "decided to take no action against the N.S.W. branch".

¹⁹⁰ Daily Telegraph, 7 November 1964.

undertakings not to participate in union elections.¹⁹¹ The Executive demanded that the N.S.W. A.L.P. Central Executive carry a resolution stating that the State party would "obey decisions of the A.L.P. in union elections",¹⁹² and formally convey the assurance to the Federal Executive.

Oliver and Colbourne continued to deny that they had breached Federal policy and argued that:

...the N.S.W. move to combat communism in the trade union movement, even if it were not completely within the letter of A.L.P. policy conformed with the spirit of the policy.¹⁹³

It was even reported that Winter had requested the letter from Colbourne "to clear his name of suggestions that he was associated with the D.L.P."¹⁹⁴

As for Colbourne's and Oliver's plans for endorsement of union candidates, the State Central Executive eventually resolved "that the Party in N.S.W. would obey a Federal A.L.P. direction on this issue".¹⁹⁵ The Telegraph regarded the decision as "a victory for the Left-wing controllers of the Labor Party Federal Executive".¹⁹⁶

It was also a minor victory for Mick McNamara and his team. In the atmosphere surrounding this partial defeat for the A.L.P. right-wing the unity ticket charges against Lynch and himself were quietly shelved.¹⁹⁷

The Federal Conference of the Union also passed a strongly worded resolution condemning Colbourne for "using his office to interfere in our Union's affairs". It pointed out that the Union was;

...made up of people of different political and religious views and while the Union may be affiliated to the A.L.P., the A.L.P. has no authority to demand or coerce our membership to vote for the A.L.P. candidates of its choosing.

It went on to point out that A.L.P. members who stood against chosen official candidates would be liable to expulsion from the Labor Party.¹⁹⁸ In moving the resolution McNamara argued strongly that "our members are not so concerned as to which political party we belong to" but what sort of leadership they get.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹¹ Daily Telegraph, 23 October 1964.

¹⁹² Daily Telegraph, 7 November 1964.

¹⁹³ Daily Telegraph, 23 October 1964.

¹⁹⁴ Unidentified News Clipping headed "23 October", McNamara Papers.

¹⁹⁵ Daily Telegraph, 7 November 1964.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 20 October 1964.

¹⁹⁸ Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1964, p.35.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., p.21.

The leadership they got as a result of the 1964 election was, according to Munday, "still orthodox militant but further to the left than we'd been before".²⁰⁰ The elimination of Winter and his team signalled the last serious attempt by the right-wing to win back the Union. Not one of the defeated officials returned to work in the industry. McNamara scathingly explained, "they weren't B.Ls to start with".²⁰¹

After the 1964 election the Executive set about tackling the administrative problems which had been compounded by the existence of the Winter group on the Executive.²⁰² The Executive minutes for 1965 and 1966 indicate an obsession with organisational matters, especially regarding membership and dues collection. This concentration on overcoming the administrative chaos was made easier by the absence of the old right-wingers, particularly Winter, from the Executive.²⁰³

The only other disruptive element, apart from the Maoist group,²⁰⁴ was a personality problem which began to develop between Maurie Lynch and those people he saw as rivals to his position in the hierarchy. When Mick McNamara visited the U.S.S.R. in mid-1967 Lynch made it quite clear that he felt he should be the acting Secretary. Munday supported the choice of Bud Cook, who was office manager at the time, as the logical replacement. Eventually Cook was appointed acting Secretary²⁰⁵ but the incident evidently rankled Lynch more than the others realised.

The 1967 triennial election was basically a non-event. With the Maoist opposition, dispirited by poor results in by-elections, virtually non-existent, the Rank and File held an uncontroversial preselection and nominated the only team for the election. Even the returning officer was not challenged.²⁰⁶ Other elections during the year to fill vacancies on Labor Council and the B.T.G. were similarly uncontested.²⁰⁷

200 Interview: Jack Munday, 13 August 1975.

201 Mick McNamara, interviewed by Pat Fiske, 1976.

202 The Executive Minutes for 1965 are remarkable for their lack of disruption and time consuming arguments.

203 Winter did not return to the industry and was employed by a firm of solicitors; and Wishart, another disruptive element, died during 1965. Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1965, p.59.

204 Discussed in Appendix C.

205 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 4 July 1967.

206 Minutes: General Meeting, 15 August 1967.

207 Minutes: General Meeting, 17 January 1967.

The new 1967 office bearers were Bob Pringle as Guardian and Bud Cook, Tom Hogan, and John Maiurano, as delegates to the Executive.²⁰⁸ Maiurano was the only newcomer who did not figure prominently in the Union leadership during the seventies.

The elected organisers remained the same, with only old-timer Charlie Smith retiring.²⁰⁹ Munday, Austin, McHugh, McGill and Prendergast remained the organisational core with temporary organisers joining their forces from time to time.

However in February 1968 the organisational continuity was shaken by an event which probably changed the nature of the Union as profoundly as anything which occurred in the sixties. Mick McNamara, after six years as Secretary was beginning to falter. There is evidence²¹⁰ that his attention to detail was declining. Munday was continually moving recommendations about tightening administrative and financial procedures.²¹¹ As Ralph Kelly describes it, "during that time, Mick spent far more time in the pub than he did in the secretary's chair".²¹² Bud Cook presents the situation more charitably. He argues, "Mick was a good person. He had the right feelings but not always the right actions".²¹³

One of McNamara's problems was his gambling. Several members of the Executive believed that he had used Union money to pay his debts.²¹⁴ Munday claims that McNamara "resigned of his own volition...he couldn't really handle the job...he was a gambler...he wasn't forced out". Munday takes care to point out that McNamara's debt to the Union was paid out of the long service leave money that was owing to him: "He

208 Minutes: General Meeting, 7 November 1967.

209 Jack Munday, "Fine Service from Jack and Charlie", The Builders Labourer, February-March 1968, p.17. Munday also reported the retirement of Jack Stephensen from the Executive. Munday's kind words about Smith do not coincide with McNamara's assertion to Federal Council that Smith did not need to be replaced because he had not been doing the job. A certain charity about old timers whose ideology is not as advanced as his, is a feature of Munday's personality.

210 For instance Correspondence: N. Gallagher to M. McNamara 14 February 1968, pointing out that the financial statement was 2½ months late. Also correspondence received and replied to after McNamara's resignation reveal many matters that needed urgent attention. Correspondence: J. Munday to R. Baldwin, 16 July 1968; J. Munday to K. Long, 7 August 1968; and D. McHugh to J. Munday, 30 November 1968.

211 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 28 November 1967, is a good example.

212 Interview: Ralph Kelly, 13 December 1977.

213 Interview: Bud Cook, 5 March 1978.

214 Caroline Graham, op.cit., p.7 refers to rumours of embezzlement whereas Pete Thomas, op.cit., p.65 gives no reason at all for McNamara's resignation.

left the Union not owing one penny."²¹⁵

When asked whether McNamara's resignation was handled correctly - with hindsight, Munday referred to McNamara's past good work with the Union and reiterated that his offence had been of a "minor nature". He did however venture that the public announcement of McNamara's resignation because of ill health²¹⁶ was "not very convincing...There he was, a strapping 28 year old walking around the Trades Hall Hotel. Jokes were made about his health".²¹⁷

McNamara resigned as Secretary and Federal Councillor at the 27 February Executive meeting after reporting that all the recommendations about administration which had been moved at the special November 1967 Executive Meeting, had been carried out. He announced that he would stay on as Vice-President of the B.T.G. and as Labor Council delegate.

Lynch, McHugh and Prendergast all spoke highly of McNamara's contribution to the Union²¹⁸ and a motion was passed "commending Mick for the work he has performed in the interest of the Branch, Federation and working class generally".²¹⁹ A presentation was made to McNamara at a function following the delegates' conference,²²⁰ and Munday wrote without untruth, a friendly tribute in The Builders Labourer:

For a considerable period, Mick has had a nervous complaint no doubt caused by the high pressure he was subjected to during the hectic years in which he played a leading part in cleaning up our Union and making it the respected organisation it is now.²²¹

McNamara went back to industry to work as a rigger,²²² and eventually dropped out of his Labor Council and B.T.G. positions.²²³ He remained a moderating force within the industry throughout the early seventies and played an ambiguous role during the Federal Intervention. However he never sided openly with his brother, Johnny, and the Maoist opposition and remained loyal to the elected leadership.

A problem of a different nature now presented itself to the leadership. They had to appoint a pro-tem Secretary with some haste

215 Interview: Jack Munday, 3 April 1978.

216 A press statement was released in early March 1968.

Minutes: Executive Meeting, 5 March 1968.

217 Interview: Jack Munday, 3 April 1978.

218 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 27 February 1968.

219 Correspondence: J. Munday to N. Gallagher, 13 March 1968.

220 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 27 February 1968.

221 The Builders' Labourer, February-March 1968, p.3. Clancy also spoke at the function. He "spoke of Mick's talents, and expressed a hope that Mick's health would improve to allow him to continue to serve the unionists and working class."

222 Correspondence: J. Munday to R. Rugg, 25 March 1968.

223 Correspondence: J. Munday to M. McNamara, 17 June 1968.

and it was not an easy decision. Maurie Lynch's enmity towards Munday had increased, and although Munday tried to work with him, Lynch was violently opposed to Munday becoming Secretary. Lynch, who had been Treasurer felt that he should be Secretary, arguing that he had been on the Executive longest. Prendergast replied: "Why not me then. I've been here just as long as you...it's got to be Jack".²²⁴ Prendergast, who at this stage was still in the A.L.P., broke with Theo Austin and John Maiurano who supported their fellow A.L.P. member, Lynch.

The C.P.A. members amongst the leadership were concerned about their relations with the A.L.P. Bud Cook had left to join the C.P.A., Mick McNamara was leaving the Union, and Prendergast was moving rapidly away from the A.L.P. Bud Cook remembers: "...We had a shaky scene with the A.L.P....A.L.P. support had fallen off...Jack was a little bit worried about the whole thing being disrupted."²²⁵

There was discussion amongst the C.P.A. people about who should be Secretary. Munday convened the meetings which consisted of himself, Bert McGill, Bud Cook, Tom Hogan and Joe Owens. Munday sought individual discussion as well as joint discussion. Originally Munday asked Bud Cook to stand. According to Cook, Munday "was looking for anybody to be Secretary". When Cook argued that it couldn't be anyone but him (Munday), Munday then asked Tom Hogan and Joe Owens who replied that he (Munday) was seen as the person to do the job. Pat Clancy was consulted and he agreed with the others that Munday should be the nomination.²²⁶

At the 27 February Executive Meeting, Cook and Hogan nominated Munday whilst Austin and Maiurano nominated Lynch. Munday was elected pro-tem Secretary by eight votes to three.²²⁷

Lynch also stood against Munday when nominations were called for the position of Secretary and Federal Councillor.²²⁸ The ballot took place at a special meeting where postal votes which were available on application were also counted. Munday recalls the vote as being about 800 to 200 in his favour. Munday believes that "amongst those who voted, I would have been seen as more radical than Lynch".²²⁹

²²⁴ Quoted by Bud Cook: Interview: 5 March 1978.

²²⁵ Interview: Bud Cook, 5 March 1978.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 27 February 1968.

²²⁸ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 16 April 1968.

²²⁹ Interview: Jack Munday, 30 March 1978.

Lynch continued to work with the leadership but "didn't mix with us...wasn't part of us". Interview: Bud Cook, 5 March 1978.

Ralph Kelly analysed how he believed the membership responded to Munday's election:

The jobs had to come to grips with the fact that the Secretary they had elected...had earned for them the tag of being a communist union. I don't think even the conservative elements among the rank and file felt very badly about it. Some were mildly amused. Jack was held in a great deal of affection by the rank and file, despite his politics rather than because of them.²³⁰

Munday's acceptance speech at the June Branch meeting²³¹ contained nothing out of the ordinary. He concentrated exclusively on administrative and organisational problems. He even advocated "a business-like approach" and argued that in the past there had been too much "gilding of the lily" and hoping "tomorrow would solve the problem". His detailed suggestions for better organisation included rearrangement of the office staff, regular organisers' meetings, more job delegates, letters to unfinancial members, area surveys, weekly recordings of pay-ins, and a new organisers' report form. He argued the need for "concrete planning to get the branch out of the financial rut":

The depth of the financial depression is to the tune of over \$13,000. Despite sub-contracting and multitude of problems facing the Branch there doesn't seem to be a valid excuse for an all time low membership at the end of this first half of 1968 of 2,700 members.⁽²³²⁾ In Victoria it is approximately 4,500...

He concluded by emphasising:

We have such a fine record of militant activity in the interest of members at job level, we can and must improve the financial unionism, for if we fail, we cannot possibly do a real job and expand, improve our services to the Builders Labourers' in N.S.W."²³³

There is little in the above to forecast the radical changes that were to take place.

There is no doubt that Munday was an efficient and enthusiastic administrator. Even Les Robinson admits, "I think Jack picked it up a bit in 1968. I think from '68 on when Jack was secretary...they were the best years of the N.S.W. Branch".²³⁴

He swung straight into his re-organisation schemes. He moved Bud Cook from wages and compensation duties into a co-ordinating role for

²³⁰ Interview: Ralph Kelly, 13 December 1977.

²³¹ Minutes: General Meeting, 11 June 1968. Stephensen was also elected as Federal Councillor.

²³² A year before, the branch had affiliated to Labor Council on the basis of 5,508 members.

Document: Basis of Affiliation to Labor Council of N.S.W. and Building Trades Group, 13 June 1967.

²³³ Minutes: General Meeting, 11 June 1968.

²³⁴ Interview: Les Robinson, 20 February 1978.

the organisers. Cook remembers:

From the minute Jack became Secretary things became organised. He had the ability to co-ordinate and draw people to him...to get people to work with each other.

His first direction to Cook was to manage the finances better:

He consolidated and cut out certain payments to organisers such as clothing allowances. They were giving themselves some fantastic expenses. There were no rorts on. It was just more than was needed.²³⁵

There was even discussion about whether the number of organisers could be reduced. "With a membership of 2½ thousand and six organisers, it was obvious we were carrying too many."²³⁶

An extensive membership drive was embarked upon with special attention to the North Shore and the inner city.²³⁷ In October a Union office was opened in Parramatta.²³⁸ Organisers were rostered to be at work on Saturday mornings²³⁹ because of the large amount of weekend overtime being worked by the membership.

By February 1969 Munday was able to comment favourably on "improved organisation within the branch",²⁴⁰ and throughout 1969 the position continued to improve. Munday used different methods to tighten financial procedures²⁴¹ and stressed the need for better communication between the organisers and the office²⁴² and between officials and delegates.²⁴³ He argued the need for more thorough surveys²⁴⁴ and improved distribution of the journal and other material.²⁴⁵

By November, McHugh on a visit from Canberra, commented on the "improved organisation in the city area".²⁴⁶

At the end of the year Munday, summed up by saying that "it had been a very good year in more ways than one".²⁴⁷

One situation which caused the leadership concern was the widening rift between the old style A.L.P. members and the C.P.A. group. Minor elections for delegates to Labor Council and the B.T.G. or to the

²³⁵ Interview: Bud Cook, 5 March 1978.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

²³⁷ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 12 March 1968.

²³⁸ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 1 October 1968.

²³⁹ Document: Roster for Saturday Morning Work, 29 June to 2 August 1968.

²⁴⁰ Minutes: General Meeting, 4 February 1969.

²⁴¹ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 11 February 1969.

²⁴² Minutes: Executive Meeting, 3 September 1969.

²⁴³ Minutes: Organisers Meeting, 25 June 1969.

²⁴⁴ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 3 September 1969.

²⁴⁵ Minutes: Organisers Meeting, 25 June 1969.

²⁴⁶ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 11 November 1969.

²⁴⁷ Minutes: Special Executive Meeting, 9 December 1969.

journal or picnic committees²⁴⁸ were decided on by consensus but when a significant election for temporary organiser took place in April 1969 Lynch nominated Maiurano while Cook nominated Bob Pringle.²⁴⁹ Although Pringle was in the A.L.P. he was younger and more in tune with the "new left" ideology of the C.P.A. group than were Lynch, Austin and Maiurano.

Maiurano's defeat in this election was really the end of the Lynch group's efforts on the Executive. Maiurano even ceased coming to meetings.²⁵⁰ Pringle acquitted himself well as a temporary organiser²⁵¹ and when Arch Harding resigned as President,²⁵² Pringle was the only nomination for the position. Don Crotty was elected unopposed to the vacancy on the Executive²⁵³ and Brian Hogan took Pringle's previous position as Guardian unopposed.²⁵⁴ When Munday visited the U.S.S.R. in April, "after some discussion with Bro. Lynch" the Executive appointed Bud Cook once again as acting Secretary.²⁵⁵ With Joe Owens also included as a temporary organiser, the pro-C.P.A. complexion of the Union became even more pronounced.

248 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 16 January 1968 and General Meeting, 16 January 1968.

249 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 8 April 1969.

250 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 8 July 1969.

251 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 20 May 1969.

252 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 8 July 1969. He resigned on grounds of ill-health amid glowing tributes from the Executive. He had resigned as Federal Councillor in March and been replaced by Stephensen.

Minutes: Executive Meeting, 26 March 1968. Jack Munday wrote in The Builders' Labourer, December 1969, p.29, "When the rank and file broke through and cleaned the right-wing out of the leadership it was Arch Harding's maturity that brought balance to the younger people involved". This is strictly inaccurate as Harding was not elected until 1962. Henneberry was the President in 1961.

253 Minutes: General Meeting, 2 September 1969.

254 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 11 November 1969.

255 Minutes: Executive Meetings, 8 and 17 April 1969.

APPENDIX CFederal-State Relations in the B.L.F. 1961-70

A difficulty which faced the McNamara leadership during the sixties was the hostility displayed by the Federal body of the union towards the N.S.W. branch.

In November 1961 Norm Gallagher became General Secretary of the A.B.L.F. He was an official of the Victorian branch and had been appointed to that position in 1955 by the Victorian Secretary, Paddy Malone, after working in the industry for several months and when he was still only in his teens. At the time of his elevation to Federal Secretary, which was a relatively minor office at the time, he was still considered to be very much a protege of the ailing Malone. It surprised no one when, during the C.P.A. split, he followed Malone into the C.P.A. (M-L).

Gallagher became General Secretary when the incumbent right-winger, Terry Foster, became ineligible to stand because he had not nominated as a delegate to the union's Federal Council.

The Federal Council also elected Paddy Malone to replace W. (Speed) Morgan, an A.L.P. supporter from Tasmania, as Federal Treasurer. E. Farrell of Queensland, described as "another militant" became Federal President and Mick McNamara won the position of Vice-President.¹

With a clean sweep win by the "left" at this Federal Conference the N.S.W. Branch could have expected a sympathetic attitude towards their inherited financial and administrative chaos, but this was not to be. There were three main reasons for this hostility. Each was to become aggravated and exaggerated until the eventual 1974 takeover by the Federation climaxed the uneven relationship.

The first factor was simply that of differences between states and between state and federal unions that occur so often in the union movement. Peter Barton summed up the situation succinctly when he claimed "The big thing was the difference in industrial tactics. Gallagher was empire building, there's no risk about that. He saw N.S.W. as a threat".²

The second factor was that Gallagher, personally did not get on with either McNamara or later Munday. The minutes show Gallagher as continually taking a tougher line against the N.S.W. branch than did

1 Unidentified News Clipping headed "November 1961", McNamara Papers.

2 Interview: Peter Barton, 5 March 1978.

either Paddy Malone or the later Federal President, Jim Delaney. It is also obvious from correspondence that Munday preferred Delaney to Gallagher on a personal level.

But the major contributing factor was the ideological struggle that occurred within the C.P.A. because of the Sino-Soviet split in 1961 which culminated in the formation of the C.P.A. (M-L) in early 1964.

Gallagher and Malone had been identified with the pro-Chinese section of the C.P.A. since the early days of the controversy. The N.S.W. communists within the B.L.F. remained loyal to the C.P.A. except for Les Robinson, Joe Ferguson and Johnny McNamara, who sided with the Victorian Maoists. Les Robinson explained that "my sympathies lay with the C.P.A. (M-L) and I clearly backed Gallagher from that period onwards".³ Jack Munday admitted that the problem was "mainly ideological"⁴ and Bud Cook believed it was "the primary cause".⁵

The ideological debate within the C.P.A. did not prevent the N.S.W. B.L.F. leadership from admiring and defending the Chinese revolution. An interesting situation occurred at a N.S.W. branch meeting in August 1963. Right-wingers Stan Winter and Terry Foster proposed a motion which condemned France and China for not joining in the nuclear test ban treaty and branding "both nations as war mongers and reactionaries".⁶ This motion was lost despite the fact that the Branch was vehemently opposed to nuclear weapons testing and the following month even proposed to Federal Council a motion congratulating the Soviet Union, America and Britain on signing the test-ban agreement.⁷ Initial support for the notion of the "peoples bomb" can be the only explanation for this contradictory voting pattern. Les Robinson referred vaguely to later differences over atomic weapons but did not elaborate.⁸

Another motion submitted to Federal Council called upon the Federal Government to recognise the People's Republic of China. This motion was proposed by Mick McNamara and seconded by Jack Munday.⁹

In August 1963 Mick McNamara went to China as part of a delegation of trade unionists and the trip received the unanimous support of the N.S.W. Executive. He told the press that the visit was "in no way

3 Interview: Les Robinson, 20 February 1978.

4 Interview: Jack Munday, 30 March 1978.

5 Interview: Bud Cook, 30 March 1978.

6 Minutes: General Meeting, 6 August 1963.

7 Minutes: General Meeting, 3 September 1963.

8 Interview: Les Robinson, 20 February 1978.

9 Minutes: General Meeting, 3 September 1963.

connected with the ideological split between China and the Soviet Union".¹⁰ He explained that the invitation had come from the national building unions of China¹¹ and that he was "going to study the latest building trends in China and compare union approaches to the problems of the industry, particularly concerning safety".¹²

So although the N.S.W. leadership was clearly affected by the internecine disputes within the C.P.A., anti-China statements were not made publicly by the N.S.W. branch. Munday believed that "the Chinese were going much the same way as Stalin in Russia"¹³ and particularly singled out the cult of the individual as an aspect he found personally abhorrent. Les Robinson, considered to be the most convinced Maoist¹⁴ of the N.S.W. "opposition", has a peculiar explanation of his own attitude towards the N.S.W. leadership. He believed that the C.P.A. split was only a secondary cause of the split between the two branches (Victoria and N.S.W.). "There had been divisions even before that" he explained:

Some of us in the C.P.A. objected to the way McNamara was handling the union...My argument was that Jack [Munday] should take over the leadership...Mick clearly wasn't doing the job, it went to his head and he was betting and drinking. He would play us off against the A.L.P. and vice versa and there were disagreements inside the Party on how to handle Mick. Me and Johnny McNamara divided with Jack on the question.

He believed that the C.P.A. split merely exaggerated the main difference which he reiterated was an "industrial position over McNamara".¹⁵

This initial rejection of McNamara's leadership and support of Munday led to oppositionist policies being undertaken. The result was that even though Robinson claims "we didn't oppose Jack...we believed he should take over the leadership", the anti-McNamara forces effectively became anti-Munday forces as Jack remained loyal to McNamara as Secretary.

The way in which the internal N.S.W. opposition related to Gallagher and the Federal body is not really clear. Although admitting adherence to the pro-China line, Robinson claimed he had "no idea" whether other members of the N.S.W. opposition group were Maoists. He said the group included China supporters and "people who didn't enjoy

10 Unidentified News Clipping headed "August 1963", McNamara Papers.

11 Unidentified News Clipping headed "29 August", McNamara Papers.

12 Unidentified News Clipping headed "August 1963", McNamara Papers.

13 Interview: Jack Munday, 30 March 1978.

14 Interview: Bud Cook, 30 March 1978.

15 Interview: Les Robinson, 20 February 1978.

the leadership of Mick McNamara". He explained that meetings of the opposition group were mainly about industrial issues:

We used to put out leaflets, propaganda, build up rank-and-file meetings...and wherever we were delegates we gave the blokes good leadership and we built up respect - let's say we had a foot in the door that couldn't be kicked out - we were entrenched.

The group produced an intermittent publication, called Construction. Robinson believes they put out "dozens" between 1963 and 1967. "They were mainly how job issues should be handled...primarily industrial stuff." He could not remember whether they had ever been requested to stop publishing Construction but he did not think so.¹⁶

However, evidence from the Minutes indicate that Construction was first produced in 1965¹⁷ and that its publication was indeed objected to by the leadership.

Originally in April 1965, Dick Prendergast moved that:

Construction, purporting to be the voice of the Builders Labourers Union and authorised by a member of our Union should cease forthwith as it will only tend to confuse the builders labourers who returned a 100% rank and file leadership at the last triennial election.¹⁸

The following week's Executive meeting decided to request Robinson and Joe Ferguson, the two executive members involved with Construction, to inform the Executive at the next meeting what their future intentions were.¹⁹ At this meeting Maurie Lynch launched another attack on the publication, claiming it to be "harmful to the Branch's welfare".²⁰ However Ferguson and Robinson moved and seconded that the Secretary's report be received so total alienation had not occurred at this stage.

Another issue of Construction was published before the next Executive meeting and this time Mick McNamara criticised it personally. He said that it "contained inaccuracies which had caused a lot of confusion amongst the membership" and proposed a resolution of condemnation on the people responsible. Surprisingly "both Bro. Ferguson and Bro. Robinson admitted that there were inaccuracies in the leaflet".²¹ This admission lends some credence to Jack Munday's claims that he did not object to an opposition paper being printed but that the purpose of

16 Interview: Les Robinson, 20 February 1978.

17 Minutes: General Meeting, 1 June 1965.

18 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 27 April 1965.

19 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 4 May 1965.

20 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 11 May 1965.

21 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 18 May 1965.

Construction "was to print lies...it wasn't going to change...we weren't babes in the woods. It was designed to destroy the elected leadership".²² Remarks made during the branch meeting in June indicated that members felt that Ferguson and Robinson had betrayed the Rank and File committee who had pre-selected and elected them. One member even went so far as to demand their resignation from the Executive. Robinson and Ferguson's main arguments seemed to centre around the need for better amenities on the job and hence the need for the publication of Construction. They claimed that the "workers on the job support it" but it is significant that no other member at the General Meeting spoke in favour of the paper.²³ The two refused to cease publication and the Executive took no further action. This was probably because of their own collective notion of the right to dissent and also because the opposition group never really constituted a serious threat and virtually petered out in the late sixties.

A good indication of the opposition group's strength is the outcome of a hard fought election campaign in 1965 for a casual vacancy for Federal Councillor. This represented probably the peak of the opposition's activity and popularity. An election pamphlet produced in support of the opposition's candidate, John McNamara, mentioned no policy differences with, or criticisms of, the leadership group. It merely urged a vote "for a strong militant progressive policy in our union" and gave details of McNamara's militant activity as job delegate and membership of the Executive since 1963.²⁴

This material was countered by a Rank and File How to Vote²⁵ ticket put out in support of Munday's nominee, Jack Stephensen. Ten officials, including Mick McNamara, Johnny's brother, were named on the leaflet as supporting Stephensen's candidature.

Johnny McNamara's election material made no mention of the fact that he was standing in opposition to the present Union leadership and the implication of the pamphlet could easily have been that he was the Executive's choice of candidate. Despite this obfuscation of the situation and his undoubted personal popularity, the less colourful

22 Interview: Jack Munday, 30 March 1978.

23 Minutes: General Meeting, 1 June 1965.

24 Pamphlet, Attention Builders' Labourers!, 16 November 1965, lp. roneod. No authorisation.

25 Pamphlet, Rank and File How to Vote, 16 November 1965, lp. roneod. Authorised by Members of the Rank and File Committee.

Jack Stephensen swamped McNamara by over two to one.²⁶

After this result, the opposition's interest in contesting elections waned. No candidates were fielded in the 1967 Triennial election nor did opposition group members stand against Jack Munday for Secretary in 1968 or Bob Pringle for President in 1969.

Robinson claims that he was "frozen out of the industry" in 1966. He "couldn't get a start...because employers were supporting Jack at that period". When asked whether he could supply details to substantiate this statement he replied "I know how the industry works".²⁷ It would indeed be hard to prove such victimisation. Leaving aside Robinson's comment about Munday's relationship with the employers (Munday was not Secretary in 1966) Robinson, as a known militant would have been on the employers' "blacklist" along with most of the other activists and would have found employment difficult even in good times but 1966 was still a recession year in the building industry. One of Robinson's complaints was that he had to find work outside of the industry.²⁸ This is not at all unusual among builders labourers who frequently move in and out of the building industry and even into different unions within the industry.

From late 1965 onwards the three opposition Executive members attended Executive meetings either infrequently or not at all. Previously their attendance had been regular and especially in early 1964 they had attacked the leadership with great spirit at branch meetings. Bud Cook reported that the three "copped a pretty rough verbal knocking from the blokes".²⁹ Jack Munday made an interesting comment on his own reaction to these attacks:

Looking back I was pretty sectarian and vicious...in my discussions and attitudes. I was pretty vitriolic. I'd be less so now. But I think they were real bastards...they were divisive. Maoists are just like the Right in things that they do.³⁰

He denied that the opposition had ever been denied their democratic rights:

...because I feel so strongly about democracy. I can't think of any incident where I used the power advantage that we had to do that. I didn't encourage them to put their points across, but who does? What

26 Minutes: Special Meeting of the Branch, 18 November 1965. Returning officer Keith Jessop reported that 786 applications for postal ballot were received; 645 ballot papers were posted; 308 were returned. Stephensen received 283 votes and J. McNamara 113.

27 Interview: Les Robinson, 20 February 1978.

28 Interview: Bud Cook, 5 March 1978.

29 Ibid.

30 Interview: Jack Munday, 3 April 1978.

political opponent encourages others? I think they had ample scope to put them across...They could write in the journal but didn't. We would have printed the stuff.³¹

Robinson does not really allege administrative repression. He does not claim for instance that they submitted articles to the journal that were not published,³² or that votes were rigged or chairmen biased. His allegations are mainly about the reception they got at meetings:

The meetings degenerated so bad they were stacked with C.P.A. supporters. You couldn't get a say and if you attempted to say anything you were howled down. Pressure threats, not physical, were put on people.³³

He declined to be more specific about what he meant. Munday's comment probably sums up the situation: "Certainly, at meetings and job meetings we hit them very hard ideologically".³⁴ Robinson makes one very pertinent point. He commented upon the bitterness which arises out of internal Communist Party disputes:

Polemics and political argument at the time became very, very bitter. If you didn't agree with people, with their political line you were savagely attacked wherever you went. It brought a lot of retaliation and vice versa.

Robinson conceded that Munday's ability and the respect with which he was regarded deterred workers from supporting the opposition. He added: "We did have some respect because we were honest blokes and worked hard on the job".³⁵ Certainly it is significant that there is no evidence in the Branch meeting minutes of this period that any member ever spoke in favour of the opposition's policies except for the three mainstays. Ralph Kelly describes the opposition's following as "non-existent"³⁶ and their main effect on the Union appears to have been as nuisance value at meetings in 1964 and 1965 and a generally disruptive influence on the collective leadership ideas that were beginning to germinate.

The main bone of contention between the state and federal bodies was N.S.W.'s financial situation. The heavy debts and organisational chaos that the McNamara leadership inherited were not readily solvable. The Federal body originally aided the state branch with loans in 1961,

³¹ Ibid.

³² In fact a letter from Johnny McNamara was published in Builders Labourer, August September October 1968, pp.27 and 29.

³³ Interview: Les Robinson, 20 February 1978.

³⁴ Interview: Jack Munday, 3 April 1978.

³⁵ Interview: Les Robinson, 20 February 1978.

³⁶ Interview: Ralph Kelly, 13 December 1977.

but as the ideological differences became exacerbated, disputes and confrontations developed over the money. As Munday explained, "...our financial position was bad but Gallagher was offside anyway".³⁷

As evidence for Munday's claim, Gallagher certainly reacted more critically, even vindictively, to the N.S.W. situation than to similar problems in other states, particularly the continually ailing Tasmanian Branch and South Australia in 1965 and 1966.³⁸

Gallagher's claims that "he found it embarrassing to have to cover up for the N.S.W. Branch in the face of the other Branches"³⁹ and his alleged concern with the financial position of the Federal Body,⁴⁰ both of which sound convincing on the surface, have to be viewed in the light of the particular surveillance that the N.S.W. Branch had to undergo. Also, Gallagher was the least sympathetic of the various Federal officials who visited N.S.W. For instance Paddy Malone, the Victorian Secretary, and like Gallagher a pro-China supporter, viewed the N.S.W. situation in a very different light. As a visiting member of the Federal Management Committee he told the N.S.W. Executive in August 1963 that he "noted a marked change in the progress of the N.S.W. branch since he was last in this state and the good work which was being done by the Executive and officials of the branch".⁴¹ In a similar period Gallagher was reported as commenting that "he was not pleased with the number of members in the N.S.W. Branch and that further efforts should be made to increase our membership".

The Minutes record that the Executive's response to these comments was not submissive:

The state secretary had objected to this statement saying that the officials of the N.S.W. Branch were doing everything possible to not only increase the membership of the Branch but to improve conditions of the builders labourers.

In a spirit of retaliation the Executive requested that the financial sheet of the Federal Body be tabled for members to peruse. Maurie Lynch asked why the Federal Council had not taken action against "the corrupt leadership under the Thomas regime and the lagging Bodkin leadership" and Theo Austin objected to "any Federal member from other states having the right to interfere in the administration of the N.S.W. Branch".⁴²

³⁷ Interview: Jack Munday, 30 March 1978.

³⁸ See discussion later in this chapter.

³⁹ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 23 July 1963.

⁴⁰ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 10 December 1963.

⁴¹ Minutes: Special Executive Meeting, 4 August 1963.

⁴² Minutes: Executive Meeting, 10 December 1963.

This last comment from Austin indicates what the problem really was. The 1963 Federal Conference debate regarding the situation in N.S.W. further illustrated the way in which autonomy issues were beginning to enter the situation.

The state Executive's response to the Federal Conference debate was a mildly worded but fairly pointed resolution. It also nicely summarised the feeling of righteous indignation felt by the Branch:

The N.S.W. Executive considers it was unnecessary for the 1963 Federal Council to spend so much time enquiring into the affairs of this Branch and especially in finding it necessary to carry a resolution calling for an investigation into certain aspects of this Branch's work. The policy of this Branch since this leadership assumed office has been to encourage the utmost democracy and rank and file control. Federal Council will appreciate that this policy is a vast improvement on previous policy pursued by previous leaderships in the past in this state. We were extremely surprised that the Federal Council should choose this time to decide to interest itself in the affairs of the N.S.W. Branch. We feel that it would have been much more timely to have held such investigation in the periods of Bodkin and Thomas. However we will welcome the Federal Secretary and Federal Treasurer when they come to N.S.W. and will give them all the assistance necessary to enable them to fully understand the position in N.S.W. Such advice and assistance we will welcome and will always, but it would have been preferable to give the benefits of experience without recourse to instructions from Federal Council.⁴³

Thus the scene was set for the continual confrontation which followed. Superficially this was to revolve around finance but in actuality it encompassed ideological differences and the vexed question of Branch autonomy.

Another difference between the two bodies was that of industrial strategy. The N.S.W. Branch refused to accept the 1963 Federal Award even though the other states did. What the N.S.W. branch was demanding was "uniformity".⁴⁴ This meant that they wanted to have the award in the same terms and conditions but not necessarily the same pay as the tradesmen. The other states were not pushing for this and it was not until N.S.W. refused to accept the Award in the terms given federally and then pushed for uniformity with tradesmen that conditions changed federally for builders labourers.⁴⁵

The competitiveness which seemed to develop out of differing industrial tactics led to snide attacks from the Federal officials.⁴⁶ Once again Gallagher was the most obvious critic, possibly because as

43 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 17 December 1963.

44 Minutes: General Meeting, 6 August 1963.

45 Interview: Bud Cook, 30 March 1978.

46 Minutes: General Meeting, 2 July 1963.

General Secretary he often attended N.S.W. executive and branch meetings during 1963 and 1964.

The problems caused by the 1963 Conference Resolution about N.S.W. finances continued to be felt throughout 1964. At the first Executive meeting of the year Mick McNamara reported that Gallagher and Paddy Malone would visit Sydney in February. He advised the Executive that they should be "ready to answer all criticism against the Branch relating to the finances and anything else that may be raised". In a spirit of retaliation he suggested that a letter should be sent to Gallagher asking for information about the membership of other Branches,⁴⁷ presumably for use as ammunition in case of attack.

When Malone and Gallagher attended the N.S.W. executive meeting their reactions were predictable. Gallagher again berated the Branch for "laxity...in checking on all projects in the State" and he felt "much work which should be done by builders labourers was being done by workers of other Unions and this resulted in a decreased membership". In comparison, Paddy Malone stated that:

...he realised the hardships the present N.S.W. Executive had to endure, and in fact takes his hat off to the efforts made by the N.S.W. executive in progress made under hardships that confronted them.⁴⁸

Malone concluded by maintaining he had "full confidence" in the N.S.W. executive.

The 1963 Resolution had obviously caused problems amongst the membership. McNamara "was concerned with gossip being circulated...but was quite confident of the feelings of most of the labourers towards the leadership".⁴⁹ Munday felt called upon to move that the Branch "declares its utmost confidence in the present leadership of our union". He also expressed his confidence that:

...the investigations into the affairs of this Branch being conducted by Bros. Malone and Gallagher on behalf of the Federal Council will clarify misconceptions that obviously existed at a Federal Council level and will show that substantial progress has been made by the present leadership.⁵⁰

Even Joe Ferguson agreed with parts of Munday's resolution but he moved an amendment to delete the section saying there had been a misconception at Federal Council. The amendment was lost, which prompted Gallagher to reply that "some people were using the Federal Council as

47 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 21 January 1964.

48 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 4 February 1964.

49 Ibid.

50 Minutes: General Meeting, 4 February 1964.

a political football and they were poor unionists". To add to Gallagher's discomfort, Harry Connell took a point of order that Gallagher was discussing a resolution which had been passed and the Chairman, Arch Harding, upheld the point of order.⁵¹

The material result of this obviously combative situation was a Joint Statement⁵² which contained vague generalisations about financial problems but also conceded the difficulties faced by the State branch.

Mick McNamara, obviously concerned about membership response, reassured the March General Meeting that "a frank friendly discussion was held" and that:

Both the State and Federal Body had financial problems and there was a need for all States to lift their financial position to help the Federation. Other States as well as N.S.W., were being asked to lift their membership. The Federal Councillors had explained that the visit was not an investigation that they were only in N.S.W. to assist where possible.⁵³

McNamara genuinely believed that the eventual outcome of the February meeting was more satisfactory than he had expected it to be. He later repeated his description of the "friendly discussion" and declared himself "quite satisfied with the result of such a meeting".⁵⁴ His concern about the way the membership would view the Federal visitation was justified. Stan Winter and the Industrial Group forces brought out a newsheet Guardian which painted a picture of the Federal body attacking the Branch and the "investigation" being virtually a vote of no confidence.⁵⁵ This campaign was sustained all the year until the Triennial Election.

When Gallagher asked the Queensland Branch for a £3,000 loan in May⁵⁶ the N.S.W. Branch did not oppose this action and recorded that it was "appreciated". McNamara reported that the Queensland Branch had in the past been wary of the N.S.W. Branch due to the past leaderships "however they now had confidence in the leadership".⁵⁷

This growing confidence of the other Federal Councillors was not shared by Gallagher. When the N.S.W. Branch received an overdraft

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Joint Statement, 5 February 1964. Although this statement was signed by Gallagher, Malone, McNamara and Lynch, the fine hand of Jack Munday is heavily apparent. The Statement is virtually a precis of Munday's speech to the General Meeting, 4 February 1964.

⁵³ Minutes: General Meeting, 3 March 1964.

⁵⁴ N.S.W. Report to Federal Council, Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1964, p.54.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Minutes: General Meeting, 5 May 1964.

⁵⁷ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 28 July 1964.

from the Commonwealth Bank, Gallagher instructed his solicitors to send a letter to the Bank Manager endeavouring to have the overdraft withdrawn. McNamara was not informed of this action⁵⁸ and taken in conjunction with Gallagher's increased pressure on the Branch to pay its sustentation fees before Federal Council or lose its vote, the Branch appears to have been quite justified in complaining about this action. The reason given by Gallagher for his action was that all Branch property belonged to the Federation and therefore could not be put up to obtain a loan.

Maurie Lynch suggested that before anything was done in relation to the overdraft, it would have been better if the N.S.W. Branch had been consulted about what action the Federation intended to take. Arch Harding complained that there were times when the N.S.W. Branch wanted assistance from the Federal body and it was not given and now that they had overcome most of their problems, it seemed that the Federal body objected to them being capable of handling their own affairs.⁵⁹

It was precisely this fear that their autonomy was being encroached upon that caused the N.S.W. Branch to study carefully the proposed rule changes to the Federal constitution. They were described as "giving the Federal Body sweeping powers over the affairs of the State branches".⁶⁰ McNamara asked the Branch General Meeting if the members wanted to instruct the delegates to Federal Council how to vote on these alterations. Lynch moved and Johnny McNamara seconded that the N.S.W. delegation vote for an increase in fees but against an increase in the percentage of sustentation fees paid to the Federal body,⁶¹ thus indicating even on the part of at least one active pro-China supporter a reluctance to cede the Federal body extra power.

A problem to overcome before they could vote at Conference was their own sustentation fees. Lynch believed that it would be unwise not to attend Conference even if the sustentation fees were not finally paid up as "it would give certain elements of Federal Council a chance to embarrass (sic) this Branch".⁶² McNamara obtained legal advice that the N.S.W. delegation could attend Conference even though they were in arrears.⁶³ The Federal Management Committee however decided that the

58 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 3 November 1964.

59 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1964, pp.6-7.

60 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 3 November 1964.

61 Minutes: General Meeting, 3 November 1964.

62 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 3 November 1964.

63 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 1 December 1964.

N.S.W. delegation could not attend. Subsequently the fees were paid and the delegation able to vote.⁶⁴

McNamara expected to come "under fire"⁶⁵ at the 1964 Conference and he was right. It began with the President's Report. Thorp, the Federal President, commented on a conversation he had with two N.S.W. members when he told them, "I felt it might be necessary to send Bro. Gallagher, the Federal Secretary, to that state as a Caretaker Secretary for a while".⁶⁶ McNamara, who had previously registered his disgust with the way Thorp portrayed the Branch⁶⁷ described this as a "shocking report", and said other delegates had shared his opinion.⁶⁸ Jack Munday describes Thorp as a right-winger who was a stooge for the power brokers such as Gallagher.⁶⁹ These claims certainly seem to be borne out by the facts. Although an undertaking had been given in 1962 that the elected President would come from N.S.W.⁷⁰ Gallagher and his supporters threw their weight behind Thorp for election as President.⁷¹ When Mick McNamara stood he received only the four N.S.W. votes. As to the claim about the money, the South Australian debacle of 1966-7⁷² could not be hushed up even by Gallagher. This pattern of Gallagher supporting compliant conservatives in preference to the N.S.W. delegates was to be repeated often.

The Conference, on the whole, was not as difficult for the N.S.W. delegates as they had expected. McNamara referred to the "unity of purpose"⁷³ and Munday regarded it as "the best ever held" as far as the Branch was concerned.⁷⁴ It was still notable however that Gallagher was not among those delegates who fulsomely praised the N.S.W. Report.⁷⁵ There was a remarkable concurrence of opinions on political items with Harding even seconding a motion urging support for the Chinese Peoples Republic in its call for an anti-nuclear conference.⁷⁶ This ties in with the N.S.W. Branch's refusal to see China as the political pariah in

64 Minutes: General Meeting, 1 December 1964.

65 Minutes: General Meeting, 10 November 1964.

66 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1964, p.5.

67 Minutes: General Meeting, 10 November 1964.

68 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 1 December 1964.

69 Interview: Jack Munday, 30 March 1978.

70 Minutes: General Meeting, 1 December 1964.

71 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1964, pp.3 and 67. Gallagher actually nominated Thorp.

72 See later in this chapter for further details.

73 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1964, p.56.

74 Minutes: General Meeting, 1 December 1964.

75 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1964, p.59

76 Ibid., p.42.

the way more dogmatic C.P.A. members did at the time.⁷⁷

There were two areas where differences of opinion were stifled but in no way reconciled. These were industrial tactics and attitudes to the B.W.I.U.

On industrial tactics much of the problem could be attributed to the fact that the Federation had not previously had a program on wages and every branch had to form its own.⁷⁸ As part of the general expansion of Federation activities, the lively and well organised industrial struggle in N.S.W. sometimes found itself curtailed by the needs of the Federation. For instance in February the N.S.W. Branch had expressed disappointment that there was not more pressure around gains for the higher rates, and only reluctantly conceded to Gallagher's advice to accept the position.⁷⁹

Even Gallagher had to admit that on-the-job struggle in N.S.W. had been extremely successful. In reference to the N.S.W. campaign to have the Federal Award varied to include height money, dirt money, extra fares, a paid picnic day etc. he concluded: "This application would not have been successful without the very good activity of the Builders Labourers in N.S.W.".⁸⁰

N.S.W. Branch support for the Federal Award struggle had also been notable, resulting in a bans clause being inserted against them "as a result of our members' determination to get a proper wage not only for N.S.W. but for all our comrades in Australia".⁸¹ Gallagher remarked with concern upon the £500 fine imposed upon the N.S.W. Branch by the Labor Government under the State Penal Clause.⁸²

McNamara also reported that the other state branches were surprised at the N.S.W. Branch's progress in getting long service leave for N.S.W. builders labourers and other workers in the building industry. Other branches had not participated in such moves.⁸³ Thus, when Gallagher referred in the General Secretary's Report to the

77 The N.S.W. Branch had earlier acceded to a request from Gallagher to protest at the gaoling of Chinese in Brazil. Minutes: Executive Meeting, 16 June 1964.

78 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1964, p.17.

79 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 4 February 1964 and General Meeting, 4 February 1964.

80 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1964, p.17.

81 N.S.W. Report to Federal Council, Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1964, p.50.

82 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1964, p.19.

83 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 1 December 1964.

inability to organise members on the job being "a big weakness of some of the Branches"⁸⁴ he was presumably referring to those states from whom he drew support, rather than to N.S.W. When Munday had referred to "more struggle in N.S.W. than any other state in Australia"⁸⁵ Gallagher had not contradicted him.

Gallagher could not, and did not claim that N.S.W. was not holding up its end industrially. What was occurring was a gradual shift in industrial emphasis. For instance Gallagher's attitude to the B.W.I.U. was not only indicative of the strains created by the Sino-Soviet split but also of Gallagher's desire to boost the power of the Federation, either at the expense of the Branches or of other unions. He complained in relation to demarcation problems that "the attitude of the B.W.I.U.... is a lot to be desired and has been very disappointing".⁸⁶ He admitted that the nature of all work in the building industry was going through technological change but believed that the answer to demarcation issues that arose was to change the name of the Union and its constitution⁸⁷ rather than create a true industry union which he claimed as "still a long way off".⁸⁸

In contrast, McNamara reported co-operation and successful combined operations with the B.W.I.U., particularly in the country areas.⁸⁹ The seeds of a particularly lengthy and bitter future dispute can be discerned in these differing attitudes to the tradesmen.

But Gallagher's "empire building"⁹⁰ exercise with regard to the change of name and constitution coincided with his desire to boost the power of the Federal Body vis-a-vis the States. As well as the higher sustentation fees he proposed an expansion of office staff and equipment and announced plans for a national journal.⁹¹ The nature of the B.L.F. was changing from a confederation of state Branches with a relatively unimportant federal body for co-ordination purposes, into a much more centralised and bureaucratised Federal administration. The new Federal

84 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1964, p.16.

85 Minutes: General Meeting, 4 February 1964.

86 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1964, p.12.

87 *Ibid.*, pp.12-15.

88 *Ibid.*, p.12.

89 N.S.W. Report to Federal Conference, November 1964, p.56.

90 This phrase was used often in conversation between N.S.W. officials in 1972 and 1973. They basically did not approve of the name change and never referred to themselves as anything other than "the B.L.F." or the "Builders Labourers".

91 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1964, p.15.

Award of 1964, the eventual affiliation of the West Australian Branch, the building boom and consequent surge in membership, plus the general trend towards centralism in unions at this time all contributed to the growth of Gallagher's power base. The N.S.W. Branch was a barrier to Gallagher's expansionism and suffered accordingly. The N.S.W. Branch saw many of Gallagher's actions as a direct attack on their own autonomy. As the largest branch of the Federation they were unlikely to cede willingly any of their hard won control. The ideological dispute may have contributed to the antagonism but Peter Barton's opinion that "Gallagher was empire building and he saw N.S.W. as a threat - no risk about that"⁹² was certainly a widely held belief.

The existing pattern of fragility and forced goodwill in relations between the Federal and the N.S.W. Branch continued in 1965. Financial problems became less important while the N.S.W. Branch's close working relationship with the B.W.I.U. began to loom larger as a future problem. Differences in approaches to industrial strategy were not so muted and could almost be described as venomous.

Perhaps the most serious confrontation occurred in February when the N.S.W. Executive discovered that Gallagher had not made application for variation of the Federal Award that would bring N.S.W. labourers uniformity with the other building unions in N.S.W. on fares, multi-storey rates and other conditions. When Gallagher addressed an angry Branch Executive meeting he conceded that the last variation for fares and special rates had been won for builders labourers federally "because of the action of the workers in N.S.W."⁹³ These complaints did not save him from a hostile response. Stephensen reported that a big majority of N.S.W. members were under the impression that the application had been already made and he thought it should have been made five months before. McNamara supported this criticism by stating that he had only become aware that the application had not been made two weeks previously. Prendergast added that the workers would not be pleased when they discovered that the application had not been made and that they were being deprived of money unjustly. Even Robinson felt that "there had been some misunderstanding" and Ferguson said he thought the application should be made. Austin disagreed with Gallagher's reasons for not making the application and the President, Harding, said

92 Interview: Peter Barton, 5 March 1978.

93 Minutes: Executive Meeting 23 February 1965.

he thought that the application would naturally have been made, and deplored the fact that this had not been done. He cast some light upon Gallagher's actions when he mentioned the steps taken to eliminate the N.S.W. Branch's financial problems and explained "the application need not take such a long period as mentioned by the Federal Secretary because the N.S.W. Branch had strengthened the position".⁹⁴

The problem basically arose because the N.S.W. Executive were not in a position legally to take action to vary a federal award. This had to be done by the General Secretary. Munday believed that Gallagher's apparent industrial lapse could have been affected by other considerations, "the ideological struggle was warming up then so there would have been a bit of sabres there too". He agreed that Gallagher would not have been over keen to take action that would make the N.S.W. Branch look good in the eyes of builders labourers.⁹⁵ The fact was that the N.S.W. builders labourers had previously fought for, and achieved, uniformity with the tradesmen in terms of conditions and extra allowances. Gallagher was not particularly happy with this situation either because of an objection to the close association with the B.W.I.U. in N.S.W. which had helped achieve uniformity or because of more general feelings of rivalry over industrial successes.

McNamara expressed the opinion that there should be only one award in N.S.W.⁹⁶ and that in future the N.S.W. Branch of the B.L.F. should follow the B.W.I.U. award, and that any basic wage increases would follow.⁹⁷

The Federal Management Committee criticised the N.S.W. Branch for being critical of Gallagher, and Federal President Thorp disagreed with N.S.W. "going into this on its own". The F.M.C. obviously felt apprehensive about N.S.W.'s relationships with all the tradesmen's unions because at the same meeting it instructed McNamara not to enter into any agreement with the Plasterers' Union over the concreting industry.⁹⁸

The F.M.C. eventually agreed to an application for variation being made after a conference with the M.B.A. was held. The State Executive recommended to its members acceptance of the proposed increases as won by the B.W.I.U. because "the alternative was to go to court and it would

94 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 23 February 1965.

95 Interview: Jack Munday, 30 March 1978.

96 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 2 March 1965.

97 Minutes: General Meeting, 2 March 1965.

98 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 2 March 1965.

be a long drawn out affair".⁹⁹ At the Branch General Meeting, Munday expressed disagreement with the terms of the F.M.C.'s decision and believed that an application should be made immediately. He pointed out that:

five months have elapsed since the BWIU (NSW) won increases in industry allowance, fares, multi storey, special rates and though other building unions both State and Federal have been granted uniformity in NSW, builders labourers have not.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ Builders labourers in NSW already have lost £150,000 since October 9th... The prime task of a working class organisation is to improve the wages and conditions of members and build working class unity. This can best be served by the Federation launching legal action as well as the NSW members conducting job action as proven in 1962 and 1963.¹⁰¹

In a spirit of conciliation the Branch meeting did not place on record its displeasure with the Federal Secretary's actions (or lack of) but merely moved to proceed with the conference with the M.B.A. that an appropriate application be made immediately afterwards.

The employers did not concede a variation so McNamara recommended a 24 hour stoppage.¹⁰² Munday agreed with the idea of the 24 hour stoppage and believed the Building Trades Group should be made aware of the struggle and brought into it. He deplored the action of the Federal Secretary and Federal Treasurer "who had not seen fit to stop over in Sydney to give their views on this rejection of our claim".¹⁰³

The proposed 24 hour stoppage did not take place after Gallagher advised against it.¹⁰⁴ The uniformity application was not wholly successful and McNamara reported that in future the Union would follow the B.W.I.U. applications in court.¹⁰⁵

When the application came to court in November there was a terse exchange of telegrams between Gallagher and McNamara over McNamara's attendance at the hearing.¹⁰⁶ Obviously relations between the parties over the matter were still somewhat bitter.

⁹⁹ Minutes: General Meeting, 2 March 1965.

¹⁰⁰ The B.W.I.U. received their increase and improved conditions under a state award. Because most builders labourers were under a parent (Federal) Award they had to wait for a Federal application. Later they went for a "roping in" award - whatever was achieved at state level was reflected in the Federal Award and vice versa.

¹⁰¹ Minutes: General Meeting, 2 March 1965.

¹⁰² Minutes: Executive Meeting, 6 April 1965.

¹⁰³ Minutes: General Meeting, 6 April 1965.

¹⁰⁴ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 20 April 1965.

¹⁰⁵ Minutes: General Meeting, 1 June 1965.

¹⁰⁶ Telegram, N. Gallagher to M. McNamara, 15 November 1965.

Telegram, M. McNamara to N. Gallagher, 15 November 1965.

Bitterness was also obvious in July when Gallagher was criticised by Lynch for not providing the Branch with the details of the A.C.T.U. Margins Case decision. Lynch said that the Federal Secretary should "at least" have consulted with the Management Committee before an application had been made three months earlier but which had been left in abeyance. McHugh thought the General Secretary could "at least" have addressed the State Executive about the problems around the margins increase. He "took a dim view of the whole proceedings and was very wary of the Federal Secretary's motives". Prendergast put his views more succinctly. He thought "the actions of the Federal Secretary and the decision of the A.C.T.U. stinks".¹⁰⁷

At the following Executive meeting, McHugh moved that:

this Executive condemn the General Secretary for his non-attendance at last weeks Executive meeting and deplore the fact that when he is in this State on the night of our Executive meeting he prefers to go elsewhere.

In seconding the motion, Stephensen said he put the General Secretary in the same category as the right-wing in the trade union movement because of the total disregard with which he treated the N.S.W. Executive. Joe Ferguson said he would not comment because he thought the resolution stupid. Lynch pointed out that on previous occasions Gallagher had not been invited to attend Executive meetings but had done so anyway. McNamara said he was perturbed that the matter had come up but as it had he thought he should tell the Executive that Bro. Gallagher had told him early in the afternoon that he could not stay the night because he had urgent business to attend to in Melbourne the following morning. He thought the General Secretary's motives were underhand in saying this as he had not caught a plane back to Melbourne until the next morning. On reception of this information the motion was carried unanimously. Evidence that this was not a single incident of non-co-operation came when Lynch asked whether the Secretary had been furnished with a copy of the basic wage and margins decision. On being told that he had not, Lynch said he deplored this as it was now three weeks since the decision had been brought down.

Later McNamara reported on discussions he had had with Gallagher about delay in an application for increases for Canberra members. He said he received "no co-operation" and added that:

¹⁰⁷ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 13 July 1965.

We were the only Union which would not get the increase in Canberra until 1966 and he thought the A.C.T.U.'s attitude and that of the General Secretary was to be deplored and he thought something should be done immediately to get the builders labourers in Canberra the increase. He...hoped the General Secretary would have the moral turpitude [sic] to report to the workers in Canberra on this matter.¹⁰⁸

These two events in 1965 were the first time that open hostility was obvious between the two bodies. The studied politeness of previous years had disappeared. Possibly the State executive felt on stronger ground when attacking Gallagher over industrial errors than when haggling over finances. Also, because their financial position had improved they probably felt more confident about opposing decisions made by the federal body.

The other industrial matter on which the two bodies differed was co-operation with the B.W.I.U. In March, the Federal President Thorp and F.M.C. member Morgan attacked the N.S.W. Branch for allowing the B.W.I.U. to guarantee a loan from the Bank.¹⁰⁹ Given the fuss the F.M.C. had made the previous year about the Federation being held responsible for loans, this action by the State branch appears perfectly understandable and the Federal position a little contradictory. Suspicion that the guaranteeing of the loan presaged closer ties between the two unions was the underlying factor. McNamara claimed that if the F.M.C. thought any ulterior motive was intended by the B.W.I.U. they were completely wrong as their only intention was to assist a fellow union which was in financial difficulties.¹¹⁰ Maybe it suited Gallagher to keep the N.S.W. Branch in financial difficulties and therefore in a client relationship with the Federal body.

Even Johnnie McNamara was appalled by the Federal Body's response:

Bro. J. McNamara said that as far as the so-called collusion with the B.W.I.U. and the B.L.F. was concerned he thought it was a shocking statement to be made by members of the Federal Management Committee and they would be better to get on with the job of doing something for the workers instead of playing politics. He said he would be pleased when all B.T.G. unions were amalgamated.¹¹¹

There is other evidence that at this stage McNamara was not as firmly in the opposition's camp as Ferguson or Robinson. He was chosen by the Branch to represent it on a trip to China,¹¹² his wages while absent

108 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 20 July 1965.

109 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 2 March 1965.

110 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 9 March 1965.

111 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 2 March 1965.

112 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 13 April 1965.

were paid¹¹³ and a film night arranged to view the results of his fact-finding mission.¹¹⁴

At the F.M.C. meeting in August differences of opinion about the B.W.I.U. became even more apparent. Delaney from Queensland reported that the B.W.I.U. were "paying a great deal of attention to what might well be termed 'the taking over of smaller unions'". Malone agreed that "the pattern of things mentioned by Delegate Delaney did exist", Thorp mentioned similar problems in South Australia, and Gallagher added that "it would be necessary for the Federation to maintain its identity in the industry". McNamara replied by pointing out how N.S.W. was an example of how the two unions could work together. His branch was convinced that the B.W.I.U. "would not knowingly perform work that rightfully should be performed by builders' labourers". The B.W.I.U. had assisted the Branch on occasions in connection with demarcation, non-unionists and other issues. He reminded delegates that "our Union must work with all other unions if the organisations we represent are to benefit". He added that the A.S.C. & J. was the greatest danger to the A.B.L.F. because of its policy and that more attention should be given to examining the activities of that union.¹¹⁵ McNamara received support from a surprising quarter. Morgan from Tasmania explained that in his state there was also a good relationship with the B.W.I.U. He carried a receipt book for the B.W.I.U. and they carried one of his. He suggested that the B.L.F. should always work with them and maintain good relations because this would eventually assist the workers.¹¹⁶

Suspicion of B.W.I.U. motives surfaced again at Federal Conference when, in response to the N.S.W. Report, a question was asked about whether it was true that the N.S.W. Branch Administration staff was to move into the B.W.I.U. office. McNamara replied that this was only a rumour but the branch would have to look round for extra space adjacent to the Trades Hall.¹¹⁷

Gallagher's own attitude to the tradesmen became obvious during

113 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 27 April 1965. Although, when the trip was prolonged with no explanation offered, Stephensen moved that no further expenses be borne by the Branch. Minutes: Executive Meeting, 15 June 1965.

114 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 27 July 1965.

115 Minutes: Management Committee, 3-4 August 1965.

116 Ibid. In his report to the N.S.W. Executive of this meeting McNamara emphasized that he had made it quite clear "that in his opinion it was in the interests of the members to co-operate with the other union". Minutes: Executive Meeting, 17 August 1965.

117 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1965, p.70.

his report to the Conference. He believed the B.W.I.U. was continually encroaching upon A.B.L.F. work and reported that he "consistently protested" to them about it.¹¹⁸

The F.M.C.'s protest over the B.W.I.U.'s loan guarantee was part of the perennial problem of the N.S.W. Branch's financial situation. Gallagher remained as intransigent as ever, despite a steadily improving N.S.W. bank balance.

In June, Gallagher asked the F.M.C. to vote that only Branches whose sustentation fees to the Federal Body were fully paid by 24 August to be allowed representation to the A.C.T.U. Congress. The Executive reacted strongly. Austin said he was "disgusted at the attitude" of Gallagher, and Prendergast went further by indicating

...disgust and surprise also that such an important matter as this was not discussed with the Branch executive before the Federal President and General Secretary made an arbitrary recommendation to Management Committee.

He believed that the decision could be challenged in court and that it was very doubtful whether the two federal officers acted in a correct manner.¹¹⁹

McNamara, on receiving notification of the predictable vote of the F.M.C. wondered "in the event of N.S.W. not being represented who would take our place". He said he thought the Federal President and Secretary were "holding a gun" at the head of the N.S.W. Branch. He had obtained a legal opinion that the action was unconstitutional and had informed the Federal Secretary of the Branch's viewpoint.¹²⁰

McNamara suggested as a solution to the problem that

for the sake of unity within the Federation we should point out the financial difficulties of the NSW Branch and ask the Federal Body to consider the £3,000 owing as a loan to the Branch and that it be repaid by a payment of so much by a certain date and the rest to be paid in regular instalments over the next 12 months.

When the motion was put to the F.M.C. eventually, it was that "the principle to be applied is that of fraternal assistance" and once again referred to "the disastrous financial and organisational legacy of the previous N.S.W. Branch leadership". This was followed by a detailed account of the way "the many debts accrued by the previous leadership" had been paid and the important industrial gains made by the Branch between 1961 and 1965. It concluded with a reminder that the loan proposition was

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 22 June 1965.

¹²⁰ Minutes: General Meeting, 6 July 1965.

a continuance of the same procedure whereby in the recent past the Victorian Branch has given the Federal Body a £3,000 loan and the Queensland Branch has also extended a loan to the Federal Body.¹²¹

When this proposition was put to the F.M.C. it was received unsympathetically. Despite presentation of a lengthy typed report from McNamara to back up his proposal, the Committee of Management rejected it.¹²²

With this sort of response there would appear to be a certain justification for Harding's later comment about Gallagher's bias. He thought that

the contrast in the attitude by the Federal Secretary and others to the South Australian Branch's financial problems as compared to the previous attack on the N.S.W. Branch in 1963 left a lot to be desired. Particularly as the South Australian Branch had started off with a substantial surplus as against the N.S.W. deficit.¹²³

This remark was prompted by the South Australian report to Federal Conference. Thorp, the South Australian Secretary had informed the Conference that membership had slipped from 1000 to around 750, the only organiser had been retrenched and there was only £22 in the bank, but he "did not want to burden the Federation with their troubles". On questioning, he could not say what the financial situation was at the end of the June 1965 period. Gallagher's only response to this obviously serious situation was to request Thorp to furnish him with a full financial report by March 1966.

Gallagher's lack of reaction has to be analysed in the light of his continual support for Thorp as President of the Federation. For Gallagher's purposes, Thorp at least had to be seen to be competent, in order to justify Gallagher's nomination of him against McNamara as Federal President. McNamara was representing the largest branch of the Federation and Thorp the second smallest. McNamara was an acknowledged radical, while Thorp was a right-winger. Gallagher as the champion of the working class had to create the impression that his opposition to McNamara was not based on industrial rivalry or ideological disputation but McNamara's incompetence as opposed to Thorp's efficiency and effectiveness.

Naturally enough the N.S.W. delegation was not happy with Gallagher's response to Thorp's report. McNamara pointed out that Thorp had previously been "most critical" on matters of finance and had

¹²¹ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 27 July 1965.

¹²² Minutes: Federal Management Committee, 3-4 August 1965, pp.2-3.

¹²³ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 7 December 1965.

stated that finance was the business of the Federation and now he said it was not the problem of the Federation but of his State Branch. McNamara moved an amendment "that an officer of the Federation go to South Australia to investigate this Branch the same way as was carried out in another Branch". After some discussion and, presumably after the N.S.W. Branch felt their point had been made, McNamara withdrew his amendment.¹²⁴

As if in deliberate contrast to the South Australian Report which was a few paragraphs of oral generalisations, the N.S.W. Report was eleven typed pages of detailed information, by far the longest of the Branch reports. McNamara announced that he "could quite confidently report that our Branch appears to be well on the way to accumulating some reserves by next year".¹²⁵ In a spirit of goodwill he proclaimed that "it is the wish of the Branch that our Federal sustentation fees be paid early in the new year to assist the Federation with its commitments."¹²⁶

This somewhat patronising gesture was one of several expressions of co-operation and unity that occurred during the Conference. Gallagher claimed that "the unity between the branches and the Federation has never been better and that there is a greater appreciation of the Federation's problems by the branches".¹²⁷ Paddy Malone agreed and added that the Branches had worked harder towards improving the Federation.¹²⁸ Mick McNamara described Gallagher's report as "well balanced"¹²⁹ and in his own report thanked the "other Branches for the assistance they so willingly gave"¹³⁰ during the Crooble Silo dispute. Gallagher also mentioned this dispute as significant because of "the level of unity that we were able to develop between branches on this occasion". He could not however resist the opportunity to point out: "One could say of course that the branches have never asked for assistance in this sort of dispute, and this is the first time a call has been made..."¹³¹ As the Crooble dispute was basically a demarcation issue with the A.W.U., a subject about which Gallagher had always displayed more concern than the N.S.W. Branch had, this comment was

¹²⁴ Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1965, pp.56-57.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p.61.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p.62.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p.3.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p.21.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p.21.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p.63.

¹³¹ Ibid., p.4.

probably gratuitous. The Federation's overall interests were at stake in the question of which Union was to cover Silo Construction - not just the reputation of the N.S.W. Branch.

Also Gallagher had conveniently forgotten the N.S.W. response to a plea from the Tasmanian Branch for help with a dispute between riggers and Civil & Civic. McNamara visited Tasmania in the course of this struggle and aided the Tasmanian Branch as requested. He was also disturbed by the safety conditions in that state because there was no "ticketing" system for riggers.¹³² Perhaps because of this fraternal support, the Tasmanian Secretary, Morgan, congratulated the N.S.W. Branch on their report to Conference.¹³³

If McNamara expected snide remarks about the Crooble dispute he came well prepared. He made a point of explaining how the N.S.W. Riggers and Scaffolders Campaign would greatly assist the Federal Award application when margins were being argued.¹³⁴ Even Gallagher referred to this as a "very good" campaign.¹³⁵

Differences between the N.S.W. Branch and the Federation were muted rather than openly hostile. As can be seen by the previous descriptions, innuendo and hypocritical remarks were the order of the day. The Victorian Report proclaimed, "...The members of Victoria are becoming more conscious of the role played by the Federation and were throwing off the parochial view of a State only view".¹³⁶ N.S.W. scored a point however when McNamara asked was it true that the gross wage for organisers in Victoria was £26/16/-. Malone admitted it was true¹³⁷ and no doubt the N.S.W. delegation felt suitably self-righteous about their own "£26 per week with no extras allowed"¹³⁸ which had been the rate since 1956.

Again there was little difference of opinion when political items were discussed although the N.S.W. resolution on disarmament which supported the principle of peaceful co-existence between nations was predictably opposed by the Maoists. Malone moved and Gallagher seconded that the item be withdrawn and that Conference re-affirm the decision of 1964 Federal Council on disarmament. The 1964 decision made no

132 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 8 June 1965.

133 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1965, p.70.

134 Ibid., p.67.

135 Ibid., p.16.

136 Ibid., p.75.

137 Ibid., p.76.

138 Ibid., p.61.

reference to peaceful co-existence and dwelt mainly on U.S. imperialism and national liberation struggles.¹³⁹ It, also, as previously described, supported the Chinese People's Republic on the question of a nuclear weapons Conference. The re-affirmation of this policy was predictably carried.¹⁴⁰

Thus the traditional ups and downs of federal-state relations in the union were repeated at the 1965 Conference as they had been since 1961. The following year was to be little different.

Early in 1966 Gallagher attended a N.S.W. Branch Meeting to report on the Federal Award Case then in progress. He appeared to be anxious to please. He commented on the improvement of the N.S.W. Branch's work and that he was pleased to be in Sydney. He agreed with McNamara that the Federal Conference had been a fine demonstration of unity and congratulated the Crooble silo workers on their actions "which subsequently led to the builders' labourers having inserted in our award silo granaries and similar types of work". He congratulated the rank and file and all the States of the Federation. He also reported that "the N.S.W. victory of 1965 served as a basis for a part-award application on behalf of the Federation" and said he was very happy in the way the N.S.W. Branch had assisted the Federation in the present Award hearing. He mentioned that the Riggers and Scaffolders Campaign in N.S.W. had also assisted the margins case then in progress.¹⁴¹

This spirit of reconciliation did not last long however. Within weeks the problem that was to be most prominent during 1966 and 1967 became apparent - the question of amalgamation. During the debate on association with the B.W.I.U. the Rank and File Committee reactivated their news sheet Hoist. In August McNamara reported that Gallagher had been in Sydney enquiring about the publication of the new Hoist. He suggested to Gallagher that he take the matter up with the people concerned, i.e. the Rank and File.¹⁴² Evidently enough pressure was put on McNamara for him to have printed in the next issue of Builder's Labourer, a notice proclaiming

Members - It has been brought to the Executive's notice that a publication called "New Hoist" has been circulating throughout N.S.W. The Executive wishes to point out that "New Hoist" is not an official Union publication.

M. McNamara¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1964, pp.41-43.

¹⁴⁰ Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1965, p.40.

¹⁴¹ Minutes: General Meeting, 18 January 1966.

The margins case was successful. The main point being that it virtually eliminated Rate 5 except for a few classifications.

The NSW Builder's Labourer, Vol. 4, No. 1, March 1966, p.1.

¹⁴² Minutes: Executive Meeting, 9 August 1966.

¹⁴³ The NSW Builders' Labourer, July August 1966, p.5.

Another hitch in smooth relationships occurred the following week when Les Robinson received an invitation, through Rex Rickard to visit China.¹⁴⁴ McNamara moved that the Branch endorse the trip and that the Federal Secretary be contacted with a view to obtaining Federal endorsement and that the Federation be requested to meet the expenses on an equal basis. Austin, Harding and Stephensen all supported the motion but with reservations that the invitation should come through proper Union channels.¹⁴⁵ After discussion with Robinson, McNamara reported that Robinson no longer wanted financial support but just Branch endorsement. This appeared to throw a spanner into the works as McNamara and others then opposed his endorsement, with only Johnny McNamara and Joe Ferguson supporting him. Prendergast moved that his endorsement be rescinded and McNamara added that the decision should be given to the press.¹⁴⁶ McNamara explained to the press that "as far as his union was concerned Mr. Robinson was making a personal visit to China".¹⁴⁷

Mick McNamara had already written to Gallagher about the original motion, but after the decision "had tried to contact him 16 times over the last week re this matter, without success". He received correspondence in reply stating that the Federal body was not in a financial position to help finance Robinson's trip and suggested this be arranged by the various states.¹⁴⁸

Some explanation of these odd reversals are provided by the September Branch Meeting. Owens reported "a certain amount of consternation of our members about Bro. Robinson's trip to China". He moved withdrawal of endorsement and instructed the state Secretary to inform Gallagher and the F.M.C. Once again, only J. McNamara, Ferguson and Robinson opposed the motion. A rank and filer, Holley, in support, explained that

there was a lot of controversy over the previous trips to China by officials and he thought that if any overseas trip was envisaged, it should come through the proper channels, i.e., the State Branch of the A.B.L.F.¹⁴⁹

The Branch expanded upon its decision in a "Statement" in the journal. It explained that, "because of confusing and conflicting reports" it was

¹⁴⁴ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 16 August 1966.

¹⁴⁵ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 23 August 1966.

¹⁴⁶ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 30 August 1966.

¹⁴⁷ Daily Telegraph, 8 September 1966.

¹⁴⁸ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 6 September 1966.

¹⁴⁹ Minutes: General Meeting, 6 September 1966.

making it known that Robinson's trip was a personal one:

Though our Branch firmly supports reciprocal trade union visits, we feel the only endorsement we would be competent to give would be to invitations received from paternal [sic] T.U.'s in other countries.

Bro. L. Robinson neither received an invitation through the N.S.W. Branch, nor was he elected by the N.S.W. Branch...¹⁵⁰

On the whole the "internal opposition" was fairly quiet during this period. Perhaps because the major difference with the federal body was over the B.W.I.U., a subject where Johnny McNamara for one, was not in total agreement with his Federal allies.

The idea of "association" had been floated for some time by the various building unions both federally and in the state. The 1962 A.B.L.F. Federal Conference and a Combined Conference of Building Union officials in the same year had advocated closer unity within the building industry. At that stage Gallagher had fully supported such action.¹⁵¹ However in February 1966 when Gallagher received material from the Federal B.W.I.U. on the matter, both Gallagher and Malone opposed the proposals "for various reasons" in discussion with McNamara. McNamara reported to the N.S.W. Executive that he had discussed the situation with Clancy and that the present accommodation of the N.S.W. B.L.F. was inadequate and that the B.W.I.U. was in the position to offer better premises in their own building. McNamara suggested the Executive should consider all proposals carefully and that Clancy should be invited to clarify the position at the next Executive meeting. It was also proposed that the B.L.F. Federal Officers should be in attendance and that a Delegates Conference should be called on the matter. McHugh and Cook moved that the association be approved in principle and it was carried.¹⁵²

At the following meeting Clancy and Frank Butler from the Painters' Union addressed the Executive and were closely questioned. Ferguson, Robinson and J. McNamara did not attend and were criticised. Austin felt "they could have paid the two visiting officers the courtesy of being in attendance" and Lynch assured the visitors that "the Executive members present were the ones that really represented the Union on this matter". The outcome of the meeting was a decision that Clancy and McNamara draw up a document which would be discussed at a future meeting of both unions.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ The N.S.W. Builders' Labourer, September October 1966, p.21.

¹⁵¹ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 29 March 1966.

¹⁵² Minutes: Executive Meeting, 22 February 1966.

¹⁵³ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 1 March 1966.

An F.M.C. meeting was called for late March and McNamara expected association to be the subject of "a lot of discussion". He explained that "already the Federal officers had been invited to N.S.W. to express any opposition they may have to the proposed association". Austin added that he knew nothing had been hidden in relation to the proposed association and "in fact the Victorian Branch had already formed some Association in 1956 with other trades by virtue of the fact that they had drawn up a combined Industrial Agreement in that State".¹⁵⁴

The F.M.C. reacted predictably to the issue and carried a "Resolution re Association and Amalgamation". The motion warned against "self-interest by a craft union who may wish to dominate or extend the influence of its own particular craft". It also proclaimed that "development of industrial unionism must proceed on a Federal basis only and not on a State basis". Finally, after some platitudes about unity with other building trade unions, it directed

that no branch of the Federation shall engage in any discussions, negotiations or any organisational moves designed to bring about an association, merger or amalgamation...without the complete approval of our Federal Council.¹⁵⁵

The Australian reported that the Federal body was "alarmed that several branches have taken part in unofficial negotiations" and announced that "action would be taken against any State branch which disobeyed".¹⁵⁶ However the F.M.C. resolution was obviously aimed solely at the N.S.W. Branch as no other states were mentioned.¹⁵⁷

The Federal reaction is perfectly understandable in terms of relative industrial strengths. Despite Gallagher's repeated statements about the desirability of industrial unionism, the A.B.L.F. at the time was not in a position to dominate any such amalgamation of building unions. Furthermore, as the Federal body was expanding its activities and strength vis-a-vis the state bodies, he did not want to see a powerful N.S.W. body emerge over which he would have little control. In his strategic thinking, the power of the Federation had to be protected over and above considerations of future benefits for building workers in N.S.W. In terms of organisation theory Gallagher was currently maintaining the means (i.e. the Federation) while losing sight of the ends (i.e. wages and conditions for workers). Gallagher's

¹⁵⁴ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 29 March 1966.

¹⁵⁵ The N.S.W. Builders' Labourer, May June 1966, p.7.

¹⁵⁶ The Australian, 2 April 1966.

¹⁵⁷ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 5 April 1966.

contest with Clancy for power amongst the building industry unions¹⁵⁸ was to become increasingly important because it invariably affected Gallagher's own N.S.W. Branch, no matter what relations they had with the B.W.I.U. at the time.

McNamara criticised the F.M.C. decision, pointing out that "closer co-operation between building unions had been the policy of the Federation, but apparently its policy had changed". He added "the N.S.W. Branch is abiding by the Rules and is only carrying out the wishes of the N.S.W. members". The F.M.C. had told the Branch it had no right even to discuss the proposed Association and he challenged the F.M.C.'s authority to do this. He suggested that legal opinion be sought and that the decisions of Branch and Executive Meetings be conveyed to the Federation to clarify "a number of issues". If necessary he believed that the Federal officers should again be invited to address the N.S.W. Branch. Stephensen expressed surprise at the attitude of the Victorian Branch and said that "a certain element in the Federation should be gotten rid of", and Harding pointed out what he considered to be contradictions and dictatorial trends in the resolution. He said the Federation was putting obstacles in the way of the N.S.W. Branch and "criticised Federal President Thorpe [sic] as a buffoon".¹⁵⁹

McNamara reiterated his belief that the N.S.W. Branch's policy was in line with Federal policy and quoted instances of statements made by Gallagher in 1962 regarding the Tasmanian Branch. He revealed that the voting at the F.M.C. had been 5-1. Harding also informed Branch members that the Federal officials had rejected an invitation to come to N.S.W. to discuss the issue with members. Owens criticised them for this and Munday added that the N.S.W. Branch had acted correctly. He said the proposed Association was the first step towards amalgamation and "spoke at length in support of it". At what was obviously a well attended Branch meeting, many members spoke in favour of association and there was no opposition.¹⁶⁰ McNamara later reported his concern at the contents of a telegram from Gallagher requesting the minutes of the April Branch meeting "for reasons unknown".¹⁶¹

After receiving the legal opinion McNamara decided it would be

¹⁵⁸ See chapter 8 especially.

¹⁵⁹ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 5 April 1966.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 12 April 1966.

"unwise at this stage to have a head-on collision with the Federal body".¹⁶² Instead he believed a report should be printed in the journal and it should be discussed at the Delegates' Conference to which he had invited the Federal officers. Munday expressed his amazement at the Federal body "trying to hold back progress", and moved:

That this meeting cordially invites the General Secretary (163) by letter to attend the Delegates' Conference on the 15 May. This Branch meeting expresses amazement at the refusal of the F.M.C. to allow improved organisation of the two biggest unions of the building industry here in N.S.W....The proposed A.B.L.F.-B.W.I.U. Association in N.S.W. is in accordance with the general policy and objects of the...A.C.T.U. It seems inexplicable that a progressive union such as our Federation should stand in the way of improved organisation and would welcome an explanation by the General Secretary.

The motion was carried unanimously with rank and file Bro. Galton saying the F.M.C. reminded him of the previous regimes of Thomas and Bodkin, who had no intention of trying to strengthen the Union.¹⁶⁴

At the Delegates' Conference Mick McNamara reported on discussions that had taken place with other unions, particularly the B.W.I.U. When reporting the Conference the journal adds:

To protect our secretary, we mention from the beginning that he did inform the Conference, as was the case at previous meetings, that by decision of the F.M.C. he could no longer have any discussions with any other unions on this subject.

The Conference expressed disappointment that the Federal officers could not attend to explain the reasons. McNamara pointed out "to the best of his ability the feelings of the other branches..." He read a letter from Gallagher which stated that he personally thought that the N.S.W. Executive was refusing to accept Federal policy. The Conference agreed to a proposition that the F.M.C. produce a leaflet for distribution in all States and hoped that it would be a collective one and not of a personal nature. N.S.W. officials agreed to ensure its distribution because it would allow rank and file members to judge if the Federal policy was the correct one. The journal captures the essence of the dilemma as it emphasises:

¹⁶² Minutes: General Meeting, 3 May 1966.

¹⁶³ Although obviously very hostile to Gallagher's views on this subject, Munday was never loath to invite him to discuss the issue. See also Minutes, General Meeting, 4 October 1966. This ties in with Munday's belief that you can "talk things through with people".

¹⁶⁴ Minutes: General Meeting, 3 May 1966.

Our N.S.W. Executive is carrying out Federal policy, but surely they are entitled to disagree with portions of any policy that they believe is not in the best interests of the N.S.W. members. Our differences will be thrashed out at the appropriate time and place, but the rank and file of the union will be the final judges of what's right or wrong.¹⁶⁵

The Delegates' conference, ever hopeful of resolving the obvious deadlock, expressed confidence that the Federal Officers and the forthcoming Federal Conference would "clearly appreciate that this State's membership saw the proposed association as a step towards building the prestige and strength of our federation..."¹⁶⁶

The journal also detailed what exactly "association" meant, obviously in order to allay the Branch's federal critics.

Association...is a voluntary function...Both unions remain separate as regards their particular national organisation or federation, and respect and carry out the policies of their respective federation. The identity of each union is preserved...In the event of either union being dissatisfied with the progress of the association, they would be able to withdraw and still have their organisation intact.

After listing the benefits available under "association" the article concludes "These are the reasons why the N.S.W. Branch is seeking Federation approval for an Association between the B.W.I.U. and our own Branch in N.S.W."¹⁶⁷

The journal also reprinted a letter from Gallagher where he outlined his reasons for refusing to address the Delegates' Conference and why he believed a leaflet would be preferable. In McNamara's reply Gallagher's accusation that the N.S.W. Branch Executive was refusing to accept Federation policy was hotly denied:

I consider this accusation is nothing else but an attack on my position in the N.S.W. Branch. I can not, and will not, stand idly by and have this Branch's officers unjustly criticised, particularly when I know that the N.S.W. Branch has done as much, if not more for the Federation as anyone else has since 1961. If there is the slightest evidence of this Branch not carrying out Federation policy, then let it be known to all.

The policy on Association or Amalgamation, as you yourself stated is controversial.

That the N.S.W. Branch officers have some doubts about it, surely does not, or should not, lead to accusations that we are not carrying out Federation policy.

Isn't it our right to disagree, providing we do not work against any particular policy...

I personally believe that this controversial subject is being used as a "front for people to begin a dog-fight in the Federation.

¹⁶⁵ The NSW Builders' Labourer, May June 1966, p.3.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p.7.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p.5.

This we do not want, and we will use all our efforts to ensure it doesn't occur.

In reference to Gallagher's leaflet, the letter concludes:

The leaflet will create discussions amongst our members and this is a good thing. Only then will we know if our present policy is correct, because we must not forget the fact that up to this time, all the decisions on this question have been at top level, except of course when it has been discussed at our Branch meetings.¹⁶⁸

This letter was enthusiastically endorsed by the Executive¹⁶⁹ and the matter was laid to rest for some time.¹⁷⁰

The July/August journal printed a letter from rank and file members on the Civil & Civic job in Park Street which commented on this exchange of letters between Gallagher and McNamara. The workers said it was impossible to understand any opposition to a closer association of unions "as we have always understood this to be a constant feature of Federation policy". They felt the proposed leaflet would not be an explanation of Federal policy but "instead Bro. Gallagher may be issuing a leaflet to explain HIS opposition to all our efforts which we have conscientiously believed to be in fullest accordance with Federation policy".¹⁷¹

Delaney from Queensland wrote to McNamara complaining that the letter implied criticism of the Federal Secretary. McNamara disagreed entirely with Delaney and said that as far as he was concerned Delaney should get his facts straight before making attacks on the N.S.W. Branch.¹⁷² He said he was becoming increasingly concerned by the attacks being made by individuals on the N.S.W. Branch and he intended to take the matter up at Federal Conference.¹⁷³

In November another Delegates' Meeting was held with Delaney and Morgan from the Federation as visitors. "Closer unity" was discussed and

...speaker after speaker expressed concern at the instruction of the F.M.C....forbidding...negotiations or even discussions with other building unions...Whilst delegates appreciate that the situation may vary in different States, in N.S.W., delegates considered that the time was ripe...

¹⁶⁸ The N.S.W. Builders' Labourer, May June 1966, p.9.

¹⁶⁹ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 24 May 1966.

¹⁷⁰ Although snide remarks occasionally crop up such as Joe Owen's comment when he seconded a motion congratulating the Victorian Branch on a Wages Agreement. He said that the Victorian Branch should also agree to amalgamation and maybe then we would win higher wages in this state. Minutes: General Meeting, 7 June 1966.

¹⁷¹ The N.S.W. Builders' Labourer, July August 1966, p.11.

¹⁷² Minutes: General Meeting, 6 September 1966.

Ralph Kelly ventured the opinion that any rank and file member should have the right to criticise any decision of the Federal body.

¹⁷³ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 6 September 1966.

The Conference remained hopeful that the forthcoming Federal Council Meeting would allow the Branch to form an association.¹⁷⁴

At the Federal Conference the Victorian Branch moved endorsement of the March F.M.C. decision. They claimed that the item reflected the demands of the rank and file¹⁷⁵ but did not, during the course of the Conference, refer to motions or meetings of the membership. Harding, McNamara and McHugh opposed the Victorian motion whilst Thorp, McEwan, Morgan and Malone spoke in support. The resolution was won 9-4.¹⁷⁶ A N.S.W. motion was lost by the same margin with Malone, Morgan and Gallagher speaking in opposition.¹⁷⁷ The N.S.W. motion quoted A.B.L.F. policy "to propagate the principle of industrial unionism", cited A.C.T.U. policy, spoke of the N.S.W. membership's wishes and claimed it would "further strengthen the Federation" but to no avail. However Gallagher, as was his custom, paid lip service to the idea of closer liaison between the Federation and other building trades unions [which] is something that the Federation must give serious consideration to. Every branch of the Federation should take an active part in the various building trade groups in each State. This is very important if we are going to build the necessary unity...to defend the wages and conditions of building workers... The question of building trade unity is best served by strengthening the various building trade groups in each state, and branches of the Federation should set out to achieve this unity.¹⁷⁸

The difference between Gallagher's concept of "closer liaison" and the N.S.W. Branch's "association" was that Gallagher would control what his Branches did under "closer liaison" and especially it would not allow N.S.W. to be too greatly influenced by his ideological opposite in the Sino-Soviet sphere, Pat Clancy.

It was obvious that the decisions had already been made and McNamara's impassioned pleas fell on deaf ears. Once again he referred to the 1962 policy "when the present General Secretary, in a letter to the Tasmanian Branch, applauded the principle of association and said it was a matter for each Branch to decide on associations". He added hopefully:

Over two thousand members have already signed a petition calling for the right of our Branch to enter into a voluntary association with the B.W.I.U. in N.S.W. We are extremely confident that with the many discussions and dialogues occurring throughout the Australian

174 The N.S.W. Builders' Labourer, November December, 1966.

175 Unity: Official Organ of the Victorian Branch, A.B.L.F., Vol. II, No. 3, December 1966, p.5.

176 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1966, pp.30-31.

177 Ibid., p.39.

178 Ibid., p.10.

trade union movement on amalgamations, that this association, besides being in the interests of the builders' labourer in N.S.W., will also strengthen the Federation.¹⁷⁹

McNamara reported to the N.S.W. Executive Gallagher's speech on "closer liaison", commenting that Gallagher was careful not to deal with the controversial matter of Association with the B.W.I.U. in N.S.W. "He only dealt with the question of working on a group basis and why branches must strengthen these groups in each State".¹⁸⁰ One point that he did feel was cleared up was the definition of the phrase "complete approval of Federal Council" which was contained in the March F.M.C. Resolution. It meant that a majority of Federal Council would be sufficient to forbid association rather than the impression the N.S.W. Branch had, which was that every Federal Councillor had to agree.

McNamara reported that N.S.W. informed Council that if their members were still of the same opinion about association then they would raise the question again. He informed the Branch that

...a further resolution was moved against our Branch in reference to this question. In general terms it attacked the officers of this Branch and as well, the B.W.I.U. We were most hostile over the way in which this had been presented. I believe some of the other delegates agreed with us because the resolution was withdrawn. It was completely unnecessary for that resolution to be moved; the decision re the Association was against us and although we still believe we were correct in seeking the Association with the B.W.I.U., nevertheless the decision will be carried out.¹⁸¹

Mundey seemed to sum up the Branch's feelings on the subject when at the last Branch Meeting of the year he moved, seconded Owens,

...this Branch meeting deplores the attacks on fraternal unionist, Cde P. Clancy and the B.W.I.U. by Cde Malone and we restate we will work for even closer unity with the B.W.I.U. and other building unions in this State and so strengthen the Federation.¹⁸²

Ferguson's amendment which effectively deleted Mundey's motion was lost. The battleground for 1967 was set.

An issue, closely allied to that of Association was that of the Federal Body's proposal to change the name of the Union. Such a change for any union is a delicate operation as the deletion or addition of a word or two can imply changes in work performed.

Gallagher obviously realised the possible implications of the proposed name change because in April 1965 when he wrote to members of

179 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1966, p.23.

180 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 6 December 1966. Federal Conference Report, 6 December 1966.

181 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 6 December 1966. Federal Conference Report, 6 December 1966.

182 Minutes: General Meeting, 6 December 1966.

the F.M.C. about the changes to the constitution and hence the name, the letter was marked "Strictly Confidential". He wrote:

On the question of handling this letter I believe that the draft document should first of all be made the property of the Management Committee and not the Branches...The reason I have asked that this correspondence be kept confidential at this stage is that it is quite apparent that when the Secretaries of the various Branches gave their Federal Council reports to the general meeting of their Branches in relation to the changing of the Union's constitution, certain people at the Branch meetings discussed the report with other Building Trades Unions, and made them aware that our Union intended to change its constitution.¹⁸³

It is probable in the circumstances that Gallagher was referring to only one Branch and only one building trades union - that is N.S.W. and the B.W.I.U.

It is also probable that Gallagher had in mind when he proposed the name change at the 1966 Conference, expansion of the Union's industrial scope - commonly referred to as "body snatching"

...I believe that we are entering a period where our Union will become the main construction union in the industry, because these changes in the industry are favouring us more than the tradesmen's unions.¹⁸⁴

He also revealed what he believed to be the real motive behind B.W.I.U. association: "This trend in the industry no doubt has been the motivating force for some of the tradesmen's unions, especially the B.W.I.U. calling for amalgamation or association".¹⁸⁵

Gallagher's reasons for opposing "association" became even clearer. Under his timetable, armed with a new name and rules, the A.B.L.F. could encroach on areas of work traditionally performed by the craft unions but which new technology had turned into disputable tasks. Once built up into the "main construction union in the industry" he could then practise Federation policy of industrial unionism and swallow up the tradesmen. What he did not want was for N.S.W. to proceed with association before he was in a position to control Clancy.

The N.S.W. delegation opposed the Victorian motion on name change under instructions from a General meeting of the Branch. Joe Owens' motion had been eventually adopted on policy although Mick McNamara personally opposed it. Once again the issue of the name was linked with association. N.S.W. policy was "...that the name of the A.B.L.F. not be changed, and we work towards associations, amalgamations of

¹⁸³ Correspondence: N. Gallagher to M. McNamara, 28 April 1965.

¹⁸⁴ General Secretary's Report, Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1966, p.9.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

building unions..."¹⁸⁶

The Victorian agenda item changed mysteriously between when it was publicised to the Victorian rank and file¹⁸⁷ and the state branches,¹⁸⁸ and when it actually appeared at the Conference. The Victorian journal Unity recorded the agenda item,

...Federal Council shall consider changing the name of our Federation to one that is properly descriptive of the various types of work that our members are now required to perform.

but the motion as presented to conference was:

That this Federal Council Meeting agrees to change the name of our Federation and that the new name of the Union shall be THE AUSTRALIAN BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION WORKERS' FEDERATION.¹⁸⁹

There was no mention of why the wording had been changed or whether the Victorian rank and file had been consulted.

When reporting back to the Branch about the name change, McNamara, although still with personal reservations, summed up what he believed would be the results of Gallagher's proposal: "The conclusion one reaches from this of course is increased membership." He warned that: "There is however quite a deal of opposition expected from other unions when we apply for registration of the name".¹⁹⁰

The other issue that attracted most attention during the 1966 Conference was the problem of the South Australian Branch. An F.M.C. meeting in October had received requests from Thorp, the South Australian Secretary for monetary assistance and a Federal organiser. The F.M.C. meeting concluded that the branch had deteriorated because of lack of regular executive meetings, no regular financial reports and "an obvious tendency on the part of the Executive Committee to leave the whole of the Administration of the Branch to the Secretary". The fact that Thorp was incompetent is obvious from the findings that there were outstanding accounts in excess of \$1,700 and the F.M.C. argued that he "must accept full responsibility for allowing the continued drift in finances".¹⁹¹

However, the F.M.C. which had shown amazing eagerness to interfere in the affairs of the vigorously active N.S.W. Branch which was slowly redeeming the bad debts of its gangster predecessors, was loath to intervene in the South Australian situation. The reason for Gallagher's

¹⁸⁶ Minutes: General Meeting, 1 November 1966.

¹⁸⁷ Unity, Vol. 11, No. 3, December 1966, p.6.

¹⁸⁸ Federal Conference Agenda, November 1966, p.4.

¹⁸⁹ Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1966, p.31.

¹⁹⁰ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 6 December 1966. Federal Conference Report 6 December 1966.

¹⁹¹ Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1966, pp.11-12.

reluctance was that Thorp was a reliable ally in the numbers game of the Federation. The F.M.C. contented itself with merely issuing a set of instructions to the S.A. Branch on how to "overcome its obvious problem".¹⁹²

However, the situation was beyond retrieval and Gallagher took further action which was received in an interesting way by the N.S.W. Branch. Instead of condemning Gallagher for having one set of standards for them and another for South Australia, the Branch expressed concern at attacks on the South Australian Branch's autonomy. Jack Dempsey referred to Gallagher's "interference" in S.A. since the F.M.C. decision and said that the S.A. Branch members "should solve their own problems". Munday went further and questioned the sincerity of the F.M.C. decision. He understood that Gallagher had instructed Thorp to dismiss a temporary organiser whom Thorp had appointed for the purpose of implementing the F.M.C. decision. He believed the N.S.W. membership should view such happenings with concern.¹⁹³ Twelve years later when questioned on this issue Munday was of the same opinion. He said his Branch meeting statement was a "forerunner". "I knew they [the F.M.C.] were going to put someone in....I was basically opposed to anyone going."¹⁹⁴

These statements show consistency in Munday's and the N.S.W. Branch's views on autonomy. Such views continued to run counter to Gallagher's and his expansionist policies.

No real decision about the fate of South Australia was made at the Federal Conference. Gallagher announced that Thorp had resigned as Federal President following the F.M.C. decision "in the best interests of the Federation". What then followed was what can best be described as a Eulogy by Gallagher of the (in N.S.W. eyes at least) thoroughly discredited Thorp. He referred to the improvement of the work of the Federation since Thorp became President, an improvement which

...could not have been done had I not had the full co-operation of the Federal President, and of course, the support of members of the Management Committee, but especially the Federal President, who has given me every assistance asked for.¹⁹⁵

The main battle about South Australia was to occur the following year.

On the whole, the Conference proceeded predictably. N.S.W. did not contest any of the elected positions, realising that the numbers were against them.

¹⁹² Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1966, p.12.

¹⁹³ Minutes: General Meeting, 1 November 1966.

¹⁹⁴ Interview: Jack Munday, 30 March 1978.

¹⁹⁵ Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1966, p.13.

Gallagher's report once again emphasised the growth of the Federation. He praised the late Jack Buck who

...always put the Federation in its proper place, and that was at the head of the Union...He knew that if the builders' labourers' interests were to be protected, then there was a need for a strong and united Federation.

He also proudly announced the affiliation of Western Australia and the fact that the A.B.L.F. was now a "national union" an achievement that only the Painters' Union had accomplished in the building industry.¹⁹⁶ He criticised the Branches for their inactivity over award applications. McNamara disagreed with this criticism when relaying it to his own Executive. He pointed out that N.S.W. labourers were "...continually in everlasting campaigns...I would agree with the criticism if we were doing nothing but relying on Federal awards, but we are not in that position, are we?"¹⁹⁷

The N.S.W. report was once again the longest and most detailed. Morgan complimented the N.S.W. Branch for distributing typed copies to delegates.¹⁹⁸ McNamara told his Executive that the N.S.W. Report was commented on and praised by some of the other states and he criticised the other Branch Reports as being "uninspiring, dealing in generalities that we know so much about". He excepted Don McHugh's Canberra report from his comments. He also commented that eighteen of the 34 agenda items came from N.S.W. with "none from South Australia and Tasmania as usual".¹⁹⁹

In his report, McNamara claimed that provisions for safety and amenities on jobs in N.S.W. were generally considered to be the best in Australia.²⁰⁰ Nobody queried him about this statement but they did quiz him on the state of Branch finances despite his assertion that,

...the financial position of our Branch is getting sounder each year. When one realises that it is only 5 years since the rank and file first cleansed this Branch, and only 2 years since the last of the right-wing disrupters were defeated, then indeed it is pleasing to report that we are firmly on our feet and expect the financial position of our Branch to improve still further in the coming year.²⁰¹

McNamara reported that when Bro. Malone criticised the N.S.W.

196 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1966, p.3.

197 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 6 December 1966, Federal Conference Report 6/12/66.

198 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1966, p.23.

199 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 6 December 1966, Federal Conference Report 6/12/66.

200 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1966, p.21.

201 Ibid.

Branch during the discussion of the financial status of the Federation, N.S.W. was "unjustly attacked".

No mention was made of the South Australian position, which was critical, no comment about Tasmania or Queensland, except it was said that their balance sheets have not as yet been perused. We explained our position without any hesitation.²⁰²

Unity was once again stressed by the Federation officials. Gallagher expressed himself very happy with the progress made over the past year and thanked the F.M.C. for their assistance.²⁰³ Delaney, the new President, thanked delegates for their co-operation.²⁰⁴ Of the 34 items only four were opposed but McNamara described these as "the subject of long and at times bitter debate".²⁰⁵ The voting on these items was 9-4 with N.S.W. the lone opponent.²⁰⁶

The political items were all passed without controversy or disagreement. The Victorian Branch's items were notable for their emphasis on foreign investment and "Australian independence" issues.²⁰⁷ N.S.W. did not oppose these items but they no doubt found the language of Maoist anti-imperialism very different to their own motions which already displayed a lack of rhetoric and jargon which later came to distinguish their style.

The Victorian Branch reported to its members that "Delegates agreed unanimously on most of the items" and then went on to list items such as the name change with no indication that it was opposed or why. Association, easily the most contentious issue of the Conference, was not mentioned at all.²⁰⁸

The "unity" referred to by the Federation officials was not so apparent to McNamara. His personal conclusions from the Conference were somewhat different. They were:

1. The N.S.W. delegates have become a leading force in the Federation.
2. Some of the delegates from other States are not unsympathetic to N.S.W. views on particular questions.
3. Although the N.S.W. wishes are not to be carried out, the position may be different next year.
4. The Conference was the most keenly debated in my 5 years as a

²⁰² Minutes: Executive Meeting, 6 December 1966, Federal Conference Report 6/12/66.

²⁰³ Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1966, p.17.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p.40.

²⁰⁵ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 6 December 1966, Federal Conference Report 6/12/66.

²⁰⁶ The other item which N.S.W. opposed was the membership fee rise of \$2. Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1966, p.29.

²⁰⁷ Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1966, p.32.

²⁰⁸ Unity, Vol. 12, No. 1, March 1967, p.11.

Federal Councillor and the differences that do exist between us will not be overcome unless there is to be a change in some of the other States' attitudes towards N.S.W.²⁰⁹

The first problem that occurred to disrupt orderly Federal State relations in 1967 was the Federal intervention into the affairs of the South Australian Branch and, more importantly the F.M.C.'s choice of acting Secretary in South Australia.

An F.M.C. meeting was held in Adelaide on 29 and 30 March expressly for the purpose of further investigating the S.A. Branch. The outstanding accounts of the Branch stood at \$5,823 and the bank account held \$4.²¹⁰ Thorp, the S.A. Secretary resigned and the Branch Executive asked the F.M.C. to take over the affairs of the Branch.²¹¹

In the light of this request Mick McNamara voted with the rest of the F.M.C.²¹² on a number of measures taken to alleviate the situation. He repeated his previously held view on autonomy "we wanted them to make some effort to overcome their own problems",²¹³ but agreed that the situation had indeed worsened since he had last been apprised of the situation at Federal Council 1966. In fact The N.S.W. Builders' Labourer commented on this aspect: "The N.S.W. Branch cannot understand why the general secretary allowed the branch to get into debt by further thousands of dollars in the last several months".²¹⁴

Part of the intervention package involved the N.S.W., Victorian and Queensland Branches, each being asked to lend the S.A. Branch \$1,500. McNamara supported this proposition though confessing that he knew there was "very little likelihood" of it being repaid. He also pointed out to the F.M.C. that the financial position of the N.S.W. Branch did not lend itself to making large loans and proposed that the loans be paid in July as N.S.W. "would be in a much sounder financial position in that period". This suggestion proved to be impossible as the S.A. debts were pressing.²¹⁵

209 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 6 December 1966, Federal Conference Report 6/12/66.

210 M. McNamara, Federal Management Committee Report, 29-30 March, 1967, 4 April 1967, p.3.

211 Circular to South Australian Builders Laborers. Authorised by N.L. Gallagher.

212 M. McNamara, op.cit., p.3.

213 Ibid., p.2.

214 The N.S.W. Builders' Labourer, April May 1967, p.31. Thorp's money problems became common knowledge in Adelaide. Years later, Steele Hall referred to the incident during a speech in the South Australian Legislative Assembly. "He...alleged...misappropriation of union funds by a former secretary, now dead, of the Builders Labourers Federation." Canberra Times, 8 March 1974.

215 M. McNamara, Federal Management Committee Report, 29-30 March, 1967, 4 April 1967, p.5.

McNamara opposed the nomination by Gallagher of Les Robinson as Federally installed organiser in South Australia. He gave as his reason:

In my view it was wrong and unfair to South Australia to send in an untried officer. Regardless of who it was to be, he should certainly have had some experience or some qualifications, and it was my view that Bro. Robinson does not have either.

McNamara nominated Dick Prendergast

...because of his years of experience in the industry...as...a respected trade union organiser. He had all the necessary qualifications both in field work and union administration...we would be assisting our brothers in that State by lending one of our top officials. This would show that we are concerned with their welfare and want to help.

Despite a lengthy debate "where there was absolutely no criticism of Bro. Prendergast's qualifications whatsoever" Robinson was elected on the votes of Gallagher, Morgan and Thorp.²¹⁶

Despite his serious reservations, McNamara wished the S.A. Branch success and promised assistance if asked. He recommended that the decisions of the F.M.C. be endorsed by the N.S.W. Branch.²¹⁷

However the Executive of the N.S.W. Branch refused to endorse the decision and instead passed a lengthy motion, critical of both Gallagher and Robinson. During the debate, most comments centred round the issues of autonomy and Robinson's unsuitability for the position. McHugh believed that the person to be sent to S.A. should have "vast experience", which he thought Bro. Robinson did not have. He thought that the fact that Cde Gallagher put forward Bro. Robinson was sheer adventurism. Austin criticised Gallagher for not carrying out his duties and allowing the S.A. Branch to get into the financial morass. He was suspicious of the fact that Thorp supported Robinson and felt the F.M.C. should have accepted the experienced official whom McNamara had proposed. He said that after what had happened he had no confidence in some of the Federal officials. Stephensen deplored the fact that the N.S.W. Branch was being called on to run the Branch into debt to help finance the South Australian Branch. Cook and Lynch also criticised Robinson's appointment. Lynch moved the resolution which was carried 7-2. McNamara felt bound to support his own resolution of endorsement and Joe Ferguson voted with him. The N.S.W. Branch Meeting also adopted Lynch's motion.²¹⁸

²¹⁶ Ibid., p.6.

²¹⁷ Ibid., p.7.

²¹⁸ Minutes: General Meeting, 4 April, 1967.

The resolution criticised Gallagher's handling of the situation and expressed inability to understand why the General Secretary had allowed the S.A. Branch to get further into debt. Once again the N.S.W. Branch reiterated its firm views on autonomy and resolved:

While not in opposition to the appointment of a Federal representative to organise in South Australia, we consider that the South Australian Branch should be encouraged to elect from their own ranks an Acting Secretary.

The N.S.W. Branch has always strongly supported the rights of the members to control the affairs of their own Branch.

The resolution objected to being required to pay "this huge amount" and proposed deferring the matter until a further report had been made, "particularly on the question that if a member of the N.S.W. Branch is to go to South Australia to organise, then the N.S.W. Branch should be the body to decide who it is to be". The Branch resolution criticised Robinson's appointment on several grounds:

We condemn the appointment of Bro. Robinson because as was pointed out, Bro. Robinson's standing in N.S.W. is low and his attendance at union meetings and general activity in trade union affairs has been very poor, particularly since his return from China last October; in fact he has not worked in our industry for many months...

The Executive considers Bro. Robinson completely unsuitable for the task of organising the South Australian Branch. We consider it very significant that the discredited South Australian Secretary, R. Thorp, in one of his final acts before resigning, voted with Bro. Gallagher for Bro. Robinson...

...Bro. Prendergast...has over six years' experience in administration and organising.

We consider the fact that the N.S.W. Secretary's offer was not accepted, and instead, another person from N.S.W. appointed, shows that there are ulterior motives in the appointment of Bro. Robinson to organise in S. Australia.219

Gallagher's motives were hardly "ulterior". To set up someone in South Australia with every likelihood of that person becoming the permanent state Secretary, and not be absolutely sure of that person's total reliability as a supporting vote in the F.M.C., would have been organisational madness for someone as adept at numbers as Gallagher. Of course he did not want Prendergast, despite his undoubted abilities and experience, as the new powerbroker in South Australia. Whilst it could be argued that the N.S.W. position contained elements of "getting their own man in", their criticisms of Robinson were serious: to send a man with absolutely no union organising experience into a debt ridden, low morale branch like South Australia was indeed a risky gamble. They saw the move for exactly what it was - Gallagher moving a fellow

Maoist into a position for which he was not qualified over the claims of a highly qualified non-Maoist.²²⁰

The N.S.W. journal article which reported the Branch decision pointed out many of the above criticisms and once again stressed the importance of Branch autonomy.²²¹ Even at this stage it was obvious that the N.S.W. Branch was aware of the serious precedent being created in South Australia even though they acknowledged the depth of the South Australian difficulties.²²²

The Adelaide Advertiser reported the Branch decision somewhat inaccurately, implying that McNamara had told the meeting that Robinson's association with Chinese politics did not inspire the confidence of members.²²³ This alleged statement was referred to at the April F.M.C.²²⁴ meeting and also at Federal Council where Gallagher launched a full scale attack, but had to admit to inaccuracy when confronted on the issue. The Advertiser article concluded on a ring of truth however. It quoted "sources opposed to Robinson's appointment" as saying,

...S.A. members could take appropriate action on Wednesday if they wished to take exception to the action of their Federal executive in appointing an "outsider" to organise their affairs.²²⁵

This smacks sufficiently of N.S.W. "autonomy" viewpoints to be slightly more accurate than the China smear.

After Robinson's departure to Adelaide²²⁶ things quietened down in N.S.W. McNamara informed the April F.M.C. meeting that although the N.S.W. Branch had decided against making a loan, he believed the matter would receive further consideration by the Branch.²²⁷ Tom Hogan raised the matter again when Gallagher attended the June Delegates' Conference. He attacked him for his handling of the South Australian

220 Les Robinson refers to this incident as when "they set me up on the State Executive with Dick Prendergast". Interview, 20 February 1978.

221 The NSW Builders' Labourer, April May 1967, p.31.

222 Munday claims that he was basically opposed to anyone being sent and that he only supported Prendergast "after Gallagher put forward Robinson". Interview: Jack Munday, 30 March 1978.

223 Adelaide Advertiser, 5 April 1967.

224 Minutes: Federal Management Committee, 17 April 1967, p.1.

225 Adelaide Advertiser, 5 April 1967.

226 Johnny McNamara had taken six months leave of absence to go overseas in February. Minutes: Executive Meeting, 14 February 1967. With Robinson's departure only Ferguson remained on the Executive and his attendance record was not good.

227 Minutes: Federal Management Committee, 17 April 1967, p.9.

Branch problems in general and the appointment of Robinson in particular.²²⁸ In August Bud Cook replied to a letter from Johnny McNamara where he referred to an "unfair attack" on Robinson. Cook stressed:

There was no attack on Bro. L. Robinson. However, the Branch was concerned at the manner in which he was installed in South Australia, and we have a duty to the members who elected us, to say so.

It was the considered opinion of the N.S.W. Branch that Bro. L. Robinson's record in this State did not fit him for the S. Australian position, and further, the appointment of anyone from this Branch should have been the subject of a prior discussion with the N.S.W. Branch Executive at least.²²⁹

When the subject reached Federal Council the main bone of contention was McNamara's alleged statements to the Adelaide Advertiser. Gallagher expostulated:

Upon reading this article, my first reaction to this press statement was to lash out at the N.S.W. Branch because of the contents of the article, because I believed it was a deliberate move by the N.S.W. Branch to upset the F.M.C.'s decision...that the contents of the article were meant to incite and create ill feeling by the S.A. members against the F.M.C.'s decision, and to undermine the confidence of the members in the appointment of Les Robinson...²³⁰

McNamara complained that Gallagher's presentation of the article was incorrect and that only part of the press statement was made by him. Harding criticised Gallagher for including the press statement in his report and Lynch moved that the words "by Comrade McNamara..." be deleted and that the inverted commas be moved. Gallagher agreed to this change and explained that the inverted commas were a "typographical error".²³¹

In the N.S.W. delegates' report to their Branch they explained:

We objected against his accusation...it was obvious to any person who can read, that Bro. McNamara could not have made the whole of the statement attributed to him by the General Secretary. Bro. McNamara told Council that the part of the article that "quoted him, which was very little, was all he had said..." The General Secretary explained that there was a misprint in his report, and corrected the punctuation. Although this was done the article as reprinted in his report could still be read to mean that Bro. McNamara made the statement, which of course is untrue.

They finished comment on Gallagher's report with the remark, "...the General Secretary should ensure that people are not accused on any

228 Minutes: Delegates' Conference, 18 June 1967, p.2.

229 Correspondence: H. Cook to J. McNamara, 9 August 1967.

230 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1967, p.14.

231 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1967, p.31.

matters unless they can be substantiated by facts..."²³²

Robinson also referred to the matter in his report to Federal Conference. Taking no account of McNamara's denials and Gallagher's acknowledgement of error, he launched into another attack:

However I personally would have felt much better if my home Branch ...would have shown confidence in myself...instead of publishing reports designed to upset the decision of Management Committee and to cause dissension and splits in the ranks of the S.A. Builders Labourers...the NSW Branch has fallen somewhat in the eyes of the S.A. members because of this article...²³³

The N.S.W. delegates reported to the Branch:

We are of the opinion that, taking into consideration that it was Bro. Robinson's first report to a Federal meeting, more would have been gained by that brother if he had dealt with his Branch matters and problems instead of attacking other officers of the Federation who have already proven themselves.

They reported, no doubt accurately, that "Bro. Harding was very frank with the Federal Councillors when he criticised Bros Robinson, Gallagher and Malone for the treatment given to N.S.W."²³⁴

Robinson's report was received with laudable impartiality by the N.S.W. delegation to Conference. They even voted for a congratulatory resolution moved by Robinson himself,²³⁵ and McNamara moved the resolution which handed back to the South Australian Executive "the affairs of that Branch in their entirety".²³⁶ This in actuality handed the full responsibility to Robinson who had, predictably enough, been elected S.A. state Secretary unopposed. This motion also noted "with satisfaction the improvement in the organisation and financial position of the South Australian Branch". The N.S.W. delegates reported back that the S.A. position "is many times better than it was when Thorpe [sic] was the Secretary...We were pleased that S.A. had gone forward since the resignation of Thorpe".²³⁷ They were genuinely relieved that Robinson had been able to improve the situation and quite happy to aid that improvement. In fact McNamara seconded the resolution which waived

²³² Report of Federal Council Meeting held Hobart 1967, pp.1 and 2.

²³³ Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1967, p.70.

²³⁴ Report of Federal Council Meeting held Hobart 1967, pp.3-4. The N.S.W. delegates also complained that they did not receive a copy of Robinson's report. Report, p.3.

²³⁵ Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1967, pp.41-42.

²³⁶ Ibid, p.71.

²³⁷ Report of Federal Council Meeting held Hobart 1967, p.3. It would not have been hard to improve on the situation under Thorp. Gallagher produced for the Meeting, evidence of Thorp's financial dishonesty as well as his inefficiency. Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1967, p.16.

the South Australian sustentation dues owed before 1967.²³⁸ Given that the N.S.W. Branch had never received such aid during their battle to wipe out the right-wing's debts of 1961, this was a benevolent gesture.

The N.S.W. Branch also felt unfairly attacked for not lending South Australia \$1,500. As they pointed out, "it was a 'request' not a demand". Secondly, they argued their familiar autonomy principle "every branch has the undisputed right to make its own decision on any matter such as this, and that right must be respected whether agreed to or not". But their final and most devastating argument was that at that time they could not afford it without a bank overdraft.²³⁹ Given that N.S.W. was viciously attacked during the Conference for having obtained an overdraft to pay sustentation fees, this was a contradictory position for the Federal officials to take.

Another event during 1967 which caused a certain amount of conflict was the Delegates' Conference organised by the N.S.W. Branch in June. The Branch invited both Gallagher and Delaney to attend to discuss the new award application and the Basic Wage decision "and its future effects as far as our members are concerned". The invitations were cordial and the N.S.W. Branch offered to pay the two Federal officers' accommodation expenses.²⁴⁰

Delaney referred to the Delegates Conference in his report to Federal Council, thanking the N.S.W. Branch and commenting: "The General Secretary and myself were made welcome and given every opportunity to address the conference".²⁴¹ McNamara added that both officers "expressed surprise at the level of discussion, and also noted the firm support for the leadership from the job delegates".²⁴²

Gallagher, in his opening remarks to the conference, said
 ...there was no doubt that N.S.W. led the Federation in regard to the progressive policy of holding Delegates' Conferences [and]... said that the State Secretary's report was a very fine one and he supported him in calling for action on the jobs.²⁴³

He then went on to discuss the anticipated difficulties in the

238 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1967, p.33.

239 Report of Federal Council Meeting held Hobart 1967, p.6.

240 Correspondence: M. McNamara to N. Gallagher, 9 June 1967.

241 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1967, p.4.

242 Ibid., p.60.

243 Minutes: Delegates' Conference, 18 June 1967, p.1.

new Award and advocated collective discussions by all unions involved.²⁴⁴

The Delegates' Conference provided a forum for the N.S.W. Branch, both officials and members, to regale the Federal Secretary with their opinions on "Association". Whether Gallagher was "set up" to come to the meeting to receive the verbal blasts is not apparent. Perhaps delegates were voicing their opinions on what was uppermost in their minds. It began quite subtly when Tom Hogan congratulated Delaney on his report and said that:

Cde. Delaney hit the nail on the head when he said it was due to the unity of the workers in Queensland that our union was able to break through in that State. He therefore thought that it was time that the Federation members buried their differences and helped the N.S.W. Branch to formulate some form of working unity with other unions. He said he felt this was the only answer as far as this union was concerned.

Lynch added that the unity that existed in Queensland between all building trades was something they could be proud of and he felt that "the sooner we got to this position down here the better it would be". Owens remarked that he was particularly pleased to hear Delaney's comments on the unity that existed in Queensland with the B.T.G. group of unions and

...he was looking forward to the reasons for both his and Cde. Gallagher's opposition to the N.S.W. Branch's efforts to form an association with the B.W.I.U....He also spoke on the problems that had been caused to this Branch by the Federal body's opposition to the forming of an association with the B.W.I.U.²⁴⁵

McHugh thought that "the time was not far distant when the militant unions would have to band together and have a go on their own and the way to do this would be a closer working unity with other building unions".

Mundey congratulated Delaney and Gallagher for attending the Conference as he was interested

...to hear their views on certain matters that had been raised here today in relation to their opposition to any association being formed by this Branch with the B.W.I.U. He...would like to hear the Federal Secretary give his reasons for the Federal body disallowing the N.S.W. Branch to work closer with the B.W.I.U.

²⁴⁴ Negotiations between the state and federal bodies over award matters during 1967 had been reasonably amicable. Only a slight difference over an award variation for Cyclone employees occurred in August. Acting state Secretary Bud Cook disagreed with Gallagher who said that an application could not be made until the N.S.W. Branch conferred with all respondents. Cook demanded that he make application immediately. Minutes: General Meeting, 15 August 1967.

²⁴⁵ Minutes: Delegates' Conference, 18 June 1967, p.2.

Bro. Holley added to this that he was convinced that "the way forward was industrial unionism", and Bro. Kendall moved successfully that telegrams be sent to the Plasterers, Painters and B.W.I.U. wishing them "every success in their amalgamation venture".²⁴⁶

In his reply, Gallagher does not appear to have defended the Federation's position, particularly with regard to the implied contradiction between the way the Federation approved close association between the A.B.L.F. and the B.W.I.U. in Queensland but opposed it in N.S.W. All he said in reply to these sustained arguments was that allegations made by Tom Hogan were not true. Hogan had criticised Gallagher for issuing a yellow leaflet attacking the N.S.W. Branch and "he thought it extraordinary that a large consignment of these leaflets had been consigned to a N.C.C. representative named Denis Ryan, an official of the A.S.C. & J."²⁴⁷ Gallagher "rejected the supposed tie-up of the Federation with the N.C.C. He said he personally mailed all the leaflets out and he said there was no leaflets sent to the A.S.C. & J."²⁴⁸

Basically, what these criticisms indicated was that association was still a very hot issue in the N.S.W. Branch and a very troublesome problem for state-federal relations.

The issue came to a head early in the year when several circumstances coincided to create a crisis in the steadily bubbling dispute. The B.W.I.U., The Plasterers' Union and the Painters' Union began final negotiations designed to culminate in Amalgamation. The N.S.W. Builders' Labourer lamented:

What a shame that our own militant and progressive ABLF couldn't be mentioned by Mr. Calwell as one of the building unions currently preparing for amalgamation...It is painfully evident to rank and file builders labourers that the solution of a whole number of problems would be the forming of stronger associations and amalgamation finally of all unions in the building industry.²⁴⁹

A motion was passed (Mundey/Holley) at the March Branch meeting expressing disappointment at not being allowed to participate in the national discussions of the three unions. "We consider it is better to join in such discussions than try to change our name and create a new

²⁴⁶ Ibid., p.3.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., p.2.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., p.3.

²⁴⁹ The N.S.W. Builders' Labourer, February March 1967, p.3. Gallagher considered this article to be "an oblique attack on the Federation". Minutes: Federal Management Committee, 17 April 1967, p.1.

union."²⁵⁰

The second cause was the fact that most of the building union awards expired in 1967 and the N.S.W. B.L.F. believed that a united campaign conducted by the Building Trades Group "will be one of our prime responsibilities".²⁵¹

But the final act which precipitated immediate retaliation from the Federal body was when the N.S.W. Branch decided to move their office from their cramped and inadequate room in the Trades Hall into Vine House which belonged to the B.W.I.U. When Dick Prendergast moved the simple motion "that we change our address" he mentioned the B.W.I.U. premises as a possibility. It is interesting that even Joe Ferguson agreed with the general consensus that a move to the B.W.I.U. would be desirable for administrative reasons. Mick McNamara was the only dissident voice. He said that if it meant giving up the Trades Hall office he would oppose the motion and added that he disagreed with Prendergast making investigations about accommodation "off his own bat".²⁵²

Originally the office staff and then the organisers had complained about their bad working conditions. A sub-committee was set up following the motion being carried and this sub-committee investigated six different rental possibilities. The B.W.I.U., who obviously knew they were looking for space made an offer which provided the extra space at comparable cost to their present rent. The offer "could not possibly be refused"²⁵³ and the move was made.

McNamara was peremptorily summoned to Melbourne for an F.M.C. meeting. Gallagher charged N.S.W. with not notifying him of their intention to move Federal property out of the Sydney Trades Hall and claimed that their choice of the B.W.I.U. building "was not, in his opinion, unconnected with the proposals put up by the N.S.W. Branch at the last meeting of Federal Council, under the heading of 'Association'".²⁵⁴

On the first complaint, McNamara replied that in June 1966 he had written to the Federal Secretary about alternative accommodation and had received no reply on the matter.²⁵⁵ He elaborated on the problems faced because of the inadequacies of their present office and reiterated that the Branch's intention had been and still was to move into the new

250 Minutes: General Meeting, 7 March 1967.

251 The NSW Builders' Labourer, February March 1967, p.3.

252 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 14 March 1967.

253 Minutes: Federal Management Committee, 17 April 1967, p.4.

254 Ibid., p.1.

255 Ibid., p.3.

Trades Hall when it was built but that would be two to three years away. His description of the situation was highly emotional.

It has been common knowledge in NSW and perhaps it is fair to say that also throughout the Federation, the NSW Branch was contemplating moving its premises. Why? Why does NSW want to do this terrible thing?

...the most fitting starting point would be at the very basis of the people we represent, workers. By this point, I mean our own office staff.

What hypocrites we are, when we in our daily organising work pull men out on strike to gain better accommodation, work rooms, toilets and better conditions generally...²⁵⁶

He then gave detailed and horrific descriptions of what working conditions were like in room 9. Even Gallagher conceded that he recognised the N.S.W. Branch problems in relation to office space.²⁵⁷

McNamara told the F.M.C. that the Branch ensured that it was not acting contrary to either the rules or decisions of the Federation by obtaining a legal opinion from J.B. Sweeney. Sweeney's conclusion was that the move to the B.W.I.U. building was that the prohibited "association" was "a far cry from the association arising out of a landlord/tenant relationship"²⁵⁸ and that in his opinion the move was clearly not prohibited.²⁵⁹ Sweeney also discussed the autonomous nature of union branches "which has long been recognised".

McNamara told the F.M.C. that if they opposed the N.S.W. move "then come up with some alternatives" and reminded them that "you are talking about our conditions in N.S.W. - not Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania or Queensland, and you cannot get away from this". He concluded that for those people who had fears about the N.S.W. Branch being so close to the B.W.I.U. "what is going to be the case when we move into the new Trades Hall...all building unions will be side by side".²⁶⁰ He also explained that the B.L.F. offices were a completely separate unit in the building.

After McNamara's speech the President stated that he had received telegrams from job-sites in N.S.W. which "he did not appreciate". He "regretted that the N.S.W. Branch had acted in this way".²⁶¹ The telegrams were in fact signed by job delegates from 21 different building sites and while no doubt generated by the N.S.W. leadership, they were

²⁵⁶ Ibid., p.2.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., p.1.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., p.7.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., p.6.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., p.5.

²⁶¹ Ibid., p.8.

certainly not officially endorsed by them. The officials and executive members sent a separate telegram of support for the move.²⁶²

The F.M.C., after a short discussion, carried a condemnatory motion by four votes to one. The motion spoke of the move being part of a "programme designed to assist a B.W.I.U. take over of the N.S.W. Branch". It called upon the rank and file in all states

...to be on the alert and stand firm against pressures which stem from a campaign under the heading of Association or Amalgamation, because the reality of this campaign in the long term, could mean a B.W.I.U. take-over....Builders labourers, once having submerged even in part their own union identity and independence can be seriously disadvantaged...in the fight...for higher margins for many of the new operations being performed by them as a result of the use of new materials and techniques in the Building Industry.²⁶³

In the light of such paranoia it is interesting to analyse just how much of Gallagher's fears were justified. His power struggle with Clancy was obviously uppermost in his mind but one cannot underrate his rivalry with McNamara. The N.S.W. Branch made no secret of their preference for the B.W.I.U. office, apart from the purely practical considerations of convenience and cost. The Executive declared that:

The new premises will provide facilities far beyond any previously available to the Branch.

It of course will lead to a further development of the unity and co-operation that has existed between members of our Union, the B.W.I.U. and other building unions in N.S.W. since the present leadership was elected in 1961.²⁶⁴

The move was certainly designed to further the existing close relationship²⁶⁵ but the Federation had banned "association" or amalgamation, and there was no move at all, on the part of the N.S.W. Branch, to go further than they had. It was obvious that Gallagher's policy of industrial unionism stopped dead at the B.W.I.U.'s doorstep and the N.S.W. Branch was well aware of that.

The N.S.W. response to the F.M.C. decision was primarily one of disgust that the Federation could spend so much of members' time and money on what they still considered to be a Branch matter.²⁶⁶ McNamara

262 Copies of telegrams to J.A. Delaney, 17 April 1967.

263 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 18 April 1967.

264 Ibid.

265 Ralph Kelly claims that the move was "hatched in the Party rooms". Interview: Ralph Kelly, 13 December 1977.

266 At the F.M.C. McNamara asked that his objection be recorded to "the interference of the General Secretary in our Branch. On his own admission he is checking up with people in NSW for the purpose of seeking information. So let it be known that on every occasion this type of back-door spying occurs we shall inform our members in NSW..." Minutes: Federal Council Meeting, 17 April 1967, p.2.

believed that had Delaney and Gallagher investigated the premises and raised any problems they had "they would have been well satisfied and could have saved the Federation some hundreds of dollars by avoiding a special meeting in Melbourne". Prendergast also mentioned the "unnecessary expense" and the attempts to "retard the progress of the N.S.W. Branch". Lynch, Harding and Cook all made similar comments. The Executive motion criticised the F.M.C.'s reference to the effect of new building techniques as

...out of line with reality, for the new techniques being introduced adversely affect builders' labourers just as they do other building workers. Stronger union organisation and unity between all unions is needed to combat the effects of new techniques.

The motion went on to refute allegations that the move was a B.W.I.U. takeover and reiterated the Branch's adherence to their own identity and the Union rules. It concluded by deploring the F.M.C. attack on "a brother union".²⁶⁷

At the Branch meeting Munday moved a similar motion in slightly stronger language, referring to the F.M.C. decision as opposing the accepted trade union principle of unity and "must only gladden the hearts of the employers". He also rejected "as a blatant insult the accusation that any other building union intends to take this Branch over".²⁶⁸

McNamara pointed out to the Executive that an article had appeared in The Australian containing parts of the F.M.C. resolution.²⁶⁹ The implication of this was that Gallagher had leaked the decision to the media.

The article was headlined "Takeover Charge by Union" and stated that the national membership of the B.L.F. was 25,000 whereas the B.W.I.U. had 50,000 members. It then quoted those sections of the resolution which accused the B.W.I.U. of "take-over" designs.²⁷⁰ The following day the same paper reported the N.S.W. Executive's motion that the F.M.C. decision had misrepresented the N.S.W. move:

The move would develop the unity and co-operation that had existed between the A.B.L.U. and the B.W.I.U. This unity had already improved labourers' wages and conditions.²⁷¹

Gallagher was not the only union official schooled in the art of leaks.

In May, McNamara brought to the Executive's attention a leaflet

267 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 18 April 1967.

268 Minutes: General Meeting, 2 May 1967.

269 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 18 April 1967.

270 The Australian, 18 April 1967.

271 The Australian, 19 April 1967.

headed "Builders' Laborers Beware - The B.W.I.U. Take-Over" which was in circulation in Victoria and had been sent to N.S.W. for distribution. He criticised Gallagher for failing to inform him of the production of the leaflet. No decision had been made by the F.M.C. to produce such a leaflet and McNamara considered it an open attack on the N.S.W. Branch.²⁷² He sent telegrams to Delaney and Gallagher demanding that the leaflet be withheld or alternatively, the N.S.W. case be presented in similar form by the General Secretary.²⁷³

McNamara then wrote to Delaney raising the "strongest objection possible", claiming that

...the actions of the people responsible for the leaflet are not conducive to building unity within our Federation, and are a retrograde step that will only assist the forces of reaction.

He declared himself "ashamed to be associated with this document" and said that he would inform the members that he, "as a Federal Officer had no knowledge of the intention to produce and distribute a leaflet that sets out to split and divide building workers generally".²⁷⁴ He then posed eight questions which queried the legality and morality of the Federal body's move and concluded that he was "disgusted with these actions which have brought about a fracture in this Federation's activities..."²⁷⁵

The N.S.W. Branch considered bringing out a leaflet in reply²⁷⁶ but after a motion condemning "the action of the General Secretary in bringing out this shocking document...on his own volition"²⁷⁷ the uproar subsided. The controversial question was not abandoned however. The next issue of the Builders Labourer contained a colourful article from Jack Stephensen who wrote of the 1966 Federal Council decision: "Although we (the NSW delegates) are reluctantly committed to the decision I, along with many of my fellow workers feel that this was a retarded move and contrary to ACTU policy". He concluded, "...last Christmas day the employers had an extra helping of turkey and champagne from the council decision".²⁷⁸

The August Builders Labourer, in reporting the Delegates'

272 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 16 May 1967.

273 Copies of Telegrams: McNamara to Delaney, 11 May 1967. McNamara to Gallagher, 11 May 1967.

274 Correspondence: M. McNamara to J. Delaney, 22 May 1967, p.1.

275 Ibid., p.3.

276 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 6 June 1967. Minutes: General Meeting, 6 June 1967.

277 Ibid.

278 The NSW Builders' Labourer, June July 1967, p.31.

Conference, recorded that "delegate after delegate...questioned the wisdom of this apparent isolationist policy" and quoted Gallagher as replying "maybe N.S.W. is right but time will tell". The journal opined:

The delegates were of the opinion that 'time is telling now', and that there exists a crying need for the establishment of larger, stronger unions, based on the needs of each industry.²⁷⁹

The Victorian journal canvassed the opposing view in an Editorial entitled "Amalgamation or Take-overs and their Significance". The article repeated the argument about new techniques in the industry and attacked the notion of amalgamation as a sacred cow. It argued that "numerical strength was not decisively important and that leadership plays a more important part in the trade unions day to day struggles, than numbers". The two examples it used to illustrate this point were the A.W.U. and the Ship Painters and Dockers which are surely not apt analogies. It capped the argument by referring to the disability allowance gained by the B.L.F. in 1966. The implication of this was presumably that the allowance was won because the B.L.F. was small - not because of job action or militancy generally. The editorial finished with the exhortation that the B.L.F. officials were not elected to "preside at a ritual designed to liquidate the A.B.L.F."²⁸⁰

At the 1967 Federal Conference the matter was only raised in passing.²⁸¹ In his report Gallagher mentioned joint discussions with the B.W.I.U. and the N.S.W. Branch because both awards expired in 1967. He noted suggestions that there should be a State Building Trade Award to govern all building unions in N.S.W. He informed the N.S.W. Branch that he opposed being joined to a State Building Trades Award and called it "industrial suicide". He mentioned that demarcation disputes with the A.W.U. would result and go against the B.L.F.²⁸² Mick McNamara, somewhat ironically, complained that Gallagher's report contained no reference to the N.S.W. Branch move to the B.W.I.U. building.²⁸³ McNamara's report mentioned

...branch meetings, delegates' conferences and job meetings continue to press for the ideas of association; amalgamation to be vigorously pursued in accordance with the ACTU policy and in fact the policy

²⁷⁹ The NSW Builders' Labourer, August September 1967, p.3.

²⁸⁰ Unity, October December 1967, pp.3-4.

²⁸¹ The N.S.W. motion on amalgamation was not raised because the agenda items were late. The motion asked Council to reconsider the 1966 decision.

²⁸² Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1967, pp.27-28.

²⁸³ Ibid., p.30.

written down in the objects of our Federation.²⁸⁴

He argued that Canberra was a good example of unions in a particular industry working together as one and continuing to thrive²⁸⁵ and concluded:

...We in NSW believe in unity, and will go a long way to achieve it; but we are only one branch. If you at these Federal meetings disagree with some questions put forward by NSW, such as the all-important question of amalgamation, you have the unqualified right to oppose it; but whenever any matter is rejected, this Federal body should not sit back for another 12 months before discussing it again...Our hope is that all of the branches respect the points of view of NSW. If you believe we are wrong, show us exactly where or why. If our methods of work have shortcomings, assist us in a material way to overcome them. It is our view that only when these theories are put into practice you will have unity where it is most essential - at the top - federally.²⁸⁶

Malone however noted "overtones of marriage with the B.W.I.U." in McNamara's report but McNamara felt this "could only have come about because we are so perfectly matched to carry out a job for the workers in our industry".²⁸⁷

Before Federal Conference even convened there had arisen a dispute about representation. In September Gallagher informed McNamara that N.S.W. was only entitled to three delegates to Council instead of four. Holley and Austin castigated the Federation for suddenly reverting to rules about Federal Council when they had not bothered to implement them for years. Lynch thought that correspondence should be sent to the Victorian Branch asking about financial membership because he was of the opinion that Victoria had been over-represented at previous Council meetings. Lynch moved that the balance sheets for all states over the last three years be requested but McNamara advised moderation and the motion was adjourned.²⁸⁸

Certainly there seem grounds for N.S.W.'s complaints. Gallagher reported to Conference that:

In the past Branches have been assessing their own sustentation fees, which is not in accordance with the rules of the Union, but is my responsibility under the rules to do so...it is true to say that the rules in relation to this matter have not been strictly carried out ...I wish to inform Federal Council that as from now the rules of the Federation are to be strictly enforced.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁴ Ibid., p.53.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., p.61.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., pp.62-63.

²⁸⁷ Report of Federal Council Meeting held Hobart 1967, p.6.

²⁸⁸ Minutes: General Meeting, 5 September 1967.

²⁸⁹ Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1967, pp.8-9.

Although citing the events in South Australia as the reason for this sudden adherence to the rules it is much more likely that the minor building boom in Melbourne²⁹⁰ and the relatively slack period in Sydney during 1967 had produced a situation where Victoria genuinely had the numbers to warrant four delegates while N.S.W. was reduced to three.

The major criticism of the N.S.W. Branch came from Malone. He moved a motion attacking them for obtaining a bank overdraft; not lending South Australia \$1,500; having their Federal Council delegates reduced to three, a drop in membership, and failing to replace a retired organiser; failing to furnish a copy of their balance sheet and not sending a delegate to the A.C.T.U. Congress. He spoke about the need to arrest this "unsatisfactory trend" and warned that if the position were not improved Federal Council "shall consider taking the steps necessary to deal with the matter".²⁹¹

N.S.W. considered the bank overdraft to be a matter of a branch's autonomous rights and McNamara believed the question should have been discussed by Federal Council but not in the way it was. He believed the South Australian "loan" was part of a policy difference with the Federal body, was a request not a demand and in any case was mutually exclusive as a crime when placed alongside charge one (overdraft). The "drop in membership" was denied by McNamara and he explained that new members had in fact risen by "some hundreds".²⁹² The retired organiser was Charlie Smith whom the Branch had been "carrying" for some time and whose position did not need to be filled as he had not contributed very much to the work performed. As McNamara complained: "Quite frankly we don't know what we have to do to please some people, even when we do show we are genuinely attempting to tackle the financial problems - we are criticised".²⁹³ On the criticism that the branch had failed to send a recent balance sheet he explained that owing to the illness (and eventual death) of the Branch's auditor the half-yearly statement was received late and they were under the impression that Gallagher had received a copy.

There is nothing wrong with our Balance Sheets. Why should we not send them? What of all other Branches in the Federation? When did they send in Balance Sheets, or is it only N.S.W. again? The General Secretary did not inform the N.S.W. State Secretary that

²⁹⁰ Report of Federal Council Meeting held Hobart 1967, p.4.

²⁹¹ Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1967, pp.64-65.

²⁹² Report of Federal Council Meeting held Hobart 1967, p.6.

²⁹³ Ibid., p.7.

he did not have our Balance Sheet until we got to Hobart.²⁹⁴

N.S.W.'s paranoia would appear to be justified on this point. The Branch had sent bank statements to Gallagher in September and informed him that the audit would be sent as soon as it was completed.²⁹⁵ For Gallagher not to have informed the Branch that he had not received it, indicates laxity or a desire to have a good criticism of the N.S.W. Branch in hand.

The final criticism, of not sending a delegate to A.C.T.U. Congress, was as McNamara described it "ludicrous".²⁹⁶ In August, McNamara had asked Gallagher if N.S.W. could attend the A.C.T.U. Congress. "Gallagher would not agree that this Branch could have a delegate unless all sustentation fees had first been paid. As this was not possible, the Branch could not be represented."²⁹⁷ Gallagher contacted McNamara in September and asked why the Branch had not been represented. As McNamara explained, "Bro. Gallagher was talking with his tongue in his cheek as he had prevented our Branch from attending because of the non-payment of sustentation fees".²⁹⁸

So Malone's seven separate charges basically boiled down to the bank overdraft and the delay in paying sustentation fees - a problem that was not confined to N.S.W. alone during the relatively slack condition of the industry in 1967.

However the motion of condemnation was carried with only N.S.W. dissenting. This situation contributed to McNamara's report to the Branch suggesting a reappraisal of existing practice:

Our report was given to the Councillors before it was read and we will certainly be looking at the advisability of circulating our report to Councillors in future. Our reason for this is that on every occasion we have done this, someone seems to go through it with a fine tooth-comb to find out its shortcomings...This is hard to swallow, because the main critic, Bro. Malone, as we mentioned before, did not even prepare a report for the Federal Councillors to peruse and yet he set out to tear the N.S.W. prepared report to pieces. We would not be as hostile as we are at present, and were then, if all the points raised were valid or constructive criticism of our work, but the fact is they were not. Unless all branches prepare reports in the future, we see no reason why only N.S.W. should (or one or two of the other states).²⁹⁹

²⁹⁴ Ibid., p.7.

²⁹⁵ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 12 September 1967.

²⁹⁶ Report of Federal Council Meeting held Hobart 1967, p.7.

²⁹⁷ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 22 August 1967.

²⁹⁸ Minutes: General Meeting, 5 September 1967.

²⁹⁹ Report of Federal Council Meeting held Hobart 1967, p.5.

McNamara repeated his criticism about lack of preparation when discussing the Victorian report although he conceded "we could find some interesting aspects" in Malone's verbal summary. He was much more complimentary about the Queensland effort, commenting that Bro. Delaney "gave a most interesting report".³⁰⁰ About Gallagher's report he contented himself with "the General Secretary had done much better on previous occasions".³⁰¹

McNamara complained about the substance of the Conference in general:

Nothing was said about our proposal for a research officer for all the States to study the important technological changes in our industry, and their effects on our members. We raised this question because absolutely nothing is being done in our Federation to investigate more deeply the changes occurring in our industry - and what we must do to ensure our members are protected.

It is a great pity that more time is not spent on matters that really interest our members as was the case on this question.³⁰²

The N.S.W. Branch considered the primary waste of time at the Conference was the condemnation motion against them. Five hours were spent in debate of the N.S.W. Report and Malone spoke for 55 minutes in his "unjustified condemnation of our Branch".³⁰³

The N.S.W. agenda items had arrived late and were not accepted by Gallagher³⁰⁴ but several of the head office and Victorian motions were hotly debated. Once again N.S.W. found itself alone in opposing the name change,³⁰⁵ which was re-submitted because of a technical hitch in registration.

N.S.W. abstained on a motion proposed by Malone arising out of the N.S.W. Report which expressed opposition to the principle of a Composite Building Trades Award applying to B.L.F. members in N.S.W.³⁰⁶ While abstaining, McNamara

...made it clear that the Federal Officers must not forget that this question of the new award for NSW is our member's bread and butter, and we are going to fight like hell one way or another to obtain maximum improvements.³⁰⁷

300 Ibid., p.4. It is interesting to note that Delaney did not attack the N.S.W. Branch during the Conference. Correspondence between the Branch and Delaney during the year also indicates a warmer relationship than that between them and Gallagher. Correspondence: J. Delaney to M. McNamara, 23 February 1967; M. McNamara to J. Delaney, 20 March 1967; J. Delaney to "The President, N.S.W. Branch", 8 December 1967.

301 Ibid., p.2.

302 Ibid., pp.7-8.

303 Ibid., p.5.

304 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 3 October 1967.

305 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1967, p.35.

306 Ibid., pp.65-66.

307 Report of Federal Council Meeting held Hobart 1967, p.7.

Another issue which caused some contention was the head office motion proposing the setting up of a Branch in the A.C.T. separate from N.S.W. N.S.W. believed that A.C.T. members were basically uninterested in the issue and that "influence from other quarters"³⁰⁸ (i.e. the Federal Body) was being used on the A.C.T. members. Certainly there would appear to be corroboration for the belief that interest in running their own Branch was not high because Gallagher admitted in his Report to Conference that only nine members attended the General Meeting that he had addressed in Canberra.³⁰⁹ McNamara believed that, ...some sections of the Federal body had completely changed face in this regard, as it was not so very long ago that they had advised us against doing the very thing that they were now advocating.³¹⁰

It is most probable that the Federation was quite prepared to encourage Don McHugh's desire for full Branch status for the A.C.T. simply to reduce the power of the N.S.W. Branch. By this time relations were so poor that Gallagher may have allowed his hostility towards N.S.W. to override his previous attitude that Canberra did not warrant a separate Branch.

When the motion was put, Delaney ruled it out of order on the grounds that it was unconstitutional. Gallagher disagreed with the President's ruling but it was upheld 9-3³¹¹ with Gallagher, Robinson and Danaher (Victoria) voting against.³¹² The resolution therefore lapsed.

Once again there was little dissension over the political items. The only interesting aspect was the increasingly Maoist jargon used by the Victorian Branch in their motions. There was even one agenda item headed "Australia - An Independent Nation".³¹³

The final irony after a heated Conference was Mick McNamara moving that Gallagher's wages be increased.³¹⁴ Presumably even if you hate the General Secretary you have to pay him correctly.

The major aspect of Federal State relations during 1968 was the co-operation of both bodies in the building workers' margins campaign.

308 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 19 December 1967.

309 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1967, p.21.

310 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 19 December 1967. Don McHugh assured the executive that "the Hill group had no hand in this move".

311 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1967, p.37.

312 Report of Federal Council Meeting held Hobart 1967, p.2.

313 Agenda: Federal Conference, November 1967, p.7.

314 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1967, p.76.

However from time to time throughout the year the N.S.W. Branch was critical of the way the Federal body handled the situation.

The building tradesmen made a claim early in the year to the N.S.W. Industrial Commission for a margins increase. The N.S.W. B.L.F. urged support for this claim arguing that "although the case...is for tradesmen in our industry, the outcome will vitally effect all builders labourers".³¹⁵ The Branch explained that the claim was part of the general Union campaign for increased margins following the metal trades decision of December 1967. The Branch pointed out that the metal trades decision had discriminated unfairly against the unskilled workers in that industry and that the same could happen in the building industry. A further unsatisfactory feature of the judgement was the decision to restrict the increases to the metal trades. "This decision makes it clear that the building unions and their members will have to be most active in campaigning if margins increases are to be won".³¹⁶

The delay in awarding increased margins to the building workers was seen as an attempt to treat them as "second-raters",³¹⁷ and quite an effective campaign was launched by the combined building unions, particularly in N.S.W.³¹⁸

In February, a claim was made in the Federal Arbitration Court for an immediate interim increase, and in March a national conference of 33 Federal and State Secretaries of twelve Building Trades unions was held to discuss a joint campaign.³¹⁹ Both Munday and Gallagher attended this conference with Munday reporting back to his branch that the meeting demonstrated once again the need for one union in the building industry.³²⁰

Munday felt that the F.M.C. meeting which was held following the conference was "pretty good...as the principal thing fully discussed was the Margins issue".³²¹ The F.M.C. agreed to back the wage campaign for a proportionate flow on and Munday reported that he was pleased to

315 A.B.L.F. N.S.W. Branch, Circular to All Job Delegates, 12/1/68, p.1.

316 Ibid., p.2.

317 Building Trades Group of N.S.W. Trades & Labor Council, Where Have All the Margins Gone?, February 1968, 4pp.

318 Daily Mirror, 26 January 1968.

319 Building Workers' Industrial Union of Australia, Federal Office, Re: National Meeting of Building Trades Unions, To Unions as Addressed, 23 March 1968, lp. roneod.

320 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 26 March 1968.

321 Ibid.

say that this resolution had come from the N.S.W. Branch.³²²

The Branch immediately launched into an enthusiastic campaign with extended lunch hour meetings, telegrams from job sites to the M.B.A. and delegates' conferences. A conference was arranged with the M.B.A. to which Gallagher and Len Schurr, Secretary of the B.T.G., were invited.³²³

A meeting of 70 job delegates in April decided to hold a stoppage later that month.³²⁴ The stoppage was extremely successful with a large attendance at the meeting to discuss the margins issue.³²⁵

Mundey believed that:

...it would be much better if the other states would take the same action because if it got to court by application of the Federation he felt it was doomed to failure, so he suggested that we call on the Federal Secretary to initiate some action along these lines with a view to getting all the employers organisations to meet us in Conference.³²⁶

Austin and Lynch supported Mundey's statement with Austin adding that, in view of Gallagher's telegram to the N.S.W. stop work meeting, the Federal Secretary "should be made to understand that he cannot have it both ways". Lynch suggested calling on Gallagher to institute action in other states so as to achieve the increases.³²⁷

This criticism of Gallagher's tactics was continued at the next Executive meeting. Mundey reported that as far as he was aware no action had been taken against employers in other states and that Gallagher had informed him that two applications had been made to the courts on the margins issue. He felt the Branch should notify the Federal Secretary that the applications were premature, and that action should have been taken in other states. He suggested withdrawing the applications and seeking an immediate conference with the Employers. Hogan agreed with Mundey's criticisms of Gallagher's actions and said that workers were impatient for action on the matter. He added that if the applications regarding fares were proceeded with, the workers would regard it as a sellout. A resolution was passed unanimously which declared:

322 Minutes: General Meeting, 2 April 1968.

323 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 9 April 1968.

324 Correspondence: S.R.L. Young, Industrial Officer, Employers' Federation of N.S.W. to the Industrial Registrar, Department of Labour and Industry, 22 April 1968.

325 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 23 April 1968.

326 Ibid.

327 Ibid.

We view with concern the timing of the Margins Application as we are of the opinion that more activity should be developed in each State in accordance with the Federal Management Committee decision of 20 March, 1968...

The resolution then detailed the steps that should be taken in N.S.W. and pleaded for the application to be stood over "pending the development of more job activity in all States..."³²⁸

Munday relayed this decision to Gallagher with an accompanying letter which was more conciliatory in tone. He remained quite definite in his estimation of the futility of resorting to court action without sufficient on-site activity "...regardless of the court proceedings it is imperative that we develop more job action in all states".³²⁹

A week later Munday told the Executive that in his opinion Gallagher was using N.S.W. to bolster up the Victorian Branch's chances of improving the climate for the forthcoming agreement with the Victorian Builders. He also said that the Tasmanian Branch had achieved some increase in margins but these fell far below what was being sought. He repeated his view that not enough campaigning had been done Federally around the question.³³⁰ At the Branch General Meeting Munday reported that during the Conference at the Court regarding the margins applications, he had said he was opposed to the delay in bringing the parties together, yet W. Fisher, the legal representative of the Federation, had agreed with the employers on a June date and said he wanted Paddy Malone the Victorian Secretary present at the Conference. Munday continued that "the decision was done on the say so of the General Secretary without consultation with the Management Committee".³³¹

Activity within N.S.W. remained at a high level. During a meeting with the M.B.A., "a deputation from Costains, University City Road Project rolled up at the Conference with placards". A number of other projects had stopped work in support of the claims. Munday suggested a Delegates' Conference should be organised

to formulate forms of action, and to put pressure on the Employers, keeping in mind the Conference to be held in Melbourne on June 5th...between the Union Federally and the Employers Nationally.³³²

In a circular to all job delegates informing them of the Delegates' Conference Munday wrote:

328 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 30 April 1968.

329 Correspondence: J. Munday to N. Gallagher, 2 May 1968.

330 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 7 May 1968.

331 Minutes: General Meeting, 7 May 1968.

332 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 14 May 1968.

Job meetings and demands on employers are being held on many jobs. Already over 30 projects have held stoppages, and these stoppages must be making an impact on the employers. If they continue until the Melbourne conference it will help in our discussion with the employers.³³³

Mundey repeated his belief in job-site activity in a letter to Len Schurr:

In N.S.W. in the last month 59 projects have been involved in stoppages of varying duration, and a number of employers have agreed and are paying the increases claimed.

It is clear that the failure of the large Metal-Trade Unions to struggle against paltry margins increases awarded non-tradesmen have rebounded on us. However, because of the Industrial Action we have engaged in, it is significant that the employers' offer at this stage is in excess of our equivalents in the Ironworkers, and that the main employer opposition isn't coming from the Master Builders Association in N.S.W.

...The interim Federal Carpenters decision will not make it easier for us, and once again demonstrates as in the Metal Trades non-tradesmen issue, that where there is only reliance on Arbitration, the workers suffer.

I believe it also vindicates the correctness of the N.S.W. Building Tradesmen Unions and this group (the B.T.G.) in moving swiftly and achieving increases...³³⁴

At the meetings in Melbourne with the Employers, Mundey gained the impression that the N.S.W. job stoppages had a marked effect on employers.³³⁵ He believed that:

...the reason for Mr Ball, NSW MBA, taking a stand in support of re-opening of the Award and being the spokesman suggesting a 30% increase on present margins, was almost entirely because of the effects of the 62 stoppages in NSW in the last 5 weeks.³³⁶

Mundey also made a pointed remark that "Mr Fisher, a Barrister did the job normally done by a Federal Secretary".³³⁷

Mundey reported that members were frustrated at the continual delays and postponements and said the Federation would have to give serious consideration to a national 24 hours stoppage. He also urged that "a representative gathering from jobs"³³⁸ attend the court hearing which had been adjourned to Sydney.

The Sydney hearing was well attended by workers³³⁹ and Tom Hogan suggested that their action should be recognised in the next journal.³⁴⁰

³³³ A.B.L.F. N.S.W. Branch, Circular to all Job Delegates, 24 May 1968.

³³⁴ Correspondence: Jack Mundey to Len Schurr, n.d. (May 1968?)

³³⁵ Minutes: General Meeting, 11 June 1968.

³³⁶ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 18 June 1968.

³³⁷ Minutes: General Meeting, 11 June 1968.

³³⁸ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 25 June 1968.

³³⁹ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 2 July 1968.

³⁴⁰ Minutes: General Meeting, 2 July 1968.

As the Sydney hearing progressed, Munday expressed doubt as to its outcome and suggested that if something tangible had not taken place by the end of the week the N.S.W. Branch should suggest to the Federal Secretary that widespread stoppages be held and that telegrams be sent to the Commissioner from workers. Munday added that:

...it bears out the contention of the NSW State Executive of some two months ago, that there had not been enough action around this issue particularly so in other states.³⁴¹

A resolution was passed at the July Branch meeting calling for a national stoppage if the case was not finalised by 26th July. Complying with the motion Munday sent letters to Gallagher and the other state Secretaries informing them of this decision.³⁴² Although these letters merely contained the text of the resolution and a "wishing you all the best" Gallagher complained about correspondence being sent to other Branches without going through the Federal Secretary. Munday replied that he was acting within the rules. In return he questioned Gallagher about activity in the other states and stressed the Branch's dissatisfaction with his (Gallagher's) handling of the margins issue.³⁴³

Gallagher was also criticised for not attending the July Branch meeting although he was in Sydney. Hogan moved that Gallagher be notified that "we deplore his non-attendance at tonight's Executive and General Meeting".³⁴⁴ Munday reported later that the General Secretary had apologized but Hogan insisted that Gallagher's answer be reported to the Branch meeting, that is, that he forgot the Executive meeting was on.³⁴⁵

Job action in N.S.W. remained intense with particular pressure being applied to Employers' Federation job-sites. In principle Munday remained opposed to single state action around the margins question and frequently argued that any action should be on a national basis.³⁴⁶

Gallagher appeared to be still dragging the chain. When the court sitting was moved to Melbourne, the N.S.W. Branch passed resolutions calling on the Federal Secretary to "organise around getting activity and attendance at the Court hearing".³⁴⁷ Munday reported that

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Correspondence: J. Munday to N. Gallagher; P. Malone; L. Robinson; and W. Morgan, 3 July 1968.

³⁴³ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 9 July 1968.

³⁴⁴ Minutes: General Meeting, 2 July 1968.

³⁴⁵ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 9 July 1968.

³⁴⁶ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 20 August 1968.

³⁴⁷ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 30 July 1968.

not one rank and filer had been in attendance on the final day, and he thought that the Victorian branch would have organised "a large team of workers to be in attendance to bring further pressure on the court". Pringle called it "a pretty poor effort by the Victorian Branch in not having any Rank and File at the Court hearing" and the N.S.W. delegates to Federal Conference were requested to "strongly let the Conference know the feelings of the NSW Branch on this matter".³⁴⁸

Gallagher, on the other hand, was filled with admiration at the way the N.S.W. Branch had conducted certain aspects of the case. In a letter to Munday he wrote:

I wish to thank the NSW Branch for the very excellent job they did in getting members to give evidence in the Federation Margins' case.

I, and the Union's Council [sic] Mr W. Fisher, was very happy with the very high standard of the Union's witnesses and no doubt their evidence must have a big influence on the decision the Commissioner will make in this matter.

I would like to convey to Organizer Bert McGill, my sincere thanks for the very fine job he did in accompanying me to various sites to interview members. I would also like to thank you for your assistance in the above matter.³⁴⁹

Action in N.S.W. continued. In August Munday informed job delegates that: "Builders Labourers in N.S.W. have done an excellent job in forcing the Master Builders Association to change its attitude and agree now that we should get the margins increase". He still urged delegates to send telegrams to Commissioner Holmes who was hearing the case. Stoppages were organised in Newcastle and Wollongong³⁵⁰ and the B.T.G. produced a leaflet which claimed that seventy stoppages by B.Ls had taken place in the Sydney area. A meeting of 220 job delegates sent a telegram to Holmes threatening that failure to grant satisfaction to builders labourers would lead to widespread industrial disputes in the building industry.³⁵¹ Munday later estimated that the total number of stoppages since April had been "in excess of 80".³⁵²

The stoppages during the final stages of the case in Sydney involved 2,500 building workers from fifteen big city jobs. A deputation of 100 workers was organised to go to the Head Office of the Employers' Federation where they buttonholed the Director for over an

348 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 15 August 1968.

349 Correspondence: N. Gallagher to J. Munday, 1 August 1968.

350 A.B.L.F. N.S.W. Branch, Circular to All Job Delegates, 2 August 1968.

351 L. Schurr, Secretary, B.T.G. on behalf of 11 affiliated building unions, Wage Demand of Building Workers, n.d.

352 Correspondence: J. Munday to J. Delaney, 9 August 1968.

hour. This was considered to be a great success both by Munday and the workers involved:

All of the workers thought the mass deputation was a very effective action and they support face to face discussion with the people that are responsible for denying them wage increases.³⁵³

The eventual decision of Commissioner Holmes was for "substantial rises" ranging from \$1.35 to \$3.25.

The fact that the N.S.W. Branch had borne the brunt of activity during the campaign was mostly unacknowledged by the other states. The South Australian description of the struggle sounded almost as if the South Australian Branch had brought about the successful conclusion itself.³⁵⁴

Gallagher himself was a little more forthcoming. Although in the initial stages of his report to Federal Conference he only distinguished between Victoria having "a number of stoppages" and N.S.W. having "a fairly substantial number of stoppages"³⁵⁵ he later spoke in more detail of the N.S.W. contribution.

After justifying his timing of the Union's application and claiming that the tactic of filing an application to vary the N.S.W. section of the Award "was a big factor in influencing the NSW Master Builders' Association to agree to the rates we proposed" Gallagher conceded that "...it was not the main factor...The main factor by far was the very good rank and file pressure which was applied by the members in N.S.W."³⁵⁶

Gallagher also mentioned that the standard of witnesses at the Sydney Work-Value case was "very high":

I would like, at this stage, to thank the New South Wales Branch for making available the services of Organiser, Bert McGill [sic], to help me to get Union members to give evidence. It was a very big help to me to have someone who had the knowledge of where the type of witness the Union wished to call was working and this had the effect, of course, of improving the Union's case.³⁵⁷

Gallagher considered the margins struggle "the best wages campaign the Federation has conducted". He conceded that "in the past we have relied too much on arbitration and legalism and not enough on 'job action', which has had the effect of involving the Federation in long

353 A.B.L.F. N.S.W. Branch, All Building Unions Support Builders Laborers, 13 August 1968, 2pp. roneod.

354 A.B.L.F. South Australian Branch, "Wage Increase for Builders Laborers", Construction, Vol. 1, No. 4, p.1.

355 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1968, p.7.

356 Ibid., p.10.

357 Ibid., p.11.

drawn out cases".³⁵⁸

Delaney, in his presidential report remarked that the Margins campaign "showed the rest of the Trade Union Movement what is needed to successfully win a campaign, and the workers and their officials in all states, I must congratulate".³⁵⁹

The general atmosphere of cordiality at the Conference was emphasised again when Delaney continued:

The unity that existed on this occasion by all Branches, their willingness to co-operate with the General Secretary on all matters, must have given him a shot in the arm, for at last the Builders' Labourers nationally have moulded themselves into a strong fighting force, equal to any in the Trades Union Movement.³⁶⁰

Quite obviously the satisfaction over the final outcome³⁶¹ and the decisive part played by N.S.W. job-site activity had temporarily obliterated from the memories of the Federal officials the trenchant criticisms levelled at the Federal body by the N.S.W. Branch for slackness in organising rank and file participation in Victoria and over-reliance on the arbitration process without sufficient job action.

Gallagher's description of the Margins increase as "the best non tradesman's decision that has been given since the Metal Trades Work Value Case" contrasted with Munday's more sober judgement:

In the light of other non-tradesmen experiences, the Builders' Labourers' Federation fared reasonably well, but it is a painful fact that the gap between the building tradesmens' rate and ours widened dramatically.

Only our militant struggle allowed us to win what we did.³⁶²

Munday appears to have philosophically accepted the situation that N.S.W.'s tremendous contribution to the Margins campaign had alleviated much of the usual hostility the Branch encountered at Federal Conferences. Munday expanded:

Through reading the minutes of previous Council meetings, NSW has had its fair share of mention in one way and another, however in struggle there is little doubt that NSW has consistently played a leading part in the builders' labourers' campaigns. This year was the best we have conducted since the rank and file won the 1961 election. The many fine strikes, the good witnesses in court proceedings, bear testimony to this. Likewise the Master Builders' Association and Employers' Federation contend there has never been as much industrial activity by builders' labourers...

Munday then enumerated, for the Conference's benefit, the N.S.W. Branch's

³⁵⁸ Ibid., p.7.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., pp.3-4.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., p.4.

³⁶¹ Ibid., p.8.

³⁶² Ibid., p.52.

achievements.

1. 93 recorded strikes of four hours to three days duration.
2. Central strike meetings in Sydney, Wollongong and Newcastle.
3. A march, in combination with building tradesmen, on the Employers Federation who were strongly opposing Federation claims.
4. Over 30 combined tradesmen-builders labourers' deputations to individual employers.

He explained:

These actions impacted the MBA in NSW, and Ball, the MBA industrial officer became a prominent figure in arguing before Commissioner Holmes for agreement with the ABLF.

Because of the breadth of the strikes and the knowledge that the builders' labourers would not stop once the BWIU won their margin increase, the MBA, though notifying the Court on a few of the strikes, didn't proceed to have the iniquitous penal clause used against us.

Future wage gains will be more difficult, as we won't have the general movement in tradesmen's margins occurring at the same time. We, standing on our own, will definitely have the penal clauses used against us.³⁶³

Thus although unity at the Conference was greatly assisted by the experience of co-operation during the margins campaign, Munday was not as optimistic as Gallagher about what sort of a victory it had been.

Other aspects of Federal State relations which had proved troublesome in the past also greatly improved during the year. The N.S.W. Branch's finances which had been in a more or less precarious state since 1961 at last began to show the effects of better organisation and administration. Another important factor was that Munday took over from McNamara in late February and was far more meticulous in his handling of requests and directions from the Federal Secretary than McNamara had been.

Just before McNamara's resignation Munday asked a question at the Branch executive about monthly reports to the Federal Executive and added that the Branch should make a "big effort to comply with this direction". There had obviously been some discussion about the Federal body's direction to furnish monthly reports because McHugh argued that "irrespective of the feelings of anybody on the Executive...we had to do something positive to try to resolve this problem".³⁶⁴

A positive effort was launched³⁶⁵ but not soon enough to avoid a visit from Gallagher and Delaney who arrived in Sydney to investigate why the monthly financial reports had not been furnished as required by

³⁶³ Ibid., pp.53-54.

³⁶⁴ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 13 February 1968.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

the 1967 decision of Federal Council. McNamara explained that he was responsible for the non-production of monthly reports³⁶⁶ but both McNamara and Munday pointed to improvements in the Branch's finances. A letter was sent to Gallagher and Delaney detailing the improvements to financial organisation and results and supplying information as to when auditor's reports would be available.³⁶⁷

The financial position continued to improve and Munday, as the new Secretary, supplied the required information to the Federal body. By July he was declaring a healthy bank credit, sending part payment of Federal sustentation fees and writing "I feel sure that you appreciate there is now a real attempt to overcome our financial problem by real planning".³⁶⁸

The death of the Branch auditor David Allen caused some problems³⁶⁹ but these were straightened out by Munday in consultation with the new auditor who believed that "Mr Gallagher is under a mis-apprehension"³⁷⁰ over exactly what information had been submitted to the Federation in the past.

However by the time the Federal Conference was due, Munday reported to the Branch Executive that the good financial position of the Branch meant that "contrary to previous years the Federal Body would find it hard to attack the NSW Branch on finance".³⁷¹ In his report to Conference Munday announced that:

Without any fear of being accused of "gilding the lily" the \$4,600 we were up at the end of June '68, compared with the December '67, is a definite improvement. Since June there has been a further and more marked improvement.³⁷²

General relations between the two bodies were better than in previous years but the underlying tensions still remained. Amalgamation only received minor attention, possibly because the Czechoslovakian situation had somewhat soured relations between the B.W.I.U. and the

366 McNamara, in his last months as Secretary, had slipped in other areas of administration. There is evidence that other mail relating to financial matters was also left unanswered, for instance a letter from the Queensland Branch's auditor requesting confirmation of a loan, (Correspondence: N. Devlin to M. McNamara, 23 January 1968) remained unanswered until Munday replied on 22 March.

367 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 5 March 1968.

368 Correspondence: J. Munday to N. Gallagher, 3 July 1968.

369 Correspondence: J. Munday to N. Gallagher, 20 October 1968.

370 Correspondence: J. Munday to A.J. Williams, 10 October 1968.

A.J. Williams to J. Munday, 17 October 1968.

371 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 12 November 1968.

372 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1968, p.57.

B.L.F. in N.S.W.³⁷³ An article by Jack Stephensen on the Margins campaign in the journal claimed that the problem of long and costly proceedings in the courts would not have been necessary if amalgamation had taken place, because the tradesmen within the B.T.G. had been receiving their increases for months.

I only hope that this has given food for thought for other State officials to reconsider the NSW branch plea that time is now ripe for our Federation to amalgamate with other trade unions. The Federal Councillors of NSW will be making this a major issue at the next Federal Conference...and if we are unsuccessful...again ...the other State Federal Councillors...should really consider what affect [sic] they are having on the take-home pay of B.L s throughout Australia.³⁷⁴

Not wishing to seem to have given up the fight Munday continued to emphasise the value of combined action to Gallagher. In August he sent the Federation eight leaflets produced by the B.T.G. in support of builders labourers' demands over margins and informed Gallagher of a planned protest demonstration by Building Tradesmen and Builders Labourers.³⁷⁵ In November he repeated his belief that the real answer to the Branch's financial problem was amalgamation and he "thought it was a sorry spectacle to see the Federal body preventing this from happening".³⁷⁶

The amalgamation debate at Federal Conference was less acrimonious than previous years and when Munday reported back to the N.S.W. Branch he had "again criticised the Federal body for their continued opposition to amalgamation but he detected a more sensible approach to this question".³⁷⁷

Perhaps the amalgamation issue was less fiercely resisted by Gallagher because he felt less threatened. No longer were the N.S.W. B.W.I.U. and B.L.F. in the same ideological camp. A rift had appeared in what he perceived as the pro-Russian opposition to Chinese Communism.³⁷⁸

It is also true that Munday tried very hard after he took over from McNamara to foster friendly relations both with the other state

373 Further discussion of this point in chapter 10.

374 The Builders' Labourer, August September October 1968, p.29.

375 Correspondence: J. Munday to N. Gallagher, 2 August 1968.

376 Minutes: General Meeting, 5 November 1968.

377 Minutes: General Meeting, 3 December 1968.

378 It was either Munday's fine sense of irony or meticulous attention to the niceties of the federation structure that led him to send to Gallagher, correspondence from Clancy regarding an Australian building unions delegation to the Soviet Union. Minutes: Executive Meeting, 20 February 1968.

Secretaries and with Gallagher. Letters he wrote to Delaney, the Federal President and Queensland Secretary, positively glowed with goodwill. Munday wished him happy holidays,³⁷⁹ get well quickly,³⁸⁰ improved health³⁸¹ and that he was looking forward to seeing him in Sydney.³⁸²

Relations with Morgan from Tasmania were evidently amicable enough for Morgan to use the Sydney office to send off his own mail³⁸³ with the aid of the N.S.W. Branch typists.

To Les Robinson in South Australia, the opponent of previous years, he wrote "hoping this note finds you, Pat and family, well",³⁸⁴ and letters to Norm Hayter of Western Australia wished him well,³⁸⁵ looked forward to seeing him again and hoped he and his wife would have an enjoyable stay in Sydney.³⁸⁶

Correspondence to Gallagher was polite rather than effusive but normally included phrases such as "thanking you and wishing you all the best".³⁸⁷ The letter he wrote to inform Gallagher of McNamara's resignation concluded:

...on behalf of the NSW branch, I wish to assure you that every assistance will be given to the Federation in developing unity of purpose in the interest of our members.³⁸⁸

Munday's efforts at rapprochement did not meet with undiluted success. Certainly Gallagher preferred him to McNamara but the degree of dislike was only marginal. Munday was older than McNamara and therefore not the same threat to Gallagher's perception of himself as a bright and successful young union Secretary. Gallagher was proud of having been a union official since he was eighteen. Munday was also less of a silver tongue than McNamara, preferring gentle irony and honest arguments to fine oratory.

When McNamara's resignation was discussed at the F.M.C. state Secretaries Hayter and Morgan commended his work in the N.S.W. Branch while Gallagher's voice was notably absent from commendation.³⁸⁹

379 Correspondence: J. Munday to J. Delaney, 20 May 1968.

380 Correspondence: J. Munday to J. Delaney, 15 July 1968.

381 Correspondence: J. Munday to J. Delaney, 9 August 1968.

382 Correspondence: J. Munday to J. Delaney, 19 November 1968.

383 Correspondence: W. Morgan to N. Gallagher, 25 November 1968, (carbon copy) filed amongst N.S.W. Branch correspondence.

384 Correspondence: J. Munday to L. Robinson, 25 September 1968.

385 Correspondence: J. Munday to N. Hayter, 25 September 1968.

386 Correspondence: J. Munday to N. Hayter, 30 October 1968.

387 Correspondence: J. Munday to N. Gallagher, 4 December 1968.

388 Correspondence: J. Munday to N. Gallagher, 13 March 1968.

389 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 26 March 1968.

Gallagher treated the N.S.W. Branch with the same contempt - even with McNamara out of the way. Apart from the occasion during the Margins dispute when Gallagher "forgot" to attend a N.S.W. Branch meeting he also declined to attend executive meetings on two other occasions when he was in Sydney.³⁹⁰ Even when there was an important building union secretaries' meeting in Sydney, Munday could only get Gallagher and Delaney to attend "for a short period".³⁹¹

Resentment of the Federal body and its treatment of the N.S.W. Branch was still understandably present. In June when the Federation requested the Branch to furnish Rule Books, Hogan complained that "it was strange to him in view of the fact that our sustentation fees were so high that we should be called on to provide Rule Books".³⁹² Austin also disagreed with the Federal edict and Lynch grumbled that "we should give the Rule Book question the contempt it deserves".³⁹³

Federal Conference in November was considered to be a resounding success.³⁹⁴ It was held in Sydney and Munday took the opportunity to invite the leaders of the other B.T.G. unions to a buffet function with the interstate Conference delegates.³⁹⁵ Whether this attempt to reinforce industry solidarity was effective is not recorded.

The N.S.W. delegates were Lynch, Munday and Stephensen,³⁹⁶ the latter two replacing McNamara and Harding.³⁹⁷

McNamara's contribution to the trade union movement was recorded by Delaney in his President's address³⁹⁸ with Gallagher and Morgan moving the formal motion of appreciation.³⁹⁹ This act in itself augured well for a less hostile atmosphere for the N.S.W. delegation.

The N.S.W. Branch had kept their agenda items "to the minimum" and concentrated "on issues we feel we can do something about".⁴⁰⁰ The Branch believed that their agenda items were not contentious except for

390 Minutes: Executive Meetings, 5 March 1968 and 17 September 1968.

391 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 5 March 1968.

392 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 4 June 1968.

393 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 24 September 1968.

394 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 5 November 1968.

395 Correspondence: J. Munday to J. Anderson, R. Hancock, R. Papworth, C. Hart, A. Skelley, F. Parker, D. Mascal, R. Wheeler, H. Anthes, K. Miller, R. Tyler, F. Butler, F. Purse, P. Clancy, 18 November 1968.

396 Correspondence: J. Munday to N. Gallagher, 26 November 1968.

397 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1968, p.2. Munday was also elected Federal Trustee in McNamara's place. *Ibid.*, p.64.

398 *Ibid.*, p.4.

399 *Ibid.*, pp.5-6.

400 Correspondence: J. Munday to N. Gallagher, 4 September 1968.

amalgamation⁴⁰¹ and that they were on the whole in a better position mainly because of their improved financial situation. The delegates were advised to take a strong position on amalgamation and Stephensen even recommended doing "some work on the other States delegates re amalgamation". Other executive members did not share his optimism.⁴⁰²

When the amalgamation item was debated at Conference Norm Hayter, the West Australian Secretary, was the only non N.S.W. speaker who supported the proposition and it was once again resoundingly beaten, with Morgan, McEwan, Gallagher and Danaher speaking in opposition. The motion itself was a very watered down proposal, only calling for a sub-committee of state secretaries to be set up "for the purpose of having discussions with other building unions...and...to report to the 1969 Federal Council". The motion also referred to the fact that "events in the past year in the trade union movement have high-lighted the urgent need for industrial unionism".⁴⁰³

In his written report, Munday emphasised that amalgamation was A.C.T.U. and Federation policy and was long overdue. He conceded that N.S.W. "...have occupied a minority viewpoint, but are hopeful that this year, we either initiate an amalgamation conference or enter into discussions..." Significantly he spelt out the real issue:

There has been no argument against the principle...Political party allegiances, personal problems even outright opportunism on the part of some of the leaders, are matters that must be tackled, for every one of us knows that sooner, not later, one union in the industry will come into being.⁴⁰⁴

Munday described the amalgamation question as "the only major difference at the conference".⁴⁰⁵

The amalgamation vote which pitted N.S.W. and Western Australia against the other states was symptomatic of the slight shift in voting patterns. N.S.W. was not always isolated. Munday's motion to increase dues from \$7 to \$8 was supported by Hayter, Morgan and Robinson even though Gallagher's amendment eventually superseded it.⁴⁰⁶ Similarly when the South Australian "identification card" item was debated Gallagher and Munday found themselves on the same side against Morgan and Robinson.⁴⁰⁷

401 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 12 November 1968.

402 *Ibid.*

403 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1968, pp.82-83.

404 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1968, pp.56-57.

405 *The Builders' Labourer*, December 1968, p.5.

406 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1968, pp.70-71.

407 *Ibid.*, p.80.

exactly similar situation.

Another item which demonstrated some differences in Gallagher's treatment of the states arose when Western Australian Secretary Hayter asked for "advice or assistance regarding organising this large state" and admitted, "I am unable to carry out the Union Rules as regards to Committee Meetings, it is hard to get enough to the monthly meetings, as you will see by the attendances..."⁴²⁰ Gallagher, who had shown little reluctance to intervene in the affairs of a viable and enthusiastic N.S.W. Branch, replied somewhat coyly that "the Federation should not intervene in the affairs of the Branch by supporting this resolution ...without first investigating the reasons for this item being placed on the Agenda".⁴²¹

Perhaps the most interesting discussion that took place during the Conference occurred when Gallagher asked for the approval of the Federal Council to go back into industry for four weeks, as he felt it would give him

...an opportunity to work with members of the Federation on the job and also it would allow him to experience for himself the difficulties and the problems which our members are experiencing on the job at the present time. It would also help him to gain first hand experience as to the changes and the work builder's labourers are requested to perform at the present time.⁴²²

This incident is considered by Gallagher supporters to prove that Gallagher first raised the concept of "limited tenure". Robinson in explaining his belief that: "Trade Union officials are businessmen...and union secretaries should step down...as long as you don't weaken your whole organisation" cited the fact that Gallagher suggested he "go back to work for six months and Mick and Jack strenuously opposed it."⁴²³ Even dismissing the fact that Robinson had his facts about the time period incorrect, it is incorrect to equate the concept of limited tenure of office with a General Secretary spending a month "on the tools" while still holding Union office.

Bud Cook believes the idea germinated when, during an argument on the phone between Gallagher and Munday, Munday "suggested that Norm should go back on the job to find out what workers were thinking".⁴²⁴ Munday agrees with this version and adds that he had "in mind that he'd

420 *Ibid.*, p.79.

421 *Ibid.*

422 *Ibid.*, p.64.

423 Interview: Les Robinson, 20 February 1978.

424 Interview: Bud Cook, 30 March 1978.

When the contentious issue of a Canberra sub branch was raised it was McHugh rather than Gallagher who was considered to have stepped most out of line.⁴⁰⁸ This does not imply that the N.S.W. Branch believed Gallagher behaved properly over the issue. They believed that he should not have arranged to visit Canberra, still an area administered from Sydney, without their knowledge,⁴⁰⁹ he should not have accompanied McHugh to Sydney without contacting Munday⁴¹⁰ and finally should not have suggested that McHugh, not a delegate, attend Federal Conference.⁴¹¹ In the confused circumstances and Gallagher's unwanted interference the N.S.W. Branch had decided to place the onus on the Federal body if they thought the Canberra situation warranted Branch status.⁴¹² When the situation was discussed at Conference Munday put this proposition reminding the General Secretary though that the N.S.W. Branch regarded the A.C.T. as an integral part of the N.S.W. Branch⁴¹³ and that

...after investigating the ACT position came to a conclusion based on the income and expenditure as well as a recent survey of Br. McHugh showing 360 Builders' Labourers on 63 projects in Canberra ...the Federation would not be strengthened by the creation of such a branch; however, a sub-branch...could be in everyone's interests.⁴¹⁴

The matter remained basically unresolved, with no motion being passed on the issue.

Gallagher came in for more criticism over his general administration, with Lynch asking him to supply delegates with a written copy of his Report prior to him reading it to the meeting.⁴¹⁵ Morgan from Tasmania asked whether the application for the Union's name change had been filed, with Gallagher prevaricating yet again.⁴¹⁶ Gallagher also admitted he had not notified the N.S.W. Branch of the closing date for agenda items in sufficient time, and apologised.⁴¹⁷

An issue of significance to the N.S.W. Branch was the reduction in staff of the South Australian Branch because of the industry slump.⁴¹⁸ When this was raised at Conference, N.S.W. did not comment upon it⁴¹⁹ even though the previous year they had been severely criticised for an

408 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 22 October 1968.

409 Correspondence: J. Munday to D. McHugh, 18 September 1968.

410 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 22 October 1968.

411 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 29 October 1968.

412 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 15 October 1968.

413 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1968, p.60.

414 Ibid., p.58.

415 Ibid., p.34.

416 Ibid., p.33.

417 Correspondence: N. Gallagher to J. Munday, 25 July 1968.

418 A.B.L.F. (S.A. Branch) Construction, Vol. 1, No. 4, October 1968, p.2.

419 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1968, pp.31 & 37.

the people away from the real issues which confront the people today.⁴³¹

Malone perceived the "real politics" of trade union struggle as "the struggle for national independence because the question that has to be answered is - Are we, the people of this country, going to run the country in the interests of Australians..."⁴³²

Mundey clashed with the Federation "line" when he proposed amending the Victorian item "Need for Trade Union recognition and appreciation of Student Youth Activity". Mundey believed that the phrase "Student Youth" was too restrictive and moved deletion of the word "Student". He was supported by Lynch but opposed by all other speakers including Gallagher, and his amendment was lost.⁴³³ Mundey also opposed the use of the word "sham" about the Vietnamese peace talks but once again was outvoted.⁴³⁴

These differences were minor however compared to the contretemps of previous years. The Conference ended with a motion recording "the very fine hospitality" of the N.S.W. Branch.⁴³⁵

Mundey reported the lack of major confrontation, "...for virtually the first time there was no attack on the N.S.W. Branch for obvious reasons".⁴³⁶ He noted that the special functions arranged for the visiting Federal Councillors were "very well received"⁴³⁷ and that "at the Federal Conference it was agreed that this was the best to date so far".⁴³⁸ Mundey followed up the Branch's efforts of special hospitality⁴³⁹ by sending a friendly personal letter and a photo of all the delegates to each Federal Councillor.⁴⁴⁰ The Victorian Branch passed a resolution expressing thanks and appreciation for hospitality extended and Malone added a personal seasons greetings.⁴⁴¹

Apart from the outward civilities Mundey recorded the deeper harmony referring to "the successful and united main decisions, and

⁴³¹ Ibid., pp.28-29.

⁴³² Ibid., p.48.

⁴³³ Ibid., pp.71-72.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., pp.73-74.

⁴³⁵ Ibid., p.88.

⁴³⁶ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 3 December 1968.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 26 November 1968.

⁴³⁹ Correspondence: J. Mundey to J. Stephensen, 6 December 1968. These efforts included a harbour cruise, trips to the Balmain Leagues Club, the R.S.L. and a dinner outing.

⁴⁴⁰ Correspondence: J. Mundey to H. Danaher; J. McEwan; G. Taylor; M. Masterson; P. Malone; N. Gallagher; W. Morgan; L. Robinson; J. Delaney; 6 December 1968.

⁴⁴¹ Correspondence: P. Malone to J. Mundey, 6 December 1968.

been an organiser since the early fifties".⁴²⁵ A couple of months later Gallagher raised the question at an F.M.C. meeting. Munday explains that "maybe the Maoists had discussed it".⁴²⁶ He admits that "in one of my more frivolous moments, after Paddy Malone had been praising Gallagher, I moved an amendment that if Gallagher would like to extend it from four weeks to four years I'd second it".⁴²⁷

The proposition raised little discussion in the N.S.W. Branch with only Lynch ever recording his views. He felt the idea was a good one but that "it should be gone into at a more advantageous time".⁴²⁸ At Conference the proposal received even less enthusiasm. Hayter (W.A.), Munday, Stephensen (N.S.W.), McEwan (Victoria) and Delaney (Queensland) all spoke in opposition with Delaney, the Federal President, pointing out that the General Secretary's duties required him to travel to every state in the Commonwealth and that the Federation's work would be seriously affected if the proposition was carried. Only Taylor from Queensland supported the actual proposal although Danaher from Victoria supported the principle of "officials returning to industry from time to time". The fact that Gallagher could not even get his own delegation from Victoria or the Federal President to support his idea would seem to indicate that he had not lobbied very hard in support of the notion. His control of "the numbers" on other issues was absolute. Eventually the Council passed a motion moved by Morgan, seconded by Danaher: "That consideration of this matter be adjourned until the next meeting of the Federal Council".⁴²⁹ It was never seriously debated again.

Debate over political items was basically uneventful. The Victorian and Federal reports were becoming increasingly "Maoist" in terminology and emphasis. Gallagher perceived the Gurindji struggle as raising "once more, the way in which the Australian ruling class is selling out our national independence to United States imperialism".⁴³⁰ He warned the Conference:

As never before American culture dominates T.V., American paper-backs and trash of all sorts flood the book stalls. Their gospel is violence, rape, murder, nothing is too sordid. All this reflects the determination of the imperialist class to subvert the minds of

425 Interview: Jack Munday, 30 March 1978.

426 *Ibid.* It would certainly have been consistent with the philosophy of the Cultural Revolution.

427 *Ibid.*

428 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 26 March 1968.

429 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1968, pp.64-65.

430 *Ibid.*, p.27.

Whilst the benefits of this [amalgamation] may be abundantly clear to the rank and file unionist, especially country members, the full value of such a course has not as yet penetrated official thinking sufficiently of the Federal body of the BLF. At Federal Council meetings, the NSW Branch has consistently raised the concept of amalgamation or association, but the idea has been continually rejected by our Federal leaders. They have given a number of reasons for their disagreement. They have claimed it is a plot by other unions to take over the NSW Branch. They have also claimed we will do much better by going it alone. (They have not presented a policy on how we will do this.) They have gone so far as to deny this branch the right to even discuss an association with other unions. It seems to me that their attitude is shortsighted to an extreme; it is also not in line with modern day unionism nor the policy of the A.C.T.U. which strongly supports amalgamations. None of the reasons given hold water. Their refusal to debate the issue in a democratic manner smacks of a standover. So far as the rank and file unionist is concerned, their attitude is holding back the progress of our union, and the service our members are entitled to receive.⁴⁴⁸

Mundey also strongly advocated that the N.S.W. Branch should call for a new meeting with the other building unions "with a view to further discussing this very important question". The Branch passed a resolution that this matter be proposed at Federal Conference.⁴⁴⁹ As usual the result was indecisive.

Another issue which produced a difference of emphasis was that of tactics to defeat the penal powers. The N.S.W. Branch began the year with a call "to bring our entire membership into action to...knock over the Penal Powers".⁴⁵⁰

The Federal body, whilst also opposing the penal powers dragged its feet on action. In May, Bud Cook as acting Secretary in N.S.W. contacted Gallagher about fines to be paid under the act. The Branch endorsed in principle "that we as a Branch would not pay any fines incurred" and asked the Federal body also to endorse such action.⁴⁵¹

The Federal body responded by recommending to the A.C.T.U. that a stoppage be held to coincide with the reassembling of Federal Parliament.⁴⁵²

The N.S.W. Branch persisted with its belief that non-payment was the best tactic and prepared to push hard for it at Federal Conference.⁴⁵³ Mundey was critical of the A.C.T.U.'s handling of the question and suggested contacting the building industry representative on the A.C.T.U.

448 The NSW Builders' Labourer, December 1969, pp.13 & 15.

449 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 3 September 1969.

450 The NSW Builders' Labourer, February 1969, p.1.

451 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 20 May 1969.

452 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 1 July 1969.

453 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 15 July 1969.

claiming,

The outstanding feature of the council was the unity of representatives from different States and the common desire to right the wrongs done to non tradesmen, including builders' labourers in 1968.⁴⁴²

The relatively harmonious pattern of 1968 in the sphere of Federal State relations continued in 1969.

Gallagher, less paranoid about amalgamation than in previous years, gave the N.S.W. Branch permission to discuss a common log of claims with other building unions "so long as we had representation".⁴⁴³ The joint campaign in N.S.W. for industry allowance, fares and special rates was carried out at the same time as a big safety campaign to Clean Up the Building Industry.⁴⁴⁴

The changed circumstances between the N.S.W. B.L.F. and B.W.I.U. did not mean that N.S.W. dropped the issue altogether, but it is quite obvious that as the possibility receded further into ideological unlikelihood Gallagher became more reasonable in his relationship with the N.S.W. Branch. It is interesting that in his report to Federal Conference Munday attacked both the U.S.S.R. and China with equal zest:

The image of socialism has been damaged by the deformations of socialism in USSR and China. The invasion of Czechoslovakia, the border clashes on the Sino-Soviet border, and the vitriolic verbal attacks on each other have shown many people that the way to a socialist world will be more difficult than had previously been considered.⁴⁴⁵

His attitudes in this area had not prevented him attending China's National Day function on behalf of the N.S.W. Branch⁴⁴⁶ nor did it prevent him continuing to advocate amalgamation with the B.W.I.U. When announcing the Union dues increase in April he wrote:

Our executive agreed with the Federal Council decision. To give better service to our members is our aim. Though our financial position has improved, as yet, we haven't got a reserve, haven't got a capacity to do the things we feel we should do in support of a higher living standard for our membership.

Amalgamation? Yes, we believe this is one of our main aims - "one industry and one union". We still have some convincing to do to win this.⁴⁴⁷

Joe Owens was just as committed but much less subtle when he wrote;

⁴⁴² The Builders' Labourer, December 1968, p.5.

⁴⁴³ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 20 May 1969.

⁴⁴⁴ The NSW Builders' Labourer, February 1969, p.1.

⁴⁴⁵ The NSW Builders' Labourer, December 1969, p.41.

⁴⁴⁶ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 30 September 1968. Bob Pringle also attended.

⁴⁴⁷ The NSW Builders' Labourer, April 1969, p.17.

Executive calling on him to "support fully the demands of the workers re the Penal Powers". There was obviously dissatisfaction with the actions of the B.W.I.U. as well as the Federal B.L.F. on the matter because Tom Hogan was "critical of some other left wing unions re this matter".⁴⁵⁴ When it appeared likely that the Union would be fined over the Cyclone dispute in August, Munday recommended that the Branch ask the Federation to call a national stoppage immediately followed by a meeting of the building section of the A.C.T.U. and "if it be necessary, a meeting of the A.C.T.U. executive also".⁴⁵⁵

The problem the penal powers might have caused between the two bodies was eliminated when the gaoling of Clarrie O'Shea and the resulting General Strike brought the matter to resolution nationally.

In award matters, the Federation and the N.S.W. Branch worked reasonably harmoniously although Gallagher came under fire once again for failing to make application for the State Award quickly enough.⁴⁵⁶

In September Gallagher told the N.S.W. Executive that they should "go along with the Tradesmen" over an M.B.A. offer on Award negotiations.⁴⁵⁷ He also praised Munday's handling of the Cyclone dispute during an Arbitration Court hearing in August.⁴⁵⁸

One issue, on which the two bodies differed, was the lingering problem of the Union name change. Although the decision to change the name had been made at the 1967 Federal Conference⁴⁵⁹ a combination of legal technicalities and Gallagher's own tardiness meant that the issue was still under debate at the 1969 Federal Conference. The N.S.W. policy on the name change was debated at the November branch meeting. It decided that it was "meaningless to change our name unless we are going to strenuously work for amalgamation". The resolution proclaimed:

This NSW branch after seriously considering the proposed change of name, believes it is not in the best interest of federation to change its name.

We believe there is a fine tradition and record in the name Australian Builders Labourers' Federation.

Instead of any modernising of the name, this branch believes our energies can best be spent in really initiating a new national drive at leadership and rank and file level to win one union in the building industry and cease procrastination on amalgamation.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁵ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 19 August 1969.

⁴⁵⁶ Minutes: Executive Meetings, 15 July 1969 and 22 July 1969.

⁴⁵⁷ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 29 September 1969.

⁴⁵⁸ Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission: Cyclone Scaffolding Pty.Ltd. and A.B.L.F., C. No. 446 of 1969, Transcript of Proceedings p.22.

⁴⁵⁹ Minutes: Executive Meeting, 22 July 1969.

We believe that narrow, political and opportunist motives have held back amalgamation, and this opportunism must be defeated.

The Federation has never been stronger than now; is one of the most militant of all building unions and should lead the way to win real amalgamation.⁴⁶⁰

The N.S.W. Branch failed to carry their point of view at Federal Conference and remained critical of the result. Munday saw it as one of the important decisions taken at the Conference.⁴⁶¹ The N.S.W. officials continued to view the name change as "Gallagher's exercise in Empire building".⁴⁶²

Relations on the formal level were still correct rather than friendly, despite Munday's attempts not to cause unnecessary friction. In March he flew to Melbourne to attend Jock McEwan's funeral.⁴⁶³ In September he issued invitations to the interstate delegates who were in Sydney for the F.M.C. meeting to attend the Branch Executive but "it appeared they had other commitments".⁴⁶⁴ To avoid problems he recommended that the Branch pay their sustentation fees before going to Federal Conference.⁴⁶⁵ Conference itself repeated the pattern that had become common throughout the sixties. As Peter Barton explained;

We had Gallagher breathing down our necks all the time. I went to a couple of F.M.C. meetings and they were a complete waste of time. We had 3 delegates and every controversial vote was 13-3.⁴⁶⁶

The 1960s period in Federal State relations can probably be summarised as a progressive worsening of relations between the two bodies primarily because of ideological differences and Gallagher's suspicion of a B.L.F.-B.W.I.U. nexus in N.S.W. However differences of opinion over industrial issues also complicated the relationship, and the growing power of the federal body vis-a-vis the states and the resulting strains that occurred regarding Branch autonomy further contributed to the deterioration.

The fact that employers were pushing for Federal Awards⁴⁶⁷ and these were becoming the dominant wage-fixing force in the building industry contributed most to the Federal Body's growing power but Gallagher's own intransigent stance on expanding the scope of labourer's work also helped. No matter what he proclaimed about union solidarity

460 The NSW Builders Labourer, December 1969, p.3.

461 Minutes: General Meeting, 2 December 1968.

462 Interview: Bob Pringle, 8 March 1978.

463 Minutes: General Meeting, 4 March 1969.

464 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 9 September 1969.

465 Minutes: Executive Meeting, 28 October 1969.

466 Interview: Peter Barton, 5 March 1978.

467 Minutes: Federal Conference, November 1968, pp.12-13.

and industry unionism his actions belied his words.

The deterioration from 1961 onwards was not a linear progression. There were "honeymoon periods" which alternated with open attacks and bitter feuding. Gallagher had the numbers and used them. It is significant that from 1961 when McNamara was vice-president, N.S.W., which had the second largest, and later, largest membership never held an important position in the Federation.