

Chapter Four

A Wild Awakening

*The financial crisis & the emergence
of the Active Service Brigade, 1893-1894*

ACTIVE SERVICE BRIGADE ("A" Division) - Church
Parade, St.Andrews Cathedral, SUNDAY MORNING,
11; to hear of "Him who has been murdered by the
Law". Countersign, "Silence". By order (7).¹

An advertisement placed by the Active Service Brigade in the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* on 18 November 1893 expressed all the essential elements of its challenge to prevailing authority, presented in code. The challenge might have been expressed plainly, but to have done so would have reduced it to just another ignored voice of protest. The oblique instructions and the metaphor of suffering, as much as the advertised demonstration, transformed the Brigade's protest into theatre. The Brigade's code incited curiosity and raised expectations: it traded on mystery. Few had heard of the Active Service Brigade; its demonstration, so obscurely explained, was unpredictable - what might actually happen? How many men and women would participate?

All that could be known for certain was that members of the Active Service Brigade's 'A' Division would parade to St Andrews Cathedral, the principal home in Sydney of the state-sanctioned Church of England: they would enter during the traditional Sunday morning service and

1. *Daily Telegraph*, 18 November 1893.

symbolically claim the spirit of Jesus for their cause. By subverting the highly regulated 'anti-theatre' of the religious service, the Brigade might provide the worshippers with an insight into what was really happening outside as the colonial economy collapsed, and authority reacted to the working class challenge.² The worshippers would be encouraged to an intensified sense of what had happened to Jesus, that icon of suffering, and his fate before the law. The Brigade's advertised theatrical may have been dimly explained, and still much ignored, but it was loaded with meaning, and authority seemed to understand its potential power. On the day the parade occurred, the thirty-odd 'A' Division demonstrators were almost outnumbered by the plain clothes police officers watching them.

The Active Service Brigade flourished during a brief period from late 1893 until mid 1894, 'a perfectly natural product of the depression', as a journalist shrewdly observed.³ The ASB was stirred into life by widespread job losses and a harsh government reaction to striking workers and trade unions. The Labor Electoral League preached the benefits of the ballot box. The ASB took to the streets, distributing handbills, and pasting up cheap posters around the city, mobilising to fight the forces of political reaction, and to assist Labor candidates in elections - 'to surround thoroughgoing democratic champions and defend them from illegal intimidation and violence'. Disrupting the election

2. 'Allowing an audience to see what is happening rather than being told what is happening is disturbing to all sorts of authorities. So there is much anti-theatre. The church has always been anti-theatre...Those convinced by religion, politics or philosophy that realism is not of their own making find that representation is dangerous. Theatre suggests that things can be otherwise.' Greg Dening, "'Let my curiosity have its little day": a reflection', *Australian Book Review*, No.180 May 1996, p.41. See also Greg Dening, 'The Theatricality of History Making and the Paradoxes of Acting', in Greg Dening, *Performances*, Melbourne University Press, 1996, p.103.

3. *Orange Leader*, 3 February 1894. Extract in Dwyer Papers ML MSS 2184/2.

meetings of Labor's opponents and preventing 'the manufacture of spurious public opinion' was said to be another task of the ASB's 'A' Division.⁴

John Dwyer was enrolled as a member of the Active Service Brigade sometime around September 1893.⁵ Tommy Dodd was the ASB's secretary, and the treasurer was Henry Douglas. The ASB's disciples included Arthur Desmond, who enrolled Dwyer as a member, and whose strident interjections at political rallies were the inspiration for the ASB's provocative stirring. An itinerant agitator from New Zealand, Desmond was also the editor of *Hard Cash*, a fiery news sheet that attacked the banks.⁶

The Brigade's headquarters, together with the barracks they ran for unemployed men, were at 221^{1/2} Castlereagh Street - up a lane that ran off Castlereagh Street, between McNamara's bookshop and Leigh House. The radical bookshop run by William and Bertha McNamara at No. 221 was probably one reason why the ASB's founders were drawn to this poor area, in the block bound by Bathurst and Liverpool Streets, not far from Brickfield Hill and the Belmore markets to the south (*see appendix 9*); here were some of Sydney's working class terraces, and the culture workers struggled to maintain in run-down commercial premises - wherever the rent was low.

Leigh House was at 223, the office and meeting hall of the Australian Socialist League, which William McNamara founded in 1887, and which

4. ASB 'A' Division membership card c1893, Dwyer Papers ML MSS 2184/2

5. ASB membership ticket, 1893 (unspecified date), Dwyer Papers ML MSS 2184/2.

6. Chris Cunneen, 'Arthur Desmond', *ADB* Vol.8, 1981 p.291.

Dwyer had helped organise in the Mittagong district. Leigh House was a popular centre of radical debate in the early 1890s.⁷ The Royal Standard Theatre, a little to the north of McNamara's, was the venue of the ASL's 'usual Sunday concert', following a talk on a social or political theme.⁸ Perhaps ASL members were treated to the shocking spectacle of 'Neck to Neck' in June 1893, climaxing with the on-stage hanging of one of the cast, who then proceeded to run amok, with the burn of the rope luridly evident around his neck. The Standard's playlist favoured popular melodrama for the working class, as opposed to the refined and expensive theatre preferred beyond Market street.⁹ Market Street crossed Castlereagh, east to west, marking a line between prosperous and neglected Sydney.¹⁰ Across the road from McNamara's was the Protestant Hall, often used for political rallies and meetings in King, one of the new single member electorates created in a redistribution in late 1893, covering much of the eastern half of the city. King was an over-crowded working class

7. Verity Burgmann, *In Our Time*, pp.36, 54, 62.

8. *Australian Workman*, 14 February 1891.

9. The *Bulletin* felt 'Neck to Neck' might have worked better if 'the hangee were more efficiently suspended'. *Bulletin*, 10 June 1893. The Theatre Royal stood near the corner of King and Castlereagh streets, opened in 1863 with the Governor and Lady Young attending the first performance. The Theatre Royal apparently set the standard for Sydney theatre prices for the remainder of the century: Pit, 2s 6d; Dress Circle and Boxes, 5s; Upper Circle, 2s; Gallery, 1s. Charles Bertie, 'Old Castlereagh Street', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol.XXII part 1 1936 pp.42-66.

10. *ibid.* Charles Bertie conducted a nostalgic 'tour' of Victorian-era Castlereagh Street in 1936. He proceeded south from the northern end (at an intersection with Hunter street), pointing out the chambers prominent solicitors established near the Supreme Court from the mid-nineteenth century, and passed the offices of Mutual Life insurance, the *Daily Telegraph* and the Athenaeum Club. As Bertie reached the intersection of Castlereagh and Market streets he stopped. There was no indication, for his readers, that his tour had proceeded barely one-third the distance of Castlereagh street, which ran the length of the city, north to south. Bertie apparently believed the less prosperous southern section of the street, with few prominent buildings, was of little interest.

neighbourhood with about 30,000 residents, in a city with a population of over 100,000.¹¹

McNamara's was itself a weapon of agitation, a 'Democratic Rendezvous', where Sydney's radical and literary sub-cultures intersected. The bookshop fed the inquisitive militancy of the radicals with a progressive book exchange featuring a wide selection of socialist titles, and McNamara's Public Reading Room, where 'hundreds' of papers could be consulted for a penny. The latest Zola, in the realist style that so shocked bourgeois sensibilities, and your stationery, tobacco and cigars could also be conveniently obtained. The ASB encouraged a reading culture in the barracks, making available its own reading room and library of popular and radical titles. Many of Dwyer's pamphlets and books are stamped 'John Dwyer', indicating that he made them available to the barracks residents.¹²

William's wife Bertha was an activist and pamphleteer in her own right, pushing the cause of the SDL and women's suffrage.¹³ One of the writers who frequented McNamara's was Henry Lawson. Bertha's daughter, also named Bertha, married Henry in 1896. Another daughter, Hilda, married the future Labor Premier Jack Lang in the same year. Lang began frequenting the bookshop in 1893 and claimed to have helped Desmond 'turn the mangle' to print *Hard Cash*. Many years later Lang recalled the

11. *Statistical Register of New South Wales for 1894*, p.588. The 1890s volumes refer back to the 1891 census for population figures; Max Kelly, 'Picturesque and Pestilential: the Sydney Slum Observed, 1860-1900', in Max Kelly, *Nineteenth Century Sydney*, Sydney University Press 1978, pp.70-72.

12. For the culture of working class reading in the 1890s, see Scates, *A New Australia*, pp.49-54.

13. *Australian Workman*, 30 December 1893; Verity Burgmann, 'Matilda Emilie Bertha McNamara', and 'William Henry Thomas McNamara', *ADB Vol.10*, 1986 pp.349, 351.

ASB activists and the wild radicals of Castlereagh Street: Harry Holland, a recent convert to socialism from the Salvation Army, and John Arthur Andrews, publisher of the *Anarchist* and other hand-made tracts (he couldn't afford a metal type printing press); there was also Jack Dwyer, the 'red flagger, who became a leading fair rents advocate', and Captain Douglas, a seafaring man, a former captain of a 'Port Line' ship.¹⁴ Lang's reminiscences credit Douglas as the 'organiser' of the ASB; Douglas himself later remembered that he conducted 'a bookstore in the city' and a newspaper, *Justice*, and gave Lang his first job. 'I was in need of a useful assistant, and young Lang was recommended to me. Even then, at his early age, he had an unquenchable thirst for knowledge and studied assiduously.'¹⁵

Douglas exaggerates his role in establishing the ASB. Appropriating the past is a way of controlling the future, as Lang understood when he published *I Remember* in 1956. Lang tried to control interpretations of his Premiership of New South Wales and his quest for power. Lang would no doubt have liked to have been the keen young radical of Douglas' self-serving memory (Douglas told the *Herald* his 'one claim to fame' was recognition of Lang's precocious talent); instead, by 1893 the 17 year old Lang was desperate to avoid the fate of his parents' poverty, already becoming, according to Bede Nairn:

a hardened and graceless young man, self-centred, his dominant cynicism unallayed by his streak of compassion and uninformed by any comprehensive understanding or zeal to improve the lot of the underprivileged before his

14. Jack Lang, *I Remember*, Invincible Press, Sydney, 1956 pp.9-11.

15. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 December 1934.

own. His drive to escape came first, compelling achievement and ambition that could expand with success, however limited in the beginning.¹⁶

In 1931 Douglas may not have chosen to remember this tough youth, born in George Street on the rise of Brickfield Hill, a short walk from McNamara's, learning how to survive the competitive struggles of depression Sydney. In the early 1890s John Dwyer, and many like him, would have recognised the young Jack Lang's drive to escape quite well, even if they recoiled at the recognition.

Tommy Dodd seems to have been the ASB's early creative force, notwithstanding Desmond's rabble-rousing inspiration, or Douglas' claims. Dodd was described as 24 or 25, thin and delicate but with pleasant features, a small moustache and 'a very little' closed cropped side-whiskers. He was poorly dressed. 'But the Brigade do not go much for tailor-made men'.¹⁷ A description confirmed by a photograph published in the *Bulletin* in March 1894, of Dodd, 'the NSW political agitator', a slight young man standing in a bowler hat and dark suit, with a swag over one shoulder, clutching two makeshift bags, one a simple bundle tied with string. The photo was presumably supplied by Dodd himself, an advertisement for THOMAS DODD, WHOLESALE TOBACCONIST, as the white hand-painted lettering at the bottom of the photo indicated (*see appendix 4*).¹⁸ Not a tailor made man, but an identity in the making, striving for something more from life than the enervating struggles and humiliations of the travelling salesman. Cocksure and obstinate in

16. Bede Nairn, *'The Big Fella': Jack Lang and the Australian Labor Party, 1891-1949*, Melbourne University Press 1986, p.32.

17. *Orange Leader*.

18. *Bulletin*, 24 March 1894.

argument, with a leaning to socialism, 'Tommy is the mastermind and has a natural bent for organising'. He could hold his own amongst 'the big lumps of fellows who are in the Brigade'. Dodd struck one correspondent as a little conceited, but 'not without brains'; he 'may be heard of later on. He will find in a few years that the world cannot be upended in a few months.'¹⁹

By December Dwyer had become the business manager of the barracks at 221^{1/2} Castlereagh Street. The barracks provided a focus for the ASB's militancy, and finally gave Dwyer a regular job and a Sydney residence. Dwyer was the joint proprietor, with Dodd and Douglas. The barracks, an 1893 ASB flier explained, had been 'acquired [leased]' to provide for those large numbers of predominantly unemployed men unable to afford good board and lodgings at 'ordinary charges'. Bed or meals were advertised at 3d each. The ASB was hoping to soon provide beds for 300 men, and sought donations of cash or furniture to achieve this aim.²⁰

The barracks was a large two-story structure, which also housed William Mason's printery. Mason was another founding ASB member and printer of the Brigade's newspaper, *Justice*.²¹ The barracks were physically connected to McNamara's building, with the bookshop taking the street front premises. The building folded around the cul-de-sac on three sides, with doorways on either side of the lane. On the left, as you came up the lane from Castlereagh street, was a dining room, where a number of men were having their threepence tea: 'a pretty fair hash, cold corned beef, beetroot and as much bread and butter as you wanted, and some good

19. *Orange Leader*.

20. ASB flier re barracks at 221^{1/2} Castlereagh Street, 1893, Dwyer Papers ML MSS 2184/2.

21. *Justice*, 3 February 1894.

tea.²² Upstairs were the sleeping dormitories, consisting of a stretcher and blanket provided to each man. Those unable to pay for food or lodgings were not refused help; 'most always paid when they could'.²³ 221^{1/2} was perhaps not the most desirable property in the neighbourhood: it had been empty for some time, and the Brigade leased it on 'easy terms'. Some of the boarders chipped in to help keep the barracks in order; one visiting scribe found Dwyer and a few others 'armed with brooms, and their trousers turned up at the legs', about to 'perform' on the floors.²⁴

Dwyer claimed they shared a weekly income of £7-10 by mid-1894.²⁵ His share, of £2-3 per week, was a reasonably substantial income - given that many workers had no income at all, or at best irregular, casual employment, generating no more than ten or twenty shillings a week. The income that Dwyer claimed the proprietors received may seem excessively high. His own account suggests the barracks was a substantial enterprise. In December 1893 Dwyer had a staff of three cooks, two yardmen, a barber, a shoemaker and a tailor, laundrymen, a nightwatchman, a waiter and a messenger boy. He makes no mention of paying these staff; perhaps they were on a promise, or worked in exchange for free food and lodgings. The barber and tailor were presumably paid directly by their clients. Characteristically, Dwyer also claimed to be in complete command of the barracks. 'I was responsible for the good order, and cleanliness provisions and cooking of the establishment. No person

22. *Orange Leader*.

23. *Tocsin*, 24 May 1900.

24. *Orange Leader*.

25. John Dwyer to 'Mr. Conroy, Barrister at Law', 21 July 1894, Dwyer Papers ML MSS 2184/2.

could interfere with me.' He said he had not slept more than four hours at a time.²⁶

Who were these unemployed men who fell upon the cheap relief of the Active Service Brigade? James Monaghan, 17, appeared before a magistrate sometime in early 1894 charged with having insufficient lawful means of support. Monaghan had arrived from England only six weeks before his court appearance; 'nothing was known of him beyond the fact that he frequented the wharves', unlikely to find much work. Dodd spoke up, offering Monaghan free board and lodging at the barracks, and he was discharged into the Brigade's care: so too was Alfred McKenzie, 18, an unemployed labourer. Trawling the courts and the streets for those in need, the ASB often accumulated their lodgers' problems. Hector Champion, aged 40, on remand for an unspecified offence, was charged with riotous behaviour after Constable Barnes saw him striking another unidentified man in Castlereagh Street, near the barracks. Champion was apparently the barracks enforcer. Dwyer told the magistrate that the alleged assault victim was 'making use of bad language', and Dwyer told Champion to turn him out. Dodd added that 'the superintendent of Police told them to put bad characters out.' The magistrate responded that while the Brigade could not disturb the peace, it could 'interfere with persons creating a disturbance outside the place.' Champion was fined 2s 6d.²⁷

26. 'Statement on oath by John Dwyer re the Slattery libel case', Dwyer papers ML MSS 290 box 1.

27. Material in this paragraph is all sourced from an undated newspaper clipping in the Dwyer collection; the name of publication is illegible. Extract in Dwyer Papers MSS 2184/2 ML.

The ASB's charitable activities were viewed with suspicion by the traditional charities and the state, stirred by the ASB's militant proselytising. At least some of the colonial press felt this hostility was unwarranted. One rural journal, the *Rylstone Advocate*, claimed that the established, 'class or sectarian' charities believed that 'self-constituted relief committees' such as the Brigade did not have the right to aid the poor. Charities like the Benevolent Society, 'tinged with good-goodyism', jealously guarded 'a monopoly to dispense charity'. They received state aid, but were subject to negligible state control; the ASB was 'an object of suspicion', attracting the surveillance of the 'fat men's nominees', presumably, the police.²⁸ Despite the grim climb in the number of men, women and children seeking relief from the late 1880s, as economic conditions in New South Wales deteriorated, charity administrators clung to hard judgments of the poor. The Benevolent Society assured the public that it was 'not asked to contribute the means of keeping in idleness able-bodied men'.²⁹ All the Sydney charities stressed that they assisted only the deserving poor. A specific mission of the Charity Organisation Society, supported by the colony's leading businesses, pastoral companies and prominent families, was to expose cases of 'pretended distress'.³⁰

ASB ideology and ethos

The attitude of the charities is a sharp reminder of the values the ASB challenged. The barracks were a practical expression of ASB's struggle to awaken workers to the urgent need to overthrow capitalism. By 1893 the

28. *Rylstone Advocate*. Extract in Dwyer Papers MSS 2184/2 ML.

29. *Help for the Poor and Afflicted*, Benevolent Society of NSW, 1891, p.3. ML

30. Charity Organisation Society, *Annual Report and Balance Sheet for the year ending 30/9/1888*, p.3. ML. For a discussion of official attitudes to the Sydney poor in the period 1880-1918 see Anne O'Brien, *Poverty's Prison*, Melbourne University Press, 1988, ch.3.

ASB believed that an opportunity was imminent, as the economy collapsed and the colonial banks and building societies suspended payment to depositors. An 1893 ASB manifesto proclaimed the necessity of defeating 'fiscalism, commercialism, and churchianity' to establish 'a free, social, and democratic republic or commonwealth of free communities', in the best interests of the Australian people.³¹ The ASB's 'A' Division membership card also declared that 'this strictly disciplined organisation' was dedicated 'to work upon purely business principles and in grim earnest, for the resumption of the People's Landed Inheritance and other property'.³²

The language of the manifesto and ASB literature is ostensibly radical and confrontationist. The creation of a democratic republic was certainly a radical ideal in a society still to come to terms with the notion of colonial federation under the Crown.³³ A careful reading of the manifesto reveals relatively modest and circumspect aims. The ASB favoured a decentralised, democratic 'co-operative and social system' of government, a system that was not quite orthodox socialism. The ASB advocated an impressive range of democratic rights - universal suffrage, free education and a free legal system, election of 'administrative and legislative officers', plebiscites to approve legislation and tax measures, but the nature of their reformed economic system was vaguely explained. Clause 9 stated that 'Production' should be controlled by 'the democracy'; clause 8 argued that commodities should be for 'community use', not individual

31. 'ASB social programme (adopted by Convention 1893)', Dwyer Papers ML MSS 2184/2.

32. ASB 'A' Division membership card c1893, Dwyer Papers ML MSS 2184/2

33. Scates argues that the republicanism of 1890s radicals envisioned an 'open and participatory' political life, not simply the removal of Queen Victoria as head of state. Scates, *A New Australia*, p.207.

or speculative profit. Clause 11 suggested that 'Peaceful social reform and economic progress' was 'desirable'.³⁴

There is no doubt that the ASB's extension of democratic rights was innovative (and indeed provocative) for the period, but the manifesto's economics were not too far in advance of the first LEL platform of 1892. The LEL platform also contained generalised appeals (supporting 'any measure' which secured a 'fair and equitable' return for a workers' labour), and a limited extension of democratic rights (wider male suffrage, election of magistrates and public school boards). The LEL platform also identified more specific measures for economic reform and government intervention than the ASB manifesto (eight hour day, land tax, regulation of banks and labour, factory legislation).³⁵ Like the general labour movement, the ASB's ideology was a blend of competing ideas, a reflection of a certain impulse for change, but some uncertainty of what a new society should look like. The populism of Henry George's single tax, loaded with attacks on the banks as a symbol of capitalism, and the pastoral companies who denied 'the people's landed inheritance', mixed with socialist prescriptions.³⁶

The uncertainty of the Brigade's aims was a manifestation of its leaders' uncertain identities. Verity Burgmann was impressed with the ASB's 'socialism', its 'centralised and secretive' organisation, noting the solemn declaration to new members from the ASB's Supreme Directing Council

34. 'ASB social programme'.

35. 'Labour Electoral League platform, January 26, 1892', in NSW Political Labor League, Handbills, Press Cuttings, Platforms, ML.

36. Peter Love, *Labour and the Money Power*, Melbourne University Press 1984 p.14; Scates, *A New Australia*, pp.64-67.

'to obey their lawful commands - without question'.³⁷ A desire to unquestioningly obey 'lawful' commands, to extinguish by 'lawful means', 'treacherous, cowardly and corrupt politicians' repeats the stress Dwyer made in Mittagong on containing radicalism within boundaries tolerated by society.³⁸ Like the 'A' Division, the Supreme Directing Council was largely a fantasy of organisation entertained by a handful of ASB activists. Through titles suggesting purpose, command and professionalism, ASB hierarchies were a way of legitimising the ASB's campaigns in the eyes of its activists and the eyes of others. Categorising themselves on active service, with an ethos of military structure and discipline, they appealed to be taken seriously.

Isaiah Berlin observed that marginalised social groups in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries often found expression of their 'craving for recognition' in a pride in 'armies, discipline and uniforms...Men who feel lost and defenceless in their original condition are transformed into brave and disciplined fighters when they are given a brand new cause to fight for'.³⁹ Dwyer had already tried to sate that craving with five years service in the Rifle Volunteer Corps in London, his own participation in the family, 'wild geese' tradition of military service, which he took great pains to document. These ancestors, of both Annie and himself (he was happy to appropriate her relatives), were all Irish or Scots fighting in someone else's cause. They fought in the War of the Austrian Succession (where the Irish Brigade, fighting the English in the French cause at

37. Burgmann, *In Our Time*, p.63. Markey argues that the ASB confused 'radical rhetoric or the grand gesture with radicalism per se.' Ray Markey, *Making of the Labor Party in NSW*, p.256.

38. ASB 'A' Division membership card c1893, Dwyer Papers ML MSS 2184/2.

39. Isaiah Berlin, 'Benjamin Disraeli, Karl Marx and the Search for Identity', in Isaiah Berlin, *Against the Current*, Pimlico, London, 1997. p.259.

Fontenoy in 1745, were dubbed the wild geese⁴⁰), at Waterloo, and the Union cause in the American Civil War.⁴¹ The Active Service Brigade represented another expression of this craving for recognition, an instrument of personal transformation for Tommy Dodd, wholesale tobacconist, and John Dwyer, the ex-foreman in search of himself.

Each week between February and May 1894 *Justice* issued from William Mason's printery to inflame Sydney society. The motto of *Justice* was 'more justice, less charity'.⁴² The brigade's radicalism was uncompromising: 'every unemployed man should be an aggressive agitator', *Justice* thundered, 'those who refuse to work deserve to starve'.⁴³ Dwyer's hand may be seen in another stern 'pithy par': 'drink is a most powerful and deadly weapon in the hands of the unscrupulous capitalist'.⁴⁴ The ASB wanted to extend its operations to the establishment of a free labour registry, with the specific aim of preventing 'the manufacturing of loafers.' Dodd said the Brigade tried to discourage the unemployed from accepting charity. 'We hold that the giving of alms to able-bodied men has a tendency to demoralise and make loafers of them.'⁴⁵ Despite the ASB's rhetorical hostility, the Brigade's attitude to assisting able bodied unemployed men was strikingly similar to that of

40. Jon Manchip White, *The Life and Times of Maurice, Comte de Saxe*, Hamish Hamilton London 1962, pp.154, 162; Robert A. Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire, 1526-1918*, University of California Press Los Angeles 1974 pp.96-101.

41. 'Family History of John Dwyer', pp.2, 11, 13. Dwyer also added references to his ancestor's military service on small notebook pages that he loosely inserted into the family history.

42. *Justice*, 10 February 1894.

43. *ibid.*, 17 February 1894 .

44. *ibid.*, 3 February 1894.

45. *ibid.*, 31 March 1894 ; Dodd to unidentified newspaper, 23 March 1894, Dwyer papers MSS 2184/2.

the established charities. Some of those unemployed may have resented the Brigade's exhortations as much as they sought to escape the moralising attention of the charities.

Justice provoked the colonial ruling class. In February an item taunted NSW Premier George Dibbs over his alleged 'borrowing' of £1,000 from the NSW Treasury, while 'an unfortunate was charged at the Quarter Sessions with stealing one shilling. Slowly but surely the people must see.'⁴⁶ Sometimes provocation contained a sting of racial caricature; in March *Justice* sardonically reported, 'so Tom Slattery is to be Agent-General [sic]. Faith, it's a foine thing to be able to do so well. Even if it be as a wire puller and parasitical placating plunderer.'⁴⁷ Unfortunately for the ASB, *Justice's* prediction about the Irish-born Justice Minister's career change proved inaccurate. Slattery was not appointed to the plum sinecure of NSW Agent-General in London, and another cavalier attack against Slattery in a later edition of *Justice* would bring a charge of criminal libel against the Brigade leadership.

The Brigade believed a new financial crisis was imminent, following the spectacular bank failures a year before: 'truly desperate is the condition of many of the financial institutions of the country'.⁴⁸ In April 1893 several major banks suspended payments to panicking depositors, and reconstructed their operations in order to alleviate the panic and pay off the mounting debts that careless lending regimes generated. The suspended banks had low reserves and many bad loans, mortgaged with 'illiquid' assets - in the grossly over-supplied urban commercial and

46. *ibid.*, 10 February 1894.

47. *ibid.*, 24 March 1894.

48. *Justice*, 10 February 1894.

residential property market, and high exposure to once lucrative pastoral businesses, now plagued by falling commodity prices, drought and industrial conflict.⁴⁹

The NSW Government had been forced to an unprecedented intervention in the financial system, implementing the Bank Issue Act to make the banks' paper notes legal tender - to carry the same value, and credibility, as gold sovereigns.⁵⁰ The banks could meet a run on deposits with an issue of paper money, thus preserving their gold reserves for the year-long life of the Act, and so restore 'confidence'. The Bank Issue Act stemmed public panic, but *Justice* claimed the seed sown by the ASB was bearing fruit. Through the Brigade's efforts, 'the fierce search-light of public opinion is now being concentrated on the actions and lives of those human devils who, betraying their sacred trust, have brought this magnificent country to the verge of bankruptcy, and plunged her workers in degradation and poverty.'⁵¹

Hard Cash and the banking crisis

Hard Cash was the most potent expression of the anti-'money power' populism stirred by the 1893 banking crisis in New South Wales.⁵² Its

49. NG Butlin, *Investment in Australian Economic Development 1861-1900*, Cambridge University Press 1964, pp.424-5.

50. No Australian government issued bank notes until the Commonwealth assumed responsibility in 1910. The full text of the Bank Issue Act 1893 was reprinted in the *Australasian Insurance and Banking Record*, May 1893 p.317.

51. *Justice*, 10 February 1894.

52. Peter Love concludes that 'by the turn of the century the idea that capitalism consisted in a set of predatory monopoly interests who conspired against the great mass of the people commanded a wide audience in the Australian labour movement. The "terror of 1893" had taught them that those monopolies were ranked in a hierarchy of power and moral turpitude, with the Money Power supreme above all others.' Love, *Labour and the Money Power*, p.40.

revelations of financial duplicity and board room self-interest emerged from the raw radicalism of lower Castlereagh Street and spread across Sydney just as the suspended banks were recommending their schemes of reconstruction to their creditors and the courts. *Hard Cash* may have had some assistance from the ASB's activists, and even an impressionable Jack Lang, but it was essentially a project of editor Arthur Desmond, the author of most of its ferocious libels, and labour journalist Sam Rosa.⁵³ Desmond made a name for himself in April 1893 by scrawling 'going bung' across an official Bank Issue Act notice pasted to the door of the Government Savings Bank in Barrack Street. He was jailed for two months.⁵⁴ *Hard Cash* lashed Australian bankers as 'the greatest deceivers on earth',⁵⁵ and scornfully dismissed the Act as the 'paper money proclamation'.⁵⁶ The banks held the capitalist system together; *Hard Cash* strove to expose their weaknesses, and reveal finance not as an omnipotent system that demanded blind loyalty but a network of self-serving human relationships, 'built upon spurious values or commercial make believe', which could be mocked and discarded.⁵⁷

A favourite target was the Commercial Bank. The Commercial was a 'mirage', according to *Hard Cash*, a bank attempting to report advances made to its branches as assets. *Hard Cash* had little sympathy with the

53. There is a clear link in style and content between *Hard Cash*, its successor, the *Standard Bearer* (for which Desmond took personal responsibility in a small notice on the back page), and Desmond's 1896 polemic, *Survival of the Fittest*. J.A. Ross, publisher of the *Sydney Worker*, claimed to have assisted 'his financial genius' - he does not explicitly name him - to publish *Hard Cash*. Ross says it was printed in his house at Underwood Street, Paddington. J.A. Ross, 'the early Nineties', ML MSS 2801 Item 2.

54. *The Worker*, (Sydney), 29 April 1893.

55. *Hard Cash*, September 1893.

56. *ibid.*, July 1893.

57. *ibid.*

Commercial's shareholders. 'The shareholders have been receiving 25% for years. As long as they got the cash regularly they were blind to the glaring mismanagement of their Directors.'⁵⁸ Most shareholders were called upon to inject fresh capital into the struggling banks; the Commercial's reconstruction required £400,000 from shareholders, a 'colossal amount' for the day, according to the Bank's own history.⁵⁹

Hard Cash interpreted the deceptions of the Commercial, or the Australian Joint Stock Bank (another 'bubble' *Hard Cash* declared, warning customers to get out before it burst⁶⁰) as the expressions of a political and social culture serving the interests of Capital. The NSW Government was 'a cabal of bank shareholders and insolvent overdrafters'; bank shareholding clergy were 'blasphemous hypocrites'. *Hard Cash* named the directors of the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Star* as directors or major shareholders in banks and as 'political frauds and financial spielers'. 'No wonder the people of New South Wales are deluded and robbed, when their daily mental pabulum of sophistry and lies is controlled by a family of wealthy, avaricious, and insatiable usurers'.⁶¹

A decisive role in galvanising support for the Dibbs Government's Bank Issue Act fell to William McMillan. A merchant and the only Sydney director of the Melbourne-based National Bank of Australasia, a former

58. *ibid.*

59. *A Century of Banking, the Commercial Banking Co of Sydney Ltd., 1834-1934*, WC Penfold Sydney 1934 p.54.

60. *Hard Cash*, September 1893. Coghlan believed that the Australian Joint Stock Bank was only resuscitated by fresh Bank Issue legislation in 1894 and the extraordinary tolerance of its shareholders and depositors, forced to accept a further reconstruction of the bank as late as 1897. Coghlan, *Labour & Industry*, Vol.3, p.1680; Vol.4 p.2129.

61. *Hard Cash*, July 1893; Vol.2 No.3 (undated); September 1893.

treasurer in the Parkes Government and a *laissez-faire* free trader by temperament, McMillan recognised the urgent need to revive confidence in the financial system. With a wide range of contacts in Sydney's financial circles, McMillan's support for an Act proposed by a protectionist government lent the legislation credibility. McMillan confirmed this impression by stressing that supporting the Act involved government intervention, a violation of 'the principles of my life'. Circumstances had forced him to recognise the banks as 'a network of ramifications affecting the social and industrial life of the country'. These ramifications were not based on gleaming stockpiles of gold or intimidating temples of stone: urging the Legislative Assembly to adopt the bill, McMillan told his fellow parliamentarians that 'we must disabuse our minds' of any idea that banking consists of storing enormous quantities of coin 'which may be got at any moment by anyone who has transactions with a bank.' McMillan insisted that 'the great superstructure of British commerce depends at the present time, not on this or the other security, but on the faith of man in man'. The Bank Issue bill would restore the transactions of faith, encouraging men and women to believe that the paper in their hands was as secure as the gold they wanted to believe lay safely waiting in a bank vault.⁶²

Testing opinion on the bill, McMillan had interviewed 'nearly every man of financial position in this country', and found that he was often talking to himself - men reluctant to be bound by an imposed remedy, unable to accept the intervention of government in commercial life.⁶³ Most banks preferred suspension because it allowed the directors and senior managers

62. *NSW PD*, Vol.65 27 April 1893, pp.6612-13, 6616.

63. *ibid.*, p.6617.

to retain control.⁶⁴ McMillan laboured to persuade his peers that without the resuscitation of confidence provided by the Bank Issue bill, commercial life could vanish. Before Parliament he conjured an image of a 'reasonable, practical man', a man who could not stand by while 'the huge business of the Government of this country, amounting to £25,000,000, stopped, and all the currency entirely dissipated?'⁶⁵ McMillan wanted to hold to his principles, but the crisis had simply made the symbiotic relationship between government and commerce obvious to all. In its usual blunt style, the *Bulletin* doubted that McMillan had, despite his lament, renounced the principles of a lifetime in supporting the legislation: 'Not at all. When state interference is contrary to the interests of his class, he's against it; when it's in favour of those interests, he's for it. He is a cash and class legislator.'⁶⁶

Responding to McMillan's prominent role in reviving the banking system, *Hard Cash* reserved a special category of vilification for the Methodist and Irish-born McMillan. He was a 'north of Ireland Jew', a 'sordid-minded Jew', one of the 'shent per shent' politicians, 'murdering the people with their foul usance'. *Hard Cash* believed that banking and business was dominated by grasping Jews. *Hard Cash* wondered if the persecuted Jews of Russia 'are as insatiable and extortionate as the Jews of Sydney and Melbourne'; if so, little surprise that 'the infuriated and

64. Few directors or senior managers were forced from office as a result of the suspensions; fewer still conceded personal or corporate responsibility. The reconstructed National Bank of Australasia Ltd retained the directors of the old bank and its General Manager. Similarly, the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Limited re-elected all the former directors and retained T.A. Dibbs, the NSW Premier's brother, as its General Manager. Geoffrey Blainey, *Gold and Paper, a history of the National Bank of Australasia Ltd.*, 1983, p.110; *A Century of Banking*, p.54.

65. NSW PD Vol.65 2 May 1893 p.6616.

66. *Bulletin*, 3 June 1893.

fleeced peasantry' rose against them, 'tearing them limb from limb'. In Australia,

workman, selector and squatter, we are all grinding up bone and brain to feed the greed of the Jew. There is no blinking the fact that this despotic Money Power must back down - must be MADE to back down, if our national liberties are not to be destroyed. Far better civil war, and blood and brains splashing our saddle-girths, than that their diabolic usurpations, their arrogance, extortion and insolence should continue unchecked.⁶⁷

Hard Cash longed for a cleansing cataclysm to overthrow the reign of corrupt Jew-ridden money power. Significantly, the threat posed by the money power apparently struck across the class divide, as a struggle uniting workman, selector and squatter in a defence of national liberties: the greedy Jew was an enemy they could all hate together. Populism could lead to the left, in radical or labourist solutions. As an appeal to nationalism and a defence of the interests of the man on the land, the small scale producer, the dispossessed worker, populism could also find a home in racist scapegoating.⁶⁸

^{67.} *Hard Cash*, September 1893.

^{68.} Peter Love notes that American populism influenced the late nineteenth century Australian labour movement, and contained a strong element of anti-semitism. Love also notes the difficulties associated with tightly defining populism, which 'can be variously interpreted as a movement leading to capitalist reaction, revolutionary communism or fascist authoritarianism.' Love, *Labour and the Money Power*, pp.2, 6, 9-10. For a discussion of populism and Australian Labor, and Love's definition of populism, see Tim Battin, "Keynesianism, Socialism and Labourism, and the role of Ideas in Labor Ideology", *Labour History* no.66 May 1994 pp.34-36.

Hard Cash found scheming Jews everywhere. They stacked the share register of the Bank of New South Wales ('Nathans, Cohens, Levys, Abrahams, Phillips, Gothiefs [a crude play on Gotthelf] and Moses, Solomons and Jacobs by the score'), and dominated the Joint Stock Bank - 'a junta of Loan and Discount Jews', one of whom, Sir Saul Samuel, was also the NSW Agent-General in London.⁶⁹ Samuel was, according to *Hard Cash*, 'an avaricious, unscrupulous old pawnbroker (a Jew by both breed and disposition)'.⁷⁰ In order to complete his symbolic vilification, the gentile McMillan was cast by his own behaviour, according to *Hard Cash*, into the ranks of this loathed Other - a Jew, if not by breeding, certainly by disposition. McMillan delivered 'hypnotic speeches' at reconstruction meetings, to deceive and enrich himself. In olden days, *Hard Cash* darkly recorded, such pillagers were hunted like bandits. 'Some day, some time, there will be a wild awakening.'⁷¹

Some feared a wild awakening might arrive sooner than later. Preserved in the papers of Louis Phillips are two copies of the *Standard Bearer*, a brief successor in 1893-94 to *Hard Cash* that Desmond produced, repeating the same formula of bank bashing and anti-Semitism.⁷² Merchant, shareholder in the Australian Joint Stock Bank and several times President of Sydney's Great Synagogue, anxiety apparently led Phillips to collect these publications that defamed him, his friends and his religion. Moritz Gotthelf was a friend and business associate - the man Desmond dubbed 'Gothief'. In the early 1890s the Jewish community in Australia was concerned about an outbreak of anti-Semitism in the colonies,

69. *ibid.*, July 1893.

70. *ibid.*, September 1893.

71. *ibid.*

72. *Standard Bearer*, 17 December 1893 and 21 January 1894, in Louis Phillips Papers, Vol.66 'Newscuttings and circulars, 1883-1912', A4764 ML.

provoked by rumours that Jewish refugees of the Russian pogroms might flood into the local economy as cheap labour.⁷³ Desmond played up this speculation, stirring it with the traditional stereotypes of Jews as grasping moneylenders and merchants. Phillips' concern may have reflected his business interests, but he also had an extended family in Sydney and a protective attitude to the community in which he was closely involved.⁷⁴ If inciting fear was Arthur Desmond's aim, it appears he had some success.

Many articles in *Hard Cash* predicted 'a terrible future'.⁷⁵ It was unclear whether this was a future in which the world's 'Old Order' drowned its people in blood or if an awakened citizenry overthrew the yoke of oppression: *Hard Cash* seemed torn between instincts of fatalistic annihilation and release. Looking into the future, a *Hard Cash* poet saw human brutes re-enslaved by emperors, and 'multitudes are ground to gold by blood and iron law'.⁷⁶ Perhaps *Hard Cash's* conflict flowed from a belief that 'everything upon this earth is for the strong', who trampled down the 'dumb and servile mob'. In Australia, the mob 'drudged' in mines and woolsheds, and chanted through the city streets 'that song of slaves in a land of plenty, "we've got no work to do"'. Neither the ballot box nor Parliament provided relief from oppression: men had to back up their vote 'with their strong right hand'. There would be no liberation 'without facing the music of death'. What would an apocalypse deliver?

73. Hilary Rubenstein, *Chosen, the Jews in Australia*, Allen & Unwin 1987 pp.79-80.

74. In 1898 Phillips wrote to the *Daily Telegraph* in response to a clergyman's claim that only 'Jews and Germans' supported the introduction of Sunday work in the Post Office. Phillips resented the gratuitous resort to anti-semitism. Phillips papers, 'Newscuttings and circulars, 1883-1912'.

75. *Hard Cash*, July 1893.

76. *ibid.*, September 1893.

Hard cash. 'The object of all revolutions...is "hard cash", that is to say, Leisure, Land, Food and Clothing - FOR THOSE WHO COME OUT ON TOP.'⁷⁷

To be one of those who came out on top perhaps might have required more pain than most Australian workers were prepared to endure. *Hard Cash* constructed a code by which men and women might condemn, but could not live. Yet there was a way to mimic, however briefly, the wild awakening of *Hard Cash* in life: in the street theatre of Sydney politics, in the public meetings which characterised the discourse of colonial politics. To play the villain at such meetings, there was no actor better suited for the role than that north of Ireland Jew, William McMillan. In September 1893 *Hard Cash* warned readers that 'the Sydney robbers of the people, headed by McMillan', intended to enforce an 'acquiescent silence' at election meetings by the use of 'hired bullies'. *Hard Cash* urged Sydney workers to defy this control, to speak out at McMillan's meetings 'determined to cheer or to hiss or to move amendments...just as they feel inclined.' If necessary workers should come armed, 'as your forefathers did in the clearing of the Danubian forests'. The workers did not bring guns, clubs or knives to the meetings, but they did bring their voices.⁷⁸

Mister McMillan loses his balance

William McMillan first stood for Parliament in 1887, for the then multi-member constituency of East Sydney. Since emigrating from Londonderry in 1869 as a nineteen year old, McMillan had by 'careful discipline' cultivated his natural gifts for business.⁷⁹ Gifts cultivated by the good

⁷⁷. *ibid.*

⁷⁸. *ibid.*

⁷⁹. *Australian Men of Mark*, Vol.1 Charles F. Maxwell Melbourne 1888, p.140.

fortune of his birth into the Protestant ascendancy. The son of a Wesleyan Minister, McMillan was also the nephew of brothers Sir William and Alexander McArthur.⁸⁰ Alexander founded the trading firm McArthur and Co. in Sydney in 1848, to which the young McMillan brought letters of introduction in 1869. McMillan rose quickly into the senior management of the firm, becoming a partner in 1878.

By 1887 McMillan had served as the President of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce, and had helped organise the Free Trade Association, as NSW politics divided over the tariff issue. His principles were firm: to his East Sydney electors McMillan described himself as 'an absolute and uncompromising free trader', although he expressed a refusal to represent sectional or sectarian interests in the Parliament. 'He believed in no distinctions of society; the mechanic was quite as good a man to study political subjects as the merchant or squatter.' McMillan's candidature was supported by the Chamber of Commerce and most of the 'leading commercial houses' declared a partial holiday to allow their employees to vote. Apparently, they did their duty for this sagacious liberal poised in perfect political disinterest: McMillan was elected on the free trade ticket.⁸¹

McMillan was soon tested by the complex reality of politics. After the 1889 election McMillan entered the ministry of Sir Henry Parkes as deputy leader and treasurer;⁸² the implications of this prominent role became clear on 19 September 1890, in the climax of the maritime strike.⁸³ The

80. Ruth Teale, 'Alexander McArthur', *ADB* Vol.5 p.121.

81. *Australian Men of Mark*, p.140.

82. Martin 'William McMillan - A Merchant in Politics', pp.202-209.

83. Following industrial unrest in the pastoral industry, wharf labourers in Sydney refused to handle wool shorn by non-unionists. Seamen and marine officers also engaged in strike action. By August 20 the major ports of Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane were all

wool owners, tired of a dispute that had dragged on two months, led a procession of waggons loaded with bales of fleece to the Circular Quay wharfs, protected by a small army of special constables: outraged opponents threw stones and supporters waved top hats and canes. At Circular Quay, mounted police charged an angry crowd of strikers, scattering them into the city streets.⁸⁴ The strike was effectively broken, although McMillan, deputising for a convalescent Parkes, feared continuing 'disorder and anarchy'. He declared that the Government would 'take such steps to secure the liberty of the subjects of this country, that will be absolutely successful'. McMillan failed to specify what these 'steps' would involve; a considerable error on his part, as it allowed later speculation and fantasy to run unchecked, although it is likely that he was himself unsure what these 'steps' might entail. Parkes quickly overruled him: 'the Government cannot defend the interests of one class to the neglect of another'. Presented with public humiliation in the press, McMillan promptly offered his resignation, although Parkes soon talked him around.⁸⁵

Embracing public office, McMillan had unwittingly moved into a social space where his lofty delusion of political neutrality was confronted by the reality of his privileged and sectional self-interest. McMillan's intemperate remarks isolated him as the ritual villain. He was now inescapably a public man, redefined by public discourse. A week after the Quay confrontation, the *Bulletin* repeated a rumour circulating around

disrupted by the dispute, which had developed into a struggle over the right of workers to unionise. M. Hearn and H. Knowles, *One Big Union, a history of the Australian Workers Union 1886-1994*, Cambridge University Press 1996 p.43.

84. *SMH*, 20 September 1890; *DT*, 20 September 1890.

85. *SMH*, 20 & 23 September 1890; McMillan to Parkes, 20 September 1890, Parkes correspondence, Vol. 24 p.152. ML

Sydney and which quickly became settled fact among Sydney's radicals. 'When Treasurer McMillan intimated to the Sydney Exchange deputation that his Government was determined to take drastic measures with regard to all strike disturbances, the wink passed around that there was an arrangement for the landing of blue-jackets from the British war-ships in harbour.' The *Bulletin* also claimed that recently erected barricades at the Quay were to facilitate their landing. Such a 'foreign invasion' would be an invitation to begin sewing 'the Australian Republican flag'.⁸⁶

Thereafter McMillan's name was rarely mentioned in the labour press without the formula being repeated. In March 1893 the *Worker* featured a 'platform sketch' of McMillan addressing a Saturday night crowd on the tariff issue. The McMillan who appeared on the stage was, according to the *Worker* 'the veneered and civilised barbarian who wheeled the machine guns and secretly conspired to land foreign troops in Australia for the deliberate purpose of shooting down the people.' McMillan's personality, including his body, was subsumed into a legend of ugly tyranny. McMillan delivered a speech 'of bitter abuse of political opponents and nauseous self-laudation', in a 'harsh and repellent voice', which the *Worker* correspondent likened to a vertical saw grinding through an ironbark log. McMillan's looks were equally 'repellent', those of 'a man who would do any mortal thing to attain his object'; 'self-seeking is engrained in every fibre of his body. The words "tyrant" and "nigger-driver" are branded deep on his unlovely physiognomy.' McMillan was described as having a 'jerry-built frame, narrow temples, hyena-like eyes'. The 'rapacious' McArthur and Co was described as a firm of 'kanaka drivers, usurers, and land speculators'. McMillan passed himself off as a 'financial pontiff', yet this was just a feeble static of figures

86. *Bulletin*, 27 September 1890.

and 'stock exchange argot', designed to fool 'the gaping crowd'.⁸⁷ McMillan was an object of the *Worker* correspondent's creative hate-play, a focus not of cringing resentment, but of a transforming aggression. Through representations of McMillan as a totem of capitalist evil, a new and more assertive working class voice could emerge in public discourse, diametrically in opposition to his own.

In September 1893 McMillan provided the Active Service Brigade with a dramatic introduction to the Sydney crowd. McMillan had organised a meeting at the New Masonic Hall in Castlereagh street to establish a branch of the Free Trade and Liberal Association in East Sydney: instead he had been shouted down, and finally met with 'a decisive vote of no-confidence'. McMillan and his supporters had been forced from the hall 'to a storm of hoots'. The *Australian Workman* declared that the 'Fiscalomaniacs' had been routed. It was all McMillan's own fault: 'he is of the type of men who are continually exciting antagonism'. The workers did not want his Association, or his representation in Parliament.⁸⁸ The motion carried against McMillan at his own - albeit hijacked - meeting noted his opposition to the payment of members and the eight hour day, his advocacy of the Bank Issue Act and his closeness to 'land mortgage companies', failings which 'renders him peculiarly unfit to sympathise or legislate for the multitude of his fellow men'.⁸⁹ It had already become clear during the meeting that McMillan shared these sentiments; agitated by the hectoring crowd, McMillan 'lost his balance', and for once 'told the workers the truth, by telling them that he did not intend to lead them to believe that he was a true champion of the poor working man'.⁹⁰

87. *Worker* (Sydney) 4 March 1893.

88. *Australian Workman*, 9 September 1893.

89. *ibid.*, 30 September 1893.

90. *ibid.*, 9 September 1893.

Unintentionally, McMillan performed his role on cue, and left the stage to the grateful derision of the mob.

Harry Holland, a recent ASB recruit who moved the anti-McMillan motion with Douglas, said McMillan set off the disruption with his 'screechy voice', 'prating' on about freedom and the brotherhood of man: 'no wonder the hall was transformed into a very Hades alive with human demons.'⁹¹ They stirred the truth out of him, and McMillan had to admit that he had never been in politics for them: he represented his peers, his way of life and its privileges. *Truth* drove the point home, reminding McMillan that East Sydney was no longer a free-trade 'rotten borough'.⁹² Labor pressure in Parliament had forced through the 1893 Electoral Act, which had abolished multi-member constituencies and provided for voting on a public holiday - allowing working men time to vote (not just a loyal staff employed in commercial houses). McMillan and other non-Labor MP's also lost the advantage of plural voting - property owners and businessmen had been able to vote in the electorates where they resided and where their office or factory was located. The Act forced McMillan to withdraw from the new King electorate, instead contesting the less unruly seat of Burwood, in Sydney's west, at the 1894 election.⁹³

The meeting and its spectacular disintegration seemed to have had a significant impact on *Workman* readers, judging by the amount of

91. *Truth*, 10 September 1893.

92. *ibid.*

93. Hawker, *The Parliament of New South Wales*, p.183.

coverage it generated.⁹⁴ Several correspondents interpreted its lessons, repeating the essential myths. H.C. Cato observed that McMillan attracted hostility during the Maritime Strike because he had 'advocated the bringing ashore of marines from the men-of-war in the harbour'. Only Parkes' intervention prevented Sydney workers from being treated like 'the poor ignorant savages of the south seas.'⁹⁵ Curiously, there is no mention in the major *Workman* reports of the role of the ASB at the meeting; a month later a small item noted the ASB had 'disrupted McMillan's meeting'.⁹⁶ In February 1894 the *Workman* noted that the ASB had 'sprung rapidly to prominence by persistent self-advertisement'. 'Disorderly meetings' in the Protestant Hall (not the New Masonic Hall) 'may have assisted its rise'.⁹⁷

The ambiguity about the ASB's role at McMillan's meetings highlights its inchoate origins. In a sense, the ASB existed before its history, part unchannelled protest, part charivari,⁹⁸ stirred by Desmond's exhortations in *Hard Cash* and shaped by Dodd and Dwyer into organisation. Significantly, McMillan chose the New Masonic Hall for his last East Sydney intervention, on the corner of Castlereagh and Goulburn streets, little more than a block south of the ASB's barracks. McMillan

94. Reports of the meeting and criticisms of McMillan continued for over a month. *Australian Workman*, 9, 16 & 30 September 1893, 14 October 1893.

95. *ibid.*, 16 September 1893.

96. *ibid.*, 14 October 1893; other press reports were also vague as to the identity of those the *Sydney Morning Herald* characterised as 'agents of disorder and apostles of anarchism'. *SMH*, 7 September 1893; *Truth*, 10 September 1893; *DT*, 7 September 1893.

97. *Australian Workman*, February 1894.

98. Charivari, 'a burlesque procession with rough music', was a feature of the carnivals which marked the changing cycles of the medieval year, when the social order was briefly reversed and mocked. Darnton links the notion of charivari to eighteenth century worker protest in France. Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre*, p.83.

provocatively transgressed the Brigade's space to preach his message - and made it easy for the radicals to draw a crowd. McMillan provided the ASB's opportunity to emerge from the conflicts of depression Sydney, insisting, through persistent self-advertisement, on recognition, on the right to speak out as Desmond demanded, 'determined to cheer or to hiss or to move amendments...just as they feel inclined.' Little matter that the 'hired bullies' *Hard Cash* warned McMillan would bring to the meeting failed to materialise and enforce an 'acquiescent silence'. They were there in spirit, the necessary and imagined trigger of defiance.

McMillan's ritual vilification formed a vital part of John Dwyer's initiation into active service. At one of the late 1893 Protestant Hall meetings Dwyer carefully recorded in his pocket notebook a resolution passed condemning 'the public plunderers', the financial corporations and their friends in government, chief amongst whom was McMillan, 'the incarnate representative and type', the 'fomentor of anarchy, disorder and civil strife.' It was 'chartered marauders' like McMillan who fostered disorder and anarchy, denying the working class the right to secure lives. Active service, for Dwyer, was a drama of secrecy. In the same notebook he outlined a plan for 'Labor Agents', who would trade information about 'blacklegs' and Labor's enemies, assist Labor during elections, and provide 'information and intelligence of national importance.' Dwyer described the agent's 'mode' as 'silence, secrecy, dispatch.' Much like the mode of the 'A' Division, and its countersign, 'silence'. Active service was a way of expressing a political consciousness, and of framing an identity. Yet under the reign of anarchic marauders, active service was paradoxically driven into silence and secrecy. It was dangerous to share the truth; and perhaps some truths could only be shared amongst a select elite. Dwyer's fascination with the secret trade of political intelligence, and

the sense of self-importance it encouraged, would continue after the Brigade had effectively collapsed.⁹⁹

The ASB on the warpath

The ASB declared their emergence in rallies, meetings, revolutionary songs (chiefly a frequent singing of the *Marseillaise*), through *Justice*, borrowing not only the title of the London SDF's journal, but also its theatrical street protest style, complete with red flags.¹⁰⁰ On Sunday 19 November 1893 this 'warpath', as they characterised their confrontation with state and capital, took the form of a parade from the Queens Statue (at the intersection of King and Macquarie Streets) to St. Andrews Cathedral, next to the Town Hall in George Street. The thirty-odd marchers, 'practically lost amongst the ordinary congregation', made little impression on church authority, despite the ominous tone of the Brigade's newspaper advertisement (cited at the beginning of the chapter). They were surprisingly youthful, most in their early twenties, and in rude good health. Many of their faces were lit by suppressed mirth. The *Telegraph* commented that the spectacle of thirty fit young men 'did not excite much commiseration'.¹⁰¹

A conclusion apparently shared by the Brigade leadership. By the evening they had organised two hundred and fifty unemployed men at the Statue, and commenced a 'blasphemous' procession through the city. Still attempting to appropriate Christ to their cause, the marchers followed a

99. John Dwyer, pocket notebook, c1893, Dwyer papers ML MSS 290.

100. In addition to the famous Trafalgar Square protests, Tom Mann describes a routine of SDF proselytising familiar to any ASB acolyte - two or three open-air and indoor Sunday meetings, afternoon and evening, around the East End, with additional evening meetings during the week. *Tom Mann's Memoirs*, Labour Publishing Co. Ltd London 1923 pp.38-39.

101. *DT*, 20 November 1893.

'huge' crucifix to the astonishment of onlookers. Nailed to the cross was an effigy of 'a down trodden man' in tattered rags, smeared with red paint. Signs on the crucifix read 'humanity crucified' and 'murdered by the rich'. The marchers stopped for speeches outside the Hotel Australia and the Grand Central Coffee Palace, where the well-off had gathered for the evening; when they reached Market Street a line of waiting constables stopped the march and confiscated the crucifix. The marchers retraced their steps to the Methodist Centenary Hall in York Street, where a service was being conducted. The marchers entered and when the service reached a point where 'any person is welcome either to offer prayer or to give his experience', Dodd rose in his place, exclaiming: 'Oh, Almighty God...we beseech Thee to look down upon these suffering people who are starving in our midst...Oh Lord! Look down and curse the sweater. We believe that large numbers of the clergy are hypocrites -.' At that moment the choir struck up 'a vigorous tune', and Dodd had to break off his subversive appropriation of religious rhetoric. The Reverend Rainford Bavin, conducting the service, remained obstinately sympathetic: he said he was deeply moved by the presence of the men, in whose eyes he could see real distress, and he agreed that the churches must share much of the blame for the present state of the poor.¹⁰²

It is difficult to estimate the extent of support for ASB demonstrations. Dodd was said to have addressed 'over 1,000' from the balcony of Peter's Hotel in North Sydney.¹⁰³ *Justice* claimed that another meeting in February 1894 at the Queen's Statue attracted a crowd of '3-4,000'. The Statue was an established meeting place for the unemployed and the radical, the idle and the rabble-rouser, and a large crowd - of the curious if

102. *ibid.*, *SMH*, 20 November 1893.

103. *Justice*, 17 February 1894.

not always the committed - could be expected for a rally. At the February meeting Dwyer made 'a powerful speech denunciatory of the Government'. Dwyer seems to have taken to public speaking with relish, a skill he probably brought with him to Australia. Douglas followed, warning of the presence of an estimated 20-30 police detectives in the crowd, with another 50 said to be lurking 'in ambush' within the nearby Mint building. Douglas invited the crowd to 'treat these paid mercenaries of oppression as they would a leprous Chinaman.'¹⁰⁴

The Statue had become a symbol of an undisciplined militancy, a social space, like the nearby Domain, that the radicals and unemployed had claimed as sites of dissent, and where they might conceive of an alternative social system.¹⁰⁵ Militancy threatened both state authority and the delicate respectability of the labour movement. Some of the Labor parliamentarians, like William Schey, spurned 'agitators and Statue men'. Schey declared in 1894 that 'I have never been one of those who have congregated at the Queen's Statue'; he had 'steadily' refused to address meetings there. 'I consider that it is a means of agitation which cannot result in any possible good to the men congregating in that place'.¹⁰⁶ Labor leader Jim McGowen also repudiated militancy, linking social unrest and division with socialism and anarchy, and fear of blood washing Sydney streets.¹⁰⁷ Perhaps the parliamentarians resented the physical proximity of the radicals to the symbolic place they had only so recently occupied in that powerful precinct of the city, marked off by the Supreme Court buildings just behind the Statue, the Parliament on

104. *ibid.*, 24 February 1894.

105. For a discussion of the idea of social space see Moore, *Injustice*, p.482.

106. *NSW PD*, Vol.75, 18 December 1894 p.3587.

107. Bede Nairn, *Civilising Capitalism, the Labour Movement in New South Wales, 1870-1900*, ANU Press 1973 p.153.

Macquarie Street, the ministries down in Bridge Street. Labor was tantalisingly close to office, and its rising power was threatened by the radicals, and their wry annexation of Her Majesty's sober image to their cause.

The ASB's leaders were active in the LEL, urging workers to support the LEL platform.¹⁰⁸ Yet in February 1894 *Justice* reported that the Darlington LEL had 'repudiated' all connection with the ASB (Schey was the Member for Darlington, and he may have prompted the move against the ASB). *Justice* accused the Darlington League of 'Leigh House' conservatism, a reference to the ASL's policy, increasingly indistinguishable from the LEL. The ASL wallowed in 'utopian wordy warfare', while 'on the same street, at the ASB barracks, you find some hundreds of your unfortunate fellow countrymen provided with board and lodging'.¹⁰⁹

In November 1893 Dodd successfully defeated a move at an LEL conference to readmit four ex-Labor MPs to the Party. On Dodd's resolution, the conference instead decided that they be treated with 'undying hostility', for their betrayal of the 'sacred cause'. The four had saved the Dibbs Government in Parliament during the bitter Broken Hill strike in 1892.¹¹⁰ The ASB soon found that its zeal alienated LEL leaders - in March 1894 Douglas and Dodd attended another LEL conference in Sydney, as accredited delegates of LEL branches, but were refused recognition as 'dual representatives' of the unemployed and the ASB. Chairman J.C. Watson, the president of the Trades and Labour Council, ruled their proposal 'out of order'. Rules were a mechanism not only of

108. The Balmain meeting expressed unanimous support for the LEL platform. *Justice*, 17 February 1894.

109. *Justice*, 24 February 1894.

110. Coghlan, *Labour and Industry*, Vol.4, p.1868; Nairn, *Civilising Capitalism*, p.95.

discipline but ambition: the conference was itself an expression of ambition - it had been summoned, Watson explained, to heal the breach between the LEL and the parliamentarians, to clarify the pledge that the parliamentarians must swear in loyalty to Labor's program, and policy on the eight hour day. The interventions of Dodd and Douglas failed to conform to the requirements of the orderly political progress of the labour movement, symbolised in the pair's unsuccessful opposition to a motion adding 'where practicable' to the words of the eight hour plank - 'legislative limitation of the working day to eight hours'.¹¹¹ The pledge was also soon relaxed to accommodate the parliamentarians.¹¹²

Dodd acquired a reputation as a disruptor of the fixed theatricals of conferences and Parliament. In November 1893 Schey initiated an adjournment debate in the Legislative Assembly on 'the present distress among the labouring classes'. Schey urged Parliament to recognise its responsibility to the unemployed, and the thousand or more men and women forced to live on the streets, some in the very shadow of the chamber in which they gathered. One Dibbs Government supporter, the expelled Labor member Andy Kelly, rejected his former colleagues' accusations of inaction. Kelly suggested that the fault for society's failure to the unemployed lay amongst men who did not work from one day to

111. *Justice*, 17 March 1894; pressure from the powerful Australian Workers Union prompted the amendment to the eight hour day policy, a concession to farmer's concerns. Ray Markey, *In Case of Oppression, the life and times of the Labor Council of New South Wales*, Pluto Press 1994 p.54.

112. The 1893 pledge demanded that the MPs uphold the Labor platform, and specifically reject any legislation 'calculated to establish a monopoly or concede further privileges on the already privileged classes'. In 1895 the pledge was changed to a simple requirement that MPs carry out the principles of the Labor platform. George Black, 'The Labor Party in New South Wales, 1891-1904', pamphlet c1904 ML, pp.12-14; Nairn, *Civilising Capitalism*, p.93.

the next, who lived 'on the life blood of the unemployed. I refer to a gentleman who is known in the community by the name of Dodd.' At that point a stranger in the public gallery called out: '*I say it is a lie!*'¹¹³

The Speaker quickly instructed the Sergeant-at-Arms to arrest Thomas Dodd for vexatiously interrupting the orderly conduct of the House. Dodd was expelled from the Parliament's precincts. Kelly continued, relishing the opportunity to torment Dodd, who had led the push, only days before, to keep him and the three other 'traitors' out of the Labor Party (the adjournment debate took place on 16 November; the LEL Conference had been held on 9 November). Kelly repeated his accusation that Dodd and others deceitfully obtained money from the public, claiming it was required to relieve the unemployed.¹¹⁴ Cast as an expelled stranger, there was no recognised procedure Dodd might access to rebut Kelly's accusations. He could only resort to the risks of illegitimate stirring, a behaviour growing more reckless as authority spurned its pleas.

Truth gleefully quoted Dodd's righteous denunciation of Kelly back at him. Dodd 'had an "undying hostility" for Andy', prompting his hot-tempered outburst from the gallery. Dodd, *Truth* explained, was 'a shrill voiced gentleman with a tremendous thinking power, considerable enthusiasm', and, its words heavily weighed with irony, 'a large bump of modesty'. Dodd had been 'forced into prominence' by Kelly's accusations.

113. NSW PD, Vol.68, 16 November 1893, pp.1086-8, 1094.

114. *ibid.*, p.1139.

If you want to go the pace,
 Tommy Dodd, Tommy Dodd,
 If you want to show your 'face',
 Tommy Dodd, Tommy Dodd,
 Just you get up out of place,
 Tell a Member he's a - case,
 Then point down - it's no disgrace,
 Tommy Dodd, Tommy Dodd.¹¹⁵

Dodd was only beginning to pay the price of showing his face. Police surveillance of the ASB intensified.¹¹⁶ *Justice* warned of a crackdown on 'socialist speakers' in the Domain. 'The capitalist party are beginning to show their teeth'.¹¹⁷ As the colonial elections loomed in 1894, *Justice* believed the State was preparing for a confrontation with its opponents. 'The Supreme Council of the ASB have reliable information that the Dibbs Government have given orders to the police that on election day they are to keep their revolvers loaded, also plenty of ammunition, so that should the hungry mob get a little excited there will be an excuse to "shoot 'em down"'.¹¹⁸ The Brigade threatened to hit back; not with guns, a course that it urged workers to reject - 'better to be battered to death like a gentleman' - but with 'a band of bruisers'.¹¹⁹ The ASB leaders had always imagined that the Brigade's activities were so challenging and notorious that the State would be compelled to respond: and what they had imagined was about to come true.

115. *Truth*, 19 November 1893.

116. *Justice*, 17 February 1894.

117. *Justice*, 17 February 1894.

118. *ibid.*, 31 March 1894.

119. *Standard Bearer*, 17 December 1893.

Theatre and Anti-Theatre

Rhys Isaac has argued that 'society is not primarily a material entity. It is rather to be understood as a dynamic product of the activities of its members - a product profoundly shaped by the images the participants have of their own and others' performances'.¹²⁰ In the early 1890s William McMillan presided over dramas of order and revival, transforming crisis into renewal. What was the banking crisis? A loss of confidence between men and women, between depositors and bankers, a tribal surge of doubt, rejection and censure before which the banks yielded and reconstructed. McMillan emerged as the agent of reconstruction, possessive of the necessary metaphors of managed transfer - calm experience, expertise, a voice of respected authority - at least for his peers in the elite; for the radical sub-culture, his intervention was another deceitful ritual of an illegitimate order, and reaction to him intensified.

Rousing working class feeling against the social order, the radicals and the labour press were compelled to turn class enemies into the reviled Other. They restructured McMillan's public persona, exploiting his actions to justify their response to capital and the state, the system that forced them into poverty and struggle, where white workers were forced to compete, as Rose Summerfield feared, with 'almond-eyed slaves'. Scates argues that the racism of late nineteenth century radicals flowed from the fact that they were 'trapped within the discourse of European imperialism.'¹²¹ Why did they feel trapped? Why did these individuals, whom Scates represents as otherwise defiant, self-acting and creative, succumb so readily to the prevailing imperialist discourse on race? Perhaps, as Denning

120. Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790*, W.W. Norton & Co., NY 1988, p.324

121. Scates, *A New Australia*, p.25.

observed of another culture, 'in their models of the Other they betray their metaphors of themselves'.¹²²

Summerfield had an intensely physical nightmare of a multicultural Sydney, the perverted product of capitalist control. Figuratively leading her audience through southern Sydney, a milling market precinct of Chinese, Syrians and Italians, Summerfield urged them to recoil before the fate that awaited them if they were forced to compete for jobs and live amongst aliens. 'Ugh! The smell, the dirt, the unwholesomeness! If you are a woman you hear loud laughter, expressions of "welly nice", "welly good", from the lips of Chinese gamblers, and lewd eyes are fastened upon you by these creatures who are allowed to live huddled together like beasts instead of human beings.' 'Can you do it?', she demanded of them. Were they willing to live like 'the waste of Italy's fair shores...the refuse, and outcasts of other nations'?¹²³ Understanding the power of theatre, Summerfield stood before her audience in Leigh House and confronted them with the psychological anarchy to which capitalism subjected the working class. An insecurity that manifested as a fear of loss of employment, loss of culture, intensified, in Summerfield's drama, through a fear of sexual violence, striking a direct emotional chord amongst the women in the audience, and the men expected to protect them from such a dehumanising ordeal.

Above all, Summerfield stimulated a fear of the loss of the self - reduced to the status of almond-eyed slaves, workers would no longer be themselves. Summerfield could not conceive of herself, be herself, in the

122. Greg Denning, *Islands and Beaches*, Melbourne University Press, 1980, p.94.

123. Rose Summerfield, 'Master and Man', address to the Australian Socialist League, Leigh House, 17 July 1892, published by the *Hummer*, Wagga, 1892, p.6. ML

world of the Other. Significantly, the foreigners Summerfield describes were not an anonymously threatening mass, but individuals she had seen, and passed closely in the street, almost felt their touch: it is the implication of empathy with them that she could not accept, an alienation she assumed was shared by her audience. In response to such vividly imagined threats to working class identity, Desmond cast McMillan as a nigger-driving Jew. Douglas condemned the police who enforced the social order as leprous chinamen. They had to cast the class enemy into a feared category of the servile and diseased Other, before the enemy did it to them.

'No wonder the hall was transformed into a very Hades alive with human demons.' Harry Holland was gripped by the moment, the sudden success of driving McMillan from the meeting, a brief intoxication of power as the crowd's released energy forced McMillan from the stage and thrust Holland up there, in place of the capitalist: a charivari that might spin right out of control, permanently reversing the social order. The crowd reflected a larrikin spirit - resisting control, mocking, knocking off balance: and an imminent threat of violence. A playful, mercurial spirit sparked by random opportunities to deride and challenge - it was not an organisation, but the intrinsic spirit of the Active Service Brigade, itself emerging from the crowd, a 'perfectly natural product of the depression'.

A play alive, as Peter Gay might observe, with aggression, a mechanism of outrage and change, and a way of feeling alive.¹²⁴ 'Everything that lives resists.' Sorel captured the spirit of 'war-like France' in the years before the First World War, where, he believed, 'the revolutionary and direct

124. Peter Gay, *The Cultivation of Hatred*, Fontana Press, 1995. p.4.

method' of socialism lived.¹²⁵ Sorel's *Reflections on Violence* (1906), in Berlin's interpretation, exulted the human spirit, resisting the forces that would deny its 'unique self-expression and reduce it to uniformity, impersonality, monotony, and, ultimately, extinction.'¹²⁶ A desire to freely live shared by Australian radicals - an escape from alienation, and the tedium of industrial life. Would this instinctive violence be channelled into social change, or simply into more violence? Aggression was also an impulse that fed on itself, and Arthur Desmond's Nietzschean code was increasingly trapped in the repetition of its prejudices.

To justify his angry outbursts Desmond needed the crowd, an audience to be persuaded that the vilification of the wealthy and the Jew was legitimised by the usury and deception of the banks. Like McMillan, Desmond scorned the crowd; they were both elitists. McMillan and Desmond also shared an acute perception of the banking system, and the crisis besetting it - banking was a mirage called confidence. McMillan, trying to preserve the banking system, identified in Parliament the nature of the crisis as plainly as any of the caustic barrages published in *Hard Cash*. Of their mutual elitism, the well-mannered McMillan bit his tongue, except when he was goaded into confession at the Masonic Hall; Desmond was less precious. Workers were the drudges of the shopfloor and the streets, the 'dull and witless mob' easily fooled by the clergy.¹²⁷ In the world's 'evolutionary' struggle, he believed, those who wielded the sword ruled the world. Ironically, the banking crisis and reconstruction revealed the skill of the elite in maintaining its control through

125. Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, The Free Press, Glencoe, Ill., 1950, p.90.

126. Isaiah Berlin, 'Georges Sorel', in *Against the Current*, p.299.

127. *Hard Cash*, July 1893.

adaptation. Perhaps in frustration at preventing this renewal, *Hard Cash* proclaimed that 'the majority of men are cowards - therefore they are slaves. That is heresy, but it's true'.¹²⁸

Desmond revelled in heresy: it shocked, and set him apart from others. The copies of the *Standard Bearer* in the Phillips papers are a faint and troubled echo of the consequences of Desmond's extravagant hate play, expending its energy on derision, light on solutions. In *Hard Cash* Desmond admitted that he was not a socialist.¹²⁹ His iconoclasm was ultimately the voice of a railing individual, unbound to common cause. This Darwinian struggle to come out on top and claim hard cash, combined with the violent anti-Semitism Desmond expressed in *Hard Cash* and the *Standard Bearer*, and later 'developed' in *Survival of the Fittest*, suggests an incipient fascism. Desmond shared these ideological characteristics with his more famous contemporary, William Lane.¹³⁰

128. *ibid.*, Vol.2 No.3 (undated).

129. *ibid.*

130. The discussion of Desmond's fascist instincts is continued in an analysis of *The Survival of the Fittest* in chapter six. Scates discusses the collapse of Lane's ideology from socialism after the failure of the New Australia project, into a jingoistic militarism by WW1. Lane's socialism had always been qualified by a doubt that socialism was a precise code that could be legislated - in his famous editorial, 'Mates', Lane argued that socialism was an ideal, 'an aspiration rooted in men's minds by the evolution of humanity.' Indeed, it was only a step towards an 'anarchistic evolution of voluntary co-operation...just what this final system will be I do not know.' While this vague idealism was defeated by frustration and hubris, Lane's virulent racism, with a strong anti-semitic strain and a social darwinist assumption that white anglo-saxon culture was the pinnacle of human experience that would subordinate other cultures, had been a constant feature of his ideology (see Burgmann and Clark). Bruce Scates, *A New Australia*, pp.162, 193; Verity Burgmann, 'Racism, Socialism and the Labour Movement, 1887-1917', *Labour History* No.47 November 1984, pp.39-41; C.M.H. Clark, *A History of Australia* Vol.5 Melbourne University Press, 1981 pp.87-8. 'Mates' was published under the pseudonym John Miller in the *Hummer*, 16 January 1892, ML.

The ASB had its own complex relationship with the crowd, the milling unemployed at the Statue or the Domain. The Brigade's declared public mission could only exist with the crowd's co-operation: they were willing to be roused but they also expected to be entertained. Like the smirking young men in St. Andrews Cathedral, many workers were unwilling to take it all too seriously. It was fun taunting McMillan, leering at the startled diners in the Grand Central Coffee Palace. The ASB cultivated this theatre, but its leaders wanted to rein it into a disciplined assault on the social structure. The ASB was ceremoniously structured like the respectable institutions of business, religion and the military - a borrowing of normalizing routines that reflected the Brigade's craving for recognition as a legitimate voice of the unemployed. Dwyer was the self-appointed custodian of ASB discipline. Dwyer honoured the structures that he and his colleagues conceived - long after the others abandoned the Brigade. Dwyer ran the barracks, enlisting the enforcer Champion to the harsh cause of excluding 'bad characters', casting a cool eye over his clientele, and mentally sorting the industrious from the loafers.

These disciplinary tendencies, and the ASB's demanding ideology, were instincts of anti-theatre, regulating rather than stimulating the unemployed's self-expression. The Brigade's leaders seemed torn between a need to defiantly prepare the unemployed to face the 'reign of terror' Andrews claimed the Brigade expected from the State in 1894, or whether the Brigade's role was to 'prevent outbreaks' amongst the angry poor, as Dodd told the judge at the Slattery libel trial (*see chapter five*).¹³¹ This contradiction was a product of the Brigade's disciplinary inheritance: traditional appeals to obedience and duty infiltrated the new disciplines of struggle. The ASB leaders lacked the skill, and they simply lacked the

131. John Arthur Andrews, 'History of the Active Service Brigade', *Tocsin*, 24 May 1900.

time, to overcome this inheritance and construct a new code of active service.

It was probably just as well, at least for some of Sydney's unemployed, that Dwyer persisted throughout the 1890s with his dogged loyalty to the Brigade's mission. Reconstruction prolonged the depression of the Australian economy, ensured that the barracks were well patronised for the rest of the decade.¹³² The banks were a shadow looming over the public domain, dominating life through the control of money, structuring almost every kind of transaction and relationship. McMillan's acknowledgment of the 'network of ramifications' was a temporary concession. After the crisis, the gates could be swung shut, and business resumed.¹³³ The emotions which ruled commercial life - confidence, faith, fear - could again be blended into progress, however slowed and scarred by the lingering depression. *Hard Cash* and the Active Service Brigade struggled to subvert these transactions of faith, and replace them through a wild awakening with a new discourse of justice, the most revolutionary word, as the Brigade declared, in the English language.¹³⁴ The opportunity opened by the system's crisis was about to close for the Castlereagh street radicals in the anti-theatre of the colonial courts.

132. That the banks locked up deposits, in most cases, until 1897, 'hung as a threat', as Butlin notes, over their own heads: they feared a renewed run when the deposits were finally released. Boehm concludes this 'severe credit contraction' persisted into the new century, delaying a revival of prosperity. 'It was not until about the years 1907-9 that real income per head passed its pre-depression peak.' Butlin, *Investment in Australian Economic Development 1861-1900*, p.430; E.A. Boehm, *Prosperity and Depression in Australia, 1887-1897*, Oxford 1971 pp.325-26.

133. In 1895 a conference of bankers in Sydney rejected government suggestions for increased industry controls and supervision, much to Coghlan's disgust. Coghlan, *Labour & Industry, Vol.4* p.2131.

134. *Justice*, 10 February 1894.