

Chapter Nine

Every Man for Himself*John Dwyer's Federation*

I cannot ask you to remember me in your
prayers, but I remember you in mine.

Daniel Dwyer to his father.

One perfect day in 1910 Daniel Dwyer sat on hill outside Grenfell, in the central west of New South Wales, and wrote a letter to his father.¹ It was a beautiful scene, he told John. In the distance the line of the Weddin Ranges dissolved in the haze of the sun. A vast belt of golden wheat, forty miles long, stretched away to his right; to his left, an endless run of well-fenced paddocks, filled with grazing sheep. Only the ring of a woodcutter's axe and the occasional bark of a dog broke the silence. Dan wondered how his family was coping in the 'jangling discord' of Sydney, 'where there seems to be no time to be kind and where selfish greed and ambition seem to be the dominating force.' He was glad to have escaped the city, where his father had fled from Mittagong in search of work seventeen years before. 'I think a person can best realise themselves in solitude. The greatness of the bush here puts me in mind of the greatness of God.'

Dan, 29 years old in 1910, had been a Methodist Home Missionary since 1905. He spent three years in the Sydney Central Methodist Mission, and

1. Daniel Dwyer to John Dwyer from Grenfell, undated, family correspondence Dwyer papers ML MSS 290, box 2. That the letter was written in 1910 is confirmed by contemporaneous correspondence and references to events - eg., the 1910 elections. See below, p.374.

later amongst the bush communities of New South Wales as a 'Circuit Evangelist'.² 'It does seem a difference to worship in a little country church, to the great congregations of the city. All that is best and truest and noblest in one's character seems to be drawn out and the feeling of peaceful, restful quiet that steals over one appeals to me so much.' Country worship and solitude brought peace and a chance to reflect. 'I often think of the strange contradictions some of us are, good and bad, but there is comfort in the thought that some-time some-where all these contradictions will be harmonised'. God was harmony, and release from the tangled web of life. 'I feel that I could not live without Him and be the man that I ought to be, and the man I want to be, but with Him to watch over and guide and love, all must be well.' Then he directly addressed his father. 'You must not think I forget you Dad. Although at times I think that you have not taught me to love you, as I would wish, perhaps the fault was mine.' Nonetheless he said his father's good influence would always remain with him, as 'a benediction'. Nor could he forget his mother's unselfishness and love: 'she is a brave little woman.' He would never return to the Central Mission, and the work amongst the city poor. 'I'm not physically fit [and] the country air is making up for a few years of my life of sickness.' He closed 'affectionately': 'I cannot ask you to remember me in your prayers, but I remember you in mine.'

In Dan's gently devastating indictment John was presented with the consequences of the struggles he had put his family through - the years of hard living in Sydney, and the strain that had placed on his relationship with his family and their well-being - Annie's self-sacrifice, Dan's health.

2. The sources for Dan's career are his letters to his father. Dan is listed as an 'evangelist' in a 1906 list of Central Methodist Mission office bearers. *Our Weekly Greeting*, journal of the Sydney Central Methodist Mission, 15 September 1906.

John would not have failed to notice that Dan's reverie on the pastoral universe of a harmonious and loving God was subtly turned upon him, the urban apostate who believed that traditional religion placed 'cobwebs in the minds of the young', and who had mounted a Domain soapbox to advocate a 'Rational Sunday'.³ Daniel feared his father's contradictions would never be soothed by the love of God. All the Dwyer children - Elizabeth, Daniel, Henry and Timm - seemed to embrace their mother's Methodism. Dwyer was sensitive to the spiritual divide between himself and his own wife and children: in 1912 he recorded in his family history that his mother's grandfather, John Cook, 'had no religion, often said he would die [sic] without any - like his father, he did so die.'⁴ Dwyer clung to the comforting memory of a conviction resolutely held in the face of death. That Dwyer had to cast back to the distant precedent of his great-grandfather was also a reminder of the lonely path he trod.

John Dwyer lived a complicated life. In order to make that life comprehensible for the reader, the chapters of this thesis reflect the familiar deceptions of order and structure, simplifying Dwyer's life in a way he might well have envied, but could never have experienced himself. Dwyer's political agitation was sharpened and disrupted by the tensions of finding himself a job, the strains of family life, the turmoil of negotiating a useful public role in a society that so often spurned him. 'Agitation' is an appropriate description of Dwyer's condition. Working class agitators like Dwyer did not simply refer a social problem to the attention of a negligent state: they were themselves the product and the prey of social distress, and they lived with it every day.

3. John Dwyer, 'the public schools and religion', November 1913, Dwyer papers ML MSS 2184/3; Minutes of the Social Democratic Federation, 10 October 1907. Dwyer papers ML MSS 2184/8 Item 6.

4. 'Family history of John Dwyer', p.6.

In October 1903 Prime Minister Alfred Deakin promised that the white Australia created through Federation did not just mean 'the preservation of the complexion of the people of this country'. White Australia meant 'equal laws and opportunities for all; it means protection against the underpaid labour of other lands; it means the payment of fair wages (cheers).' Deakin promised 'a civilisation whose foundations are built upon healthy lives, lived in honest toil, under circumstances which imply no degradation.'⁵ This chapter is a fragment of white Australia in the early twentieth century, and John Dwyer and his contemporaries' experience of the conditions Deakin hoped to redress.

Time not much my own: boarding house life

In 1903 Dwyer provided a snapshot of his daily life in a diary he briefly kept. On 20 April 'Lizzie left home to go to work for strangers'.⁶ Elizabeth, his 23 year old daughter and eldest child, presumably took work as a live-in domestic, and asserted a degree of independence - or responded to an economic need: probably both. There was no reason for her to leave, John insisted in his diary. 'Without doubt in my mind the act of deliberate opposition to my wishes. I refused to consent to her going', although she still left. The economic need seemed real enough: on 29 April a bailiff turned up seeking unpaid rent for 372 Sussex Street, one of the two unemployed shelters Dwyer operated in 1903 (the other was a little further along the street at no.296). The bailiff, Dwyer records matter-of-factly, was pelted with flour and red ochre, as if such greetings were routine. Dwyer identifies the bailiff as a Mr. Dive, otherwise a fruit

5. Speech by Alfred Deakin in Ballarat, October 1903, reprinted in Frank Crowley (ed.), *Modern Australia 1901-1939*, Thomas Nelson Australia, Melbourne 1978. p.51.

6. John Dwyer, *Diary, 1903-4, 1914*, Dwyer papers ML MSS 290.

salesman at the Belmore Markets. Like Dwyer, most bailiffs were simply ordinary workers seeking a little cash from performing odd jobs, hardly in a position to scruple over the unpleasantness of their task.

Dwyer got on with agitating: on 3 May he addressed a gathering of the unemployed at the Statue; on 13 May he led an unemployed delegation to the premier, Sir John See; the following day they interviewed Carruthers, the leader of the opposition. Soon the bailiffs were back, pursuing Dwyer for £22 rent owing on 296 Sussex Street (the premises he had inherited from the State Labourers Union). On 25 July the bailiff, 'an old man', got in and seized the wire stretchers Dwyer had leased, and took them away in a cart. Two days later Dwyer sold his interest in another thirty second hand wire stretchers to his son Dan for £3 10s. Dan's address was given as 345¹/₂ Sussex Street.⁷ Dan's attempt to follow in his father's footsteps proved short-lived; on 26 November Dwyer recorded 'lost everything at 345¹/₂ Sussex St. for £5 10s rent [due] to landlady at pub next door.'⁸

The Dwyers' appear to be living at 'the large and roomy building' at 296 Sussex Street in 1903. The properties Dwyer leased in Sussex street were all in the two blocks bound by Bathurst Street to the north and Goulburn Street to the south, with Liverpool Street intersecting between them.⁹ The public school between Bathurst and Liverpool Streets may have provided an education for Henry or Timm, the only Dwyer children still of school age in the early 1900s. Life in Sussex Street must have incited memories of

7. Agreement between John and Daniel Dwyer, 27 July 1903, general correspondence Dwyer papers ML MSS 290.

8. Dwyer Diary.

9. 372 Sussex Street was simply noted as being 'smaller' than 296. Appeal for 'John Dwyer's Shelter for the Relief of the temporarily Necessitous', March 1903, Dwyer papers ML MSS 2184/7.

Shadwell Basin, dominated by the bustle of the wharves that ran its length along the eastern edge of Darling Harbour, and the adjacent railway goods yards. Sussex street was congested with overburdened drays serving the warehouses and ships, and the milling life of its working class community - wharfies and draymen, domestic servants, rail workers and factory hands. A street adorned with a necklace of pubs, drawing out the intemperate and the lonely from narrow terraces and unemployed shelters.

At no.403 the Open All Night Refuge for women dismally hovered over the street. Run by George Ardill's Sydney Rescue Work Society, the refuge was a 'wretchedly furnished' Methodist shelter with 'a mean and forbidding aspect', made available for the temporary salvation of local 'fallen women'. A report noted that 'women appear at the door at night and demand admission at what hour they please, telling the Matron that they will walk the streets as long as they like and she will have to admit them when they come.' Mr and Mrs Ardill conducted religious services along 'gospel temperance' lines several times a week under less than reverential circumstances. 'The inmates are compelled to attend these services, which the Matron tells us is the occasion of a considerable amount of trouble.'¹⁰

Dwyer's rough shelters for unemployed men were almost as cheap and possibly as cheerless as Ardill's refuge. Dwyer carried on his own brand of preaching to a captive audience, and drew several of them into his campaigns - Peter Emslie, Louis Nistrie, Walter Cashman. In 1903 the rates for 296 and 372 Sussex Street were six pence a night, and a half-penny

10. Royal Commission on Public Charities - Third Report, Subsidised Benevolent Institutions, *Journal of the NSW Legislative Council*, 1898 Vol.60 pt.1, pp.74, 83-84.

for a piece of bread or a cup of tea: Dwyer's customers could not have afforded more, nor paid a premium for a mattress on a wire stretcher in a crowded room.¹¹ New South Wales was said to be over the worst of economic hard times by the turn of the century. Prosperity may have passed by in trade, but it made little headway into Sussex Street homes. Dwyer dreamt of something better: amongst his papers is a September 1902 letter from Backhouse and Backhouse, architects, quoting for the construction of a 'proposed residential premises' at 296 Sussex Street. 'We have allowed for a first class brick building on concrete foundations.' The five story structure would include a large restaurant and kitchen, an attendants office, a barbers shop, two smoke rooms (first and second class) and 261 bedrooms, 'entirely separated and externally ventilated.' Construction costs were estimated at £6,300.¹² Having no capital of his own, Dwyer prevailed upon the NSW Government to pay for his grand boarding house. On 17 September Dwyer's local member of Parliament, Ernest Broughton, a backbencher in See's Progressive Government, advised that the 'unsettled state of the financial position' prevented government support.¹³

The combination of running boarding houses, and the shifting about necessitated by notices to quit and pursuing bailiffs, makes it difficult to specify which property the family actually lived in during the period 1902-1905. During 1906-7 Dwyer moved operations from Sussex Street to 39 Crown Street in East Sydney; by 1908 the Dwyer's settled in a row of terraces at 64-68 Forbes Street Woolloomooloo, not far up the street from

11. Appeal for 'John Dwyer's Shelter for the Relief of the Temporarily Necessitous', March 1903, Dwyer papers ML MSS 2184/7.

12. Backhouse and Backhouse to John Dwyer, 4 September 1902, Dwyer papers ML MSS2184/1.

13. Broughton to Dwyer, 17 September 1902, Dwyer papers ML MSS2184/1.

the bay and adjacent to the Plunkett Street School (which appears to have absorbed the terraces in later years). The boarding house was no.68, apparently a former hotel.¹⁴ The Dwyers' remained in this tough and impoverished neighbourhood until about 1921.¹⁵ We have some idea of what life was like at no.68: In September 1911 a sanitary inspector from the Sydney City Council served Dwyer with a notice. As the proprietor of a 'common lodging house', Dwyer was required to make a series of repairs within fourteen days or face the cancellation of his licence. Dwyer was ordered to cleanse and renovate the walls and ceilings of all rooms, passages, staircases and offices, clean all windows, and lower the water closet seat 'so that matter will not be discharged over pans'. He was also ordered to provide a supply of water sufficient for domestic and sanitary purposes, and legibly paint upon the exterior of each bedroom door the number of persons allowed by the Council to occupy the room. Dwyer had previously been issued with notices to cleanse his properties and reduce the number of occupants per room.¹⁶

Dwyer was licensed to have 45 lodgers occupy the twelve rooms of 68 Forbes Street. On average there were three tenants to rooms 14-15 feet long by 9-10 feet wide, and 12 feet high.¹⁷ Dwyer claimed he charged only

14. Dwyer to Senator Nield, 6 June 1909, Dwyer papers ML MSS 2184/2.

15. A 1912 Commission of Inquiry found that sections of Woolloomooloo were as poor as the worst European slums. Milton Lewis, 'Milk, Mothers and Infant Welfare', in Jill Roe (ed.), *Twentieth Century Sydney: studies in urban and social history*, Hale & Iremonger 1980, p.206.

16. Sydney City Council Sanitary Inspector's notices, 13 May 1907; 26 November 1910, 26 September 1911, general correspondence Dwyer papers ML MSS 290.

17. Sydney City Council, annual renewal notice of licence to run a common lodging house at 68 Forbes Street, 29 February 1912, *ibid.*

four pence a night, and often supplied rooms 'gratis' to 'out of works'.¹⁸ Generosity was easily abused, and Annie was often left to deal with the consequences: in 1908 she complained to John (away working casually as a cook) that three 'sailor chaps' had been staying without paying, and 'Jack won't pay anything till you get back.' In the eyes of at least some lodgers, Annie was not 'the boss', and was treated accordingly.¹⁹

William Clark was a Forbes Street resident, and his friend, a Miss E. White, wrote to him several times during 1908. Apparently playful and teasing, her five surviving letters reveal an undercurrent of disturbance - a tentative relationship disrupted by distance and hardship. A domestic servant, she recorded her travels with the Higgs family, first to Leura, a favourite retreat for the Sydney middle class in the Blue Mountains to Sydney's west, then to Jamberoo, on the south coast. She wrote in moments snatched from her duties. Her first letter was written while the Higgs children are away at the Leura baths. William apparently found life a struggle. Living in Dwyer's Forbes Street doss was probably not much relief from his daily grind as a cook at the Sorrento cafe. She urged William to cheer up - 'everything will come right in the end.' Then she had to break off, to make the afternoon tea. Later she complained that his letters were 'getting scarce...I suppose you are very busy', although she acknowledged that she was in a hurry when she read his last letter, and her own time for correspondence was constrained. At Jamberoo she had to walk over a mile to post a letter, and she had to take the Higgs children with her. When she told Clark that the Higgs family was returning to Sydney from Leura, she asked him not to meet her at the railway station;

18. Dwyer to NSW Chief Secretary, 14 November 1908; Dwyer to Francis Andersen, 24 August 1910, Dwyer papers ML MSS 2184/2.

19. Annie Dwyer to John Dwyer, 21 April 1908, Dwyer papers family correspondence ML MSS 290.

Mrs. Higgs would not approve. In the last, much shorter letters, the handwriting deteriorated as she hastened. She apologised for her scrawled note: 'we will make up for all lost time when we meet.' She pleaded with him not to imagine that her short note meant she had better things to do than write to him. 'My time is not much my own.'²⁰

Dwyer also preserved a Supreme Court petition from May 1911, a folded sheath of papers covered in the busy scrawl of legal demand. The petition demanded that John Loughlin, labourer, acknowledge responsibility for his wife, Minnie Isabel Loughlin, and his two children, John, 11, and Florence, 10, whom he, as an 'habitual drunkard', had abandoned without means of support three years before. His wife sought the dissolution of the marriage and custody of the children. Whenever Loughlin left Forbes Street, he left the petition behind, just as William Clark apparently departed without his girlfriend's letters; they were probably dodging the rent, or their responsibilities.²¹

Dwyer occasionally claimed that his efforts on behalf of the unemployed and the poor were continuing campaigns of the Active Service Brigade. In his capacity as ASB 'chief' Dwyer unsuccessfully lobbied the NSW government for grants to cover operating costs at Forbes Street.²² In June 1909 he asked for blankets from the Australian Army's Victoria barracks at Paddington, claiming that in the twelve months he had been operating

20. The five letters dated between January and May 1908 are in 'papers re William Clark', Dwyer papers ML MSS 290.

21. Supreme Court petition, 12 May 1911, Papers re John Loughlin, Dwyer papers ML MSS 290.

22. Dwyer to NSW Chief Secretary, 14 November 1908 Dwyer papers ML MSS 2184/2.

the rooms at Forbes Street he had provided some 11,500 beds. Dwyer was supplied with 30 'unserviceable' blankets from the military stores.²³

Dwyer regularly appealed for financial aid from private citizens. In 1909 he told Francis Anderson, professor of philosophy at the University of Sydney and education reform campaigner, that the ASB's 'shelter' was under 'severe strain'. In the course of preparing his letter Dwyer redrafted various flattering statements - he expressed admiration, as 'your humble friend', for Anderson's 'deep interest in...the public good', and the 'great work you are doing in the position you so worthily occupy'. Grovelling worked the first time; a response arrived from Professor Anderson of 'Bayview' at Pittwater, enclosing a £1 donation. Anderson was glad that the shelter was under the control of 'working men', better able to look after themselves than 'Church or political bodies, who cannot give charity apparently without adding to it other things which are not desired.'²⁴ Anderson's admiration proved temporary: in December 1910 he rejected another appeal. 'I have a good many calls of a similar nature made on me, and have to exercise my best judgement in discriminating. I do not at any rate feel inclined just now to help further in your work.'²⁵ Comfortably remote from the problems of working men who needed his help, Anderson had the power to whimsically satisfy or resist his charitable instincts. Perhaps churches and political bodies were not alone in loading undesirable attitudes onto the work of aiding the poor.

23. Dwyer to Senator Nield, 6 & 19 June 1909, *ibid.*

24. Dwyer to Francis Anderson, 24 August 1909, Dwyer papers, *ibid.*; Anderson to Dwyer, 27 August 1909, Dwyer papers ML MSS 2184/1; W.M. O'Neil, 'Francis Anderson' *ADB*, Vol.7 Melbourne University Press 1979 p.53.

25. Anderson to Dwyer, 11 December 1910, Dwyer papers ML MSS 2184/2.

'Glad of a start': Dwyer's search for work

Dwyer not only lobbied on behalf of others; he was stalked by a need to find regular, well-paying work. As he grew older, Dwyer believed the individuals and political organisations he had helped owed him a debt of gratitude. At the same time as Dwyer was trying to win the favour of NSW Premier Joseph Carruthers (*see chapter eight*), Dwyer pursued Labor contacts in his search for work. On 19 May 1904 Dwyer wrote to Billy Hughes, the Minister for External Affairs in the short-lived Watson Labor Government (April-August 1904). Like Dwyer, Hughes was a British immigrant born mid-century. Hughes had done well in his adopted country, from a Balmain mixed business to trade union leadership and into Parliament.²⁶

John Dwyer had not done quite so well, and when the Watson Government came to office on 27 April, Dwyer saw his chance. Hughes, someone Dwyer vaguely knew, was now in a position of power and patronage. Dwyer asked Hughes' help to obtain even a subordinate position in the External Affairs department. 'I shall be glad of a start', Dwyer said, a forty-eight year old desperate for the start that he had never quite managed to find since his arrival in Australia. Dwyer told Hughes his previous London training 'had been of no value to me in this country. The market being overstocked when I came and I having a family of five [an exaggeration: John and Annie had only two children on their arrival] left me no alternative but to tackle the first thing that came along.' He had been 'strictly sober' all his life, Dwyer assured Hughes, although he crossed out of the draft: 'and apart from my holding strong political convictions, none can speak one word truthfully against my

26. Donald Horne, *The Little Digger, a biography of Billy Hughes*, Sun Papermac 1983 pp.6-8.

integrity'. Apparently he felt it unwise to emphasise his controversial radical politics to this pillar of mainstream Labor authority. Instead he reminded Hughes that: 'I have lived in this city since about 1890 where you have know [sic] somewhat of me personally'. Then Dwyer crossed out: 'as a rule enjoy the best of health. I am prepared to serve the Commonwealth anywhere.' This sounded too desperate, and suggested his health was actually doubtful, so he replaced those words with: 'but am not now particular where I go if in the service of the Commonwealth.'²⁷ A carefully chosen conclusion, at once striking a more casual tone, while also implying that as serving the Commonwealth was such an important calling, he would naturally expect to serve it anywhere.

Hughes knocked him back; the External Affairs Department had only ten to twelve staff, and the Public Service Commissioner made all appointments. He would let Dwyer know if a vacancy came up.²⁸ Dwyer thanked Hughes for his prompt reply, and hoped that now Labor was in power 'those who are willing and capable in the rank and file should be given a show. Both the other crowds look after their men, why not ours?' Dwyer asked Hughes to hand a letter to Prime Minister Watson on his behalf. Then he crossed out: 'those who fight the battles get absolutely little or nothing.' If he was not helped, 'the result is easy to forecast in this merciless fight for existence.'²⁹ Like many bitter outbursts, this was apparently too close to the truth; given time to reflect, Dwyer removed it from the draft, concealing his feelings.

27. Dwyer to Hughes, 19 May 1904, Dwyer papers ML MSS 2184/1.

28. Hughes to Dwyer, 25 May 1904, *ibid.*

29. Dwyer to Hughes, 26 May 1904, *ibid.*

Failing to win the favour of the powerful, Dwyer took on a range of casual jobs to make ends meet. In 1909 he obtained six months' work as a 'searcher-watcher-assistant' at the General Post Office in Martin Place.³⁰ He managed to obtain another six months' work sorting parcels with the Post Master General's department in 1910. He was unsuccessful in having his term extended, despite lobbying on his behalf by Labor MLA J.P. Cochran, and despite the fact that his attendance was regular, his conduct good and his work satisfactory. 'He possessed no special qualifications, and was not, therefore, recommended for exemption.'³¹ Labor MPs continued to assist him in the hunt for work. In 1911 McGowen Government Minister Fred Flowers provided a reference. Dwyer was 'a reliable man' he had known for a number of years, 'who will do good work if given an opportunity.'³² The opportunities Dwyer was offered were not those he desired: in 1914 he worked as a 'pick and shovel man' on the excavations to build the new Teacher's College at the University of Sydney. He was fifty-eight years old.³³

Dwyer launched appeals on his own behalf: in late 1902 several of Dwyer's associates - probably lodging house tenants - agreed to sponsor an appeal written by Dwyer for this 'friend of the unemployed', whose work on their behalf had left him with 'many difficulties' and a desire to greet 1903 'debt free'. An attached 'list of donations' is blank.³⁴ In early 1903 he tried again, this time a little more shrewdly printing an appeal for 'John Dwyer's Shelter for the Relief of the Temporarily Necessitous'. The

30. Public Service Commissioners to Dwyer, 14 January 1909, *ibid.*

31. Post Master General to JP Cochran, 24 August 1910, *ibid.*

32. Fred Flowers 'to whom it may concern', 5 January 1911, Dwyer papers general correspondence ML MSS 290.

33. John Dwyer, Diary entries, 4 & 27 April 1914, *ibid.*

34. Benefit for 'a friend of the unemployed', 1902, Dwyer papers ML MSS 2184/7.

appeal raised only a few pounds, and was most notable for its small but interesting list of contributors, representative of Dwyer's political networking - George Reid donated £1 1s., Lawler & Sons 2s. 6d., Ernest Broughton 2s. 6d. and Joseph Carruthers £1. Labor MPs George Black and Arthur Griffith each donated 2s. 6d.³⁵

Sometimes Dwyer resorted to plain begging: in August 1905 he wrote to a Mrs. M.J. Smart of Surry House, Moss Park. Dwyer twice drafted a letter to her on the same day - and only a few days before the 16 August Town Hall meeting which established the Citizen's National Unemployment Movement. The meeting (Dwyer enclosed a cutting from the *Evening News* with the letter) was designed to build a community coalition in support of the plight of the unemployed, and was to be chaired by Dwyer, who obviously feared embarrassment. 'Where I might fail is on account of my want of a little funds to defray preliminary expenses. Being elected "leader", I must either be so or throw up the sponge.' In the other draft Dwyer noted: 'I don't choose to show up my poverty.'³⁶ She had already patronised him; in 1903 he recorded in his diary, 'Mrs. Smart gave me a donation of £5 to help me. I did not ask her for it.'³⁷ This time he was asking, although there is no surviving record of her response.

In late 1911 Dwyer again sought temporary employment as a postal assistant, working the Christmas mail rush at the GPO. In October Dwyer went to the Public Service Commissioners office, and was 'coolly informed' by the 'youth' in charge of registrations that his name had been

35. Appeal for 'John Dwyer's Shelter for the Relief of the Temporarily Necessitous', March 1903, *ibid.*

36. Dwyer to Mrs M.J. Smart, 11 August 1905, State Labourers Union letter book, Dwyer papers ML MSS 2184/6.

37. John Dwyer, Diary entry, 23 December 1903. Dwyer papers ML MSS 290.

erased from the waiting list, and he would have to make a fresh application. Dwyer had missed the cut-off date to renew his registration, and making a new application 'would place me some hundreds of steps back in the scramble for a job', as he told his local Labor Federal Member of Parliament, John West (with whom Dwyer had attempted to organise a union campaign against the Constitution bill in 1899). Dwyer demanded to know what West was going to do to help him. 'I am tired of waiting and of strong opinion that I am being unjustly injured, victimised and punished, and by a LABOR GOVERNMENT' (the Post Master General's Department was a Commonwealth responsibility, and the Fisher Labor Government had returned to office in 1910).³⁸ West told Dwyer that there was nothing he could do; the Commissioners could not restore his name to its old position on the list, without, as West unfortunately observed, 'doing an injustice.' West blandly concluded 'with the compliments of the season.'³⁹ Dwyer was furious, reminding West that he had been 'your proper supporter' in many a hard political battle. West had prospered while he was left to fight for a paltry temporary job. Dwyer bitterly concluded that 'it seems to me that it is every man for himself.'⁴⁰

'Driftwood': Daniel Dwyer's story

In 1904 Dwyer received a letter from his cousin Bill Laken, a tobacco worker who lived in Poplar, not far from Dwyer's old home in Plaistow. They had not corresponded for some years, nor seen one another since the Dwyer family left for Australia in 1888. Laken could not overlook the contrast between his settled London life, and the life chosen by Dwyer.

38. Dwyer to West, 28 October 1911, Dwyer papers ML MSS 2184/1.

39. West to Dwyer, 14 November 1911, *ibid.*

40. Dwyer to West, 16 November 1911, *ibid.*

Your life must be entirely different from mine, with all its changes and ups and downs, even if you are at times not flourishing it makes life more worth living, knowing that if you persevere you are bound to come out at the top...then there is the glorious uncertainty of things, which alone is worth something. I often think that my life is humdrum. Same old routine day after day. No doubt there has been certain times when you would have welcomed those old times again?⁴¹

Glorious uncertainty had not only disrupted Dwyer's political ambitions and his search for work; uncertainty, and a sense of isolation, seemed to run like a tremour through the life of his eldest son, Dan, as he made plain in a poem he sent to his father.

Driftwood

Men say I drift with any way-ward tide
 They liken me to driftwood on the sea
 And murmur passing with averted face
 They see no use in floating planks like me
 But planks will float where staunchest ships go down
 I drifted by a shipwrecked life at sea
 Clinging to me, it safely reached the shore
 God sees some use in floating planks like me.⁴²

Dan was the child most like his father, although perhaps the similarities were not apparent to either of them. There is little record of Elizabeth,

41. Laken to Dwyer, 4 February 1904, Dwyer papers family correspondence ML MSS 290.

42. Daniel Dwyer to John Dwyer from Harden, c1910, *ibid.*

Henry or Timm following in his father's footsteps. Daniel followed John into several projects - singing at the Theosophical Society function for Katherine Tingley in 1897, joining him in the Nerriga gold mining venture in 1899, briefly running the lodging house at 345^{1/2} Sussex Street in 1903. Dan's work amongst the poor as an evangelist also reflected a sense of social justice that his father might have encouraged. Yet the relationship between John and Dan seems to have been the most difficult within the family. The Nerriga venture collapsed when one of the partners, Michael Gavan, tried to turn the others against Dwyer, who typically remained in Sydney while they laboured at the digs near Braidwood. John Andrews, who had travelled to Braidwood, tried to defend Dwyer's interests, awkwardly finding that Dan sided with Gavan and against his father.⁴³ The relationship between father and son apparently recovered, but as Dan's Grenfell letter indicated, the underlying tensions endured. Where John had the physical resources to cope with the impoverished conditions of working class Sydney in the 1890s, Dan seemed to be both physically and mentally sensitive to its privations. Dan was only eight when he arrived in Sydney after the family's extraordinary journey across half the globe. It was understandable that Dan might have felt adrift in the world, given that the family had spent so many of the following years shifting about Sydney, never able to scrape together more than a basic income. Dan brooded on his role in life, the conditions and expectations placed on the individual by society, and the fate of his wilful and dissatisfied father.

Dan cannot have been too morbidly withdrawn, for he would never have survived the rigours of the training regime provided by the Central Methodist Mission for its future evangelists. Dan enrolled in the

43. Papers related to a mining lease at Nerriga, 1899, Dwyer papers ML MSS 290.

Mission's Evangelists Training Home in Sydney in 1905. One of the Mission's principal ministers, the Reverend P.J. Stephen, said the trainees wanted were men of 'personality, force of character, grit, with a thorough consecration of life to Jesus Christ.' The Mission hoped that trainees might contribute something towards their maintenance, possibly the precondition Dan felt most unable to satisfy. The Home was 'no place for the weak': evangelists 'come here with an earnest purpose to work; they live in an atmosphere of work; and when they lose the relish for work they have to go home.'⁴⁴ The Home had places for a dozen trainees, although there were usually only half that number enrolled.⁴⁵

The year-long training regime consisted of instruction in English History, English and Arithmetic, Theology and Practical Evangelism. The day began with devotional reading at 6 am, a morning of study and afternoon of work in the 'slums' and hospitals, and finally an evening of evangelism in the streets and Mission halls, finishing at 10 pm.⁴⁶ Dan escaped this exhausting routine in 1908, the work he told his father he had not the strength to resume. In Hargraves (a small town north of Hill End in central west New South Wales) in September 1908 Dan gave an evening lecture, 'Light and Shadows', or 'three years in the slums of Sydney, being a little of my experience whilst in the Central Methodist

44. Reverend PJ Stephen, 'Among the Evangelists', in *Evangelism and Social Regeneration*, 24th anniversary souvenir booklet, Sydney Central Methodist Mission, 1908 p.9. ML.

45. Sydney Central Methodist Mission Annual report for 1907, *ibid.*, p.41. Between 1889, when the Training Home opened, and 1904, about sixty young men were trained as evangelists. *Our Coming of Age*, Sydney Central Methodist Mission 1904 souvenir booklet, p.7. For the Mission's activities see also Richard Broome, *Treasure in Earthen Vessels, Protestant Christianity in New South Wales, 1900-1914*, University of Queensland Press, 1980, pp.42-43.

46. Reverend P.J. Stephen, 'Among the Evangelists'; *Our Coming of Age*.

Mission.⁴⁷ Dan may have found his city experience a little too familiar: much of the work in Sydney's slums would have been with the same people who inhabited his father's lodging houses. The Mission maintained its own shelter for poor and unemployed working men in Woolloomooloo.⁴⁸

As a circuit missionary, Dan was poised on the fringe of the communities he served. Driftwood had its uses, but it was a lonely social utility, and it was probably just as physically demanding as the city work he had abandoned.⁴⁹ Dan told his father that one needed a lot of mental capacity to cope with the preacher's lot; the preacher is 'the butt of general criticism...one is forced to wonder if people think the "poor parson" is something more than human'. A sense of alienation is reflected in Dan's descriptions of Harden and the surrounding country of southern New South Wales. The reverie of a Grenfell hilltop was not the life of a country town in 1910. From Harden Dan wrote that he was 'over-awed' by the Australian bush - its high temperatures, grasshopper plagues, bush fires; 'it takes a person with a bit of grit to be a "sunny optimist" through it all.' Harden was a railway town, surrounded by some of the best pastoral and wheat country in New South Wales. There was a busy trade in poisoning the rabbits that competed with the grass reserved for the pastoralists' sheep. The 'stench' of the rotting carcasses stacked in the rabbitier's carts hung in the town air, and was 'simply unbearable'. Harden was a society dominated by its pragmatic economics. The 'wretched

47. Daniel Dwyer to John Dwyer, 30 September 1908, family correspondence ML MSS 290.

48. *Evangelism and Social Regeneration*, p.6.

49. As Broome observes of the lonely life of the circuit missionary, 'like all bush people, the cleric had to confront an unpitying environment and ultimately himself...the bulk of the bush clergy travelled up to 6,000 miles a year on horseback, pushbike or buggy.' Broome, *Treasure in Earthern Vessels*, pp.46-48.

boarding house keepers are veritable shylocks, they grab and fleece, right and left, everything is awfully expensive.⁵⁰

Dan had exchanged one kind of boarding house life for another, although his experience did not seem to increase his sympathy for other travellers. Dan was struck by the human 'flotsam and jetsam' that passed through the town: men carrying the swag, going nowhere in particular, who had opted out of the country economy, and as such 'they are as bad as the rabbits...if you ask some to cut a little wood they simply curse you...some absolutely refuse to work for the farmers at harvesting time.' Dan enjoyed reporting to his father that when introduced to a local man, he was asked if he knew 'Dwyer the socialist'. The Harden man gave a hostile report of this socialist's Domain harangues, which Dan found 'deadly funny'. When Dan revealed the family connection the embarrassed local started to 'enumerate' John's virtues. 'So you are well known even in the heart of the Australian bush. Don't you feel flattered?'⁵¹

Dan confessed that his views on the subjects of 'capital and labour' were 'immature'.⁵² Like his church, Dan was disturbed by the atheism of many socialists.⁵³ Without directly referring to his father's views, Dan observed that 'socialists need to learn that the true brotherhood of man is impossible [without] the true fatherhood of God.'⁵⁴ Politically, he was most inspired to speak out on the temperance issue. 'Although I am a

50. Daniel Dwyer to John Dwyer from Harden, c1910, Dwyer papers family correspondence ML MSS 290.

51. *ibid.*

52. Daniel Dwyer to John Dwyer from Wingham, c1910, *ibid.*

53. In 1905 *The Methodist* thought Labor's 'strongest spirits' were 'anti-Christian'. J.D. Bollen, *Protestantism and Social Reform in New South Wales, 1890-1910*, Melbourne University Press 1972 p.162.

54. Daniel Dwyer to John Dwyer from Harden, c1910, *ibid.*

labour man in principle still I did not like their attitude on the No Licence question.' Dan told John that when he had questioned George Burgess, the Labor MLA for Burrangong (which took in Grenfell), for his position, Burgess failed to 'come clean.'⁵⁵

The 1910 NSW elections represented the high water mark of the attempts by temperance campaigners to suppress the liquor industry. The temperance cause had crystallised around the issue of 'No Licence' - the prohibition of NSW liquor licences, thus forcing the closure of local pubs. The elections were accompanied by a plebiscite on Local Option, with voters able to express their preference for continuance, reduction or no licence in their constituencies. The Protestant churches took a leading role in the campaign. Dan worked for the temperance cause on the NSW North Coast during the elections. Dan helped organise public meetings addressed by Albert Bruntnell, a leading Methodist temperance campaigner, former IOGT official and Liberal member of the NSW Parliament.⁵⁶

Religion and temperance weighed more heavily with Dan than a vague class identity as 'a labour man', although his cause was frustrated in 1910. Despite appeals that temperance would help redress the economic problems of the working class, the Local Option vote fractured along a class and sectarian divide: Labor believed Wade's Liberals (Carruthers had retired before the election) supported the plebiscite in order to secure Protestant support. Some Laborites also noted that while Local Option would force the worker's pubs to close, the wealthy and the middle class would be left free to stock the bar in their homes. Labor won office for the

55. Daniel Dwyer to John Dwyer from Grenfell, c1910, *ibid.*

56. J.D. Bollen, 'Albert Bruntnell', *ADB Vol.7* Melbourne University Press 1979 p.465.

first time in New South Wales, and a majority of electorates voted for continuance: No Licence failed in every seat.⁵⁷

Elizabeth was also a committed temperance activist. In 1906 she travelled to Hobart with a young woman's temperance group. Elizabeth told her father that she attended five lodging meetings and had visited a local fair, and enjoyed the amusements and the food, although 'I am very sorry to say there were 3 tent-hotels there too.'⁵⁸ In 1914 Elizabeth married Hubert Belhatchet, and their wedding was described as a 'Good Templar Wedding' in a clipping proudly kept by John from the *Australian Temperance World*, the IOGT's journal. 'Two well known metropolitan Good Templar workers', Brother Belhatchet and Sister Dwyer, 'both old members of the Prince Edward of Wales Lodge', were married at the Parramatta Congregational Church on 2 February.⁵⁹

Henry was already making his own way in the world. In 1909 John recorded that eighteen year old 'Ted' started work as a telegraph messenger at the GPO in Sydney, and in 1910 successfully completed the Post Master General's Departments Junior Fitter's exam.⁶⁰ Timm was still at school and many of Daniel's letters urged his father to let Timm visit him, and gain some relief from inner-city life. Daniel's instinct was acute: in October 1910 Timm spent several weeks with Dan at Nundle, a little to the south of Tamworth. Timm told his father 'I am so healthy that I have generally 4 meals a day'. Dan was apparently staying at a local farm,

57. Daniel Dwyer to John Dwyer from Wingham, c1910, ML MSS 290 Box 2 (3); Bollen, *Protestantism and Social Reform in New South Wales*, pp.159-160, 170-172;

58. Elizabeth Dwyer to John Dwyer, 31 January 1906, Dwyer papers family correspondence ML MSS 290.

59. 'Family history of John Dwyer', c1912 Dwyer papers MSS 290.

60. 'Note re birthdays'; clipping from the Sun 14 August 1910 Dwyer papers ML MSS 290.

'Happy Valley', and Timm was initiated into the rituals of bush life. He learnt to ride Dan's horse, Barney; he watched a lame cow shot and skinned, and helped drag its carcass to the pit. He visited the White Horse Gold Mine and found a small nugget. Every evening he had 'a nice run' helping to bring the cows into the inner paddock. He was nearly frightened out of his wits, he said, by two 'wallaroos' that bounded up from behind and passed him.⁶¹ There are cards and letters from Elizabeth, Timm and Henry recording excursions outside Sydney, but none from Dan before he took up his mission posts in 1908. Childhood travels outside the city may have been experiences he missed; he certainly seemed determined that Timm would not.

Daniel's restless progress continued after his stint in Harden. He transferred in 1912 to Queensland, working as a Home Missionary near Ipswich, and spent most of 1913 in South Australia.⁶² In November Dan consulted an Adelaide medical specialist, Arthur Gault, and as a result of the consultation Gault immediately wrote to John.⁶³ Dan had 'well marked' tuberculosis, covering 'a good area' of his left lung: 'This requires immediate attention.' Gault strongly advised sanatorium treatment. Essentially a regime of rest in a clean, well-ventilated nursing home, sanatoria represented the most advanced treatment then available for tuberculosis sufferers, and a treatment upon which Gault was an acknowledged authority.⁶⁴ Gault added, 'I understand that he has not

61. Timm Dwyer to John Dwyer, October 1910, Dwyer papers family correspondence ML MSS 290.

62. 'Family history of John Dwyer', c1912 Dwyer papers ML MSS 290.

63. Gault to Dwyer, 4 November 1913, Dwyer papers family correspondence ML MSS 290.

64. F.B. Smith, *The Retreat of Tuberculosis, 1850-1950*, Croom Helm London 1988, p.97; Arthur Gault, 'the present position of the sanatorium treatment in Australasia', in *Transactions of the Australasian Medical Congress*, Adelaide September 1905, South Australian Government Printer 1905 p.33. ML

been told on account of his nervousness.' Gault also noted a report from the colleague who had referred Dan, a Dr. Gibson, who said that Dan also suffered from epilepsy. Gault could not confirm this, but was certain of the tuberculosis; 'Act promptly it is his only chance.'

In 1909 one of Australia's chief public health officials described the tuberculosis bacilli as 'the greatest enemy with which man has had to struggle for his life. It has slain more human beings than have fallen by the hand of man in all the wars of history.'⁶⁵ The rate of death from tuberculosis had been steadily falling since the middle of the nineteenth century, although it still accounted for approximately one-fifth of all deaths in Australia in the early twentieth century.⁶⁶ Tuberculosis struck hardest amongst men and women aged 20 to 45, particularly amongst 'mercantile' and industrial workers, according to a 1916 Commonwealth Government report.⁶⁷ The slow onset of tuberculosis was 'frequently overlooked', dismissed as little more than an irritating cough or chill.⁶⁸ McIntyre Sinclair, the chief medical superintendent of a NSW sanatorium, told a 1905 Australasian medical congress that new research revealed that the tuberculosis bacilli was found in every living human being by the age of 40. 'No-one reaches old age without having a focus of

65. J.S.C. Elkington, 'Tuberculosis and Australia', *Lone Hand*, 1 May 1909 p.90.

66. John Powles, 'Keeping the Doctor Away', *Making a Life, A People's History of Australia since 1788*, McPhee Gribble/Penguin Books, 1988 Melbourne p.75.

67. *Commonwealth Department of Trade and Customs, Report on Tuberculosis*, 1916, p.15. ML; Smith notes that the wealthy could also develop pulmonary tuberculosis, although he conceded that 'the poor were more exposed' to 'infection through droplets or dust', the 'main path' to the development of pulmonary tuberculosis. F.B. Smith, *The Retreat of Tuberculosis, 1850-1950*, p.175

68. F.S.V. Zlotowski, 'Tuberculosis, its History, Causation and the means to be employed to prevent its spread', in *Sanitary Inspectors Association of New South Wales, Official Report of Lectures and Proceedings of the first annual conference, 1912*, p.71. ML

tuberculosis somewhere', although a majority of men and women 'possess sufficient powers of resistance to cope sufficiently with the bacillus.'⁶⁹

Dan's letters indicate that his health had always been poor, and that in moving to the bush he was trying to overcome 'a life of sickness', as he told his father in the Grenfell letter. Illness pursued Dan: in 1908 he had a nasty accident at Hill End, when he fainted and fell into an open fire, and had to be dragged out.⁷⁰ Annie rushed to see him, travelling by train to Bathurst followed by a thirteen hour coach ride over the rough road to Hill End. Annie told John that Dan had 'a fit', but epilepsy may not have been diagnosed, or Annie chose to doubt it. 'I do not think the Dr understands him as well as I do.' Dan made light of the episode, telling his father that he did not have much faith in the Doctor's opinion; he felt like the 'redoubtable cat with nine lives'.⁷¹

Dan's condition rapidly deteriorated in early 1914. In February Dan was in Milthorpe in central west New South Wales, staying at a boarding house, probably having tried to carry on as circuit missionary. The boarding house manager wrote to Annie on the 18th; Dan was too ill to write, and certainly too ill to travel to the Waterfall tuberculosis sanatorium south of Sydney, established by the NSW Government in 1909, and where a place had been found for him.⁷² The manager urged Annie to come as

69. M. McIntyre Sinclair, 'The prognosis of pulmonary tuberculosis', in *Transactions of the Australasian Medical Congress*, Adelaide September 1905, South Australian Government Printer 1905, p.38.

70. Telegram to John Dwyer, 21 September 1908; Daniel Dwyer to John Dwyer, 30 September 1908, Dwyer papers family correspondence ML MSS 290.

71. *ibid*; Annie Dwyer to John Dwyer, September 1908, *ibid*.

72. Robin Walker, 'The Struggle Against Pulmonary Tuberculosis in Australia, 1788-1950', *Historical Studies*, Vol.20 1983, p.449.

soon as possible. 'We have him in ice packs, all his food has to be iced and he is not allowed anything solid or in the least warm.' The need to bring down a feverish temperature indicated that Dan's condition was well advanced. Soon after another note warned that Dan was weak after an attack of bleeding from the lungs.⁷³ Annie arrived on 21 February. Over the next week she wrote regularly to John, each day hoping that Dan would be well enough to survive the trip to Waterfall. Dan's left lung was 'gone', and the right was 'very bad', although the haemorrhaging slowed by 25 February. Annie planned to travel with him, 'as I can keep him quieter than the others.' Dan became upset, she said, at 'the least excitement.' The doctor had told her that Dan 'is at a very catching stage', and had ordered people not to enter his room, although Annie must have done so.⁷⁴

Annie held the family together, rushing to Dan's side to tend him. She felt the strain: she did not like being in a stranger's house, although they were very kind. Annie hoped to be home soon, she told John, 'and get a good rest.' The other children were rarely far from Annie's thoughts. 'Tell Ted to be good and Timm not to starve himself.'⁷⁵ When Annie wrote to John from Hill End, she told him not to allow the boys to play outside, indicating her concern about the local Woolloomooloo neighbourhood and the boys' welfare. 'I am wondering all the time how Timm is he will not complain.' Annie asked John to write to Lizzie and

73. 'Amy B' to Annie Dwyer, 18 February, 1914, & two other undated notes, *ibid.* The pulmonary tuberculosis or phthisis bacilli generate 'complicating organisms', infections that produce the 'steep hectic fever, chills, night sweats, and rapid wasting characteristic of the later and terminal stages of pulmonary phthisis.' M. McIntyre Sinclair, 'The prognosis of pulmonary tuberculosis', p.42.

74. Annie Dwyer to John Dwyer, 21, 25, 26 & 27 February 1914, Dwyer papers family correspondence ML MSS 290.

75. *ibid.*

tell her that Dan was better; she tells John that Lizzie's address is on the kitchen shelf - 'She is at Mrs. Forysths.' Annie was alert to John's priorities: 'I would like you to see this place you would be digging for gold everywhere.'⁷⁶ From Milthorpe Annie reminded John to feed the family pets, Boxer and Jacko; that John was disconnected from daily family life is also implied when she asks John to give Timm a couple of shillings, 'till I get back.'⁷⁷ Annie may have had her own money, but it is more likely that she would repay John from the housekeeping he allocated her, reflecting the tradition-bound attitudes they had inherited, segregating the social space of men and women, and entrenched a sense of isolation between them. For their part, the children probably found it easier to reciprocate their mother's easy affection and attention, confirming John as a distant paternal figure - a tension evident in Dan's Grenfell letter.⁷⁸ Something of the children's more relaxed relationship with their mother is reflected in a 1910 cartoon of Annie by Timm (*see appendix 8*). The cartoon is a mock advertisement for a bogus weight reduction formula. Annie is shown reading 'How to be happy though married.'⁷⁹

76. Annie Dwyer to John Dwyer, September 1908, *ibid*.

77. Annie Dwyer to John Dwyer, 25 February 1914, *ibid*.

78. Ellen Ross observes that 'hard work was...a highly emotionally charged "currency" in intimate relationships. "Work" defined the obligation of husbands to wives: a man who "worked for" a woman and her children, regularly supplying her with most of his wages, was functioning as her husband.' This obligation was expressed to the wife as power, in the ritual of 'the housekeeping money, the rather inelastic 'wage' she received each Friday and Saturday from her husband'. Ross also notes the sense of gratitude adult children expressed for the maternal care that their mothers had provided, particularly amongst male children - a strong echo of Dan's appreciation of Annie, that 'brave little woman.' Ellen Ross, 'Labour and Love: Rediscovering London's Working Class Mothers, 1870-1918', pp.78-79, 84-87.

79. Dwyer papers, ML MSS 290.

John tried in his familiar way to help Dan deal with his illness: In January 1914 Dan followed his father's advice and wrote to Labor MLA Fred Flowers, presumably seeking access to a sanatorium. 'I could only ask him for a favourable consideration of my case.' John had also written to Flowers; both father and son were gripped by a sense of urgency, but Dan tried to play it down. 'I am feeling fairly well but need a couple of months skilled treatment at once, if possible.'⁸⁰ Flowers had a long interest in public health policy, and undoubtedly had a wide range of contacts in the medical profession. Three months after Dan's letter to John, Flowers became the first NSW Minister for Health.⁸¹ Flowers may have helped: a note to John from a Mr. Lomas at the Health Department records that Lomas had agreed to facilitate Dan's admission to the Waterfall sanatorium.⁸² Dan was finally admitted on 6 March 1914.⁸³

Two days later Dan wrote to his father from his bed in ward six, reporting the doctor's advice that he needed six months' total rest. Dan's mind could not rest for worry over money, although the sanatorium's services were provided free of charge. 'Well, this spells, finance, I've had plenty of that lately in travelling fees, etc. Is it not possible to gain me a little stamp money under the "invalidity section" of the Pensions Act?' Other patients had received such a benefit; Dan would not hesitate to accept the same, if his father could help arrange it. Dan added that he had been put back on a light diet, owing to renewed bleeding.⁸⁴ Dan was appreciative of the

80. Daniel Dwyer to John Dwyer, 14 January 1914, *ibid.*

81. Bede Nairn, 'Fred Flowers', *ADB Vol.8 Melbourne University Press 1981 p.528.*

82. John Dwyer to Lomas, 19 February 1914, Dwyer papers family correspondence ML MSS 290.

83. Official notice from the Waterfall Sanatorium, Hospital and Asylum for the Infirm, New South Wales, to John Dwyer, 6 March 1914, *ibid.*

84. Daniel Dwyer to John Dwyer, *ibid.*

sanatorium's care. On 25 June the *Daily Telegraph* printed a letter Dan had written to promote community awareness of the 'beautifully situated' Waterfall sanatorium, sheltering over 300 patients. 'From the poor man's standpoint this sanatorium offers the best and most modern treatment'. Patients could only be grateful for the 'courteous and instant' treatment provided by the medical and nursing staff, and the 'abundant' fresh food provided. The staff gave their 'skill and sympathy' to their work, as every day patients described the 'most distressing symptoms' of this 'scourge of the age.'⁸⁵

By the time the letter was published Dan was dead. His father cut it out from the newspaper eight days after his son died in the Waterfall sanatorium on 18 June. Dan was 31 years old.⁸⁶ Dan's treatment, however kind and attentive, could not overcome the virulence of a disease for which there was no effective cure: advanced cases were invariably fatal. The tuberculosis bacillus was only identified in 1882, but doubt about the discovery, and how the disease spread, endured for many years afterwards.⁸⁷ Tuberculosis was not a notifiable disease in metropolitan Sydney until 1904, and in other parts of New South Wales until 1915.⁸⁸ The first free anti-tuberculosis dispensary to serve Sydney's poor was only established in 1912.⁸⁹ Gault conceded in 1905 that sanatorium treatment in

85. *Daily Telegraph*, 25 June 1914, clipping in ML MSS 290.

86. There is a discrepancy between the age of death given in the death certificate (31), and the year of birth given for Daniel in Dwyer's 'family history' - 1881. Death certificate for Daniel John Dwyer, 18 June 1916, NSW Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages; 'Family History of John Dwyer', p.15.

87. F.B. Smith, *The Retreat of Tuberculosis, 1850-1950*, pp.47-9, ch.3.

88. *Department of Trade and Customs Report*, pp. 3, 9.

89. The dispensary was staffed by honorary physicians and a trained nurse. In its first year of operations 839 patients were treated. *National Association for the Prevention and Cure of Consumption, first annual report, 1914*, ML.

Australia 'is still on trial', and the doubts seemed confirmed by the Commonwealth report of 1916, which challenged extravagant claims of cure in sanatoria. Returns from the Waterfall sanatorium for 1911 indicated that of 283 patients, 108 had died, and only 91 were cured or showed signs of significant improvement from a regime of disciplined rest (in the absence of an effective pharmaceutical or surgical remedy).⁹⁰

The Commonwealth report could not precisely estimate the number of tuberculosis cases around Australia in 1916: its only source of reliable data were the reports of deaths from the disease, and the allocation of pensions, which only went to 'persons permanently incapable of earning their livelihood'. Tuberculosis was overwhelmingly a disease of the poor, and the poor were only offered financial aid when they were at death's door.⁹¹ Daniel's condition was too advanced to survive the belated recognition of the authorities. Dan was one of 3,111 Australians who died of pulmonary tuberculosis in 1914, and one of 1,178 victims in New South Wales.⁹²

Scientific discovery and public health reform not only contested with medical ignorance, bureaucratic lethargy and social injustice: in 1916 there apparently lurked within the Australian community a belief that tuberculosis 'discharges a useful function in weeding out the unfit'.⁹³ To what degree was the fight against tuberculosis retarded by a belief that its selective culling fulfilled Darwin's survival of the fittest? It is difficult to

90. Gault, 'the present position of the sanatorium treatment in Australasia' p.33; *Department of Trade and Customs Report*, pp. 27-28.

91. *ibid.*, p.8; Robin Walker, "The Struggle Against Pulmonary Tuberculosis in Australia, 1788-1950", p.452.

92. *Department of Trade and Customs Report*, pp.4-5.

93. *ibid.*, p.19.

measure an implicit state of mind, a mentality of dogged individualism that shrugged, in token sympathy and with a trace of self-satisfaction, as some fell by the wayside. A mentality real enough for the 1916 Committee to confront as 'idle and mischievous': tuberculosis 'swept away', 'great numbers of the most promising young folk.'⁹⁴ Darwinian individualism was a pervasive instinct in the social and economic life of Australia, and was not confined to grim rationalisations about tuberculosis. Daniel's self-esteem had already been infected by his failure to adapt and prosper. Alienated by the furious getting and spending around him, Dan saw himself as driftwood, a poor plank of little economic value, of whom he hoped his God had found some use.

The only record of Daniel's death in his fathers papers is the newspaper clipping, a slight and graceful testament to Dan's brave suffering. Unusually, there is no record of any correspondence from John to Daniel. The surviving letters from Dan to his father come in fitful bursts - 1908, 1910, 1914, a reflection of the gulf between father and son. Daniel once told his father, 'please don't think I'm mad because I'm writing you a letter'. Dan doesn't explain this cryptic plea, although he notes that 'there does not seem to be the same bond of kinship existing between us, that I observe in other fathers, and their sons. Still I suppose it's there somewhere, and only needs developing.'⁹⁵ We will never know if John responded to his son's tentative invitations to communicate. John's papers for 1914 record only his business. Even the diary John briefly kept is absorbed with the routine of his political agitation - save for a small note a month before Daniel's death. John records his wonder at a

94. *ibid.*

95. Daniel Dwyer to John Dwyer from Wingham, c1910, Dwyer papers family correspondence ML MSS 290.

hydroplane flying over Sydney, as he watched it 'drop straight down also fly sideways and upside down.'⁹⁶

The brilliant turns of the hydroplane provided a brief glimpse of a carefree life, liberated from the conditions John had known since he was a boy in Whitechapel. Alone of his brothers and sisters, John had survived infancy. Daniel succumbed to the deadly infection that stalked working class London and Sydney. Did John and Annie feel some responsibility for the conditions Daniel and the other children endured? It must be acknowledged that the sanitary inspectors' reports that Dwyer preserved describe conditions in which tuberculosis flourished.⁹⁷ It is impossible to precisely identify when Daniel was infected with the tuberculosis bacillus. Blaming the Dwyer's for the conditions they lived and worked in is like vilifying them for being born into the working class. The very conditions that John and Annie faced day to day - the quality of the buildings they leased, the struggle to make ends meet - guaranteed that apparently simple standards of cleanliness and hygiene were almost impossible to meet. A moral imperative may have demanded that owners adequately maintain properties leased to working class tenants, but there was little financial incentive.

⁹⁶. Diary, 10 May 1914, Dwyer papers ML MSS 290.

⁹⁷. In 1912 Dr. W.G. Armstrong, a medical officer with the Metropolitan Board of Health, urged Sydney sanitary inspectors to a war against slum landlords and badly run boarding houses. Good ventilation, plenty of light and dry walls were 'essential to the health of the occupants.' Dr. W.G. Armstrong, 'Powers and Duties of Sanitary Inspectors', in *Sanitary Inspectors Association of New South Wales, Official Report of Lectures and Proceedings of the first annual conference, 1912*, p.71. pp.34-5. ML

On active service

The Right to Work Movement represented a final flourish of Dwyer's inner-Sydney activism. There is virtually no record of political agitation, or writing of any kind, by Dwyer after mid 1914. In January 1916 he wrote to the Commonwealth Department of External Affairs, belatedly trying to breath life into another grand scheme - a co-operative settlement in the Northern Territory, the 'New North', where 'MONEY HOMES FAME AND FORTUNE', awaited the brave pioneer. A flurry of correspondence, and the production of dodgers and prospectus, resulted in little more than printer's bills.⁹⁸ Dwyer was still living on the wind, but his heart was not in it. The 1916 letter was an isolated and final gasp of a scheme Dwyer had not actively pursued since 1912-13.

Dan's death must have been a cruel reminder of the fixed, impoverished circumstances his family had endured since settling in Sydney in 1893. Dwyer was 60 years old in 1916; his schemes had failed to transform his life, or the lives around him. The outbreak of World War One in August 1914 also militated against continued agitation. Labor spectacularly split over the issue of conscription for overseas military service in September 1916. NSW Premier William Holman and Prime Minister Billy Hughes took many Labor parliamentarians, including Dwyer's old colleague and local MP, James Morrish MLA, into the Nationalist camp. Fred Flowers MLA and Hector Lamond, the manager of the *Sydney Worker*, also split from Labor. No record of Dwyer's attitude to the conscription crisis survives. Lamond and Holman, his old sparring partners, were finally

98. Dwyer to Commonwealth Department of External Affairs, 21 January 1916, in 'Northern Territory & North West Settlements Corporation Limited', Dwyer papers ML MSS 2184/12; Flier for 'The New North', c1912, in 'documents re Northern Territory and N.W. Settlement Corporation Ltd., including receipts and unissued share certificates, 1912-1913', Dwyer papers ML MSS 290 box 2.

displaced from their positions of influence within the labour movement, although Dwyer might have regretted the collapse of the Labor Government. Holman, still a Labor Premier in July 1916, promised to introduce a Right to Work bill in the new session of Parliament; Holman's subsequent Nationalist administration failed to legislate.⁹⁹

On 10 July 1916 Dwyer deposited the record of a political life in Australia that stretched back twenty-six years with the State Library of New South Wales. On 14 August 1917 he made another deposit, this time of mainly personal papers.¹⁰⁰ By 1921 Dwyer were living with Timm Stephen and Timm's wife Helen at 65 Sixth Avenue Lidcombe (later Berala), in Sydney's western suburbs.¹⁰¹ Dwyer was eligible for a pension under the Commonwealth Invalid and Old Age Pensions Act when he turned 65 in 1921, and that probably marked his retirement as a boarding house manager. Presumably, Annie was with him, although there is no record of them together after Forbes Street.

John Dwyer died in the State Hospital at Liverpool, south-west of Sydney, on 1 February 1934, aged 77.¹⁰² The cause of death was recorded as 'carcinoma of the glands of neck', the secondary spread of a primary malignancy, presumably a melanoma, on his lower lip. Did Dwyer still believe, as he lay dying, that his death resulted from too much life? As we live, he wrote in 1897, the 'life waves' rush with increasing intensity

99. *NSW PD*, Vol.64 1916 p.3.

100. State Library of NSW to the author, 11 November 1998. The 1916 deposit was marked as ML MSS 2184; the 1917 deposit ML MSS 290. See bibliography for details.

101. George Reeve's 1921 article on Arthur Desmond refers to Dwyer living at Lidcombe. The address is also recorded on John and Timm Stephen's death certificates. *Ross's Monthly*, 6 August 1921.

102. Death certificate for John Dwyer, 1 February 1934, NSW Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

through the body, and 'a time comes when we are not able any longer to endure their power.' Dwyer had hoped that his astral light would endure beyond the death of his exhausted body.¹⁰³ He was buried in the Methodist section of Rookwood Cemetery, after a Methodist service. Perhaps, like his friend Andrews, he had asked for the comfort of tradition; perhaps his mourning family reclaimed him for the Christianity he had rejected, but which sustained them in their grief. Only the cemetery records indicate where Dwyer rests. No details of Dwyer's life, or his presence, are recorded on the grave.

There was little public acknowledgment of his death. A funeral notice was placed in the *Labor Daily*, requesting that 'officers and members of the South, Central and North Lidcombe branches of the ALP Fair Rents Association are requested to attend the funeral of the late JOHN DWYER.'¹⁰⁴ Labor Premier Jack Lang - Douglas's young offsider at the Castlereagh Street Barracks in the 1890s, and, at Lidcombe, Dwyer's local Member of Parliament - had legislated in 1926 to make the Fair Rents Act provide tenants with greater security of tenure. The Bavin Government repealed the amendments after Labor lost office in 1927. Control of rents and tenants rights re-emerged as a significant issue during the depression. The re-elected Lang Government introduced rent controls in 1930, although they were phased out again in 1933, after Lang lost office.¹⁰⁵ Jack

103. John Dwyer, 'The Book of Notes and Observations on the Occult Subjects', 1897, Dwyer Papers, ML MSS 2184/3, item 1, pp.40-1.

104. *Labor Daily*, 2 February 1934.

105. Helen Nelson, 'Legislative Record, 1925-1927', in Heather Radi and Peter Spearitt, *Jack Lang*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney 1977, pp.82-83; Paul Mortimer, *Unfinished Business: the story of the Tenants Union of New South Wales, 1976-1996*, Tenants Union of New South Wales Sydney 1996, pp.7-8; Terry Kass, 'Cheaper than Rent: Aspects of the Growth of Owner-Occupation in Sydney 1911-66', in Max Kelly (ed.), *Sydney, City of Suburbs*, University of NSW Press Sydney 1987, pp.87-88.

Lang recalled Dwyer as 'a leading fair rents advocate' in his memoirs, undoubtedly referring to Dwyer's participation, as a local activist, in the see-sawing campaign for tenant's rights.¹⁰⁶ Dwyer had arrived in New South Wales to be greeted by a severe economic crisis, and lived just long enough to survive the worst years of another. He had been on active service through both of them.

Unhappily, John had to endure the death of one of his own children. Annie faced another family tragedy. Only four years after John's death, Timm Stephen was killed in a workplace accident in the Enfield railway marshalling yards in Sydney's west. Timm had been a shunter with the NSW government railways, probably since moving to nearby Lidcombe around 1920. On 19 June 1938 Timm was found crushed between two goods trucks. He was 41 years old.¹⁰⁷

The shunter's job was one of the railways most dangerous, particularly in the Enfield yards - the largest in Australia, containing over one hundred miles of track. On a quiet Sunday, Timm worked, alone, a string of 56 trucks 'through down departure into the neck'.¹⁰⁸ Enfield yard ran downhill, and a system of gravitational shunting was used to sort the trucks and carriages into trains of various lengths.¹⁰⁹ The engine in front of the long line of trucks was out of sight around a curve. Timm was standing between two trucks uncoupling the gear when they slammed together, leaving him pinned. An inquest found that the coupling on one

106. Jack Lang, *I Remember*, Invincible Press, Sydney, 1956 p.10.

107. Death certificate for Timm Stephen Dwyer, 19 June 1938, NSW Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

108. *Railroad*, 28 June 1938, pp.1, 3.

109. Mark Hearn, *Working Lives, a history of the Australian Railways Union in New South Wales*, Hale & Iremonger Sydney 1990, p.124.

of the trucks was defective, and Timm had been forced to get between the trucks to force it loose. Timm's union, the Australian Railways Union, was angry that he had been left to perform such dangerous tasks unaided. 'Sunday work at Enfield is performed by the skeleton of a normally thin staff.'¹¹⁰

The ARU conducted a series of campaigns over workplace safety issues during the late 1930s. Timm's death sparked industrial action by the Enfield shunters to improve safety conditions in the yard.¹¹¹ Timm had been an active unionist. Jack Ferguson, the organiser sent by the union that Sunday to investigate the accident, had been signed up by Timm as an ARU member in 1926.¹¹² Ferguson observed that for the NSW Railways, Timm's death was 'merely an impersonal incident.' For Ferguson, Timm's work mates and above all, for Timm's family, Timm's death was not impersonal. In the ARU journal *Railroad* Ferguson recorded meeting Helen Dwyer, Timm's widow, and the two children, Robert and Barbara. 'If only those responsible could enter the homes of the bereaved!' Ferguson entered the Dwyer's 'small home' in Sixth Avenue. Despite her distress, Helen felt compelled to speak out, expressing her bitterness about those who put balanced budgets before a human life.¹¹³

Timm had often complained to her of the staff shortages at Enfield. 'I feel that I must say something if I possibly can, so that I may be able to do

110. *ibid.*, p.3.

111. *ibid.*, p.1; Hearn, *Working Lives*, chapter three.

112. *Railroad*, 28 June 1938, p.3; Mark Hearn, 'John Alexander Ferguson', *ADB* Vol.14 Melbourne University Press 1996 p.152.

113. *Railroad*, 28 June 1938, p.3.

some good, and save others from similar suffering.¹¹⁴ Ferguson described how Helen had been informed of Timm's death with 'callous indifference.' No-one from the NSW Railways Department officially contacted her. A young girl, hastening with the rough speed of bad news, came to the door of the family home that Sunday afternoon, and told her that 'her son' had been injured. Realising that the girl was referring to Timm, Helen immediately made for the Enfield yard. As Helen rushed to the railway station, she was told by one of Timm's fellow workers that he was in hospital after a minor accident. When she arrived at the hospital she was finally informed that Timm had been killed instantly in the accident, and had been dead some hours. A month later, the shunter's industrial campaign resulted in increased staff, gloves for shunters (who had been grappling with the often greasy couplings with their bare hands) and improved lighting in the yard.¹¹⁵ A few gains extracted at a terrible price: between January and July 1938 the ARU's 'red roll' recorded thirteen workplace deaths in the NSW Railways, four of whom were shunters.¹¹⁶

Timm was buried with his father at Rookwood.¹¹⁷ On 16 June 1954, Annie Matilda Dwyer died of a cerebral haemorrhage. Annie was 97 years old, and she had been in New South Wales 65 years.¹¹⁸ Annie was laid to rest with Daniel in the Methodist section of Woronora cemetery at Sutherland, in Sydney's south. Like John, Annie and Dan have no

114. *ibid.*, 21 June 1938, p.1.

115. *ibid.*, 26 July, 1938, p.1.

116. *ibid.*, 9 August 1938, p.1.

117. Timm's death certificate and the Rookwood Cemetery records indicate that they are buried in the same grave.

118. Death certificate for Annie Matilda Dwyer, 14 June 1954, NSW Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

headstone. A thick mulch of leaves covers a patch of earth between two other graves. Six years later Elizabeth died at the age of 82, and was cremated after a Methodist service at the Woronora crematorium.¹¹⁹ Henry was the last surviving child of those pioneers, John and Annie Dwyer.¹²⁰ The Dwyer's had fought for the material and spiritual improvement of the working class; they had fought for a place in Australian society, for recognition of their aspirations and their needs, and they had assumed various social roles that might earn reward and respect. John tried hardest of all; who was he? On his death certificate, and those of Annie and the children, John Dwyer was variously described as a journalist, law clerk, clerk. Dwyer had worked as a boarding house manager, foreman, ship's cook, sculleryman, market gardener, postal worker and as a pick and shovel man. He had given himself a range of titles to represent his aspirations - Managing Secretary of the Patent Block Fuel Company, Mittagong, the President of The Citizens' National Unemployment Movement, the Chief of the Active Service Brigade. John Dwyer was the Master Worker. He had enough experience of work, the daily grind to win hard cash, to claim that title.

119. Death certificate for Elizabeth Matilda Balhatchet, 29 January 1961, NSW Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

120. Born in 1891, Henry was presumably still living in 1969, the cut-off year under the rule applied by the NSW Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, prohibiting the issue of death certificates for thirty years prior to the year of application.