

W.A. Woods and the Clipper, 1903 - 1909

A Study in Radical Journalism

by

Marilyn Lee Lake (née Calvert)

Bachelor of Arts

submitted in partial fulfilment of the

requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Arts with Honours

University of Tasmania

Hobart

26/12/1968

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university, and to the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no copy or paraphrase of material previously published or written by another person, except when due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

*ML Lake*

## Contents

Abbreviations

Introduction

Chapter One                      The Editor and the Journal

Chapter Two                      Woods's Priorities of Reform

Chapter Three                    The Role of Woods and the Clipper  
   in the Labor Movement

Conclusion

References

Bibliography

## Abbreviations

A.M.A.            Amalgamated Miners Association

A.W.U.            Australian Workers Union

W.P.L.            Workers Political League

Historical Studies

Historical Studies : Australia and New Zealand

T.H.R.A.            Tasmanian Historical Research Association

## Introduction

This is a study of Walter Alan Woods and the Clipper, the radical journal which he edited from 1903 until 1909. It was the decade when the working classes of the island known as "Sleepy Hollow" awakened politically. I suggest that the Clipper was both a symptom and a cause of this awakening.

A knowledge of Woods's background (he was about forty when he took over the editorship) promotes a keener understanding of the attitudes and views expressed so forcefully in the Clipper. In the first chapter I have endeavoured to present a picture of the activities of his formative years on the mainland, as far as I was able from the limited information available. I have also tried in that chapter to give an overall summary of the type of paper the Clipper was, its history and the regard with which it was held.

Woods believed with most of his generation in the nineteenth century concept of Progress. He was part of the tradition which set the "common man" in capitals against the gentlefolk, the rich and the aristocratic; the tradition which hailed the Labor party as the unchallenged vehicle of Progress. The obstruction in the path of Progress in Tasmania was identified as the Legislative Council, supported by the system of Land Monopoly. The second chapter examines Woods's attitudes to these alleged pillars of stagnation and his proposals of reform. As the title of the chapter indicates, Woods set reforms in a hierarchy of importance. At the top was land nationalization which was often treated as a panacea. Near the bottom was New Protection, which Woods

impatiently dismissed as a useless palliative. Woods never lost sight of the ultimate goal of Socialism and the realization of a Cooperative Commonwealth.

Chapter three is a discussion and assessment of Woods's role in the early Labor movement in Tasmania. He contributed to its development most significantly as editor of the Clipper and as a fervent union organizer. I suggest that he contributed most constructively in the former capacity. The inflexible application of mainland experience to Tasmanian conditions marred the success of his latter mission.

Finally I hope that this thesis has not grossly offended the mores of what Peter Coleman in Australian Civilization was pleased to call the Counter Revolution in Australian historiography. I would like to think that it is possible to write radical and Labor history without an indecent identification with the subject matter; without that history being mere academic indulgence in the Australianist legend.

## Chapter One : The Editor and the Journal

### (i) The Editor

Walter Alan Woods arrived in Tasmania from New Zealand sometime in 1895. At that time and through the years that followed few people who met, or offered support to that energetic, albeit dapper looking gentleman with the distinctive bald head knew of the colourful experiences and notable achievement which filled his years prior to arriving in Tasmania. In his campaign speeches for the House of Assembly elections of 1906 and 1909, he referred to his long years of organizing Labor both in Tasmania and the mainland states, but besides such vague allusions his mainland career remained a mystery.

One of the most curious facts of his past was that Woods's name at birth was registered as Walter William Head, the name which he retained, it seems, until he left for Tasmania, at which time he assumed the name of Walter Alan Woods. In Labor and journalist circles on the mainland he was always known as William Head.

He was born in 1863 in Melbourne. As a young man he divided his time between shearing in the Riverina district of New South Wales, trade-union organizing and journalism. The supplement to the Australian Worker, 4 February 1942, gave a tribute to the significant role played by Woods (then Head) in the establishment of the Hummer and its successor the Worker. The Hummer first appeared at Wagga Wagga on 18 October, 1891. There is also reference to Woods's contemporary interests.

The publication of "The Hummer", the title of which was changed to "The Worker" on September 24, 1892, had its genesis in the fertile brain of the then Secretary of the Wagga Branch of the Amalgamated Shearers' Union of Australasia, Walter Head, but the venture of the Union into the journalistic field was not welcomed by a considerable section of the organisation. During his occupancy of the Editor's Chair, Walter Head continued to

act as Secretary of the A.S.U. and the G.L.U. . . . and founded "The Worker". He was also prominent in the Cooperative Movement and became one of the leaders of William Lane's New Australia movement.

His prominence in William Lane's New Australia movement consisted in the fact that he edited the associated journal New Australia which began appearing at Wagga Wagga on November 19, 1892. In November 1893 Woods gave up his editorship of the Worker, probably because of the pressure of the New Australia concern. He also undertook the position of Sydney secretary to New Australia. It was at this time that his deep friendship with Mary Jane Gilmore (née Cameron) was cemented. They stayed in the same boarding-house and worked together for New Australia, until she left in 1895 for the Cosme settlement.

Woods's days as a shearer are nostalgically recalled in some of his poems and short stories written over the pseudonym of "John Drayman". Such poems are "The Banjo at Belar" and "Wool". In one poem in particular called "I Don't go Shearing Now : A Wool-Shed Story", which was written for the Bulletin in September, 1895, his intimacy with the life of the shearer is expressed with affection.<sup>1</sup> The poem takes the form of an address to an uninitiated youth about to set off for the shearing sheds. The poet remembers the scene :

There's the flying hurry-scurry up  
and down the greasy floors,  
Of the pickers and the brookers; there's  
the banging of the doors,  
And the rattle of the wool-press, with  
its hard metallic din  
And the hoof-taps on the battens  
when the ewes and lambs rush in.  
Wool away! and Tar! and Sheep-ho!  
Sundry growls at clumsy boys  
Are excluded from the rule of  
No unnecessary noise.

At the end of such fond recollections the poet avows:

I've been there myself, my sonny,  
and I know precisely how  
All these little things affect you -  
though I don't go shearing now.

The poem is not only valuable as an insight into Woods's experience of the shearer's life; it also shows how much in line was Woods with the dominant stream of Australian writing. It is the writing of the 'nineties, which "had broken out of the cage of the middle-class attitude".<sup>2</sup>

Woods like Lawson was writing of the people, for the people, and from the people. They exalted the virtues of the Bush above what Joseph Murphy called "the spurious and blue-moulded civilization of the littoral".<sup>3</sup> The working-class theme was partly to account for the success of the Clipper newspaper some years later. Henry Lawson and Walter Woods beyond sharing a similar style of writing, enjoyed a close friendship. In one letter to Woods dated January, 1900 Lawson mentioned as mutual friends "6X8", a short-story and paragraph writer on the Bulletin and the Sydney Worker, and J.F. Archibald who was editor of the Bulletin. He referred with disapproval to the Boer War and the New Australia experiment. In connection with the latter, Lawson also made reference to the fact that the whereabouts of Head (Woods) were supposed to be unknown.<sup>4</sup> In a later telegram Lawson thanked Woods for the loan of some money, which he hoped would enable him to make a desired trip to England.<sup>5</sup> Both Woods and Lawson had paid extended visits to New Zealand. Rollo Arnold has recently shown that Lawson made three visits to New Zealand in the nineties,<sup>6</sup> one of which in 1905 must have coincided with Woods's sojourn before he arrived in Tasmania. It was their mutual friend Edward Tregear, Secretary of the New Zealand Labor Department,

who found work for Lawson in 1894 on the overland telegraph line between Tophouse and Nelson.<sup>7</sup>

The newspaper clippings which Woods collected reveal that he contributed most of his poetry and short stories to the Bulletin, his most productive years being 1896, 1901 and 1903.<sup>8</sup> He also wrote for the Critic and Sydney Worker, as well as editing the Tasmanian Democrat (1895 - 1896) and the Clipper (1903 - 1909). His contribution to Australian journalism was prodigious, and he well merited the compliment of the Bulletin jubilee number of 29/11/1930 :

One way to spoil a pressman is to make him a member of Parliament. But there are a few that even Parliament can't spoil. One of these rare birds is W.A. Woods ("John Drayman") who has been in and out of the Tasmanian Parliament since 1906, and in and out of the Speaker's Chair since 1914. There have been long silences when his political job claimed him; but for forty years nobody has done more than he to keep his little island well forward in the Bulletin.

In 1895 Woods left the mainland and sailed to Tasmania via New Zealand. While in New Zealand he was informed by the proprietors that the editorship of the radical paper, Tasmanian Democrat of Launceston, was vacant. Woods was editor of that paper for about twelve months.<sup>9</sup> He then spent his time in other colonies but within a short time settled in Hobart, where he became active in Labor politics.

During 1897 Woods together with James Paton, who was at that time editor of the Clipper, represented the Democratic League in some instructive debates. The attitudes of his debate speeches foreshadowed those to which he would give such forceful expression in six years time in the Clipper. For instance, speaking on the subject of Socialism, he equated the adoption of the Socialist system with Progress.<sup>10</sup> If a nation

repudiated Socialism, it faced inevitable ruin. His reference to New Zealand's Socialist legislation and consequent prosperity was to be reiterated and enlarged upon frequently in the future.

Woods's enterprises were diverse and abundant. His papers show that during 1902, he and James Paton acted as wholesale agents for various pharmaceutical products such as "Lock's Infallible Salve" and "Rheumalgia".<sup>11</sup> Paton had been editor of the Clipper from its beginning and in 1896 was the first Tasmanian Laborite to sign the pledge. In 1899 he had stood against R.C. Patterson and W.B. Propsting, giants in Tasmanian politics, in a Hobart by-election, gaining the encouraging total of 578 votes (as against 140 in 1897).<sup>12</sup>

Together Woods and Paton conducted the "Infallible Remedy Company". Woods's correspondence indicates an earnest desire that the products should be advertised in all Australian papers. Included among the products was an invention of their own. In May 1902 Woods wrote to the Commissioner of the Patent Office in Melbourne inquiring after a patent applied for the year before. The patent was for "An improved method of removing marine growth from ship hulls while afloat", by W.A. Woods and E.J. Paton.

Woods supplied town and country stores with the products and offered "a substantial reduction in price to (the) firm, commensurate with frequency of orders".<sup>13</sup> There is no indication of the profits of the business. That it was not a means to instant prosperity can be gathered from a letter in which Woods signs himself "Yours wearily", and remarks that there are "no returns to speak of yet". But by the end of the year Walter Alan Woods had already directed his energies to a new pursuit: the

managing-editorship of the Clipper.

Prior to the 1909 House of Assembly elections, in reply to some local slanders Woods elaborated upon the positions he had held and the role he had played in the early organisation of Labor politics in Tasmania.<sup>14</sup> His positions included foundation member of the Democratic Club in Hobart in 1894; and of the Political Labor League in Launceston 1895; official of the Democratic League in Hobart from 1897 until 1899; General Secretary of the Workers' Political League for the first three years of its existence, and member of the W.P.L. Executive from its inception in 1903 until 1910; and President of Denison No. 1 branch of the W.P.L. in 1906 and in 1909. In the industrial wing of the movement, he held the official position of Honorary organiser and first President of the Tasmanian branch of the Federated Saw Mill and Timber Yard Employees' Association of Australia from 1908 - 1909. He was also Honorary Organiser and became Treasurer of the Tasmanian branch of the Federated Factory Employees' Union 1908 - 1909. Woods's first ticket as a financial member of the A.W.U. dates from 1886.

As a record of energy, enthusiasm and patience the above is an outstanding record. Such was the man who managed and edited the Clipper newspaper for seven years, and at times he was to bear alone the entire responsibility for its continued production.

It becomes evident after reading through the pages of the Clipper that it was Woods's self-appointed mission to educate and organise the workers. In the first years of Woods' editorship this is made explicit :  
"When the Clipper sees the crowd led into ignorance or falsity by the

Fatographers; It doesn't blame the crowd; it blames itself for not being able to use words hot enough to blister the befogged brains and scorch the petrified souls of the populace into a recognition of the truth".<sup>15</sup>

Of contemporary Socialist writers, perhaps the one who exercised most influence on Woods's thought was Robert Blatchford. Woods owned a personal copy of his book Merrie England, whose pages of Socialist doctrine are covered with Woods's annotations. At the beginning of the first chapter is a quotation from Thucydides which reads : "To avow poverty with us is no disgrace; the true disgrace is in doing nothing to avoid it . . . . The great impediment to action is not discussion, but the want of that knowledge, which is gained by discussion preparatory to action".

There lies the rationale behind Walter Woods's Clipper.

#### (ii) The Journal

The Clipper had been established as a radical journal nearly ten years before Walter Woods became manager and Editor. James Paton, Woods's business and political associate, had launched it and the first issue had appeared in the streets of Hobart on 8 April, 1893. It appeared to be modelled on the Sydney Bulletin with its pages of radical comment enclosed within a bright red cover. Its policy was tinged with Christian socialism: James Paton believed that he was advancing the cause of "that greatest of agitators and reformers who began it nearly nineteen centuries ago".<sup>16</sup> In 1896 Paton was charged with £500 libel damages; in 1902 criticism of the Minister for Lands and Works, Mr. E. Mulcahy, cost him

a further £600 for libel. Faced with such financial debt James Paton was unable to continue as manager-editor of the Clipper, a position which he surrendered to Woods.

It is clear from his correspondence that Woods had an active interest in the Clipper before his signature appeared on the last page of the paper on 27 December 1902. As early as 1898 Woods received well wishes for the prospects of the Clipper from a friend in New Zealand.<sup>17</sup> On 8 July, 1899 Percy Milne (later an active contributor to the Clipper) wrote to "Woods of the Clipper Office", thanking him for an award in a recent literary competition. Said Milne, "I agree with you that our slumbersome literary talent requires rousing and doubtless these competitions will do much in that direction".<sup>18</sup>

The new editor brought to the Clipper zeal and optimism. He imbued the journal with a fresh spirit of earnestness. An editorial called "The New Regime" explained his purposes and proposed method :

The Clipper will ever be found fighting on the lines of broad justice to all and special privilege to none. At the same time it will avoid giving needless offence to those who may not yet have sensed the full glory of our ideals. If it cannot live and do good, necessary work on these lines it must accept the popular verdict and retire from the business. But its conductors have sufficient faith in the progressiveness of their fellow Islanders to believe that their editors will be earnestly and ably seconded.<sup>19</sup>

The religious overtones were significant. It was the belief in "the full glory of our ideals", rather than the progressiveness of his fellow-Islanders which sustained in Woods that fighting spirit when all effort seemed of no avail. When the cock crowed thrice, Woods was much tormented.

Woods, as editor, encouraged participation of correspondents in the radical weekly, but unlike the Bulletin in its later stages, the

Clipper did not let readers set their own standard.<sup>20</sup> Rather than supplying them with what the readers wanted, the Clipper's self-conscious function was to educate. Contributions most often published were articles on New Protection, the Land Tax or Unification. To one correspondent the editor replied "Bush fire memories are hardly of sufficient interest".<sup>21</sup> To another who wrote that not all members of the Legislative Council were bad, the response was "You make us tired", and added a short explanation of the connection between land monopoly and the Legislative Council concluding with the necessity for the abolition of the Upper House.<sup>22</sup> With regular literary competitions in describing the funniest thing ever seen, or composing limericks, or writing a quatrain celebrating Tasmania's centenary, the Clipper made a serious effort towards fostering and promoting literary talent in the island. The number of entries for such competitions was gratifying to the conductors of the Clipper, even if there was "nothing very brilliant" in the way of poetry.

The Clipper's stated ancient motto was

What e'er men say or do or think or dream  
Our motley paper seizes for its theme<sup>23</sup>

but the content of the paper was far more exclusive than the motto suggests. As already suggested, the Clipper's self-conscious role was that of an educator among the people. Its aim was to convert the people to a belief in the Labor cause. Its aim determined the content which was almost entirely socialist and Labor party propaganda in the form of articles, reviews and poems.

One of the most popular and effective forms of propaganda was the succinct quotation. The quotations were taken from varied sources but

all pointed the same moral. The sources were as varied as Zola, Pope Leo XIII, Oscar Wilde, Marx, Henry George, Eugene Debs and Upton Sinclair. Zola moralised that whoever stifted Socialiam ("the new gospel") was a criminal, whilst Pope Leo XIII stated the necessity of industrial legislation for the protection of the worker. Karl Marx denounced capitalism per se and in particular as productive of pauperism and Henry George postulated the right of the people to the land. That the above statements rely on conflicting assumptions and are not consistent with each <sup>other</sup> is irrelevant to the purposes of the Clipper. They acquired meaning together in that they all supported the righteousness of the Labor cause, which was a better distribution of wealth aiming at the ultimate improvement of the life and conditions of the working-class.

Robert Blatchford supplied through his books Merrie England, England for the English and the Clarion newspaper, much of the socialist doctrine of the Clipper. His influence was especially evident in Woods's advocacy of the necessity of a strict parliamentary Labor party opposed to both Liberals and Tories. Woods's emphasis on socialism as the ultimate, never-to-be-forgotten goal was also reminiscent of Blatchford. Upton Sinclair's book The Jungle, a vehement and emotive indictment of private enterprise and the factories of that system, was particularly fruitful as a source of propaganda. When first published the Clipper reviewed the book favourably<sup>24</sup>, and thereafter it was the object of frequent reference. For instance, note the Socialist persuasion in Sinclair's description of the Trust in America quoted by the Clipper: "It was a monster devouring with a thousand mouths, trampling with a thousand hoofs; it was the great Butcher - it was the spirit of capitalism made flesh".<sup>25</sup>

An article on Percy Shelley characterised the content and the method of the Clipper. As the title "Percy Shelley - Democrat" indicated, the article ignored Shelley's prowess in poetry, in lieu of which he is saluted as "The Master - Singer of Democracy Militant", and praised for his recognition "that the priest and the fatman are twin heads of the one dragon".<sup>26</sup>

The topics most generally discussed were contemporary Australian political issues. Most editorial space was devoted to a diagnosis of Tasmania's problems. The all important problem was judged to be the system of land monopoly, which in turn buttressed the Legislative Council, that "excrescence of conservatism" in Tasmania. The pastoralist from Richmond, A.J. Ogilvy, featured strongly in the Clipper as the internationally known land nationaliser. Through his articles, he both contributed to the policy of the paper and fomented provocative debate. International news was limited to cursory glances at the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05 and the Russian revolutionary riots of 1905.

The Clipper was eclectic in gathering its material, but all the matter had a uniform application: for example, "The Liberty of the Press", by John Milton, and "My Right to Work" by R.B. Suthers in the Clarion.<sup>27</sup> "The Vooruit of Ghent" was an instructive article on the system of Co-operation in Ghent, which taught the joys to be had from organized industry, organized thrift and organized well-being.<sup>28</sup> Each article or feature or poem, was a comment on the workers' plight or went towards a solution of that plight.

The poetry in the Clipper was of a generally low standard, much of it written merely as a political instrument. This type of poetry was

especially predominant before elections. One reader, who wrote over the pseudonym of "Jans Tas" was much practised in this style and frequently called upon the workers to "gather the hands, for the fight is now, and great is the prize we know".<sup>29</sup> Woods himself, using the pen-name of "John Drayman", contributed a number of poems to the Clipper. He showed little regard for the integrity of the poet in the Yeatsian sense. Rather, he subordinated poetry to politics as glibly as the victims of Yeats' criticism, the Irish Nationalistic poets. The poem "To The Reformers" was written purely to convey a political message. The occasion was a split in the West Australian Labor Ministry in which the leading members "wobbled" on the question of a syndicate railway and a land value tax to retain office, even though sacrificing political principle. In "To The Reformers" (an ambiguous title - who are the reformers?) he harshly condemned such compromising moderates:

Go softly, like beetles  
In dung-heaps a swarm  
Be part parasitic,  
And part for reform.<sup>30</sup>

In the 1909 Tasmanian House of Assembly elections when Rowntree, a pledged Labor candidate in 1906, ran as an Independent against Woods, disapproval was voiced in a poem:

Oh, don't you remember the promises made  
Sweet candidate, long, long, ago;  
We come for an answer why traitor you played  
To the pledges you gave long ago?<sup>31</sup>

Mary Jane Gilmore was the most prolific writer for the Clipper. Her poems did not enunciate any doctrine or code of conduct; nevertheless her poems were written to appeal to the working class, by means of choice of subjects familiar to the readers, for example love, friendship, the toiler's weariness, and by the tone and diction which were colloquial

bordering on the familiar. "In Poverty and Toil" by Mary Gilmore expresses the sentiments of women workers:

Its workin' early, workin' late,  
Year in, year out, the same,  
Until we seem like work machines,  
An' women but in name.<sup>32</sup>

When Woods acquired the Clipper there was as yet no Labor party in Tasmania; the Unions were few and of limited aims, the only one of significant size and organisation being the A.M.A. branches on the West Coast. Thus the whole responsibility for propagating the Labor cause fell on the shoulders of Woods and a few sympathetic friends. The editor's ultimate aim was that the Clipper should be the official organ of the Labor party; in all other states in the Commonwealth the Labor press was subsidised by Labor organisations; the Clipper depended solely on advertising and the financial initiative of its proprietors.

Early in 1905 the other part proprietor of the Clipper, Gerald Tempest Massey wanted to change the policy of the paper to conform more to the platform of the Tory-Liberal organisation, the National Association. Woods strongly opposed the proposition and his only alternative was to buy Mr. Massey out of the Clipper<sup>33</sup>. This left Woods in dire financial straits, unable to carry on alone. It was recognised that the need for a Labor paper was crucial, especially in Tasmania where there was no Hansard and the Mercury habitually mis-reported Labor speeches in Parliament. Some interested Labor men proposed a flotation of the Clipper into a Cooperative Company. This was agreed upon by a strong body of Labor supporters. The flotation meant that interested Labor supporters would become share holders and hence control the paper.

The prospectus of the Clipper Cooperative Company stated that the capital of the Company consisted of £2000 in 4000 shares of ten shillings each. When 1000 shares had been subscribed to, the Company would be considered floated.<sup>34</sup> Support was enthusiastic, but limited. Gormanston A.M.A. branch invested twenty pounds of branch funds in shares of the Company. Zeehan A.M.A. followed suit but when it was proposed that the same branch take an additional 400 shares in the next year, a ballot defeated the proposal. Their enthusiasm was qualified. This called for comment in the Clipper and regret that these "old style" unionists had not adopted the principles of "new unionism", as adopted by the most progressive of unions, the A.W.U. The unions should realise that "a Labor paper should be owned and absolutely controlled by the Labor organisations. All else is folly".<sup>34</sup>

Almost twelve months after the first publications of the Prospectus the first batch of shares had been allotted, although the number was under 1000, the number needed for the flotation to be assured. The report of the first meeting of shareholders ended with a reminder that the working expenses and the size of the Clipper were determined by the income received from the sale of shares, and subsidies from the Labor organisations.

The financial prospects of the Clipper were far from ameliorated by the boycott of government advertising and a libel charge brought against the Clipper in June, 1907. The only Labor paper in the State was forced "to publish election information for its readers for love, whilst the anti-Labor dailies get paid for it".<sup>35</sup> The Clipper applied for a copy of the Wages Commission Report of 1907 and was refused whilst the

Mercury, Examiner and Daily Telegraph all received one. The Lands Office refused a Chestnut Estate advertisement to the Clipper while supplying it to ten other papers in the State.<sup>36</sup> The Premier in the House of Assembly in answer to the charge of boycott claimed he refused to support the Labor paper because it "ridicules and blackguards" him, thus implying he regarded subsidies to be given to the press only in return for staunch support of the Ministry.<sup>37</sup>

The Clipper laboured under many difficulties. Perhaps the severest blow in Woods's seven years of editorship was the libel action brought against the Clipper proprietors by Alderman C.D. Haywood, the large-scale biscuit manufacturer. The plaintiff claimed £300 damages against the defendants for "falsely and maliciously printing certain words". The words referred to were spoken by Ms.P. Long and Burns and printed in the Clipper, to the effect that Haywood was guilty of "sweating" employees. The defendants lost the case, a defeat which cost the Clipper over £300. The total expenses amounted to nearly £400 of which Woods had to pay £87/3/2 privately, because of lack of funds.

At the 1907 annual meeting of the Clipper Cooperative Company, the directors expressed regret that the year's operations had not resulted in a larger profit, and recommended that a special effort be made to dispose of the £850 worth of shares still on hand. The flotation had been assured and from 25 January 1908, the Clipper bore the notice of "The Clipper, Official Labor Journal of Tasmania". On 7 November of the same year it bore the label of the Typographical Union of Australasia. At the 1908 annual meeting Woods again expressed regret that the Company was not yet in a position to pay dividends and that the Clipper "was the only

official Labor paper in the Commonwealth that was expected to muddle along without a direct subsidy from Labor organisations".<sup>38</sup> The purely voluntary system resulted in one or two persons bearing the financial burden.

That Woods was very sensitive to the financial sacrifices he himself had made on behalf of Labor, was shown by his indignation when once accused of making money out of the Clipper and the Labor movement. In a letter to A.J. Nettlefold dated 19/1/1910, Woods wrote "in cash and services I have put into the Clipper Company nearly £950 and . . . the very most I can take out of it is 200 Daily Post shares which are already mortgaged to more than £50 over their face value. Where's the gain? I am not complaining of course but I certainly do not intend to permit anybody to mislead the public in regard to it".<sup>39</sup>

At the end of 1909 the Clipper was incorporated into the Daily Post which had pledged itself to Labor. In lieu of cash the Clipper creditors were given Daily Post shares, which insured the same Labor support for the daily. Although this action meant the demise of the Clipper, it saw the birth of a Labor daily, a fact which Woods had looked to for many years. In a report issued to the Clipper Company Shareholders on 17 July, 1912, the Liquidators W.A. Woods, W. Sheridan and Ben Watkins regretted that the Company's transactions had not proved more profitable to the shareholders but added that "it is not entirely unsatisfactory to reflect that the sacrifices made by the pioneers for the Labor weekly have had the result of securing for the Movement the powerful advocacy of a Labor daily."<sup>40</sup>

The Clipper under the editorship of Walter Alan Woods was full of

lively comment and good humour. It devoted at least four columns a week to jokes, riddles and anecdotes. Wit and good humour could be guaranteed. It fulfilled its own ambition of mixing the grave with the gay, the sentimental and satirical without sacrificing earnest conviction or turning into a buffoon.<sup>41</sup> Thus the Sydney Bulletin's perceptive summary :

A little democratic paper that deserves a word of praise is W.A. Woods' Hobart Clipper. It is broad and bright. Some Labor papers are dull: the idea seems to be that dullness proves earnestness and conviction. Nonsense: the whole idea is to make people happier, to put more sun and smiles into their lives. A little sermon is the sermon that goes a long way.<sup>42</sup>

Therein lies the excellence of the Clipper. It was able to show the Importance of Being Earnest in a most pleasant and bright way.

## Chapter Two : Woods's Priorities of Reform

### (i) The Legislative Council : Obstacle to Tasmanian Progress

The Clipper interpreted all contemporary issues in terms of Progress versus Stagnation and the People versus Special Privilege. Within this conceptual framework the Labor party was the progressive party. Its belief in Progress in some ways reflected the nineteenth century European view of Progress: "We are the Forward Party, the Party of Reform and Progress in every land on earth where white men dwell, and each New Year must see us prepared to make fresh strides towards the goal of human freedom and happiness".<sup>1</sup> The Clipper saw every election as a chance for the people of the land to choose between the forces of Progress and Stagnation. To vote Labor was to prove to the world that Tasmania was determined "to keep in step in the march of progress".<sup>2</sup> The Federal election in 1906 was to be the greatest battle ever fought and would make former battles between the forces of Progress and Stagnation appear "mere skirmishes" by comparison. The real issue of the 1909 election was said to be Labor versus Monopoly, another version of the People versus Special Privilege.

Socialism represented the peak of all human progress and it was to be arrived at through evolution, not revolution: "evolution of humanity from savagedom up through the dark nights of feudalism and chattel slavery to wagedom, which the glorious sunrise of socialism, was soon to dispel".<sup>3</sup> Even the slightest incident, a division in the House of Assembly when eight voted for Arbitration, was hopefully regarded by Woods as another link in the "endless chain of evolution". New Zealand, or Maoriland in Clipper jargon, had attained closest to the "glorious sunrise" and that was the

nation. Tasmanians should look to as an example and try their best to emulate.

The Clipper saw Tasmania as only having reached a stage in evolution somewhere between feudalism and wage-slavery. This was not because of any lack of natural endowment to the island, for according to the Clipper, Tasmania was the richest country in the world in natural resources. The readers were continually informed of Tasmania's good soil, fine climate, abundant variety of minerals and large flowing rivers. But in spite of such endowment Tasmania was the poorest, most ignorant state in the Commonwealth. Its people got the smallest wages, spent the least and saved least of any Australians. Young Tasmanians often had to leave their home State to make a decent living.

For the Clipper the villains of the piece, the pernicious legislators, were the Legislative Councillors of the House of Doderly, as Woods preferred to call the Council. They represented the Land Monopolists or "Land Sharks" and together they comprised the clique who governed Tasmania. They were the protagonists of stagnation and it was they whom the Labor party should abolish. They were the obstructions in the way of Progress.

It was the Council's obstructionist policy which earned most abuse from the Clipper, not that the Council was to be regarded as the lion in the path, rather as a stuffed donkey.<sup>4</sup> Faced with the Upper House the Labor party's efforts were compared to those of Sisyphus. He was condemned after death to roll to the top of a hill a very large stone, which had no sooner reached the summit than it fell back again and thus rendered his horrible job eternal. Similarly, the zealous democrats

laboured year in and year out "rolling the heavy mass of humanitarian Legislation" up to the door of the Legislative Council only to have it flung back again "by the malignant forces of Fat".<sup>5</sup> During W.B. Propsting's Ministry from March 1903 until he resigned in July 1904, the Legislative Council rejected all democratic measures proposed and passed in the Assembly, except Woman Suffrage. The measures rejected included constitutional reform, probate duties, land taxation, self-assessment, abolition of the Income Tax, early closing, a tax on absentees and Arbitration. This policy of the Legislative Council continued unaltered throughout Woods's editorship of the Clipper.

It moved the Clipper to a fresh appellation - the House of Slaughter. The slaughter metaphor was extended to the character of bills, for example, "no sooner got the poor little Factories Bill into the shadows than they cruelly clubbed it to death".<sup>6</sup> Such "murders" were all the worse in the Clipper's eyes because they were committed in the name of democracy, when in fact the Legislative Council, that "concentrated essence of the massed conservatism, stupidity and snobocracy of the Island" represented the antithesis of democracy.<sup>7</sup> For although it ruled the lives of all the people of the State, it was elected only by a small percentage of the people. The Tasmanians who had no free-hold worth ten pounds, were not occupiers of a house worth thirty pound per annum, or who had no army commission or university degree were not reckoned to be fit to qualify for a vote for the Legislative Council. The franchise resulted in only 11,000 of the 45,000 male adults in Tasmania or about eleven percent of the total population voting for the Upper House. Their power was such under the constitution and in practice that they could say with justification "l'état c'est nous".

Reform of the Legislative Council was not an easy task to contemplate, for a bill to that effect would have to be passed by the Council, whose members had no doubts as to the sanctity of the status quo. An editorial called "The Blessed Constitution - Made Under the System" remarked that the Mercury and Tory politicians "talk about the Tasmanian constitution as though it were a revelation brought down Mount Wellington by a modern Moses, who had spent forty days and forty nights with the Almighty". The constitution, hence the power of the Legislative Council stood as it was at the beginning. The Clipper's account of Tasmanian constitutional history was extremely partisan. The readers were told that it was in 1854 that the Legislative Council created Tasmania's first House of Assembly, which was then deprived of all practical Legislative power. The House of Assembly passed a law; the Legislative Council threw it out. A dissolution was ineffectual because the whole process merely repeated itself.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the constitution was an anachronism in the twentieth century for it originated when Tasmania was bossed by an official class, who were brutalised by the evil system they had administered.<sup>9</sup> The Clipper verified its assessment of the Legislative Council by quoting the members themselves. After throwing out the double dissolution bill, Mr. H.A. Nicholls made the statement that "the members of this House represent eight tenths, if not nine tenths, of the property of the State, and it is our duty to see that the Constitution is not interfered with".<sup>10</sup>

With such an obstacle in the path, concluded the Clipper, Tasmania had no chance of enacting progressive Legislation and achieving the ultimate goal of Socialism. Tasmania was losing population by emigration every year and there was "overwhelming evidence that the country with the most

advanced legislation (New Zealand) was attracting population, while the country with the least advanced legislation (Tasmania) was failing to either attract immigrants or retain its own population".<sup>11</sup> The Clipper frequently quoted figures to support the above assertion, for example in the month of October, 1906, ships from England carried forty-nine passengers for Australia and Tasmania and 1315 for New Zealand, "dominated by Socialistic legislation" in the words of the Tory catch-cry.<sup>12</sup> The above figures were characteristic of the years from 1903 until 1909. Between the years 1905 and 1906 the actual population of Tasmania decreased from 181,105 to 180,163. The increase of births over deaths failed to make up for the increase of departures over arrivals.

The Clipper consistently argued in favour of abolition of the Upper House. Only in one moment of desperation did reform seem better than nothing.<sup>13</sup> It was quickly realised however that the only meaningful reform was abolition, and thereafter the Clipper was uncompromising. As early as 1903 when the Proposing Ministry introduced the Constitution Bill, the Clipper was not enamoured of the new proposal. "There (was) no need for a second chamber at all". By 1907 after four more years of frustration, the editor warned that any Labor advocate who thought it sufficient to reduce the Legislative Council franchise to twenty pounds for example, was "more than half-way into the cemetery of compromise - that yawning bury-hole of Labor principles".<sup>14</sup> Mere reduction was not good enough because firstly, increasing the number of specially privileged persons was only perpetuating the wrong of Special Privilege, and secondly the experience of South Australia and Victoria showed that reduction of the franchise was not a step towards ultimate abolition.

The experience of Tasmania had also taught that any attempts at reform from within, placing progressive men in the Council, were futile. Propsting had appeared to act on progressive principles; he introduced some advanced legislation, whilst Premier from 1903 until mid-1904, but when he entered the Upper House, he turned reactionary. Hence the Clipper commented, when the faithful clubbed together to send Proppy as a missionary to the Upper House to convert and reform, it would have been better had they simply clubbed Proppy.<sup>15</sup> When the Factories Bill was destroyed in the Upper House in 1908, it was the alleged friends of the people who had been sent thence to democratise, who "cruelly clubbed it to death". This was the final proof that attempts at reform from within were futile. In fact, to send "good healthy-minded men into such a Chamber is really sentencing them to political leprosy for life".<sup>16</sup>

How then was the abolition to be effected? One contributor, Duncan Murphy, suggested that this could be done in six possible ways. It could be (a) by an act of parliament, although it was highly improbable that the Legislative Council would pass it, (b) by a convention as with the Federal constitution, (c) through an appeal to the British Parliament, although this would reduce Tasmania's independence of Britain in the future, (d) by a refusal to vote supplies, (e) through a Federated Land Tax, although this would be too indirect and encroach upon State rights, or (f) by an amendment of the Federal Constitution, to be done through a referendum. The writer judged that the last proposal would prove the most effective. But whichever method was chosen, it was urged that the Labor party should immediately decide on a course of action. "Striking attitudes and declaiming at large would not meet the situation."<sup>17</sup>

During 1907 and 1908 the case for replacement of the Federal with a unitary government was attracting an increasing number of subscribers, and in early 1908 a petition for Unification was being extensively circulated throughout the Commonwealth. The main arguments put forward in its favour were the financial saving, and that Unification would automatically mean the abolition of obstructive Legislative Councils. Woods wholeheartedly approved of the proposal, but thought it a mistaken and irresponsible approach to advocate Unification merely because one result would be the abolition of the Upper House. He had always contended that the people ought to be independent and self-reliant and that progress and prosperity ought to be a reward for their own efforts and earnestness. "In our opinion the States can abolish their own Upper Houses whenever the people desire it."<sup>18</sup>

Through the medium of the Clipper Woods played an operative part in bringing the question of the validity of the Upper House into prominence, and it was he who made the first effective step from theory into action. In November, 1908, Woods moved in the House of Assembly for the abolition of the Upper House. He stated that the Legislative Council had the last say in legislation affecting 180,000 people, yet it was elected by only 19,000 persons who possessed no special moral or intellectual attributes - the possession of a certain value in something that was arbitrarily termed "property", being the only qualification.<sup>19</sup> Not surprisingly, the motion was defeated in the Assembly, only the seven Labor members voting in favour of it. The pillar of stagnation remained entrenched.

(ii) Behind the Legislative Councillors : Their Land

Land monopoly and the Legislative Council were but twin heads of the one monster. All compromises should be discarded; the attack could be made only with large scale land reform, reform which included both taxation of unimproved land values and land nationalisation. Therein lay the only true solution to the problem of Tasmania's stagnation.

Professor Hancock wrote that "the dominant theme in Australian political history is the lament of an unsatisfied land hunger".<sup>20</sup> That lament was especially loud in the Clipper. The reason for the prominence of land reform proposals in the Clipper during the years 1903 - 1909, was that the editor considered that it was land monopoly and the tax on property inclusive of improvements that was driving population away from the island state. His view was shared by many including G.M. Burns, M.H.A., who when introducing the Land Tax amendment bill in November 1904, ascribed the constant departures from Tasmania to the existing land situation and legislation.<sup>21</sup> Not only did Tasmania fail to attract population but during the years 1905 - 1906 the population decreased due to the excess of departures over the rate of births. This phenomenon was singular to Tasmania and probably explains the continuance of the plea for land nationalization in Tasmania, when it had largely ceased as a practical proposal in the other States. It was even advised in 1905 that the Labor movement must necessarily become the Land Restoration movement.<sup>22</sup>

In 1903 there could be no "doubt that the land question (was) at the bottom of most of Tasmania's troubles". The "iniquitous policy of land ownership and . . . insane reverence for the alleged rights of

a few monopolists" meant that the best settlers must either delve into "the uttermost wilderness" or leave the State. The strength of feeling behind such propositions is evidenced by the highly emotional and coloured language: "the system of land ownership is the parent of unmentionable horrors and all vile things".<sup>23</sup>

An article entitled "How Westralia Attracts Population" decided that the outstanding fact was that population never left a country where good soil was available for settlement on advantageous terms. Referring to New Zealand, land reform and prosperity were directly linked as cause and effect: "with the passing of the Progressive Land and Income Tax, and the Compulsory Lands for Settlement Act, came the dawn of prosperity and progress in Maoriland".<sup>24</sup>

The Land Question was at the bottom of the Housing Problem, and the existence of slums in Hobart. There were hundreds of acres in the immediate vicinity, but "for the needful purpose to supply ample and healthy sites for the houses of the poor, it might as well be located in the moon, so complete is the inhibition laid upon us by private land monopoly". And most of these acres were idle lands in idle hands, devoted to bush, sheep and rabbits.

The Clipper was so fanatical in its denunciation of land monopoly as the root of all evil, that the death of spring lambs in the Midlands was also attributed to land monopoly. In 1904 thousands of lambs were reported dead in the Midlands. It was recognised that this was due to a prolonged and excessively cold winter. But the "real" cause for the Clipper, went deeper than this. Only on large estates where the sheep

are "never" hand fed but expected to pick up their livings at all seasons" would this happen.<sup>25</sup> The Midlands of Tasmania, the centre of land monopoly, were depicted as a horror to behold - an eerie land of cobwebs and sheep, void of any signs of human life. "John Drayman", as a means of artful propaganda, described his visit to the Midlands for the readers of the Clipper. "All through the splendid country we saw little but black-nosed or leather-necked sheep, impudent looking rabbits and an occasional wool-shed. But O, the painful scarcity of human beings!"<sup>26</sup>

Land reform was posed as the cure-all. Its main objective was to encourage prospective settlers, firstly by making the land available, and secondly by not taxing improvements, rather than to provide a means of State revenue. In opposition to the Government's Income Tax, the Ability Tax and Occupancy Tax plus its borrowing policy, the Clipper proposed the graduated land tax on unimproved land values, as the only sensible way to raise revenue. It compared the £313,000 from New Zealand's land tax of 17,500 landowners with the £50,000 paid by the 43,000 landowners in Tasmania.<sup>27</sup> But the financial objective was decidedly secondary to that of substituting Progress in place of Stagnation, and the People in place of Special Privilege.

The proposals for land reform were a mixture of argument for land nationalization and taxation, with confusion between the distinct schools. The mixture of quotations, articles and letters are evidence of a simple faith in the possibility of social improvement through any type of land reform. The reform most urgently required was a graduated tax on land values exempting improvements. The main argument in favour of taxation was that it was most effective in breaking up the big estates and forcing

land into use. The Clipper quoted the Downie Report on New Zealand and New South Wales Land Settlement and taxation systems as an authority to support this assertion.<sup>28</sup> Also, such taxation would lift the burden of taxation from the shoulders of the poor and place it squarely on the shoulders of the privileged.

The editor of the Clipper held land nationalization to be the only true solution to the land question and Tasmania's problems in general. The Single Tax was an immediate aid, but a partial solution. Land nationalisation with Crown leases was necessary to eliminate the abuses of private property and to effect closer settlement. In the words of A.J. Ogilvy, the Single Tax alone, was contrary to its own principles, as well as to public interest. It began by taxing the land at, for example, one shilling in the pound, later at two shillings, and so on. Thus it began by allowing the "land hog" nineteen shillings in the pound of what it declared he had no right to have, later eighteen shillings etc.. This would cost much more in the end, and take longer than any nationalisation plans. Besides it did not retake the land, only the land value, leaving the landlord with his powers of destruction and annoyance.<sup>29</sup> Beyond this, to secure to the wealth producer the full result of his labour, Woods always held that full Socialism was necessary.<sup>30</sup>

A.J. Ogilvy was certainly the biggest influence on the Clipper's land policy. In 1905 that paper had called itself the official organ of the Land Restoration League. Ogilvy was one of the few Australian land reformers whose works were read outside the colonies. He held as an article of faith the proposition that access to land for all citizens was vital to social well-being. There was always work to be done in

either primary or secondary industry, but there was always a privileged obstructionist, the landowner, standing between the workers and the work, keeping them apart. If this obstructionist were shifted out of the way (through State ownership of land) then "industry (would) proceed at full swing".<sup>31</sup> Ogilvy suggested three ways of effectively dealing with the land question. These were no further alienation of Crown Lands, Land Taxation and Land Resumption (or Compulsory Purchase). Distinguishing between the Land Nationaliser and the Socialist, Ogilvy pointed out that while the latter wanted the State to manage the mines, the former wanted only to own them. Both agreed on the necessity of the abolition of monopolies and after that was effected, explained Ogilvy in all innocent idealism, "all industrial wrongs will either right themselves spontaneously, or be very easily righted".<sup>32</sup>

It was Ogilvy's proposal of land resumption by the State with compensation to owners which provoked most debate in the pages of the Clipper. According to the land nationaliser, land resumption should proceed gradually, with compensation being paid not in cash but in interest bearing bonds, and when the interest fell due the State rent would be ready to meet it, so that the State would be squared so far. The property that the State tenant received would not be on terminable, but perpetual lease as long as he paid his periodically revised rent, estimated on the unimproved value by a disinterested Court.<sup>33</sup>

Grant Hervey, a contributor both to the Bulletin and the Clipper, judged the biggest objection to Ogilvy's scheme of land resumption, to be the act and method of compensation. It seemed to him that the State simply became the landlord's agent, collecting his rent for him and relieving

him meanwhile of all personal trouble with regard to tenants and upkeep.<sup>34</sup> To this Ogilvy replied that the proposed percentage of £40 in £1000 of land value, was not a tribute to the landlord, but compensation for retaking an article which was sold or authorised as a legitimate subject for sale. As to how the owner be compensated, that question was not really important. A.R. Wallace's (president of the international Land Nationalisation Society) scheme for example, of annuities for the lives of the present holders and their children was feasible. Or the bonds which Ogilvy suggested could be like the annuities, terminable.

The real point of dispute however was the principle of compensation. More often arguments were emotional rather than rational, humanitarian rather than intellectual. One reader wrote that if there were any compensation at all "it should be given and received as an act of pure generosity on the part of the real owners". Grant Hervey went further than this and stated that to take what belonged to everyone, the consent of all was required. Thus those who had taken land without the consent of all (that meant all landowners) were thieves and "thieves should not be recompensated".<sup>35</sup> Ogilvy replied wearily "over and over again I have explained that the compensation claimed is not for the land (which we admit no generation had a right to sell) but for the money which the purchaser has been unjustly made to pay".<sup>36</sup>

Ogilvy was of course in the anomalous position of a landowner who advocated land nationalisation. He viewed his own role of landowner as that of an exemplary would-be martyr. But in fact under the arrangements he proposed of full compensation to landowners his sacrifice would have been limited. His own position as landowner indeed probably accounts in

part for his fervent interest in compensation.

In the mainland States schemes of straightout nationalisation gave way increasingly to more practicable plans of confiscating incomes while leaving property in private hands.<sup>37</sup> The land taxation proposals still aimed at "bursting up of large estates and monopoly in land", but indirectly.<sup>38</sup> The Labor party continued to favour permanent lease of remaining Crown lands to outright sale but by 1912 this too had been jettisoned.

That outright land nationalisation continued to be advocated in Tasmania during the first years of the new century was due to the combined influences of A.J. Ogilvy's ideas and the Clipper's interpretations of Tasmania's special problems. Alan Moorehead wrote in Cooper's Creek "One of the fascinating things about Australia is the sense of claustrophobia in the midst of such an infinity of space".<sup>38</sup> The realization that Tasmania was not an infinity of space, added urgency to the claustrophobic lament.

Land taxation plus land resumption by the State was the simple yet sovereign remedy of Tasmania's ills. It would abolish poverty, unemployment, slums, privilege and monopoly. It would purify government, encourage the settlement of a class of yeomanry and carry civilisation to a yet nobler height.

(iii) Two Palliatives : New Protection and Arbitration

The Clipper's view was that a little more protection from the courts and a little less from the tariff would be much appreciated by the working-

man. The Labor Party existed solely to demand that the real producer of wealth, the worker, receive a more equitable share of the wealth he or she, produced.<sup>39</sup> New Protection in the Clipper's view would not further this aim, whilst Arbitration may.

New Protection, as distinct from "Old Protection" was more amenable to Laborites because of its unqualified assurance that gains from high tariffs would be shared by all social classes, not just the manufacturers. The tariff was conditional on just prices and conditions for the workers. This issue was very much alive between 1903 and 1909 in the pages of the Clipper. Many correspondents favoured its adoption as a plank by the Labor party; the editor was vehemently and consistently against this proposal, himself adopting the stand of "fiscal atheism". To all the differing readers the editor reiterated that New Protection was irrelevant to the whole raison d'être of the Labor party. The Clipper endorsed the words of R.B. Suthers in the Clarion, the English newspaper: "Send Free Traders or Protectionists to Parliament and they will do nothing to alter the present conditions. Free Trade? Tariff Reform? Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Neither is any good. Socialism is the only remedy".<sup>40</sup> Socialism was interpreted by the Clipper to mean nationalization of monopolies. To subsidize monopolies by high tariffs was only increasing their power to resist the advance of Socialism.

Elaborating upon the argument of irrelevance, the editor stated that at the time when the Commonwealth Parliament was discussing the tariff, it was clearly shown that Free Trade produced paupers and millionaires in Britain and that Protection did the same for America; that ninety five percent of the wealth of England was held by five percent

of the people, and that five percent of Americans owned ninety five percent of the United States; that New South Wales was ruined by Free Trade, whilst Victoria was depopulated by Protection. There were more important things to do and reforms to pursue than to trouble with fiscalism. "Let us squash the borrowing lunacy, wade in for a death grapple with the land monopolists, and set about the unification of Australia, before we again sort out the dreadful tangle of Free Trade myths and Protectionist inventions".<sup>41</sup>

The Clipper believed that not only was New Protection fallacious in principle, but that it was destructive of the Labor movement, splitting the ranks of Laborites into two camps, perhaps irretrievably. Protectionist Laborites were compared to Kipling's Old Men who play with

The flaccid tissues of long dead issues,  
offensive to God and mankind,  
Exactly like vultures over an ox that  
the army had left behind.<sup>42</sup>

Contributor Duncan Murphy pictured Protectionist Laborites as the proverbial flies being seduced into the spider's parlour.<sup>43</sup>

Protection proved to be the point of most dissension between the Clipper and the Bulletin. Since Woods had been editor, the two papers had not been very sympathetic in outlook. The Clipper had eulogized the English Socialist Tom Mann when he visited Tasmania in 1903 and ascribed part of the responsibility for the founding of the Tasmanian Labor Party to his rousing agitation. The militant orator's methods were readily condoned. The Bulletin on the other hand, did not like the "crude irresponsible howler and purveyor of dried-up phrases and impracticable bunkum"<sup>44</sup> and considered his connection with the Labor

Party "a calamity".<sup>45</sup> Most of the Bulletin's references to Tasmania were disparaging, in one instance categorizing Tasmanians as a "dirty little people",<sup>46</sup> so the Clipper really had no cause for affection toward the elder newspaper, but it took the Bulletin's powerful advocacy of New Protection to rouse the Clipper's savage invective. When the Bulletin argued that the influx of cheap foreign products would upset any cooperative system of industry, the Clipper retorted "For sheer, downright stupidity, it would not be easy to match that".<sup>47</sup> The idea that a nation which was its own employer and own customer having to protect itself against itself was "wildly hilarious". Two years later it was reported that the Bulletin had begun to abuse Laborites who did not subscribe to its "fatuous little fetish".<sup>48</sup> In reprimanding Tasmanian Laborites who read the Bulletin and not the Labor papers the editor expressed outright antagonism to the Sydney paper, referring to it as a "subsidised servant of Capitalism".<sup>49</sup>

Protection as an issue lost its prominence during 1907. The recently formulated scheme of New Protection was in the Clipper's view doomed to failure. The scheme provided ideally for protection of the manufacturer, the worker and the consumer. If the worker's wages and conditions were not just, or the consumer prices too high, the proposed tariff would be abolished. The manufacturer was punished at the expense of the worker. There was no provision for the Excise Board to fix fair rents - yet it was the landlord who was the all powerful fixer of wages and prices, "he owns the storehouse . . . he owns the earth". When the New Protectionists found that they could not possibly dodge the landlord by "the byways of New Protection and similar artificial side tracks, there

will be no alternative but to tackle him with a land-tax pitchfork".

The Clipper welcomed the New Protection proposals for at last it would be proved empirically that the scheme was ineffective, and one more palliative would be relegated to the scrap-heap. And "it is only over a mountainous scrap-heap of obsolete 'palliatives' that we may climb to the Cooperative Commonwealth".<sup>50</sup>

That industrial arbitration was merely yet another palliative, the Clipper took some years to realise. At first Arbitration was looked upon as the supreme good, for it promised to secure to the worker a fair return for his toil and a primrose path to social harmony. The Clipper's attitude was typical of the Australian-wide Labor optimism regarding Arbitration, which was given expression in N.S.W. by W.A. Holman, "We believe it is a measure which gives absolute justice to both sides, which benefits both, which puts an end to the struggle, which can only be ruinous to both parties engaged in it, a simple, quiet, peaceful method of procedure in keeping with the advancing spirit of our civilisation".<sup>51</sup> The Clipper grew to disbelief and its pages from 1903 until 1909 are a record of disillusionment with false prophets.

In March 1903 in New Zealand a dispute was raging within the ranks of Labor over the virtues of Arbitration. It was between trade unionists who believed in Arbitration Boards and the extreme Socialists who saw them as a gross interference with the inalienable right of the workers to strike. The Clipper considered that the only question was whether the worker gets a bigger share of his own under Arbitration Acts than under the old 'freedom to strike' regime. Woods concluded that considering the steady increase of wages in New Zealand, where an Industrial

and Arbitration Act had been in operation since 1895, the odds were in favour of Arbitration.<sup>52</sup> The Arbitration Bill introduced in the Tasmanian House of Assembly in November 1903, was defeated 18 votes to 8. The enemies of the Bill were recognized as all "the prophets of ill-disguised hatred of progress".

When the Commonwealth Arbitration and Conciliation Act had passed through Federal Parliament, the editor of the Clipper was critical. The only good to come of it was that it constituted a recognition of the Arbitration principle throughout the Commonwealth, beyond that it was an "expensive miscarriage". An explanation of his judgment was not offered except that it suffered from "the insane desire of the Reid government to pander to the privileged classes".<sup>53</sup> The Clipper continued to look for justification for its faith in Arbitration to New Zealand, that mecca of progressive legislation. The deductions involved were narrow and rather naive, for instance "since the Arbitration Courts were established in 1895, Maoriland factories have doubled in number, and the workers have increased more than double"; but such logic suited propaganda purposes. Gradually certainty gave way to doubt. An article of influence in the Clipper was that by A.J. Ogilvy, which suggested that Arbitration was certainly of little value, for it sidestepped the fact of the landlord "who squeezed both employer and employee".<sup>54</sup>

In February 1906 the workers' representative in the Sydney Arbitration Court, Mr. E. Riley, claimed that the recent Arbitration Court decisions contained more law than justice, owing to the fact that the judges were mostly drawn from the most conservative class in the community. This was a failing inherent in the legislation and it

belied Holman's "absolute justice to both sides". The Clipper as yet was not seriously disturbed. Its solution was glib: the remedy is obvious - the workers had to control parliament and hence exercise a greater influence over the judiciary. But henceforth, the Clipper became part of the climate of opinion which began seriously to distrust Arbitration as of benefit to the workers. The Clipper quoted Hutchinson, M.H.R., from the South Australian Herald: "never in my opinion, did the workers make a greater blunder, than when they agreed to have their bread and butter controlled by judges and lawyers."<sup>55</sup>

The Clipper's increasing dissatisfaction was almost inevitable in that the Arbitration Court and the Labor party and in particular the Clipper, differed so significantly in the priorities of their objectives. Whilst the Clipper held that the chief aim of Arbitration Courts should be to secure to the worker a bigger share of his own,<sup>56</sup> the Court in the words of the President from 1907 until 1921, Higgins, believed that preservation of industrial peace "should be the principal aim of Arbitration Courts, and that discovery of absolute distributive justice was important, but of secondary significance".<sup>57</sup> By 1909 the Clipper had concluded that as "a cure for social inequalities", Arbitration was "practically useless".

The Clipper however, found an unintended value in Arbitration Courts, namely, securing useful statistics which could serve an educative or propaganda purpose, by exposing the enormous profits of capitalists and the wretched wages paid to workingmen and women.<sup>58</sup> As for the intended value, the Clipper's assessment was negative; at least they were not an absolute failure. Woods compared them to lighthouses,

Arbitration Courts had not abolished strikes or their causes, any more than lighthouses had wholly prevented shipwrecks.

To a certain degree, faith was restored in Arbitration and the Commonwealth Court by the Award made in 1906, which was very favourable to the A.W.U. in "the most important case ever adjudicated upon by any Court of Industrial Arbitration".<sup>59</sup> The Clipper remarked that if the award was loyally observed as it probably would be, Australia would have every reason to congratulate herself. "The avoidance of a Labor dispute of gigantic dimensions has been made possible by the Federal Arbitration Court. Yet there are some people who profess to believe that arbitration is and always must be a failure. The sanity, or the honesty of such persons is, and always must be, open to serious question".<sup>60</sup>

The Clipper saw a further triumph for Arbitration in 1907 when a threatened miners' strike in Newcastle was avoided. As soon as the mine-owners of Newcastle realised that the Miners' Federation really meant to fight and they faced the prospect of fleets of ships lying idle in every port, famine prices for coal and cessation of sea and rail traffic of the Commonwealth, all anti-Socialist forces called for State interference. The method agreed upon for settlement of the details of the dispute was a "complete victory for the principle of Arbitration as advocated by the Labor party".<sup>61</sup> Commenting on the protracted miners' strike at Mt. Magnet on the West Coast fields in 1908, the Clipper said that in all probability an Arbitration Court would have prevented the lock-out, and "industrial peace, even of the old patched-up kind, is better than a lock-out".<sup>62</sup>

This was the Clipper's general attitude. Given the capitalistic

system, Arbitration was necessary. Only under the Cooperative Commonwealth would Arbitration Courts become superfluous, but this ultimate goal should never be lost sight of.

Stephen Barker, Secretary to the Trades Hall Council, called the Wages Boards and Arbitration Courts aids, not finalities in the march of industrial progress. The Clipper claimed this view erroneous, for were not such artificial institutions (for example Protection and Arbitration) holding back the realisation of the Cooperative Commonwealth? The overriding law was that of supply and demand, that is, if there were more men looking for work than could obtain opportunity to work, no legislation could prevent wages from falling. The only solution was to prevent any class from monopolising the opportunities. Hence, was not the construction<sup>and</sup> the destruction of palliatives merely a waste of time and effort?<sup>63</sup>

The Clipper's attitude to New Protection and Arbitration was significant in terms of self-definition, in that these were the great pillars of the Deakinite liberal-labor reform. On the one hand Woods feared that the Australian Labor Parties were threatened with death by a thousand such compromises, yet at the same time the Clipper thought that the breakaway Socialist groups in Melbourne, Sydney and Broken Hill, would have done more good by staying within the ranks of Labor; the Clipper declined to believe that free education, old age pensions and land nationalisation were "useless palliatives".<sup>64</sup> This constant ambivalence in the Clipper's attitude to practical reform within the system, was never resolved.

### Chapter Three : The Role of Woods and the Clipper in the Labor Movement

The rise of the Labor movement was the most significant feature of political life in the first decade of the twentieth century in Tasmania.<sup>1</sup> In an essay in the Clipper called "Labor's Progress : The How and the Why", Duncan Murphy attempted to explain the steady increase of Labor votes and support. "There has been no hysteria, no ebullient revivalism, not white-hot enthusiasm about the movement. Women have not cast their jewels at the feet of the Labor evangelists; rich men have not sold their possessions and endowed the organisation." As opposed to the situation in the mainland states, the Labor movement in Tasmania was not "ushered in by any strikes, or disturbances, nor has it been accompanied by any signs of abnormal stimulation". Duncan Murphy himself suggested that converts had been won simply because of the reasonableness of the Labor speakers' and writers' arguments.<sup>2</sup>

One speaker and writer who exercised a more compelling influence than most was Walter Alan Woods. His able editorship of the Clipper was decisive in fostering a strong Labor movement. For the first three years of its existence, Woods also acted as General Secretary to the Workers' Political League.

"A Labor paper is always organising", wrote W.G. Spence. The Clipper had to fulfil more functions than that of an organizer. In Tasmania there was no significant trade union organization to provide a basis for a political organization as there was on the mainland. Even by 1905 there were estimated to be only 1500 unionists in Tasmania of which 1300 formed the A.M.A. branches on the West Coast. In Hobart

the Democratic League founded in 1896 in the old Clipper offices, had produced the most radical platform to date in the colony. Yet it had failed to flourish mainly because it lacked popular support.

Woods made it his task to arouse the lower classes from their political apathy and instil into them a spirit of militant comradeship. Woods observed that the greatest enemy to freedom was the contented slave. Under his editorship, the Clipper was to be the pillar around which the Labor movement crystallized. In the same month that Woods undertook the fulltime editorship, he, together with Dave Balchen, convened the preliminary meeting of what was to be the Workers' Political League, the organisational unit of the Labor movement in Tasmania.<sup>3</sup>

At the beginning of the same year Woods issued his memorable call to the workers of Tasmania:

I remember Carlyle's injunction: 'Make yourself an honest man; you will then be sure there is one rogue less in the world'. That's it. How much do you desire a change? Are you satisfied? Are you senile? Are you too slow? Are you doing your earnest bit towards lifting the degrading reproach of apathy from Tasmania's shoulders? Are you in earnest for reform? . . . No man has a right to say 'Oh, you'll never get any reforms in Tasmania' unless he is at the present time a genuine trier himself.<sup>4</sup>

"Jans Tas" the prolific verse writer for the Clipper added to the sense of political urgency. Of the House of Assembly election in 1903 he wrote:

Electors of our island home, a chance  
is ours today,  
A grander one than e'er before has  
fortune sent our way.<sup>5</sup>

The Clipper was essential to the formation of the Labor party in Tasmania in providing a central idea and definition of Labor. The

Labor movement was to be the working class movement and the workers were asked to harken to the Greek legend of Antaeus who derived his strength from contact with his mother, the Earth. As the Earth was the mother of Antaeus, so was the working class <sup>was</sup> the parent of Socialism. And no sooner would the Socialist movement tear its roots out of that soil, than decay would ensue. The workers were commanded to "watch that modern Antaeus should always be in close contact with his mother Earth".<sup>6</sup>

The Clipper's primary task was to foster a working-class consciousness, to teach the workers that they must be independent and not rely on either the Liberals or Tories. "The main thing to remember", Robert Blatchford reminded readers in Britain for the British, "is that even if the Liberals are all they claim to be, they will never do as much for Labor as Labor would do for itself."<sup>7</sup> Woods also quoted Kier Hardie, the English Labor leader who steadfastly opposed both Liberals and Tories in parliament.<sup>8</sup> Speaking of Bishop John Mercer and other Liberal thinkers who contributed a considerable amount to the Labor movement in Tasmania, Woods emphasized self-reliance; while they were thankful for all sincere helpers, having regard to the past, he thought "the toilers would do well to depend upon themselves as a class to save themselves as a nation".<sup>9</sup>

Although Woods preached class solidarity his concept of who should constitute that class was broad. Labor could not afford to be exclusive in Tasmania at such an early stage in its formation. "Labor is for all who toil, regardless of whether they wield a shovel or a pen, steer a needle or a ship, a plow or a steam-engine, study geography with road

metal, or navigation with an ocean chart, measure yards of ribbon in a drapery store or compute distances between stars."<sup>10</sup> Labor did not encourage the image of a "sweat of the brow" movement.

The Clipper made special appeals to the small farmers arguing along the lines of taxation : the Labor candidates were the only ones who stood for land reform. Little headway was made with many of the farmers however, who feared Labor's proposal of confiscation of land. At the beginning of 1907 it was resolved that for the next three years Labor's work was to be "the education of the work-farmer (as opposed to the idle farmer) and this emancipation from the domination of the National Association". After some years it was evident from the flourishing branches of the Political League in the Channel-Huon area and along the North West Coast, that the farmers' prejudice was in part overcome.

At one time special efforts were made to secure to the ranks of Labor the "sweated snob", or higher collared young gentleman who worked as a clerk. The people had to be taught that "the clerk, the shop assistant, and the artisan, and the laborer are all wage-earners and belong to the same class".<sup>11</sup> They also had to be taught that they needed the help of Labor more than Labor needed theirs. The truth of the last assertion is however somewhat dubious.

The largest "interest group" the Clipper aimed at converting, was women. One of the lessons to be learnt from the 1903 Federal elections was the important role to be played by women in politics.<sup>12</sup> The potential attached to the recently organised women's suffrage was great indeed, a fact which was ably illustrated by a cartoon picturing

Woman on a Shrine being pleaded and worshipped by a Sweater, a Slum Landlord and a Usurer. At the 1903 Federal election working-class women had not been as forthright in voting at the polls as had their counterparts of the upper classes. A weekly column began soon after called "To Mrs. Smith, Who Did Not Vote at the Recent Federal Election"; its aim was to make sure that Mrs. Smith voted at the next election, and voted Labor. The women were told that if they wanted justice for themselves, their husbands and their children, they too must rouse themselves.<sup>13</sup> The pill of propaganda was cleverly coated with social columns and a column of miscellaneous "womanities". Woods' efforts in this direction were rewarded in a year or so, when it often happened that more women were in attendance at W.P.L. meetings than men and when many of the branch offices were filled by women.

Woods was especially concerned with instructing the initiated in the importance of being earnest. Tirelessly, he preached loyalty, earnestness and solidarity; conversely a traitor or a "wobbler" was severely denounced. Once having awakened the lower classes it was necessary to inculcate them with Labor doctrine and principles of action. Solidarity was uppermost of these principles. "Every soldier in the regiment must keep in step or go out of the marching business altogether."<sup>14</sup> Lacking trade union activity, Tasmania had little experience or understanding of solidarity as an operative principle.<sup>15</sup> Woods did his best to impress this principle upon the workers. They were told that "50,000 earnest men can govern a nation who can agree on all vital questions, who will plant their shoulders together and swear by all that is true and just that for long years ~~they~~ will put their great idea before the country".<sup>16</sup>

Woods's special aversion was "wobbling" and compromise, "that yawning bury-hole of Labor principle".<sup>17</sup> Principles and the platform embodying them were all important; individualism was anathema to the spirit of the movement. In 1905 both West Australia and Queensland Labor parties compromised on government ownership of railways, land value taxation and the sale of Crown lands. For the Clipper the moral of the story was to be seen in the split of the West Australian Labor party and in the Charters Towers by-election in Queensland, where an independent Labor candidate had recently defeated a pledged Labor candidate.<sup>18</sup>

An editorial entitled "Unworthy Bricks" is worth examining in full for the light it throws on Woods's concept of the Labor movement. It illustrates the character Woods attempted to impress upon the Tasmanian Labor organisations. He compared politicians with bricks, the Labor party being equivalent to a building whilst all other parties were like a mere loose stack of bricks. "Loose or soft bricks in a building indicate bad workmanship, and a collapse is a far more serious matter than the fall of a mere stack of bricks. It costs time and money to rebuild; the mere stack of uncohesive bricks may be restacked easily and cheaply."<sup>19</sup> He stressed the higher calibre required in Labor members. The reverses in Queensland and West Australia pointed the necessity of careful discrimination, the "soft, mis-shapen and wobbly bricks" had to be absolutely rejected. Woods described Labor's task in terms of religious austerity: "The task has been hard; no feather-bed soldiers those who fight in the van of the Labor movement. They are in earnest, no time have they to waste in gaudy trifles". The other quality Woods ascribed to the Labor corps was

a pristine innocence. The men and women of the Labor movement were "as sensitive as children". If they were trusted, they would trust in return, but if they were deceived, they would resent it "with all the bitterness born of ages of oppression". The lesson of that day was that it was better to build slowly, than to build with unworthy bricks.<sup>19</sup>

Woods's fanatical aversion to wobblers and compromisers was pressed home in a poem by "John Drayman" called "To The Reformers", wherein he pictured them as worms with "wobblesome squirm".<sup>20</sup> The Clipper reinforced its message about political perfidy by quoting figures from the West Australian elections in which the Labor "rats" were wiped out, whilst the true Laborites were returned with over-whelming majorities in some cases - a triumphant indication of platform and principle. The Queensland elections, which resulted in pledged Labor holding the balance of power, showed that "Queensland doesn't like the party of boodle, but it likes turncoats less".<sup>21</sup> But had not the split occurred, Labor would have been returned with a majority. It was Woods' firm conviction that the primary cause of the delay of Labor's legislative triumph was "departure from the straight road of principle". It was Woods's mission to set as many people as he could upon that path, and by showing them the worthiness of the principle, prevent departures from it.

The most effective means of securing this in the parliamentary field was the written pledge. The Clipper viewed the pledge as a fitting test of genuineness. Its belief was confirmed when Propsting, the erstwhile progressive Premier of the House of Assembly, entered the reactionary Upper House and crawled "on his belly to abjectly lick the feet of his enemy". Then did the Clipper announce that the justification

of the written pledge was "complete".<sup>22</sup> The Clipper subscribed to the view that elected men ought to be delegates rather than representatives. Woods could not see the point of electors subordinating themselves to members of Parliament, if they in turn did not subordinate themselves to a platform of principles. Consistency was not one of Woods's primary virtues; for one of his arguments against Labor's adoption of New Protection as a plank was that it would tie Labor's hands, whereas if Labor attained to office the Labor members should be free to do what circumstances at that time required. Woods's confidence in the pledge however, was such that by 1909 the Clipper felt confident enough to avow that the pledge was responsible for Labor's one hundred per cent increase in support; it was "the only political party that imposes a test of genuineness upon those who profess sympathy with its aims and religiously punish every traitor it can catch".<sup>23</sup>

Besides arousing class-consciousness and acquainting working men and women with the concepts of solidarity, earnestness and loyalty, the Clipper was also the indispensable organiser. It was essential for electioneering purposes in providing information on How To Vote, facilities for voting and as a reminder to readers to insert their name on the electoral rolls. These were on view at the Clipper office for all to read. It was the central agency for managing electoral funds. The Clipper's financial appeals were abundant. In 1905, for example, money had to be raised to supplement the miserable pittances of Labor Ms.P., for the election fund, to subsidize the Clipper Cooperative Company, and if possible to pay a special lecturer. The Clipper was necessary for a report of Labor members' parliamentary speeches because of the fact

that the daily Mercury habitually omitted or misreported the speeches. During 1908 several articles explained the Hare-Clark system of counting votes; this was demonstrated by a mock-election.<sup>24</sup> Before each election the Labor platform was printed with accompanying explanations.

On Woods's suggestion a fund was begun in the Clipper to raise money to buy a Labor Van. This would facilitate lecturers' tours and be a sure means of gaining a thousand extra votes at the next election. Woods himself opened the fund with a subscription of ten pound.

It was also on Woods's initiative that the ex-Presbyterian minister Roger Palamountain was enlisted as official "organiser" for Labor in 1904.<sup>25</sup> Palamountain had been sent down from the ministry because he had expressed open sympathy with Labor politics. The Clipper championed his cause of freedom of speech (as long as it was Labor speech) and started a fund with which to support him, while he was preaching the Labor gospel.

One Laborite described the Clipper as their Scout, their Field Telegraph, their Despatch Rider, their Maxim, their Open Line of Communication.<sup>26</sup> In appealing for greater financial support for the Clipper, the secretary of the Lovett branch of the W.P.L. called it the "strongest weapon" Labor had. "Without it we are powerless and we become a mere collection of disunited Leagues, totally in the dark as to what each is doing. And no letter from a laborite would be published in a daily if we lost the Clipper, which is the best organizing weapon we can use."<sup>27</sup>

The Clipper was also the self-appointed policeman of the Labor movement. It dutifully arrested and punished every traitor and "unworthy brick" in the Tasmanian house of Labor. One of the first was William Lamerton, elected as a pledged Labor man to the House of Assembly in 1903, and who in the words of W.G. Spence "ratted on the movement, and was got rid of".<sup>28</sup> The Clipper provides an interesting account of accruing doubts as the Labor man reveals his "unworthiness".

At first when Lamerton voted for the Ability Tax (referred to by the Clipper as the Debility Tax), the Clipper was unshaken. There were good points about Lamerton, although it was a shame he had come into politics too late. The next month the Clipper was provoked to ask "What ails Lamerton?" On the clause of the 1904 Mining Bill which provided for the appointment of an inspector by the mines, the Zeehan man "spoke and voted against his mates, though it (was) understood the party had agreed in caucus to go solid".<sup>29</sup> Antagonism between the Clipper and Lamerton increased. At the 1905 annual conference at Beaconsfield the latter made a point of expressing disappointment that "the Labor press had not given sufficient prominence to the views of some of the Labor members. The opposition papers had given fuller and fairer reports".<sup>30</sup> Lamerton again made clear his opposition to the Clipper, when he telegraphed the A.M.A. branch of Zeehan to try and dissuade that branch from buying more shares in the Clipper, "that scurillous rag".

When at the end of 1905 it appeared that pre-election of Labor candidates for the coming State elections would be dispensed with at Zeehan, leaving Lamerton as the Labor candidate, the Clipper was adamant in demanding another and larger meeting to sound the opinion of

members of the A.M.A.<sup>and</sup> of other unions. "On all questions affecting the great body of workers, a ballot taken on as wide a basis as possible would ensure that cheerful acquiescence in the decision of the majority which invariably spells success."<sup>31</sup> The next week the Clipper was elated. Its advice had been followed. Another meeting of sixty odd had been called and unanimously upset the decision of seventeen. The outcome of the dispute was perhaps a measure of the influence the Clipper wielded in Labor activity in the State. Lamerton having been dispelled, the Clipper took the opportunity to express its personal antipathy. The Labor man had been of "little value" to the Party, for he did not understand the true basis of the movement. He was too "strongly individualistic in temperament".<sup>32</sup>

It was not until 1909 that the real Judas appeared in the person of Gilbert Rowntree, who represented the Hobart Wharf Laborers. His stand as an Independent Labor candidate for Denison, the electorate Woods was contesting, represented a sore affront to Woods personally, and the biggest threat yet to the unity of the Tasmanian Labor movement. But more important for present purposes the independent candidate represented a challenge to the position and teachings of Woods and the Clipper. The challenge was more significant for what it symbolized than for what it achieved. In the election Woods won an easy victory over his opponent.

\* \* \* \*

Rowntree's stand was significant in bringing to crisis relations between the political and trade union demands in the Tasmanian Labor party. To explain this crisis, one must trace the history of trade

unionism in the island and especially Woods's role in this development. This in turn opens up the question of his whole part in the Tasmanian Labor movement.

More than any other Labor leader in Tasmania Woods believed in the necessity for strong unions. As political Labor had come of age in Tasmania independent of trade union activity this was a too literal and also dangerous translation of his mainland experience. On the mainland, in New South Wales, Queensland and to a lesser extent Victoria the trade union organizations had initiated political representation. It has also been shown that steps in this direction had been taken before the so called "great turning point" of 1890, by Melbourne and Sydney Trades and Labor Councils.<sup>33</sup> It was natural that all mainland speakers and organisers in Tasmania took for granted the same pattern of development in the island State. These included Prime Minister Watson, W.G. Spence and Arthur Rae. In a letter to the Clipper, Rae formulated the common sentiment:

Experience has taught us that the industrial organisation of Labor, that is Trades Unionism, is and must be the backbone of the movement if Labor in politics is to be kept on the straight track . . . Unionism in short, makes for capacity, strength, wisdom, solidarity, while political action is a mere flash-in-the-pan, making much noise and display but of no more solid value than a cannonade of blank cartridges . . . New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria are all organised from shore to shore . . .<sup>34</sup>

Woods pursued his mission to organise relentlessly. He never considered the inapplicability of mainland experience in Tasmanian conditions. He looked upon trade unions not as an alternative means to secure the workers' ends, for he was firmly in favour of political and legislative action. Rather, he fancied trade unions to be a type

of training-school for politicians. In those precincts prospective politicians were to be trained in discipline and solidarity. "It is the spirit of solidarity more than the exact letter of the rules and platform that counts for successful labor politics - if that spirit is lacking in the State Labor party the organised workers outside parliament should take steps to make a radical alteration".<sup>35</sup> The disciplinary methods of trade unionism would prepare for the parliamentary pledge. Woods eulogized unionism. Not only was it "among the greatest forces for the moral, intellectual and social improvement of mankind",<sup>36</sup> but it was indeed "the best test of intelligence extant; the higher the intelligence the greater the power of combination".<sup>37</sup> Woods was of course referring to "new unionism", the sort that participated in politics, not the craft unionism that still existed in Tasmania.

As an example to Tasmanian unionists he pointed to the mainland states, and also England.

Some of the more conservative unions in Hobart and other places which religiously avoid politics in their meetings may profit by the reminder that at the present time no less than a million of the Unionists in England and Wales, not counting Scotland, are affiliated with the Labor Representation Committee and are levying themselves to cover the expenses of the forthcoming general elections.<sup>38</sup>

The result of the Great Britain elections Woods taught as a lesson of what could be won through earnestness. Over forty-five Labor candidates were returned, and the whole of the funds necessary to fight the battle was subscribed by the Unions and unskilled workers.

The storm which broke in 1909 had been brewing as early as 1903; the signs were apparent if only Woods would heed them. At the first Labor Conference of 1903 in Hobart, the Wharf Laborers Union was

conspicuously absent. Woods simply saw them as unenlightened; they did not yet understand that the "stand alone" policy was a suicidal one.<sup>39</sup> The next year the W.P.L. officers (Woods was General Secretary) reported, not without surprise, that the only union to affiliate in a body with the Political League for the Senate elections was the Gormanston branch of the A.M.A. It seemed that to the other branches of the A.M.A., the Wharf Laborers, the Railways, the Typographical and other Unions, the scheme of affiliation did not commend itself.

If Woods saw the writing on the wall, he did not recognise its meaning. He spared no effort to convince unionists of the righteousness of his cause. In 1904 he called for an all-round union, either as a branch of the Australian Workers Union, or as a separate Tasmanian association. It was urged that one big union would cure industrial weakness in Tasmania, thought to be a result of the necessarily small and parochial unions. He was constantly dogged by mainland precedents. "It is clear that some such organisation is necessary if Tasmania is not to become and remain a dead weight and a drag on the more advanced Labor movement of the sister States".<sup>40</sup>

A preliminary meeting was called for all interested at the Workingmen's Club in Hobart on 13 March, 1905. Woods presided at the meeting and outlined in full the reasons for one big union. A general workers' union would overcome all the difficulties of small unions such as limited membership, financial weakness, the possibility of victimization and the impossibility of awakening a general public sympathy. Temporary officers chosen included Gilbert Rowntree as Secretary.

Woods personally founded many Tasmanian unions. The same month that the Tasmanian Workers Association was founded, Woods presided at the founding meeting of the operative bakers union at Hobart. He spent a great deal of time in 1908 organizing the Channel and Huon timber workers. A Branch of the Australian Saw Millers Union was consequently established. He organised the workers in jam factories, with the result that a Factory Employees' Union was formed which formally resolved to affiliate with the Victorian and New South Wales branches of the Union.

Perhaps the most successful course followed to stimulate industrial organisational growth in Tasmania, was to encourage large mainland unions to send over organisers to establish branches in the island. Woods offered his full support and encouragement to this line of action. The travels of G.M. Burns, Labor M.P., in Victoria in 1905 for this purpose were of little consequence. The decision of Sydney A.W.U. to send an organiser to Tasmania, was. The organiser Arthur Rae pioneered the organisation of shearers in the midlands with relative success. A Tasmanian branch of the A.W.U. was established at Campbell Town.

Woods tried every means to strengthen unionism in Tasmania. In the Clipper of April 20, 1907 he called upon the secretaries of trade unions to establish a Trades and Labor Council; an authoritative body was needed to consider united action on inter-state matters. The first Council had collapsed in the nineties, was reformed in 1900 but due to insufficient support, disappeared within a few months.<sup>41</sup> Woods persisted in his advocacy of the need for a Council but it was not until July 1910 that one was formed.

Woods further attempted to seduce the unionists into politics by repeatedly offering them special standing at reduced membership fee in the Political Leagues. But this proposal did little to encourage membership. The unionists' antipathy towards political affiliation was again demonstrated in the decision of the Zeehan branch of the A.M.A. not to take further shares in the Clipper. The editor remarked that the principles of new unionism was adopted by the A.W.U. had hardly begun to take root among the mines. In June 1908, the A.M.A. voted on whether the Union should affiliate with Political Labor Leagues and have power to levy for political purposes. The ballot resulted in a large majority against the proposal. Zeehan recorded one of the highest "no" votes.<sup>42</sup>

Woods's faith was blind. At the elections of 1909 Labor in Tasmania featured a one hundred percent increase in votes on the 1906 elections. That is, political Labor was progressing well without the solid backing of industrial organisation. Six years of smouldering resentment on the part of many old-style unionists was climaxed in 1909 when the Wharf Laborers put up an "independent" candidate in direct opposition to Woods. The Secretary of the Union, D. Patten was motivated by a strong dislike of Woods's attitude towards unionism.<sup>43</sup>

Woods's role in the Labor movement in the years from 1903 until 1909 was paradoxical. All his efforts were directed towards solidarity within the movement, but was not the result disintegration? The following decade was marked by bitter conflicts between the political wing of Labor and militant trade union leaders. It is sadly ironical that the man who worked selflessly to bring the industrial and political wings

of the movement together, was the cause of the first of these splits.

A general assessment of the place of Walter Woods and the Clipper in the founding of the Tasmanian Labor movement is difficult, primarily because such would require a full history of the early Labor movement, which this paper does not pretend to incorporate. Woods's main, and I think, indisputable, achievement lay in the fact that he personally and through the medium of the Clipper fostered a vibrant working-class consciousness, in a people previously "more peaceful, more ordinary, more bourgeois" than any in the world.<sup>44</sup>

The Clipper was the first direct and successful appeal to the Tasmanian working-class. The first step towards achieving a socialist State was to create a socialistic and democratic self-consciousness in the people - Woods took that step.

## Conclusion

Walter Alan Woods died aged seventy-seven on 28 February, 1939. The widespread sources of the tributes and condolences on his death reveal his intense interest in community affairs and organisations. Tributes came from Government House, the Education Department, Hobart High School and Headmaster Higgins, the President of the Tasmanian Branch of the League of Nations Union and the Secretary of the Council of the Parents and Friends Association. The achievement most referred to in the tributes and obituaries however was his part in advancing the cause of Labor: that when the voice of Labor was as the voice in the wilderness he was in the forefront of its advocacy.

His parliamentary career continued late into his life. Woods was first elected to the House of Assembly when he was editor of the Clipper. He was elected again as member for Denison in 1909, 1912, 1913 and 1916. He resigned his seat in 1917 to contest a seat for the Senate but was defeated. In 1925 he was again elected as a member for Denison to the House of Assembly. He was returned in 1928 and held his seat until May 1931, when he was defeated at the General Elections. He was Chairman of Committees from July 1925 until October 1926 and Speaker of the House of Assembly from March 1914 until May 1916, and from October 1926 until July 1928.

That he never held office in the Labor administrations he supported was probably due to his uncompromising nature. It is not in the nature of things for an uncompromisingly honest man to have many friends and so it was not unnatural that Woods experienced moods in which he felt (as he

wrote in one poem) that he could count his friends on his finger ends.

He always lived true to the ideals of honesty, consistency and earnestness which he had preached in the Clipper, from the "Hollow" in the Queen's Domain and from the soap-box in Arthur's Circus, Battery Point. When he wrote the poem "The Old King William Pine", he could equally well have been talking of himself when he said about the pine:

A hundred years of tempests have  
not dashed  
The courage of his soul!

And indeed perhaps he was.

## References

### Chapter One

1. The Woods Papers N.P. 139/8/11.
2. Phillips, A.A. The Australian Tradition, Sydney, 1958, p. 38.
3. Furphy, J. Such is Life, Sydney, 1948.
4. Roderick, C. "Henry Lawson to W.W. Head". Meanjin XXV,i, 1966.
5. Papers N.P. 139/8/7.
6. Arnold, R. "Henry Lawson: The New Zealand Visits". Australian Literary Studies III, iii, 1968.
7. *ibid.*, p. 174.
8. Papers N.P. 139/8/11
9. Clipper, 3 March, 1906.
10. *ibid.*, 24 July, 1897.
11. Papers N.P. 139/1/5.
12. Clipper, 17 October, 1908.
13. Letter to Holder Bros., Fingal, 1/6/1902. Papers N.P. 139/1/5.
14. Papers N.S. 139/11; also Clipper, 17 April, 1909.
15. Clipper, 18 July, 1903.
16. Tasmanian Democrat, 29 January, 1897.
17. Papers N.P. 139/8/1.
18. *ibid.*
19. Clipper, 6 December, 1902.
20. See Thompson, Ailsa G. "The Early History of the Bulletin", Historical Studies, May, 1954.
21. Clipper, 24 January, 1903.
22. *ibid.*, 2 April, 1904.

23. *ibid.*, 20 January, 1906.
24. *ibid.*, 2 June, 1906.
25. *ibid.*, 7 July, 1906.
26. *ibid.*, 9 April, 1904.
27. *ibid.*, 28 April, 1906.
28. *ibid.*, 15 February, 1908.
29. *ibid.*, 8 December, 1906.
30. *ibid.*, 11 November, 1905.
31. "Ghosts", *ibid.*, 17 April, 1909.
32. *ibid.*, 31 January, 1903.
33. *ibid.*, 12 August, 1905.
34. *ibid.*, 28 September, 1907.
35. *ibid.*, 24 November, 1906.
36. *ibid.*, 20 July, 1907.
37. *ibid.*, 20 July, 1907.
38. *ibid.*, 28 November, 1908.
39. Papers N.P. 139/1/2.
40. *ibid.*, N.P. 139/1/1.
41. Clipper, 18 February, 1905.
42. "Red Page", Bulletin, 30 March, 1905.

## Chapter Two

1. Clipper, 4 January, 1908.
2. *ibid.*, 12 December, 1903.
3. Ben Watkins, *ibid.*, 14 March, 1908.
4. *ibid.*, 21 March, 1903.

5. *ibid.*, 6 February, 1909.
6. *ibid.*, 31 October, 1908.
7. *ibid.*, 25 April, 1903.
8. *ibid.*, 27 May, 1905.
9. *ibid.*, 2 July, 1904.
10. *ibid.*, 25 July, 1904.
11. *ibid.*, 3 March, 1906.
12. *ibid.*, 17 November, 1906.
13. *ibid.*, 30 January, 1904.
14. *ibid.*, 23 February, 1907.
15. *ibid.*, 12 May, 1906.
16. *ibid.*, 31 October, 1908.
17. *ibid.*, 4 August, 1906.
18. *ibid.*, 29 February, 1908.
19. *ibid.*, 28 November, 1908.
20. Hancock, W.K. Australia, London, 1930, p. 72.
21. Clipper, 5 November, 1904.
22. *ibid.*, 1 April, 1905.
23. *ibid.*, 21 March, 1903.
24. William Sheridan, *ibid.*, 23 June, 1906.
25. *ibid.*, 1 October, 1904.
26. *ibid.*, 4 May, 1907.
27. *ibid.*, 10 September, 1904.
28. *ibid.*, 15 June, 1907.
29. *ibid.*, 1 December, 1906.
30. *ibid.*, 7 October, 1905.

31. *ibid.*, 15 October, 1904.
32. *ibid.*, 29 October, 1904.
33. *ibid.*, 5 November, 1904.
34. *ibid.*, 3 November, 1906.
35. *ibid.*, 8 December, 1906.
36. *ibid.*, 19 December, 1908.
37. See Gollan, R. Radical and Working Class Politics, Melbourne, 1960, pp. 191-2; also  
Goodwin, C.D.W. Economic Enquiry in Australia.  
Durham, Duke University Press, 1966, p. 100.
38. Gollan R. *op.cit.* p. 191.
39. Clipper, 8 June, 1907.
40. *ibid.*, 28 April, 1906.
41. *ibid.*, 20 August, 1904.
42. *ibid.*, 27 May, 1905.
43. *ibid.*, 16 March, 1907.
44. Bulletin, 30 June, 1904.
45. *ibid.*, 17 November, 1904.
46. *ibid.*, 29 December, 1904.
47. Clipper, 15 October, 1904.
48. *ibid.*, 26 May, 1906.
49. *ibid.*, 14 July, 1906.
50. *ibid.*, 19 October, 1907.
51. Clark, C.M.H. ed. Select Documents in Australian History 1851-1900.  
Sydney, 1955, p. 638.
52. Clipper, 21 March, 1903.

53. *ibid.*, 24 December, 1904.
54. *ibid.*, 18 November, 1905.
55. *ibid.*, 20 April, 1907.
56. *ibid.*, 21 March, 1903.
57. Goodwin, C.D.W. *op.cit.* p. 388.
58. Clipper, 18 May, 1907.
59. *ibid.*, 27 July, 1907.
60. *ibid.*, 27 July, 1907.
61. *ibid.*, 30 November, 1907.
62. *ibid.*, 16 May, 1908.
63. *ibid.*, 11 April, 1908.

### Chapter Three

1. Reynolds, H. "The Island Colony Tasmania : Society and Politics 1880-1900." M.A. Thesis, University of Tasmania, 1965.
2. Clipper, 9 February, 1907.
3. *ibid.*, 24 January, 1903.
4. *ibid.*, 24 January, 1903.
5. *ibid.*, 7 February, 1903.
6. *ibid.*, 25 July, 1903.
7. *ibid.*, 17 March, 1906.
8. *ibid.*, 14 April, 1906.
9. *ibid.*, 15 September, 1906.
10. *ibid.*, 7 January, 1905.
11. *ibid.*, 9 May, 1903.
12. *ibid.*, 2 January, 1904.

13. *ibid.*, 28 May, 1904.
14. *ibid.*, 7 October, 1905.
15. McRae, M.D. "The Tasmanian Labour Party and Trade Unions, 1903-1923", T.H.R.A. Papers and Proceedings V,1, 1956, p. 4.
16. Clipper, 14 October, 1905.
17. *ibid.*, 23 February, 1907.
18. *ibid.*, 21 October, 1905.
19. *ibid.*, 4 November, 1905.
20. *ibid.*, 11 November, 1905.
21. *ibid.*, 25 May, 1907.
22. *ibid.*, 5 May, 1906.
23. *ibid.*, 22 May, 1909.
24. *ibid.*, 18 August, 1908.
25. *ibid.*, 19 November, 1904.
26. *ibid.*, 6 March, 1909.
27. *ibid.*, 29 August, 1908.
28. Spence, W.G. Australia's Awakening, Melbourne, 1909. p. 307.
29. Clipper, 22 October, 1904.
30. *ibid.*, 29 April, 1905.
31. *ibid.*, 9 December, 1905.
32. *ibid.*, 16 December, 1905.
33. See Philipp, June, "1890 : Turning Point in Labor History?"  
Historical Studies IV, and Gollan, R. "The Trade Unions and Labor Parties 1890-94", Historical Studies VII.
34. Clipper, 12 October, 1907.
35. *ibid.*, 10 September, 1904.

36. *ibid.*, 3 April, 1909.
37. *ibid.*, 27 March, 1909.
38. *ibid.*, 13 May, 1905.
39. *ibid.*, 4 July, 1903.
40. *ibid.*, 11 March, 1905.
41. McRae, M.D., *op.cit.* p. 6.
42. Clipper, 27 June, 1908.
43. *ibid.*, 24 April, 1909.
44. Max O'Rell John Bull & Co. Cited Reynolds, H., *op.cit.* p. 214.

## Bibliography

### Newspapers

Clipper 1897, 1902 - 1909.

Daily Post 1909.

Bulletin 1902, 1904, 1905.

### Unpublished Material

The Woods Papers (Tasmanian State Archives)

- Clipper, Business Papers, including those relating to its liquidation, 1908-11. N.P. 139/1/1.
- Letters from Woods concerning the Clipper 1909-10. N.P. 139/1/2.
- Letters from Woods relating to the Infallible Remedy Company, 1902, N.P. 139/1/5.
- Miscellaneous letters to W.A. Woods, N.P. 139/8/1.
- Telegram from Lawson. N.P. 139/8/7.
- Notebook and Poetry. N.P. 139/8/12.
- Poetry and Newspaper Clippings. N.P. 139/8/11.
- Tributes and Condolences on Woods's death early in 1939. N.P. 139/8/14.
- Miscellaneous Pamphlets, including Robert Blatchford's Merrie England, N.S. 139/12.
- Political Pamphlets. N.S. 139/11.
- New Zealand Labour Party Pamphlets. N.S. 139/13.

Thesis (University of Tasmania Library)

Reynolds, Henry. "The Island Colony : Tasmania : Society and Politics 1880 - 1900".

M.A. Thesis, Hobart, August 1965.

### Journal Articles

- Arnold, R. "Henry Lawson : The New Zealand Visits", Australian Literary Studies, III, iii, 1958.
- Blackton, C.S. "Australian Nationality and Nationalism 1850 - 1900", Historical Studies, IX.
- Gollan, R. "The Trade Unions and Labour Parties, 1890 - 94", Historical Studies, VII, xxv, 1955.
- McRae, M.D. "Some Aspects of the Origins of the Tasmanian Labour Party". T.H.R.A. Papers and Proceedings, III, ii, 1954.
- McRae, M.D. "The Tasmanian Labour Party and the Trade Unions, 1903 - 1923". T.H.R.A. Papers and Proceedings, V, i, 1956.
- Philipp, J. "1890 : Turning Point in Labor History?", Historical Studies, IV.
- Reynolds, J. "Walter Alan Woods" Meanjin, XXV, i, 1966.
- Roderick, C. "Henry Lawson to W.W. Head", Meanjin, XXV, i, 1966.
- Thompson, Ailsa, G. "The Early History of the Bulletin", Historical Studies, 1954.

### Books

- Childe, V.G. How Labour Governs, Melbourne, 1964.
- Clark, C.M.H., ed. Select Documents in Australian History, 1851 - 1900, Sydney, 1955.
- Coleman, P., ed. Australian Civilization, Melbourne, 1962.
- Crisp, L.F. The Australian Federal Labour Party, 1901 - 1951, London, 1955.
- Furphy, J. Such is Life; Being Certain Extracts from the Diary of Tom Collins, Sydney, 1948

- Gollan, R. Radical and Working-Class Politics, Melbourne, 1960.
- Goodwin, C.D.W. Economic Enquiry in Australia, Duke University Press, 1966.
- Green, F.C. ed. A Century of Responsible Government in Tasmania, 1856 - 1956, Hobart, 1956.
- Hancock, W.K. Australia, London, 1930.
- Palmer, V. National Portraits, Melbourne, 1948.
- Phillipps, A.A. The Australian Tradition, Sydney, 1958.
- Spence, W.G. Australia's Awakening, Melbourne, 1909.
- Sutcliffe, J.T. A History of Trades Unionism, Melbourne, 1921.