

## **Labor Memoirs Ballarat**

WJ McAdam

### **Ballarat North Railway Workshops History**

Early in 1911 it was commonly reported that the Watt Liberal Government of Victoria contemplated purchasing from Private Enterprise rolling stock for the Railways Department that would cost £65,000 to £70,000 more than if same has been made on the Railway Workshops at Newport. This matter had been viewed very seriously by the Laborites of Ballarat North and Soldiers Hill and was the principal thought behind the May Day Celebration of the branch (then known as the PLL). The celebrations were held on the then old Soldiers Hill Band room an adjunct of the Millers Arms Hotel and the main address was given by the Secretary (Mr WJ McAdam) and naturally the theme was Socialism. Largely quoting from a booklet written by the late Tom Tunncliffe MLA which contained much in reference to the Newport Workshops naturally impressed the audience of about fifty people gathered. At the conclusion of the address and the end of the celebrations three members of the branch namely Bobby Band, a Cabman, Jack Ward a "Courier" employee and Jim Tait husband of the licensee of the Millers Arms Hotel adjourned to the bar to have a glass of beer and during the time of partaking of these drinks discussed the address given by the Secretary. Knowing of the earlier reports of the intention of the Watt Government Jim Tait raised the question of starting a campaign at Ballarat North to secure Government Workshops. The other two agreed the time was ripe and they there and then decided that they would ask the ALP (PLL) secretary Mr McAdam if he would act as Secretary to a campaign. Next night Mr Ward waited on Mr McAdam and told him what was proposed and asked would he act as Secretary. Mr McAdam agreed to the request. That week a Committee was formed with Mr McAdam as Organising Secretary. The Committee got going at once, attempting to carry out a plan of Organisation but to their surprise were met by a wave of hostility. Plenty of sneers, jeers, insults and even brawls were met. "Just another IWW stunt of the Labor Crowd" was freely hurled at members. Although a bit downhearted at the reception received the Committee decided to carry on. Every possible avenue was exploited even to some of those who adopted a sneering attitude to Committee members. Business men sounded out, Members of Parliament approached, the Progress Association was well informed. We secured the assistance of Mr Andy McKissock who was then the MLA for Ballarat West who contacted at our request the late Frank Hyett, Secretary of the ARU and our Committee were able to gather much information quickly. We also got the assistance of Mr Tom Hursfield who was well versed in the days of the Phoenix Foundry and another friend by the name of Miller. Having secured all the information as to what was required our next problem was the site. We inspected the present site, also the

Showgrounds site (then known as land for Worlem(??) homes). We also learned that people in other parts wanted shops in their districts. The Committee had just about finished its enquiries and were preparing to state their case when an individual who had previously made many enquiries about what was doing from Mr Bobby Baird shot a thunderbolt. He had been asked by some people at Newport and Sunshine if he could find out how things were going. Mr Baird said we were just about ready to give the show a go. This chap must have told one of the Councillors as Mr Baird was asked to see Mayor Barker. The Committee realising a united body was better than a small coterie agreed and Mr Baird had an interview with Mayor Barker. Local interest took a turn. Mayor Barker arranged to call a meeting of interested citizens which was held. They elected a chairman and a secretary and arrangements were made to put the case before the Railway Commissioner. This new committee which included some members of the ALP committee did good work too.

#### Meeting the Commissioner, Mr Fitzpatrick

Mr Hursdfield put the case from the citizens' standpoint. Mayor Barker had promised that the City Council would pay interest on £40,000 to get the shops built at Ballarat. By this time the question of workshops for Ballarat was a real live question. Many who sneered and jeered at the outset were now prepared to clap and cheer. On July 20<sup>th</sup> 1911 at Parliament Mr McKissock MLA stated there were still many unemployed in Ballarat and he hoped the recommendations of the Railway Commissioners in regard to the extension of the Railway Repair Workshops to Ballarat would be carried out as speedy as possible. We still had to fight the opposition by people who wanted the shops elsewhere. It was unfortunate that in the elections of 1911 Mr McKissock was defeated by Mr Baird. That was the first since that women had a vote.

#### Now the well-staged fanfare of Triumph

The stage had been well set for the announcement that the Government had decided to build the Workshops at Ballarat North and Bendigo. At a dinner of South Street Society the Hon WH Edgar MLC Minister of Public Works in the Watt Government just dropped enough to prepare the assemblage for what was to be staged at night. The opening of South Street Competitions on September 30<sup>th</sup> 1912 just before the last musical item was to be given and the show well staged. The conductor Mr Bailey called for attention as the Hon R McGregor MLA had an important announcement to make contained in a telegram from Mr Watt to Messrs McGregor and Baird McAdam was the news that the Government had that day decided to build the

Workshops at Ballarat North and Bendigo costing £80,000 without contribution from the City Council. Great jubilation “Socialism in Excelsis” but not admitted.

#### Heads celebrate

Led by Mayor Crocker the “heads” adjourned to Gray’s Hotel to “Pop the Corks of Champagne” and celebrate the event and scratch the backs of those who came into the movement after all the spade work was done. Those who were responsible for the movement being launched and preserved within face of sneers, jeers and insult never got a mention.

#### Extract from “Courier” 1/10/1912

The 22<sup>nd</sup> South Competitions were opened at the Coliseum last night by the Hon WH Edgar MLC Minister of Public Works who was backed by the Hon A Deakin MP. The gentlemen both made eloquent academical speeches of a kind suitable for the occasion and there was a very good programme of music. The dramatic announcement during the proceedings of the intention of the Government to spend £80,000 on steam locomotive workshops for Ballarat will make the month a memorable one and a more fitting place or time for it could hardly have been selected.

#### Another striking Courier Comment

In the “Courier” of January 12<sup>th</sup> 1963 the fact was disclosed that in Ballarat alone through the Railways as a whole and the Workshops in particular it constitutes spending money to the tune of a million pounds a year.

### **Preferential Voting at Elections**

During every election campaign the question who brought in Preferential Voting was always agreed. In order that Labor and Unionists may know it is wise to place the facts plainly.

Preferential voting for the Legislative Assembly of Victoria elections was introduced by the Hon WA Watt MLA Minister for Labor in 1911. The number of Act is 2321 of 1911. The Government did not bring in Preferential Voting for the Legislative Council elections until 1921 Act No 3139 1921.

The first assembly election under the Act was for the assembly on November 26<sup>th</sup> 1911.

In the Federal Parliament the system was brought in by Mr Glynn of the Nationalist Party Husion Government. This was for the House of Representatives only. October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1918. One year later the system was introduced by Senator Russell (Nationalist) on October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1919 when he introduced the system in the Senate. The system came into operation at the General Elections in 1919.

In Victoria the Labor Party strenuously opposed the measure. Elmore(?), Prendergast, Wards, Bilson who tried their utmost to defeat the measure. Watt openly said it was the same as a second ballot for the minority voters. The second reading was carried by 21 votes to 27 so evidently a number of Libs were also opposed to it. Labor tried to limit the bill to 3 years but got defeated by 30 votes to 21. They did not bring on the system for Legislative Council elections until ten years later.

## **History of the White Swan Dam Ballarat**

The Dam that saved Ballarat – the Dam that made Ballarat.

On 4/2/1936 I was appointed to the Ballarat Water Commission as a Government representative and continued as such until 4/2/1935. The late JM Barker (Chairman) and the late AJ Pitford MLC were the other two Government nominees. The City Council representatives were Crs King, Knight Lederman and Martin.

The Commissioner at that time with Mr A Hamer Engineer were confronted with the problem of having a better supply of water for the citizens of Ballarat.

Mr Hamer securing the experienced assistance of Mr Ritchie the MMB of Works engineers was in favour of building storage dams similar to those existing in Melbourne and elsewhere. Crs Lederman and Martin were opposed to the storage system as proposed by Mr Hamer. Jealousy crept into the business and the City Council foolishly lent itself to the debating of Water Commission business in open Council. There was much hostility between the Council reps and many insulting references were cast. Jealousy also casted between the Commission Officers and this allowed a further hostility to exist all round. I watched and waited, and finally decided that the only way to get enough water for Ballarat was by building a New Reservoir. Being a student of World affairs at the time, I could see by the various Press reports and of some of the "Old Contemptibles" then resident in Ballarat that the powers were on asking for another World War. I knew that this Country was sure to be drawn into the conflict and that being the case Industry for war purposes would have to get out into Country areas. I sought the support of Cr AJ Pitford to support and second a motion to hold a meeting to build another reservoir. Cost was the main objection. After a lot of discussion and we together at my request made inspections of the Present White Swan Dam area. Mr Pitford promised he would support and second my motion pro forma to hold a meeting to discuss the building of a New Reservoir at the White Swan area. Mr Pitford as he always did with me kept his promise. On June 15<sup>th</sup> 1939 at the Commission meeting I moved that a special meeting of the Commission be held to consider the advisability of increasing water storage at the Reservoir. Cr AJ Pitford seconded.

The report in the "Ballarat Courier" of 16/6/39 said "Com McAdam's idea was that an embankment should be constructed from the vicinity of the late James Long Residence across the State Forest. They would impound more water than they had in the whole of the present reservoir. He believed the Engineers would be able to devise means of utilising the overflow which went to waste down the creek. As to the cost they had a justifiable claim on the Government for the money on water supply for other places."

Com Pitford He was supporting the motion for the calling of a special meeting the matter was worthy of consideration.

The Chairman (Mr JM Barker) I think the meeting should be held first.

Cr Lederman What is the use of calling a special meeting if we have no information?

Com George They had adequate storage capacity but not the water unit.

Commissioners McAdam, Pitford and Martin for it.

You must understand that the White Swan Dam is a big storage basin taking the excess water from the other Dams due to it not having a by-catchment area. The loss of that motion was a serious blow to the people of Ballarat especially the North and Western areas. The position was so bad that people at Ballarat North could not get enough water to make a cup of tea for their dinner. This induced the Commission to build the pipe known as the Pincotts High Level Main to improve the supply to the North and Western districts of Ballarat. But that did not improve the position for storage of water. In fact it decreased it because it meant more water was available for use. At Cr Martin's suggestion the Commission decided to bore for water at the Reserves. I believe the cost was in the vicinity of £700, but we got no water.