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# Trouble Makers: Anarchism and Syndicalism

The early years of the Libertarian Movement in  
Aotearoa / New Zealand

Frank Prebble

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1995

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1995

FROM THE STRIKERS COMMITTEE

*(Industrial Unionist Nov 29th 1913)*

## References

As I have already said in the introduction much of the information for this pamphlet has come from secondary sources. I am particularly indebted to the late Bert Roth for all his help and his many excellent articles in such magazines as Here and Now and Monthly Review. Bert wrote several books on the labour movement all well worth reading.

Erik Ollsen's "Red Feds" is the best book dealing with the period up to 1914, well its the only one.

Other books include

- "The Road The Men Came Home" By Edward Hunter, a semi auto- biographical novel photo copy available from Lib Press.
- "The Memoirs of Tom Barker" photo copy also available.
- "The Red and the Gold" by Stanley Roache
- "Miners and Militants" by Len Richardson
- "The Denniston Miners Union" by Len Richardson
- "Scholar Errant" R.M. Burdon. (The life of Alexander Bickerton)
- Tom Barker and the IWW - Oral history recorded and edited by E.C. Fry available on the Australian IWW website.

the one hand and Bolshevism on the other, effectively divided the movement and I believe, destroyed it. We have waited seventy years for the Bolshevik myth to be finally destroyed. The myth of state socialism was exposed by the anarchists of the First International in the 1870's. Until recently many labour historians considered the crowning achievement of the workers movement to be the formation of a labour party. The 1980's should have killed that idea.

When I started to research this pamphlet I knew nothing of the early libertarian movement and thought, like most that it didn't rarely exist in this country. How wrong I was.

**TO ALL MAORI PEOPLE**

MY FRIENDS,

This is a message to you to explain the reason the workers of New Zealand are striking and to show that this strike concerns you. The top bosses of the shipping companies and the Government mean to destroy the unions of New Zealand workers, so that they can succeed in lowering the wages of the workers. The newspapers are concealing the most important point. These bosses are looking for people to act as policeman to fight us. Not one of you should participate in these treacherous dealings. This is disgusting work. We and you are workers together and we all suffer from the same affliction. It was these bosses who confiscated your land, they who shot your ancestors in days gone by. This thieving gang is your enemy - people without feelings. You are our dear friends. And so, we must always hold fast to our mutual love. All workers should be of one mind regarding this battle. Therefore do not help our mutual enemies. We are all workers together, We are ever one tribe - the tribe of workers.

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stop it drying. Along with an advert for Allen's pamphlet "Revolutionary Unionism", Bill Murdoch wrote an article condemning Trade Unionism and outlined the basic ideas of Industrial Unionism and Syndicalism.

After November the 23rd the militant unions were left isolated. The wharfies held out until just before Christmas, and the miners into the new year. With the defeat of the strike the scabs ran riot. Charlie Reeve a leading member of the I.W.W. was beaten up when he tried to board the Maheno bound for Sydney. The end of the strike also destroyed the I.W.W. as an organised group although Industrial Unionism remained a powerful force within the labour movement. It took nearly two years for the Auckland watersiders to recapture their union from the 'arbitrationists' and readmit many of the sacked strikers.

## **End Piece and References**

The defeat of the 1913 strike didn't have the same devastating effect as in 1890 or 1951. Many militants began organising in the countryside. Indeed much of the gelignite stolen in Auckland was put to good use in the gum diggings of Northland. Many Wobblies became active in the Shearers and other rural unions, and the employers once again began to complain that they still needed to "finish the job". Early in 1914 Tom Barker moved to Sydney to "fan the flames of discontent". This is literally what happened. Charlie Reeve and J.B.King were among twelve I.W.W leaders accused of arson and conspiracy in 1916. They all received extremely harsh sentences but were released in 1920. Bill Murdoch went on to become an organiser of the One Big Union movement in Auckland in the 1920s, and a militant in the Auckland Watersiders Union.

From the turn of the century up until 1914 were the years of insurgent labour. The First World War ripped the guts out of the militant labour movement. The rise of social democracy on

organisers published an appeal in the Maoriland Worker, and there were several wildcat strikes, especially in the North Island. The Federation then tried unsuccessfully to involve the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants. Time was running out. The I.W.W. continued to campaign for an all out general strike, and urged the shearers to force the farmers home; if a strike wouldn't bring them back then sabotage certainly would, they believed. They also urged the strikers to form a workers militia to clear the streets of scabs and special police. Although the strike was general in Auckland, it was a different story in the rest of the country. Support in Christchurch was patchy. However Lyttelton was at a standstill. Nothing moved in Westport, and in Dunedin the entire strike committee was arrested. But the final blow didn't come from the government and employers but from the executive of the Seafarers Union when they broke ranks and came to a compromise agreement with the shipping companies. This, along with a drift back to work by some of the smaller unions forced the Auckland Strike Committee to cancel the strike on the 23rd of November. However the Watersiders, Labourers, and Drivers remained solid as did six hundred seafarers of the Auckland union. The I.W.W. bitterly criticised the strike committee for not consulting the rank and file before they acted. Meanwhile several militants had been arrested for concealing explosives, and the papers were full of stories of conspiracies. One allegedly involved a plan to blow up the Wellington express. History was to repeat itself in the 1951 Waterfront Lockout. The last issue of the "Industrial Unionist" was printed on the 29th of November. They certainly went out in an optimistic mood. Along with reports on the progress of the strike in Wellington and Christchurch they carried news of sailors refusing to do bayonet drill on the H.M.S. Psyche anchored in Auckland harbour. They once again called for a General Strike and printed an amusing report about the NZ Herald advocating sabotage; a bag of sugar in concrete to make it crumble, and some cod liver oil in the varnish to

## Introduction

This pamphlet is not meant to be an introduction to anarchism. It is a brief outline of some of the groups and people who became associated with anarchism and revolutionary unionism before the outbreak of World War One in Aotearoa. In those early years the socialist, and syndicalist movement had an incredible influence in this country; a degree of organisation and militancy that has not, I believe, been matched since. Of course the socialist movement of that time bears no resemblance to what passes as socialism today; the super welfare state, and authoritarian state communism. Except for a handful of books, mostly published in recent years, those early struggles remain largely unknown, overshadowed by the events of October 1917, and November 1935 in radical mythology.

This pamphlet is not complete, much of the information we have is very fragmentary and a lot more work needs to be done. I have drawn most of the information from secondary sources. This obviously is not adequate enough and relies on other people's interpretation of primary sources and interviews.

In conversation with others I was told of an anarchist group in Wellington in 1913, "*after their meetings they used to have street fights with the coppers. I don't know anything else about them.*" An old communist... "*there was a well dressed fella who carried a book of Bakunin around under his arm when he was talking at street meetings.*" "*There was a family called the Webbs in Auckland who were quite active, also a Sacco-Vanzetti defence committee.*"

On another occasion somebody told me that there was an I.W.W group active during the 51 Lockout, or that there was a libertarian socialist group in Auckland in the 1950's. And so it goes on. Some of this information we have been able to verify. However our first breakthrough was when a comrade in Germany sent a translation of a page from Max Nettlau's "History

of Anarchism” dealing with Aotearoa. This covers the years 1890-1913, the period covered by this pamphlet.

It is also important to point out that not all the people dealt with here called themselves anarchists or libertarians, and even if they did, many of them didn't remain so. But it's what they did and who they associated with that places them within the movement. People have always struggled against tyranny and oppression; nothing new about that, but those who have struggled the most, and suffered the most, very rarely leave behind an account of their sacrifices or their triumphs.

## Nettlau's History of Anarchism

Perhaps the most important sources of information on anarchist and anti-authoritarian history are the works of Max Nettlau (1865-1944). In particular his *Die Geschichte Des Anarchismus* (the History of Anarchism). Chapter ten deals with "Anarchist propaganda and Industrial Unionism in Australia and New Zealand". Unfortunately only one page deals with Aotearoa, and this finishes in 1913. Nettlau was an Austrian anarchist active in the movement for over sixty years. He contributed to nearly all the major anarchist publications of his day, and wrote many biographies of leading anarchists, including Bakunin and Malatesta. He accumulated a huge collection of anarchist material which is gathered together in the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam. This is the translation of the page on New Zealand.

*'In New Zealand the Maoris, in no way a primitive people fought long and bravely but were bloodily and almost totally exterminated. Then several decades were let pass and gradually New Zealand emerged again as the model colony, the paradise of work laws and a second England. This suggestion had its effect, perhaps like Canada now has less*

Back in Wellington Barker relates in his memoir instances when the strikers attacked the specials barracks. Within a few weeks riots became continuous and the gun smiths were doing a roaring trade in the sale of revolvers. The police never caught on to this until all the guns in Wellington had been sold. However in Auckland all was quiet until November 8th when eight hundred farmer volunteers occupied the wharves armed with revolvers and pick handles. They also raided the offices of the Watersider's and tore down a banner from the front of the building which proclaimed "Workers of the World Unite. One Big Union".

Within a few days Auckland was in the grip of a general strike. Seven thousand workers struck and thousands more were idle. Barker went back to Auckland to assist in the production of the Industrial Unionist which was coming out every second day.

'Everyone was buying the paper.' Barker continues, 'I remember being in Queen Street I had sold seven hundred copies of the paper. I was absolutely weighed down with coppers. I could hardly move and had them stacked along the side of the street... along came a policeman who asked me to go to the police station with him.'

He ended up back in Wellington charged with sedition. The General Strike in Auckland, led by the I.W.W. forced the Federation of Labour to call a one day national strike for November 10th. It was a failure, and the next day many leading militants and wobblies were arrested. including the editor of the Maoriland Worker. Allen was appointed temporary editor. The government and employers were beginning to gain the upper hand. Nevertheless by the second week in Auckland the strike remained solid although four hundred scabs were already at work on the waterfront. After November 10th the Federation tried to extend the strike into the countryside. There was a lot of support from the rank and file of the Shearers Union, nevertheless the executive decided not to enter the struggle. Three

## The I. W. W. and the General Strike in Aotearoa

Not long after he joined the I.W.W. Tom Barker was appointed national organiser. He travelled south to Wellington and after several meetings around the docks and the railway workshops a branch was established. In Christchurch he was arrested for selling literature and fined ten shillings. He stayed in Christchurch for about a month and once again a branch was re-organised. Then on to the West Coast mines where he no doubt met Ted Hunter, a Wobbly organiser, miner and musician. Hunter wrote a regular column for the Maoriland Worker under the name "Banjo Hunter". The nickname "Banjo" could relate to either the banjo shovel used by face workers or the musical instrument. On the eve of the strike, in October Barker was back in Wellington speaking at the Post Office square. In the same month the Huntly miners went on strike and were promptly locked out by their employers. In Wellington the watersiders struck over travelling time and the dispute spread to all the main ports and to the mines of the West Coast. Barker was asked to organise public meetings in support of the strike.

'By relays of speakers, by I.W.W. songs which were catching on, we kept these meetings going continuously and at the same time we did not neglect the organising of the pickets. When the government brought in volunteer farmers as strike breakers the workers retaliated. The road into Wellington has steep gorges on one side and was fenced off from the sea by barbed wire. At night time when we got word from cyclists that the farmers were coming we would stretch this barbed wire across the road then get up on the hillsides and pry big stones down on them... the farmers would make a dash for it and land up in the barbed wire, in many cases getting badly cut.'

*cold and snow since people have systematically avoided talking of "Our Lady of the Snows". But perhaps such transformations do not occur, and there were many disappointed new immigrants. No libertarian voices were actually audible until 1914. Nevertheless, the constriction of the workers through work- legislation and developing militarism in New Zealand in the years before 1914 generated somewhat greater opposition than in Australia. In 1901 Tom Mann found the miners in the gold mines of Waihi on strike against the laws of the arbitration court, and during a visit five years later he found a new conflict there. Freedom<sup>1</sup>, January 1913 (English anarchist paper founded in 1886) tells of the terrible incidents of the strike in Waihi in November 1912 as 1,800 workers and their families were driven out of the town, their houses destroyed. "Waihi's Black Week".' According to the Maoriland Worker, 6 December, the Federation of Labour declared the strike ended by notifying, "After participation in the greatest industrial struggle in New Zealand's history, one of the most persistent, peaceful and clearly defined struggles for Industrial Unionism in*

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<sup>1</sup> In January 1913 Freedom (London) was able to be obtained at four places: Wellington, Christchurch, Invercargill and Auckland. P. Josephs the seller in Wellington who, for example, reviewed English anarchist literature in The Maoriland Worker, was the only anarchist there in 1911 and could only occasionally distribute Freedom and brochures from London. S Trunk, the militant German anarchist, previously in London, migrated to New Zealand Where his brother in-law Lutjohann lived, and nothing more was heard from him. This was a little before or after 1900. Towards the end of 1898 Paul Robin travelled to New Zealand but came back to Paris after several months. Michael Flurscheim visited New Zealand in 1904 in the course of his journey to investigate the possibilities of establishing a colony in the spirit of his land reform ideas. In those years appeared "A Federated Home, Wainoni" from the Canterbury Times 5 April 1899.

*Australasia, we feel ourselves compelled to come to this resolution in the face of forces being assembled against us, composed of the government with all its union destroying powers, the tribunal and all its degrading partisanship, indeed every conceivable aspect of capitalism." This example shows what a yoke the workers have laid upon themselves, and how their strength is wasted struggling against it. After this they would have little interest in idealistic socialism.<sup>2</sup>*

*This real New Zealand is not to be found in apologetic writings (e.g. the Fabian Tract, no 74, "The State and its Functions in New Zealand," London Dec 1896, but at least in some of the local worker's papers, some of which have reached Freedom since 1911. The Maoriland Worker, official organ of the N.Z. Federation of Labour stood for Industrial Unionism, as did the Social Democrat. Here may belong "Unionism Old and New", the substance of a lecture delivered before the Auckland Trades and Labour Council October 1910: by H. Scott Bennett printed by the Auckland Socialist Party 1910. "Labours Leg Iron" or "Liberal and Labour Party Arbitration Acts in New South Wales" with a brief reference to the N.Z. Arbitration Act by H.E.Holland, Maoriland Worker pamphlet 1912. This concerns the strike at Broken Hill. To combat militarism appeared, "Gaoling the Boys. Will the people of N.Z. stand for it ?". Issued by the Anti-Conscription League Wellington. In Christchurch appeared the*

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<sup>2</sup> Tom Mann, "Socialism. Does New Zealand stand in need of it?" Wellington 1901, mentioned in his "Memoirs" is unknown to me. The date should read 1902, because he first stepped foot in that country in January of that year.

active in the league. In 1908 he spoke at the Haymarket commemoration along with Malatesta and Rocker, and published an essay on anarchist communism in which he bitterly criticized the authoritarian socialists of the Socialist Labour Party. The following year he wrote a pamphlet "Revolutionary Unionism" which was reprinted in Wellington in 1913. He arrived in Auckland in March 1913 and became President of the General Labourers Union and contributed to the "Industrial Unionist".

The unity conference met in January 1913, and the leadership once again began to toy with the idea of political action. The I.W.W. was excluded from the conference. During this period the Wobblies devoted their energies to the basic task of winning back their local influence. They attempted to gain control of the arbitration union that had been set up in Huntly during the lockout. Wobblies also attempted to gain work in the Waihi mine. The company had blacklisted most of them. They led the fight back against the employers. In the same month the Auckland I.W.W. launched their own paper the "Industrial Unionist". It had an editorial committee of five. One of the five was Bill Murdoch a watersider. He was to continue being active in the syndicalist movement for many years, and was a member of the "One Big Union Club" in Auckland in the 20's. Jock Barnes remembers him as "a big man who was always heard at union meetings". This was in the mid thirties. A second unity conference was called for in July. This same month Paddy Webb, one of the leaders of the Federation, was elected to parliament for the Grey district on the West Coast. The July conference set up a new United Federation of Labour and discussed the establishment of a new Social Democratic Party. Within four months of the founding of the new Federation it was involved in the second major labour dispute in New Zealand's history.

backbone of the strike. Pressure mounted on the Federation to call a general strike. The employers announced towards the end of September that they would re-open the mine. But not until the second of October did they attempt to do this, and then with only fourteen scabs. Fifteen hundred workers assembled to stop them. The Wobblies sang a parody of the national anthem "God save J.B. King", and jostled the police and scabs to the mine. Meanwhile the Federation decided to call a one day general strike, but only in Auckland. There was utter confusion. Only the wharfies and part of the General Labourers Union struck. Another country wide strike was called but support was patchy. This eroded support for the Wobblies and they accused the executive of discrediting the most powerful weapon working people possess, the general strike. In Huntly the strike was general but the owner refused to allow the workers back and a lockout ensued. The scab union in Waihi continued to gain members. By November there were one hundred men at work. Tension mounted in Waihi. Fist fights became frequent and the union store was ransacked by scabs. All this led to the tragic incident at the union hall when George Evans was murdered by scabs as they stormed into the hall. This was virtually the end of the strike in Waihi. All the strikers were hounded out of town and the strike collapsed.

After the strike many of the Waihi miners found work in Auckland and joined the Labourers Union.

They blamed the Federation for the disaster, and the Labourers Union voted to leave the Federation. The militant labour movement was led by the Wobblies in Auckland and Huntly until the defeat at Waihi. The Federation tried to isolate the militant north by calling a "Unity" conference. At about this time E.J.B. Allen arrived in Aotearoa. He had considerable influence because of his involvement in the syndicalist movement in England. He had worked closely with Tom Mann in the Industrialist League, and their paper "The Industrialist" was printed by the Freedom Group in London. The anarchists were very

*"Anti-Militarist", Sept 1911. I only know of this issue. In the last mentioned city the only Australian Ferrer publication of which I know was published.. "Ferrer And His Enemies" by W. W. Collins, published by the N.Z. Rationalist Association 1911. Since that time no news of recognizably libertarian stirrings has reached me.'*

## **Arthur Desmond**

One person not mentioned by Nettlau is Arthur Desmond. Desmond is cast as a rather flamboyant and eccentric character. He was born in Hawke's Bay of English / Irish parents in about 1859, although his background and date of birth has never been confirmed. Throughout his life he made a point of covering his tracks. He worked as a cattle drover and unsuccessfully contested the general elections of 1884 and 87 on a platform of land reform and single taxation. Single tax was the name given by the economist Henry George to his proposal that taxation should be confined to land rent; land being, in his view, the real source of wealth. Desmond received considerable support during the 87 campaign, and obtained a majority of votes in Taradale the second largest town in the electorate. He bitterly attacked the local establishment describing bank directors as "scoundrels", estate owners as "blood-sucking leeches", and of course the local press as "hirelings of monopoly".

After his defeat in the election he realised that there wasn't much of a future for somebody with his vindictive talents in Hawkes Bay. Not to mention work. He found employment in the timber mills of Poverty Bay and on farms in the Waikato. He later wrote.

*Many a time when lying on my back in a bush whare  
or a tent after a day of grinding toil, have I resolved*

*that if ever I had a chance to sweep away such a brutal system, it would not be neglected.'*

Arthur Desmond was a supporter of Te Kooti the leader of the Hau Haus, and probably met him. He was attracted to the Communism of the Maori people, and especially their communal land ownership. When Te Kooti announced his intention to visit Gisborne in 1889, Desmond was the only person who spoke in his support. The settlers organised a meeting to prevent Te Kooti's visit. Five hundred people packed into a school-room at Makaraka and there was talk of bloodshed and massacres. They decided to arm themselves and stop Te Kooti. Desmond spoke on behalf of Te Kooti. He told the meeting that he was acquainted with many of Te Kooti's followers, and that Te Kooti meant them no harm. All he wished was to visit the place of his birth. The meeting erupted in an uproar, and he was thrown out.

Desmond had lived with the Maoris at Te Karaka, who were members of Te Kooti's Ringatu church. He had moved there to study the songs and stories of the Maori people. The real reason the colonists feared the visit was that they thought Te Kooti would prevent the sale of Maori land. A few days later on the 21st Feb another large meeting took place, this time in Gisborne. Eight hundred people attended and passed a resolution to stop Te Kooti by any means necessary. Again Desmond spoke in favour of Te Kooti's visit. He told the assembly that he had a message from the Maori leaders at Te Karaka, and informed them that they had no right to interfere in what was to be a peaceful visit. Again the settlers wouldn't listen, and a fight broke out. Desmond, slightly out numbered, had to be "escorted" from the meeting by the police. He was described as the "pakeha emissary from the Hau Hau's" in the NZ Herald, and, according to the paper, was lucky to get out of the meeting alive. By this stage Poverty Bay was in a panic. The government stepped in and arrested Te Kooti and his seventy

paganda branch was established in Wellington and one already existed in Christchurch.

May 1912 saw the beginning of the Waihi strike. The engine drivers wanted to secede from the "Workers Union" which covered all aspects of the mining industry in the town. Bill Parry the president of the union, tried to convince the drivers to stay. He failed. The strike began on May 13th. Parry assured the miners that the Federation would support strike action. A strike committee was elected, King being one of the members. The engine drivers formed an arbitration union. However the leadership of the Federation did not approve of the strike. King called for a general strike but this was also rejected by the leadership. The miners were on their own. The third conference of the Federation was held in Wellington during the same month. King attended as a delegate, and advocated a general strike to support the miners. This was defeated. There was also an ongoing strike by miners at Inangahua and a wildcat at Hikurangi. The executive didn't want to discuss the Waihi strike, nevertheless it agreed to send a delegation to the mine owners and start negotiations, which failed. The strike dragged on. The executive reduced the struggle to one of money. Thirty five thousand pounds was raised but it was not enough to defeat the mine owners. The strikers boycotted employers, and stores that sold goods to the scabs. The strike committee organised the distribution of food and fuel to the workers through the unions co-operative store.

In July the Liberal government fell from power. By September Waihi was in a state of virtual class war. The owners decided to open the mine with scab labour. Pickets were strengthened. The police brought in reinforcements. On September 7th fifty to sixty miners including the strike committee received summonses. They were charged with inciting. Over the next two months police prosecuted eighty two workers, and imprisoned sixty five of them in Mt Eden jail. During this time women took the brunt of the work on the picket lines, and became the

Federation who did nothing. By February the union was de-registered, even though they had left the arbitration system. The dispute dragged on, and by March the council and employers had formed a scab union which was gaining members. The dispute collapsed out of inaction by the Federation. Their answer was to organise an alternative candidate to Parr, the mayor who smashed the labourers in the forthcoming council elections. The electoral results were disastrous for the Labour candidate. From then on the "Red" Federation leadership began to lose credibility and the I.W.W. began to increase its influence and membership.

The I.W.W. was particularly strong in Auckland. One of its leading members was John Benjamin King. Born in Canada in the 1870s he worked as a miner teamster and stoker. During 1910-1911 he was a member of the Vancouver local of the I.W.W. He was elected organiser for the city and took part in a mass strike by construction workers in Prince Rupert. After the defeat of the Vancouver strike, King left Canada for New Zealand. He arrived in August 1911, and worked in Auckland as a labourer. He joined the General Labourers Union and was soon elected to the executive. He worked closely with Bennett, the editor of the "Social Democrat" who was urging the Federation to adopt the I.W.W. model of organisation. The "Social Democrat" advocated industrial sabotage as a weapon in the class war. Another prominent figure during this time was Tom Barker. He was secretary of the Socialist Party in Auckland. However, following the defeat of the labourers, and the disaster at the ballot box, he resigned and joined the Wobblies. After a stay of three months in Auckland, King went on a North Island tour and after speaking at Waihi decided to stay and work as a miner. He organised an economics class and enrolled about thirty miners. Back in Auckland the I.W.W. was becoming more active. In March 1912 they formed a propaganda club. Each Sunday they had speakers down at the wharves. They applied for a charter from Chicago and became Local 175. A pro-

followers, many of them women and children, at Waiotahi. Te Kooti was charged with unlawful assembly and despatched to Mount Eden gaol. He was later released and returned to the Waikato. Arthur Desmond deeply admired Te Kooti and wrote a poem dedicated to him. (See Desmond's poem: Song of Te Kooti)

After this Desmond moved to Auckland. He was an active member of the Timber Workers Union and represented the union on the Auckland Trades Council. He also toured Northland organising for the newly formed Gum Diggers Union. During the Maritime strike he published a paper called the "Tribune", and became one of the militant leaders of the strike in Auckland. In the "Tribune" he said

*How can we expect just legislation and equal laws  
when those who control private plundering concerns  
are our legislators.*

In the midst of the strike he was extremely vocal in his condemnation of the employers, and especially the small group who had a strangle hold on commerce in the Auckland region. The Bank of New Zealand was the spearhead of this capitalist domination. However the "Bank" also had its own problems not dissimilar from today's. Corruption and bribery were rife, and Desmond didn't waste any space in the "Tribune" in his condemnation. He squatted an office belonging to the Auckland Employers Association. After three weeks the employers discovered the identity of their unwanted guest and promptly demanded that he vacate the office and hand over the key. In retaliation perhaps, Desmond forged a confidential letter from a cabinet minister to the Auckland Employers Association. From an election platform he accused the Association of corruption and conspiracy. The letter was obviously a forgery and the cabinet minister Mr E Mitchelson took proceedings against Desmond for criminal libel. The

Tribune ceased publication and Desmond was once again on the move this time to Wellington where he worked on the waterfront.

By late 1892 he was in Sydney. He was involved with the anarchist Active Service Brigade, and a paper called "Hard Cash". The 1890's was a time of depression and saw the collapse of many weak financial institutions. Desmond was arrested for chalking on a bank "Going Bung". The Active Service Brigade's aim was to "change the present competitive system into a co-operative and social system". The government and press tried to implicate the Active Service Brigade and Desmond in various dynamite plots and intrigues. By late 1894 he was in Britain, and then he worked in the United States. What happened to him after this is a mystery. According to some he was killed in World War 1; others say he was killed during a rebellion in Mexico. Arthur Desmond never described himself as an anarchist, but because of his association with anti-authoritarian ideas and groups he is often regarded as such. He was an individualist anarchist along the lines of Max Stirner.

### **The Song of Te Kooti by Arthur Desmond**

**Te Kooti was a veritable Maori Robin Hood - an outlaw, who for years fought the invaders of his country, and outmanoeuvred their generals by his knowledge of the bush. The translator has done his best to turn the savage force and poetic fervour of a wild Maori chant into the rhythmic swing of ordinary English verse. In doing so he has faithfully preserved the meaning, but has been compelled to take some liberties with construction and metaphor.**

Exult for Te Kooti! Te Kooti the bold;  
So fierce in the onset, so dauntless of

was first employed by the Federation, then the Socialist Party in Auckland. He toured the West Coast, and then Auckland province. In February 1910 he visited Christchurch, where he received an enthusiastic response, especially from the General Labourers Union. The Labourers Union had been growing rapidly since 1908. The leadership supported the Labour Party, but an increasingly militant rank and file supported the Federation and industrial unionism. By January 1911 an Industrial Unionist Club was established by the militants who organised open air meetings and sold pamphlets. A branch of the I.W.W. was also formed and S.J.Roscoe, a shearer, was one of its leading members. The I.W.W. group applied for membership of the Federation and was admitted in June 1911. But it wasn't until January 1912, after a long and protracted battle with the conservative leadership of the General Labourers Union that the labourers finally voted to join the Federation. After his South Island tour, Bennett returned to Auckland where he worked on the Socialist Party's paper the "Leader". The Socialist Party was extremely active during this period. In February 1911, Bennett established a weekly paper the "Social Democrat". The "Leader" had to close because of a libel case.

The Federation of Labour continued to increase its membership. In February 1912 there were forty three affiliated unions with a total membership of fifteen thousand. Miners, shearers, and watersiders made up ten thousand members. However the anti political socialists began criticising the leadership for its inaction, and apparent willingness to accommodate political action. The conflict was particularly intense in Auckland. Throughout 1911 and into 1912 a series of industrial disputes developed. The most important involved council labourers affiliated to the Auckland General Labourers Union. Six hundred labourers went on strike over working conditions. The council capitulated but it was only a partial victory. Early in 1912 the employers refused to recognise the union and agree to an "award". The union placed the matter in the hands of the

into two groups; the militants advocating direct action in the workplace, and the others ballot box politics.

In 1907 H.M. Fitzgerald arrived in Aotearoa from Canada. He became a Socialist Party organiser and toured the West Coast in 1908. He was a revolutionary socialist and syndicalist. Before his tour he established a branch of the I.W.W. in Wellington. One hundred workers attended the first meeting. But the most significant event of 1908, besides the famous strike in Blackball, was the formation of the first Federation of Labour, the "Red Federation". The Federation was strongly influenced by the ideas of the I.W.W. and Syndicalism. However it was a mixture of the old conservative craft unions, and industrial unions. The leadership of the federation played a difficult juggling act between revolutionary politics on the one hand and syndicalism on the other. The Federation was mostly made up of miners unions to start with and growth was slow. The first test of the Federations strength came in late 1908 when a new workers compensation act provided for employers liability for occupational diseases such as miners consumption. The mining companies demanded that the men undergo a medical examination before being re-employed after Christmas. The Federation threatened strike action, the government intervened and ordered the State Insurance Department to issue policies without prior examination.

Events in Australia had a profound influence on New Zealand labour. There was a constant flow of workers between the two countries and the west coast of America. During 1909-1910 strikes by miners in Newcastle and Broken Hill, converted the majority of miners in this country to Industrial Unionism. Late 1909 saw the arrival of Harry Scott Bennett from Australia. He had been active in the Victorian Socialist League and the Labour Party, whom he represented in the Victorian Parliament in 1904. He lost his seat in 1907. He was briefly a member of the Australian I.W.W. in 1908, but however he resigned in September of the same year. Bennett

old,  
Whose might was resistless-when  
battle-wars rolled,  
Exult for Te Kooti, yo-hoo!

The Pakehas came with their rum and  
their gold,  
And soon the broad lands of our fathers  
were sold,  
But the voice of Te Kooti said: Hold the  
land! Hold!  
Exult for Te Kooti, yo-hoo!

They falsely accused him, no trial had  
he,  
They carried him off to an isle in the  
sea;  
But his prison was broken, once more  
he was free-  
Exult for Te Kooti, yo-hoo!

They tried to enslave us, to trample us  
down  
Like the millions that serve them in  
field and in town;  
But the sapling that's bended when  
freed will rebound-  
Exult for Te Kooti, yo-hoo!

He plundered their rum stores, he ate  
up their priests,  
He robbed the rich squatters to furnish  
him feasts -  
What fare half so fine as their clover-fed  
beasts?  
Exult for Te Kooti, yo-hoo!

In the wild midnight foray whose foot-  
steps trod lighter?

In the flash of the rifle whose eyeballs  
gleamed brighter?

What man with our hero could clinch  
as a fighter?

Exult for Te Kooti, yo-hoo!

They say it was murder; but what, then,  
is war?

When they slaughtered our kin in the  
flames of the pa,

O darker their deeds and more merciless  
far!

Exult for Te Kooti, yo-hoo!

They boast that they'll slay him -they'll  
shoot him at sight,

But the power that nerves him's a giver  
of might;

At a glance from his eye they shall trem-  
ble with fright -

Exult for Te Kooti, yo-hoo!

When the darkness was densest he  
wandered away

To rejoice in the charge of the wild  
battle-fray;

Now, his limbs they are feeble, his  
beard it is grey -

Exult for Te Kooti, yo-hoo!

The Eternal's our father, the land is our  
mother,

The forest and mountains our sister and  
brother;

Who'd part with his birthright for gold

Conciliation, and Arbitration Act, and we've had it in various forms ever since, until recently. The I.C.A. Act did encourage the formation of unions but it also curtailed the right to strike, and tended to divide the union movement. However by 1905 working people were again becoming restless. 1905 also saw the formation of the Industrial Workers of the World in the United States. The ideas of the Wobblies, as they were called, began to filter through to New Zealand. There was now a new air of militancy especially amongst the miners. Between 1900 and 1911 the workforce in the mines increased by nearly 75%. With this increase also came the atrocious working and living conditions, intransigent employers and of-course mine disasters. The miners, wharfies, shearers and labourers were the backbone of the new movement. Many militants from Europe and America toured New Zealand and Australia advocating Industrial Unionism. The newly formed Socialist Party organised many of these tours and began publishing articles on Industrial Unionism in it's paper, the "Commonweal".

In 1907 Ben Tillet, of the London Dockers, toured New Zealand preaching revolutionary Industrial Unionism. Pat Hickey was one of the organisers of the tour on the West Coast. Hickey had spent some time in England and Ireland. He worked in the U.S.A. and was a member of the Western Federation of Miners. The miners were the driving force behind the I.W.W. but left shortly after it was formed. It is important to point out that up until 1908 the American I.W.W. had two distinct factions; those who supported both revolutionary political action and organisation at the point of production, and those that repudiated politics for direct action on the job. There was a split in 1908 and the supporters of politics and Daniel De Leon formed the Detroit I.W.W. The majority became what was known as the Chicago I.W.W., the anti political union. In New Zealand up until 1911 the labour movement generally supported both revolutionary politics and Industrial Unionism, but by 1911 the movement split

purposes interchangeable. Industrial Unionism wasn't new to this country and has its origins in South Canterbury, with the formation of the shearers unions in the 1880's. It made sense for seasonal workers to combine in terms of industry instead of craft. Many workers would move from shearing and other pastoral work to the meat, dairy, and flax industries or perhaps onto the wharves, or into the mines. So it made sense to form the "One Big Union" on the job instead of remaining divided into several craft unions. The travelling union card. Pat Hickey, one of the leaders of the Red Federation of Labour, maintains in his memoirs that members of the Federation never thought of themselves as miners or watersiders but as "Federationists", and as members of the working class.

The basic ideas of Syndicalism are; direct action in the work place and community; a decentralised union structure with no paid full time officials; all decisions made at a general assembly of workers; and recallable delegates assigned to carry out the decisions of the assembly. Syndicalists generally feel that political parties are a divisive influence within the workers movement. They reject ballot box politics for direct action and consider the general strike to be the most powerful weapon working people have against the employers and the state. But it wasn't enough to fight for better wages and conditions. The industrial unions were seen as the building blocks for a future co-operative society. They were the training ground for a better future.

The story of the I.W.W. in Aotearoa cannot be told without considering the wider labour movement. The Wobblies weren't a small sectarian group isolated from the tumultuous events of those times. Often they were at the centre, and the leading spirit within the militant workers movement. At no other time did the ideas of anarcho-syndicalism have such a wide popular appeal. After the defeat of the 1891 Maritime Council, the workers movement in New Zealand went into decline. Depression years followed. In 1894 the Liberals introduced the Industrial

to another?

Exult for Te Kooti, yo-hoo!

We won't sell the land - 'tis the gift of the Lord -

Except it be bought with the blood-drinking sword;

But all men are welcome to share in its hoard -

Exult for Te Kooti, yo-hoo!

Yet 'mid the rejoicing forget not the braves

Who, in glades of forest, have found lonely graves,

Who welcomed cold Death, for they scorned to be slaves -

Exult for Te Kooti, yo-hoo!

Exult for Te Kooti, Te Kooti the bold,

So sage in the council, so famous of old,  
Whose war-cry's our motto - 'tis Hold the land! Hold!

Exult for Te Kooti, yo-hoo!

From the Bulletin (Sydney) Of 23 March 1889. Desmond had probably met Te Kooti. In February 1889, when Te Kooti's announced intention to visit Gisborne caused a panic among local settlers, Desmond, who was described as 'a pakeha emissary from the Hauhaus', attended a protest meeting at Gisborne and attempted to read a message but was ejected amid scenes of great uproar.

## **Alexander Bikerton, and the Federative Home**

The later half of last century saw some major advances in science and technology. There was a belief that science would solve many of the social problems of humanity, and would sweep away many repressive and superstitious institutions. One person who shared this belief was Alexander Bikerton. He arrived in New Zealand in 1873 to take up his appointment as Professor of Chemistry at Canterbury College, the forerunner of today's university. He immediately began a course of popular lectures which attracted hundreds of people. He was a born actor and an exceptional teacher. Public lectures at that time were regarded as popular entertainment. Bikerton was a pioneer in science education, and champion of original investigations. He regularly demonstrated Nikola Tesla's experiments. Tesla was a pioneer in the development of alternating current when General Electric and Thomas Edison were promoting direct current. He remains a rather obscure scientist, principally because many of his inventions would have destroyed the profitability of many companies that are now multi-nationals. When he died the United States government impounded the entire contents of his safe, only they know what it contained.

Within a short period of time Bikerton became unpopular with the Christchurch establishment, dominated as it was by the Church of England. During the course of conversation the Bishop urged him to study the Bible. Later, when asked what he thought of it, he replied "Really excellent. I have decided to put myself down as a Christian at the next census." "Good heavens!" exclaimed the clergyman, "What religion did you state at the last census?" "Church of England", replied Bikerton. Bikerton also developed a scientific theory which he called partial impact. This he believed explained the birth of stars. However

The Freedom Group appears to have lasted for at least a year so maybe they did have "street fights with the coppers", or perhaps this relates to an incident during the November General Strike. Philip Josephs remained active for a number of years. In 1915 he was arrested for possessing banned literature when the police raided his workshop. He apparently returned to Russia after the 1917 Revolution and was back in Aotearoa in the early 20's although we cannot be certain of this. A. G. Solomon was involved in the Russian Famine Relief Campaign in 1922 and an Army Intelligence document from 1927 suggests that Solomon and Josephs were the same person.

Another anarchist involved with the Wellington Socialist Party was Thomas Fauset McDonald. He arrived from Australia around 1906 and was involved with the Hutt Valley Socialist Society in early 1908. McDonald was a doctor specialising in tropical diseases. He had been active in the English movement in the 1890's and was a friend of Nettlau's. However McDonald was a racist who published several articles and pamphlets outlining his ideas. He was condemned by his comrades in the Socialist Party in an editorial in the "Commonweal" in July 1907 when he became president of the White Race League.

## **The Industrial Workers of the World in Aotearoa**

Today's trade and industrial unions date from around the turn of the century, and some go back much earlier. Many, especially the unskilled unions, were very militant. They quickly absorbed the ideas of Industrial Unionism and Syndicalism that were sweeping the world. The word Syndicalism comes from the French, meaning union, but in English speaking countries it is generally considered to mean revolutionary unionism. Although there are differences between Industrial Unionism and Syndicalism the terms are for all practical

One member of the Wellington Socialist Party was the anarchist Philip Josephs. Josephs was a Russian Jew who worked as a tailor. In January 1905 he spoke in support of the Russian revolution and became a member of the party. For two years he ran their economics class and contributed to the "Commonwealth". In an article entitled "Trade Unionism in New Zealand: Is it a failure", he describes the state of the workers movement and the effect of the arbitration act on unionism in general.

*'The Conciliation Board and arbitration Act has dealt Trades Unionism in New Zealand its death blow ... The workers have been robbed of their fighting weapon, the strike. The union meeting is a place for transacting routine business only, instead of a rendezvous of the advanced guard of progress and a school of preparation for the great coming event, the social revolution.'*

Josephs remained an active member of the party and helped revive the Anti-Militarist League in Wellington in 1912, and was elected secretary. He often advertised Freedom Press pamphlets in various publications including the Maoriland Worker. In July 1913 he along with others set up the anarchist Freedom Group. The Maoriland Worker reported on July 18th that

*'At No 4 Willis Street on July 9th, a meeting was held to form an Anarchist Group, to be called the Freedom Group. Its object is the self education of its members and the propagation of anarchist principles. It was decided to have weekly meetings, commencing at 8pm every Wednesday, at Joseph and Co's rooms, 4 Willis Street. "The subject of the discussion next week is "What method should we adopt to change the present system?". It is announced that those interested will always find a warm welcome, and visitors are invited to take part in the discussions.'*

it also directly contradicted the teachings of the Book of Genesis, and of course those of the Bishop. He regarded himself as a state socialist and supporter of the single tax movement. Nevertheless by the late 1880's he had become convinced that genuine communism would be easier to attain than any steps taken towards it. In a letter to the Lyttelton Times he outlines his libertarian communist views.

*For a quarter of a century I have struggled with the many difficulties of the human problem in the various aspects presented by hunger and love; and never for an hour, during all these years, did I see a satisfactory solution to its many complexities. Then, studying human evolution from the Darwinian stand-point, I saw that the ethics of Christ yielded a scientific solution, and this has satisfied me for nearly a dozen years ... the true mode of life is that described by Christ under the name of the Kingdom of Heaven, a state in which no one lacks anything because no one owns anything ... a state in which there is no law, because love is supreme. And to this state only is man's emotional nature consonant; a condition of rivalry in generosity, instead of competition in greed. Let me at once affirm that I believe progressive taxation (single tax), land nationalisation, and state socialism, could they be obtained, would be incomparably better than our present system. Many champions of these panaceas own them to be but steps towards Christian communism; they think these things attainable, and the higher life not immediately attainable. Close on forty years study of the problem convinces me that the Kingdom of Heaven is easier, far easier to attain to than any of the supposed steps towards it, so I devote most of my efforts to this conviction.*

*But I do not neglect the other view. I have been the means of circulating thousands of socialistic books and periodicals, and are ever ready to do my part in working with socialists, knowing them to be the salt of the earth.'*

In 1893 Bikerton became a member of the Christchurch Workingmen's Society and soon afterwards President of the Tailoresses and Presses Union. He was also one of the founders of the Kingsley Club. The Club had a membership of 400 and organised benefit dances concerts and lectures on a weekly basis. In 1898, along with others he established the Federative Home at Wainoni. He had purchased the property some years before. Wainoni was to be an experiment in communal living. By autumn 1899 the Federative Home was well established with about thirty members. All domestic work was done co-operatively and most of the members had outside jobs. However the community did support a few industries such as a fireworks factory. Bikerton was also one of the founders of the Socialist Party. Many socials and picnics were held in support of the party at Wainoni. The Federated home itself covered several acres of garden. At the centre was the main house built from materials recovered from the Christchurch Exhibition of 1882. From contemporary accounts it was very impressive. A report from the Canterbury Times of 1898 recounts.

*As we wheeled into the entrance gate we obtained a good view of the establishment. The entrance hall, reception rooms are in the centre, with the vinery to the right and the fernery and conservatories to the left.. From the roof we look down upon the orchard, garden and terraces. Peaches apricots, and nectarines are under our feet'.*

individuals by conversation and the gift of an Anarchist paper or pamphlet, with very poor success. But thinking it time to try other methods, about twelve months ago he inserted an advertisement of pamphlets and books in the Maoriland Worker, the official organ of the New Zealand Federation of Labour, which has a large circulation. Immediately orders and inquiries began to flow in, the business increasing so quickly that he had not enough stock to keep up with it. This was soon remedied, and large advertisements brought still bigger business. Now he has issued a four page list of books and pamphlets on sale, the variety of which is a striking testimony to the interest he has aroused in Anarchism. Agencies have also been established in Canterbury, Otago, and Auckland.

At the present moment there is no Anarchist movement., as we understand the term, in New Zealand. But from articles and speeches reported in the Maoriland Worker from time to time the influence of Anarchist ideas can be easily traced, and it is certain that comrades will shortly be holding meetings and carrying on more active work. Credit is due to the editor of the Maoriland Worker for his sympathy and assistance; in fact although not an Anarchist, his opponents have charged him with advocating Anarchism in his paper.

Our comrade Josephs' initiative and energy have met with the success they deserved, and should be an object lesson to those who are sometimes only too ready to sit down and bemoan their own impotence.

*Freedom Sept 1912*

## **I.W.W. Clubs**

Dear Comrade, - In this week's issue Fellow-worker Sweeney advocates the formation of I.W.W. Clubs in the four centres. I have to inform him that in Christchurch we formed a club nine months ago, and have since changed it to a recruiting union of the I.W.W. We have adopted the preamble and as far as possible the constitution of the I.W.W. of America (V. St. John, secretary), and are carrying on a propaganda for Industrial Unionism. We have just decided to supply THE WORKER with matter on Revolutionary Unionism, and the first instalment will be sent along shortly. Workers requiring the latest pamphlets on Industrial Unionism may obtain them from me. I think Fellow-worker Sweeney's idea is a good one and would be pleased to supply a copy of our preamble and constitution to anyone interested. - Yours in revolt,

SYD. KINSFORD.

107 Ricarton road, Christchurch.

*Maoriland Worker, June 1911.*

## **Philip Josephs and the Freedom Group**

### **ANARCHISM IN NEW ZEALAND.**

Our comrade, P. Josephs, of Wellington, New Zealand, has succeeded, almost single-handed, in building up an agency for the distribution of anarchist literature on quite a large scale. For six or seven years he carried it on in the usual way, by attending meetings and trying to interest

In an interview in the Lyttelton Times in 1902 Bikerton comments.

*A federated home is much simpler, much cheaper, and much more sociable and happy than the separated homes in which we lived formerly. Our domestic duties are discharged on the principle that everybody should do what he or she likes best... the only thing approaching a regulation is a time table of daily duties. Each family has its own rooms or cottage, but the drawing room is there for all visitors, and the social hall is there for everybody'.*

The home boasted a large library, a gymnasium, tennis court and several other social amenities. In all it appears that the members lived an idyllic existence.

In 1900 Bikerton returned briefly to England, there he met Kropotkin several times and Malatesta. He criticised the anarchists for not pursuing, "sound and logical methods" to achieve anarchism. By this stage Kropotkin was not an enthusiastic exponent of experimental colonies. Most had been dismal failures. Bikerton may have renewed his friendship with Paul Robin. Robin had travelled to New Zealand in 1898 arriving in Auckland. We don't know if they met personally but almost certainly exchanged letters. Robin was very influential in libertarian educationalist circles in France. Angus McLaren's book "Sexuality and Social Order" briefly mentions Robin's visit to Aotearoa and his friendship with Bikerton Robin wrote in "Regeneration" (April 1908)

*I saw in the Antipodes ingenious housewives who made for themselves for a derisory price an object having the same efficacy as the best brands of pessaries, ovules and cones.'*

Emma Goldman mentions Robin in her autobiography, "Living My Life"

*Who was Paul Robin? My friend informed me that he was one of the great libertarians in the field of education. Out of his own means he had bought a large tract of land on which he established a school for destitute children. Sempuis the place was called. Robin had taken homeless waifs from the street or orphan asylums, the poorest and so-called bad children. "You should see them now!" Victor said; Robin's school is a living example of what can be done in education by an attitude of understanding and love for the child.'*

Emma Goldman was in Paris where she attended the Neo-Malthusian Congress. She met Robin and several other delegates. Her friend was Victor Dave an anarchist member of the First International and friend of Bakunin. The congress met in secret and every session was in a different place. We don't know if Bikerton attended this conference. Perhaps he did.

Bikerton returned to New Zealand, but by 1903 the Federative Home began to falter. He estimated that the place would need at least one hundred members to prosper. The numbers rarely rose above thirty. Many of the members would not co-operate in the running of the place and Wainoni became for many a free boarding house. After the home eventually failed Bikerton turned the property into an amusement park. By this stage he had been dismissed from Canterbury College. The amusement park also failed. In 1910 he once again returned to England leaving his family behind. He tried to gain recognition for his scientific theory of partial impact, from the scientific community. No one was interested. He never returned to Aotearoa, and died in England, at the age of 81 in 1928. His last years were spent in virtual poverty, regarded as a crank and eccentric. Bikerton was a great scientist, a person far in advance of his times.

*third of the amount of each order as deposit. When they had finished, their finances were in the same state as the rest of the branch. The first result of this nocturnal activity was that at the following meeting the resignations of the entire Committee were called for, and cheerfully tendered, the offending members promptly forming themselves into a branch of the I. W. W.*

*The second result did not eventuate for some months, but when it did it took the form of a stream of large wicker hampers packed with printed material, to the total number of over 100,000. The Socialist Party disclaimed ownership of them and they were distributed by a group of individuals, most of them being taken in bulk lots by trade union branches, principally those of miners and waterside workers.*

*The great majority of this and other similar literature coming into the country at this time was anarcho-syndicalist, and the speeches made at meetings and conferences during this period leave no doubt as to the widespread effect it had. The little Marxist literature that was available was swamped by that of the I. W. W., the British Independent Labour Party and various exponents of single and land tax theories.'*

The article continues to outline the influence syndicalism had within the labour movement and goes on to describe Semple, Fraser, Savage and co as anarcho-syndicalists which is even for a communist stretching imagination a little too far. We can only assume that the literature had more value than a handful of votes. But the real point of the article was to point out what the communists perceived as the follies of syndicalism to the watersiders of 1950.

New Zealand of a co-operative commonwealth founded on the socialisation of land and capital. The conference condemned political action by a two to one majority. However they did stand candidates on several occasions. Branches of the party were established in many small mining towns, including Waihi and Huntly. In Runanga, on the West Coast party members included the mayor, town clerk, headmaster and local Methodist minister.

An amusing incident occurred in Christchurch in 1910 and is related in an article, "Anarcho-Syndicalism in the New Zealand Labour Movement", written forty years later in the "N.Z. Labour Review", a Communist Party journal.

*'The local branch of the Socialist Party was facing an election campaign with empty coffers, and little prospect of filling them. The Literature Committee, however who operated a separate fund, were solvent to the extent of £40. A motion was therefore moved to amalgamate the general funds of the Branch, (nil), the Social Committee (nil), and the Literature Committee, for use in the election campaign. Unfortunately for this scheme the membership of the Literature Committee were anarchist to a man, and had no use for elections. One of the Committee's members had the vote on this motion shelved on the grounds that since it amounted to the rescinding of the previous decision which had decided on the operation of separate funds, a special notice of motion would first have to be given. The irony of an avowed anarchist employing such legalist arguments was apparently lost on the meeting and the matter was held over.*

*Immediately the meeting concluded the Literature Committee went to work. By the small hours of the following morning they had completed their labours, which consisted of the ordering of booklets, sending a*

## **Michael Flurscheim....A Pioneer of Today's Green Dollar System**

Michael Flurschiem arrived in Wellington in 1898. He was a supporter of the single tax movement and monetary reform. On arrival he was greeted by the Single Tax Society and spoke at a meeting of the Socialist League and Trades Council. Flurscheim was a wealthy industrialist from Germany who decided to sell his business and devote his money and time to the promotion of monetary reform. Its philosophy was based on the same principles as today's green dollar systems. In October 1898, he established the New Zealand Commercial Exchange Co Ltd with offices at the corner of Willis and Manners Streets, Wellington. Those who joined the exchange agreed to carry out transactions without the use of money, a barter system using exchange notes. It was stated on the notes that "the holder of the note is entitled, on or within a reasonable time after presentation, to goods or services of the New Zealand Commercial Exchange Co Ltd, who are liable to supply goods or services". Flurscheim vigorously promoted the advantages of the scheme. He wrote many articles and letters to the press, published a pamphlet "Business without Gold" and launched a journal "The Commercial Exchange Gazette" later renamed the "Pioneer of Social Reform". He was convinced the exchange would flourish.

*'There is nothing to prevent our club from gradually embracing all members of the community, and it is in the interests of every member to help extend the circle so as to have it embrace all trades, so that anything wanted by the members can be supplied in mutual exchange.'*

His efforts had the desired effect. Several hundred shopkeepers and trades people joined the exchange within a few months.

But the scheme began to falter. The main reason for this was a campaign of slander in the press by a one time friend and business associate. This tended to undermine the credibility of the exchange bank. Flurschein withdrew from all involvement. He left Wellington and established another exchange in Auckland, and by June 1901, it had enrolled a thousand local members. In 1902 he wrote 'Clue to the Economic Labyrinth' which he dedicated to the people of New Zealand. In this book he advocated land nationalisation, the abolition of interest and a co-operative exchange system. He also advocated the co-operative control of production and distribution.

Flurschein left New Zealand in about 1905. Many of his business ventures, including a soap factory in Wellington failed and he eventually returned to Germany where he died in 1912.

## **The Socialist Party and the Anarchist Picnic**

By the turn of the century there were only a few hundred active socialists in Aotearoa, but with the arrival of 190 men and women who intended to form a co-operative colony, the number almost doubled. The colony was backed by William Ranstead the financial supporter of the "Clarion", a socialist weekly magazine published in England. The colony was never established and the "Clarionettes", as they were known dispersed throughout New Zealand. Nevertheless they did help to establish the first New Zealand Socialist Party.

The first branch was set up in Wellington in July 1901. The party represented most shades of socialist thought from Marxists, Fabians, parliamentary socialists, to syndicalists and anarchists, and was loosely organised. Soon after other branches were formed in Auckland and Christchurch. Tom Mann was an early organiser for the Party. Mann along with Benn Tillet, who also visited Aotearoa, had been organisers of the success-

ful 1889 London dock strike. By 1903 the Party had established a journal called the "Commonweal", based in Wellington and edited by Robert Hogg. Wellington became the centre for a group of anti-parliamentary socialists. Hogg declared in the first issue of "Commonweal".

*'Our aim is revolution, not reform, because we mean to abolish the foundation of all existing institutions.'*

At last night's meeting of anarchists, the principal said they were there to commemorate the political murder of the men who had become known throughout the world as the Chicago martyrs. He enumerated the martyrs, and said he had personal evidence having been associated with some of their comrades, of their superior abilities as organisers of the workers and as propagators of rationalism at that time. These men had been brutally murdered because they had dared to show the wage-slaves how they were exploited by capitalists – because they realised that organisation was necessary for the salvation of the workers, who were then practically disorganised in the United States. The capitalist class, who composed the State,- deemed it necessary to get rid of these organisers, and so they were flung into prison and some eventually murdered.

Wellington anarchists commemorate the Chicago Martyrs (*New Zealand Times, 12 November 1907*)

At first the growth of the party was slow but by 1907-08 the increase in membership was dramatic. In April 1908 the party claimed 3000 members. That same year they held their first national conference. The first objective was; The establishment in