

There is a tension in analysing the origins of neoliberalism as diverse while implying its outcomes are uniform. There are certainly common elements: declining union membership, rising inequality, the spread of competition policy. But important differences remain across 'neoliberal' countries. As Block argues, the differences between capitalisms – or we might say 'Keynesianisms' or 'neoliberalisms' – are significant and point to strategies for change.

Humphrys ends with an important problem – how to deal with the 'profound disorganisation' of working people. Her critique offers both useful conceptual tools for understanding neoliberalism and an important caution in rushing towards the state for solutions. That is a challenge, particularly in Australia, where unions have often looked to political means to solve industrial problems. Her call also resonates with a growing number of critical voices within the union movement urging a renewed focus on industrial organising. Acknowledging the diverse origins of neoliberal reform can certainly inform us of the dangers of working through the state, but I was left wondering if taking seriously the diverse realities of neoliberalism might also reveal strategic opportunities for making a more egalitarian society.

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Tom McDonald, *DARE to DREAM: The memoirs of Tom and Audrey McDonald*, Self-published: East Gosford, NSW, Australia, 2016. ISBN (hbk) 9780994631510, \$30.00 (for availability see <http://www.daretodreammemoirs.com.au/buy.html>), pp. 426.

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*DARE to DREAM* is a clear, animated and absorbing account of two significant labour movement veterans. It recounts the trials, tribulations and successes of Tom and Audrey McDonald in their respective, yet overlapping domains of trade unionism (Tom), the

women's movement (Audrey), peace and international working-class solidarity (both) and left-wing politics (both). But it is more than this. *DARE to DREAM* is about social relationships: family and the many comrades who shared their values and engaged in struggles for social change. Tom and Audrey McDonald have been together for over 60 years, active in organising campaigns intended to improve the lives of working people and furthering progress towards a socialist society.

The book speaks to the general public. It is a quality publication that includes humorous incidents, photos and poetry. Academics will also be interested in the authors' role in and interpretation of significant events. The book comprises eight chapters arranged chronologically from the late 1930s when Tom and Audrey were growing up, to their retirement years in the 2010s. Each chapter chronicles their respective experiences, making it possible to compare working-class leaders' lives within a period and over time, in the context of social and political change. In this review, I will sketch Tom and Audrey's contribution to social change by focusing on some of their most salient achievements. As will become clear, they often worked alongside rather than with each other, but they remained united politically in striving for a socialist society and an international order free from war.

Readers might be forgiven for not knowing much about Tom and Audrey, for they spent most of their time advocating and promoting issues considered radical by mainstream commentators. The Building Workers' Industrial Union (BWIU) and the Union of Australian Women (UAW) were left-wing organisations, whose principal leaders, including Tom and Audrey, were members of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA). How did Tom and Audrey become activists? And how did they become life-long partners?

Tom was born in 1926, the eldest son of 10 children. The family lived in a two bedroomed tenement in Glebe, a tough, working-class area. Tom's father was a street sweeper and garbage collector. Working for Sydney City Council meant a steady job, supplemented by running a small, illegal SP bookmaking operation. His mother grew up near Newcastle, where her father had been a coalminer.

Tom left school without a certificate and took an apprenticeship as a ships carpenter and joiner at Cockatoo dock. It was here he joined the BWIU, coming under the influence of a couple of socialist ship joiners and the local CPA area secretary, Tom Payne, who supported his application to join the CPA. While working on a construction site, he became involved in a strike which brought him into contact with Pat Clancy, the union organiser and 7 years his senior. Clancy – who became a towering figure in the CPA and in the union movement – was Tom's mentor, colleague and political guide for 43 years. In 1950, Clancy persuaded Tom to become a union organiser and 3 years later, when Clancy was elected Secretary of the BWIU NSW branch, Tom became Assistant Secretary.

Audrey was 11 years younger than Tom, one of three children raised on a small farm in Sandy Flats near Tenterfield, NSW, which she describes as 'a small bush community with distinctive working class beginnings' (p. 33). Her father grew corn and vegetables and kept livestock. Keen on receiving an education, Audrey moved with her mother to Sydney, living in one room, so she could attend secondary school. In 1952, Audrey, now 15 years old, passed her intermediate certificate and left school, while her mother, who

was a housemaid, joined the Hotel Club and Restaurant Union (HCRU) which 'came to be our family' (p. 33). Audrey was befriended by Flo Davis, the Union secretary and a CPA member, to whom she became very close. In 1955 Audrey represented the Union at the 5th World Youth Festival in Warsaw. Later, she accepted a union organiser position with the HCRU and Flo Davis introduced her to the UAW.

Tom and Audrey's lives were converging from working-class roots in a wider context of capitalist renewal after World War 2 amid the polarising politics of the emerging Cold War. A class struggle lens helped make sense of employers whose reluctance to negotiate with unions encouraged industrial action. Furthermore, CPA leaders and Party comrades, many of whom were union officials, reinforced a critical view of capitalism that contrasted with the dream of a socialist society. Therefore, it was likely that Tom and Audrey would meet organising a political event, which happened to be the pro-Soviet, 5th World Youth Festival. But it was at cabaret nights hosted by the BWIU where they forged their relationship, marrying 5 years later.

The 1950s were fuelled by the Cold War, intense sectarianism and conflict within the labour movement. Communist-led unions were under attack: the BWIU had been deregistered in the federal arbitration jurisdiction and there was a similar threat in NSW. To undermine the BWIU, employers and right-wing unions encouraged the formation of a breakaway carpenters' union. Meanwhile, Tom and his colleagues advocated militancy with purpose, attempting successfully to improve site safety, and towards the end of the decade, winning a campaign that gave building workers payment for lost time due to hot or wet weather. The breakaway union also collapsed.

In 1965, Tom and Audrey were afforded an opportunity by the CPA to attend a Communist Party of the Soviet Union School for 6 months. This is described with mixed feelings. On returning to Australia, their work began to diverge, though they remained politically united. Audrey focused mainly on women, initially taking up the position of national publicity officer with the UAW. In 1967, she became national secretary. Tom, on the contrary, was pre-occupied with defending the BWIU from attack by employers as indicated by his claim that 'the number of fines against unions was 50 times higher in 1968 than at the beginning of the 1960s' (p. 100). In addition, inter-union conflict was erupting: between the BWIU and the Builders' Labourers Federation (BLF) under Communist Jack Mundy who favoured a more adventurous form of militancy, including green bans. Mundy identified with the emerging CPA anti-Soviet position that culminated in the CPA split following the Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

The 1970s witnessed more strife in the BLF when federal secretary Gallagher (a Maoist communist) eventually replaced Munday in 1975. Meanwhile, the BWIU under Clancy and Tom's leadership made significant gains in three areas. First, in 1971, after a 3-week strike, described by Tom as 'probably the most militant, best-organised dispute in Australia's building industry' (p. 167), the union won accident pay. This meant that injured workers received normal pay while undertaking rehabilitation. Second, in 1973, after a lengthy campaign, the union won long service leave based on length of service in the industry rather than in a specific firm. And in 1975, the BWIU negotiated the first national paid rates (rather than base rates) award in Australia.

This intense industrial activity took its toll on Tom's health. He vacated the NSW Secretary's position in favour of the less onerous state President position. Three years

later, he led a multi-union delegation to Moscow Trade Union College to study soviet workers and the role of unions in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). This was apparently a 'disappointing' experience for various reasons.

While the BWIU established its leading position in the building industry in the 1970s, consumers and women also benefitted from the work of the UAW and other community organisations. Audrey explains her activism in price committees, in campaigns against rising prices and in organising events and delegations supporting International Women's Year (1975). At the newly formed Trade Union Education and Research Centre, she organised a programme for women's education. However, that same year, under stress, exacerbated by political tensions in the Left, her health faltered. Conflict within the UAW mirrored the CPA split, with some leaders following the new CPA policy line, and others, like Audrey (and Tom), supporting the smaller pro-Soviet, Socialist Party of Australia (SPA). Like Tom, she vacated a more onerous role in the UAW (national secretary) for the position of the union's NSW branch president. However, Audrey was appointed by NSW Premier, Neville Wran to the inaugural Women's Advisory Council (WAC) which championed many pioneering reforms, including introduction of the Anti-Discrimination Act, 1977. Audrey was also instrumental in proposing a Working Women's Charter which was developed and adopted by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) at their 1977 Congress.

The 1980s were characterised by political re-alignment, union co-operation and close ties with a Federal Labor government. Left-wing politics changed fundamentally. Conflict within the SPA between party and union officials concerning control of the BWIU led in 1981 to the expulsion of the BWIUs leaders, including Tom. Subsequent efforts to consolidate the emergence of a New Left Party by Clancy, Tom, Audrey and others failed. The book provides important insights into these efforts and reflections on party fracturing, union autonomy and attitudes to the Soviet Union. The fluid state of left-wing labour politics including a decline in sectarianism within the Labor Party meant new possibilities for union co-operation. As a counter to the Gallagher-led, BLF, the BWIU sought ACTU participation in all major building industry campaigns and disputes. In 1983–1984, the BWIU under the leadership of Clancy, Tom and others worked closely with the ACTU to create an industry superannuation fund. This became the model for the wider introduction of compulsory superannuation by the Hawke and Keating Labor governments. In 1985, Tom succeeded Clancy as federal secretary of the BWIU. This was the year of the tax summit that was preceded by mass mobilisation of workers and the broader community leading to Prime Minister Hawke's decision to abandon the GST, a process and outcome which Tom applauded (p. 284). Two years later Tom participated in the joint government-ACTU fact finding delegation that produced *Australia Reconstructed* (Australian Council of Trade Unions and Trade Development Council [Department of Trade]), 1987), a publication that significantly influenced the development of the Accord, industrial relations and trade unionism in Australia. As a member of the ACTU executive, Tom also became involved in the Accord negotiations. His observations on the Accord process and evaluation of its outcomes led him to conclude that

There was some hard bargaining between the ACTU and the Government on many issues. These negotiations led to some very significant social reforms in areas like superannuation and

family/childcare policy. On other issues, the Left was less successful. These included the struggle against deregulation of the financial system, the entry of foreign banks, privatisation, and the need for a more interventionist industry policy. (p. 280)

Tom believed in the notion of a working-class united front propounded by Bulgarian communist, Georgi Dimitrov. Political differences had prevented the BWIU from merging with other building unions. With the assistance of colleagues, Tom developed and executed a plan to create a union comprising Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy workers (CFMEU). Following negotiation of successive mergers in the early 1990s, this new union replaced its predecessors, including the BWIU in 1992, prompting Bill Kelty to observe that ‘the CFMEU created probably the most strategically important progressive industrial union in the country’. (p. 309)

While Tom was contributing significantly to the ACTU’s economic policy and trade union restructuring, Audrey’s activism in the UAW and Women’s International Democratic Federation improved the standing of the African National Congress (ANC) in Australia, helping to create an ANC support committee and assisting in establishing a permanent ANC office in this country. Prominent ANC representatives visited Australia, including persons who later became key post-apartheid government figures including Mandela, Tambo, Mbeki and Ramapohsa. Her dedication was rewarded by an invitation to attend Mandela’s presidential inauguration in 1994, which is vividly described in the book. Times were also changing in Australia. UAW membership was waning as women’s issues became mainstream in the union movement and new organisations were beginning to address issues like consumer rights which had previously been pursued by the UAW. Furthermore, young women were joining business and professional organisations. A weakened UAW responded by concentrating on projects focusing on humanitarian aid and support for women in developing countries. In 1996, the UAW was finally disbanded. In retirement, Audrey continued her political activism by contributing to the Central Coast Peace Forum, the United Nations Association and various local women’s groups.

The two final chapters of the book comprise reflections by Tom and Audrey on their respective journeys. For Tom, there is the satisfaction of achieving gains through the union: accident pay, superannuation and union restructuring. The CPA is applauded for giving meaning and much more to his life. For Audrey, it is the many generous and talented people she worked with in the HCRU and in the women’s and liberation movements. Both highlight the importance of family. Audrey refers to ‘. . . a warm, loving, supportive and wonderful family’ (p. 388) that includes Tom and her son Daren (who facilitated and edited the book). And Tom, writing of his relationship with Audrey, concludes that

The happiest time of my life began with my marriage to Audrey. Our life together was everything that I could have hoped for. . . . In our retirement we have become even closer. Retirement gave us a greater opportunity to be involved *together* (original emphasis) in community and labour movement causes. (p. 402)

*DARE to DREAM* prompts several questions about the future of Australian society which deserve more attention. Here, I will mention only three. First, what kind of

progressive political economy and social structure can we realistically envisage? Second, what are the pre-conditions – economic and political – that are likely to make this happen? And third, will it be possible to develop a left-wing coalition of forces that can assist in building the infrastructure for social transformation?

In conclusion, I strongly recommend this book to readers interested in the history of the labour movement in Australia. Its focus on two significant left-wing leaders and their complementary activities will be particularly valuable for understanding a key aspect of the post-Second World War political economy. In addition, the story of the UAW, as portrayed by Audrey, and the collapse of the CPA as told by both authors are relevant to sociologists, political scientists and social activists. These are instructive examples of organisations failing to anticipate social change. *DARE to DREAM* also demonstrates how the results of past struggles – for example, superannuation and anti-discrimination – remain embedded in our society, reminding us that defending and extending such gains not only requires vigilance but also appropriate organisation, strategy and tactics.

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