

Pat Hickey- the Making of a Homegrown Revolutionary

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In early 1906, a young man of 24, returned to his family in Nelson after having spent three years travelling the world. He returned to New Zealand armed with his membership card of the American Socialist Party and his union card from the militant Western Federation of Miners. He was also armed with a determination to stir up class struggle and industrial agitation in New Zealand with the ultimate aim of the destruction of capitalism and the abolition of the wage system.

Less than two years later, in February 1908, the same young man, Patrick Hodgens Hickey, was employed as a miner by the Blackball Coal Company. According to his own account, while Hickey was eating his “crib”, the mine manager Walter Leitch, appeared at his working place. Hickey had been one of those behind a union vote to extend the traditional fifteen minute crib time to a more civilised half hour. Leitch stood over him with his stop watch and at the end of fifteen minutes ordered Hickey back to work. Hickey replied, “But look here, Boko, I haven’t finished my pie yet”. “No joking”, Leitch replied, “I order you to resume work”. “And I refuse”, Hickey replied. Leitch had Hickey charged for disobeying the lawful commands of a mine manager and the processes that led to the Blackball strike had begun. This incident has become legendary, much of it no doubt due to Hickey’s colourful telling of the tale. In fact many pre-existing grievances helped create the Blackball strike and Hickey was just one among many strikers defying both the mining company and the arbitration laws. Hickey was, however, very much the strike’s public face especially outside of the Coast. The sacking of Hickey and six of his socialist comrades, a few weeks after the stop watch incident, set the strike in train. Hickey’s sacking, his theatrical delivery of evidence at the Arbitration Court, his fund raising tour of the

North Island, along with his somewhat farcical arrest and very brief imprisonment kept him in the news.¹

The following talk is not so much a biography of Pat Hickey as an attempt to look at the making of the man who was perhaps our first home grown Pakeha revolutionary, although just what being a revolutionary meant in the early twentieth century remains question open for debate. Much of the following account is based on the work of John Weir, the son of Hickey's niece, from Weir's unpublished biography written in the 1970s. Weir had access to family correspondence and personal reminiscences from family members that have not been used by other writers.

Pat Hickey did not become as famous as some of the other Red Fed activists such as Savage, Semple and Webb, as unlike them he did not become part of 1930s Labour Government. Hickey died in Australia in 1930, never living to see the election of Labour to power in New Zealand. Pat Hickey was a rare case: a NZ labour activist born and raised in this country. The vast majority of New Zealand's early twentieth century socialists and union activists were from overseas, usually arriving with some experience of union activity. Of the activists in the Blackball strike Paddy Webb, George Hunter, Bob Semple, and Walter Rogers were from Australia, H M Fitzgerald was from Canada, and David Pritchard was from Scotland. New Zealand in the early twentieth century was one point of arrival and departure in an imperial and global labour market, where cultural and economic interconnections of the British Empire and the USA placed the English speaking worker at an advantage. For all that Pat Hickey was born and raised here he was part of that same world of mobile workers and ideas. It was in travelling the world that he developed his ideals and his activism.²

Patrick Hodgens Hickey was born in January 1882, on a small farm at the junction of the Wangapeka and Motueka Rivers, in the Waimea South area of Nelson. He was the fourth of seven children of Thomas and Jane Hickey, both Irish Catholics, from modest rural backgrounds. Thomas Hickey was originally from Baillieborough, County Cavan in Ulster, while Jane Hickey, originally Jane Hodgens, had migrated to Nelson as a child with her family from Drogheda in County Louth, Munster. In the

¹ P H Hickey, "Red" Fed Memoirs, pp 6, 11-13. *NZ Worker*, Special Edition, 6 April 1908, p 1.

² On the idea of the Imperial Working Class see J. Hyslop, 'The Imperial Working Class Makes Itself "White"', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 12(4), 1999, pp 398-421.

1880s the Wangapeka area was still largely undeveloped, so Pat and his brothers and sisters grew up in a tough pioneering lifestyle as the family hacked a farm out of the native bush. Pat and his two older brothers Mike and Jack attended the Stanley Brook School, having to cross the Motueka River and taking a track up the gully until they came to the small settlement. Even today this area is pretty much the back of beyond. Pat's mother wanted him to become a priest. Despite the fact that as an adult Pat became a rationalist, his evangelism in the cause of labour sometimes had almost religious overtones.

In 1890 Pat's father, Thomas Hickey, was killed by a falling tree while clearing bush. Following Thomas' death, Jane moved with the children to a small mixed farm at Foxhill, a less isolated part of the Waimea South countryside. Pat attended the Foxhill School, which numbered Ernest Rutherford among its old boys. (The area had too low a population to have separate state and Catholic schools). Pat was a keen and intelligent student, but also a fearless fighter who was strong for his age. Despite his aptitude for learning Pat failed to win a College Scholarship, so in the days before free secondary education his formal schooling came to an end when he left Primary School. He was, however, to spend his whole life in a process of self education, through both reading and experience.³

On leaving school Pat worked briefly for an insurance company, but soon left for a manual outside job at a sawmill. He was already determined to travel, aiming to make enough money to get to Ireland. His motivation does not appear to have been any romantic visions of the Old Sod, but rather the family story that his father Thomas Hickey should have inherited had an estate, either in money or land, back in Ireland. Pat was determined to go back and claim this inheritance. No indications of particularly socialist ideals at this time, but perhaps a sense of a determination to see justice done.

A number of authors have said that the young Pat Hickey went to the Alaskan gold rush, but there is no evidence of his having gone there. Rather in 1900, the 18 year old Pat set off to Australia, with the aim of earning enough money to get to the USA from

³ J Weir, "The Red Fed", unpublished biography of P H Hickey, c 1970, pp25-27; J Newport, *Footprints: the story of the Settlement and Development of the Nelson Back Country*, 1962, pp 297-8.

where he hoped it would be easier to get to Ireland. On arriving at San Francisco he was disappointed to find that the fare to Britain was as expensive from the USA as from New Zealand. Work was plentiful but wages were low and he was homesick for Foxhill. He was unimpressed with the wonders of San Francisco and the fast life in its pubs and gambling dens. He travelled through California and the Western United States, through Wyoming and Colorado, crossing the Rockies on foot, contracted pneumonia, working at manual jobs, often connected with mining, and generally failing to make much money. Although his working life was affected by strikes and lock outs, Pat essentially remained apolitical. He approved of both the rivals in the Presidential race, William McKinley and William Jennings Bryan, as both were Irish Americans. Before long Hickey was thoroughly sick of America and had lost any money with which to get to Ireland. By August 1901, he had returned to New Zealand. He came back a more experienced young man, still only 19 years old, but without an inkling of any interest in the cause of socialism.⁴

After visiting his family, Pat got a job at the Ironbridge mine at Denniston, trucking coal. He soon moved on to the better paid job of loading the coal trucks. While Hickey does not seem to have resented paying union fees, and probably attended union meetings, at this time he had no interest in unionism, being more concerned with “having a good time”. By Easter of 1902 he had returned to Foxhill to work locally and be closer to his family. On his 21st birthday he received some money from his father’s NZ estate and used this as the basis to once more head for Ireland in a bid to claim what he believed would be a richer inheritance there.⁵

In February 1903 Pat Hickey set sail from NZ on what would prove to be a life changing adventure. He sailed via Australia, Ceylon and the Suez Canal to Britain. At this time he was still proud of NZ’s reputation as the social laboratory and showed no disillusionment with the Liberal Govt, “One of the most remarkable facts that struck me during the voyage and also in Australia is the good name NZ has among the people. It has been continually pointed out as the most progressive colony... People all speak in admiring terms of the... Government it enjoys- Mr Seddon being continually spoken of as the ablest statesman that the colonies have provided.”⁶

⁴ Weir, pp 28-31

⁵ Weir, pp 32-33; Hickey, *Red Fed Memoirs*, p 6.

⁶ Weir, p 34.

Far from being the wide eyed colonial at the centre of Empire, Hickey was unimpressed with London, “no different to any other place with the exception that it is a bit bigger”. Within a few days he headed for Liverpool, with which he was impressed, to take the ferry to Ireland. Despite his experiences of rough living in the USA, Hickey was shocked by the poverty and dirt he found in Dublin. He headed for Cavan in search of his father’s mysterious inheritance, and again was surprised at the poverty of the Irish countryside, with women walking around barefoot and his cousin Clarke, considered well off as a land owner, living in a house with a mud floor, thatched roof, with a pigsty next to the house. He was also unpleasantly surprised that the older local people insisted on calling him sir and raising their hat to him, with one of the locals asking him if he was the new curate. While in Ireland Hickey addressed a meeting of the conservative Irish nationalist group the United Irish League, but while he was definitely a believer in Home Rule, Hickey does not seem to have come away from Ireland with any great commitment to the Irish cause, nor does the poverty he saw seem to have filled him with indignation over British rule. Pat did not find his father’s legacy in Ireland, nor did his experiences turn him towards politics. That was to occur on the next stage of his journey as he set off once more for the United States.⁷

Pat’s lack of an internationalist class consciousness at this point in his life is illustrated by the fact that he paid extra money to travel second class, rather than travelling steerage, which was “crowded with foreigners of all descriptions.” After visiting relatives in New York, he travelled westward, once again working in a wide variety of jobs, including at the Carnegie steel works. He worked at copper mining in California and gold mining in Oregon and at some point joined the militant miners’ union the Western Federation of Miners. He also travelled to the Aleutian Islands on behalf of the Aleutian Live Stock and Mining Co to assess the possibilities of establishing cattle farms on the islands. His writings of his encounters with the native Aleuts do not show any great level of sympathy for an indigenous people encountering the intrusion of colonisers.⁸

⁷ Letters from PH Hickey to MA Hickey, March 14 1903, April 4 1903, 20 April 1903, MS-papers-3663, ATL.

⁸ Letters from PH Hickey to MA Hickey, 28 May 1903, 11 June 1904, MS-papers-3663, NLNZ. Roth papers on P H Hickey, MS- papers-6164-035, ATL.

By August 1905 Hickey was at the huge copper mine of Bingham Canyon in Utah. Hickey did not like Utah, “for I do not like the Mormons and they do not like me”. Mormons were in positions of social and economic dominance in the state, while the copper miners tended to be non-Mormon outsiders. Hickey did enjoy became actively involved in the local of the Western Federation of Miners and wrote to his sister that he had been elected to a position on the executive. Union records show that Hickey may have exaggerated slightly, as he was nominated for the finance committee and as a delegate to the state union convention, but was not officially elected on to the executive.⁹

Throughout the decade from 1894 to 1904 the WFM was involved in a series of industrial conflicts with employers with armed violence being used by both sides. In late 1903 a series of strikes were crushed by the Governor of Colorado who imposed martial law on striking areas and sent in the state militia to destroy the union. These events shaped the class consciousness of the hard rock miners. Initially most had unionised simply to improve their working conditions, but experience had taught them they were involved in a class war with their employers and the forces of the state. The bitter lessons of class conflict led the WFM to support the creation of an organisation to unite the entire working class in opposition to capital. The WFM became the leading group in setting up the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) through a series of meetings in Chicago in 1905, at the very time Hickey was becoming more involved in union activism. The Wobblies were formed with the intention of carrying on the class struggle through the creation of one big industrial union of workers. The final goal was the destruction of capitalism and the abolition of the wage system. This was seen as leading to the creation of a cooperative commonwealth, where all production as for the benefit of all workers and the union would provide the basis for the organisation of society. The general consensus among both the WFM and the IWW was that this would ultimately be achieved through the weapon of the general strike, rather than through violent revolution, although neither organisation was adverse to the use of violence where deemed necessary. Hickey was never a member of the IWW, (in later life he was to attack its theories and methods), but the ideas he

⁹ Letters from PH Hickey to MA Hickey, 15 August 1905, MS-papers-3663, ATL. F.Shor, “Left Labor Agitators in the Pacific Rim of the early twentieth century”, *International Labor and Working Class History*, 67, April 2005,(pp 148-163), p 152.

gleaned from the WFM closely paralleled the revolutionary industrial unionist approach of the Wobblies.

In addition to his support for the WFM, Hickey became a member of the Socialist Party of America, which by 1905 had a growing following among many workers and ethnic minorities in the USA. The Socialist Party achieved considerable political success in the early twentieth century and was one of the leading forces in the American labour movement. Its leader, Eugene V Debs, had run in 1904 as the Socialist Party candidate for President of the USA, receiving 402,686 votes (3.2 % of the total votes). The Socialist Party eventually succeeded in getting two Congressmen elected, as well as over 70 Socialist party mayors of American towns.

In later years Hickey was to claim he had been closely involved in a large number of strikes during his second sojourn in America, “more strikes than any other man of his age”. He also claimed to have met many of the great union leaders including the WFM and IWW leader Big Bill Hayward, and to have talked to veterans of some of America’s most bitter strikes, including the bloody Homestead Strike of 1892, where ten people were killed in a battle at one of Carnegie’s steel mills. Hickey was to make the Carnegie libraries a particular focus of his attack on capitalism, condemning them as philanthropy built on workers’ blood. Pat had been disgusted with America on his first trip, but now, with his eyes open to the evils of American capitalism, he considered becoming an American citizen- perhaps so he could become more involved in the struggle there.¹⁰

In the end Pat did not stay in the States but instead returned unannounced to his family in Nelson. After a brief reunion he headed once more for the Hill at Denniston. In contrast to his earlier days on the Coast, Pat arrived armed with his WFM ticket and his Socialist party membership card. He was determined to become an active unionist and spread the message of socialism. Hickey brought the messages of North American syndicalism to the Coast, a task in which he would soon be joined by the Canadian socialist agitator H M Fitzgerald. After the rough and tumble unionism of the USA, Hickey was shocked by his first union meeting at Denniston. On proposing strike action over some pre-existing grievances he was told that strike action was

¹⁰ *Greymouth Evening Star*, 28 October 1907, p 1; *Commonweal*, January 1908, p 3; Weir, p 50.

illegal while an award set by the Arbitration Court was in place. Pat became a bitter opponent of the arbitration system, joining those who saw it as “Labour’s leg iron”. The leaders of the Denniston Miners’ Union were men such as the President, John Foster, older miners who had fought the original battles to establish unions on the Coast. They had survived the collapse of unionism that followed the disastrous 1890 strike and rebuilt the unions in the early years of the Liberal Government. To them arbitration was by no means perfect, but was a better option than the suffering and defeat that could result from industrial action.¹¹

Hickey’s closest ally on the Hill was a young Australian miner, Patrick Charles “Paddy” Webb. Webb came from the North Eastern Victorian town of Rutherglen, where he had worked in a gold mine. He had been active in trade unionism and socialist politics, along with his friend and fellow socialist Michael Joseph Savage. Webb’s activism saw him blacklisted, which led him to cross the Tasman to what he believed was the ‘working man’s paradise’ of New Zealand. Webb was such a great supporter of Richard John Seddon that he quit his job to go to Wellington for Seddon’s funeral. After working at a variety of jobs Webb took up coal mining at Denniston. By the time he arrived on the Hill, Webb had also become disillusioned with the arbitration system. He and Hickey became close friends and leading lights in the newly established Socialist Party branches at Denniston and Burnett’s Face. Their attempts to gain power in the Miner’s Union were unsuccessful and both fell foul of the mine management: Hickey was sacked for campaigning against the medical examination of miners, Webb was fired soon afterwards for taking time off to help organise the speaking tour of visiting British union leader and socialist Ben Tillett.¹²

Hickey, after being fired once again from the Stockton mine, got a job at the State Mine at Runanga. The leader of the State Miners’ Union at Runanga was “Fighting Bob” Semple, another Australian, who had come to New Zealand after being blacklisted from Victoria due to his involvement in the Gippsland miners’ strike of 1903. Like Webb, Semple had chosen to come to New Zealand believing it to be the ‘working man’s paradise’. Semple, despite the radical reputation he was soon to acquire, was in early 1908 seen as a respected moderate leader of a union that had a

¹¹ Weir, pp 50; Hickey, *Red Fed Memoirs*, pp 6-7. L. Richardson, *Coal, Class and Community: The United Mineworkers of NZ, 1880-1960*, 1995, pp 83-86.

¹² Hickey, *Red Fed Memoirs*, pp 8-11.

reputation as progressive. Semple and the State Miners' Union were not at this time anti- arbitration, having successfully campaigned, in 1905-1906, to be included within the arbitration system. (State employees were generally not covered by the Arbitration Act).¹³

Semple and Hickey joined forces to set up Socialist Party branches at Dunollie, Greymouth, Brunerton, Reefton and Blackball. The members of this early Socialist Party held a wide range of views on what constituted socialism. Pat Hickey, however, was clear in his belief in the class struggle; that the exploiting class and the wage system must be abolished and all profits from the economic system must go to the workers. Hickey criticised state enterprises as merely another boss to exploit the workers, but believed in a socialised state where industry was organised for the benefit of workers. He read a wide range of authors, being particularly influenced by the historian Henry Buckle, who advocated the idea that the people make their own history. Despite campaigning for the Socialist Party, Hickey, Webb and Semple seem to have regarded it as more of a platform for socialist propaganda than a genuine vehicle for taking parliamentary power. While all three were members of the Party, Hickey stated that they eyed it with some suspicion when it came to contesting Parliamentary seats. The focus of the struggle at this time was industrial action and the formation of a united federation of industrial unions.¹⁴

Patrick O'Farrell has portrayed Runanga as a 'safe house' for labour radicals, but Pat Hickey soon found that he was once more out of a job. It is not clear if he was literally fired or simply not re-employed. Despite his friendship with Semple the State Miners' Union made no moves to support Hickey's reinstatement.¹⁵ Hickey headed for Blackball, accompanied by Paddy Webb, recently fired from Denniston, Webb's friend the Victorian socialist George Hunter, and a number of other young miners.

Hickey, Webb and company had made little headway in the established unions at Denniston and Runanga. The Denniston union was dominated by older miners

¹³ V J Smith, "Gospel of Hope or Gospel of Plunder: Socialism from the mid 1890s up to and including the Blackball Strike of 1908", BA Hons dissertation, Massey Univ, 1976., pp 62-64

¹⁴Hickey, "The True Leaders" in *Commonweal*, Dec 1907, p 6. Hickey, Red fed Memoirs, p 32.

¹⁵ P O'Farrell, 'Politics and Coal: The Socialist Vanguard', (pp 101-127), in P R May (ed) *Miners and Militants*, 1975, p 116; Weir, p 63; *Commonweal*, April 1908, p4.

principally of Northern English and Scottish descent. These unionists were active campaigners over issues such as the eight hours “bank-to-bank”, but they did not want young, radical miners, who were often of colonial Irish descent, holding positions of power in “their” unions. The Runanga State Miners’ Union was newer and less entrenched than the Denniston union, with a reputation for a progressive approach to issues. Even taking his into account, the State Miners’ Union was also not open to a take over by the young radicals. The union had a solid power structure and a working relationship with the mine management; there was no room for a take over by young radicals from outside. Any changes to the Denniston or Runanga unions would come from within, not from the newly arrived socialist evangelists. For Pat Hickey there was a significant “push factor” in his move to Blackball, as there were now few other places on the Coast where he could have got a coal mining job. There was also a “pull factor” in that it is likely that he, Webb and Hunter were drawn to Blackball by the hope that they could have a significant input into the union politics there. There is, however, no real evidence to back up O’Farrell’s claim that Hickey, Webb and Semple were plotting to start a strike at Blackball to challenge the arbitration system. The indications are that the young activists were opportunists who used existing local issues as a basis from which to agitate and build support for the Socialist Party and militant industrial unionism. As Hickey wrote to his mother soon after his arrival at Blackball, “I think I shall like this place and by this time next month, if I am here, we will have [it] organised as the other places I have worked”.¹⁶

The Blackball mine experienced a sequence of technical and economic setbacks since its opening in 1893. Until a bridge could be built across the Grey, the mine was dependent on the aerial ropeway, which was constantly breaking down. (The bridge, under construction at the time of the strike, was not completed until 1909). Other difficulties included fires in the mine and a series of localised economic downturns, all combined to keep the Blackball mine struggling to stay viable in the years before 1908. This meant that the Blackball Miners’ Union (or Blackball Miners’ Industrial Union of Workers as its full title was) also struggled to survive through these years. With employment precarious the union was not in a strong position to put pressure on management and remained largely dependent on the vagaries of the arbitration system.

¹⁶ Weir, p 64.

Conditions at the Blackball mine were probably no worse than in any other West Coast mine; indeed the Government Mines Inspector, Robert Tennant, considered the Blackball Mine a model of good safety practice. Despite Tennant's opinion the Blackball miners were convinced that Blackball was a mine with bad ventilation and an antagonistic management attitude. They believed that Tennant was in the pocket of mine manager Walter Leitch and that therefore Government inspections were worthless. The miners had a series of disputes with Leitch over mine ventilation, the weighing of tubs, and over hours of work. There also appears to have been some local conflict over the role of the Leitch family in the operation of the mine, with some suggestion that there were "too many Leitchs" at the mine. James Leitch, who was based at Ngahere, was the Manager of the mine; his son Walter Leitch, based at Blackball, was Mine Manager, taking care of day to day operations. There were at least another ten men from the Leitch family working at the Blackball mine, all of whom were numbered among the Blackball strikers.¹⁷

While the economic problems of the Blackball Mine had kept the union weak, the fact that 1908 dawned as a prosperous year for the mine also meant the union could build up its strength. Prosperity meant the union could risk going against the arbitration system, which they did not believe had served them well, and consider strike action. The relative weakness of the union also meant it welcomed newcomers prepared to put their energy into union activities, such as the young activists who arrived at the beginning of 1908. It should, however, be noted that some of the longer standing union members such as David Pritchard and the Union Secretary, Walter Rogers, were already very active union members.

Hickey, Webb and the young socialists established a branch of the Socialist party at Blackball. As at Denniston, it became a centre of social activities; especially for the young miners. Three members of the Party were elected to the Union executive- Paddy Webb, Henry Fox, and Thomas Milligan. The seven men sacked by Walter Leitch were the entire executive of the Socialist Party, and included Webb, Fox and Milligan, as well as Hickey, Hunter, William Bromilow and John Goldsmith. The fact

¹⁷ *NZ Worker*, Special Edition, 6 April 1908, pp 1-2, AJHR, 1908, Vol II, C-3A, pp 12-13; *Greymouth Evening Star*, Mon 23 March 1908, p 2.

that the young activists had become so involved in the Blackball community meant that, when they were fired, the union and the town rallied round them; probably very much to Walter Leitch's surprise. Leitch would have been well aware that Hickey had been fired from Denniston and Runanga without any union backlash.

Hickey played a leading role in the strike, but it is arguable as to how much power he had as a strike leader. On at least two occasions he tried to negotiate an early end to the strike, only to have his proposals rejected by the union membership. Despite his experiences in the USA, Hickey was still relatively naïve when it came to understanding the role of democracy in unionism.¹⁸

By the time the Blackball strike ended, Hickey had become a national figure. He stayed on briefly in Blackball and was elected President of the Blackball Miners' Union. Within less than a year Hickey and Webb both moved on from Blackball after being informed that there was no longer any work for them at the mine. Pat did, however, form one lasting connection with Blackball, becoming engaged to Rose Rogers, daughter of his friend Walter Rogers, the Union Secretary. Pat and Rose were married at Greymouth in 1911.

Hickey went on to be an organiser and activist in the Miners Federation, the peak body of miners' unions, and the organisation that grew from it, the Federation of Labour or Red Feds. The growth of these peak union bodies was assisted by the spreading mood of militancy among many unions, influenced by workers' victories such as the Blackball strike. Hickey was also sub-editor and a prolific writer of often controversial articles for the labour newspaper *The Maoriland Worker*. Always following an independent line he was often to clash with his old allies Paddy Webb and Bob Semple, as they cemented their positions of power in the new labour organisations. After the defeat of the 1913 strike Hickey continued his union organising, but like many of the strike leaders had difficulty in finding paid work due to employer blacklisting. He was staunchly opposed to the Great War which broke out in 1914 and feared, correctly, the conscription would eventually be introduced.

Despite the fact that he was now in his 30s, married and the father of a young son, Pat

¹⁸J McCullough Diary, 12 March 1908, ARC 1991.26, Manuscripts Dept Canterbury Museum. Letter J McCullough to G G Stead, 26 March 1908, Roth papers, 94-106-29/12, ATL; E Olssen, *Red Feds: Revolutionary Industrial Unionism and the NZ Federation of Labour, 1908-1913*, p 12.

junior, Hickey was convinced that he would be conscripted. He left New Zealand in late 1915 for Australia in order to avoid this fate, accompanied by Rose and Pat junior. Given the later drafting of Paddy Webb, of the pacifist Baxter brothers and the Irish nationalist Cody brothers of Riversdale, Pat Hickey's fears may well have been justified. In Australia he became immersed in the anti-conscription campaign. This campaign was ultimately successful, as in two separate referenda the majority of voters rejected the Hughes Government's attempts to introduce conscription.

Hickey held a variety of jobs in Australia. He worked at first as a clerk in the Federal Defence Office of the Australian Defence Department, a job which John Weir believes he took in order to discover the Federal Government's plans regarding conscription. Hickey soon went back to working for the unions, becoming an organiser for the Victorian Railways Union and then editor of the Queensland Railways Union paper. Although active in calling for the release of IWW activists, Hickey clashed with the Wobblies over tactics and was reported as suing newspapers and Prime Minister William Hughes over Hughes accusation that he was a member of the IWW.¹⁹

Pat and his family returned to New Zealand in 1920, to edit the *Maoriland Worker*. He resigned as editor in 1921 and tried to set up his own printing business. In addition to his union and Labour Party activism Hickey was involved in the defence campaign for IWW and Irish union activist James Larkin, imprisoned in the USA. During this period Hickey fell foul of the small Communist Party due to his involvement in trying to have them expelled from the Labour Party. He also ran unsuccessfully as Labour candidate for the Invercargill electorate, in a bid to defeat Joseph Ward, against whom he had a particular grudge dating back to the days of 1908. Despite his continued involvement in labour issues, there is an impression from his writings that Hickey regretted that passing of the days of fiery rhetoric and direct action of the 1900s and 1910s.²⁰

In 1925 the Hickey's returned to Australia, where Pat went into business managing a hotel on the Adelaide-Melbourne motor road. He became involved in Australian

¹⁹ Weir, p 332, 340. P H Hickey, *Solidarity or Sectionalism: A Plea for Unity*, 1918.

²⁰ Roth papers on P H Hickey, MS- papers-6164-035, ATL.

Labor Party politics and was elected President of the Victorian Labor party. He was selected as candidate for the safe Labor seat of Dandenong, but died of a brain clot on 5 February 1930, before the election was held. Hickey's death at a relatively young age means that we can only speculate as to where his career might have led. All indications are that he would have continued to follow his own line and proved as much of a maverick within the Labor Party, as he had been in the union movement.

What of Pat Hickey the man? He was reported as having been a dynamic speaker, although some said he was not as good on the soapbox as Bob Semple. According to John A Lee, Hickey was a great defensive fighter, brilliant at holding his own and arguing a point: as seen at Blackball, he was not a man to back down when he believed he was in the right. Hickey was a self educated working man who read widely. He had read many of the American socialists, such as Debs and De Leon, as well as some of Marx, although it is not clear to me at present to what depth he had studied Marxist thinking. At the time of the Blackball strike Hickey was strongly influenced by the English historian Henry Buckle (1821-1862), from whom he took the message that ordinary people create their own history. John Weir records that some working people thought Hickey came across when speaking as being too well read and intellectual, in comparison to the more rough and ready, populist style of speakers such as Semple.²¹

In the years immediately after his return from the USA, Hickey was a syndicalist; at a time when syndicalism was the prominent revolutionary socialist theory. Hickey believed in revolutionary change, to be brought about by the actions of large industrial unions, leading to a socialist society with the industrial unions as the basis of economic organisation. While Hickey believed in the class struggle and revolution, he did not necessarily believe in violent revolution. His essential aim was to bring about change through the strike weapon rather than through an armed uprising. John Weir, looking at Hickey's actions during the 1913 strike and later in opposition to the Great War, describes Hickey as a pacifist. I am of the opinion that Hickey was not adverse to violence if he saw it as absolutely necessary, but that he sought to avoid it if at all possible.²²

²¹ Weir, pp 105-106, 370. Hickey, "The True Leaders" in *Commonweal*, Dec 1907, p 6

²² Weir, p 328.

The union federation that Hickey, Webb and Semple were seeking to establish was a step on the way to a socialist society built on syndicalist lines. Hickey's ideas on this were to a large extent derived from his American experiences, an influence that was enhanced during the Blackball strike by the presence of the Canadian socialist and IWW agitator H M Fitzgerald. But Hickey himself acknowledged a local influence: Frank Hudson, a miner and union activist from Runanga, who apparently pressured Hickey and Semple into the cause of organising a union federation. In later years, as he held formal positions within the Federation of Labour, on the staff of the *Maoriland Worker*, and in Labour Parties in New Zealand and Australia, Hickey was forced to compromise more. He was never a good team player, however, and often fell out with other leaders, including Semple and Webb. Hickey was known for what were seen as impetuous outbursts; he spent many years trying to live down his notorious call to workers to "to toss every agreement to Hell" in his *Maoriland Worker* article of February 1912.²³ CHEck

Despite his fiery public reputation there was another, softer side to Pat Hickey. By all reports he was a good family man and kept in constant touch with his mother and siblings, visiting them when he was in New Zealand and writing to them when he was overseas. His wife Rose was a staunch socialist, who at one stage was on the executive of the Social Democratic Party, one of the forerunners of the Labour Party. Throughout the course of their marriage she backed Pat loyally in his labour activism. It is clear that his relationship with Rose was important in keeping Pat going during the later difficulties in his career.

Pat Hickey will in many ways remain an enigma. In contrast to many of the Labour leaders of the thirties, who came to New Zealand from Australia and further afield, he moved from here to Australia. There is an indication that he went through a period of disillusionment, but then once again became active in labour politics. His early death at the age of 48 means that we will never know in which political direction he was heading. His image in New Zealand remains one of radical youth confronting conservative union leadership, Government and the forces of capitalism, in an obstinate belief that the World can be changed for the better.

²³PH Hickey, "Lest we forget", *Maoriland Worker*, 9 Feb 1912.

