

The Scottish Colliery Strike, Excerpt from *Unity is Strength: A history of the Australians Labor Party and Trades and Labor Council in Western Australia*, Bobbie Oliver, API Network, 2003 p. 38.

During the campaign, the State experienced its longest industrial strike to date, after workers at the Scottish Colliery at Collie walked off the job in protest over the dismissal of a miner, William Wyard. Wyard had lit a fuse as a practical joke, and the resulting smoke had forced several miners to stop work until the air was clear again. The Collie Miners Union (CMU) had a strong union culture and a history of militancy, which included raising levies to help the Victorian coal miners during a 17-month strike cum lockout. At Collie, union solidarity, with support from the ALF, achieved Wyard's reinstatement after 18 weeks. The employers also agreed to compulsory unionism, the removal from the *Industrial Arbitration Act* of the controversial Clause 26, under which a union could be penalised for striking, and the return to work of the men who had been locked out.⁴⁹

Before the Collie strike ended, the Scaddan Labor Government came to office in October, with a landslide of 34 of the 50 Legislative Assembly seats. 'Demos is King', the *Worker's* banner front-page headline trumpeted triumphantly. The *Worker* saw the swing to Labor as a result of 'economic circumstances' and 'personalities'. Among the economic circumstances were listed the 'widespread discontent' against the government's continued support of immigration whilst there was high unemployment in the State, and unhappiness with the activities of 'rings' and 'combines', which forced up the price of food and other commodities. One such example was the 'meat ring' operating in the State's North-West, which the Labor Party pledged itself to circumvent by establishing a line of state-owned steamers to ship meat — rather than cattle — to the southern ports. Here, according to the *Worker*, the matter of personalities also influenced the election result. The public saw Government Ministers as being corrupt and exploitative. The last straw was the passing of the *Redistribution of Seats Bill*, which Labor supporters regarded as nothing more than a cynical attempt to give the Liberals an extra lease of power. Conversely, Labor's policy appealed to a public who were tired of 'bandits' and 'boodlers'. The election campaign was extremely professional, well organised and aided by the publication of a newspaper, the *Vanguard*, edited by Hugh Mahon. In celebrating the fruits of victory, the *Worker* did not forget to praise the Party faithful — making particular mention of the women organisers.⁵⁰