

**A People's
Press—
Noel Counihan**

Large print version of
displayed texts

STATEMENT

Art is a social activity, and as such is organically united with the struggles and aspirations of humanity towards the ideals of democratic life. The body of art is created in the crucible of human natural and social experience, and achieves an independent volition of its own which co-evolves with society. Art modifies, alters and enriches the psychological responses of those human units which, in their agglomeration, form the social organism. Thus art directly affects society itself.

Since the middle of the last century, when the objective realists cleared the ground of classical posturings and destroyed the heroic myths as a valid theme; art has become its own subject. The artists commenced experimenting with their psycho-physical responses to phenomena, to revolutionizing perception and the structures of art. The apple on a dish-cloth became self-sufficient.

Despite the magnitude of their achievements, these artistic introversions have, in their own time, become inadequate. Such is the contemporary problem - the movement of the artists' attention outward, from self-preoccupation to current social conceptions formed under the pressure of modern history. Art, as distinct from the official and academic variety, returns to the parent social body to discover its own aims, to seek vitalizing impulses in order to react back with purposeful vigour and authenticity. Our own extraordinary epoch has created new directions and new functions.. We are faced with a return of theme, subject, content or what you will, for art requires a working faith.

This exhibition is an attempt to crystalize this tendency, to show the impact of the fascist decade on our artists' sensibility. That many bad pictures have resulted is unquestionable. The so-obvious solution for many painters is to make their work subservient to political expediency and illustrate some

immediate political need. Coloured political cartoons and jingo sentiment provide a cheap solution and an easy evasion of the real problem - the impact of present reality on existent artistic form. Such a false approach may provide the material for a new reaction, which could menace whatever social health we possess, as Government indifference and the dreary senility of the National Gallery affects it now. To make art the slave of political concepts, whatever their color, is artistic suicide, for if art is to grow it must, above all, remain free.

It is a truism to say that the best weapons to employ against political and military fascism are political and military. But then fascism is not only a political movement, it is an "ideology," and as such has its own official philosophy, psychology and art. Fascist art is a scullery maid in the fascist kitchen, a servile wench dutifully parroting her masters' inhuman views of race, blood and state; throwing overboard the last 80 years of artistic history because they would encumber the political idea.

It is our task to see that the results of generations of artistic labor are not thrown away in the interests of any political idea. Incorporate the idea if you will. In our own social order there are art movements founded on a belief in mass and individual liberty, with all that is implied in the economic and political sense. Such works may seem to contain little direct reference to fascism, but that does not matter. They leave that to the politician. What does matter is that they are incompatible with the fascist stomach, and as such are its natural enemies.

EUREKA

1854-1954

A FOLIO OF LINO-CUTS

This folio of lino-cuts, the work of ten artists, produced by the Melbourne Popular Art Group, pays tribute to a great occasion in our history - the stand of the Ballarat miners in the Eureka Stockade.

At dawn on Sunday, December 3, 1854, a handful of poorly-armed diggers stood within their flimsy wooden stockade in defiance of the organised might of Government, army and police.

Their grievances had been acute: an unjust and oppressive tax on their labour, enforced by a corrupt and brutal administration in the election of which they had no choice.

Confused and divided by the agents of the Government, the number of diggers who remained within the Stockade was small. But their friends and sympathisers were many.

Military victory went to the Government - but the moral victory was the diggers'.

Within one year of Eureka the tax they fought against had been abolished, and the democratic reforms they demanded had been granted. Within two years their leader, Peter Lalor, at first declared an outlaw, had become their representative in the Parliament their blood had won.

This is the centenary year of Eureka. In remembering this anniversary, we celebrate men standing together, in mateship, to defend their rights and liberties.' We celebrate the birthday of Australian democracy.

MELBOURNE
1954

THE PRINTS

1. **PETER LALOR (Silk Screen) by RAY WENBAN**

On November 30, 1854, at a mass meeting of the Ballarat diggers on Bakery Hill, Peter Lalor stood forth from among them, for the first time, as their leader.

On that same day, he accepted the invitation of the diggers' Council of War to become commander-in-chief: "I shall not shrink; I mean to do my duty as a man . . . If once I pledge my hand to the diggers, I will neither defile it with treachery, nor render it contemptible by cowardice."

Peter Lalor proved himself worthy of the diggers.

'Twas of such stuff the men were made who saw our nation born, And such as Lalor were the men who led their footsteps on;

And of such men there'll many be, and of such leaders some, In the roll-up of Australians on some dark day yet to come.

HENRY LAWSON - Eureka

2. **"JOE! JOE! THE TRAPS ARE COMING" by NOEL COUNIHAN**

"Joe! Joe!" No one in the world can properly understand and describe this shouting of "Joe," unless he were on this El Dorado of Ballarat at the time. It was a horrible day, plagued by the hot winds. A blast of the hurricane winding through gravel pits whirled towards the Eureka this shouting of "Joe." ... It was a scarecrow for the miners, who now scrambled down to the deep, and left a licensed mate or two at the windlass . . . Are diggers dogs or savages, that they are to be hunted on the diggings, commanded to come out of their holes, and summoned from their tents by these hounds of the executive?

CARBONI RAFFAELLO, The Eureka Stockade

3. THE LICENCE HUNT by PAT O'CONNOR

The digger hunts, as the police termed them, were of daily occurrence. The method was: A strong armed force of police would set out from Camp Hill, and would sally over the diggings, demanding of every man to produce his licence. A failure, or a refusal to do so, meant immediate arrest with unnecessary violence. One handcuff was attached to the victim's right wrist, the other to the ring-bolt in the trooper's saddle, and a smart move was made to the police camp. If the prisoner objected to entertaining his brutal captor by a trotting match with his horse, the reply was to put the steed into a canter; it was make the pace or go down.

MONTY MILLER, a veteran of Eureka, in an unpublished Mss.

4. THE MAGISTRATE by NOEL COUNIHAN

These small officials are the pests of the colony. By their repeated acts of insolence, and petty tyranny, they have established rankling animosities against them in the minds of the diggers. - "The Age," November, 1854.

A set of young insolent and imperious men were put into the Commission, who appeared to have no sympathy whatever with the people over whom they were set to rule. The whole management of the Gold Fields . . . raised the indignation of high-spirited, free-born men, and excited the universal hatred of the people as a cold-blooded, un-English, un-Christian despotism.

WILLIAM HOWITI, Two Years in Victoria

5. ON BAKERY HILL by NOEL COUNIHAN

"I feel bound to ask you, gentlemen, to speak out your mind. Should any member of the Reform League be dragged to the lock-up for not having a licence, will a thousand of you volunteer to liberate the man?"

"Yes! Yes!"

"Will two thousand of you come forward?" "Yes! Yes!"

"Will four thousand of you volunteer to march up to the Camp, and open the lock-up to liberate the man?"

"Yes! Yes! Yes!"

Speech of TIMOTHY HAYES to the diggers' mass meeting,
November 29, 1854

6. BURN THE LICENCES! by PETER MILLER

No one who was not present at that monster eeting, or never saw any Chartist meeting in Copenhagen-fields, London, can possibly form an idea of the enthusiasm of the miners of Ballarat on that 29th of November. A regular volley of revolvers and pistols now took place, and a good blazing-up of gold licences.

CARBONI RAFFAELLO, The Eureka Stockade

Resolution of the diggers' meeting, November 29:

"This meeting being convinced that the obnoxious licence fee is an imposition and an unjustifiable tax on free labour, pledges itself to take immediate steps to abolish the same by at once burning all their licences; that, in the event of any party being arrested for having no licence, that the united people will, under all circumstances, defend and protect them."

7. BUILDING THE STOCKADE by AILSA O'LONNOR

On that very afternoon, November 29, carts were commandeered to bring in timber. They were sent out into the bush and carted in what we called small piles - posts about twelve feet long. These were split down, made _into two. They were put in a trench about four feet deep, round sides inwards, and the fl.at, rough sides outwards. They left a barricade about eight feet in height as the front wall of the Stockade.

MONTY MILLER, unpublished Mss.

8. THE BLACKSMITH by LEN GALE

Paddy Gittins, the pike-smith, and a Scotch blacksmith, Sandy McNab, had their forges inside the Stockade and were making pikes on the Irish model of 1798 and 1848, as hard as they could welt away at it.'

MONTY MILLER, unpublished Mss.

9. THE BLACKSMITH by ERNIE McFARLANE

"Tell these gentlemen that, if they cannot provide themselves with firearms; let each of them procure a piece of steel five or six inches long, attached to a pole, and that will pierce the tyrants' hearts."

PETER LALOR

10. THE SLY-GROG SELLER by PETER MILLER

Sly-grog sellers got also a little profit out of the Eureka Stockade. A fellow was selling nobblers out of a keg of brandy hanging from his neck. It required Peter Lalor in person to order this devil-sent out of the stockade.

CARBONI RAFFAELLO, The Eureka Stockade

11. THE SENTRY by MAURICE CARTER

The military were quick to take advantage of the situation, and moved to the attack between 2 and 3 o'clock on Sunday morning, December 3, 1854.

It was in the darkness before dawn that Harry de Longueville, one of the sentries on duty, heard the tramp of the storming party, and fired the shot that alarmed the diggers.

MONTY MILLER, unpublished Mss.

12. THE PIKEMEN by PETER MILLER

The blade of the pike was about fifteen inches long, shaped at the bottom very much like a boathook, except that the hook was flat and sharpened to a keen cutting edge. The object was to attach the hook to the troopers' bridles, and, with a sudden pull, to cut the bridle, so that the rider had only one rein, and lost control of the horse. At the same time, a belt with the pike would send the horse galloping off, and put the trooper out of the fight. A breach was soon made in the Stockade, and military and police poured into the diggers' citadel. Then came the hand-to-hand fighting, in which the eight-foot pike was superior to the five-foot musket and bayonet. The fight in the Stockade was silent and deadly, broken only by the heavy fall of a fatally wounded digger or soldier.

MONTY MILLER, unpublished Mss.

13. TRAMPLING THE FLAG by NAOMI SHIPP

The old command, "Charge!" was distinctly heard, and the red-coats rushed with fixed bayonets to storm the Stockade.

A wild "hurrah!" burst out, and the Southern Cross was torn down, I should say, among their laughter. The red-coats were now ordered to fall in; their bloody work was over, and they were marched off, dragging with them the Southern Cross.

CARBONI RAFFAELLO, The Eureka Stockade

14. AFTER THE BATTLE by MARY ZUVELLA

Here begins a foul deed worthy of devils, and devils they were. The accursed troopers were now within the Stockade. They dismounted, and pounced on firebrands from the large fire in the middle of the Stockade, and deliberately set in a blaze all the tents round about. The howling and yelling was horrible. The wounded are now burnt to death; those who had laid down their arms, and taken refuge within the tents, were kicked like brutes and made prisoners.

CARBONI RAFFAELLO, The Eureka Stockade

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SPEECH FROM STEEL CAGE

Young Artist Fined £15

BRUNSWICK CASE

As a sequel to an incident in Sydney Road, Brunswick, on Friday night when a young man in a steel cage mounted on a lorry made a speech through a megaphone to a large crowd. Noel Cunningham, 19, artist, of a'Beckett Street, City, was charged at the Brunswick Court today with having on May 19 at Brunswick, behaved in an offensive manner. Cunningham was further charged with having obstructed Sydney Road by allowing a cart to remain across the roadway.

Constable Cook, of Yarraville, said that about 8.40 pm on May 19 he was on duty at Sydney Road in company with other police. The cart was drawn up almost in front of the post office. The horse had been taken from the cart and a large cage made of wooden beams, a steel grille and netting had been erected. Cunningham was addressing the crowd through a megaphone in a loud voice. He was saying, "This is necessary because the police prevent us from speaking to you." On the cage were the written words: "We want free speech." and "In gaol 18 class war prisoners for free speech."

HOLE BROKEN IN CAGE

The wheels of the cart were padlocked and a crowd was surging around, added Constable Cook. A hole was broken in the cage before Cunningham would stop speaking. He submitted to arrest quietly.

Cunningham: 'Was there not traffic passing while I was speaking?'

Constable Cook: 'No.'

Cunningham: 'Were there not mounted police driving the crowd up through the doors of shops'. — No.

Constable Cook's evidence was corroborated by other constables.

Cunningham said that he was speaking for the Brunswick Free Speech Defence Committee, and that the cart from which he spoke was in line with other vehicles along the kerb. He could not have been obstructing the traffic, as he had to stop speaking several times because of the noise of passing vehicles.

"The cage was necessary," said Cunningham. "If I was to be protected from the batons, and, as it now seems, from the bullets of the police."

Mr. Brown. P.M, 'You are above the average intelligence. Nevertheless law and order should not be defied. You should be assisting law and order. You will be fined £5, in default one month's imprisonment, for offensive behaviour and £10 in default two months' imprisonment, for having obstructed traffic.

Cunningham gave notice of appeal against his conviction for having obstructed the traffic and asked for time to pay the fine for offensive behavior. He said he had been out of work for 12 months and had just got work.

Mr Brown: We are against time to pay in these cases.
The request was refused.

Two Exciting Arrests Stir Shopping Crowd in Brunswick!

By seating himself in this cage a young man attempted to outwit the police at Brunswick last night and address a crowd through a megaphone. He was arrested after the police had broken into the cage.