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Jack Mundey

Jack Mundey is a trade unionist and environmentalist. He was secretary of the New South Wales Builders Labourers Federation (NSW BLF) in the early 1970s during the 'green ban' movement, leading the protests against the destruction of inner-city heritage sites such as The Rocks and Kelly's Bush. Mundey was instrumental in creating alliances between local community groups and the trade unions to protect the urban environment. He continues to campaign on environmental issues, arguing the need for unions and communities to band together to create a better quality of life for all citizens. In 1997 he was named an Australian Living Treasure. In 2000 he was made an Officer of the Order of Australia. He joined the Australian Greens in 2003. The University of Sydney has created a Master of Environment degree to honour Mundey’s work.
Jack Mundey is well known as a trade unionist, environmentalist and urban campaigner. As he has always maintained strong notions of the moral obligations of citizens belonging to a global community, and argued that political action should foster recognition of a common humanity, he may also be called a global citizen. While this is not the only way to understand Mundey’s lifetime as an activist and radical thinker, this chapter offers a complementary perspective on Mundey as a cosmopolitan activist, whose political ideas were expressions of a universalist civic and ecological concern. In particular, Mundey and the leadership group of the New South Wales Builders Labourers Federation (NSW BLF) in the early 1970s spoke of the ‘social responsibility of labour’. By this they meant that industrial struggles should be linked to ecological sustainability, and to broader social and moral obligations of solidarity with progressive international political movements (see e.g. Mundey 1980: 280–3). The most well known of these actions were the innovative ‘green bans’ on socially and ecologically damaging development, which had dramatic impacts both nationally and overseas. It is argued here that Jack Mundey’s long life of activism has been characterised by an appeal to universal values and responsibilities, which he sees as a means for citizens to address political problems within and beyond Australia. This chapter first examines the political and historical context of the green bans, and then suggests five key themes of Mundey’s political thought and activism which identify him as a global citizen. These themes cover Mundey’s public commitments to the preservation of the urban environment, the ‘social responsibility of labour’, a critique of ‘growthmania’, solidarity within and beyond national borders and to re-enfranchising forms of direct, participatory democracy.
The green bans in context

In the early 1970s, urban planning and heritage protection controls were virtually non-existent. In the midst of an unprecedented building boom, many areas of Sydney came under threat of development, including Kelly’s Bush, Woolloomooloo, Centennial Park, the Rocks area and Victoria Street in Kings Cross. An important context to the rise of the green bans was the failure of local and state governments in New South Wales to address widespread concerns over the social consequences of unfettered development. It was an era of unprecedented building expansion, and the then Askin Liberal government of New South Wales was notorious for its close personal and political ties with developers. At the time, planning regulations gave residents affected by development proposals no genuine avenues for appeal (Burgmann and Burgmann 1998: 46–9).

In this context of ‘state failure’ to address mounting public concerns over unfettered development, the BLF’s coverage of over 90 per cent of builders’ labourers gave it considerable influence. Equally, as Mundey put it at the time, builders’ labourers had a unique influence by virtue of being the ‘first on and last off site’. By the early 1970s, the NSW BLF had already established itself as a radical union, having taken an active stance on Aboriginal land rights, opposition to the Vietnam War, and other social issues. At this time, the NSW BLF leadership began to express the view that unions should be involved in wider ranging social and environmental issues.

In this sense, the actions of the NSW BLF may be understood within the context of New Left politics, which ventured beyond the traditional ‘Old Left’ focus on class to question other forms of social oppression and disenfranchisement. This generational shift included a wider questioning of the future of the cities (see e.g. Stretton 1970), and a renewed interest in urban politics with the rise of the Whitlam government in 1972. As a trade union, the NSW BLF had particular significance as a bridge between these ‘old’ and ‘new’ social movements. With distinctive ideological influences, it was a union particularly suited to this task. Part of the context to the green bans lies in the wider history of trade union political action.

As a member of the then non-aligned Communist Party of Australia (CPA), Mundey came from a union tradition which saw broader social and political action as core aspects of union activity. Under the leadership of the Communist Party, important precursors of this tradition included Waterside Workers Federation bans to prevent pig-iron exports to Japan in 1938 (Mallory 1992: 44) and to support the Indonesian independence struggle in the late 1940s.
As this chapter seeks to demonstrate, Mundey and the leadership group of the NSW BLF transformed this existing CPA tradition of ‘political action’ into a broader form of global citizenship, in the universal interest of people from all classes. Notably, the popularity of these new forms of urban environmentalism saw Mundey’s political influence survive the dissolution of the Australian CPA in 1991. Several important universalist themes emerge from Mundey’s long history of political and environmental activism. The following point distinctively to Jack Mundey as a cosmopolitan political thinker and activist.5

Preservation of the urban environment

Responding to requests from local residents to stop an A. V. Jennings housing development in Kelly’s Bush – one of inner Sydney’s few remaining green spaces – the NSW BLF leadership sensed the opportunity to ‘turn theory in practice’ (Mundey 2004). Within a short time of the initial Sydney ban in June 1971, the concept of the ‘green ban’ was articulated. These were union work bans to prevent destruction of urban green space, historic and heritage buildings, and the corporate redevelopment of inner-city working-class neighbourhoods (see e.g. Burgmann and Burgmann 1998; 1999; Mundey 1980). It has been estimated that these innovative actions prevented around $5 billion of ecologically destructive development (Burgmann and Burgmann 1999: 44), most famously in the cases of Kelly’s Bush and the Rocks in inner Sydney. Over the next three years, forty-two separate bans were imposed and some sixty heritage buildings were saved. These interventions added a new strength and focus to the conservation movement, by highlighting the universal problem of quality of life and socially and ecologically responsible planning in the cities (Mundey 1976b).

This innovative focus on the built environment as a conservation issue occurred at a time when inner cities were ceasing to be the exclusive domain of the working class. The green bans had a unique capacity to unite middle class concerns for ‘quality of life’ issues, with working class concerns over loss of housing and community in the inner city. This twin focus on preventing the destruction of older working class areas, and maintaining urban green space, gave the green bans a broad appeal. Ultimately, these actions had the effect of encouraging greater citizen participation in urban planning, and would be credited with the renovation of planning processes in Australia and the ‘democratisation’ of heritage protection (Freestone 1993). Importantly, the green ban movement was explicitly articulated in the context of ‘state failure’ at all levels of government, necessitating a new urban politics.
involving the coordination of trade union and resident action groups. More broadly, the emerging focus on ‘socially useful’ development (Mundey 1980: 285) prompted calls from the BLF for a building industry commission ‘to determine which and what kind of buildings were to be constructed and to do this in a planned, and not in an anarchic manner’ (Mundey 1980: 284). The green ban movement encouraged more socially responsible development and ultimately transformed the culture of urban planning. Crucial to these actions was Mundey’s conception of the ‘social responsibility of labour’.

Social responsibility of labour

... [the green bans] were different because we weren’t fighting to increase wages and conditions, but we were responding to a request to use our strength in a new way in the interests of the environment ... it was a more noble, honourable action than just looking after the hip-pocket nerve (Mundey 2004).

Mundey and the NSW BLF in the 1970s spoke of the ‘social responsibility of labour’: the idea that industrial struggles should be linked to broader issues of ecological sustainability, and solidarity with international political movements. Most distinctively, the NSW BLF leadership boldly envisaged a new role for the union movement as a ‘social conscience’ in the protection of the natural and built environment (Mundey 1980: 280). Fundamental to this core philosophy was Mundey’s view that all economic classes and social strata share interests in an ecologically sustainable future, particularly in the context of rapid global urbanisation (Mundey 1980: 280). This focus placed the NSW BLF in a cosmopolitan tradition of recognising moral affiliations and obligations beyond the local and immediate needs of members. The green bans were explicitly articulated as a form of moral political action, to distinguish them from the ‘black bans’ designed specifically to sustain members’ wages and conditions. As Mundey (1980: 283) put it:

... in ‘green ban’ actions, workers were making conscious decisions to withhold their labour. It was a moral action, and it took into account other people’s wishes, feelings and aspirations. (emphasis in original)

The NSW BLF saw itself as developing a ‘new concept of unionism’, founded in the core concept of a wider responsibility to intervene on behalf of universal social and ecological interests. This ‘new concept’ offered a critique of traditional union and labourite ‘economism’, and outlined innovative
concerns for socially responsible production and employment (Mundey 1973: 17-19; 1976a: 30). If necessary, these obligations could extend to refusing work, and, at times, sacrificing the immediate ‘interests’ of members, for wider social goods in the common interests of the community (Mundey 1976a: 34). While the concrete political actions of the NSW BLF inevitably took place in local contexts, they were motivated by wider concerns and conceived as universal issues. Primary among these were the protection of urban environments and a focus on ‘quality of life’, rather than ‘standard of living’ (Mundey 1988: 19).

Mundey extended the CPA concept of political action – itself a critique of a narrow trade union ‘economism’ which evinced concern for wages and conditions alone – to focus on the ends rather than the means of production, and particularly on the ecological impact of socially destructive work, arguing that workers should be concerned with the products of their labour (see Mallory 1992; 2000; Mundey 1981: 145). As Mundey put it (1976a: 30):

[all] strands of revolutionary thinking have been essentially economist in character, with a concentration on aiming to win control of the means of production, with insufficient consideration as to the ends of production, the social nature of labour, and almost total neglect of ecological consequences of the use of workers’ labour and of industrial development.

Mundey thereby extended a more traditional CPA conception of internationalism by emphasising ‘the importance of the more enlightened middle class and the more enlightened working class coming together’ (Burgmann and Burgmann 1998: 286) in the universal interests of humanity in a sustainable future. Mundey and the BLF demonstrated these principles through their willingness to respond to appeals from different community groups, and by developing political alliances which transcended traditional class associations (Mundey 1980: 285). Here, Mundey’s political activism entered a more distinctively cosmopolitan tradition (Mundey 1976a: 34).

If industrial workers and their organisations can break with economism, and commence to question which commodities, goods and services should be made in the interests of society in general – yes, there is a future – but only if the progressive section of the populations of the advanced industrialised countries . . . can give assistance to the third world countries. (emphasis in original).

This focus allowed the NSW BLF to present trade union activity in the form of work bans as representative of universal interests (Burgmann and Burgmann 1999: 45). Mundey was thereby able to express ‘the way in which
working class interests coincide with those of a constituency as large as the world itself' (Burgmann and Burgmann 1999: 46). Articulating a new ethic of the global responsibility of labour, with some roots in older utopian socialist traditions of class action in the interest of society as a whole, this stance allowed the green ban movement to position workers as global citizens, possessing the right and responsibility to 'insist that their labour was not used in harmful ways' (Burgmann and Burgmann 1998: 3). This was combined with a strong commitment to a democratising tradition of direct citizen participation in global issues. The green bans were thus a prototype of 'social movement unionism' and 'an entirely homegrown contribution to international environmental politics and radical practice' (Burgmann and Burgmann 1998: 4). Mundey responded to the criticism among some on the traditional left who labelled the BLF the 'darling of the trendies, engaging in middle class issues', by arguing that environmental issues transcended any one class. Equally, though, the NSW BLF and some urban activists of the time were quick to note that the working class had the most to lose from unregulated urban redevelopment (see Mundey 1973; Stretton 1970: 1, 5; Thomas 1973). For Jack Mundey, this core critique of unregulated urbanisation and quality of life in the cities led to a wider focus on sustainability.

**Critique of ‘growthmania’**

Expanding his critique of urbanisation, Mundey criticised 'growthmania' in both East and West, rejecting the blind adherence in both systems to economic growth models. Both continued to 'worship the holy cow of GNP', and growth for growth's sake (Mundey 1976b: 346), failing to take account of the social and environmental costs. Trade union power, he argued, in league with sections of the progressive middle class, should be used to moderate the economic ideal of progress to ensure better social and environmental outcomes. As he noted in 1976, 'what is the good of winning higher wages if we are living in cities that are polluted; if we are living in cities without parks and bare of trees; if we live in a city without a soul' (Mundey 1976b: 346).

Here, Mundey explicitly articulated concerns for quality of life, socially useful production, and socially useful employment (Mundey 1976a: 33; 1988: 19) embodied in the 'Three Es': employment, energy use and environment. In the early 1970s, Mundey established and convened Environmentalists for Full Employment, dedicating himself to the central problem of 'the carefully orchestrated myth' that environmental protection would lead to increased unemployment (Burgmann and Burgmann 1999: 59).
The theme of 'socially useful production' (Mundey 1980: 297) comprised a critique of overdevelopment and consumer culture, and a commitment to moderating an exclusively economic notion of progress to ensure a better quality of life. Mundey (1988: 20) specifically advocated socially responsible job creation schemes to repair environmental damage. In a comment which continues to resonate in contemporary Australia, he noted that such jobs would be necessary to combat the short-sighted 'jobs versus the environment' argument (Mundey 1988: 19). Mundey saw these issues distinctively as local expressions of a global problem, which afflicted socialist command economies and capitalist countries alike. For the Burgmanns (1999: 60), Mundey and the NSW BLF offered inspiration to those 'who seek to use working class power to express the universal interests in environmental action'.

Solidarity politics

Not all bans were 'green'. The NSW BLF actively supported a range of other progressive causes, both within and beyond Australia. These included anti-apartheid activism, land rights, anti-war actions, women's and gay rights (see Mundey 1980: 280; Burgmann and Burgmann 1999: 52–3) and even prison reform (Mundey 1973: 18). As Mulligan and Hill (2002: 267) note, Mundey was heavily involved in the Gurindji land rights campaign as president of the Sydney district branch of the CPA.

For Mundey, workers had responsibilities as global citizens which could be expressed through union action. Mundey's explicit views on these questions accord strongly with the cosmopolitan notion of 'concentric circles' of moral and political commitment (Vertovec and Cohen 2002: 12): first, to improve wages and conditions of members; then to social action with other citizens; and finally, to solidarity with Third World movements (Mundey and Polites 1975: 60). In debate with the then director of the Australian Council of Employers' Federations, George Polites, Mundey linked quality of life in urban environments and the social responsibility of labour to arguments about the importance of global solidarity. In so doing, he made some prescient comments, foreshadowing anti-globalisation protest positions of the 1990s and beyond. We are in a 'shrinking world', he argued, in which the 'grip of the multinational corporations can be felt in every part of the globe'. Unions must link together in international solidarity, with the aim of 'a more global response to [workers'] claims, with environmental considerations taken into account' (Mundey 1975: 14). Through the focus on a universal ecological interest, common to all humanity, the political
actions of the NSW BLF moved well beyond a more traditional left conception of internationalism, towards a cosmopolitan conception of global citizenship.

The growing influence of these ideas within the Australian trade union movement was evident in the establishment of Union Aid Abroad in 1984. Also known as Australian People for Health, Education and Development Abroad (APHEDA),^7 Union Aid Abroad is strongly supported through subscriptions from trade union members, and emphasises direct aid to workers in developing countries, bypassing official state aid agencies. By fostering direct networks of global social responsibility, Union Aid Abroad highlights the distinction between the participatory forms of global citizenship that Mundey advocated, and the state-based forms of international citizenship embodied by official agencies such as AusAID. Tellingly, the rise of this particular expression of the global responsibility of labour contrasted markedly with the decline in official Australian aid levels since the 1980s. More broadly, Mundey's concern for democratic renewal within the union movement, along with the grassroots approach of the green bans, signalled a wider concern with a revitalised citizen politics.

Participatory democracy

The Green bans had a heartening effect, and allowed people to feel their own strength (Mundey 2004).

Mundey and the NSW BLF were committed to developing both internal and wider social mechanisms for a more participatory democracy. Central to this project was the development of 'citizen/worker coalitions', to broaden community participation in political decision making. As Mundey put it (1975: 20), 'unions are beginning to link up with conservation, environment, ecology and resident action groups, in exciting alliances which have given a tangible new dimension to citizen activity on many "quality of life" issues'. This conception of the citizen–worker coalition was a response to the perceived failure of government to meet the needs of citizens (Mundey 1976b: 347), and opened the space for a new type of politics in which individuals have a greater voice in deciding issues affecting their communities. This notion of a new citizen politics, in which coalitions of individuals take direct action to address collective problems, accords strongly with the values of cosmopolitan democracy (Carter 1997: 71). Taken together, these actions encouraged the development of an alternative arena of direct citizen politics.
For Mundey, the green bans movement was explicitly conceived as a strategy to maximise political participation (Mundey 1976b: 351):

I see Green Bans not as an end in themselves – [but] a tactic to bring about people’s participation and not just allow the engineers, architects, town planners, developers and their friends in high places in government to determine how the community should develop.

Green ban actions were only ever initiated in response to requests by Resident Action Groups (RAGs) (Mundey 1973: 17). In these actions, Mundey and the leadership group of the NSW BLF sought to work towards inclusive, participatory forms of democracy capable of connecting local actions with global problems. ‘Community action,’ he wrote, ‘even though it can be in the interest of your particular house, your particular community can, in fact, lead to wider social understanding’ (Mundey 1976b: 352). These forms of civic engagement represented a revitalisation of the public sphere (Mundey, 1976b: 352-3):

I believe that action by people - extra-parliamentary action - has a vital role to play in bringing greater degrees of democracy into being ... I believe in every-day democracy. Surely democracy doesn’t mean going to a ballot box once every 3 years and casting a ballot paper. To me, democracy is acting on one’s conscience every day and facing up to responsibilities.

Importantly, in a tradition of ‘self-exemplification’ more common to new social movements than to trade unions, Mundey and the NSW BLF focused strongly on radical democracy within the union, including limited tenure for office holders (Mundey 1973: 18–19). This position alienated many other union leaders and ultimately contributed to the downfall of the NSW BLF after the federal intervention in its affairs, led by Norm Gallagher (see Burgmann and Burgmann 1998: 267–74).

While many critics and political opponents protested that the green bans usurped or supplanted the role of government, defenders supported the NSW BLF precisely because they filled the vacuum created by the failure of mainstream political leadership; and did the ‘State’s job’ for them (Burgmann and Burgmann 1998: 293). For supporters, the bans broadened public space and sought to realise more participatory models of democratic governance. Indeed, governments of the time had difficulty responding to the green ban movement, precisely because they were grassroots campaigns involving broad coalitions of citizen residents and unionists (Mundey 1973: 17). Effectively, the green bans operated as ‘holding operations’ (Mundey 1976b: 351) which opened the way for forms of participatory democracy, and delayed the impacts of unfettered development while politics ‘caught
up'. This emphasis on the moral responsibilities of citizens to see beyond local and national commitments and work towards a democratic, participatory and sustainable future signals Mundey and the NSW BLF as exemplars of cosmopolitan democracy in action.

**Impacts: local and global**

The innovative green ban movement had dramatic impacts – both nationally and internationally. The election of the Wran Labor government in 1976 was followed by the creation of official state environmental and planning mechanisms in New South Wales. These included the Land and Environment Court, legal aid for resident action groups’ planning objections, and heritage protection legislation, including demolition controls over heritage buildings. In this way, the green bans contributed to establishing a legal and institutional framework that extended and gave substance to citizen rights and duties. Though some of these planning and heritage controls were watered down in the 1990s, these results of extra-parliamentary direct action, with their genesis in the green ban movement, set in train new community consultation, objection and approval procedures that continue to regulate urban planning regimes.

At a national level, the green bans were an integral element of wider concerns over urban politics. With Tom Uren as Minister for Urban and Regional Development, the Whitlam Labor government raised the profile of urban planning issues in the cities. In April 1973, Uren introduced legislation leading to the creation of the Australian Cities Commission. The green bans movement also influenced the Whitlam government in setting up the Committee of Inquiry into the National Estate in 1973, and the *Environmental Protection Act* of 1974. The former led ultimately to the establishment of the Australian Heritage Commission.

More broadly, environmental groups around the world expressed interest in the green bans movement, and the possibility of involving broader coalitions of citizens in environmental actions (Roddewig 1978). Pitt (cited in Mulligan and Hill 2002: 269) uses the term 'green Guevara', noting that outside Australia, Jack Mundey is regarded a 'virtual Messiah' to environment movements. Mundey was one of twenty-four 'world thinkers' invited to address the first UN conference on the built environment in Vancouver in 1976 (Mulligan and Hill 2002: 264), and toured the UK at the invitation of the Centre for Environmental Studies in London. At this time, he was instrumental in instigating a ban to prevent the demolition of the Birmingham post office, a significant Victorian-era building with considerable heritage value in the eyes of local residents.
For Mulligan and Hill (2002: 264), the concept of citizen-worker alliances greatly impressed European political movements. Indeed, Bob Brown credits Mundey as the originator of the term ‘green politics’ internationally. German Greens leader Petra Kelly also regarded him as a ‘major inspiration for the formation of green parties in Europe’ (Mulligan and Hill 2002: 244, 264). Internationally renowned ecologist Paul Ehrlich said the green bans movement ‘heralded the international birth of urban environmentalism as distinct from nature conservation’ (Mulligan and Hill 2002: 269). Mundey has clearly been a major influence on Bob Brown, and the previously ‘eco-centric’ green movement – influencing the rise of policies relevant to those living in cities (Mulligan and Hill 2002: 244). As Mulligan and Hill (2002: 273) note, ‘starting from different directions, Mundey and Brown have helped to build a bridge between the environmentalism of the city and the bush’.

Looking forward

Jack Mundey is still directly involved in environmental campaigns in Sydney, including the more recent – and successful – CFMEU green ban on the construction of a McDonald’s outlet in Centennial Park in 2000. At the time of our interview in mid-2004, the Greens had recently enjoyed major victories in inner city council elections in Sydney, securing near majorities in the Leichhardt and Marrickville Councils, and doubling their representation across the state of New South Wales. For Mundey (2004), these developments hold out promise of a new coalition for a sustainable future:

A left of the future must come together with a green agenda and win the hearts and minds of people... The union movement has a responsibility to move to the left, those who consider themselves left have to become more militant and link up with better grouping within the Greens, as has happened in local governments in many parts of the country.

When asked how trade unions can act with social responsibility in an era of higher unemployment and lower industry coverage, Jack Mundey refers back to the core themes of union militancy, direct democracy, and ecological action in the interest of workers and a wider public. In his view, the first task for unions is to become more militant in establishing greater control over the growing casualisation of work, to give more permanency to the workforce. The second and wider issue is one of direction. Mundey argues that the union movement has not taken up the issue of the environment at the grassroots level, with a ‘vigorous leadership’ going onto building
sites and tapping the ‘enormous potential’ of rank and file workers. For Mundey, the key to the rejuvenation of unions, and the left more broadly, is an alliance with environmental and ecological movements, the new ‘third force’ in Australian politics. Mundey stood as the fourth Green candidate for the Senate in New South Wales in the 2007 federal election. Although a Green senator from that state was not re-elected, the Greens received nearly 460 000 votes and Mundey secured an unusually high ‘below-the-line’ personal vote.

Reflecting upon recent events, Mundey commented on the values and responsibilities of a ‘globalist’ in a new century. While he acknowledges that globalisation has concentrated unprecedented power in transnational corporations, the core issue of corporate power over the decisions affecting the daily lives of a majority remains the same. The main responsibilities of a globalist continue to be those of breaking the power of transnational corporations in the interests of a livable and sustainable future for humanity. For Mundey, the significance of globalisation lies in the reality that global action against corporate power is ‘more pressing’ than ever. Equally, given the rise of neo-conservatism in the United States, Mundey believes the UN must reassert itself after the ‘devastating and dangerous’ episodes of unilateralism. He is quick to note, however, that any progressive multilateralism is more likely to be driven by non-state actors and the massive ‘global opposition’ created in recent years, particularly in Europe. In these views, Mundey reflects a long held commitment to participatory democracy, and to the moral obligations of citizens to transcend local and national interests to address global problems of social and ecological sustainability. As for the green bans, Mundey (2004) remains optimistic, despite concerns over the relative decline in union influence.

The idea of the green bans is still alive – nothing like they were – but even in these circumstances it is possible to bring environmentalists and unionists together in common action. That potential is there and will be in the future. It is there to be won, and the union movement must become more radical. It will wither on the vine if it takes the conservative path it is taking now. Unless the union movement becomes more involved in the environment and in ecological issues, you cannot see it making a comeback.

Conclusion

For recent cosmopolitan thinkers, economic globalisation poses new risks of citizen disenfranchisement at a national level, and increased possibilities
for social and ecological harm (Elliot and Cheeseman 2002: 12; Heater 2001: 182). By the same token, these developments have created new possibilities for transnational political action, and added considerable urgency to ideas and practices of global citizenship. If, indeed, there are universal moral obligations on global citizens, a key question for modern cosmopolitan thinkers is that of identifying these particular responsibilities. This chapter has argued that one of the achievements of Jack Mundey was his role in articulating and popularising core aspects of these universal obligations in an Australian context. Specifically, it has been argued that Mundey and the NSW BLF made groundbreaking contributions to urban environmentalism and conservation, to a now influential critique of unregulated growth, and to broader notions of global citizenship embodied in the ideas and practices of socially responsible labour, participatory democracy, and global solidarity politics.

These political ideas, actions and alliances advocated by Jack Mundey stand as an important local expression of universal civic and ecological concerns. In an age of growing concern over climate change, they continue to inspire the types of radical thinking critical to an ecologically sustainable future. Mundey (1977: 11) explicitly put these political problems and actions in a cosmopolitan framework, stressing the need for local action to meet the universal responsibilities implicit in global ecological problems:

self-help . . . actions in each country must be the main struggle . . . [but] this must not be posed against an increasing need for more global considerations of human problems, and the need to see these international problems as our problems, which we can do something about by increasing awareness, improving communications . . . and by coordinated actions of people concerned with retaining a habitable planet. (emphasis in original)

In light of the resurgence of exclusionist nationalism in Australia in the past decade, Jack Mundey may be celebrated as one of the forebears of an alternative tradition of imagining a transnational ‘moral community’ to which Australians belong, in the universal interest of ecological sustainability.

Notes

1 I would like to thank Geoff Stokes and Roderic Pitty for their valuable comments on this chapter.

2 Burgmann and Burgmann (1999: 50), for example, see Mundey, quite properly, as a ‘leading’ intellectual figure within the working class who sought to give it a ‘consciousness of its function not only in the economic field but in the social and political field as well’.
3 Key members of the NSW BLF leadership group of the period included Joe Owens and Bob Pringle. As I rely on his writings and interviews, I refer primarily to Mundey throughout.

4 The CPA declared itself independent of ‘Moscow-line’ politics following an internal split in 1971 over the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

5 As many commentators note, one obstacle to the renovation of cosmopolitan political thought is the predominance of a ‘non-philosophical’ (Kleingeld and Brown 2002) or everyday meaning of the cosmopolitan as an urbanite, at home everywhere, enjoying a ‘comfortable familiarity with a variety of geographical and cultural environments’ (Heater 2001: 179). This conception of cosmopolitanism as the ‘class consciousness of frequent travellers’ (Calhoun cited in Vertovec and Cohen, 2002: 6) has informed much popular, and even intellectual suspicion of the term. It presents an ‘elite’ image of rootless cosmopolites – separated from and unsympathetic to the dominant sources of modern political identity and community. If one of the tasks of renovating cosmopolitan political thought is to displace this ‘aloof, globetrotting bourgeois image of cosmopolitanism’ (Vertovec and Cohen 2002: 21), and reclaim its political content, then the example of trade union leader and working class activist Jack Mundey may offer a useful corrective.

6 This example illustrates Kleingeld and Brown’s (2002: 8) distinction between ‘strict cosmopolitans’ and ‘moderate cosmopolitans’ like Mundey, who would see ‘special duties to compatriots’ as legitimate provided a wider universal interest is not compromised. This distinction has roots in the Cynic and Stoic positions.

7 See http://www.apheda.org.au

8 Mundey noted in 1976 that there were over 500 RAGs in Australia – ‘precisely because of the breakdown of government, particularly at state and municipal levels’.

9 Mundey resigned from the Cities Commission in 1974 as a result of what he saw as the low level of citizen participation is its processes (Mundey 1981: 128).

References


—–2004. Interview with Michael Leach. 3 June.


