

BUILDERS' LABOURERS' AUSTRALIAN ART COMPETITION

"CATALOGUE"

BUILDERS' LABOURERS' SONG BOOK

B.I.S. SONG BOOK

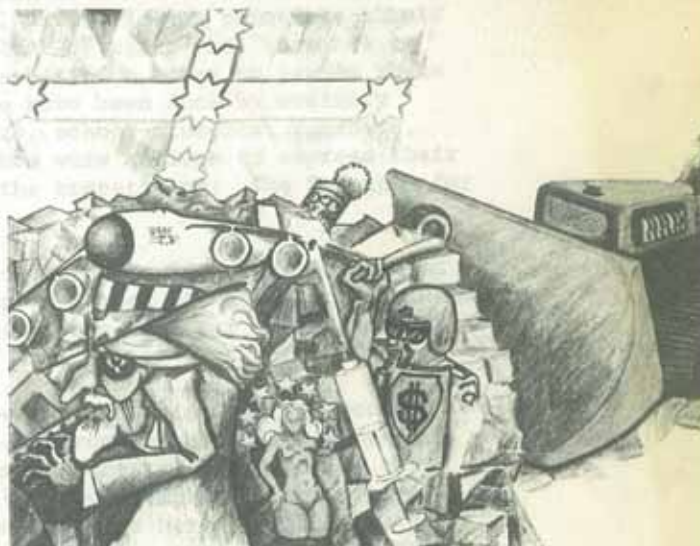
BUILDERS' LABOURERS' SONG BOOK



Australia's History Through
Australia's Songs.

Our songs and ballads
tell a wonderful story of the
struggle for a truly free and
independent Republic of Aus-
tralia.

Eureka, the depression
to the Constitutional Crisis.



WIDESCOPE INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS
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\$2.50
Recommended price

"The Struggle For Australian Independence"

FOREWORD

The art exhibition is a selection of paintings from the Builders' Labourers' Australian Art Competition. The competition was run by the Australian Building Construction Employees' and Builders' Labourers' Federation as a contribution to the further development of a progressive Australian culture. The theme was the "Struggle for Australian Independence".

The prize-winning entry was used on the cover of the Builders' Labourers' Songbook, containing songs of struggle from the past and the present. The Introduction to the Songbook by the General Secretary of the Federation states:

"The Australian people have a rich and militant cultural heritage.

The Federation has produced this book as a weapon in the struggle for our independence.

This is a book for the coat pocket and the kit bag; for the strike and the demonstration.

This is only a beginning - another step in the rewriting of our history, past and present, from the stand of the working people.

We urge every reader, every singer, to play an active part in the further steps that must follow - to criticise, to contribute, to compose.

In the hands of the workers our culture is a mighty weapon in the struggle for Australia's Independence."

Institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York, spread the lie that painting is a rare skill possessed by only an elite of geniuses, while viewing paintings should be the privilege of a "cultured" elite who "know how to 'appreciate art'". This exhibition hopes to expose these myths. The paintings here have been done by ordinary people: workers, labourers, school-students, teachers, housewives etc., all of whom were anxious to express their feelings on the theme of the competition: The Struggle for Australian Independence.

Foreign oppressors have fostered the idea that Australian culture could be summed up in a meat pie and sauce, holdens and footy. These paintings prove that our culture is far richer.

It proves that ordinary people can paint and can produce original work of quality and promise which depicts their aspirations for an independent country and pride in our history and traditions. We should emphasise that there is a long way to go. The paintings here are only a step towards the further development of a true Australian art that will flower fully only in conjunction with our struggle to control our own destiny.

The Australian Builders' Labourers' Federation also sponsored a Songbook containing peoples' songs from the past and the present. The convicts, the bushrangers, the struggle of the small farmers against the squatters, the struggles of the Australian working class men and women; the struggle of the Aborigines against the British Colonial invaders. The book is full of songs born in the lives of ordinary Australians; it seeks to prove nothing fancy, only to give expression to ideas and wishes for many years suppressed.

CATALOGUE

1. Poster from the Progressive Art Movement, South Australia. It is based on a photograph of a demonstration opposing U.S. multinational domination of the Australian economy. In South Australia a sizeable section of the people are dependent for their jobs on the American car companies, like G.M.H. and Chrysler. Chrysler recently gaoled a worker for refusing to take the sack. The unity of the working people and the struggle for independence is well expressed in this entry.

2. Pen and ink drawing by a woman depicting the fight to save the Victoria Market. People are defending the kind of market they want, instead of having the U.S. way of life, supermarkets and all, imposed on them. The drawing also shows the role of the police. Ever since the convict days a traditional aspect of our culture has been opposition to, and hatred of, the police. This drawing is a good example of how these traditions have a progressive part to play in the people's struggle to defend their rights.

3. Poster from South Australia symbolizing the attempted dehumanization of the Australian working people by the foreign monopolies. Here, are workers up for sale to the highest bidder - the wealthy American corporations. Yet their faces show a grim determination that convinces us that the future is in the hands of the Australian people: that soon we will own our country.

4. Pen and ink drawing by a 12 year old school student. Inspired by the prolonged struggle against the presence of foreign military bases on our soil, he has depicted a protest march, led by a worker, demanding the expulsion of all such bases. With the danger of World War 3 looming, as rivalry between the U.S. and Russian superpowers intensifies, this demand is very relevant to the security of us all.

5. Painting done by a young woman artist, symbolizing the fight for our national independence. The painting is full of explosive energy, showing the Australian patriotic people bursting from the narrow confines in which imperialism has hitherto imprisoned us.

6. A crayon drawing by a woman showing the procession of Australian history. In the background are traditional Australian cultural figures symbolizing the struggles of our colonial past - Ned Kelly, the swagmen who gave us Waltzing Matilda, the Aborigines, who were the first to wage armed struggle against imperialism. In the foreground is the march of the Australian people, led by a building workers. The Eureka flag flies at the head of the march - the flag of Australian independence, first raised by the diggers at Ballarat when they rebelled in 1854 against British colonial domination and demanded an independent republic.

7. Who built Australia? "Workers and the ordinary working people", proclaims this design in wood. There is not an executive from a multinational to be seen!

8. The prize-winning entry by a worker from Sydney shows a worker bull-dozing the trash of imperialism out of our country. American magazines, yank bombers, Kentucky Fried, the "drug culture" are all being driven out of the country under the banner of the Eureka flag of the Southern Cross.

9. Past - Present - Future, an entry from the country. In the past lies the flag of British imperialism. In the present, the half-way flag concealing the rule of the yank multinations behind John Bull's waistcoat. In the future, the red flag symbolizes the people's struggle for national independence and socialism. The stormclouds in the background symbolize the danger of nuclear war resulting from the rivalry of the two superpowers for world domination.

10. Another poster from the Progressive Art Movement, South Australia. In the fire of struggle, the sunset of U.S. domination of Australia sees U.S. flags burning and the Eureka flag of Australian independence stands proud and victorious.

11. By a young working woman; Aboriginal culture, the swaggies and the Eureka independence struggle are combined to represent the development of an independent people's culture.

12. Painting by a professional artist of one of the leaders of the Eureka uprising, Peter Lalor. Despite his revolutionary activity at Eureka, Lalor ended up as a reactionary member of the Victorian Legislative Council, supporting property qualifications for members and voters, thus arousing the contempt of the electors of Ballarat who had voted for him in order to achieve democratic reforms.

13. A painting by a 14 year old schoolgirl showing a builders' labourer at work.

14. Nationalise the Car Industry! Poster from the Progressive Art Movement, South Australia. The worker on the production line, doing all the work, is overshadowed by the boss - the yank with the big cigar, bought, no doubt, from the sweat of these Aussie workers slaving for these yankee millionaires. The demand of the poster flows automatically from the cruel reality this poster depicts.

15. A painting done by a young worker, which clearly reveals his feelings about the place of Australia in the world today. Here is a beautiful flower, struggling to open and bloom, held back by the chains of imperialism-Chains stressed to near breaking point.

16. A watercolour painting by a school student from South Australia, showing the reality of the hard struggle to "earn a crust", that each prospector faced.

17. A collective effort by three people: A postal worker, a student, and a car worker. The signpost symbolizes the fact today that we stand at the crossroads of our history. Do we go forward to national independence under the banner of the Eureka flag? Or do we stay on the road of servitude with the multinationals and imperialist culture - Coca Cola, Ford, Esso, Shell, Mickey Mouse? Do we take the road to independence through people's struggle with the convicts, Ned Kelly, the Aborigines, and the swagmen? Or do we submit to imperialist oppression? The future is in our hands.

18. Uncle Sam gets the bullet! This painting was done by a school student at a Public School. U.S. aggression meets an answer from those it has in the past oppressed.

18 A *Ironing board - symbol of oppression of clothes*

19. This entry was awarded first prize in the under 16 section of the competition and is reproduced on the back cover of the Songbook. This painting of Ned Kelly was done by a 9 year old school student from Victoria. Those familiar with the Ned Kelly series of Nolan will have no difficulty in recognising the armoured figure who defied the colonial police. Together with the small farmers of North-East Victoria he fought against the big Landowners who were taking over the farms and ruining the small settlers. So strongly did the local people support the Kelly gang that nobody gave them up in order to get the massive reward the police had placed on his head. Ned Kelly, a bushranger, has captured the imagination of the Australian people as no stuffed-shirt aristocrat or "official" hero ever has! Even today he is a living symbol of the ordinary people's struggle against oppression.

20. This painting was done by a young woman from New South Wales. There is past struggle - Eureka, the bushrangers and Ned Kelly. There is present struggle. A man and a woman with their fists clenched in anger and resistance are united with an aborigine in pointing to a future of independence and freedom.

21. The chains break! Another painting by a school student showing the chains of U.S. and Japanese domination breaking asunder.

The paintings here represent one of the first attempts to encourage ordinary people to express their feelings in an art form on the theme of Australian Independence. It is one step along the long road to the further development of an independent Australian people's culture.

N.L. CALLAGHER

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CONSTRUCTION EMPLOYEES AND BUILDERS
LABOURERS' FEDERATION.