

## The Labour Movement, Mutuals and Co-operatives: CFP for Special Issue of Labour History

Posted on January 8, 2016 by Rosemary Feurer

Greg Patmore and Mark Westcott have issued a call for proposals for a special issue of the May, 2017 issue of *Labour History*. The focus is on the relationship between unions, mutuals, and cooperatives. The CFP deadline is February 29.

Generally, labour historians have overlooked the relationship between unions, mutuals and co-operatives. Both Mutuals and Co-operatives are member owned organizations that operate on a not for profit basis. During the nineteenth century, for example, miners in the UK formed their own sick and accident relief funds to look after fellow miners and their families. It is assumed, however, that with the rise of the welfare state unions no longer need to promote self-help through mutual associations. In Australia, however, unions have played an important role in establishing and promoting both credit unions and private health insurance funds such as the Maritime Workers Credit Union and Westfund. Unionists, particularly miners, played an important role in establishing consumer co-operatives. More recently unions have become involved in jointly managing industry superannuation funds with employers.

There has been a diversity in the nature of the relationships between the labour movement and co-operative movement, both in Australia and internationally. For instance in the UK the co-operative movement formed their own political party, the Co-operative Party, which has a parliamentary alliance with the Labor Party. Unions have also found consumer co-operatives a powerful ally in fighting inflation and even encouraged worker co-operatives in depressed former industrial areas, as seen in the United States, to promote employment opportunities.

There are however tensions between cooperatives and unions. As employers Co-operatives and mutuals can play a role in pioneering and promoting better working conditions for workers, but they can also enter into conflict with unions that can result in industrial action.

At a broader policy level unions that have formed mutuals to provide for members health insurance may find themselves in conflict with those sections of the labour movement that have promoted nationalised medicine.

With this issue of complementarity and tension as a theme this issue will explore questions such as: –

What has been the experience of unions in organising and running mutuals?

What role have unions played in organising and promoting co-operatives?

Are employee and union relations different in co-operatives and mutuals?

What have been the benefits and costs of union involvement in superannuation and pension funds?

What is the relationship between ideas such as labourism and mutualism?

**Abstracts of papers for consideration in this special issue will be due on Monday 29 February 2016.** These abstract need to be 1,000 words and provide the following:

- (i) A summary of the argument of the paper
- (ii) A summary of the findings of the paper
- (iii) A selected list of references for the paper

Abstracts should be submitted to Greg Patmore at: [greg.patmore@sydney.edu.au](mailto:greg.patmore@sydney.edu.au).

**Authors will be notified of the acceptance or rejection of their proposals by Thursday 31 March 2016.** Successful authors will be required to submit a full paper, following Labour History guidelines, by Friday 30 September 2016 to the editors and present the papers to a symposium in Australia on Friday 4 November 2016. Following the symposium authors may revise and submit their papers to the editors for refereeing for Labour History by 30 November 2016 with final publication in the May 2017 issue.

For further information concerning the special issue please contact the editors – Greg Patmore at [greg.patmore@sydney.edu.au](mailto:greg.patmore@sydney.edu.au) and Mark Westcott at [mark.westcott@sydney.edu.au](mailto:mark.westcott@sydney.edu.au).

## Author



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