

Policing Industrial Conflict in Rural and Regional Settings: Local and 'Outside' Approaches

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Abstract

This article examines the policing of pickets and lockouts, the overt manifestations of industrial disputation, in rural settings. Traditionally throughout Australia, whenever employer or government requested police intervention in smashing picket lines, the police response was often swift, legalistic, forceful and at times brutal. By examining some historical and contemporary case-studies of the policing of industrial disputes in rural and regional areas, this article argues that the confrontation between police and unionists has often been affected by the composition of the police body employed against the picketers. Where the police involved have been, or are, local or 'outside' constabulary is a significant factor in the processes and sometimes the outcome of the dispute. In terms of preventing violence at pickets and lockouts, police leaders need to carefully consider the composition of those police used to control an industrial dispute in a rural community. Similarly, union organisers and picket captains must restrain certain individuals and discourage certain behaviours at the picket-line. Police perform the delicate balancing task of enforcing the law and keeping the peace and security during industrial conflict. After the dispute is settled, as all are eventually, local police remain in the town; the workers do too, but capital and 'outside' forces are much more mobile. In many situations, local police, immersed in the community, are better placed than 'outsiders' but there are circumstances when an 'outside' force may be more appropriate to deal with the dispute.

Key words: rural industrial disputes, policing

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Introduction

The policing of industrial disputation throughout Australia has been neglected by industrial relations experts, labour historians and criminologists. Police have played an essential, significant and partisan role in the processes, procedures and even outcomes of some protracted disputes, such as the Great Strikes of the 1890s, 1928 waterfront strikes, and 1937 Korumburra lockout (Baker 2005, 50-81; Blackmur 1993, 206). Institutional police histories focus on the relevant policing institution but they do not analyse the processes and outcomes of major disputes. Labour historians have neglected the regulation and impact of police organisations and officers on the processes of industrial disputes (Morgan 1987, 6-7). This academic neglect of police handling of the overt manifestations of industrial conflict — pickets and lockouts — particularly applies to the volatile and sometimes violent dynamics of regional and rural disputes. In Australia, violent protest is not normally associated with rural communities but historically it occurred sporadically during industrial conflict.

Hogg and Carrington (2006, 9) debunk the mythical assumptions that rural communities are orderly and cohesive by nature and that modern crime and violence are primarily an urban phenomena. Many of the vexatious, bitter and violent industrial disputes in Australia have occurred in remote areas (Weipa, Mt. Isa, the Pilbara, Broken Hill, Townsville, Rothbury). Isolation and reliance on a single employer in a region (for instance at Broken Hill, Port Kembla or Mt Isa) has heightened the dependency, the solidarity and the tension during industrial disputation (Cole 1982, 10). Gollan's study of NSW coalminers (1963) — isolated, performing physically exacting work, afflicted by a number of deaths and injuries — revealed workers prepared to take direct action when demands for better conditions and wages were ignored by management. When police actions have aroused local community antipathy, the policing of the dispute has been problematic and onerous.

Policing Historical Disputes

Historically, in periods of bitter industrial strife in Australia, owners and employers customarily relied on the apparatus of the state in the form of the police to make their plants accessible, to protect staff and strikebreakers, and to safeguard business productivity. The mines, the shearing-sheds and the wharves were the most common arena for bloody police-worker confrontation. When employers or governments demanded police action, the response was usually quick, decisive and sometimes brutal. Police, with batons, escorting strikebreakers to the workplace, was the catalyst that inflamed violent confrontation between unionists and police (Baker 2001). As the coercive arm and guardian of the state, police historically quelled hostile industrial unrest including many in remote regions (eg., 1891 shearers' strike, 1908-9 Broken Hill lockout, 1919 Townsville meatworks).

The Clunes riot of December 1873 is a classical, colonial example of the potency of combined community action against the forces of law and order (Small 1997). Latent conflict between capital and labour had surfaced when the manager of the Lothair Quartz and Alluvial Mining Company informed the men that there would be no more contract work and that they would be required to work two extra shifts. 150 quartz miners went on strike for fourteen weeks regarding pay and working conditions. Virtually the whole rural township, united and resolute, supported the strikers in their efforts to prevent Chinese strike-breaking labour entering the mining town.

On Tuesday 9 December, a small band of about fifteen police led 45 strike-breaking Chinese from Ballarat and Creswick towards Clunes. The miners were well-prepared! More than one thousand men, women and children, 'armed with sticks and stones', waited on the Ballarat Road for the arrival of the Chinese (*Creswick Advertiser*, 10 December 1873). The townspeople had made 'hostile' preparations – axes, pick-handles and waddies at the ready. At about seven am, five coaches escorted by police approached 'with a dash' the barricade, a mile short of Clunes. Sergeant Larner (Ballarat) and Constable Durack (Clunes) both mounted the barricade, one with a carbine and the other with a horse-pistol (*Age*, 10 December 1873). A brief but ferocious battle ensued. The police and Chinese were quickly routed.

During colonial times, the insufficient number of police in rural districts and the lack of reinforcements, impeded police enforcement of the law. Tactically, Sergeant Larner's foray reveals the hazards of a grossly outnumbered police body attempting to move a committed and incensed local crowd of strikers and supporters. The legal authority of fifteen police could not conquer a thousand agitated miners and their families. The Clunes police 'loss' was not to be repeated in the colony.

The judicial outcomes at Clunes reflected the local feelings: considering the nature of the assault charges, the penalties imposed on the guilty were light. Fines amounting to 80 pounds were paid by the Clunes Miners' Association and townspeople, including 'handsomely responded' contributions from the Clunes business people (*Clunes Guardian & Gazette*, 1 January 1874). Significantly, charges had been left to the local police (not the central Melburnian authorities) to lay against a few ringleaders. There was no evidence of continued hostility towards police in the Clunes district; Constable Durack remained on duty. The miners' spokesmen rebuked the police sortie, but the deep-seated antagonism was directed against the Lothair company's Melburnian directors (Baker 2005, 31-34).

Most of the violent incidents in the late nineteenth century related to objections to similar use of strikebreakers, especially with semi-skilled workforces in rural districts. Revisionist historian Robin Walker (1986) lists numerous examples of the stoning and injuring of police by aggravated workmen, and some cases of the use of firearms on both sides. Strike leaders often restrained the more militant rank and file. As it was rare that strikebreakers themselves provoked the violence, the clash, like that at Clunes, normally involved the workers and the police escorting the

strikebreakers. At Adamson, in the Hunter Valley in September 1888, 30 police were unable to protect six strikebreakers who fled from the stoning of a large crowd (Walker 1986, 56-57). Colonial forces and their governments quickly learnt the significance of winning and controlling both public and private spaces. Police, when expecting trouble, went armed; the unionists were defeated. Colonial police were subjected to numerous allegations of brutality and harassment, but appropriate accountability mechanisms were virtually non-existent (Baker 2001).

Like Clunes, other union communities spurned strikebreakers and their protectors. Remote communities have been prepared to support strikers in their battles, often by financial and emotional support, at times by physical presence and action. The Broken Hill lockout of 1908-1909 involved a massive escalation of police manpower and intervention in town affairs. Police, housed in barracks, and ostracised non-unionists were vilified and attacked by local supporters of the locked-out unionists. A food boycott of both barricaded company officials and the 'police expeditionary force' proved effective. A scathing postcard from the 1909 lockout depicted avaricious and detested 'outside' police stealing food after shopkeepers had refused to serve them (University of Wollongong Archives, RAAM no.929, postcard 19).

'Outside' city police have traditionally been perceived by unionists and community supporters as the aggressors during violent confrontations. The 1929/30 Royal Commission into the coal industry identified widespread problems: too many people producing too much coal and too expensively. After more than a six months' lockout and relative peace on the coal-mines, New South Wales Nationalist Premier Bavin stated that he would use the coercive arm of the state, the police, to open the Rothbury coal-mine. In an armed clash on 16 December involving about 40 police under command of Superintendent Beattie of Newcastle region and thousands of miners, a ricochet police bullet killed miner Norman Brown. In the panic, two other miners were critically wounded and seven police officers received minor injuries. Conflicting reports contradicted police reports that the miners used revolvers (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 & 18 December 1929). As local police were not entrusted to control the deteriorating situation, 400 'outsiders' were utilised and organised into what locals called 'Basher Gangs', a virtual army of occupation (*Guardian*, 22 March 2000).

Regular violent clashes occurred between mass pickets and the escalating police presence in the village. A centralised, speedy mobile 'flying squad' of police arrested lodge officials and batons were freely used. A Canberra journalist professed that only 'the ruthless rule of baton law' prevented an armed industrial war. Locals asserted that the violence was confined to 'outside' police (Dixon 1973, 136-141). For some time, police outnumbered miners by a ratio of 2:1 in the area. The special correspondent for the *Labor Daily* (20 January 1930) claimed that there were 290 police to control between 120 and 140 mine workers at the camp: 'But there's no love lost here. The police hate us. They hate Rothbury, and we keep them here. That's why they hate us'. Such saturation policing often created resentment

and acted as a catalyst for violence. Miriam Dixon's interviewees (1973, 139-140) in relation to the Rothbury strike asserted that only 'outside' police committed acts of brutality and general misconduct amidst the coalfields community, whereas police normally stationed at the coalfields' centres were generally much better regarded. In late January 1930, a deputation of miners demanded the withdrawal of all 'outside' forces from the northern coalfields (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 January 1930). The dispute ended after fifteen months; the 'flying squad' had left, but local police continued to manage the mining district.

Mt Isa

The major Mt Isa strike of 1964-65 illustrates both the complexity of policing industrial disputes in remote, harsh and isolated terrains and the locals' mistrust of central government and 'foreign' policing. In the 1960s, Mt Isa was a company town dominated by the benevolent and paternalistic employer, Mt Isa Mines (MIM), and populated by a transitory workforce. The emergence of a local leader in the persona of Pat Mackie (especially his dismissal for 'blowing a shift') and changes to the contract system were catalysts for the bitter 1964-65 strike and lockout that lasted eight months (Cribb 1983, 270-297).

In December 1964, the Nicklin Government proclaimed a state of emergency and gave MIM the legal power to sack miners who refused contract work. The presence of extra police in the town and the government's 1965 Order-in-Council, giving the police many extra-ordinary powers, heightened industrial tensions and escalated picketing activities. Police could prevent anyone entering the Mt Isa area; they had power of entry, search and arrest without warrant; a ban was placed on forms of speech and dissent; and printing presses could be seized at will (Fitzgerald 1984, 319). Several hundred police were flown to the area, many of whom patrolled the air terminals. A special squad of 40 police were flown to Mt Isa to affect arrests. A night curfew was imposed. According to Fitzgerald (1984, 233), much of the town was painted in swastikas as locals reacted to the new legislation and the heavy police presence. A former police officer revealed years later that police had been instructed to 'go in hard' by Commissioner Bischof, following government orders. Bischof personally told the police assembled at Mt Isa that 'the government would support them if they went in because he'd been in touch with the minister and had that assurance' (*Courier Mail*, 23 April 1998).

In March 1965, the Nicklin Government legislated to outlaw all picketing and restricted speech and movement. All discussion against returning to work was illegal, but police did not act accordingly and maintained a restrained presence. However, Pat Mackie alleged that police, without warrants and even doorknocks, daily raided workers' houses and clubs on the pretext of searching for illegal literature and printing machinery. Mackie (1989, 208) asserted that the picketers had 'good relations' with the local Mt Isa and Cloncurry police but the 40 Special Branch members were

‘a different class of copper altogether, very provocative, nasty ones’. They were selected for ‘tough tactics and coming from the roughest areas around Brisbane’. The townspeople were much more accepting of their local police than they were of the Special Branch squad.

Policing Rural Victorian Meatworks

The Wodonga and Camperdown disputes in the early 1990s must be seen in the context of the meat distribution scandal and the determination of certain aggressive employers to challenge the role of unions in the workplace. Poor hygiene standards had instigated the closure of certain small operators in the industry, although rumours circulated of the re-emergence of a couple of former operators via shelf company arrangements. The bitter disputes at Wodonga and Camperdown fragmented both small rural communities beset by considerable unemployment. Both disputes concerned the employment of non-union contract labour. Violence and the threat of violence occurred in both towns, although there were conflicting reports as to its extent (Curran interview).

Police in different regions, distant from central headquarters, adopted different tactics. Both the Wodonga and Camperdown meatworks pickets were initially policed by local or regional police. Wally Curran, the Secretary of the Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union (AMIEU), described the policing of the Wodonga picket as ‘exemplary’: fair, properly undertaken, impartial and conducted in an ‘impeccable fashion’. By contrast, Curran (interview) alleged that local Camperdown police fabricated evidence; harassed and stalked unionists; and brutally bashed one picketer. He complained to the Deputy Ombudsman (Police Complaints) and sought investigation of charges of perjury and corruption but the AMIEU, conscious of high legal costs, withdrew the complaints from prosecution after the union negotiated some arrangements with Victoria Police about the handling of future pickets.

In April 1991, 217 employees of Wodonga Meats walked off the job in support of ten sacked union delegates who refused to negotiate new contracts that included no-strike clauses. Bitterness and disruption engulfed the border community. Townspeople were divided in relation to the no-strike agreements and the ensuing intimidation and violence. Meat inspectors would only cross the picket line ‘so long as there is police protection’. Police, picketers and strikebreakers were involved in videotaping the actions of protagonists (*Age*, 24-26 April 1991).

Superintendent McDonough described his first impressions of the Wodonga picket as akin to a rugby scrum. Two weeks later, he claimed that there was a minimum of friction between picketers and police and that police and union officials together were controlling the picket (*Sun*, 10 May 1991). Daily, between 140 and 170 workers, escorted by police, were crossing the picket line into the abattoirs. However, police did not interfere with passive picketing. More than twenty police daily maintained order at the picket

(*Sun*, 10 May 1991). Age reporter Kevin Childs (26 April 1991) reflected the esteem of the 'beefy and cheerful police' of 'good humour' who were temporarily 'drawn from country towns over a vast area, including Mansfield, Yarrawonga and Tallangatta' to keep order at Wodonga.

The protracted 1991 Camperdown meatworks dispute, immersed in devious politics, illustrates the decisiveness and effectiveness of elite police in eliminating a picketing stalemate (Baker 2005, 70-72). The Camperdown abattoirs were closed on 3 May 1991, after a \$2 shelf company (Farmcorp owned by Farouk Fami) purchased the works. Fami refused to endorse an industrial agreement with the AMIEU and employed contract workers from the hire company Troubleshooters Available. Local police allowed the picket to operate 'within the guidelines that had been established with the Police Department' (VPD [LA], 405, 1472). The press reported death threats, two shotgun blasts fired at a Camperdown contractor's home, car tyres slashed in home driveways and violence at the picket line. Police Commander (Operations), Brian Church, described the violence as 'totally un-Australian, it is criminal and it is totally deplorable' (*Herald-Sun*, 5 October 1991). The local police supplied a walking escort for the trucks that conveyed contract workers to the work-site. The manager of the meatworks claimed that work was only possible 'from 7 a.m. in the morning until 4 p.m.' and that the time that the contract workers started operations 'depended on the picket line, sabotage to the trucks, etc.' (VPD [LC], 405, 1569, 21 November 1991). The alternator line of a truck, which was used to transport contract workers, was cut (*Camperdown Chronicle*, 1 November 1991). The council was subjected to increasing criticism for failure to remove the picketers' camp outside the meatworks. Local police advised that the picketers' equipment (tent, wood heap and toilet) was not obstructing the roadway and access to the abattoirs (*Camperdown Chronicle*, 15 November 1991).

Victoria Police Command recognised the ineptitude of the local police to handle the Camperdown situation, particularly in relation to threats and intimidation; the reality that Camperdown police would continue in the district after the dispute's settlement; and the burden on the south-west district's police budget (*Camperdown Chronicle*, 1 November 1991). Both sides in the dispute were unhappy with the local policing. Inspector Denis Cairns (interview), following Command instructions, led an elite contingent of twenty, fit and hand-picked policemen, mostly veterans of BLF industrial disputes, and four mounted police to Camperdown on 7 November 1991. The city police were sent to Camperdown to confront the picketers and gain access for the contract labourers. Horses were used to affect the removal of picketers blocking the roadway to the abattoirs. Wally Curran (interview) believed that Inspector Cairns was aware of the civil rights and liberties of picketers, which at least enabled picketers to stop trucks and talk to the drivers. Cairns liaised with Famicorp representatives and union picket leader Jim Britten. Britten had previous dealings with Cairns' group, a 'professional' industrial policing squad, and realised that they had come to remove the obstruction (police terminology) or break the picket line (union terminology) (*Camperdown Chronicle*, 12 November 1991). Cairns alleged

that 'rent-a-crowd' in the form of 'standover' operatives, were conspicuous on the picket line. Police encountered some resistance but only for a brief period. Within two days, the picket had basically been removed, although a token presence still remained six months later (*Sunday Age*, 3 May 1992). The Melbourne police 'oversighted' the local policing and eventually charged 23 people for thefts, assaults or mainly wilful damage. Local and regional police had established and maintained an acceptable control at Wodonga but in the more politically explosive climate of the Camperdown dispute, a specialist group was deployed. In handling the Camperdown dispute, local police were too closely identified with the picketers; the utilisation of city police meant that local constables could continue to work and coexist within the regional community. Major contemporary disputes, involving extensive picketing, present police hierarchy with the dilemma whether to act slowly by utilising local personnel or seek rapid compliance by deploying highly trained, tactical forces. Victoria Police's preference today is to utilise local police personnel to manage industrial strife, but intervention by a specialist unit may be deemed necessary in specific circumstances.

The Associated Pulp and Paper Mill (APPM) Dispute at Burnie

(i) The Conflict

APPM, colloquially known as 'The Pulp', dominated the industrial, provincial town of Burnie in 1992 and was the district's largest employer of 1100 people. Burnie had been a company town since the mill's opening in 1936 and the benevolent APPM was vital to the north-west's economy (*Advocate's* editorial, 14 May 1992). However, APPM was part of a declining pulp and paper industry in Tasmania. It was taken over by North Broken Hill Holdings Ltd (NBH-Peko) in 1984, with its headquarters and power-brokers in mainland Melbourne and its corporate ethos determined to make its Forestry and Paper Division competitive on the world market. The Tasmanian state and media feared the impact of mainland business intrusion on the island's economy and communities and showed understanding of the mill-workers' plight. The company maintained its 'right to manage' philosophy in a climate of restructuring and enterprise bargaining (Baker 2005, 84-86). Lasting over three months, the dispute was divisive and protracted by Australian, and especially Tasmanian, standards.

The bitter industrial strife escalated into a volatile strike on 12 May 1992, when pickets were established and surrounded the mill, covering all eleven entry points (pickets remained until 11 June). Picketers quickly established a routine in the 'cold rain, bitter winds' of wintry north-west Tasmania. Picket captains were carefully selected; a policy of non-violence was enshrined; agitators were moved on; hygiene and cleanliness were emphasised; and alcohol was banned. The dilemma for APPM management was how to gain entry into the mill for any vehicles or willing workers. The aggressive company failed to appreciate that Burnie, a tightly knit and well-organised community, was not like the artificial Robe River frontier town where

NBH-Peko and the Western Australia Police had exercised their muscles against the workers in 1986.

APPM workers received substantial support through community organisations. The activities of the Support Pulpmill Employees Committee, that evolved from a women's welfare support group to an assertive industrial lobbyist, revealed the empathy for the strikers and the militancy and resolution of many townspeople. However, two surveys of the Burnie community in 1992 and 1993 revealed that the inhabitants were generally equally divided between pro-employer and pro-union in relation to the APPM dispute (Hanson 1993).

(ii) Community Policing at Burnie

The community policing approach at Burnie adopted consultation and compromise rather than confrontation and coercion. Distinctively, local police ignored NBH-Peko's demands to remove the picketers, much to the strategic advantage of picketing mill-workers. Based on local knowledge, Burnie police placed peace-keeping above the enforcement of the law. As he had no intention of ordering the picket to be broken, Inspector Fox (interview), the local officer in charge, was comfortable at any time 'to walk up and down the picket line and say hello'. There was no grand policing strategy; situations were encountered on a daily basis as they arose 'on the spot' (Timmerman interview).

As Inspector Fox (1992, 16) consistently saw his discretionary duty as foremost one of preserving the peace in the Burnie district, the strategy was low-key and non-confrontationalist with limited arrests and intervention: 'I simply contained the situation. I didn't solve the situation'. Fox (interviews) maintained a co-operative liaison with the union leaders to the dispute's end. He saw his handling of the Burnie pickets in accord with philosophical and evolutionary changes in policing over the century from force to service, the march towards community policing. Burnie police were looking to the picketers and their supporters to be a self-disciplined body, encouraging safety and order on the picket lines around the plant.

(iii) Resolution of the APPM Impasse

For three weeks the human wall around the perimeter of the 'Pulp' had become a concrete symbol of union resolve to remain a viable part of the mill's workplace affairs. Tensions increased with a series of ugly incidents, allegations and counter-allegations of intimidation, and renewed company pressure on police to intercede. In a surprise and unprecedented move, APPM's mainland parent company, having lost patience with the picketers and the police, served a writ of mandamus on the Tasmanian Police Commissioner, in which it claimed that police failed to protect public property, to provide truck access and to assist workers who wished to go about their normal, lawful business, even to the extent of crossing picket lines. Justice Wright (1992, 8) in the Tasmanian Supreme Court upheld the APPM argument that non-striking employees and other people on lawful

business should have access to the plant. Obstructionist, passive picketing was declared illegal. After Wright's judgement, police saw no alternative but to apply the law according to the judge's exposition. According to Sergeant Timmerman (interview), the preceding weeks had heightened the irony of police breaking the picket line: 'By that stage we had built such a good rapport with the picketers and union officials, when the decision came down ... they sympathised with us. They said, 'OK, we know you have a job to do, you've been very good to us, we know your hands are tied'.

After 23 days of non-intervention, police moved against the picketers. The big push occurred on 4 June at 3pm when Fox, with about 85 police officers, including more than 50 Launceston police, and escorting 30 afternoon-shift workers, confronted about 300 picketers at the main gate. 41 arrests occurred and 'others were left bruised, bloodied and emotionally distraught' (*Mercury*, 5 June 1992). Although Fox (1992, 25-26) described the judicial decision emanating from Hobart as 'unarguably sound in law', he asserted that its 'eventual application at the picket line created the violent situation we had sought to avoid'. Considering the numbers involved on both sides, the bitter month long build-up to the violent climax, the enmity of picketers and mill management and the issues involved, the level of violence on 4 June was surprisingly low.

During the 1992 Burnie dispute, the only union criticism of police was that directed by some union organisers against the 'outside' Launceston and Hobart 'academy' members, not the local constabulary. Union organisers maintained that police of all ranks 'played a terrific role', except for 4 June with the busloads of police from Hobart, 'hyped up with adrenalin to kick arse' (Grey interview). Despite the 4 June clashes, according to reporters, local Burnie police remained on good terms with the workers and there were no recriminations (*Mercury*, 10 June 1992).

If dissatisfied with police responses, a company concerned about maintaining production during a strike can employ private security, who are directly under its control and authority. During the APPM dispute, NBH-Peko employed the Bruce Townshend trucking and security group from Hobart as part of its own 'policing' of the mill complex. Politicians, unionists and police expressed concern about the company's hiring of its own private 'policing' apparatus. Security guards were employed to keep protesters, APPM employees, out of the mill (*7ZR News*, 5 June 1992). Also, at the beginning of June, NBH-Peko secretly flew in the 'Ninja Turtles' from Sydney. Distinctive in their black garb, these five Toraguard Security guards received a hostile reception from the Burnie public who were 'totally against that sort of security' (Fox interview). The picketers viewed them as martial arts experts, the company's private army, employed to harass the strikers. The 'Ninja Turtles' returned to Sydney after just three days. Even company officials would later admit that the employment of these karate-boxers was a poor public relations exercise in a tightly-knit Tasmanian town preoccupied by the strike stalemate (Guest interview). Picketeer Peter Beattie expressed the hostility and lack of trust of the mainland company 'that's lied and cheated and brought in ninja turtles -

quote - hit men from the other side of this island, to bash their own work people' (*ABC News*, 8 June 1992).

Burnie police relied heavily on the cooperation of the local people, especially in times of emergency. Although the industrial dispute was settled, the policing responsibilities in the area continued unabated. The police were attempting to keep the peace not just between company and picketers but also within the community. To community police practitioners, the APPM unionists were fellow residents of Burnie and surrounding districts; workers on strike, not criminals (Baker 2005, 131).

Capital is a mobile phenomenon: NBH-Peko, with its eastern mainland boardrooms, was capable of withdrawing its investment from north-west Tasmanian paper manufacturing. In September 1993, the mill was sold to AMCOR. However, the labour force for north-west Tasmania was intricately tied to that district. Labour in a particular region is far less mobile than capital in terms of employment, family, home, education, social and recreational links (Ellem 1999). Like the APPM workers, Burnie police strongly identified with the district and formed part of that entrenched community.

The Joy Dispute at Moss Vale

Joy Mining Machinery, an aggressive global downsizing company, locked out 70 workers at its Moss Vale plant in the southern NSW highlands for three months in 2000 after the collapse of enterprise bargaining negotiations, redundancies without warning and the contentious issue of contract labour (Cahill 2001). The lockout turned into a strike involving a 24 hour picket line which was maintained for 205 days. Like the union pickets at Burnie in 1992, the Joy picket was organised and restrained, with two clusters of tents complete with kitchen, toilets and sleeping facilities.

Generally, the rapport between the picketers and local police was one of acceptance on both sides. However, on 27 April, about sixteen uniform police forcibly removed a group of picketing students from the manufacturing plant so that the plant's hydraulics workshop could be moved off site. This operation was conducted by a 'large and heavy-handed, out-of-district, police presence' (Cahill 2001). In comparison with the city-based police, local police had been cooperative with the protesters, members of 'Concerned Citizens'. Towards the end of the Joy dispute, the company hired the Townshend unit of self-professed interstate 'union busters'. Labour historian Cahill claimed that the Townshend presence 'aggravated the dispute, moving the unions and the company further apart' (Cahill 2000). The licensing and training of private policing personnel and the legality of security actions and surveillance require close scrutiny and 'policing' itself (Reynolds and Wilson 1996).

Conclusion

Although the centralised state police agencies in Australia have set general guidelines about the policing of conflict situations and although police officers receive some public order training, it is the police on the spot in rural and regional industrial confrontations who usually make the decisions about the course of action. Rural police, providing a generalist service compared to the more specialist urban roles, live within the local community and often adopt a community-based model of policing through which they become integrated into the community and immersed into rural values and beliefs (Scott and Jobes 2007, 127-130). Such community closeness and reliance, especially in remote areas, poses a dilemma for police if an industrial dispute erupts: the rural police officer may be sympathetic to the unionists' cause but police are employed to enforce the law. The identity and standing of the local police leader, the limitations of rural police numbers and resources (compared to urban counterparts), the difficulty in attaining reinforcements and a remote community's propensity to support its aggrieved workers affect the police response to industrial strife.

A tension regularly apparent in rural/regional industrial disputes involves centralised, state-directed policing and local norms of police-community relations. The local constable may live in the region but it is the central police authority that formulates operational guidelines and demands allegiance. Well-trained crowd control specialist police may have their place: for example, the quick and effective settling of tensions during the 1991 Camperdown meatworks dispute. Traditionally, 'outside' specialist police were often resented or resisted by the aggrieved striking community. As occurred in all disputes cited in this paper, local police continue to patrol the locality long after the particular industrial dispute is settled. Policing of industrial disputation should be viewed not just in terms of the particular dispute but also as a component of the on-going policing of the district. To avoid picket violence, police leaders need to carefully consider the appropriate composition of those police used to control a remote dispute. In many industrial situations, local police, immersed in the community, are better placed than 'outsiders', but there are circumstances when an 'outside' force may be more appropriate.

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