

# Lock Out The Landlords!



Australian Eviction Resistance 1929-1936

Written and researched by Iain McIntyre

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# Lock Out The Landlords!

## Australian Eviction Resistance 1929-1936.

Whilst life in the 1920s had, with the crushing of a number of key unions and the national unemployment figure hovering around 12%, been economically difficult for many Australians things only became worse following the collapse of world markets in late 1929. Reliant on overseas exports and heavily indebted to European and American banks the Australian economy was particularly vulnerable to the drop in consumer demand which saw world trade contract by a third alongside widespread company bankruptcies and plummeting share values. As state and federal governments floundered in response and began to slash government spending, civil service salaries and public works in order to service foreign debts many ordinary Australians were left with no one to turn to, but each other.

With up to a third of Australians out of work it was clear who would be bearing the brunt of the downturn in the global economy. In the first years of the Depression there were only charity handouts and a minimal level of welfare available to unwaged families and little or no assistance provided to unmarried men, women and indigenous Australians. In response a number of unemployed people began to organize through the auspices of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) dominated Unemployed Workers Movement (UWM). Formed in April 1930 the UWM's membership rapidly grew to more than 30 000 in 1932 with the CPA itself achieving major growth in membership from 300 in 1930 to around 2000 in 1934.

Far from wholly controlled by communists the UWM campaigned militantly for a decent level of welfare and against "work for the dole" schemes, dole forms and other forms of harassment. Their main position was that since the unemployed were not responsible for their situation they should not have to suffer for it. To achieve their goals they organized protests, hunger marches, "dole strikes" and occupations as well as opposition to relief schemes that failed to provide work at award rates. Unlike most other political organizations of the time the UWM also made a point of including women and families in their activities. Fiercely repressed by both the police and the middle class based right wing paramilitaries a number of UWM members spent time before the courts with the Melbourne branches boasting at one point that they had enough members locked up to form a branch in Pentridge Gaol.

The early 1930s saw the CPA at its most militant with its activists and newspapers encouraging as much resistance as possible, but internal divisions and a fear that the unemployed were gaining too much strength within the party saw the UWM merged into the United Front Councils of Employed and Unemployed Workers in 1932. This organisational change saw a subsequent downgrading of unemployed activism which was to accelerate in the mid 1930s with the adoption of a "popular front" strategy which saw the CPA woo middle class and trade union support by moderating its overall stance and tactics. Predictably, although the rate of unemployment continued to hover around 10% until the beginning of the Second World War, unemployed militancy also began

to decline due to the success of the UWM and others in securing better treatment for the unemployed.

Whilst some, radicalized by the depredations of the Depression, rallied to the UWM other unemployed people organised through their Trade Unions as well as the Combined Unemployed Councils (CUC) and other Australian Labor Party (ALP) oriented organizations. Officially the unemployed organisations linked to the ALP stuck to lobbying and the distribution of Trade Union assistance. However at the grassroots their membership often opted for more radical action and, fearing they would defect to the UWM, the unions and ALP leadership had little choice, but to let them do so. The leadership of the CPA and UWM, in line with the policy of the Soviet Union, denounced the ALP as “social fascists” and their followers as “dupes” whilst the ALP remained hostile to any progressive force outside of its control. These tensions led to many lost opportunities for combined action although at the local level neighbours, regardless of their political persuasion, generally united against the common enemy.

Despite falling rental costs many Australians struggled to keep a roof over their head and the issue of evictions became a key one for the unemployed organisations. Evictions had long been an unwanted part of life for working class people, but the Depression years saw their numbers skyrocket. 6484 eviction orders were sent out from the central Sydney Courts alone between December 31 1934 and September 30 1939 whilst the Melbourne Court of Petty Sessions issued 16 000 warrants for “ejectment” in the three years from 1930 with over 5000 evictions being carried out. Many of those who had been buying their own home also lost it with around a third of those whose homes were mortgaged to the South Australian State Bank falling into arrears. Barely a town or suburb in Australia was unaffected by the housing crisis.

Whilst the majority put up with their lot, crammed in with relatives or did a “midnight flit” to avoid paying back rent others organized against evictions setting up Anti Eviction Committees (AECs). Campaigning for the unemployed to be exempted from paying rent the UWM and other organisations utilised a variety of strategies against the bailiffs, landlords, banks and finance companies who preyed on the disadvantaged. The AECs would approach people in danger of eviction and offer to set up pickets and provide food, childcare, help with moving, etc. They would usually then go to visit the owner or real estate agent to warn them that any eviction would be resisted. Street meetings would then be called to consult local residents as to what action they would be willing to countenance.

Once the picket was set up community sing-a-longs and demonstrations would be held to rally support and when the eviction attempt began pickets on bikes would be sent out to alert residents and gather as big a crowd as possible. On some occasions the picketers would occupy and barricade houses and on others they would take revenge on the owners by trashing properties. Deputations would also go to councils and government departments to try and secure facilities for the homeless and where this failed evicted tenants’ furniture would be dumped outside the Town Hall or police station. Faced with the indignity of having the homeless camped on their doorstep even

the most heartless of authorities quickly located housing.

In the countryside some farmers saw their land auctioned off beneath them by the banks they were mortgaged to. Whilst most refused to employ radical tactics (and lost their land as a result) others fought back. A number of auctions were disrupted in Western Australia and NSW by the mobilization of large numbers of people to prevent anyone putting in bids. Sadly, specific records of rural eviction resistance are few and far between.

As the 1930s wore on the NSW government shifted the site of resistance to the courts by increasing the ability of tenants to appeal eviction orders and apply for short term debt moratoriums. In 1932 the Victorian government introduced rental subsidies equal to about two thirds of the rent for properties in low income areas and in 1934 South Australia saw the introduction of relief work for evictees. Whilst the AECs in those states began to focus more on providing advice and legal representation sterner forms of resistance were still required as the number of evictions ironically climbed as the economy recovered with landlords tossing out unemployed tenants in favour of those who had once more found work.

The following chronology lists just a small number of the hundreds (if not thousands) of anti-eviction actions taken around Australia from 1929 to 1936. The information presented here has been largely drawn from daily newspapers as well as the Communist Party of Australia's (CPA) newspaper *Workers Weekly* and other sources. With improvements in the economy and the collapse of unemployed organisation reports of eviction resistance in the left and mainstream press largely trickle off by 1936 although some squatter camps saw residents refuse to leave without a fight in the latter part of the decade.

Despite their brief nature these listings provide us with a fascinating insight into the daily struggles of the time. They also demonstrate how organised direct action at the grass roots can make a difference.



Bankstown eviction fight, 1931

*“The first eviction I saw had a devastating effect on me and I think probably it and a few other experiences then were what finished the capitalist system as far as I was concerned.”*

Artist Neil Counihan in Wheatley, N.

“Meeting Them At The Door: Radicalism, Militancy and the Sydney Anti-Eviction Campaign Of 1931” 1980

### **July 9 1929, Adelaide**

1000 unemployed gather to stop a family from being evicted whilst their father is out looking for work. The lone policeman present had already shot the family terrier in “self defence” and threatens the crowd with his revolver. No one is shaken however and despite the arrival of police reinforcements the owner agrees to let the tenants stay until another house can be found.

### **October 1929, Sydney**

ALP Secretary FF Ward institutes numerous attempts to evict unemployed from his properties around Sydney. Despite pickets operating day and night a squad of police, troopers and twelve bailiffs eventually prevail.

### **December 10 1929, Adelaide**

Unemployed people unsuccessfully resist an eviction with one of them being severely injured by police.

### **April 1930, Perth**

200 unemployed remove furniture that is about to be seized for debts from a house in central Perth. The *West Australian* reports that “The entire removal operations were carried out in about ten minutes and the work was done so quietly that even the immediate neighbours were not aware of what was taking place.”

### **May 28 1930, Sydney**

A large number of unemployed meet the landlord and police at a house in Madeira St. Surrey Hills. After a stand off twelve police move in breaking the picket line and arresting two speakers from the UWM.

### **June 1930, Sydney**

During his daily rounds Reverend S.W. McKibbin of the Sydney Central Methodist Mission encounters a woman arguing with bailiffs and second hand furniture dealers. When the four men move to throw her out of the house McKibbin steps in barring their way and threatening to “Dong any man who tries to enter.” The bailiff threatens him with arrest, but when that fails to have any effect the eviction team concede defeat.

### **July 1930, Sydney**

The UWM’s first conference resolves to “organize vigilance committees in neighbourhoods to patrol working class districts and resist by mass action the eviction of unemployed workers from their houses, or attempts on the part of bailiffs to remove furniture, or gas men to shut off the gas supply.”

After the conference a number of men smash up a house in Clovelly from which a family has just been evicted. 21 leading UWM militants are later targeted and framed up for the incident (despite few of them possibly having been there) with some receiving sentences of up to 8 months.

## July 17 1930, Melbourne

Hundreds of unemployed protestors divert from an ongoing march to prevent an eviction from being completed in Gold St. Brunswick.

*"To the unemployed men the mention of the word bailiff was like waving a red rag at a bull. Without further parley the entire squad was on its way to Gold Street at the double. In her kitchen Mrs Carruthers had just heard the agent instruct the bailiff to mark certain furniture. At that moment there was a commotion and through the doors and windows streamed the modern knight errants. A push sent the bailiff reeling back into a chair where an enterprising gentleman tipped a dish of water over him. The agent and the bailiff were then subjected to some rough handling as they were bundled unceremoniously down the passage and thrown out of the house where they were seized upon by a crowd numbering several hundred who were waiting in the roadway. The Agent and his clerk managed to escape in a motor car whilst the bailiff who was again roughly treated made a break for the South Brunswick railway station nearby. His progress was expedited by the avengers and he was almost thrown over a post and rail fence before he got out of the danger zone."*

*Brunswick Coburg Gazette, July 18th 1930*

## August 8 1930, Brisbane

Unemployed swagmen camping out in Davis Park repel nightly attacks from police and vigilantes.

## August 15 1930, Sydney

Despite being unable to prevent an eviction members of the UWM force the local government to place the affected family in another property.

## September 1930, Australia

UWM branches officially begin organising regular response teams to hold up evictions. Large meetings are held across Australia.

## September 1930, Perth

The *West Australian* reports that large groups, under the auspices of AECs, have been rallying to prevent bailiffs from carrying out their duties in Victoria Park and Fremantle.

## September 6 1930, Melbourne

Pickers take back repossessed furniture from bailiffs and restore it to a house in Richmond before posting guards to ensure it is not taken again.

## September 12 1930, Melbourne

A large meeting of unemployed people in Brunswick urges the government to "remove the rigour of the Landlord and Tenant Act during the time of industrial stress, especially in relation to the seizing of furniture in default of the payment of rent in all such cases where payment is rendered impossible owing to unemployment."

## September 19 1930, Melbourne

After landlords begin evicting families who are only in two weeks arrears the UWM



announces at a public meeting that it will begin to organize resistance.

### **December 1930, Sydney**

A meeting of the city's various UWM branches resolves to win every eviction case they take on and the local AECs succeed in doing so for the next six months.

### **December 12 1930, Sydney**

When the Sydney Furnishing Company comes to repossess furniture from a leading UWM member pickets prevent the removal of the goods for two hours before the company's representative is convinced it would be better for him to just leave.

### **January 12 1931, Western Australia**

The Wheatgrower's Union of WA (WUWA) annual conference resolves to blacklist local traders and banks who harass or evict needy farmers.

### **February 4 1931, Melbourne**

600 people march to an unemployed worker's home in Larnoo Ave. West Brunswick to prevent bailiffs from taking his possessions to recover debts. The bailiffs are confronted and most elect to leave, but when a moneylender and the head bailiff refuse to go they are dragged away and beaten up. Police arrive and arrest one person, but are surrounded and forced to let him go. During the melee the money lender's car is also destroyed.

### **February 20 1931, Sydney**

Unemployed activists take over a Glebe Council meeting demanding a hearing on a variety of issues related to housing. Following a recess they are forcibly evicted by Labor councillors and the police.

*"On Thursday February 26<sup>th</sup> the Surrey Hills anti-eviction committee heard that an unemployed worker was to be evicted the next day. On the Friday the UWM was on the job and had no difficulty in preventing the bailiff and his police protectors from gaining entry. The company-owners however would make no agreement and on the weekend two further attempts were made to repossess the house. The anti-eviction committee sought legal advice and was told that 'any time was legal and that any trick could be used to gain entry.' The UWM decided that 'it is therefore necessary for members to remain on the premises in sufficient numbers to at any time defeat any attempt by police or bailiffs to gain admittance; and this will be done until the workers have gained a complete victory.' Large numbers of local residents attended daily mass pickets with food and cash through the specially formed Workers International Relief committee. The occupation was still in force a month later."*

*Workers Weekly, 20 March 1931*

### **February 27 1931, Sydney**

The UWM prevents an eviction taking place in Surrey Hills going on to mount one of its first occupations in Sydney.

### **March 1931, Sydney**

The AEC of the Surrey Hills UWM wages war against the Permanent Trustee Company after it attempts to evict a Greek worker from 3 Chapel St. Woolloomooloo. Two separate attempts by the police to evict him are defeated.

## March 1931, Narrogin

United action by farmers successfully prevents anyone from bidding at an auction with the farm owner able to buy his goods back at a pittance. The success of the action prompts WUWA representatives to tour the rest of Western Australia to encourage other farmers to organise in a similar way.

*“Well, they lined up this big farm near Narrogin and they were going to sell it. There must have been 1000 farmers there... Any strangers were taken to one side and told to go or stand outside or shut up. If he opened his mouth he was told he would cop it. Well, harvesters were bought for a shilling, horses’ flat rate were six pence, whole pens of chooks, machinery and cows were two pence each. The auctioneers had to go through the business and formally sold everything and received cash on the fall of the hammer, and they were given back to the owner and he simply continued on. They had about three sales like that and showed that nothing could be achieved so the sales stopped.”*

C. Hodgson in Bolton, G. *A Fine Country to Starve In*  
UWA Press, Nedlands, 1994.

## March 6 1931, Brisbane

A recently widowed woman is forced to forgo her piano to maintain her mortgage. However when the loan sharks later attempt to seize the rest of her property UWM members chase off their hired thugs and move her goods to a safe location.

## March 7 1931, Moornaming

An auction of farm property in W.A.’s wheatbelt fails to sell anything after local farmers intercede. When one potential buyer puts in a bid “a number of spectators rush the purchaser and jostle him, warning him that should he make a further bid he would be dealt with drastically.” Eventually the property is sold in a private sale, but this only creates further trouble for the bank as it becomes subject to further protests.

## March 12 1931, Melbourne

The Rank and File Association musters unionists to picket a house in Footscray where an old man is due to be evicted. The police move in beating three of the pickers unconscious and inflicting serious head wounds on 12 others. The next day 300 workers march to Footscray Station where they pinion the police guarding the gates and travel without tickets to a mass anti-eviction rally in the city.

## March 13 1931, Sydney

An eviction is initially prevented at Donnelly St, Balmain. However after the fracas the tenant is unnerved and decides to move out anyway.

## April 1931, Sydney

A spate of evictions are contested with a house at 81 Booth St. Annandale occupied to prevent eviction whilst in Balmain two evictions are frustrated and court orders withdrawn. In Bondi a house due for eviction has a banner placed out front and local streets are chalked up with information. Another house at 41 Richie St. Granville sees the landlord cancel eviction orders after being confronted in his office. On hearing of an eviction in Granville UWM members attempt to roust the landlord out of bed at night, but are chased off by his shotgun wielding daughter. Whilst the midnight visit

comes to naught the planned eviction is called off after 60 picket the property for a fortnight.

#### **April 1931, Belka**

Local farmers attending a forced auction in the Wheatbelt remove their hats as if at a funeral each time an item goes up for sale. Due to pressure from those present there are no bids made and WUWA members later remove wheels from a wagon and put them in a dam to prevent it being repossessed in future.

#### **April 1930, Melbourne**

Members of the Brunswick CUC are expelled from “all responsible positions” after they destroy a house in Brunswick following an eviction.

*“If the owner did get a person out, the next morning there would be no house left. The unemployed just stripped it. They’d pull these little houses down, take them for firewood. They’d even take the chimney. The owner would come and all he’d have left was a block of land.”*

Dot and Tom Hills in Lowenstein, W.  
Weevils in the Flour, Hyland House, Melbourne 1981

#### **April 1 1931, Melbourne**

The Richmond UWM prevent five police from entering a house in Richmond. Whilst the police are tied up a bailiff is spotted in a nearby telephone box. After being attacked he flees into a shop, hiding until he is eventually rescued by 18 cops.

#### **April 4 1931, Melbourne**

Pickets in Coburg return furniture to a recently evicted house.

#### **April 14 1931, Sydney**

60 men picket a property in Granville for a fortnight.

#### **April 16 1931, Newcastle**

100 picket a house in Wallsend forcing the cancellation of the eviction order.

#### **April 23 1931, Melbourne**

Despite the presence of police 40 men chase off a bailiff in Carnegie who is trying to evict a grandmother along with her invalid daughter and grandchild.

#### **April 24 1931, Melbourne**

The Commercial Banking company obtains a court order to evict a family in Brunswick, but when the bailiff arrives he is confronted by a crowd of 100 who eject him from the property instead. The crowd then grabs the family’s furniture and marches to Brunswick Town Hall where they dump it in the portico. Having done so they then return to the house to wreck it.

*“The front fence was uprooted and one of the main supports was thrown through the front window. Every window in the little house was smashed. The gas meter was torn bodily from the wall and the bath overturned and mantelpieces pulled down from the walls. In places the ceiling was badly damaged and holes were made in the flooring of several of the rooms. Doors were pulled from their hinges and thrown onto the floor amidst the general wreckage... The taps were turned on*

*with the result that the garden and the yard were flooded.”*

*The Age*, April 25 1931

### **April 31 1931, Newcastle**

Citing unsanitary conditions the North Illawarra Council attempts to evict an unemployed camp of over 80 men. This is defeated by a large protest which then goes on to picket a house where a widow and 14 year old son are being turned out in the street.

### **May 1 1931, Melbourne**

The UWM forces Fred Symonds, who owns 60 houses in Collingwood alone, to bribe his tenants to leave after picketers prevent an eviction for two days. An eviction attempt at 463 Victoria St. Collingwood succeeds however picketers are rousted by police.

### **May 1 1931, Sydney**

Despite the fact that many potential supporters had already gone to the May Day rally the local branch of the UWM gathers 60 people together to resist an eviction in Lakemba. Six police arrive and order them to leave warning that more of their number are on the way. They are in turn warned that for every worker hurt two cops will suffer. The family threatened with eviction includes two returned soldiers so whilst the police are tied up arguing local Returned Service League members are mobilised with over 100 ex soldiers arriving to bolster the picket. Local shopkeepers also come down to donate food. Faced with this resistance the owner agrees to give the family at least an extra fortnight to move.

### **May 15 1931, Sydney**

A small shopkeeper in Oxford St. Paddington is threatened with the loss of his property until a deputation from the local AEC persuades Russell Garvin Ltd. to withdraw the sale.

*“Resenting the ejectment of an unemployed man and his family from their home... about 250 workless men damaged the dwelling yesterday... The unemployed men broke all the windows at the back of the building, and also those in the front of the upper storey.”*

*Argus*, May 20 1931

### **May 19 1931, Melbourne**

Two men are arrested when around 500 people prevent an eviction from taking place in Victoria St. Collingwood attacking the bailiff, who later claims he was “kicked and punched from all directions.” When police execute the warrant of eviction a few days later 250 men storm the cottage smashing windows and taking the remaining furniture to dump it outside the Town Hall. The local council meets their demand to rehouse the tenants paying for three weeks rent.

### **May 22 1931, Sydney**

Pickets and the occupation of a house in Lakemba defeat an eviction and result in the resident being able to stay on rent free until he can find a job. Following the victory a huge party is thrown on the lawn.

## **May 22 1931, Melbourne**

A bailiff attempting to evict a house in Grant St. South Melbourne is met by a picket of over 1000 people. He agrees not to carry out the eviction.

## **May 29 1931, Sydney**

Members of the Newtown UWM clash with the fascist New Guard during an anti-eviction picket in Ivy Street, Newtown.

## **May 30 1931, Sydney**

With the UWM winning every eviction fight they have taken on for six months the Lang government comes under pressure from landlords, banks and bailiffs to do something about the organization. Having picketed the McNamara family's house in Douglas Street, Redfern for a month and occupied it for a week, padlocking the front door and flying the red flag from the verandah in the process, the local AEC is caught off guard when armed police rather than bailiffs arrive without warning to break down the door with a sledgehammer. With many of the pickets away at a UWM conference those who remain are quickly dispersed, but the police soon lose the upper hand when a group of 30 men and women armed with iron bars arrive with a lorry to seize the family's furniture. As the crowd builds the police draw their revolvers to hold them at bay until reinforcements arrive, but no arrests are made.

## **June 1931, Sydney**

The *Workers Weekly* claims over 70 anti eviction victories have occurred in Sydney over the past few months.

## **June 1931, Methuel**

200 farmers prevent the sell off of a property in rural NSW by turning up to the auction to threaten anyone who tries to put in a bid.

## **June 5 1931, Sydney**

The NSW government continues its campaign against the UWM sending in 60 police to evict occupiers from a house in Starling St. Leichhardt. During the eviction revolvers are drawn once more to subdue an angry crowd of around 200 locals.

## **June 12 1931, Sydney**

Police join with hired thugs to attack a picket in Stirling Street, Leichhardt.

## **June 17 1931, Sydney**

A bungalow located in Brancourt Avenue, Bankstown, becomes the site of ones of the bloodiest eviction fights of the Depression era. Members of the UWM and the tenants, the Parsons family, barricade the cottage with sandbags and barbed wire and armed with axe handles, iron pipes, garden forks and other implements await the police. Attacking early in the day, before the eviction order has become legally operative, 40 police, with another 100 held in reserve nearby, surround the house only to be met with a volley of stones which injure ten including an Inspector White who suffers a fractured skull. Enraged the police open fire hitting Owen Kendall in the skull and Alexander Eatock in the thigh before forcing their way into the property, brutally beating and arresting the occupiers. One occupier, John Bowles (who had been present at the Gallipoli landing), later describes the police as "armed bandits" and the violence as some of the worst he had ever seen. When the occupiers' cases later go to trial 16 are found guilty of "willfully obstructing and resisting" the police with 14 receiving sentences of 12 months. Andrew Eatock receives 18 months, in part it is

believed because of his Aboriginality, and his brother Noel later receives the heaviest penalty ever imposed for rioting due to his involvement in the Glebe Dole Riot. In the coming months protests against the sentences take place across Sydney.

### June 19 1931, Brisbane

Seven are arrested for resisting an eviction.

### June 19 1931, Sydney

Police surround a fortified building at 143 Union St. Newtown where unemployed men have barricaded themselves in against eviction with sandbags and barbed wire. Armed police then lay down covering fire whilst others force their way into the building. The 18 defenders rain bricks and stones weighing up to a kilo down on 40 police as they try to break in. Once inside more shots are fired and all of the defenders are beaten semi-conscious. One man is shot and two others hospitalised with fractured skulls. The *Sydney Morning Herald* later describes the room the men were barricaded in as “absolutely bathed in blood.” 15 police are injured and later booed and stoned by a crowd of thousands when they leave the house. One aged spectator suffers a heart attack from all the excitement and later dies. The *Sun* later reports that in the weeks after the fracas local children have turned to playing “Evictions” instead of “Cops and Robbers.” All arrested are charged under archaic Common Law Riot provisions.

*“The most sensational battle Sydney has ever known was fought between 40 policemen and 18 Communists ... All the defenders were injured, some seriously. Bullets flew, one man was hit. A crowd numbering many thousands gathered in Union Street. They filled the street for a quarter mile on each side of the building until squads of police drove them back about 200 yards and police cordons were thrown across the roadway. At times the huge crowd threatened to become out of hand. It was definitely antagonistic to the police... When constables emerged from the back of the building with their faces covered in blood, the crowd hooted and shouted insulting remarks. When one patrol wagon containing prisoners was being driven away, people standing well back in the crowd hurled stones at the police driver.”*

*Sydney Morning Herald* , June 20 1931

*“I was in the front room upstairs when I heard someone say ‘Here they are.’ I looked out the door and saw the street full of police with drawn revolvers firing up into the balcony at us. We started throwing bricks in defense of ourselves. I was standing behind and a bit to the side of Gabbit when he grabbed his left arm and said ‘I am hit.’ I then dropped on my hands and knees to avoid the bullets and backed to the door leading on to the stairs. I stood up to see how everybody had fared and how things were and a bullet or something hit the wall and plaster was splashed all over my face.*

*I then got downstairs and into the front room. They were then bashing*

*the back door in. When the police got into the house they batoned us unmercifully whether we showed fight or not calling us Communist Bs and saying 'I'll give you Red Russia you Bastards.' I was knocked over in the front room, a policeman put his foot on me and batoned me while I lay on the floor. I was then handcuffed and as soon as I was handcuffed I was punched on the jaw. [There was] blood everywhere I looked and someone being bashed on the floor.*

*I was then taken outside and while I was sitting in the yard the police hurled all the filthy insults imaginable at us. They said Lang should pass a bill to shoot the lot of us on sight. I was then taken and put in the patrol and conveyed to Newtown station. When we got there we had to walk through a line of police to the charge room. They kicked and punched us all the way from the patrol to the charge room. As I was walking through the charge room handcuffed I received a heavy punch on the nose which half dazed me. When in the charge room the police continued to call us all the abusive names under the sun. We were then charged; some going to hospital, some to the cells."*

Transcript of picketer Mr Stace's legal statement

"Meeting Them At The Door: Radicalism, Militancy and the Sydney Anti-Eviction Campaign Of 1931."

### **June 20, 1931, Sydney**

Following a successfully contested eviction a woman remains with her furniture in Ramsgate Ave. Bondi, refusing to leave until she is given a new home.

### **June 24 1931, Broken Hill**

Over 1000 assemble at Broken Hill Trades Hall Council and march to a house threatened with eviction proceeding to barricade it. After the crowd disperses the police arrive, but the small numbers remaining pressure the owner into halting the eviction.

### **June 25 1931, Melbourne**

Following an eviction Brunswick unemployed pay a visit to a local landlord. Having previously warned him that "they would pull the property to pieces if the tenants were ejected" they proceed to do just that.

### **June 26 1931, Sydney**

Following a wave of successful anti-eviction actions the Lang government introduces the Fair Rents and Lessees' Relief Bill allowing mortgagees a three month moratorium on repayments and tenants more rights to appeal eviction orders. Whilst in the long run these measures wind up being of limited value they do provide temporary relief taking some of the wind of the UWM's sails by reassuring workers previously disenfranchised by the ALP's failure to increase welfare payments by 25% and protect tenant's rights through the 1930 Landlord and Tenant Act.

### **June 29 1931, Sydney**

Police evict an anti-eviction occupation in Glebe.

### **July 2 1931, Sydney**

Pickers in Guildford are routed by police.



Above: Anti-eviction protest march, Sydney 1931

Below: Eviction at the Happy Valley squatter camp, Sydney 1939







Above: Redfern eviction, Sydney 1932

Below: Woolloomooloo anti eviction rally, Sydney early 1930s



### July 3 1931, Brisbane

UWM members occupying a house in Isaac St. Spring Hill are batoned and evicted.

### July 3 1931, Erigola

Over 100 farmers picket a farm in NSW chasing off the mortgagor when he arrives.

### July 15 1931, Sydney

A UWM picketer caught trashing a house in Glebe reputedly states that he did it to “Wake up [Premier] Lang and [Colonial Secretary] Gosling and by the time we smash a few more they will come our way.”

### July 16 1931, Melbourne

An attempt to evict the Albert Park UWM President from his home is defeated and the eviction order withdrawn after his house at 16 Withers Street is mass picketed.

The offices of the real estate agents responsible for the property, Richard Young and Company, are chalked with slogans stating “Eviction King” and “Throws unemployed women and children into the streets.”

### July 18 1931, Melbourne

300 men gather at a house on the corner of Alexander Parade and Forest Street, Collingwood to prevent the eviction of a woman and several children. Although the woman wishes to move to another house those gathered claim that it is unfit for human habitation and encourage her to hold out for something better.

### July 20 1931, Melbourne

Despite unemployed picketers as well as the mayor, town clerk and local councilors warning a landlord that her Collingwood property will surely be wrecked should she evict a woman whose husband is away on relief work she goes ahead anyway losing the property in the process.

### July 31 1931, Australia

The *Workers Weekly* claims that over 200 evictions have been prevented in the last eight months.

### August 1931, Melbourne

Activists smash the windows of every estate agent in Richmond following a violent eviction in Burnley.

*“We had a very good organisation to fight evictions and one particular Wednesday there was an eviction in Burnley and we got an awful bashing from the police. People were batoned down. So we called a meeting and we decided to do something about it. The evictions were instigated by the estate agents on behalf of the owner. They never let you know who owned the houses and we didn’t know how to find out for ourselves so we decided to take on the Richmond estate agents. On the Friday we met at a certain place and divided into groups of two people to each real estate agent. It was a late shopping night and at a quarter to nine there were two of us outside each of the nine estate agents. One chap in each group had a watch and they were all synchronized. At a quarter to nine ‘Bang.’ We wrecked every estate agent’s window in Richmond with lumps of blue metal. There was hell to pay the next day. The papers were full of it. Even Mr Sidney Myer came out with a statement that it*

*wasn't right that people could be evicted because they were out of work, and that the Government should do something. Well, the Government [later] announced the rent subsidy of eight shillings a week. If you had an eviction order you could apply for the money. This took the sting out of the eviction fights."*

Matt in Weevils in the Flour.

### **August 12 1931, Melbourne**

1000 residents gather to protest against a number of evictions taking place in Hanover St. Fitzroy. When the crowd moves in to confront a bailiff accompanied by Sergeant Murphy of the Fitzroy police a trap is sprung in a furniture van and 30 police leap out of the back batoning all present. A further 50 police are brought in to quell the crowd, one of whom is hospitalized. Armed police are then stationed at the house to prevent it being trashed in retribution.

### **August 21 1931, Kurri Kurri**

A mass meeting of coal miners in the Hunter Valley, NSW threatens to go on strike if planned evictions go ahead.

### **August 28 1931, Brisbane**

The UWM sets up a No Rent campaign demanding that the unemployed be given a rent amnesty.

### **September 1931, Melbourne**

Demonstrations and protests see the Federal Government turn over the Broadmeadows Military Camp to the homeless after large numbers of unemployed men are evicted from empty railcars in Jolimont.. The camp's military discipline however sees the men walk out and squat a row of terraces in Brunswick. The owner is later forced to rent the terraces cheaply to the men who use them as a base for anti eviction and other campaigns.

### **September 4 1931, Sydney**

A jury acquits two UWM members from charges of "maliciously damaging property" in Glebe.

*"At Bankstown and at Newtown,  
We made the cops feel sore,  
We fought well,  
They got hell,  
As met them at the door,  
We met them at the door boys,  
We met them at the door,  
At Newtown and at Bankstown,  
We made the cops feel sore."*

Depression era song

### **December 1931, Launceston**

An anti-eviction campaign is launched after a number of unemployed people facing eviction warrants are ordered to leave their homes before Christmas. The first planned protest falters after the resident opts to leave voluntarily, but the police are warned to

stay away in future. The next eviction protest is somewhat more successful as whilst the police are able to remove furniture from the property involved the removalist is hassled by picketers into leaving the scene. The furniture is then picked up and a procession marches to the Town Hall making a stop on the way to jeer the landlord. At the Town Hall the furniture is stacked up to provide a platform for speakers as over 2000 assemble. Faced with such a loud and angry crowd the council are pressured into providing accommodation for the two men who have been evicted.

When the pair are evicted again a few days later, a deputation visits the Chief Secretary Mr James. They knock on his office door, but James is in another room and tries to sneak away. However just as he reaches the exit door he is hit in the head with a hard loaf of bread. Knocked to the ground and surrounded he finally agrees to secure permanent accommodation for the men.

### **Dec 4 1931, Sydney**

An eviction at Ramsgate Avenue in Bondi sees UWM members and other protesters held off by police.

### **January 1932, Launceston**

A landlord responsible for a number of evictions is targeted and harassed by the UWM.

### **January 1932, Sydney**

With tenants now able to contest evictions through the courts and with armed police regularly attacking pickets the NSW UWM begins legally representing workers on a more regular and organized basis.

### **February 1932, Melbourne**

Police cordon off two streets to prevent interference during the eviction of households in Preston.

### **February 1932, Melbourne**

Police break up an anti-eviction meeting in Port Melbourne and later disperse the picket of a house in Heath Street. Later in the month real estate agents decide to evict a returned soldier from Princess Street, but are blocked by members of the United Council of the Unemployed (UCU). From the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> (the period of the warrant) 100s of pickets are provided with meals by local residents. The agent, a Mr Chapman, is prevented from evicting the residents before the warrant expires, but vows to try again. In response the UCU institute a “No Rent” campaign leafleting all of his tenants.

### **February 1932, Melbourne**

After landlord H.C. Barrett evicts a family from a cottage in Cobden Street, South Melbourne 400 people pay the property a visit. Windows are smashed, all the fittings destroyed and three days later the house is burnt down. The Port Melbourne AEC issues a circular to real estate agents warning that “united action” will follow any future eviction attempts. The circular also states “We intend to do all in our power to prevent brutal crimes being committed against our class.”

### **February 5 1932, Ballarat**

A single men’s camp is established by the UWM after a number of swag men are evicted from bush camps. An empty house at 162 Main Road is later squatted to house 30 men.

## February 25 1932, Melbourne

When police are caught removing furniture from a house in Cuthbert St, Reservoir 400 or 500 protestors pick it up and start replacing it. A brawl begins, with the police at one point drawing and firing their guns, but eventually they are forced to abandon the four remaining evictions scheduled that day for the area whilst the agent involved is left with no other option, but to allow the tenants to stay on for a further fortnight. With anti-eviction activity peaking in the area the property is burnt down on March 10 after the family finally moves on.

*“Our demonstration on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> February was proof of the necessity for a united council of the unemployed. We, the producers of all the wealth of this country, are the builders of these houses and have the right to a roof over the heads of our wives, children and ourselves. When the time comes that we have again to resist the ejection of one of our comrades let us show them our determination by rolling up in our thousands instead of our hundreds for UNITED WE STAND BUT DIVIDED WE FALL.”*

*Revolt, 1932*

## March 1 1932, Melbourne

400 to 500 unemployed workers in South Melbourne trash a house in Cobden Street from which a family had just been evicted before proceeding to the real estate agent's office where they tear up his business books. Moving on to the agent's house they are dispersed by the police, but return in the following days to set it on fire.

## March 2 1932, Melbourne

Police knock three picketers unconscious during an eviction battle in Footscray.

## March 8 1932, Melbourne

After a crowd gathers to protest the eviction of a woman and three children from a house in Carlisle Street, Balaclava police seal off nearby Hotham Street to evict another. Furniture is then taken from the houses and dumped at the Town Hall where the Mayor is forced to rehouse one of the families. The next day 300 gather for another protest which is attacked and dispersed by police.

## March 25 1932, Newcastle

A widow and daughter in Wickham are given an eviction notice, but 300 picketers move in with a number of women assisting in the occupation of the house. The pair are rehoused after a Police Inspector agrees to pay their first month's rent after police attempt and fail to enter the property.

## March 25 1932, Melbourne

Hundreds march from Preston and as far away as Williamstown to join a thousands strong picket outside a home slated for eviction in Charles St. Brunswick.

## April 1932, Launceston

The Launceston UWM declares a new policy of “commandeering” empty houses for the homeless rehousing one family of evictees and assisting another to reoccupy their home.

## April 1932, Sydney

The UWM reports that it has prevented 46 evictions in the past month alone through

the mounting of challenges to the Court of Petty Sessions. Landlords however move to circumvent the majority of these appeals by putting “Direct Expulsion” orders to the Supreme Court which does not have the power to block evictions.

### **May 1932, Launceston**

Police evict people from squatted houses laying charges of “unlawful possession” against a number of them. All of the cases are later thrown out of court. In the meantime the UWM mounts a major campaign against one eviction. The house is picketed, the red flag flown from its roof on Anzac Day and the local area chalked and placarded. With large crowds squaring off against the police the eviction of the property is prevented for a number of weeks.

### **May 13 1932, Sydney**

A picket at 81 Goodlet St, Surrey Hills sees several hundred people force the police to guarantee that there would be no eviction until a new home is found for the tenants. Suspicious of the value of a police promise however the UWM maintains a security presence at the property.

### **May 20 1932, Wollongong**

Despite resistance a number of unemployed camps are evicted by police and vigilantes.

### **May 25 1932, Melbourne**

A Preston family are evicted after their property is left unguarded because 20 of those who had been picketing it are sitting court on charges relating to an earlier protest.

### **June 14 1932, Newcastle**

The Newcastle UWM joins with trade unionists to picket a house at 30 Clara St, Tighes Hill. 60 police move in to evict and are met by 800 protesters supporting a hard core of 200 picketers and occupiers including a number of women. Fighting continues for an hour after police attack the crowd and 17 protesters are injured, 3 with fractured skulls, whilst 2 police are treated for concussion. 30 men are charged with assaulting police, but no jury in Newcastle can be found to convict them. The Attorney General Henry E. Manning orders ten of them to be retried in Singleton, but after a 61 day trial eight are acquitted with Manning giving up on nailing the remaining two.

*“Batons fell like hail as the police moved forward to break down resistance, and the pickets wielded palings torn from fences and wooden batons, and one man even had a sledge hammer.”*

*Newcastle Sun, 1932*

### **July 1932, Wollongong**

UWM members prevent the auctions of houses which the unemployed have lost to the banks by outbidding everyone else and then waiting for the crowd to disperse before declaring they have no money.

### **July 8 1932, Cairns**

About 100 unemployed squat the local show grounds after being promised accommodation for two months. Several eviction attempts are foiled. Eventually the men are evicted by police aided by 2000 residents and farmers who had been told that the annual Agricultural Show would be cancelled if the squatters remained. Fierce fighting breaks out with the unemployed being battered and chased through the

backstreets of Cairns.

### **July 14 1932, Geelong**

A house in Drumacondra is wrecked after the landlord evicts a family and takes their furniture in lieu of back rent.

### **July 22 1932, Sydney**

Under pressure from the UWM the Granville Council is forced to allow a meeting protesting the eviction of a family to occur in their chambers.

### **September 1932, Sydney**

A number of eviction warrants in Glebe and Paddington are successfully defeated in court by representatives from the UWM.

### **September 30 1932, Sydney**

Men arrested in the Bankstown eviction fight are temporarily freed on bail after a jury disagreement during their appeal trial. Within a short time they lose the appeal and are sent back to prison.

### **November 29 1932, Melbourne**

An evening meeting held outside a recently evicted property in Little Gold St. Coburg draws 350 people who reoccupy and return furniture to the house.

### **January 20 1933, Melbourne**

Mr Zwar, a Member of the State Legislative Assembly, has his own house picketed after he evicts a family in Preston.

### **February 3 1933, Mudgee**

The *Workers Weekly* reports that an unemployed church goer in rural NSW has been evicted after putting his faith in the courts and rejecting a proposed picket of his home.

### **February 17 1933, Kurri Kurri**

The local AEC sets up pickets outside three Hunter Valley homes threatened with eviction.

### **April 7 1933 Melbourne**

A protest of 200 confronts a real estate agent forcing him to stop setting up the unemployed by initially renting houses out cheaply and then hiking the rents after they have settled in.

*“A demonstration would generally be called to take place at the estate agent’s office. The estate agent who’d issued the eviction order on behalf of the landlord would be asked to receive a deputation. Well, as a rule he tried to avoid it, but he couldn’t. If you had several hundred people outside and six to dozen came into your office you simply had to talk. So it was often put to him that it was very much in his interests and the interests of his office if he rang the landlord and asked him to call off the eviction and of course he often did. This was a display of force. We stood there until he did.”*

Neil Counihan in *Weevils in the Flour*.

### **April 28 1933, Sydney**

Anti eviction groups begin a campaign to prevent a returned soldier from being evicted

from 13 Napier St. Paddington.

### June 2 1933, Sydney

Unemployed representatives from 22 local organisations force two representatives from a property owners' peak body to admit they have been evicting the unemployed despite having denied such actions in the media.

### June 1933, Sydney

The Redfern AEC reports that they have won a number of recent court cases against evictions in their area. However they also report that a number of anti eviction meetings have been broken up by police.

### July 1933, Sydney

The Paddington AEC reports that in the last few weeks they have defeated eight evictions in court.

### July 14 1933, Sydney

A mass meeting is held at the *Canterbury* Town Hall to protest the removal of furniture by finance companies.

### August 1933, Adelaide

Adelaide AECs report that their protests and agitation have resulted in a number of workers being returned to their homes.

*“There was a hurried consultation of the Unemployed Committee when word was received that an eviction was taking place. The problem was how to be in it without attracting the attention of the four policeman who were among the 500 unemployed at the Adelaide Labour Exchange shelter... Men circulated amongst the unemployed quietly informing them that there was an eviction on a West Terrace and not to rush it, but to use both exists and go out individually over the next ten minutes... Of course the police were suspicious that something was being put over them. As they passed the Adelaide GPO they could see on the straight road ahead 500 unemployed racing toward the eviction 100 yards away. Four blokes carrying furniture on the road also saw them and took off at a speed that would have done credit to Olympic runners through a group of women from the neighbourhood who threw abuse and fists at the evictors.”*

Jim McNeill in Fox, L (ed)

Depression Down Under, Hale & Ironmonger, 1989.

### August 8 1933, Melbourne

Having mustered around 2000 people earlier in the month for a demonstration against the eviction of 75 single men who had refused to take part in below award wages sustenance work unemployed activists are caught off guard when plain clothes, mounted and uniformed police sweep into their row of terraces in Fitzroy St. Fitzroy. Thrown onto the streets the men regroup in the afternoon marching on Parliament where they dump their furniture before being routed by police.

*“A lot of the younger single men in the Movement lived in Unemployed Single Men’s*



*Groups; they lived communally, squatted in terraces around the inner suburbs. They resisted evictions and protected speakers. They were daredevils, political bushrangers..."*

Harry in Weevils in the Flour.

### **August 13 1933, Sydney**

1000 participate in an anti eviction march.

### **September 1933, Adelaide**

AECs report that they have been picketing evictions around the eastern suburbs using gongs and chalked messages as a warning system.

### **October 20 1933, Sydney**

After a family of ten are evicted from a house in Alexandria the Redfern AEC rallies 500 locals. Unfortunately the police prevent reoccupation.

### **November 17 1933, Sydney**

The Paddington AEC are themselves evicted by the ALP from their offices in the Paddington Town Hall.

### **November 24 1933, Sydney**

Workmen tear out all the conveniences from a house in Redfern, but the family residing there refuse to leave. Bailiffs and police then arrive and try to evict them without a court order, but a crowd gathers to defeat the illegal action. When another household in the area is illegally evicted without a court order supporters return their furniture to the house with the attendant media publicity forcing local estate agents to back off from executing further evictions.

*"At nine am sharp there arrived a posse of police. My husband opened the door to the bailiffs who rushed in and started removing our furniture. The children were very upset at the sight of so many people ripping up our lino, taking pictures down and so on... At last when the place was empty of everything the bailiffs called myself and the children to come outside.*

*Then something happened. The members of the AEC each grabbed a piece of furniture on the street, pushed the bailiffs aside and dashed into the house. The people surged forward and women and kids all helped put the things back. It had taken 3 men hours to evict us; it took less than 10 minutes to return the furniture to the house. Then we closed the door. We waited for something to happen and to our surprise we saw the cops and bailiffs walking to their cars. So their bluff was called! And the illegal evictions which firms were attempting at several suburbs were also stopped."*

Daisy McWilliams in Depression Down Under.

### **March 1934, Wollongong**

An influx of new workers into Wollongong creates increased evictions for locals as greedy landlords try to cash on in. AECs are set up at Port Kembla, Fairy Meadow, Balgownie, Corrimal and Coledale.

### **March 28 1934, Adelaide**

After two Port Adelaide families with eleven children between them are evicted and their furniture dumped in the street they decide to protest by setting up home on the pavement. Sending their kids to relatives the four adults sleep in one bed claiming they don't have enough bed clothes for separate mattresses. Following this and other negative publicity the S.A. government offers to pay the removalist fees and guarantee relief work for one day a week for the breadwinner of evicted families. This reform soon inflates the eviction figures as tenants and landlords do deals to ensure the payment of rent.

#### **April 1934, Adelaide**

Adelaide AECs report that battles have been raging for months between a number of landlords and tenants. The landlords and police have been using the archaic "Rogue and Vagabonds" Common Law provisions as well as housing acts to imprison those who have reoccupied houses.

#### **April 16 1934, Temora**

Mass action organized by the Farmers Defence League sees hundreds meet an auctioneer and solicitor at a farm that is to be sold off in rural NSW. The auction is prevented and the bank forced to place a moratorium on the majority of the debt.

#### **June 1934, Melbourne**

200 people protest outside the home of an unemployed activist in Footscray.

#### **June 3 1934, Melbourne**

A mass meeting at the Richmond Town Hall protests the continuing number of evictions.

#### **June 6 1934, Melbourne**

Fearing trouble police bring in four mounted police, a dozen constables and nine plain clothes police to evict one woman and her seven children.

#### **August 1934, Corrimal**

A number of eviction orders are defeated in country NSW when large protests force the local government to withdraw court orders.

#### **August 17 1934, Adelaide**

The Lord Mayor of Adelaide is booed at an anti eviction meeting called to protest the death of a woman who had been forced onto the streets by bailiffs.

#### **January 4 1935, Cairns**

After a farmer in the Atherton Tablelands forces bailiffs off his land at gun point on three occasions the bank proceeds to sell his land from under him to the Forestry Department without compensating him for his loss. When the department plants trees on the land they are torn out by locals. Following further protest action the Forest Department and the bank are forced to pay him 1200 pounds to move on.

#### **June 1935, Bulli**

Over a number of weeks the Illawarra Shire Council attempts to evict unemployed campers at Fairy Meadow before communist organisers and delegates from the Miner's Federation visit the area successfully pressuring the council into providing alternative accommodation.

#### **July 1935, Adelaide**

The Adelaide AEC reports that local police and landlords have recently gained confidence after a number of evictions have gone uncontested. The group also reports that is attempting to turn the situation around by organising against a series of coming



Above: Anti eviction placard, Sydney, early 1930s

Below: Evicted Hurstville family, Sydney, early 1930s



evictions in the central Adelaide area.

*“Wasn’t there any sympathy for the unemployed amongst the police?” “No. These men were picked... they hated the unemployed and in every case would beat them with batons... The brutality went on. No difference between Labor and Conservative governments.”*

Stan Moran in *Weevils in the Flour*

### **July 5 1935, Adelaide**

A man who has been ordered by his doctor not to work for at least twelve months is threatened with eviction. A deputation by the Goodwood Park AEC to the Minister of Employment to talk about the situation is refused admittance and another to the landlord, Robert Stamp, sees him assure them that he will go ahead with his plans. In response the organisation prepares a bulletin describing the case and proceeds to distribute it to workers at the Foy and Gibson’s store where Stamp works as an accountant. An attempt by the hapless Stamp to tear up the bulletins fails and after a further visit from 200 unemployed he backs down allowing the tenants to stay.

### **August 30 1935, Kurri Kurri**

A public meeting resolves to resist the eviction of a Mrs Graham from her house by the Rural Bank of NSW.

### **September 10 1935, Bulli**

The Bulli AEC begins to organise against the proposed eviction of 50 families who are camping on property at Slacky Flat owned by the Bulli Colliery.

### **November 30 1935, Rockhampton**

After a number of protests the eviction of unemployed men residing at 12 North St. is postponed.

### **February 1936, NSW**

The Wheat Growers Union reports that a number of its members have been threatened with evictions and that they have been organising to prevent them from being carried out. Reacting to protests the Stevens Government suspends the proposed evictions, but tensions remain high and a meeting of over 200 farmers at Rankins Spring clashes violently with members of the State Government Debts Relief Board. Attempts by the local newspaper to sideline the struggle by exploiting differences between Anglo-Australian farmers and Italian group settlers fail after the two groups continue to unite against any attempt by the state government or banks to repossess their land.

### **February 7 1936, Manjimup**

Farmers in WA’s Southwest begin an anti-eviction campaign after the Agricultural Bank serves eviction notices on over twenty group settlers.

### **March 6 1936, Sydney**

Tenants renting in Rozelle from a Mr Myerson defeat a rent increase by collecting petitions, holding protests and instituting a rent boycott.

### **March 27 1936, Sydney**

An attempted eviction of unemployed by Reverend Hammond at Hammondville is defeated when the tenants take up batons and face down the police.

*“Does that fellow collect your rent?”*

*No!*

*Who he is then?*

*The rent collector”*

Popular Depression era joke

### **May 15 1936, Manjimup**

A family with nine children get together with six adjacent group settlers to defy attempts by an Agricultural Bank manager, police and six hired thugs to repossess their furniture.

### **June 16 1936, Sydney**

Camperdown residents defeat a rent increase by instituting a rent boycott.

### **July 3 1936, Invermay**

A radical Christian in Tasmania defeats an attempt to evict him by putting up huge placards outside his house publicising his case and quoting biblical references to money lenders and poverty. Embarrassed the local council gives him a job and guarantees he will not be evicted.

### **July 1936, Lake Cargelligo**

NSW farmers defeat a number of sell offs by organising a mass boycott of auctions threatening anyone who dares bid.

### **July 14 1936, Sydney**

Large protests force an inner city Church to abandon its proposed eviction of nine different homes.

### **August 4 1936, Sydney**

Workers involved in demolishing a house refuse to remove its roof when they discover that its tenant, a woman with a husband in hospital, is refusing to leave the property. The foreman brings in other workers who are prepared to remove the roof, but when the woman continues to stay put the property's owner is forced to supply her with accommodation elsewhere and move her furniture free of charge.

### **August 18 1936, Wakool**

An unemployed camp in the Riverina is evicted by two car loads of police plus armed men from the Water Commission. Despite facing guns the unemployed resist, but are eventually defeated when the police slash their tent ropes and pull down their humpies by hooking them up to cars.

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For more on the history of Australian  
anti-eviction and housing struggles visit  
[www.australianmuseumofsquatting.org](http://www.australianmuseumofsquatting.org)

# WAR ON BAILIFFS

## Excitement in Larnoo Avenue

### A Real Tragi-Comedy

**I**T is still open season in Brunswick for birds of the bailiff species. A city moneylender imported a bailiff to execute a bill of sale over furniture in a certain Larnoo avenue household on Wednesday morning, but unfortunately for the invaders the word had been passed around, and things started to happen.

#### Some Brief Resistance

Over five hundred Brunswick unemployed crowded into Larnoo avenue and ejected the bailiff and the money-lender without any beating around the bush. The money-lender put up some show of resistance, but soon took to his heels in the direction of his parked motor car. But alas! the car rested on four flat tyres—the tyre valves having been removed in the meantime, and the Shylock had to adopt other means to make himself hard to find.

#### Bailiff's Alleged Agreement

Meanwhile the bailiff was receiving special attention from the crowd who, it is alleged, extracted from him a signed agreement that he would not act in the capacity of bailiff in any part of Brunswick or its surroundings during the term of his natural life!

West Brunswick police, who soon arrived on the scene, were supplemented by Sergeant W. M. Kelly and Constable E. G. Wise, and the bailiff, badly scared, was rescued, and spirited away to the city by car. He refused to travel by tram, saying that the crowd would follow him and assault him.

#### Large Crowd Gathers

During these hectic happenings the crowd had swelled until there were over one thousand people in the street, but with the action of the police the major part of the crowd dispersed, until there were only small knots of residents left to discuss the disturbance. A unit of half a dozen machines from the motorcycle police patrol arrived on the scene, but left when it was seen that the situation was "all quiet."

Ho-hum! — Just another of these bailiff scenes. It's a great place for excitement, is Brunswick!

# Lock Out The Landlords!

Australian Eviction Resistance

1929-36

The economic depression of the 1930s saw thousands of Australians thrown out of their homes and into the streets. These actions however did not go unopposed. Across Australia pickets, occupations and protests were organised to disrupt and prevent evictions and auctions. Where these failed some took matters into their own hands wrecking the properties of landlords and real estate agents in revenge.



This pamphlet chronicles just some of the many struggles that took place. It includes a chronology of actions as well as photos and quotes from those involved providing a fascinating insight into the events of the time.

Homebrew Books  
2008

