

# The 1995 ACTU Congress: Recruitment and Retention

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## Abstract

*The 1995 Congress was unusual. It was considerably shorter than all recent Congresses and there was only one substantial policy item: the recruitment and retention of union members. Nonetheless, the Congress provided the platform for important speeches from government and ACTU leaders. These reaffirmed the Accord process and, with an election looming, contrasted it with the Opposition's approach. The Congress also provided for a smooth transition, with Jennie George endorsed as President-elect to replace Martin Ferguson on his anticipated departure to Federal Parliament.*

There is no question that recruitment and retention must be a top priority. If we continue to lose members at the current rate Australian unions will be at risk of losing much of our strength and influence as representatives of working people.

The Future of Unions in Australia, background paper, ACTU Congress 1995, S.1.4.

**T**he main game at the abbreviated 1995 ACTU Congress was the recruitment and retention of members. The Australian Bureau of Statistics series, *Trade Union Members, Australia* showed a decline in the unionised proportion of the workforce from 49.5 per cent in 1982 to 35 per cent in

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1994 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1995: 72). The main banner in the Congress Hall and delegates' satchels and folders were stamped with 'reunion, revitalise, recruit, represent'. The Congress was memorable on several counts. It witnessed the joyously celebrated endorsement of Jennie George as President-elect; it saw key speeches from the Prime Minister, the Minister for Industrial Relations and the President and Secretary of the ACTU designed to underline the importance of the Accord relationship and rally delegates and the broader community in the run up to the forthcoming federal election and there was a further tranche of major changes to the ACTU's rules.

The Congress was held on 27-29 September in the Wilson Hall at Melbourne University. The venue and feel of the Congress contrasted with its immediate predecessors at Sydney's Darling Harbour (1993) and Melbourne's World Congress Centre (1991). It was back to metal frame benches and plastic seats and there was no imposing video screen. One casualty was the sound system which was tinny and flawed with much crackling and the intermittent dropping out of speeches. This aside, ACTU Secretary Bill Kelty said he preferred the change. It set the scene for his message that 'unions are back'.

On the first day of Congress Assistant Secretary Bill Mansfield announced that 39 unions and 13 State Branches and Provincial Councils were in attendance.<sup>1</sup> He announced a total of 653 delegates. An important absentee was the Transport Workers Union which had announced its disaffiliation in May 1995. It had cited concerns over the level of ACTU service to the union, lack of consultation and criticised the leadership style of ACTU Secretary Bill Kelty (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 May 1995: 1). On the eve of Congress, however, the union indicated that it was considering reaffiliation (*Age*, 27 September 1995: 8).

The economic context was much more favourable than at the previous Congress. The 1995 Budget recorded the growth of Gross Domestic Product over 1994-95 as 4.75 per cent and forecast that it would be 3.75 per cent over the year ahead. The underlying inflation rate for 1994-95 was 3.25 per cent with the level of unemployment reduced to 8.5 per cent. Less encouraging was the Current Account Deficit at \$27 billion or 5.5 per cent of GDP. The political settings were of much greater concern. Labor remained in power in the federal government but faced an election within a year. This time Prime Minister Paul Keating would be challenged by John Howard, appointed for the third time to the post of Opposition Leader. Opinion polls taken before Congress pointed to a significant lead for the Opposition, with several polls suggesting a lead of 8-10 per cent in two party preferred terms (*Age* 27 September 1995: 6). The anticipated election cast a shadow over Congress proceedings, as on previous occasions. Speakers were keen to

identify the importance of industrial relations as a critical election issue and the need to prevent a Coalition victory. Fears of such an outcome were fed by state developments. Labor ruled in only two states, New South Wales and Queensland and in both cases the governments had one seat majorities.

The 1995 Congress was a most unusual Congress. There was really only one substantial item on the delegates' agenda: union membership. Much of the second day of Congress was devoted to syndicate group discussion on this. The remaining time was taken up with set piece speeches, reports and a mix of presentations. This report will examine the discussion of organisational and industrial issues and will comment on the new Executive elected at the Congress.

## Organisational Matters

Secretary Bill Kelty had warned at the 1987 Congress that unless unions took drastic action to increase membership, 'unionism will decay and decline to the point of irrelevancy' (Davis, 1988: 120). At the 1989 Congress, ACTU Vice President Tom McDonald cautioned:

Comrades, our movement is in deep crisis. We either improve our performance and reorganise or we perish. (Davis, 1990: 100)

At the 1995 Congress, evidence of a further steep decline in membership returned the spotlight to this issue. The plight of unions was spelt out in a comprehensive background paper, 'The Future of Unions in Australia' placed in delegates' Congress folders:

Not only has union recruitment and retention not kept pace with employment growth, it has in fact declined. Between 1982 and 1994, at a time when the labour force grew by 1,337,900 employees, [25.8%] union membership declined by 284,200 [11.1%]. Between 1982 and 1988 union membership increased by almost 5%, with unions recruiting 26 of every 100 new employees. However, between 1990 and 1994 union membership declined by 376,200 [14%]. Union membership is now declining in absolute terms. 'The Future of Unions in Australia', ACTU Congress 1995, Background Paper, S.2.1.

A table from the paper, drawn on the ABS series, *Trade Union Members, Australia* (cat. no. 6325.0), also illustrated the absolute and relative decline in membership.

**Table 1** Trade Union Membership in Australia: 1982-1994

Year	Union Members (000's)	Employee (000's)	Union Density (%)
1982	2567.6	5187.9	49.5
1996	2593.9	5683.9	45.6
1988	2535.9	6101.9	41.6
1990	2659.6	6565.6	40.5
1992	2508.8	6334.8	39.6
1994	2283.4	6525.8	35.0

Source: The Future of Unions in Australia, background paper, ACTU Congress 1995, p.27.

Closer inspection of ABS data demonstrated that membership had fallen in nearly all industries, despite strong employment growth in some sectors. In August 1994 membership had dropped to 26% in the private sector and 62% in the public sector. Such trends had generated enormous debate within the ACTU leadership. At the Executive and Council meetings in March and May 1995 a strategy had been agreed which involved a major expansion in the number of recruiting officers and diversification in the services offered by unions (ACTU *Workplace*, Autumn 1995: 4-5 and Winter 1995: 4-5).

The 1993 Congress had sanctioned the development of a scheme called 'Organising Works'. This funded approximately sixty trainee organisers whose role was to work with unions with the special brief of recruiting new members. President Martin Ferguson had commented in an interview on the success of the scheme. The trainee organisers had recruited some 9000 new members boosting union revenue by \$2 million. The income generated was approximately double the costs associated with the program (*Australian Financial Review*, 20 January 1995: 4). The May meeting of the ACTU Council approved the employment of an additional 300 into the Organising Works scheme. It also encouraged unions to consider services such as the provision of holiday homes at discounted rates and discounted insurance and health cover schemes. The *Australian Financial Review* ran the headline *Unions: Kelly's Last Stand* and described it as a \$40 million last-ditch plan to save Australia's dying union movement (1 March 1995: 1).

The report, *Unions 2001*, prepared by the Evatt Foundation gave broad support to this thrust, calling on unions to improve their basic organising of members and their delivery of relevant services. It argued for the fostering of a 'recruitment culture', with recruitment accepted as an integral part of union activities (Evatt, 1995: 286). Leaders within the New South Wales Labor Council dissented, arguing that the main problem was the move to 'super unions'. ACTU policy, encouraging the merger of unions, had, they

argued, led to a spate of union amalgamations but the bodies formed were often bureaucratic and unresponsive to members. Potential members were not attracted to conglomerate unions and members were leaving as they no longer felt affinity with the larger, more amorphous structures created (*Southland*, Autumn 1995: 5 and 13-14).<sup>2</sup>

Martin Ferguson touched on the issues of member recruitment and retention in his opening address to the 1995 Congress. Unions, he said, were playing a pivotal part in the nation's economic, industrial and social life but had failed effectively to communicate their role and aims to their membership and potential membership. They were no longer seen as 'relevant' (Ferguson, 1995: 5-6). Bill Kelty underlined these concerns and the need for effective strategy. In his Finance Report to the Congress he moved that delegates confirm the decision of the May Council to allocate \$10m to a recruitment and organisation fund. This would support the next phase of Organising Works, the establishment of telephone service centres to facilitate better communication with members and non-members and the marketing of home loan, travel and other services (ACTU 1995 Congress, *Minutes*: 2-3). For its part, said Kelty, the ACTU would sell a significant share of its accumulated assets to channel funds to unions for recruitment. The ACTU would seek to reduce its staff from 54 to approximately 30 through redeployment and non-replacement of those leaving.

The Executive also proposed the shift of \$800,000 from the ACTU's basic operations to the new Recruitment, Organisation and Regional Development Campaign. In 1996 the proposed ACTU affiliation fee for an adult member was \$1.82 with this comprising 90c for basic operating expenses, 10c the information service, 20c international, 10c Organising Works and 52c for recruitment, regional development and publicity. This meant an increase in the total fee from \$1.77 in 1995 to \$1.82 in 1996. The proposal represented a major change in the distribution of ACTU finances. It was clear that these proposals had been well canvassed and agreed before the Congress and there was no challenge to them on the floor of Congress. The recommendations on recruitment were carried unanimously.

## **Syndicate Groups**

President-elect Jennie George was given the task of briefing delegates on the role of the syndicate groups. Six hours of the second day had been set aside for syndicate work with delegates asked to attend two three hour sessions. The fifteen groups were to discuss recruitment and retention in regard to: regional recruitment, workplace organisation, small/medium size business, outworkers, casuals, information technology, training, enterprise

bargaining, young people, best practice, women, Non English Speaking Background, union services, communications and individual contracts. She emphasised the importance of the work of the syndicates. Several factors had influenced the decline in union membership including changes in the structure of industry, reduction in the public sector, the expansion of small business and the growth of part-time work. But unions, she said, could not escape responsibility. The challenge was to devise a strategy to restore and revive relevance. Workplace delegates had a key role to play. She referred to various success stories, indicating that some unions had swum against the tide.

A feature of the syndicate work at the 1995 Congress was that it held no immediate decision-making significance. At the 1993 Congress, the first occasion on which syndicates were attempted, there were report-backs to the full Congress and motions proposed and considered. At this Congress, delegates were informed that the syndicates, 'will not make policy type recommendations but rather the conclusions will be included in a strategy document on *The Future of Unions in Australia* which the ACTU will aim to finalise by October/November' (ACTU Congress 1995 Papers, s.5,1.2).

In this sense, the deliberations of the groups held less significance than on the previous occasion. Nonetheless, the two groups which I attended, workplace organisation and enterprise bargaining, saw quite high levels of attendance and participation in discussion on the part of Congress delegates. Doug Cameron, Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, chaired the first group attended by a total of 39 delegates. The key, he said, to effective workplace organisation were active workplace delegates. This had long been the experience of the AMWU. Chris Walton, the manager of the Organising Works scheme, reinforced the point. Full-time officials could not be expected to carry out their normal duties, be engaged in bargaining and recruit effectively across a range of workplaces. Unions must therefore do more to encourage and support a fuller role for workplace representatives. This would be no easy task. Even in unionised workplaces, a third have no workplace representatives (Callus, 1991: 103). Also, regard must be paid to the inclusion and representation of different groups within the workplace.

Doug Cameron and Chris Walton spoke for approximately an hour. The next hour saw Congress delegates volunteering their experiences and views. This sketched the problems that full-time officials had in recruiting workplace delegates. For instance, many members were reluctant to become union delegates, conscious of their lack of knowledge of industrial awards, legislation on occupational health and safety and matters such as superannuation. In addition, would they be able to represent members effectively?;

would they incur managerial displeasure and retribution? The threads of the session were pulled together by Doug Cameron. Encouraging interaction from the group he carried out a SWOT (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis, covering the blackboard with points in the appropriate columns. The session engaged those attending and proved interesting and informative.

The second group which I attended explored the use of enterprise bargaining as a recruitment tool. John Maitland, Construction, Mining and Forestry Employees Union was in the chair, with ACTU Advocate and Senior Research Officer Grant Belchamber and NSW Secretary of the AMWU, Dave Goodger, designated session leaders. Some twenty Congress delegates attended. Goodger reported on experience in the metal industry. His union had lodged claims for improved wages and conditions on a large number of enterprises with no or low membership. Officials had visited the workplaces and sought meetings with the employees. Workers had received leaflets, printed in five languages, about the claims and the union. The first three months of this strategy saw the recruitment of 600 new members.

Grant Belchamber looked at the difficulties of utilising bargaining for recruitment. For instance, many workplaces did not appear to engage in any bargaining and in many unionised workplaces, delegates did not have the skills and resources to bargain effectively. The key therefore was appropriate training for, and support of, workplace representatives. In short both syndicate groups were relatively well attended (although lunch may have depressed attendance at the afternoon sessions), were informative and engaged the involvement of Congress delegates. The significance of these discussions, however, was less clear since they were not part of the process of Congress decision making.

Bill Kelty moved a composite resolution, in the final hour of Congress, covering organisational, industrial, international and other matters. On organisational matters he stressed that unions should remain committed to a cooperative approach. They should abide by the strategy approved at the last Congress to resolve inter-union disputes. The motion reiterated its call for a repeal of s.118 of the *Industrial Relations Act* which empowered the Industrial Relations Commission to determine union coverage. It stated, 'No government, employer or tribunal can restructure union organisations against our collective will' (Draft Resolution-ACTU Congress, s.3). There was no challenge to these proposals and the resolution was carried unanimously.

Other key organisational matters came before the Congress in proposed Rules' changes. These changes were left in the hands of ACTU Assistant Secretary Tim Pallas. His report came late on the first day of Congress and

the hall had emptied after the excitement of speeches by Jennie George and Paul Keating. Eighteen recommendations for changes were put before the delegates. These looked at the representation of affiliated unions on the Council and Executive and embedded the ACTU's commitment to affirmative action. For instance it was proposed that each Union Group should be entitled to two rather than one representative at the ACTU Executive, with the second representative entitled to participate as a full member of the Executive but not vote. Wherever practicable, the second representative should be a woman. This meant an increase in the size of the Executive from approximately 38 to 59 (ACTU Congress 1995, Rules Review, s.7).

Significant changes were also proposed for the ACTU Council and Congress. The Council, established at the last Congress to deal with major issues between Congresses, was deemed not to have worked satisfactorily. It was now proposed that the Council should meet separately from the Executive (not immediately after) and that it meet once a year, in those years in which a Congress is not held. A new formula for unions' representation was suggested with 'one delegate for each 25,000 members or part thereof' (*ibid* recommendation 8).<sup>3</sup> The adoption of this recommendation would result in a Council of 146 (See Appendix). In addition, unions must abide by stipulated requirements on the inclusion of women in their delegation. For instance, the minimum female requirement for a delegation of five members is two; for ten members is four.

Following the 1997 Congress, it was proposed that Congress move from being held once every two years to once every three years. This was to defray the costs of an increased Council (*ibid*, s.10). Congress should retain its role as the peak body in general policy formulation and direction and in the election of ACTU officers (*ibid*, s.11). A new formula for the representation of affiliated unions was proposed 'with 2 delegates for each 2500 members or part thereof' which would result in a Congress of approximately 2000 delegates, substantially larger than the 600-900 delegates in recent Congresses.<sup>4</sup>

The final recommendation concerned the weighting of votes on the Executive where issues were contested. Instead of all representatives having one vote, 10 ACTU Executive members may request a 'weighted vote' which would allocate to Union Group representatives multiple votes in accordance to their entitlement at ACTU Council. All other Executive members would retain a single vote (*ibid*, s.12). This recommendation was the only recommendation to be challenged. Peter Tighe (Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union) moved that only 5 ACTU Executive members should be required to request a weighted vote. The amendment was not accepted by the Executive. It was put and lost and the motion was



carried with very few opposed. As with the Finance Report, the major rules' changes proposed had won the support of union leaders prior to Congress. Their presentation to Congress did not lead to any further discussion and their adoption by delegates proved a formality.

## Industrial Matters

The eighth section of delegates' Congress folder contained Accord Mark VIII and a *Joint Statement – The Accord in Context*, signed by Martin Ferguson and Paul Keating. Both were dated 22 June 1995. The job of the Congress was therefore to ratify the renegotiated Accord and endorse the declared sentiments of the leaders of the labour movement. Prime Minister Keating, arriving to a standing ovation, was welcomed with warmth by Martin Ferguson. He was described as a leader with 'vision and heart', who would defeat the Opposition in the forthcoming election. The Prime Minister looked relaxed and at ease: 'Martin, Jennie, Bill, friends one and all, it's great to be back'. Setting aside his speech, he paid strong tribute to unions and the Accord relationship: 'I believe in what you do in pursuing the interests of ordinary Australian people' and praised them for their role in remodelling Australia. It now demonstrated strong economic growth, low inflation and unemployment was declining. It was also becoming a fairer society. Enterprise bargaining would advance the wages and conditions of working people while the award safety-net would ensure protection for those without bargaining power. He listed as milestones improvements in superannuation, in maternity leave, childcare and the enhanced status of women workers. He contrasted the Opposition's approach of attacking workers' wages and conditions. For them, workers were 'the enemy'. To the enjoyment of delegates, he described Opposition Leader John Howard as having, 'no strength, no purpose and no understanding .... out of his age, out of his depth and sneaky'. He urged unions to keep the faith in the Labor Party and the Labor Government.

As on previous occasions Bill Kelty rose to move the vote of thanks. He noted the achievements of Accord VII and praised Paul Keating for his leadership in pursuit of improved land rights for Aboriginal Australians and for his defence of Carmen Lawrence. In a twist to his usual formula he arranged the playing of a 1960s hit single as a tribute and delegates were treated to *Please Don't Let Me be Misunderstood* by Eric Burden and the Animals. The PM left to another standing ovation.

Jennie George welcomed Industrial Relations Minister Laurie Brereton to his second Congress. There was some bite in her comments. She noted that he had not always agreed with the ACTU on industrial relations policy.

She stressed that in an 'equal partnership' it was appropriate to voice concerns. The ACTU had considered that some of the industrial relations reforms introduced by the Minister would discourage unionism and facilitate attacks on workers' wages, conditions and rights. Her comments won warm applause from delegates. Switching emphasis, she praised the Minister for his part in working for a fairer Australia and for his pursuit of issues of particular concern to woman workers. In these areas he could count on the wholehearted support of the union movement.

Laurie Brereton did stick to his text. He was lavish in praise of the Accord, the ACTU and unions and heavy-handed in his attacks on the Opposition. He defended the shift to enterprise bargaining while acknowledging the difficulties for workers and for 'overstretched union officials'. But the Accord and its achievements were his focus:

Not just the 66% drop in industrial disputes compared to the Fraser period, not just the low inflation, not just the 680,000 jobs since 1993 – but Medicare and the social wage, the right to strike, the removal of Sections 45d and 45e from the Trade Practices Act, the strengthening of the award safety net, superannuation, the maternity allowance, bereavement leave and most importantly of all, national standards covering minimum wages, parental leave, equal pay for work of equal value and unfair dismissal (Brereton, 1995: 3).

The courting had some effect and by the middle of the speech delegates were applauding in the right places. At the end there was strong applause in sharp contrast to the Minister's rebuff at the previous Congress (Davis, 1994, p.307).<sup>5</sup> The image presented to, and via, the media was of a united labour movement proud of the Accord and its achievements. Indeed, this was highlighted as a key factor distinguishing the ALP from the Opposition in the run-up to the federal election.

Senior ACTU Vice-President and National Secretary of the AMWU, George Campbell, was given the unenviable task late on the first day of moving the Congress resolution endorsing Accord Mark VIII. He outlined the merits of the Accord process, the contents of Accord VIII and contrasted this approach with the Opposition's. There was little new. There was no debate and the motion was carried unanimously.

## **Other Matters**

A number of other policy matters came briefly before the Congress. There were motions condemning child labour, opposing nuclear testing, supporting the move to an Australian Republic and opposing new industrial

relations legislation in Western Australia. None proved controversial; none provoked dissent. All were carried unanimously. Also carried without debate or discussion on the floor of Congress were a series of amendments to policy on international affairs, young people, wages and the situation of working women.

A significant proportion of time at this shortened Congress was devoted to non-policy matters. There were the important 'showpiece' speeches of the Prime Minister and Minister for Industrial Relations, the welcomes and the votes of thanks; a rehearsed question-and-answer role-play was performed by officials in the Organising Works scheme which showcased their talent; there were speeches and a bugler to mark the Year of Remembrance; a 17 year old school boy was invited to address the Congress on the merits of an Australian Republic; there were reports from delegates who had attended the United Nations World Women's Conference in Beijing; there were media awards for unions which had been judged outstanding in their communication to members and there were meritorious service awards given to retired members.<sup>6</sup> On top of this, and in spirited fashion, the Victorian Trades Hall Choir began and ended the proceedings. The outcome was that debate and discussion on policy matters was severely compressed. A greater amount of time was devoted to syndicate group work and to speeches and presentations not directly linked to policy. In his inaugural Presidential Address, Martin Ferguson had referred to the Congress as the 'workers' parliament' (Ferguson, 1991: 5). The 1995 Congress had moved some distance from this model.

## **Congress Elections**

ACTU President Martin Ferguson had seized an opportunity in June to seek pre-selection for the safe federal Labor seat of Batman. He emerged successful after a messy struggle involving three warring left factions. This meant that he would step down as President when the federal election was called. Urged by Bill Kelty, the Executive determined that ACTU Assistant Secretary Jennie George be nominated as President-elect and that the 1995 Congress should be asked to endorse this proposal. Jennie George's skills as an effective communicator were widely respected and there was the telling symbolism of appointing a woman, for the first time, to this senior post.<sup>7</sup>

At approximately 11.30am on the first morning of Congress, Kelty rose to move, 'That this meeting of the ACTU Congress endorses Jennie George as the President-elect of the ACTU'. Barely had he spoken five words before some hundreds of supporters burst into the hall, balloons were released,

streamers thrown, and music played. There followed a five minute exuberant standing ovation. It was certainly the most extraordinary demonstration of shared good feeling, with nothing to match it in the nine Congresses attended by this reviewer. When calm returned, Kelty spoke eloquently in praise of Jennie George. He cited her strength, commitment, resolution and compassion, 'a person we ought to be very proud of'. She had always carried the torch for battlers, for working people and for women. She deserved to be President-elect; she was 'simply the best'. Sharon Burrow, Australian Education Union, seconded the motion.

Buoyed up and moved by the tremendous warmth of her reception Jennie George thanked delegates. She reflected that tough battles lay ahead. She would use her contacts with the Australian Democrats, Greens, church and welfare organisations to forge alliances in pursuit of union goals. She valued highly the relationship with the Labor Party and indicated her admiration for Paul Keating but also reflected that, 'Labor cannot forget that it is there primarily to represent the interests of Australian workers in their huge diversity.' She looked forward to working closely with Bill Kelty, a friend of long standing, and saw their skills as different but complementary. Finally, she remarked that while she was 'solidly on the left' she would not get caught up in factional dealings. Her remarks were greeted with another lengthy standing ovation.<sup>8</sup>

The other elections at the Congress, for ACTU Vice Presidents, Council and Executive members and Affirmative Action positions failed to excite the same degree of interest! Before turning to them, it was noteworthy that there was significant turnover in the Executive elected at the previous Congress. Tim Pallas had replaced Iain Ross as Assistant Secretary; three Vice Presidents had left, Anna Booth, Michael Easson and Pat Staunton and four of the six state Labor Councils had changed their Secretary. Notably, John Halfpenny from the Victorian Trades Hall Council (and formerly the AMWU) had resigned because of ill-health bringing to a conclusion several decades of activism. He had through the 1970s and 1980s been one of the most prominent and forceful union speakers inside and outside of Congress. Another key resignation was that of Peter Robson, from the Community and Public Sector Union. There was therefore a substantial changing of the guard in between the Congresses.

As has been the case since 1983, union leaders had evidently reached agreement on the seats to be determined at Congress. No casting of votes was required. The six Vice Presidents elected were Wendy Caird, George Campbell, Helen Creed, Joseph de Bruyn, Sandra Moait and Greg Sword. The three Affirmative Action posts were taken by Mary Douglas, Lynne Poleson and Lynne Rolley. The full Executive, immediately following the

Congress, is indicated below. It indicates the person holding the primary union group seat. An unusual feature is that at the close of nominations, the Health Services, Australian Workers Union and General groups had still not determined their representative on the Executive. There was of course no representative for the Transport Workers Union.

### ACTU Executive 29 September 1995

President:	M. Ferguson
Secretary:	B. Kelty
Assistant Secretaries:	J. George, B. Mansfield, T. Pallas
3 Female VPs:	W. Caird, H. Creed, S. Moait
3 Female AA.:	M. Douglas, L. Poleson, L. Rolley
State and Provincial Labor Council:	J. Pyner (ACT), P. Sams (NSW), L. Hubbard (Vic), J. Bacon (Tas), J. Thompson (Qld), J. Lesses (SA) and T. Cooke (WA).

### Union Group Seats

ASU:	S. Gibbs	CPSU:	D. Bunn
CFMEU:	S. Sharkey	PTU:	R. Jowett
CEPU:	P. Tighe	TWU:	*
NUW:	G. Sword <sup>+</sup>	SDA:	J. de Bruyn <sup>+</sup>
Education:	S. Burrow	AWU:	*
FSU:	T. Beck	AMIEU:	T. Hannan
ANF:	J. Uren	Police/Emergency:	T. Collins
HSU:	*	MEAA:	A. Britton
LHMWU:	J. Lawrence	Professional/Managerial:	J. Vines
AMWU:	G. Campbell <sup>+</sup>	General:	*
MUA:	T. Papaconstantinos		

\* = to be determined

<sup>+</sup> = also a Vice President

Source: ACTU Returning Officers' Report, 28 September 1995. See Appendix for full Union Group titles.

It will be interesting to monitor the work and functioning of the new Executive. It will shortly have a new President, a new Assistant Secretary and will involve several state Labor Council leaders who are relatively fresh in these roles. The Executive will also be considerably larger, as noted earlier. On the other hand, there remain a number of familiar and experienced older hands. Bill Kelty and Bill Mansfield are ACTU Officers of longstanding and several holding Vice Presidential and Union Group seats have sat on the Executive for several terms. President-elect Jennie George first won a seat on the Executive in 1983.

## Final Thoughts

It proved an unusual Congress. It differed from previous Congresses in some important respects. It was much shorter. The recruitment and retention of members were singled out as the main issues for delegates' attention. There was however little policy deliberation on these or other matters. Assembled delegates were required to endorse Executive decisions and while the formal opportunity was there for delegates to speak up, few did so.

The Congress achieved a number of ends. It demonstrated a high degree of unity. The Transport Workers Union aside, there were no stories for the media of internal fights. Solidarity was demonstrated with the federal government. The Prime Minister and Minister for Industrial Relations were warmly welcomed and given a platform to sell their wares and attack the Opposition. The Congress provided for a smooth transition to a new President, at the same time gaining extraordinarily favourable publicity for its endorsement of Jennie George. And the Congress put the spotlight on union action to improve recruitment and retention.

Speaking at the end of the Congress Bill Kelty declared himself satisfied with the Congress. He liked the return to a more traditional union venue. Unions, he said, were 'always being written off, written down ... (but) we're coming back'. The fight lay ahead, to defend public health, education and utilities such as Telecom and to bargain collectively at the workplace for improved wages, conditions and rights. It was a compelling and rallying speech, placing the work of the Congress in a wider perspective. It was made, however, in the final hour of Congress and perhaps half the delegates had already left.

The final business of Congress saw Kelty pay tribute to Martin Ferguson as the soon-to-retire President. He noted their long association and regard for his strength in tough negotiations and relentless pursuit of an improved social wage. He acknowledged that they had had differences but 'only one or two'. Delegates rose to deliver a further standing ovation. A clearly moved Martin Ferguson was entitled to draw comfort from the warm response. He had proved an able President, taking up the post in early 1990. The working relationship with Kelty had at times proved tense with a major fall-out when Kelty supported Keating and Ferguson, Hawke in the tussle for the post of Prime Minister in 1991. It must also have been a trying final Congress with his impending departure overshadowed by his successor's anticipated arrival.

## Notes

1. The Finance Report indicated that including the Transport Workers Union, 56 unions were affiliated to the ACTU, covering 2.3 million members.
2. Southland is an occasional journal supported by the NSW Labor Council. See also Evatt Foundation, *Evatt Papers* Vol. 3, No. 1, for discussion of *Unions 2001* and the Foundation's *Labour Network* bulletin for an edited text of Bill Kelty's speech at its launch.
3. The previous formula for representation on the Council was one representative for each 80,000 members for each Union Group, ACTU *Rules* 1993, S.12.1.VIII.
4. The existing formula was, 'One delegate from the first thousand members or part thereof and one delegate from each subsequent two thousand and five hundred members or part thereof', ACTU *Rules* 1993, S.5.2.
5. The New South Wales Minister for Industrial Relations, Jeff Shaw, was also invited to address delegates. He spoke briefly and reassuringly of his intentions to introduce reform in that state.
6. Awards were presented in person to Ann Forward, Bill Landeryou, Jim Maher, George Slater and Edgar Williams. Others to receive the award later were: Tas Bull, Laurie Carmichael, Cliff Dolan, Charlie Fitzgibbon, Pat Geraghty, Ray Gietzelt, Bob Gradwell, John Halfpenny, Bob Hawke, John Maynes, Tom McDonald, Phil Reilly, Dick Scott and Laurie Short. Bill Richardson's name was also listed. Much of the preparation for Congress in recent years has been left to him; the 1995 Congress was his last. His has been an important albeit behind-the-scenes role.
7. Jennie George was previously the first woman elected to the ACTU Executive (1983), the first woman Vice President (1987) and, as Assistant Secretary, the first woman full-time ACTU officer (1991). A remarkable trail-blazing record.
8. Jennie George's endorsement captured the attention of the electronic and print media. It was generally 'page one' and the subject of several editorials: *Age*, 29 September 1995, p.13; *Australian*, 29 September 1995, p.8 and *Herald Sun*, 28 September 1995, p.12.

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## Appendix

Anticipated Union Representation on ACTU Council/Congress  
Following Endorsement of Proposed Rules' changes at the 1995 Congress

Group	Union	Total	Council Reps (25,000 or Part)	Congress Reps
1	Australian Services Union (163,345)	163,345	7 (2) <sup>1</sup>	132
2	Construction, Forestry & Mining Employees Union (120,000) Victorian State Building Trade Union (6,550) Australian Collieries Staff Association (4,848)	131,398	6 (2) 1 (0) 1 (0)	96 6 4
3	Communications, Electrical & Plumbing Union (161,720)	161,720	7 (2)	130
4	<u>National Federation of Workers</u> National Union of Workers (100,600) Textile, Clothing & Footwear Union of Australia (38,044)	138,644	5 (2) 2 (1)	82 32
5	<u>Education Group</u> National Tertiary Education Union (22,030) Australian Education Union (152,606) Independent Education Union (36,522) Independent Schools Staff Association (769)	211,927	1 (0) 7 (2) 2 (1) 1 (0)	18 122 30 2
6	Finance Sector Union (115,000)	115,000	5 (2)	92
7	<u>Nurses</u> Australian Nursing Federation (62,289) NSW Nursing Association (38,000)	100,289	3 (1) 2 (1)	50 32
8	Health Services Union of Australia (68,428)	68,428	3 (1)	56
9	Australian Liquor, Hospitality & Miscellaneous Workers Union (173,646) Union of Christmas Island Workers (350)	173,996	7 (2) 1 (0)	140 2
10	Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (204,328)	204,328	9 (3)	164
11	<u>Maritime Federation</u> Australian Institute of Marine & Power Engineers (2,567) Australian Maritime Officers Union (3,685) Maritime Union of Australia (10,165)	16,417	1 (0)	4 4 12
12	Community & Public Sector Union (224,951)	224,951	9 (3)	180
13	Public Transport Union (33,475)	33,475	2 (1)	28
14	Transport Workers Union of Australia (unaffiliated - last Congress figures) (91,429)	91,429	4 (1) <sup>1</sup>	74



Group	Union	Total	Council Reps (25,000 or Part)	Congress Reps
15	Shop, Distributive & Allied Employees Association (213,941)	213,941	9 (3)	172
16	Australian Workers Union (178,438) Federated Brick, Tile & Pottery Union of Australia (1,245)	179,683	8 (3) 1 (0)	144 2
17	Australian Meat Industry Employees Union (40,190)	40,190	2 (1)	34
18	Police & Emergency Services Group Police Federation of Australia & New Zealand (36,924) United Firefighters Union of Australia (10,746)	47,670	2 (1)	30 12
19	Media & Entertainment Group Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance (12,104) Musicians Union of Australia (5,971)	18,075	1 (0)	12 6
20	Professional and Managerial Group Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists & Managers of Australia (16,642) Association of Railway Professional Officers of Australia (1,155) Salaried Pharmacists Association (836)	19,088	1 (0) 1 (0) 1 (0)	14 2 2
21	General Unions Group Australian Airline Flight Engineers (102) Australian Licensed Aircraft Engineers Association (2,567) Australian Salaried Medical Officers Federation (5,000) Breweries & Bottleyard Employees Industry of WA (220) Blind Workers Union (56) Civil Air Operations Officers Association (1,264) Dental Technicians Association of NSW (173) Disabled Workers Union of WA (50) Flight Attendants Association of Australia (7,550) Funeral & Allied Industries Union of NSW (664) Federated Gas Employees Industrial Union (3,502) Club Managers Association (1,100) Victorian Affiliated Teachers Federation (1,223) Woolclassers Association of Australia (1,033) WA Dental Technicians Employees Union (122) WA Prison Officers Union (1,150)	26,612	1 (0) 1 (0) 1 (0) 1 (0) 1 (0) 1 (0) 1 (0) 1 (0) 1 (0) 1 (0) 1 (0) 1 (0) 1 (0) 1 (0) 1 (0) 1 (0) 1 (0) 1 (0) 1 (0) 1 (0)	2 4 4 2 2 2 2 8 2 4 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2

<sup>1</sup> Women's representation in brackets.  
Source: ACTU 1995 Congress Papers