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The New South Wales Teachers' Federation, c.1957-1975

John Michael O'Brien
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THE NEW SOUTH WALES
TEACHERS' FEDERATION
c. 1957 - 1975.

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of
the requirements of the award of
the degree of

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from

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by

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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
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VOLUME 1

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

John M. O'Brien

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.C.E.R.	Australian Council for Educational Research.
A.C.S.P.A.	Australian Council of Salaried and Professional Associations.
A.C.S.S.O.	Australian Council of State Schools Organisations.
A.C.T.U.	Australian Council of Trade Unions.
A.I.C.D.	Association for International Cooperation and Disarmament.
A.N.Z.A.A.S.	Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science.
A.L.P.	Australian Labor Party.
A.T.F.	Australian Teachers' Federation.
C.P.A.	Communist Party of Australia.
C.P.D.	Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates.
D.L.P.	Democratic Labor Party.
D.T.	Daily Telegraph.
N.S.W.P.D.	New South Wales Parliamentary Debates.
N.S.W.T.F.	New South Wales Teachers' Federation
O.E.C.D.	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.
P.T.E.C.	Parent Teacher Education Council.
S.M.H.	Sydney Morning Herald.
S.T.A.	Secondary Teachers' Association.
U.N.E.S.C.O.	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

A B S T R A C T

This work analyses the history of the New South Wales Teachers' Federation from 1957 to 1975. The Federation is one of the largest unions in New South Wales and as an affiliate of the Australian Teachers' Federation, is part of one of the largest industrial organisations of employees in Australia. The period under review was a time of significant economic, political and social change, both in Australia and internationally. This thesis examines the Federation's response to those changes and its attempts to influence the direction of those changes. It seeks to identify the changes within the union and the degree of continuity in the union's experience during the whole of the period under discussion. Previous work on the Federation has not dealt with this particular period of its history in any comprehensive way.

The thesis is informed by, and in part endeavours to make a contribution to, the debates about the role teachers and their organisations play in a capitalist society. It examines the activity of the Federation as an organisation of employees of the State. It discusses the constraints operating upon teachers as State employees. It traces the sometimes contradictory influence of the ideology of professionalism, in its various forms, upon the attitudes and behaviour of teacher unionists. It considers the difficulties which can arise from teachers' contradictory position as both wage earners and professionals. The thesis endeavours to make some contribution to the task of identifying the class position, class location and the degree of class consciousness of teachers as unionists.

The primary material on which this thesis is based is taken, for the most part, from the extensive archives and publications of the Federation itself. The author has had unrestricted access to this material. It has been supplemented by material of an official nature such as government education reports and by contemporary newspapers that have devoted a considerable amount of space to the activities of teachers' unions and to education generally. Interviews with persons involved in the union during the period under review, brought differing perspectives to the information and differing insights from those gleaned from the written sources. For the most part, however, the argument of the thesis is derived from the written sources.

The work examines the policies, and particularly the methods, adopted by the Federation in the period under review. It traces the process of transformation from a concept of 'united action' which did not include resort to strike action, and which was largely determined by the central decision-making bodies of the union, to action initiated by local units and vanguard elements of the union and which often involved strike action. The movement towards the use of strike action as an industrial tactic is examined, together with the implications of the use of that tactic for the internal operations and politics of the union. It also considers the consequences of the use of strike action for the union's relationship with various authorities of the State. Indeed the 1968 strike, the first in Federation history, is the pivotal point both of the narrative and the argument of the thesis.

Much of the thesis is developed chronologically. There are, however, important exceptions to this approach. Two chapters discuss the Federation's federal funding campaigns. Another two chapters deal with the background to the period under discussion and the wider social, political and economic context in which the Federation operated. There is also a chapter which discusses changes in the structure and operation of the union in the 1960s.

Chapter one deals with the context in which the union operated in the 1940s and early 1950s, as well as giving some background to the internal structure and politics of the organisation in this period. The second chapter examines the Federation's federal funding campaign, particularly the attempt to build a broadly-based united front by the mobilisation of arguments about the role of education in economic, scientific and technological development.

Chapter three discusses the Federation's campaign for the reform of secondary education. The next chapter analyses the role that the union's Education Commission policy played in providing a central focus for the activities of the Federation in the first half of the 1960s.

Chapter five analyses the various constituent elements within the union and the changes that took place within the organisation during the 1960s. The objective of this chapter is to explain what constituted, both 'unity' and acceptable 'action' within the traditional Federation concept of 'united action'.

This is followed by a chapter which sets out the broader economic, social and political framework in which the union operated in the late 1960s and in the first half of the 1970s. Chapter seven is the second chapter on the federal funding issue, covering the period 1967 to 1975.

Chapter eight examines the changes within the teaching service and within the union itself which contributed to the resort to strike action in 1968. The next two chapters deal with the consequences of that action for the union's relationship with the State authorities. They also examine the related struggle within the union between those who desired to maintain the maximum degree of central control and those elements that demanded greater autonomy from the centre in the ordering of the campaign priorities of the union.

The last chapter covers the period of the new leadership which emerged victorious from the internecine warfare of the late 1960s and early 1970s. It analyses whether this period constituted a 'new era' in Federation history fundamentally different from the period preceding it.

The work concludes that important changes took place within the union which, in turn, had a significant effect on the union's relationships with the State. It also suggests, however, that these changes had not, in any fundamental way, swept away the constraints placed upon teachers as employees of the State. It also concludes that the ideology of professionalism, although

weakened and redefined in the interests of the union rather than the employer, still prevented teachers from identifying themselves as an integral part of the working class in its continuing struggle with Capital and the State. In the period 1957 to 1975 there had been much change, but nevertheless significant continuity, in the history of the New South Wales Teachers' Federation.