



**THE ARCHIVE PROJECT**  
96 MINUTES, AUSTRALIA, 2006

**CHAPTER 1**

**DAYS  
OF  
HOPE**





## KEITH GOW (1921-1987)

Keith's career began as a theatre director, designer and actor for the Newcastle Workers' Theatre and later the New Theatre in Sydney. One of his earliest film projects was as a cinematographer with Bob Mathews, David Muir and others on the Realists' *They Chose Peace* (1952). Keith Gow, Jock Levy and Norma Disher established a theatre on the Sydney docks called The Maritime Industries Theatre. They made a 16mm trailer to advertise the MIT first production Ewan MacColl's *The Travelers* (1953). The success of the trailer led to the formation of the Waterside Workers Federation Film Unit (1953-8). The WWF Film Unit produced 11 films for a number of trade unions including the classic documentaries *The Hungry Miles* (1954) and *Hewers of Coal* (1957).

In 1959 Keith joined the Commonwealth Film Unit (later to become Film Australia) working as senior cameraman, director and producer. He co-wrote *The Cars that ate Paris* (1974) with Peter Weir and Piers Davies. He made about eighteen films at Film Australia; including as director *Australian geography* (1970), *Our Asian neighbors* (1975), *And their ghosts may be heard* (1975), *History of Australian cinema 1930 - 1940* (1979), TV Law series (1980), *Women of Utopia* (1983) and *The Human face of Russia* (1984), and as cinematographer *The Builder* (1959), *From the tropics to the snow* (1962), *Change at Groote* (1968), *The Line* (1970) and *Big Island* (1970).

*Picture: Keith Gow & Jock Levy with the wind up bolex, on the set of Film-Work, Glebe (1979).*



Fade up from black. A projected 16mm image is occupying a portion of the frame. We see the texture of film leader superimposed on the image of Keith Gow, holding a couple of film cans under his arm, walking toward camera as it tracks back. In voice over we hear:

### KEITH GOW (V/O)

*Any film is propaganda of one sort or another.  
It always contains a point of view, a message of  
some sort. It can't be otherwise.*

The sound of a film editing machine button accompanies a freeze of the tracking shot. Screen design elements evoke a torn page.

### NARRATOR

*One place to start piecing together a story of  
the Melbourne Realist Film Unit is here, with  
filmmaker Keith Gow.*

The snap of a clapperboard marking a sync point is removed from the frame, revealing three people at an editing bench. These are the members of the Waterside Workers Federation Film Unit (1953-59), Norma Disher, Keith Gow and Jock Levy. This, and the first scene are excerpts from *Film-Work* (1981). We see the animated title: *Film-Work* resolve itself from fragments evoking single 16mm film frames.

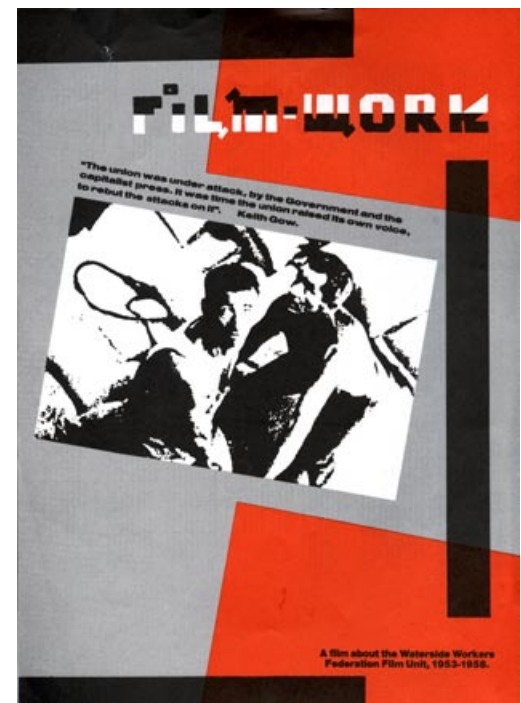
### NARRATOR

*I interviewed Keith in the 1970s for Film-  
Work, a documentary I made on the Waterside  
Workers Federation Film Unit. They made  
some wonderful classic films with Australian  
Trade Unions during the 1950s.*

From *Film-Work* see Keith at the editing bench. We see workers 'taking positive action'. In reverse angle we see the editing bench screen with the projected image of young, determined waterside workers voting.



Keith Gow, *Film-Work* (1979)



*Film-Work* poster (Carol P.T., 1981)



May Day, Melbourne 1946. Bob Mathews

Returning to the tracking shot from Film-Work with Keith in the corridor at Film Australia, we see overlay images as young hands thread a 16mm camera, a photograph of Keith filming with a Bolex at a demonstration in Sydney in the early 1950s:

#### KEITH GOW (V/0)

*The first time I was ever able to actually use the tools of film making myself was in the early fifties when Bob Mathews of the Realist Film organization in Melbourne asked me to do some photography on a film about the Peace Movement.*

Cut to a production still showing Margot Nash, cinematographer and John Whitteron, sound recordist aboard Keith Gow's motorcycle sidecar shooting Film-Work, at the entrance to Film Australia's Lindfield studios, Sydney, 1979:

#### NARRATOR

When Keith says –

#### KEITH GOW (V/0)

*... the Realist Film Organization in Melbourne...*

Screen design collage flips from the Film-Work production still to documents and stills illustrating an introduction to the Melbourne Realist film movement:

#### NARRATOR

*He signals a story that Film-Work didn't tell. The story of the Realist Film Organization is a story of a small group of dedicated people. They were pioneers in giving Australian audiences access to the images and ideas of world cinema, beyond British and American commercial distribution.*

*They started making films around 1945. Some are lost, others exist only in fragments.*



*Jock Levy directs a rehearsal of A Sky Without Birds, New Theatre Sydney, 1952 (from They Chose Peace)*

*In Sydney Jock Levy had 'creative differences' with the New Theatre around Oriel Gray's play, A Sky without Birds, the play he directed for the New Theatre to coincide with the Carnival for Peace and Friendship 1952.*

### JOCK LEVY (0A)

Jock is another of the generation who became committed to the left movement through his involvement with community theatre in the 1930s. In his case the formative experience was the Jewish Youth Theatre in Sydney. As a worker of the Sydney wharf since the 1940s, Jock initiated the Maritime Industries Theatre in 1953 with Keith Gow and Norma Disher and the Sydney branch of the Waterside Workers Federation (now MUA) and following this, the Waterside Workers Federation Film Unit. As an actor Jock Levy's performance in the WWF Film Unit film comedy *Four's a Crowd*, 1955, and later with the Commonwealth Film Unit productions (e.g. *Where Dead Men Lie*, 1971) and the films of Australian maverick producers and directors such as Cecil Holmes (e.g. *Three in One*, 1956) is highly regarded. From the mid 1960s he earned his living driving taxis. In 2010 Jock was awarded an Order of Australia medal for his contribution to Australian cultural work.

See Film-Work, John Hughes, 1981 on the Waterside Workers Federation Film Unit. Lisa Milner, *Fighting Films: a history of the Waterside Workers' Federation Film Unit*, Pluto Press (2003).





## NORMA DISHER

Norma came down to Sydney from Bega before WW2 and took up a job in the music library at radio 2GB. It wasn't long before she became involved with the New Theatre, a creative endeavour she remained committed to for half a century. It was there she met Jock Levy and Keith Gow; together they established the Maritime Industries Theatre on the Sydney waterfront, in collaboration with the arts program of the Waterside Workers Federation. In 1954 they staged Ewen McCall's *The Travellers*. A 16mm film trailer made to advertise the play led to their first documentary WWF Film Unit *Pensions for Veterans*, a film supporting the Union's industrial campaign. Norma worked fulltime for the Miscellaneous Workers Union and nights and weekends unpaid with the New Theatre, and with Jock and Keith on the WWF Film Unit. She came onto the payroll with the Film Unit for their BWIU (Building Workers Industrial Union) film *Bones of Building* (1956). Norma worked with distributor Eddie Allison at Quality Films, and supported the work on the Sydney Realist Film Association. After the Film Unit folded in 1958, Norma returned to the 'Missos' (MWU), first in the NSW office and later with the Federal Branch as a Secretary to Ray Gietzelt. Norma continued her work with the New Theatre, committee work, directing and a variety of community-based organisations.

See 'Interview with Norma Disher', Margot Nash and Margot Oliver, *Lip* 1980: 134-138



## WATERSIDE WORKERS FEDERATION FILM UNIT

The Waterside Workers Federation Film Unit (1953-58) was established on the Sydney docks from the Maritime Industries Theatre (1953) and the trailer that the Unit's members made to advertise their play *The Travellers* (Ewen McColl). The unit's members Norma Disher, Keith Gow and Jock Levy all worked with the New Theatre in Sydney. Between 1953 and 1958 they made eleven films for a variety of Trade Unions, among them Australian documentary classics *THE HUNGRY MILES* (1955), *NOVEMBER VICTORY* (1955) and *HEWERS OF COAL* (1957). The WWF Film Unit's success must partly be attributed to the fact that they were protected by a powerful trade union, while others (Cecil Holmes, Ken Coldicutt) were blacklisted. The WWF had experienced the potential of documentary film in advancing their policies when the Dutch filmmaker Joris Ivens made *Indonesia Calling* with support from the maritime trade unions in 1945-6.

"... W.W.F. FILM UNIT... a recent issue of *Maritime Worker* (reports) the Federal Council of the Waterside Workers' Federation has endorsed the work its [NSW Branch] film unit and has authorised the purchase of additional equipment... The recent Warsaw Youth Festival ... awarded a gold medal to *THE HUNGRY MILES*. The unit, which is now working on a film for the Building Workers' Industrial Union, intends to increase its mobile activities."



Pensions for Veterans, WWF, 1953  
*The Hungry Miles*, WWF, 1955  
*November Victory*, WWF, 1955  
*Bones of Building*, BWIU, 1956  
*WWF Newsreel*, WWF, 1956  
*Banners Held High*, NSW May Day Committee, 1956  
*Hewers of Coal*, Miners Federation, 1957  
*Four's a Crowd*, WWF, 1957  
*The Housing Problem and You*, BWIU, 1957  
*Think Twice*, Boilermakers Union, 1957  
*Not Only the Need*, BWIU, 1958  
 (updated version of *The Housing Problem and You*)

A box set of WWF Film Unit films is available from the MUA (Maritime Union of Australia). See also: *Film-Work*, John Hughes, 1981; Lisa Milner, *Fighting Films: A history of the Waterside Workers Federation Film Unit*, 2003, Pluto Press; *Waterside Workers Federation Collection E211/163*, Noel Butlin Archives, ANU, Canberra

ASIO (Australian Security Intelligence Organization) surveillance photographs show Keith Gow shooting a scene for the Realist film *They Chose Peace*. The photograph shows a group of twenty or thirty people greeting passengers from a ship on a Sydney wharf.

*Their contribution to film culture didn't meet with favor from governments of their time.*

*One of the Melbourne Realists, Bob Mathews, handed the camera to Keith Gow in 1952.*

A slow zoom in to the ASIO photograph features Bob Mathews, dominant in the shot, holding a reflector board, watching as delegates to the 1952 Sydney Youth Carnival for Peace and Friendship prepare to approach the gangplank.

Cut to a sequence from *Film-Work*: Keith is being interviewed in his Film Australia office. He holds a spring wind bolex. As the dialogue proceeds Keith 'buttons-on'.

### KEITH GOW (V/O)

*The advice that was given to me by Bob Mathews was 'get it running, quickly' because things happen fast and by the time you fiddle around with it, it might be all over. So in fact that was very good advice and that's what I've always remembered. You know you switch it on - you're shooting.*

Sequence from *Film-Work* continues as we cut to the p.o.v. of Keith's Bolex, swinging to the film crew shooting the interview. The image freezes on the filmmaker narrator John Hughes.

### NARRATOR

*Another place to start is with the trims I've been carrying around for years. These two battered attaché cases have taken over 20 years to unpack.*

Screen design collage with black and white stills of the "two battered attaché cases," both open and closed, showing the condition of the film that was handed-on in the early 1980s:



*Film-Work, cinematographer Margot Nash. Cut to Keith Gow in his Film Australia office.*





Picture: Keith Gow (behind bolex) & Bob Mathews (gesturing) ASIO surveillance photograph 1952.





*They were handed to me in the early 1980s as I searched for the missing archives of the Realist film movement. These trims and out-takes and files and documents have traveled with me from house to house, and film to film.*

**Title: The Archive Project**

*It's about time they came out of the closet.*

**Super:**

"The wise and wicked art of re-editing the work of others"

Sergei Eisenstein, 1929

A montage of fragmentary, incoherent images (derived in fact from these "battered attaché cases"):

*Out of the blue, the archives of Bob Mathews, one of the original founders of the Realist Film Unit had surfaced.*

Still of Bob Mathews, stills, Sue Mathews, unlocking the cellar under her Northcote house:

*Bob's daughter Sue knew I was working on the Realist story. She called me to say that she had found Bob's home movies in the cellar.*

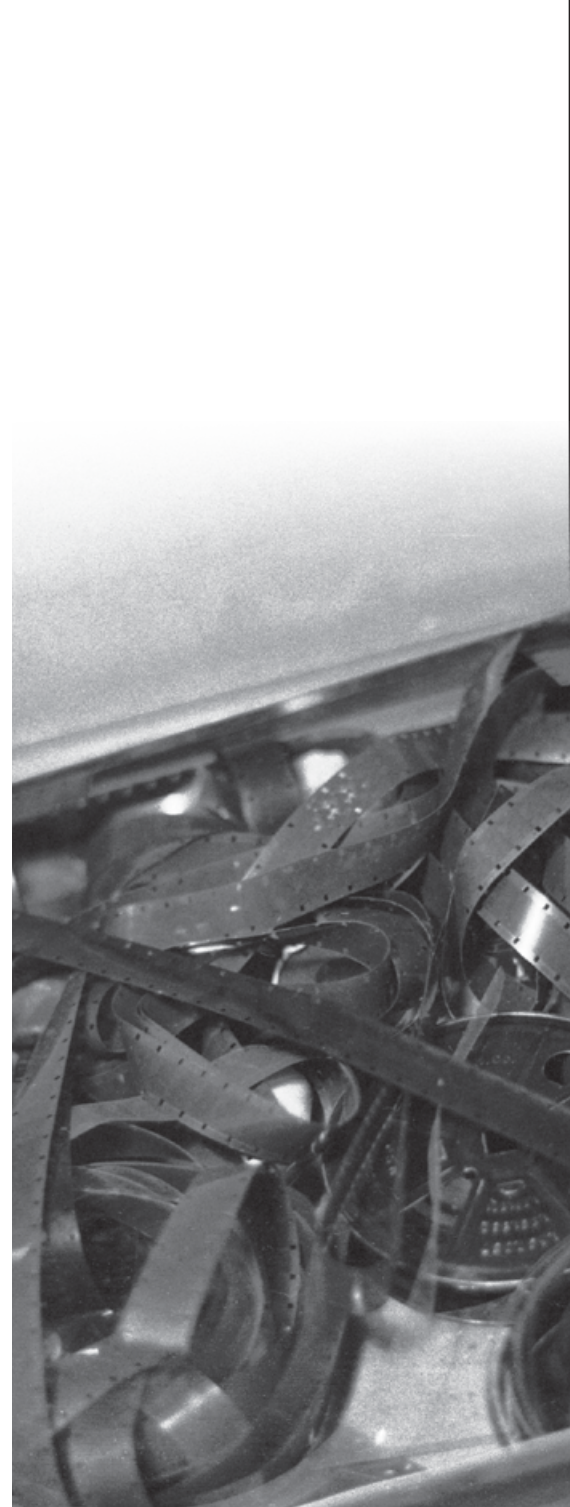
**SUE (V/O)**

*He didn't throw away anything, so we've got the -you know - splicing block and all sorts of things that probably have been no use to anyone for fifty years. But we've still got them.*

From Bob Mathews home movie footage we see the young Rivka Mathews, Bob Mathews and Sue as a baby in a garden setting - classic home movie, new baby.

*All of this stuff was in a room under Bob and Rivka's house at Donvale and when we packed up our parents' home a couple of months ago we brought it all over to the cellar under my house.*

Color and black and white home movie footage of the 1950s shows Bob and Rivka playing up for the camera, shadows of Rivka's dancing figure against the trunk of a tree, Bob throwing a picnic





Bob Mathews 1938

rug over the camera's lens, Bob nursing a baby (Susan), feeding her from a bottle.

*He is living in a nursing home, he has dementia, which is fairly advanced and unfortunately he can no longer tell us about any of this material.*

Cut back to Sue Mathews speaking to camera:

*He doesn't have any - if he has memories of it, he's not able to explain to us.*

Sue carries boxes from the cellar. We see the boxes in the back of Sue's car. We see stills of Bob as a young man, and an older one.

### NARRATOR

*Bob's memory was gone but maybe some of the missing films might be among these cans.*

From Bob's home movie footage we see the shadows of Rivka and Bob, Rivka waves.

Cut to Rita Parkinson, Film Archivist at the National Film and Sound Archive (Canberra) inspecting 16mm film.

*It's quite faded. It's got a really strong vinegar smell. So even though it's smelly and wrinkly and a bit faded in parts, it's still got some really beautiful images on it.*

*And they made good cement back then 'cause the splices are holding together pretty well. We're going to have to treat it kindly, be very gentle with it, look at all the bits of information that's in there, because all these little clues help us to discern what - what's on the film. Sometimes we can be left in the dark.*

Rita Parkinson carefully unwraps paper from a tightly rolled trim. She reads the label:

*"Aussies with flags"*



Rita Parkinson examines Bob Mathews' footage at National Film and Sound Archive in Canberra. "Aussies with flags."



Highly saturated Kodachrome colour footage shows Melbourne University Labor Club and New Theatre marchers with banners, Melbourne, May Day 1946. Collage with Bob Mathews publicity portrait, New Theatre:

### NARRATOR

*There is only one interview with Bob Mathews, recorded in the early 1990's on my high-8 video camera by film historian Deane Williams.*

Bob Mathews interview, (Deane Williams, 1993)

### BOB Mathews

*I was one of the production committee of the New Theatre and I was producing plays over - for quite a few years and had begun to think that this - you know this is not the way to go - we should be learning to make films.*

Screen design incorporates countdown leader:

*I wasn't satisfied with the theatre production, you know I wanted to get closer to reality.*

From Bob Mathews home movies we see Bob dressed in a suit, lying on his back, holding his arms out with hands framing up a 'shot':

### NARRATOR

*In these cans were reels of 16mm home movies, documentation of demonstrations and strikes in Melbourne in the 40s and 50s. Exquisite, evocative trims, off cuts and out takes, tiny fragments of imagery, the previous generation's memories flashing back into the present moment.*

In the National Film and Sound Archive's Melbourne office Sue Mathews winds through her fathers films on a Steenbeck editing bench:



*"We should be learning to make films..."*



*I wanted to get closer to reality",  
Bob Mathews*

## BOB MATHEWS 1911 – 2005

Robert (Bob) Mathews joined the New Theatre when it was the 'Workers Theatre' in the early 1930s. Having left school at aged 14, Bob dated his commitment to left wing politics from seeing a family evicted from their home during the depression years. He was a foundation member, actor and director of some of the most successful of the early Workers' Theatre and New Theatre plays, including Clifford Odets *Waiting for Lefty* (1936), *Till the Day I Die* (1937), A. Afinogenev's *Distant Point* (1932) and J. B. Priestley's *They Came to a City* (1946).

The Realist film movement began with screenings at the New Theatre organised by Bob in late 1945. With Ken Coldicutt, Bob was one of the creative principals of the Realist Film Unit and Association, and with his partner Rivkah, was an activist in the peace movement. In 1956, along with many artists and intellectuals around the world, he turned away from the Communist Party at the time of the revelations of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (February) and Russia's suppression of Hungary (October). Bob Mathews went on to be a successful businessman in the fashion industry, building the Witchery chain. He remained a supporter of the Melbourne Film Festival all his life. Records are held by the National Archives of Australia, National Film and Sound Archives, and the Performing Arts Museum at the Victorian Arts Centre (New Theatre Collection).

### NARRATOR

*Among Sue's treasures were lost items from the Realist catalogue.*

On the Steenbeck screen we see delegates on a tour in China, 1951:

### SUE (O/S)

*That's my mum there.*

### NARRATOR

*There was Bob's film, A Glimpse of New China.*

Shots from *A Glimpse of New China*, and *May Day 1946*, collage from New Theatre footage, 1946 and Margaret Walker Dance Group:

### NARRATOR

*And there was also footage of May Day 1946. The filmmakers were part of a much broader movement of cultural activism; theatre, painting, literature, music and dance.*

*They responded to the desperation of the Depression and the rise of Fascism in Europe. They wanted to help build a people's movement for peace and for a more humane society.*

*The Russian Revolution looked like a beacon to the future. Their cultural activism was inspired by their political dedication.*

*For them, "realism" was an antidote to escapist fantasy. Making films was one part of their project. They also wanted Australian audiences to be able to see films that were otherwise not available, classic European and Russian cinema, avant-garde American film, British and Canadian documentary, Labor movement films, films with a purpose, art house movies.*





### BOB Mathews (V/0)

*Well the absence of...*

Bob Mathews interview:

#### BOB Mathews

*... anything with real meaning was the thing, rather than what was coming out of Hollywood, although I resented Hollywood because of its cramping of the development of Australian cinema.*

Cut to: slow zoom in – the interior of a small cinema (Sydney Filmmakers Co-op, ex Film-Work outs), countdown leader projected on the screen:

#### BOB Mathews

*The screening was the main reason for existence.*

*Bob Mathews filming through the fence at a picket circa 1947*









## CHAPTER 2 **WORKERS' ART**

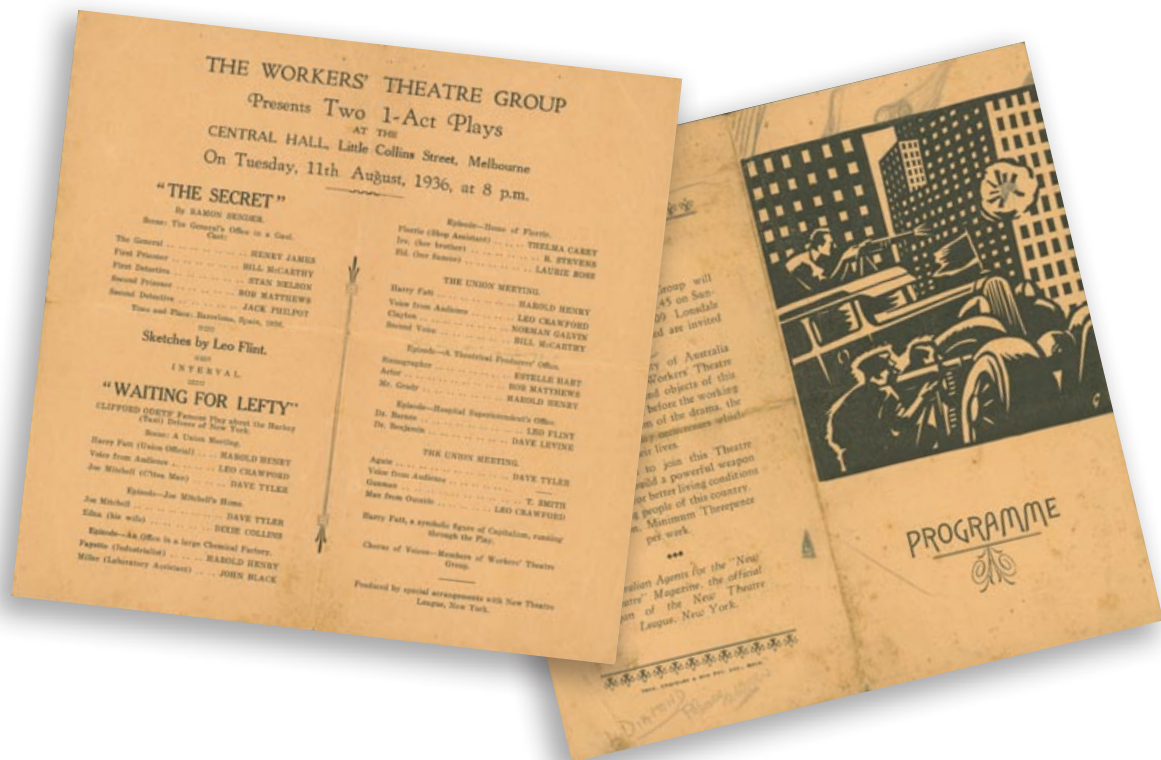




See: Amirah Inglis *Australians in the Spanish Civil War*, Allen & Unwin, 1987. Deane Williams, 'Screening Coldicutt: introduction' on-line journal 'Screening the past' December 1997.



Around the world Spanish Relief Committees were formed in 1936 to support the Spanish Republican government's resistance to a military coup under General Franco, supported by Italian fascist and German Nazi forces. Ken Coldicutt left his work as film organiser with the Movement Against War and Fascism and joined the Australian branch of the Spanish Relief Committee. He imported sound and silent films produced in Spain and London and organised and delivered screenings around the country, from Melbourne, Victoria to Mossman in Queensland, South Australia and as far south as Hobart. In May and June 1938, Ken organized screenings in 25 Queensland towns; in Innisfail alone 900 people attended. Queensland was the most successful location because of the numbers of Italian, Spanish and Yugoslav cane cutters who donated generously to the Committee's work. In Melbourne's Assembly Hall 4000 people saw *They Shall Not Pass* (Spain, 1936) over seven nights in November 1937. During eight months of screenings, 25,000 people across Australia saw these films. This was the first time in Australia that films had been used as an organising tool in this way. Films screened included *News from Spain* (1937), *Attlee in Spain* (1937) *Modern orphans of the storm* (1937) *Behind Spanish Lines* (1938), *Help Spain*, *The Health of Spain*, *Defence of Madrid* (Ivor Montagu and the Progressive Film Unit, UK, 1936) & *They Shall Not Pass*.



## BOB Mathews

*Then Ken Coldicutt turned up and discussed all the other possibilities that Ken knew about that we didn't.*

Overlay montage: stills of Ken Coldicutt with images from his collection of posters and documents from when Ken was 'Films Officer' for the Victorian Branch of the Spanish Relief Committee:

*Then we learned that Ken had carted a projector around all over Australia, I understand, on his own; you know what that means, with a transformer and a 16mm projector. He began doing this I think during the Spanish Civil War.*

Ken Coldicutt's black and white home movie footage. Collage; Spanish Relief Committee files, the 'damaged' portrait from Ken's files, Proletariat:



Ken Coldicutt, editor Proletariat (Labour Club, Melbourne University)



## NARRATOR

After his death in 1993 Ken's family had kept some 16mm home movies that he'd shot during the late 1940s and early 1950s and his files included documents and letters from the period of the Spanish Civil War. A lot of the old letters were very badly damaged. There remained traces of his correspondence with the International Spanish Relief Committee and British distributors of films on Spain.

As a student at Melbourne University in the early 30s, Ken Coldicutt edited the Labor Club's journal, 'Proletariat', where he wrote about the power of the moving image. He joined the Communist Party on his 20th birthday.

Film Poster 'They Shall Not Pass' (1936) advertising a screening at Melbourne's Assembly Hall, November 19, 1937

When the Spanish Civil War began, he joined the Spanish Relief Committee and traveled the length and breadth of the country. He showed films supporting the Republican government that was desperately defending itself against a military coup of Spanish Fascists under Franco.

Stills; portraits Bob Mathews, Ken Coldicutt

Bob Mathews joined the Workers Theatre through the Unemployed Workers' Union in Brunswick in the early 1930s. He acted, produced and directed anti-Fascist plays from the 1930s onwards. Ken spent the war years in the air force.

Superimposed scrolling graphic: Ken Coldicutt, interview, Wendy Lowenstein 1992, Oral History Collection, National Library of Australia.



### KEN (V/O)

*I did what I'd always meant to do as soon as the war was over, that is to start this job of setting up a film organization. And at New Theatre I contacted first Bob Mathews and later Gerry Harant.*

*I had 300 pounds deferred pay and Bob Mathews decided to put in an equal amount; so we both put in 300 pounds to establish the Realist Film Unit, which was in 1945.*

Realist Film Unit document from Ken's papers: Registration of a Business Name: 'Realist Film Unit'

*The object of our screenings was not only to establish our name and fame, but also to accumulate funds for film making because the first objective of the Realist Film Unit was to produce films.*

Newspaper cutting Guardian, Melbourne, March 1946 'Realist Film Unit Show'. Using the attaché cases trims, scenes from Margaret Walker Dance Group and New Theatre 1946, a visual précis illustrates these early film projects of Bob Mathews and Ken Coldicutt. Their coverage evolves from documentation of staged action and more cinematic treatments of the action.

### NARRATOR

*The Realists documented a series of New Theatre productions in 1946. But their very first film is lost. They made a 20-minute color film about the Eureka Youth League Christmas Camp at the end of 1945 that they called 400 Film Stars. A delegation to a youth festival in Eastern Europe gave it away when they found they had no other gift to offer their hosts. The film must*



### NEW THEATRE MELBOURNE, 1946

The New Theatre developed from the Melbourne Workers' Theatre of the 1930s. The New Theatre movement was Australia wide, and international. A history of the Melbourne New Theatre has been written by Angela O'Brien. The Melbourne New Theatre archives are held by the Performing Arts Museum, State Theatre, Melbourne. In late 1945 and 1946 the Realists filmed scenes from their performances.

See: Angela Hillel, *New Theatre, Melbourne 1936 - 1986*, New Theatre, 1986. Angela O'Brien, *The Road Not Taken: Political and Performance Ideologies at Melbourne New Theatre, 1935-1960*, Ph. D, Monash, 1989. Anon: *The New Years: six decades of Sydney's radical New Theatre*, 1992.





White Justice, Australian Aboriginal League with New Theatre

## NEW THEATRE PRODUCTIONS 1946

### White Justice

*A segment of Coming Our Way*

Writers: New Theatre Collective

Written and performed with the collaboration of the Australian Aboriginal League, the dance theatre work is based on the research of Guardian journalist Jim Crawford who broke the story of the 1946 stockman's strike in Western Australia's Pilbara region. This was the first strike by Aboriginal workers.

Dance performance: Eric Onus, Joyce McKinnon, Harold Bux, Edna Brown, Winifred Onus, Con Edwards, George McKinnon (from the Australian Aboriginal League) with Peter Sainthill, Colin Burns, Ian Fairley, Norma Russell, William Dye, William Anderson, Rex Lowe.

### God Bless the Gov'nor

Ted Willis (Unity Theatre, London)

Ted Willis uses the 19th century burlesque form in a satirical take on the British class system

Dir: Hugh Esson | Producers: Bill Juliff and Bill Griffiths

Set Design: 'Vane' Lindesay | Lead actor: Bill Griffiths

### Spanish Village

Lope de Vega (1562-1635)

17th century 'realism': Lope de Vega is credited with being the first dramatist to treat the 'common' people with dignity and strength.

Produced & Directed: Hilda Esson

Dance choreography: Margaret Frey (Walker) | Set Design: Eva Harris  
Costumes: Margaret Dietrich & Herta Schnierer | Sound Gerry Harant

"With its ballet and music, its costumes and stage effects, (Spanish Village) was in many ways our most ambitious effort so far"

Hilda Esson, New Theatre Review, February-March, 1947

be there somewhere in the archives of the World Federation of Democratic Youth or buried in the Film Archives in Prague or Budapest.

The New Theatre was a community based political theatre. It provided one of the few production outlets for Australian plays and it fostered new forms like the Australian Folk Musical. They did political satire, agitprop; they performed at factories and in street meetings.

Among their productions in 1946 was 'God Bless the Guv'nor', a burlesque send-up of 19th century melodrama,

### Tartuffe

Moliere (1622-1673)

Moliere's Tartuffe was banned as Seditious following its first performance in Louis XIV's Paris (1664). His comedies ridiculed the hypocrisy of the clergy and the pretensions of privilege.

Produced & Directed: Hilda Esson | Set & Costume Design: 'Vane' Lindesay  
Lead players: Yvonne Taylor, Bruce Beeby, Jack Phillips & Felix Farquharson.

"It is precisely because Moliere's comedies reflect an acute observation of the society of his own time that his work has more reality for us today than that of his many illustrious contemporaries."

Aileen Palmer, New Theatre Review, July 1946

### They Came to a City

JB Priestley (1894-1984)

In Priestley's play, nine characters find themselves outside the gates of a utopian city. Faced with the choice of entering this new world or remaining in the old one, two people decide to stay, in order to fight for a better world for all.

Producer and Director: Robert 'Bob' Mathews

Stage design: 'Vane' Lindesay | Lighting: Gerry Harant

Cast: Marjorie Forbes, Dora Norwood, William Phillips, Joyce Addison, Les Davey, Norma Ferris, Ken Otway, Shirey Robertson, Colin Burns

### Love on the Dole

Writers: Ronald Gow & Walter Greenwood

Producer: Shirley Robinson, Dora Norwood | Set Design: 'Vane' Lindesay

Cast: Sheila Glass, Charlotte Hinton, Bill Griffiths, Alf Jones, Charles McCormack, Sally Darnley, Susan Saffir, Nancy Fryberg, Charles Collins, William Phillips, Jean McLeod, June Miller, Les Miller

"The fearful depression of the thirties has been forgotten... well almost, except by those who still bear its scars and those who are most conscious of the failings of our economic system"

New Theatre leaflet, October 1946

Moliere's 'Tartuffe', a 17th century French farce that ridiculed the hypocrisy of the nobility and the bigotry of the clergy. 'Spanish Village', with a large cast of players and dancers, is a tale of the struggle of the villagers against their overlords, performed here for the first time in Australia.

New Theatre produced 'White Justice' a dance musical about the first Aboriginal stockmen's strike in Western Australia of that same year. In 1946 hundreds of Aboriginal pastoral workers walked off stations in the Pilbara region protesting ill treatment and virtual slave conditions. It was made in collaboration with the Australian Aboriginal League.

They performed J B Priestley's 'They Came to a City'. In this play nine people of different backgrounds, find themselves mysteriously outside the gates of an idealized city. The characters have to choose this ideal world or their familiar lives. The militant trade unionist carries the editorial; he says he must stay in the old world, so as to fight for a new one available to all.

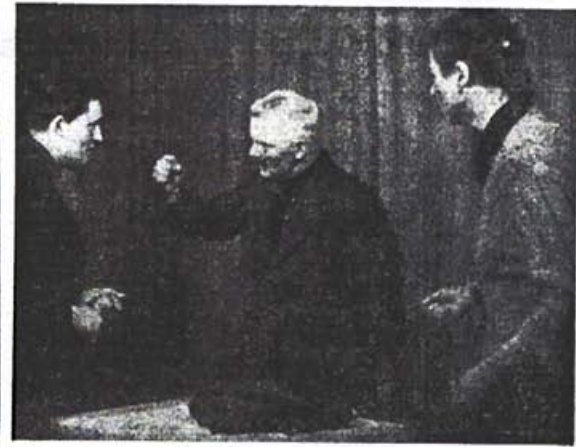
The early post-war years in Australia were days of hope. A Labor government under Chifley promised a new deal in post-war development. Activists organized community campaigns to build child-care centers and libraries.

Trade Unions began campaigns to catch up on wages sacrificed during the war. Equality, decent housing, progress and peace seemed to be achievable. Among the Left there was a shared vision of a just future.

For Bob Mathews and Ken Coldicutt screening films and making films held enormous promise for social change.

An abridged version of A Place to Live, this edited version maintains the structure of the original, the passage of its argument, its inter-titles and its montage introduced with Ken Coldicutt's recollections. (Music: Carl Vine 'Inner World')

## New Theatre ★ Play Opens ★



A scene from New Theatre's new play 'Love On The Dole,' which opened last Saturday.

### Review

The play deals with the effects of the last depression on a typical small pocket of one of England's industrial areas. Its production is well up to the N.T. standard.

Alf Jones, in his first major part, as young Tommy Hardcastle gives an outstanding performance among the leading characters, but William Phillips in the small part of the local bookmaker's stooge, gives a brilliant character performance.

Chief weakness of the production is its handling of romantic scenes and situations, of which there are more than the usual. The play will run at New Theatre, Flinders Street, until October 30. —B.D.

### Support For Rail Workers' Fight

BENDIGO.—A resolution carried at the last meeting of the Bendigo Trades Hall Council endorsed the struggle now being waged by railworkers, and called on all workers to give financial and moral support to the ARU in any further action it might take to secure implementation of its nine-point program.

A similar resolution has been carried by the Bendigo sub-branch of the Fuel and Fodder Union.

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## KEN COLDICUTT (V/O)

*We very soon got stuck into making a film about Melbourne's housing shortage which was eventually released as a half hour film, A Place to Live.*

*We'd been through a period of depression with hardly any house building and we'd been through a period of war, altogether, a period of something like 15 years with no working class housing really worth mentioning. So there was a tremendous backlog.*

*We dealt with the housing shortage, we did a lot of exploration of the inner areas of Fitzroy, Collingwood and South Melbourne and the response of the people was was surprising to me. The fact that they weren't a bit afraid to offer themselves and their housing as examples of what was wrong with housing for the workers.*

*Quite a lot of them are quite happy to invite us into their houses and have a look at the peeling walls, cracked plaster, the rat infested interiors and so forth.*

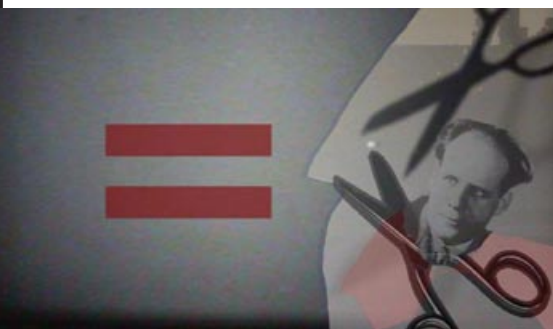
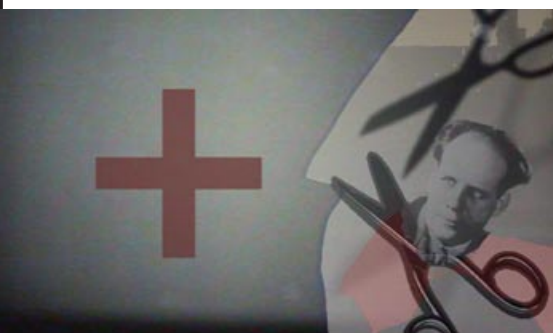
*Following observational scenes of slum living conditions in Melbourne's inner city suburbs, the film cuts to exterior shots of the homes of the wealthy. The inter-titles are often ironic and at the same time they issue a demand. We see young children playing in the street, with 'fast cutting' of close traffic; the inter-title: 'Playgrounds for workers children'. We see wealthy holiday homes, empty, and families camping in tents in the bush; the inter-title 'Country homes for the evicted.'*

Cut to Bob Mathews:

## BOB MATHEWS

*Ken was a product of Eisenstein.*

Screen design collage and music sequence introducing the figure of Eisenstein, and his montage theory; an image of poverty cut together with an image of wealth, equals the idea "inequality"; the graphic inter-title "This inequality must end, the workers must own the wealth they produce":



## BOB MATHEWS

*I was closer to Podovkin really than Eisenstein. I liked movement. The element of movement, camera movement in cinematography fascinated me. That it has the potential for actually producing...*

Cut to another individual shot from A Place to Live, in which an emotionally evocative tableau is played out in wide shot.

*a balletic affect, and including what would be editing, in a single shot. I couldn't do it any other way.*

Screen design divides the frame in two, a freeze frame of Ken on the left and the Bob Mathews interview on the right – Ken's portrait is replaced with an instance from A Place to Live of very fast cutting of close ups of traffic, creating a sense of danger for children we have just seen playing in the streets:

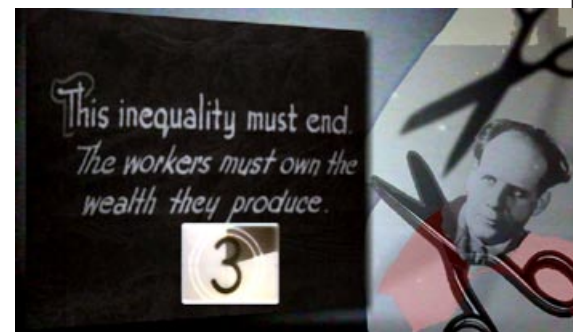
*But Ken wanted lots of pieces of film to join together in dramatic effect. However that was a small thing, it didn't affect our friendship.*

Bob Mathews' image freezes, and Ken begins to speak, a flash frame presents another collage where screen right is taken up with images illustrating Eisenstein's early work:

## KEN COLDICOTT

*My thinking was governed very strongly by the sort of thinking that Eisenstein was putting forward in the 20s and the early 30s. And a - and a sort of thinking that is made concrete in Strike and - Potemkin and October.*

*I think those showed Eisenstein at his peak and showed the real potentialities of film, whereas the films that he made later like Bezhin Meadow and Alexander Nevsky and Ivan the Terrible, were films made more or less under duress, where he's forced by the Soviet bureaucracy to make films which were more conventional in their form and to some extent also were more theatrical, than filmic.*





## REALIST FILM UNIT

Circular.

2nd Floor,  
330 Flinders Lane,  
MELBOURNE, C.1.  
Phone: Central 3711.

January, 1947.

### OUR FIRST YEAR.

Formed towards the end of 1945, the Realist Film Unit recently concluded its first year of activity. A non-profit organisation, operating on a small capital subscribed by working members, the Unit fulfilled three important functions:-

1. A REPERTORY CINEMA: The Unit has helped to develop intelligent appreciation of the youngest of the arts by screening revivals as well as important current productions which are denied commercial release. In 1946: The Unit organised a number of city screenings, mainly at New Theatre; silent films shown included: "CRAINQUEBILLE"; "GRASS"; "TEN DAYS THAT SHOOK THE WORLD"; "THE WHITE HELL OF PITZ PALU"; "METROPOLIS"; and many of the early Chaplin and Mack Sennett comedies. Sound films included: the Soviet productions: "69th PARALLEL"; "NO GREATER LOVE"; "SPRING SONG"; the American documentaries: "THE VALLEY OF THE TENNESSEE"; "THE CITY"; "A BETTER TOMORROW"; "FIGHTING LADY"; the British-American war-documentary "THE TRUE GLORY"; the British documentaries: "WORLD OF PLENTY"; "NORTH SEA"; "BORDER WEAVE"; the French feature-films "THREE WALTZES" and "LA KERMESSE HEROIQUE"; Canadian National Film Board productions; and documentaries from China, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia.

The Unit was responsible for the recovery from the Commonwealth Investigation Branch of the documentary on the Chinese Red Army, "CHINA STRIKES BACK"; and we broke the (unofficial) ban by Victorian exhibitors on "INDONESIA CALLING" by purchasing a print of the film and organising public screenings.

2. NON-THEATRICAL SHOWS: From the proceeds of city screenings the Unit has provided a much-needed projection service at unusually low prices for working-class and cultural organisations. In 1946: 215 shows were given to audiences totalling 21,000. Increasing demand for the Unit's services is shown by the fact that over half of these shows took place in the last three months of the year. Organisations assisted in this way included: Schools; youth clubs; trade unions; community centres. Shows were given in public halls, schools, churches, club-rooms, private homes, and even out-of-doors. Not only Melbourne and suburbs were covered, but also Geelong, Ballarat, Healesville, Yarra Junction, Yarram, Sale, Mirboo, Foster, Maffra, and Wonthaggi.

3. FILM PRODUCTION: The Unit has also proved that film production need not remain the close preserve of the big financial interests, but that films can be made to serve the interests of the people. Newsreels have been taken of workers' demonstrations and strike struggles. Short films were made of all New Theatre stage productions in 1946. The color film "400 FILM STARS", showed how young workers of the Eureka Youth League organise their own holiday camp. "YOUTH PLANS ITS FUTURE" dealt with the campaign for the improvement of young workers and apprentices in Victoria. "A PLACE TO LIVE", vividly revealing the extent of Melbourne's housing crisis, was an example of the way in which films can be used to tackle important social problems in Australia.

In 1947: The Realist Film Unit will greatly increase its production activities. Already in production is a color film about Australia's outstanding progressive school, "Koornong", and next on the list is a film explaining the trade union attitude to wages and prices.





## CHAPTER 3 THE EARLY FILMS: 'REALISM'