

1966-1969: Alexander Macdonald and Student-Union Solidarity

The political history of Queensland's trade union movement extends far beyond its links to the ALP. Trade unions have repeatedly involved themselves in public debate. This paper will examine the brief period of close co-operation between the Queensland union movement as represented by the Trades and Labour Council Queensland (TLC), and the left-wing student movement of the 1960s. This relationship was fraught with political tension. This paper will analyse the pivotal role Alexander Macdonald played, as TLC Secretary, in overcoming these tensions. It will cover both Macdonald's role in facilitating TLC's industrial action in 1967 in support of student protests, and his more controversial support of the Foco Club. In doing so, I will argue that Macdonald's strong support of worker-student co-operation can be partially explained by his links to the Communist Party of Australia (CPA). However, despite being instrumental in fostering co-operation between the union and student movements, Macdonald was unable to prevent rifts developing towards the end of his life. Following his premature death while in office in 1969, the relationship quickly deteriorated.

Alexander Macdonald's public life was dominated by his involvement with progressive left wing politics, most notably the Communist and trade union movements. Understanding this dual role is crucial to understanding why and how he built an alliance with the student left. Born in Scotland in 1910, he immigrated to Australia in the 1920s.¹ Unable to find work, he drifted towards radical politics and became an active Communist.² By 1936 he had been elected to the Queensland state committee of the CPA.³ He was simultaneously entering the trade union movement, joining the Ironworkers Union and quickly becoming its Secretary.⁴ By the early 1950s Macdonald had become deeply involved in the TLC. Now known as the QCU, this was a peak union council, affiliated with approximately 40 unions.⁵ It is true that during this period the TLC only covered approximately a third of Queensland unionists due to the fact that the enormous Australian Workers Union was not affiliated with it.⁶ However,

¹ Molly Macdonald Interview with Cecily Cameron 1984 in Cecily Cameron Papers UQFL 439 Box 10

² Hamilton 2010: 18

³ BLHA 2010: ???

⁴ Interview with Ted Bacon by Cecily Cameron 1984 in Cecily Cameron Papers UQFL 439 Box 10

⁵ BLHA 2010: 8

⁶ Fry, Shield and Elen 2004: 112-114

it was one of the most influential union bodies due to the influence it wielded within the ALP from 1957 to the late 1980s.⁷

In 1952, Macdonald replaced Communist Mick Healy as Secretary of the TLCQ. In doing so he joined a core of committed Communists on the TLC Executive. This group (which also included Hugh Hamilton, Jack Hanson and Greg Dawson) drew its strength from unions such as the Builders Workers Industrial Union and the maritime unions.⁸ The Communist influence within the TLC Executive was representative of broader Communist influence over unionists, with approximately 15% of union members being controlled by the CPA as of 1969.⁹ Within the TLC Executive, communists such as Macdonald vied for influence with TLC members who were more aligned to the ALP, such as President John (Jack) Egerton.¹⁰ This tension within the Executive would later become important when relations between Egerton and the student left soured.

Macdonald's time as TLC Secretary was distinguished by three characteristics. The first was the universal respect he enjoyed from his colleagues. "One of the calmest, most patient and good-natured men conceivable", Macdonald excelled at negotiating compromise between the diverse range of views within the TLC Executive.¹¹ As Bob Hawke noted shortly after Macdonald's death, despite his ideological allegiance to Communism he "not once" tried to "ram it down the throats" of his colleagues.¹² This facility for promoting compromise was repeatedly mentioned approvingly in oral recollections of Macdonald's leadership style. Moreover, within both the TLC and CPA, respect for this ability was often coupled to genuine affection for Macdonald. Even the ALP-aligned Egerton displayed intense loyalty to him.¹³ The second characteristic was his conviction that the union movement should be an advocate for progressive political causes. Macdonald founded the TLC's Equal Pay Committee, was a vice-president of the Peace Committee, and was an early "beacon for Aboriginal rights".¹⁴ In pursuing these goals Macdonald was willing to work with forces outside the union movement. As his obituary in *Tribune* noted, his life was spent striving "to

⁷ Ibid: 104

⁸ Alistair Davidson 1969 "A Short History of the Communist Party of Australia", 142; Justus M. Van Der Koef 1970 "The Communist Party of Australia Today", *Studies in Comparative Communism*, 70

⁹ Alistair Davidson 1969 "A Short History of the Communist Party of Australia", 158

¹⁰ Brian Laver Interview with Cecily Cameron 1988 in Cecily Cameron Papers UQFL 439 Box 10

¹¹ Bacon's Oration 20/8/196 CPA Papers Box 19, 1; Hamilton 2010: 15

¹² Robert Hawke 1969 Address to TLC on 3/9/1969 in TLC Records UQFL 118 Box 90

¹³ Ted Bacon Interviewed by Cecily Cameron 1984 in Cecily Cameron Papers UQFL 439 Box 10

¹⁴ Hamilton 2010: 15

unite all sections of the labour movement around common progressive issues”.¹⁵ This marriage of universal respect and a concern with broader political issues explains why Macdonald entered into an alliance with student activists.

The student left formed independently of any political party or union body during the 1960s. This was a period of intense political activism on university campuses across the globe. Across Australia, university students were becoming politicised by their opposition to conscription and to the Vietnam War.¹⁶ By 1966, groups such as the Vietnam Action Committee had formed at the University of Queensland (UQ). It was out of these anti-war groups that a broader student activism movement (strongly influenced by the American New Left) was able to grow.¹⁷ Students such as Mitch Thompson and Brian Laver, and academics such as Dan O’Neill were inspired to found Society for Democratic Action (SDA) in April 1966.¹⁸ These activists quickly began large-scale marches against conscription throughout 1967.¹⁹ The Nicklin government responded with bureaucratic suppression via the State Traffic Act and police violence.²⁰ This further outraged student activists. By the end of 1966 student left had become equally committed to protesting for civil liberties as a natural outgrowth of the anti-war movement. Therefore, the mid-1960s saw the emergence of a highly active student protest movement.

There were two reasons young students of the period chose to join groups such as the SDA, rather than working through the ALP, the ALP-affiliated TLC or the CPA. The first was the undeniable class distinction between the children of the middle class, (who could afford a tertiary education before Whitlam’s reforms) and the working class members of more established leftist organisations. The second was the disconnect between the Old Left and youth in general. As Jon Piccini has noted, the union’s youth programs were extremely poor, being dominated by staid events (such as Miss Union competitions) that held little appeal for members of the 1960s counter-culture.²¹ The CPA’s Eureka Youth League, whose “programmatically dogmatism” had made it “an object of mild derision, at best, in youth circles”, was no better.²² This problem was compounded by the fact that many young activists saw

¹⁵ Tribune 2/8/1969

¹⁶ Alan Anderson 2010 “Alex Macdonald 1910-1969” Brisbane Labour History Association, 11

¹⁷ Dan O’Neill 1969, *Semper Floreat* “The Growth of the Radical Movement”, 9 in Dan O’Neill Papers UQFL 132

¹⁸ Dan O’Neill 1969, *Semper Floreat* “The Growth of the Radical Movement”, 12 in Dan O’Neill Papers UQFL 132

¹⁹ Courier-Mail 8/9/1967

²⁰ Dan O’Neill *Ephemera Relating to the Right to March and Civil Liberties* VF6 638 VF6 ’68

²¹ Jon Piccini 2011 “ ‘A Group of Misguided, Way Out Individuals’: The Old Left and the Student Movement in Brisbane 1966-70”, *Queensland Journal of Labour History* no. 12, 21

²² Justus M. Van Der Koef 1970 “The Communist Party of Australia Today”, *Studies in Comparative Communism*, 79

both unions and Communists as being too willing to compromise with non-left forces.²³ Even within the union movement, young people often had to struggle against general disinterest in youth issues, which were rarely raised at Trade Union Congress before 1965. For instance, Alan Anderson (a young delegate for the Plumbers' Union) remembers being verbally abused by Egerton when he suggested that the body needed to do more to engage with young workers (revealingly, Macdonald was in contrast highly supportive of young delegates).²⁴ In this environment, it was natural that young students would choose to form their own organisations rather than work through traditional left channels.

Despite this undeniable distance between young students and trade unionists, from 1966 onwards the two groups began to work together. The student left first attracted real attention from the TLCQ once it focussed its energies on securing civil liberties. For instance, at the 1966 Trade Union Congress it “congratulate[d]...the students and staff of Queensland University who are continually campaigning for civil liberties”.²⁵ This was soon followed by industrial action in favour of the SDA's civil rights protest. Indeed, throughout 1967 the SDA would describe the trade unions as being their “most responsive ally”.²⁶ For example, the TLC held a 4 hour stop work meeting on the 14th of September 1967 in protest at the “shocking” police brutality against student participating in a march six days before.²⁷ As the minutes of the TLC Executive record, “the overall feeling of the Executive was that it was necessary to take some positive steps” in support of student civil liberties.²⁸ This meeting was attended by over 3000 people. Although records of the TLC's internal deliberations are murky on this point, it seems that Macdonald played a major role in persuading the TLC Executive to take this action. Interestingly, Egerton himself initiated this protest, belying his previously derisive attitude towards youth, citing the intermittent “urging” by affiliated unions to take a firmer stance in favour of students.²⁹ However, Piccini contends there were also “sharp divisions” in some unions about the validity of such a stoppage, indicating that support from a figure as senior as Macdonald would have been critical.³⁰ Anderson describes

²³ Rex Mortimer 1967 “Communists and the Australian Left” *New Left Review* no.46, 47

²⁴ Alan Anderson 2010 “Alex Macdonald 1910-1969” Brisbane Labour History Association, 11

²⁵ Trade Union Congress 1966 Executive Summary in TLC Records UQFL 118 Box 90, 12

²⁶ Student Guerilla No 21 “Open Letter from Dissenting Dogs” in *A Left Compilation*” by Greg Mallory

²⁷ John Egerton Report on Civil Liberties 22/9/1967 in Dan O'Neill Papers UQFL 132 Box 5 Folder 3, 4

²⁸ TLC Minutes from Tuesday 12/9/1967 in TLC Records Box 8 Parcel 29 p. 3

²⁹ Egerton *Ibid*

³⁰ Jon Piccini 2011 “A Group of Misguided, Way Out Individuals’: The Old Left and the Student Movement in Brisbane 1966-70”, *Queensland Journal of Labour History* no. 12, 21

this decision as a “bold stand” by Macdonald.³¹ It is understandable, therefore, that several members of the SDA (including Laver and Thompson) participated in the 1967 postal strike, and were subsequently arrested for handing out union leaflets.³² This in turn led to another four hour stoppage by the TLC.

This support can be partly explained by the common aims of the union and student movements. For instance, a number of its more left-wing member unions (notably the Seamen’s Union) had, like the student left, been outspoken critics of Australian involvement in Vietnam since the early 1960s.³³ The TLC was so sympathetic to the anti-war movement that it criticised the federal ACTU for being insufficiently supportive.³⁴ More broadly, the TLC saw an affinity between the student’s civil liberty campaign and their own struggle for industrial liberty.³⁵ For instance, in the special meeting that preceded the September 1967 stop-work meeting, they seem to have been persuaded by Ralph Summy’s appeal that “the struggle for a better life was bound up with the struggle for civil liberties”.³⁶ As Macdonald himself noted in 1968, to the TLC Executive “industrial and civil liberties were inseparable”.³⁷ Likewise, the SDA perceived the union movement’s long struggle for industrial liberties and the right to march to be evidence of its “bona fides” on civil liberties.³⁸ Therefore, over the issue of civil liberties “Old and New Left met, finding a common enemy in the form of Queensland’s repression of protest”.³⁹ Consequently, the perceived nexus between these two struggles offers a powerful explanation for early TLC support for student protests.

Despite these shared goals, it is important to not to overestimate the closeness of the union-student relationship. While the TLC was officially keen to see greater student-union cooperation, young unionists and activists both recall continued indifference and suspicion towards groups such as the SDA.⁴⁰ Those involved in the SDA at the time believe that this distance was engendered by its radical politics, which even in a militant union council

³¹ Alan Anderson 2010 “Alex Macdonald 1910-1969” Brisbane Labour History Association, 12

³² Trade Union Congress 1968 Executive Report in TLC Records UQFL 118 Box 90, 50

³³ Seamens Journal May 1965 in , 93

³⁴ TLC Minutes Tuesday 20/9/1966 in TLC Records Box 8 Parcel 29

³⁵ Student Guerilla No 21 “Open Letter from Dissenting Dogs” in “A Left Compilation” by Greg Mallory

³⁶ TLC Minutes Tuesday 12/9/67 in TLC Records Box 8 Parcel 29, p. 2

³⁷ Trade Union Congress 1968 Executive Report in TLC Records UQFL 118 Box 90, 50

³⁸ Student Guerilla 1968 (unknown edition), extract in “A Left Compilation” by Greg Mallory

³⁹ Jon Piccini 2011 “A Group of Misguided, Way Out Individuals’: The Old Left and the Student Movement in Brisbane 1966-70”, Queensland Journal of Labour History no. 12, 22

⁴⁰ Alan Anderson 2010 “Alex Macdonald 1910-1969” Brisbane Labour History Association, 11

attracted distrust from “right-wing ALP” types.⁴¹ In the minds of many trade unionists, however laudable the student left’s goals were, they remained “a lot of long-haired no-hopers, probably inundated with drugs”.⁴² A good example of this was Macdonald’s decision at the end of 1967 to hire Brian Laver to work as a research assistant in the Trades Hall.⁴³ In doing so he stepped from supporting student groups to actually allowing them to work within the TLC. It was precipitated by Laver’s involvement in the October 1967 marches, which prompted Communists associated with the TLC (notably Ralph Summy) to suggest he should be employed.⁴⁴ Anderson again characterises the hiring of Laver as a move which forced Macdonald (with the support of Communist sympathetic unions such as the BWIU) to confront more conservative members of the TLC, most notably ALP-aligned members such as Egerton.⁴⁵ While Egerton was not opposed to the aims of the student left, he was unwilling to go as far as Macdonald in allowing a potentially disreputable student leader to work within the walls of Trades Hall. However, notwithstanding these reservations, the TLC and the student left had demonstrated genuine support for one another.

It is therefore important to distinguish the TLC’s ideological support for the aims of the student left from the distrust and prejudice many unionists harboured towards students themselves. It is notable that the TLC was able to co-operate so closely with students. It is here that Macdonald’s importance becomes more apparent. His decision to employ Laver was a pre-cursor of a much more ambitious student-union initiative: the Foco Club. Conceived by the SDA as a space in which anyone, but particularly young students and young workers, could express themselves politically and culturally.⁴⁶ It took its name from the Spanish word for “camp”, referring to Che Guevara’s Cuban training camps.⁴⁷ What was remarkable about Foco, however, was that it operated out of the TLC’s premises at Trade Hall, while being jointly run by a combination of student activists, young unionists and the Eureka Youth League. Therefore, it was a three way venture between the student left, the union movement and the Communist movement. This was an unprecedented level of student-union co-operation.⁴⁸ Moreover, it was remarkably successful, attracting regular crowds of 500 people

⁴¹ Brian Laver Interview with Andrew Stafford 6/11/2001 In Andrew Stafford Papers Box 2

⁴² Alan Anderson Interview 2002 in Material Relating to the Foco Club

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⁴⁴ Brian Laver Interview with Andrew Stafford 6/11/2001 In Andrew Stafford Papers Box 2

⁴⁵ Brian Laver Interview With Cecily Cameron 1988 in Cecily Cameron Papers UQFL 439 Box 10

⁴⁶ Foco Club Ephemera 1968, Opening Night Poster

⁴⁷ Brian Laver Interview With Cecily Cameron 1988 in Cecily Cameron Papers UQFL 439 Box 10

⁴⁸ Communist Party Records in Cecil Cameron Papers UQFL 439 Box 10

every Sunday night until its closure in June 1969 Guyatt 1983: 266)⁴⁹. Those who attended were not only exposed to avant-garde culture but also to radical leftist literature and ideas (disseminated most stridently by the student left). As such, Foco can be considered a triumph of student-union co-operation in the cause of promoting political awareness.

Macdonald's vital role in the venture is commonly acknowledged. In Anderson's estimation, "much of the success of Foco can be attributed to Alex".⁵⁰ Macdonald's support took three forms. Firstly, he supported the idea in the TLC Executive, despite the fact that (as Hamilton reflects) it no doubt cost him support amongst the more ALP-aligned members.⁵¹ These members did not want to associate the TLC with either the radical left politics or the moral panic (described below) that suffused Foco. So strong was the opposition that Macdonald's widow recalls him dispiritedly remarking that "if the [TLC] kick me out I wouldn't be surprised".⁵² Macdonald's immense esteem within the labour movement, coupled with his excellent negotiating abilities, can be seen in the way he convinced his colleagues to accept Foco's use of the Hall. In this regard he was undoubtedly aided by the fact that Egerton and a large number of other TLC officials were unable to attend the meeting at which it was resolved to give Foco the use of the Hall.⁵³ He made use of the Communist faction within the TLC.⁵⁴ As Laver infers, it was Macdonald's CPA links that enabled him to "do a deal" within the ALP to allow the project to proceed.⁵⁵ Macdonald's efforts may very well have been enhanced by the fact that Egerton, who was opposed to student use of the Hall, was frequently overseas during this period.⁵⁶ The Trades Hall was a crucial factor in Foco's success, because the TLC's political prominence meant that Queensland's notoriously violent police were reluctant to raid it.⁵⁷ This was demonstrated by the only Foco meeting held outside the Trades Hall, which was immediately dispersed by police.⁵⁸

Secondly, Macdonald supported Foco by remaining continuously engaged with it, unlike many of his colleagues. Writing a few months after Foco's expulsion from the Trades Hall in

⁴⁹ Trade Union Congress 1968 Executive Report in TLC Records UQFL 118, 59 ;

⁵⁰ Alan Anderson Interview 2002 in Material Relating to the Foco Club F3598

⁵¹ Hamilton 2010: 16

⁵² Molly Macdonald Interview with Cecily Cameron 1984 in Cecily Cameron Papers UQFL 439 Box 10

⁵³ TLC Minutes Wednesday 7/2/1968 in TLC Records Box 8 Parcel 30, p. 6

⁵⁴ Brian Laver Interview with Andrew Stafford 6/11/2001 In Andrew Stafford Papers UQFL 440 Box 2

⁵⁵ Brian Laver Interview with Andrew Stafford 6/11/2001 In Andrew Stafford Papers UQFL 440 Box 2

⁵⁶ Brian Laver Interview With Cecily Cameron, 1988 in Cecily Cameron Papers Box 10

⁵⁷ Alan Anderson Interview 2002 in Material Relating to the Foco Club F3598

⁵⁸ Alan Anderson Interview 2002 in Material Relating to the Foco Club F3598

June 1969, its former President Alan Anderson noted how few union officials ever attended.⁵⁹ In contrast, Macdonald visited almost every week.⁶⁰

Finally, Macdonald defended Foco from controversy, in stark contrast to most of his colleagues. The most notable instance of this were the accusations from conservatives that Foco was a front for drug dealers and prostitution. These were levelled by Liberal Party MP Don Cameron in 1968 under Parliamentary privilege. They had an enormous impact on public opinion in socially conservative Queensland, even amongst some older members of the Communist Party.⁶¹ Most damagingly, he alleged that the Club was close to ‘the nerve centre of the ALP in Queensland’.⁶² Concern for the reputations of both the union movement and the ALP caused Egerton to publicly criticise Foco in June of 1969.⁶³ In contrast, Macdonald never doubted the fact that the allegations were a “political smear”.⁶⁴ Unlike the majority of his colleagues, he not only publicly denied the allegations’ validity but personally convinced Police Commissioner Bischoff of their falsity (Piccini 2011: 25). Consequently, by securing the Trades Hall, providing his ongoing support and publicly defending it, Macdonald was an integral part of Foco’s success.

It is necessary to examine the historical context surrounding Macdonald’s actions in order to understand them. As mentioned above, he was naturally inclusive when it came to progressive issues which he felt strongly about (Tribune 2/8/1969). However, this explanation alone seems unsatisfactory in the face of the opposition which he endured towards the end of his life for his support of student-union relations.⁶⁵ One possible explanation that has not been deeply explored is the influence that Macdonald’s allegiance to the CPA had on his support for student-union solidarity. Since 1964, the CPA had undergone a national change in platform under the leadership of Laurie Aarons.⁶⁶ Reversing his party’s previous hostility towards the New Left, Aarons declared that “united action with other sections of the community common objectives” was essential.⁶⁷ By the time of the 1969 CPA State Conference, the youth movement was being praised as “certainly the most

⁵⁹ Alan Anderson 1970 “The Foco Story” in Tribune 2/9/1970 , 8

⁶⁰ Ted Bacon Interviewed by Cecily Cameron 1984 in Cecily Cameron Papers UQFL 439 Box 10

⁶¹ Alan Anderson Interview 2002 in Material Relating to the Foco Club F3598

⁶² Hansard Extract in Alan Anderson Material Relating to the Foco Club F3598

⁶³ Courier-Mail 14/9/68 in Alan Anderson’s Material Relating to the Foco Club F3598

⁶⁴ Alan Anderson Interview 2002 in Material Relating to the Foco Club F3598

⁶⁵ Molly Macdonald Interview with Cecily Cameron 1984 in Cecily Cameron Papers UQFL 439 Box 10

⁶⁶ Justus M. Van Der Koef 1970 “The Communist Party of Australia Today”, Studies in Comparative Communism, 80

⁶⁷ Laurie Aarons 1964 “Labour Movements at the Crossroads”, 38 ; Alisatir Davidson 1969 “A Short History of the Communist Party of Australia”, 150

spectacular feature of the Australian left movement”.⁶⁸ The most important of these objectives was the anti-Vietnam struggle, the influence of which on “solidifying the relationship with radical youth cannot be overstated”.⁶⁹ It would be presumptuous to conclude that the CPA’s national platform was the sole reason for Macdonald supporting close relationships with students. However, it is notable that the most consistent support for close student-union ties came from Communist inclined TLC members. For instance, Hugh Hamilton was singled out as being particularly helpful in establishing Foco.⁷⁰ Indeed, Laver goes so far as to say the CPA “did a deal” with the ALP to allow the partially student run Foco Club to operate out of the Trades Hall.⁷¹ Similarly, it is significant that a major force in establishing Foco was the youth front of the CPA. While it is not tenable to attribute Macdonald’s support of student-union initiatives like Foco to his membership of the CPA, it is necessary to acknowledge his CPA allegiance as an important factor.

Despite Macdonald’s success in establishing Foco, he was unable to prevent the relationship between the two movements deteriorating. The first major dispute came on Labour Day 1969, when around three hundred student activists joined the union-organised march with the intention of “reintroduce[ing socialist] politics” to the event.⁷² Waving red and black flags and shouting slogans at ALP participants (including Federal Opposition leader Gough Whitlam), these students caused the ALP-aligned TLC considerable embarrassment. In response, Egerton called for the students to be physically thrown out of the march, calling them “a group of scrubby, confused individuals”.⁷³ Moreover, Laver alleges Egerton “gave an open invitation to the police to deal [with students]”.⁷⁴ Conversely, student participants felt that they had been excluded from the march by ALP aligned unionists.⁷⁵

This fracas in turn led to Foco’s expulsion from the Trades Hall in June 1969.⁷⁶ Although it was publicly claimed that this was a routine result of long-planned renovations, Anderson suggests the conservative trade unionists opportunistically used the students’ actions to eliminate Foco.⁷⁷ Regardless, Foco collapsed shortly afterwards.⁷⁸ Although Macdonald

⁶⁸ Queensland State Conference June 14 & 15 Report 1969 in Communist Party of Australia Papers UQFL 234 Box 26

⁶⁹ Justus M. Van Der Koef 1970 “The Communist Party of Australia Today”, *Studies in Comparative Communism*, 87

⁷⁰ Brian Laver Interview with Andrew Stafford 6/11/2001 In Andrew Stafford Papers Box 2

⁷¹ Brian Laver Interview With Cecily Cameron, 1988 in Cecily Cameron Papers Box 10

⁷² Socialist Humanist Action Committee ~1970 Pamphlet in TLC Records Box 390

⁷³ Courier-Mail 16/5/1969 “Student Radicals: ‘Never Again’ At Labor Day”

⁷⁴ Brian Laver 1970 “The Communist Party is Behind the Moratorium- Way Behind”, 3

⁷⁵ Socialist Humanist Action Committee ~1970 Pamphlet in TLC Records Box 390

⁷⁶ TLC Minutes Wednesday 11/6/1969 in TLC Records Box ???, 10

⁷⁷ Alan Anderson Interview 2002 in Material Relating to the Foco Club F3598

publicly emphasised the routine nature of the expulsion, Foco organisers saw it as reflecting the low priority the TLC placed on student-union interaction.⁷⁹ This division was symptomatic of the shift in the student left from a protest movement to a radical movement, less willing to support the more moderate stance of the ALP-influenced TLC.⁸⁰ Following Macdonald's sudden death in late 1969, the student-union relationship deteriorated further. The breaking point was the Vietnam Moratorium of May 1970. On that occasion, both the CPA and ALP aligned members of the TLC prevented elements of the student left (particularly the Revolutionary Socialist Students Alliance) from voicing active support for the Viet Cong.⁸¹ They did so by convincing Hugh Hamilton to alter the speaker's schedule at short notice to delay Laver's address, and then allowing CPA members to physically restrain Laver while ALP Senator George Georges spoke in his stead (Joe Harris pamphlet). This incident demonstrated that the radical politics of the student left had diverged from the political interests of the TLC. From then on, it became increasingly unlikely that the two movements would ever work as closely as they had during Foco.

In conclusion, Alexander Macdonald was a crucial figure in solidifying the alliance between students and workers in the 1960s. Firstly, he capitalised on the shared goals of the two movements to help promote a system of mutual support. Moreover, he went further than many of his colleagues by helping young activists gain the use of Trades Hall for Foco. In doing so he enabled a highly successful joint student-worker endeavour. This comparatively high level of support must be situated within the context of Macdonald's links to the CPA. However, despite his best efforts, not even he could prevent this relationship buckling through the tensions between the more conservative side of the TLC and radical students.

⁷⁸ Alan Anderson 1970 "The Foco Story" in Tribune 2/9/1970 , 8

⁷⁹ Telegraph 29/5/1969 "Eviction of Foco 'not sudden order' "

⁸⁰ Mitch Thompson "SDA Dissolves" in SDA Ephemera 1966-1969 FVF381

⁸¹ Brian Laver 1970 "The Communist Party is Behind the Moratorium- Way Behind", 2