**BRIEFING NOTE FOR JO KEEN – RE ACTIVITIES FOR ACTU/RUN**

My apologies for the delay, but even with the lock- down there appears not enough hours in the day. I trust you are well and should mention that I am on the    ".... short list .... "so to speak for a hip- replacement. Fortunately, it does not inhibit me from developing ideas concerning the Labour Movement, looking to the future. Of course, this is  in  the hope that come the next Federal Election, we are rid of the Morrison Government. Set out are some thoughts regarding possible activities for RUN  Members in the period ahead.

NOTE REGARDING A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO UNDERPIN WORK & ACTIVITY OF ACTU/ RUN RETIREES NETWORK.

Unfortunately, I was unable to participate in the most recent RUN meeting, due to some health issues. I add that I am very poor in computer skills. However, I have noted that even if a meeting is being " Zoomed ,"one can now participate via the telephone, which will enable me to re-connect with ACTU/RUN. My own view is that organising retirees has the potential to contribute significantly to the Union Movement and Progressive Community Movements. I make this observation as an active participant  in the Maritime Union Veterans, foundered in the early 2000s.

In developing these thoughts, I want to report an experience which Fran and I had some years ago, whilst overseas ago. Arriving in Genoa in early spring, we noticed hundreds of posters announcing negotiations soon to begin between the Unions and the Employers concerning conditions of work. Heading the list of demands was a bold Claim for more Child Care Facilities, followed by Improved Public Transport and so the list went on to the thirteenth claim, almost at the bottom of the list. In discussing these Claims with Comrade Daniane, Secretary of the Maritime Unions, he indicated that workers and the broader community did not see community and workers as separate , which indeed was reflected in the Claims. For me it was exceptionally interesting, when compared with my own experience in Australia: my own experience was that with rare exceptions, our unions paid little heed to affairs not directly connected to the workplace. Since then, I have strived to include such an approach to my own activities.

A further observation worth noting is the back-ground to RUN which began when Jeff Lawrence was Secretary of the ACTU. On the staff was one John Ryan, who had the responsibility to develop a stronger connection between the Union Movement and the broader Community. Just prior to this, the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) had set in train the Trades Hall Retirees Network. This group was overseen by David Cragg, who had a keen appreciation of the possibilities of organising Retired Workers. It was these developments which led to opening discussions with the ACTU, during which we canvassed ideas about the possibility and potential value of such organisation Of course, the Unions directly involved were able to speak from experience, as their Retired Members played an important role, particularly when industrial disputes occurred. One needs to remember that under Howard’s Work Choices, picketing was banned; however, Community Pickets replaced the role of the strikers, as the Law outlawed the right of the strikers to do the picketing. Unions involved were the AMWU Retirees Division, the Maritime Union Veterans, with the assistance of David Cragg. This latter aspect was most helpful, in that David was the VTHC Representative on the ACTU Executive.

Eventually, the ACTU agreed to a Retiree Organisation and invited the fledgling organisation to have an information booth at the ACTU Congress, last held in Melbourne. I mention this background as it is possible that some RUN Members are not aware of how RUN came into existence. If I understand the situation, more recently, the membership has increased , some hundreds of members across the States and Territories. In my opinion, this augers well for the future.

Now for the purpose of this Note.

With some exceptions, historically the Labour Movement has lacked a Strategic Social Policy, concentrating almost exclusively on the Workplace. At the Parliamentary level, Policies determined by Party Conferences and / or by Labor in Office have rarely been presented as part of an overall connected Strategy. Often, when elected, Policies are ignored or dumped. We have all witnessed such happenings. Some may disagree; however, my purpose is no more than to stimulate discussion so that we work to see such a strategic development. Should the ACTU go down the road of developing an integrated Social Policy, it will be not surprising if they are seen as the main defender of Public/ Community interest.

Set out below are some of the ideas which informed the RUN presenters who attended the

2018 ACTU Congress The Presenters were Jane Timbrell from Vintage Reds (Canberra) and

Colin Ormsby from the AMWU Retirees Division, (Vic). At the time, the ACTU was mounting its new Plan CHANGE THE RULES.

SOME ISSUES CONSIDERED PRIOR BEFORE THE PRESENTATION.

Prior to the Congress there was an amount of discussion as to the issues which might be appropriate to raise with Congress Delegates, as some Unions are yet to consider organising retired members. Some of the matters considered were:

# If Labor was successful in the Election, Jane from Vintage Reds had put forward an excellent idea that after forming Government, they fund a Nation- wide Retirees Conference. She also proposed Government funding an Officer at the ACTU, to be responsible for oversighting and assisting the emerging Retired Workers Movement. Such developments would enhance the involvement of retired workers who wanted to remain connected with their past work mates and continue the connection with their Union. It would also strengthen the notion of Community/ Union / Community / Union, as it is imperative that we beat back the “ …… the big end of town …… “

# In engaging with the Delegates, seek opportunities to address Union Committees and where possible talk with their Rank& File Members. Regarding the latter, the Victorian Branch of the MUA is considering providing access to the Superannuants regular meetings, giving the Veterans a spot on the Agenda, so that those close to retirement can be informed, regarding the retirement story. MUA experience demonstrates that the retirees have become a valuable asset to the Union in its many Campaigns and actions. An obvious example is picketing, during an industrial dispute, as those picketing are not affected by the Howard Legislation, which has made such activity Illegal.

A key issue is to persuade Delegates that their Union will get real value, from organising their retirees. In this regard, I am aware of struggles in Victoria, NSW, Canberra and South Australia, where friendly community pickets have assisted the Unions during various struggles. Regrettably, this Law still stands fourteen years since the defeat of the Howard Government. All the more reason to prepare to see the back of the Morrison Circus.

# Encourage widespread deputations to Parliamentary Members beyond only marginal seats. This is put in the context that marginal seat activity only, does not necessarily build the broad community political movement, which is necessary if we are to CHANGE THE RULES.

# Encourage activities/actions at local, regional and nationally, tailored to address specific area issues, reflective of the broad range of issues raised in CHANGE THE RULES and aimed at a Fairer Society.

#As above, we could be involved in activities at shopping centres and sporting events; alternatively we can assist the Australian Unemployed Workers Union at a major Centrelink Centre.

# We need to begin working through the large numbers of individual registrations of those who participated in the recent Tele Conference address by Sally McManus. If we were able to successfully recruit many of the participants, it could assist the development of ACTU/RUN.

# Marginal seats campaigning; in any assistance work, we should be advocating the candidates public support of the principles of Change the Rules. To say no more than this approach seeks to inject substance in the campaign.

# Raise the idea of a wide ranging improvement to the Social Security System. This system is now badly broken 2-2.5 million Australian living in poverty; Centrelink Payment New Start Allowance is way below the poverty line; thousands who are homeless obviously, for this large portion of our population the Rules do need to Change.

# We should attempt to have congress re-endorse the Fair Go for Pensioners National Claims but brought up to date with claims that we have developed since 2 Congresses ago.

If these activities were implemented, it could provide a basis for a broad based Social Policy for the Labour Movement to resist continuing attacks by reaction on the majority. Of course we must raise the issue of Climate Change, as with doing nothing, what is the point of a dead planet.

My approach is to raise our sights, so that we become a serious force for Social Justice and a Fairer Society. Put otherwise, we should embrace issues of concern for Retirees in such a manner that we interact with progressive community interests.

I also suggest that this material be circulated to the present members of RUN for the purpose of discussion, say early in 2022. If the ideas are taken up, we could then develop a number of campaigns specifically to engage the members in activities, giving a real purpose in being a RUN Member.

My real hope is that these thoughts will stimulate ideas for future activities.

Roger Wilson

ACTU/RUN Member and

Maritime Union Veterans, Victoria.

10/8/2021