



Centre of Full Employment and Equity

Working Paper No. 07-14

The Job Guarantee of 1848

Victor Quirk¹

December 2007

Centre of Full Employment and Equity
The University of Newcastle, Callaghan NSW 2308, Australia
Home Page: <http://e1.newcastle.edu.au/coffee>
Email: coffee@newcastle.edu.au

1. Introduction

There are signs of an emerging awareness of the positive economic dynamics of 'Job Guarantee'(JG) full employment programs², and more people are beginning to understand the potential of such programs to address otherwise intractable social and environmental issues (for example: Lawn, 2007; Devraj, 2007; Inngs, 2007; Kaboub, 2007). Nevertheless, and certainly in Australia, public awareness of the potential of such programs remains significantly suppressed, and JG advocates marginalised, while unsupported assertions of 'market forces' correcting things are unquestioningly reinforced, deceptive statistics (for example, unemployment rates) and analyses of labour market phenomena (for example, skills shortages) are energetically spun to the public to convey the impression that orthodox labour market policy is working when, from the perspective of the precariously employed, the underemployed, the unskilled and others totally excluded from the labour market, it is not³. This non-debate is likely to continue until we identify the real opponents, those sections of society that fear and loathe full employment, because until then we cannot engage with them, to understand why they do, and perhaps reconcile them to it. This paper continues a project to clarify the basis of opposition to full employment and how it may be overcome.

The notion that unemployment is deliberately preserved, despite the presumption of many scholars that it is not, has been espoused on many previous occasions. Marx (1976: 781-784), Beveridge (1909/1930: 100) and others have argued that capitalism needs a 'reserve army' of unemployed labour to avoid labour shortages that would drive up wages and impair growth during cyclical periods of expansion. Keynes and Kalecki argued that full employment was compatible with growth and profitability, and *economically* feasible, but the latter argued in his 1943 essay on 'Political Aspects of Full Employment', that the social power of employers as a class was undermined by full employment and that over time this would prompt their political mobilisation to restore unemployment (Kalecki, 1971), which appears to be what happened in Australia (Quirk, 2003) as elsewhere (Korpi, W., 1981, 2002). More recently, addressing the specific case of Job Guarantee (JG) / Employer of Last Resort (ELR) schemes, Kreisler and Halevi raise the concern that they may become instruments of oppression if used to replace unemployment as a source of worker discipline without addressing the underlying power relations in society (Kriesler & Halevi, 2001: 78-79). Nevertheless, despite these and other contributions, the economic debate proceeds assuming that governments would implement full employment if only they knew how, a proposition that Kalecki dismissed over sixty years ago as 'fallacious' (Kalecki, 1971).

Researching opposition to full employment is complicated by the strategic necessity of its opponents to not declare their position. Were those responsible for preserving unemployment and immiserating the unemployed to publicly explain their reasons, the electoral backlash would likely cost them the power to do so. Public suspicion that unemployment was deliberate would undermine justifications tendered for the systemic punishment and denigration of unemployed people, necessary for the preservation of unemployment as a cheap and potent source of repulsive incentive to drive profitable levels of productivity (Quirk, 2005).

The preservation of unemployment has required deft political handling for more than a century. The progressive concession of (initially male) suffrage in the UK and elsewhere during the 19th century, under pressure of often riotous democratic protest, threatened to undermine the usefulness of the state as an instrument of social domination. Political rulers nevertheless learnt to secure electoral support from those they sought to dominate, through techniques of skilful obfuscation, misinformation (for example, unemployment rates), distraction and persuasion (advertising and spin) that have continued to evolve to this day (Carey, 1995). Understanding the political dynamics of unemployment entails peeling this obscuring covering away, and like finding the seam on a roll of sticky-tape, this requires looking back to a time when opponents of full employment were less skilful in the arts of

obfuscation, and less mindful of the consequences of their candour. Useful episodes to examine are those when concrete proposals to directly eliminate unemployment have been contested. One such situation arose when a republican revolution succeeded in France in February 1848 with the military support of 10,000 workers, conceding the 'Right to Work' under duress by proclaiming that the state would provide work to the unemployed. A landmark in the story of full employment, this episode was prominent in the minds of those contesting the 'right to work' in Britain some forty years later, a debate that resolved with the establishment of the pattern of preserving unemployment while ameliorating its worst social effects through Labour exchanges and national unemployment insurance. The details of this episode are presented here as a background to another paper that examines the British 'Right to Work' debates of 1886 - 1912 (Quirk, 2007).

2. The struggle for 'Right to Work' in 1848

The abolition of unemployment, expressed as the 'right to work' ("droit du travail"), had been enunciated as a goal of the Parisian workers who had backed the Second Republican Revolution of February 1848 and found themselves in a commanding position in the early days of the new provisional government (Sewell, 1979: 195). The speed of the collapse of the regime of Louis Phillipe surprised the moderate republicans who dominated the provisional government, rendering their pre-revolutionary plans for gradualist democratic reform obsolete, forcing them to proclaim suffrage for all males over 21 years of age (Fasel, 1974: 658), as well as the 'Right to Work'. The latter had been popularised over the preceding decade by Luis Blanc, a socialist writer who in 1839 advocated a particular scheme for this purpose called 'the organisation of labour' (McKay, 1965: 11). This entailed the state facilitating the formation of cooperative enterprises by otherwise unemployed workers according to their trade experience and skills, so that bakers would be organised and capitalised to form bakeries, saddlers to form saddleries, and so on. Blanc argued that this scheme would enable all working people to have paying work whenever they wanted, fulfilling their right to work for their living (Blanc, 1858: 122-123; Blanc, 1992: 231-237).

Blanc's credibility is assailed throughout the 1933 account of the National Workshops by Donald McKay⁴, which fails to acknowledge the context of Blanc's proposal. There was a sizeable movement to establish consumer and producer cooperatives in France at this time, and even after the suppression of the workers in June 1848 (following clashes over the closure of the National Workshops and withdrawal of the 'right to work'), the new Assembly voted in July for 3 million francs to be allocated for the nurturing of cooperatives (Furlough, 1991: 24; Moss, B.H., 1976: 72-75). In this context, and with the benefit of hindsight of similar programs surviving under governments of different political hue, Blanc's proposal to provide capital and logistical support for the formation of worker cooperatives as a way of creating the employment that would deliver full employment is perhaps not as 'nebulous' as McKay concluded⁵. McKay makes much of the fact that Blanc did not promote his own particular scheme when an opportunity for doing so presented itself in the immediate aftermath of the revolution, preferring instead to settle for establishing the more general proposition of the 'right to work'⁶. This was adopted by a majority of the provisional government despite their fundamental opposition, agreeing to it simply through fear of the consequences of not doing so.

The provisional government was constituted and installed at the Hotel de Ville on the 24th of February, 1848. The next day the provisional ministers were confronted in their cabinet room by a representative of the thousands of armed workers encamped in the streets around the Hotel, who struck his gun on the floor and demanded the '...organisation of labour – within the hour!' (McKay, 1965: 9-10; Fasel, 1974: 659). Blanc used his popular profile with the workers to persuade the armed intruder that his demand was not immediately practicable, and then proceeded to placate him with a draft proclamation to which the rest of the provisional government promptly agreed:

The Provisional Government engage themselves to guarantee the existence of the workmen by means of labour. They engage themselves to guarantee labour to every citizen (Blanc, 1858: 82; McKay, 1965: 10).

It is unsurprising that under these circumstances little thought was given to the precise means by which this undertaking would be implemented. The basic idea was for the state to act as an employer of last resort, to provide paid work to those who could not find employment in the private labour market. The depth of the Provisional Government's commitment to this principle is reflected in their giving the task of its implementation to the member of the government who was possibly the most hostile to its key proposition. The choice of method was the most obvious to them: since the charitable provision of temporary public works had traditionally been used in France to alleviate extreme distress in times past, the method adopted was an extensive public works scheme. The day after the proclamation, the provisional government announced its intention to establish 'National Workshops', and made them the responsibility of M. Marie, an implacable opponent of socialism and Louis Blanc's 'organisation of labour' system. According to McKay 'He had no intention of seeing the National Workshops become a socialist experiment' (McKay, 1965: 12).

Though originally legislated to provide for 10,000 places, ten times as many applicants had to be accommodated within three months (Table 1). The Municipal Mayors who were given the power to authorise entitlement to work at the National Workshops declared everyone who applied as suitable to deflect the pressure of remonstrating applicants away from themselves (McKay, 1965: 13-14).

Table 1 Employees of the National Workshops of Paris⁷

March 15	14,000
March 31	28,350
April 15	64,870
April 30	99,400
May 15	113,010
May 31	116,110
June 15	117,310

The municipal engineers responsible for organising the work resented the use of unskilled and ill-disciplined workers, and consequently arranged too little for them to do. Tens of thousands of Parisian workers were subsequently paid one and a half francs per day to do nothing, and two francs per day on the occasions when they were given work (McKay, 1965: 29). It is not surprising that this policy-development process did not produce an efficient system for employing labour for which there was otherwise no demand. A British parliamentary report of 1893 reproduced this picture of the national workshops from a report of the 'Office du Travail':

no serious control was exercised over these crowds of humanity. Many of the workmen had themselves enrolled in several brigades so as to draw wages from each; others came solely for the purpose of drawing wages though they worked as usual in private workshops. Brigadiers exaggerated the number of men in their brigades in order to appropriate the excess wages which they were supposed to distribute, workmen who had a disagreement with their employers combined, deserted their own workshops, and went to the national workshops. This was done by the paper stainers and hatters ('Le Placement des Employes', quoted in Board of Trade (1893: 385).

The chaotic nature of the scheme was partially the consequence of the tensions within the cabinet on the question of the elimination of unemployment. The majority of its members were liberal republicans, generally anti-socialist, who sought to establish political reform

(eg., representative parliament) not social reform (eg., wealth redistribution, elimination of poverty and unemployment). Luis Blanc and a few others who were socialists were only included in the government to placate the tens of thousands of armed workers who had constituted the bulk of the revolutionary force that had delivered them to office. The National Workshops were a further concession, agreed under duress, and to forestall the adoption of the more socialist arrangement that Blanc had long promoted. Indeed, the more chaotic the National Workshops were, the easier it would be to later justify their closure as a 'laudable but impractical' exercise in utopianism.

Having been forced to make these concessions at the outset of their reign the 'moderate republicans' began to plan and execute their counter-moves. To give themselves the privacy to do so, they first encouraged Blanc and his followers to decamp to the Luxemburg Palace to hammer out the details of a program of social reform with the workers of Paris, while they remained at the Hotel de Ville, purportedly to organise the first National election, and handle the more mundane matters of day-to-day administration (Blanc, 1858: 92-99; Sewell, 1979: 198-201). They then secretly developed a strategy to close the National Workshops as soon as they could train and equip a militia (the 'Garde Mobile') capable of suppressing the worker uprising the closure was expected to provoke. To mask their intentions from the enfranchised workers prior to the April 23 elections for the National Assembly, from which a new government was to be formed, Provisional Government members such as Public Works Minister Marie continued to publicly support extension of the National Workshop system even as they planned its destruction (McKay, 1965: 41). Meanwhile, steps were taken to impose order and dilute socialist militancy among the workers through the imposition of a military-style chain of command within the National Workshops devised by Emile Thomas, a young and ambitious university graduate who was consequently appointed National Workshops Director (McKay 1965: 21). Perhaps underestimating the real hostility of the Government toward the 'Right to Work', being himself convinced of its value, Thomas sought to instil loyalty for the Provisional Government in the workshop workforce to justify the scheme's retention (McKay, 1965: 20-33).

The duplicitous strategy of expressing public commitment to the 'right to work' and the National Workshops system, and for the economic security they provided to newly enfranchised workers, while secretly planning their withdrawal, proved effective. Candidates of the Left were poorly organised and consequently poorly supported in the National Assembly election of May 4th that returned to power key Monarchist officials who had held office under the deposed Louis Phillipe, as well as supporters of the more conservative elements of the Provisional Government (Sewell, 1979: 200; Moss, 1984: 392). The Assembly appointed an Executive Commission consisting of all the members of the former provisional government, with the exception of socialist representatives Luis Blanc and 'Albert' (Board of Trade, 1893: 386).

This resurgence encouraged the anti-socialists to become more outspoken in their denunciation of the reformers demands (McKay, 1965: 62-3). A worker protest over alleged election fraud in Rouen was brutally suppressed by the National Guard, raising apprehension as to the attitude of France's new government towards workers (McKay, 1965: 61). The new assembly formed on May 4, and on May 12 the new Minister for Public Works (Trelat) told Emile Thomas that the National Workshops would be dissolved as soon as a process for doing so was determined. The Luxembourg Commission continued to meet but it soon became apparent that its policy recommendations were to be ignored (Hill, 1960: 234). Public disquiet with the new government's attitude to social reform was possibly already triggered by the assembly's firm rejection of Luis Blanc's May 10th call for a Ministry of 'Labour and Progress', an institution for carrying to implementation the measures formulated in worker consultations at the Luxembourg during the period of the Provisional Government (Blanc, 1858: 389-90). A mass demonstration on May 15, ostensibly in support of Polish self-rule, but which was to demand that the National Assembly honour the social reform

agenda of the February revolution, invaded the new Assembly and an alleged 'provocateur' ('Huber') briefly seized the podium and called for the formation of a new provisional government. The unarmed mob was quickly dispersed by the National Guard who set about rounding up the organisers (Amann, 1970).

During May 15 – May 24 the executive accelerated its plans to dissolve the workshops, informing the Assembly of their intention on May 17 in an address by Trelat. At noon the following day an extra-parliamentary committee of experts (three government engineers and four civil engineers) was established to advise on the future of the workshops. By 6.30 pm they had interviewed Emile Thomas for half an hour and the General Secretary for the Public Works department for two hours, then wrote their 24 page report throughout the night and presented it for printing at 8am the next morning. 1200 copies were printed and never distributed, for while Trelat approved of the report's support for closure of the Workshops, the Executive disapproved of its suggestions to preserve the 'right to work' by other means.

'It was believed at the time in certain quarters that the government's action reflected particularly its dissatisfaction with the formal recognition of the "right to work". And it is true that the report not only recognised the 'right to work' as a general principle, but urged its extension to include adequate provision, in the form of state aid, for the care of those unable to avail themselves of the state's offer of work (the aged, the sick, orphans, et al). It is highly probable that the Executive Commission had no desire to prejudice its position with the assembly, a large number of whose members were known to be very hostile to the "right to work" (McKay, 1965: 86-87)

Though suppressed, the report of the extra-parliamentary expert committee provided items 2,3,4 and 5 of the instructions issued for implementation to Workshops Director Emile Thomas by Minister Trelat on May 24 that began the dissolution of the Workshops:

1. Unmarried workers, eighteen to twenty five years of age, were to be given the option of enlistment in the army or dismissal from the Workshops.
2. A census of the workers was to be taken at once. Those resident in Paris less than six months prior to May 24 were to be dismissed.
3. From the lists provided in a placement bureau employers might require whatever number of workmen they needed. Those refusing to accept such offers were to be dismissed.
4. Those who remained temporarily members of the Workshops were to be paid on a piece-work basis.
5. Workers were to be organised and sent to the departments, there to be employed on public works under the direction of government engineers (McKay, 1965: 90)

A key part of the strategy was to send as many workers as possible out of Paris before they had time to organise (Charnier, 1849: 53). It was the publication of this letter in the Parisian 'Moniteur' newspaper on June 22nd that later sparked the mass insurrection of June 23rd (Moss, 1985: 546; Board of Trade, 1893: 388). Initially, Thomas protested to Trelat that the measures were 'utterly inconsistent with the "guarantee of work" and that their execution would imperil public order' (McKay, 1965: 93). The new government had already begun to doubt Thomas' loyalty following his failure to keep the workshop workers away from the mass demonstration of May 15, as he had from previous rallies. His intention to stand as a candidate at a by-election on June 4 and his opposition to the dissolution of the workshops gave rise to a fear within the business-aligned elements of the Provisional Government that he would campaign for the retention of the workshops. To prevent him doing so, he was removed from Paris under police escort on the evening of May 26 to Bordeaux, without being allowed to first visit his home to tell his family where he was being sent. When Trelat attended the central office of the National Workshops the next morning, he told an agitated gathering of 200 – 300 people that Thomas had been despatched to Bordeaux to study how the National Workshops may be extended (McKay, 1965: 98).

On My 30th the National Assembly decreed the substitution of piece-work for day-work, but the change was difficult to carry out, and the results were unsatisfactory. On June 15th the Assembly determined on the suppression of the works, and to guard against the consequences an army under General Cavaignac was concentrated on Paris. On June 22nd the proposals for the enlistment of workmen between 18 and 25 and the other measures of reduction detailed in M Trelat's letter to Emile Thomas of May 24th appeared in the "Moniteur", and the same day an attempt was made to organise the first batch of departure from Paris. The result was the bloody insurrection of June 23rd and following days, which, thanks to the military organisation of the national works, was only suppressed after three days of street fighting. In the course of the insurrection the Executive Commission resigned and General Cavaignac became dictator (Board of Trade, 1893: 388).

The withdrawal of the proclamation of the 'right to work' provoked the workers of Paris to erect barricades and challenge the authority of the government of the National Assembly, an authority that was now backed by the National Guard and the new militia, the 'Guard Mobile' (Moss, 1985: 546). It took four days (June 23 – 26) of intense street warfare to suppress this rebellion, leaving 6000 workers dead. The victory of the bourgeois republicans was short-lived. The Presidential election of December 10 1848 saw the election of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, nephew of Napoleon I, defeating the republicans who were associated with the bloody suppression of the workers. In December 1851, frustrated in his attempt to extend his Presidency for a further four year term, he declared himself dictator, and a year later Emperor Napoleon III, preserving the formal trappings of a constitutional monarch while suppressing debate and dissent until acceding to liberal reforms in the 1870's. Reviewing the episode of the Second Republic in an 1893 report on 'Agencies and Methods for Dealing with the Unemployed', the Labour Department of the British Board of Trade summarised the aftermath thus:

The gigantic schemes subsequently carried out under the Second Empire for the rebuilding of large parts of Paris, served for many years to provide employment for Paris workmen, and while they lasted, formed an effective substitute for the ill-fated workshops (Board of Trade, 1893: 388).

3. Principles of opposition to the right to work

The French experience of 1848 reflected a clear awareness among the parties contesting the role of the state as to where their strategic interests lay in relation to the elimination of unemployment. The first demand of the Parisian workers on securing a voice for themselves in the new Republic was for the elimination of unemployment through the direct intercession of the state in the labour market. While their demand for Blanc's 'Organisation of Labour' scheme was deflected, the rapid deployment of the 'National Workshops', an application of previously temporary public works strategies on an unprecedented scale, served the key purpose of placating them with hitherto unknown employment security. The domination of the Provisional Government by liberal bourgeois interests ensured that begrudging support for the elimination of full employment would last only so long as the workers that had delivered them power retained the ability to take it from them. Most significantly, implementation of the 'right to work' was not entrusted to its prime pre-revolution advocate within the government (Luis Blanc), but to a member of the government who had no enthusiasm for making the scheme a sustainable proposition. As soon as a reliable military force was available, capable of suppressing the inevitable protests of workers, the commitment to full employment was withdrawn to restore the subordination of workers.

The history of this period was subsequently contested by the surviving participants, including the persistent yet spurious attribution of the design and operation of the 'National Workshops' to Luis Blanc⁸, who had fled to England after his indictment on August 26 for the disturbances at the National Assembly on May 15 (Blanc, 1858). British officialdom (eg., Ambassador Lord Normanby) expressed its dismay at the loss of life, blaming the social

instability on the National Workshops (Hill, 1960: 234). The connection of universal suffrage with demands for full employment in France may have worried the British establishment, particularly as they could see how the February revolution breathed life into the parliamentary reform movement in Britain (Quinault, 1988: 833-835).

Hostility to the right to work, evident in the Lamartine government's decision to avoid distribution of the report calling for the closure of the National Workshops, indicates that it was the principle of guaranteed work, ie., full employment, that was at issue, not the specific mechanism for its delivery (the National Workshops). This point is explicitly made by Nassau Senior, economic consultant to the authors of Britain's Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, who travelled in France from May to June 1848, reporting on the views of his contacts in the Paris establishment.

It was not the 20th decree, creating the ateliers nationaux [national workshops], which occasioned the rebellion of June. It was the 19th – that which guaranteed employment to every citizen, and recognised the right of work-people to combine. Had not that decree been issued, relief to the unemployed would have been given *as* relief. It might have been subjected to conditions to which none but the destitute would have submitted; and, though subject to these conditions, if tendered as charity, it would have been accepted with gratitude. But the 19th decree converted it into a debt; and the first consequence was to deprive the Government of all power of selection (Senior, 1973: 57-58)

During his stay, Senior socialised with the intellectual establishment of Paris recounting the analysis of Alec de Tocqueville of the 'right to work' as a pathway to either communism or socialism:

If the State (says M. de Tocqueville) attempts to fulfil its engagement by itself giving work, it becomes a great employer of labour. As it is the only capitalist that cannot refuse employment, and as it is the capitalist whose work-people are always the most lightly tasked, it will soon become the greatest, and soon after the only great, employer. The public revenue, instead of merely supporting the Government, will have to support all the industry of the country. As rents and profits are swallowed up by taxes, private property, now become a mere encumbrance, will be abandoned to the State; and, subject to the duty of maintaining the people, the Government will be the only proprietor. This is Communism.

If, on the other hand, the State, in order to escape from this train of consequences, does not itself find work, but takes care that it shall always be supplied by individual capitalists, it must take care that at no place and at no time there be a stagnation. It must take on itself the management of both capitalists and labourers. It must see that the one class do not injure one another by over trading, or by the other by competition. It must regulate profits and wages – sometimes retard, sometimes accelerate, production or consumption. In short, in the jargon of the school, it must organise industry. This is socialism (Senior, 1973: 52-53).

Senior's own critique of the National Workshops emphasized the degree to which they undermined the motivation of the working people to exert themselves in their work:

The hours supposed to be employed were nine and a half. We say supposed to be employed, because all eleemosynary employment, all relief work, all parish work (to use expressions that have become classical in Ireland and England) is in fact nominal. When the relations of the labourer and the capitalist are in the state which in a highly civilised society may be called natural, since it is the form which, in such a society, they naturally tend to assume when undistorted by mischievous legislation, the diligence of the labourer is their necessary result. As he is paid only in proportion to

his services, he strives to make those services as valuable as he can. His exertions perhaps ought more frequently to be moderated than to be stimulated. A large proportion of our best artisans wear themselves out prematurely. In another state of society, which is also natural in a lower civilisation – that of slavery – a smaller, but still considerable, amount of industry is enforced by punishment. But in eleemosynary employment there is absolutely no motive for the labourer to make any exertion, or for the employer, a mere public officer, to enforce it. The labourer is, at all events, to have subsistence for himself and his family. To give him more would immediately attract to the public paymaster all the labourers of the country; to give him less, and yet require his services, would be both cruelty and fraud. He cannot be discharged – he cannot be flogged – he cannot be put to task work – since to apportion the tasks to the various powers of individuals would require a degree of zealous and minute superintendence which no public officer ever gave. When the attempt was made in Paris, men accustomed to the work earned fifteen francs a day, those unaccustomed to it not one. (Senior, 1973: 54-55)

Senior contrasts the guarantee of employment, which removes conditionality from access to the means of subsistence, to the conditional provision of welfare. The latter is a conditional threshold while the former is not:

Now, to guarantee subsistence to all – to proclaim that no man, whatever be his vices or even his crimes, shall die of hunger or cold – is a promise that in the state of civilisation of England, or of France, can be performed not merely with safety, but with advantage; because the gift of mere subsistence may be subjected to conditions which no one will voluntarily accept. But *employment* cannot safely be made degrading, and cannot practically be made severe’ (Senior, 1973: 57-58).

4. Conclusion

In the absence of the subsequent 150 years of abstract theorising and obfuscation, and the conditional ameliorations of the welfare state, those contesting the ‘right to work’ in 1848 were remarkably clear sighted as to where their interests lay in relation to the question of full employment. Parisian workers knew what they especially wanted for themselves from the Second Republic: the elimination of unemployment by means of the state providing them with work whenever they were unemployed. Members of the employing class and their liberal intellectual advocates, to whom the workers of Paris had delivered power, knew equally well that the ‘right to work’ and full employment would undermine the master / servant relationship that produced their wealth and prestige. Under threat of a menacing mob, the right to work was conceded, but the liberal majority within the provisional government privately determined that it would revoke this undertaking as soon as practicable. To do so they had to win the electoral support of working people in order to gain the necessary control over the legislature and the army, and so they professed wholehearted support for the ‘right to work’ and the extension of the National workshops system. Workers voted them into power, the new government revoked the ‘right to work’, and put down the ensuing revolt by slaughtering 6000 people. The need for opponents of full employment to obscure their agenda, to obtain support from those whose interests they intend to harm, continues to muddy debates around full employment to this day.

The consequences of June 1848 reverberate through the annals of labour market history. Britain’s Board of Trade report of 1893 on ‘agencies and methods for dealing with the unemployed’ detailed the chaos of the National Workshops and the violence engendered by their closure, providing late 19th and early 20th century opponents of the ‘right to work’ with damning proof of the consequences of interfering in the free contract of labour. For Britain’s rulers, the ‘right to work’ was an impossible concession, even when 20,000 unemployed rioted in Trafalgar Square in February 1886, and even when a ‘Right to Work’ Bill threatened to split the governing Liberal Party in 1908 (Quirk, 2007).

How can we understand the implacable nature of this opposition?

The social power of employers ultimately derives from being the arbiters of who shall have economic security and social inclusion and who shall not. Their ability to extract a toll (in surplus labour, productivity, profit, servility) from those seeking passage from unemployment to employment, and subsequently to jobs of higher status and remuneration, is compromised by the existence of alternate exits from unemployment, or actions that make it less repulsive. If the state employs those whom private employers choose to reject, the strategic advantage of controlling entry to private employment is lost, diminishing the social power employers derive from that control. They could be reduced to the status of just another occupation - commission based workers engaged in directing capital to its most profitable uses, on terms of greater mutual acceptability to those investing their labour.

Since 1848, public comprehension of the real economy has been subject to skilful re-engineering, with false commitment to the goal of full employment, ala the provisional republican government, a strategically necessary and endemic feature of liberal democracies.

Undoubtedly, as with the National Workshop's director Emile Thomas, and the engineers who produced the suppressed report calling for the closure of the National Workshops, throughout the machinery of government today are people who take official commitment to full employment seriously. Inevitably, moments arise when they are forced to rationalise discrepant instructions and policies handed down from their superiors. Plausible rationale are skilfully composed for their benefit as much as for the public – the need to be 'cruel to be kind', to help people by preventing their dependency on help, the social justice of 'mutual obligation', the need to attack worker's pay and conditions to protect their jobs – all justified as means to an end (full employment) that, in reality, their superiors are determined to avoid realising at all costs.

Proponents of full employment require a clear perspective of who their opponents are: not the sincere adherents of Marshallian abstractions of labour supply and demand that spuriously reduce humans to the status of commodities, nor the welfare officials indoctrinated with dependency theory and fallacious notions of saving 'taxpayers money'. The real debate that must be had is with the hard core of class warriors who construct these smokescreens, whose implacable opposition to full employment would countenance the slaughter of 6000 working people, and who consciously obscure the nature of their game, being the preservation of social domination.

References

Amann, P.(1970) A "Journée" in the Making: May 15, 1848, *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 42, No. 1. (March), 42-69.

ABS (2007) Australian Labour Market Statistics, Catalogue No. 6105, April, Canberra.

Beveridge, W.H. (1930), *Unemployment A Problem of Industry*, AMS Press, New York.

Board of Trade (1893) *Agencies and Methods for Dealing with the Unemployed*, Parliamentary Paper C- 7182, Parliament of the United Kingdom.

Blanc, L. (1992) 'Organisation of Labour' in Fried, A & Sanders R. eds *Socialist Thought: A Documentary History*, Columbia University Press, New York.

Blanc, L. (1858) '1848. Historical Revelations, inscribed to Lord Normanby', Chapman and Hall, London,

Carey, A. (1995) *Taking the Risk out of Democracy*, UNSW, Sydney

Charnier, R.N. (1849) *Review of the French Revolution of 1848: From the 24th of February to the election of the first President*. Vol II. Reeve, Benham and Reeve, London

- Devraj, R. (2007) 'India Passes World's Biggest Job Guarantee Plan', *Inter Press News Agency*, available at: <http://ipsnews.net/interna.asp?idnews=30004>
- Fasel, G. (1974) 'The Wrong Revolution: French Republicanism in 1848', *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 4. (Autumn.), 654-677.
- Furlough, E. (1991) *Consumer Cop-operation in France: The politics of Consumption 1834-1930*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca.
- Hill, H.B. (1960) 'A Letter from Louis Blanc in Exile', *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 32, No. 3. (Sept), 234-240.
- Ingg, M. (2007) 'Indian job-guarantee model could have relevance for South Africa', *Engineering News*, Creamer Media (Pty) Ltd. Published online: 19 Oct 07. Available at: <http://www.engineeringnews.co.za/>
- Kalecki, M. (1971) "Political Aspects of Full Employment" in *Selected Essays on the Dynamics of the Capitalist Economy*, Cambridge University Press.
- Lawn, P. (2007) 'Achieving ecological sustainability with the introduction of a Sustainability Guarantee', *International Journal of Global Energy Issues*, Vol. 28, No.1 111 – 133
- Korpi, W. (1981) 'Political and economic Explanations of Unemployment: A Cross Sectional and Long-Term Analysis' *British Journal of Political Science*, No. 21
- Korpi, W. (2002) *The Great Trough in Unemployment: A long Term View of Unemployment, Inflation Strikes and the Profit/ Wage Ratio*, Swedish institute for Social Research, Stockholm University.
- Kriesler, P. and Halevi, J. (2001) 'Political Aspects of Buffer Stock Employment' in Carlson E. & Mitchell, W. eds *Achieving Full Employment, The Economic and Labour Relations Review Supplement to volume 12, 2001*, Industrial Relations Research Centre, UNSW, Sydney
- Marx, K. (1976) *Capital*, Volume 1, Penguin, London.
- McKay, D.C.(1965) *The National Workshops : a study in the French Revolution of 1848*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Mitchell, W.F. and Wray, R. (2005) 'In Defence of the Employer of Last Resort', *Journal of Economic Issues*, March, 39(1), 235-245.
- Moss, B. H.(1976) 'Producers' Associations and the Origins of French Socialism: Ideology from Below', *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 48, No. 1. (Mar., 1976), 69-89.
- Moss, B. H., (1984) 'June 13, 1849: The Abortive Uprising of French Radicalism', *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 3. (Spring), 390-414
- Moss, B. H., (1985) Marx and Engels on French Social Democracy: Historians or Revolutionaries? *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 46, No. 4. (Oct. – Dec), 539-557.
- Quinault, R.(1988) '1848 and Parliamentary Reform', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 31, No. 4. (Dec), 831-851.
- Quirk V. (2003) 'The Problem of a Full Employment Economy', *Working Paper 04-02*, Centre of Full Employment and Equity, Newcastle, Australia.
- Quirk, V. (2005) 'Methods and Motivation of Social Domination', in Wrightson, G. (ed) *Creating a Culture of Full employment: Conference proceedings of the 7th Path to Full employment Conference and 12th National Conference on Unemployment*, 8-9 December, 2005, University of Newcastle. Australia.
- Quirk, V (2007) 'The Right to Work: Britain 1886-1912', *International Journal of environment, Workplace and Employment*, (forthcoming in 2008).

Senior, N.W. (1973) *Journals kept in France and Italy From 1848 to 1852*, De Capo Press, New York

Sewell W.H., (1979) 'Corporations Republicaines: The Revolutionary Idiom of Parisian Workers in 1848', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 21, No. 2. (Apr), 195-203.

¹ Research Officer, Centre of Full Employment and Equity, University of Newcastle.

² These schemes, variously known as 'Right to Work' (RTW), 'Job Guarantee' (JG) or 'Employer of Last Resort' (ELR) differ from past Keynesian approaches to unemployment which proposed that practically any sort of government spending would produce demand for labour and hence full employment, whereas the RTW / JG / ELR approach is for the state to directly employ people in work of public benefit at a minimum wage sufficient to maintain a decent basic standard of living. Linked with a skills analysis and training function, and intimately connected to a public employment service, this is proposed as a replacement to unemployment as a 21st century buffer stock to the private labour market (Mitchell & Wray, 2005). For an example of how it might be applied in Australia, see Quirk, et al (2006).

³ This is notwithstanding that unemployment is officially low in Australia, according to the unreliable persons-based measures favoured by governments. In the highly casualised Australian labour market, to count a person with one hour's employment as 'employed', instead of 34 hours 'unemployed', hides the extent of labour underutilisation. The Australian Bureau of Statistics measure of labour underutilisation indicates that as of September 2006, 10.6% of the willing labour supply was unutilised, despite the lowest level in official UE rates since the 1970's (ABS cat.6105). For more on hours-based measures of labour underutilisation see CoffEE Labour Market Indicators (CLMI) on the CoffEE website.

⁴ For example: 'Often inaccurate and thoroughly unreliable, Blanc's reminiscences need to be subjected to the critical control of other materials' (McKay, 1965: 177).

⁵ For example, the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS), established by the early Hawke government in Australia, has continued to survive for a decade under the Liberal-National government of John Howard, and includes a provision for the establishment of co-operatives along lines not dissimilar to Blanc. This aspect of NEIS has hardly been used owing to the absence of appropriate infrastructure to deliver it (Source: Department of Employment and Workplace Relations).

⁶ 'No better commentary on Blanc's lack of a practical program with which to implement his general scheme is needed than his apparent inability to use this magnificent opportunity to force his plans upon the government' (McKay, 1965, 11). If Blanc was unsure of how to advance the cause of cooperative enterprises on the second day of a revolution within a cabinet in which the majority was anti-socialist, this does not necessarily mean he did not have a concept of how his scheme could be implemented over time.

⁷ This table was compiled by McKay from several sources, after determining which of several discrepant accounts was the more plausible in his opinion (McKay, 1965: 159).

⁸ Blanc protested: 'In point of fact it is monstrous to confound the industrial system developed in my 'Organisation of Labour' with the system, so justly stigmatised, of the national workshops managed by M. Emile Thomas, under the sanction of M. Marie. In the *social workshops*, as suggested by me, the workmen were to pursue their business, the State lending them capital, to be repaid according to certain stipulations; they, working exclusively for their own benefit, that is to say, with all the stimulus of personal interest, combined with the influence exercised by the pursuit of a common object, and that point of honour which belongs to *esprit de corp*' (Blanc, 1858)