

FACTORY FOOTBALL: PATERNALISM AND PROFITS

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Ever since 1884, when miners from the Minmi colliery formed the Minmi Rangers, soccer clubs have continually sprung up within coalmines, factories and workshops. In Britain, such famous clubs as Arsenal and West Ham United were formed by workers at the Woolwich Arsenal and Thames Ironworks, respectively.¹ No Australian workers have been able to build such illustrious clubs as these, but, in terms of enthusiasm, local workers have always equalled those who first began the famous 'Gunners' and 'Hammers'.

Simply put, a works soccer club was comprised of employees of the one company. They borrowed the company's name and either played in competitions for works teams or in the all-age divisions of local Football Associations. From World War One onwards hundreds of such clubs were formed. The majority were made up of social players whose ambitions were never pretentious and whose aim was simply to enjoy a game of football with a few mates. The clubs formed around the workplace as a convenient way of recruiting players and supporters. The taking of the company's name reflected what the workers demonstrably had in common.

This paper examines the support employees received from their bosses. For the majority of clubs this did not amount to much and the small scale at which they operated reflected what has always been the pattern of social amateur sport. At the same time, a good number of clubs in Sydney were part of company inspired Sporting and Welfare Associations and therefore did receive sizeable support. These Associations were managerial schemes aimed at creating a more contented, efficient workforce and, as a consequence, larger profits. Thus the question of social control is raised. With sport for employees a prominent part of company welfare plans, the soccer of some works' clubs developed into something more than just football.

The idea of company welfare work had its roots in theories held by enlightened mid-nineteenth century industrialists. By the turn of the century the United States and Britain led the field with companies like Ford, Goodyear, Cadbury, Rowntree and Lever Brothers.² The latter in 1888 had built what was known as Port Sunlight on the banks of the Mersey River, opposite Liverpool. It was not only an extensive soap factory but also a town where employees could live near to their work. The company's aim was to improve the welfare of its workers by supplying housing and a network of welfare benefits. As the years rolled by sporting clubs, educational classes, theatres and special interest societies were built up for the benefit of employees.³

William Lever himself visited the Sunlight Soap Works at Balmain, Sydney in March, 1914.⁴ Two months later the Sunlight Soccer Club was formed. In 1915 the company's management decided to donate the Sunlight Cup for a knock-out competition amongst metropolitan teams.⁶ The competition lasted thirteen consecutive seasons and only lapsed when administrative turmoil saw the collapse of the N.S.W. Soccer Football Association.

Football was not the only sport in which Sunlight was interested. In 1923 the company had developed some land in Drummoyne which, while serving as the soccer club's home ground, also catered for the Sunlight Sports and Welfare Association.⁷ The Association established an Annual Sports Meet at which male and female employees competed. Relay events, sprints, shotput and javelin provided some serious athletics and there was also tunnel ball, sack races and the traditional egg and spoon contest. Moreover, invitations were sent to other major companies in Sydney and the welfare clubs of each supplied competitors. In 1924 the invited guests came from Messrs. Anthony Hordern and Sons Ltd., Farmers Ltd., Hordern Brothers Ltd., Elliott Brothers, Nestles and Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Co. Ltd., and S.T. Leigh and Co.⁸

While Lever Brothers was one of the first companies in N.S.W. to adopt sporting and welfare schemes, others were not slow to follow suit. In the years immediately following the war, the four trading companies which comprised the British Tobacco Co. (Australia) Ltd. were regularly playing sport against each other at the Raleigh Park complex, Kensington.⁹ They also found competition with

Malleable Castings and the paint manufacturers, Lewis Berger and Sons. Cricket, rugby league and soccer were the three games mainly played but numerous others sprang up too.¹⁰ In the city, all the major retailers were active in promoting welfare work, Anthony Hordern in particular.¹¹ In 1921 thirteen acres were purchased at Dulwich Hill and developed as the Hordernian Sports Ground.¹² Jennifer MacCulloch has shown that a large range of sporting and social activities was provided by the stores and, for good measure, company holiday homes were supplied by Farmers and Anthony Hordern for the recuperation of their hard working female staff.¹³

The idea of welfare schemes was spawned in Britain during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was a complex period. The social reform movement was sprouting, class conflict was increasing as organized labour confronted big business, and the economic rivalry of Europe, particularly Germany, was believed to have become a serious threat. The mental mood of the nation was one of looking inward and this was encapsulated in what became known as the ideology of 'national efficiency'. Britons believed that in every walk of life - industry, government, military, education, health and fitness, there was a need to pull their socks up, to become more 'efficient'. If the nation failed to do so then its global prominence would soon be a thing of the past.¹⁴

It was in response to, and a measure of, this mentality that British industrialists, seeking to boost productivity, turned to welfare schemes for their employees. It was reasoned that by improving employment conditions workers would so increase their production that corporate efficiency and profits would ultimately rise too. Not all, or even a majority of British employers held this view, but those who set up welfare schemes were convinced that they would prove effective.¹⁵ Given this, plus the fact that British capital and management so dominated Australian companies, it was only a matter of time before the idea of workers' welfare was transported.

A humanitarian influence, typified by men like Seebohm Rowntree, was mixed with the profit motive when British manufacturers first introduced welfare.¹⁶ However, by World War One it is hard to see welfare in any light other than that of business management. This was particularly the case when it was introduced to

Australia. 1915 to 1929 was a period of considerable industrial strife. Companies were in need of better industrial relations to ensure their profitability. Lewis Berger and Sons (Australia) Ltd. had this in mind in 1928 when the company historian, referring to the company's welfare programme, wrote

"The Berger Returned Sailors and Soldiers' Club" has sprung into being. There are in addition several other well supported social and sporting associations within the organisation, and the management boast proudly of the fact that there has not been one instance of industrial trouble of any kind since the day on which the Works started. Truly this is a wonderful tribute to the workmen in Australia!¹⁷

As the 1920s progressed the number of works soccer teams and Sporting and Welfare Associations increased, In 1921 Lewis Berger and Sons supplied a home field and dressing sheds to the teams supplied by its employees.¹⁸ Shortly after, the engineering firm of Babcock and Wilcox opened a new ground at its Regents Park plant for the use of its soccer teams. The company was soon donating trophies and by 1925 had sanctioned a lunch-time competition.¹⁹ In 1923 the Kandos Cement Company at Lithgow had given a long lease on land it owned to the Kandos Soccer Club, the members of whom were all employed by the Company.²⁰ In 1924 the Metropolitan Soccer Football Association appointed one of its vice-presidents, F.C. Packer, as the secretary of a Warehouse and Factories competition, which was to be played on Saturday mornings.²¹ S.T. Leigh and Co., printer for British Tobacco, was a certain starter in this competition but, when it lapsed from a want of contestants, the company promptly arranged alternative matches with other business houses. Both Malleable Castings and Lewis Berger and Sons obliged, while W.D. and H.O. Wills and British Australasian Tobacco provided opposition for rugby league matches. All of the games were held at Raleigh Park on Saturday mornings.²²

In 1926 the Lewis Berger Soccer Club decided to take matters into its own hands and persuaded eight other company clubs to join them in a proper competition. Malleable Castings were first and Sunlight, Yellow Cabs, Blue Cabs, North Shore Bridge, Sydney Municipal Council, Auburn Sports Club and Metters quickly followed.²³

Not all of the clubs were from companies which had introduced Sporting and Welfare Associations but, in the next two years, a number of companies notable for them did join. These were Babcock and Wilcox, the tobacco divisions of British Tobacco, and S.T. Leigh and Co. Additional entrants emerged from the glass/timber merchants of Bell and Frazer and Vicars' Woollen Mills of Marrickville.²⁴

Amongst the companies which were adopting workers' sport and welfare the newly established Goodyear plant, located at Granville, was perhaps the most outstanding example. The company, Goodyear Tyre and Rubber (Australia) Pty. Ltd., was, of course, a subsidiary of the American giant. Within a few years of commencing operations in Australia (production began in 1927) the firm was able to boast of four cricket teams, a champion City Houses rugby league club, a similarly successful baseball team and a soccer club, which in 1934 was the first division winner of the Sydney and District League. To complement the external sports the company also developed inter-departmental competitions and these included cricket, tennis, boxing and swimming. Football fields and tennis courts fronted the factory and in 1932 Camellia Park was established. After a grandstand had been added in 1936 the Park became a regular venue for state baseball championship contests and first class soccer matches.²⁵

That Goodyear in Australia should embark on such an ambitious sports programme for its workers was a reflection of those policies which the parent company in America had long pursued. In 1917, the Goodyear chairman, Paul W. Litchfield, had laid out a tidy £90,000 on what was known in the U.S.A. as Goodyear Hall. A building that was six stories high, it was for the healthy recreation of Goodyear workers and included a gymnasium that had a seating capacity of 5,000, a fully equipped theatre to seat 1,400, sufficient club rooms for any interest that employees had, a swimming pool, showers, billiard rooms, dining rooms, and, in the basement, a bowling alley and rifle range!²⁶ The theory behind the Hall

. . . was that it was a stock dividend to employees, comparable to the stock dividends paid to stockholders. It would stimulate education, recreation, and physical well-being, and in so doing enable a man to increase his productiveness, become more

useful to himself, to his company, and to society...²⁷

With expressions such as these from the company's historian it would be naive to believe that Litchfield's £90,000 was anything but an investment. It was too considerable a sum to be charity and the company would have fully expected a return on its capital outlay. Certainly Litchfield, on humanitarian grounds, believed his workers should be treated well and on this score he was in accord with such magnates as Henry Ford and John D. Rockefeller.²⁸ However, as with these two men, the Goodyear boss was mostly concerned with profits. If these were to be maximized then experience showed that employees needed to be treated well.

At Goodyear's plant at Granville the executives who established and then ran the factory were well versed in Litchfield's policies. Nearly all of the top men in Australia were American and had worked at one time or another at headquarters, back in Akron, Ohio.²⁹ The sporting activities were therefore hardly unusual and neither were the many social benefits that workers additionally received.

Goodyear's enthusiasm for workers' welfare was not exceeded by any other company in Australia but it was matched by the British Tobacco Co. Ltd. To list the entire inventory of social and sporting activities available to the tobacco workers would be tedious,³⁰ but the green belt of sporting facilities that ringed all the Raleigh Park buildings was sufficient testament to the company's sporting policies. Yet sport was only one section of employees' welfare at Raleigh Park for there were also educational and cultural activities and, to emphasize the active role management played, company assistance for housing, life insurance, health benefits, savings accounts and retirement funds.³¹ In effect, nearly all facets of the employee's life were covered.

Most companies tried to mask the paternalism of their welfare work but British Tobacco's efforts were far from strenuous. In fact, the company was not at all adverse to emphasizing its role as benevolent provider. In an article on the Raleigh Park complex that appeared in the specialist sporting paper *The Referee*, the correspondent was fed by company sources to conclude that

Sport is a big and important item at Raleigh Park. It has achieved all it was supposed to do - united a huge force into one happy and contented family.³²

Another article, this time from the company itself, claimed that

Quite apart from the material benefits which the Employees have obtained from the Benefits Schemes - and which have made for a contented spirit among Employees, with a resultant greater efficiency - the Management and the Employees have, as a result of the working out of the Schemes, been brought almost unconsciously into a closer personal relationship, which has made for a wider comprehension and a better understanding of each other's point of view.³³

Images such as these were the bread and butter of those magazines which companies produced for their employees.³⁴ They were excellent tools of propaganda and combined to create a subtle psychology. The idea was to promote the concept of an industrial family, along with its accompanying innuendoes of benevolent parent, gratitude, loyalty and co-operation. If workers believed that by a welfare scheme their company meant to look after them then they would reciprocate by working and performing better. Corporate efficiency and productivity would increase and an overall higher profit would soon be registered.

While management expounded on the improvement in the employment conditions of its workforce, and while business propaganda couched the benefits in terms of how the individual was a better person for them, the fact was that company welfare acted as an industrial bribe. As already seen, the management at Lewis Berger and Sons was well pleased that the social and sporting associations for their employees had the effect of reducing strikes, go-slows and any industrial disruptions. British Tobacco was no less impressed with the ability of company sport and welfare to unite "a huge [work] force into one happy and contented family".³⁵ Yet were workers themselves better off? There was no change to the status quo, with the bosses maintaining their economic supremacy and the workers still left with only their labour to sell. For all their welfare benefits at Raleigh Park the tobacco workers were only working to produce fatter profits for shareholders and, in doing so, were docilely following the direction in which Business wished

them to go.

Little research has yet been done on the history of company welfare in Australia³⁶ but, on the question of whether employers consciously used welfare as a tool of social control, there are indications that this was so. Firstly, as revealed by Roy Hay, British employers in the early twentieth century had found that welfare benefits were "both productive and effective as a means of social control".³⁷ There seems little reason to suspect that Australian employers, particularly if they were subsidiaries of British companies, would not have been told this or realized it themselves. Secondly, articles written in 1925, 1928 and 1931³⁸ show that the trade unions in Australia were suspicious of industrial concessions and the more militant sections did consider welfare as "the employers' device to strengthen their hold on employees".³⁹ Of course some workers found welfare much to their liking. With a range of company-sponsored benefits that nursed and suckled British Tobacco workers there were few grizzles about the company's policy. Nevertheless, elsewhere other workers refused outright the advances of employers over welfare, or, having taken up such schemes, soon rejected them after management used them as bargaining weapons. One case in point was when a company claimed that increased wages should be refused on account of newly introduced welfare benefits. The company's welfare scheme was instantly rejected by its workers.⁴⁰

The antagonism between labour and capital seems ultimately to have limited the spread of company welfare throughout Australian industry. For both parties the traditions between the two, traditions of suspicion and hostility, were too deepseated for any form of mutual co-operation to survive. However, there were at least three other reasons why company welfare failed to catch on. First, rather than relying on voluntary concessions from employers, trade unions maintained their policy of using legislation to improve employment conditions.⁴¹ Second, welfare schemes were reliant on the size of the individual company. Unless there was a sufficiently large workforce, management lacked the economies of scale to implement comprehensive schemes. This fact was commented upon by F.R.E. Mauldon, of Melbourne University, in 1931. After excluding government departments and state-owned industries, he found that

there were less than 100 private enterprises offering welfare benefits. Yet between them these enterprises accounted for 40,000 employees, with two thirds of the companies employing more than 1,000 workers each, and of those companies which comprised the remaining third, half of them registered 300 or more on their weekly payrolls.⁴² The third reason why company welfare did not catch on was that many employers simply did not believe they would increase efficiency amongst workers. In fact, throughout the 1920s, British employers who had supported welfare before 1920 had moved away from such schemes precisely because improvements in efficiency had been disappointing.⁴³

During the twenties and thirties large, notable companies had developed workers' welfare schemes ostensibly for their own purposes. Yet by the late thirties these schemes were already in decline. Organized labour had never taken to them. Part of the welfare schemes had been the provision of recreation facilities, subsidized sports clubs and, included in these, soccer teams. It is a long way to go from soccer, to company sport, to company welfare, to the relationships between labour and capital, but it is a natural progression. Soccer in N.S.W. has traditionally been a working class recreation, with little bourgeois involvement to speak of. This ensures the issue of social control rarely emerges in the game but, in the case of companies who used soccer, and sport in general, as part of their welfare schemes, the game did become entangled with social control questions. As such, it is necessary to explore the wider context in which works soccer clubs existed.

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

- 1 For some details of the clubs' early days, including sources, see Tony Mason, *Association Football and English Society 1863-1915* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), pp. 29-30; Charles P. Korr, "West Ham United Football Club and the Beginnings of Professional Football in East London, 1895-1914"*, *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 13 No. 2 (April, 1978), pp. 211-232.
2. An excellent overview of the history of overseas company welfare work is given in Commonwealth of Australia, Advisory Council of Science and Industry Bulletin No. 15, *Welfare Work* (Melbourne: 1919). The Bulletin itself borrows heavily from the pioneering work of Emily D. Proud, *Welfare Work*:

- Employers' Experiments for Improving Working Conditions in Factories* (2nd edition, London: Bell and Sons, 1916). For more detailed sources on each of the separate companies see Henry Ford, in collaboration with Samuel Crowther, *My Life and Work* (London: Heinemann, 1922); and Allan Nevins, *Ford: The Times, The Man, The Company* (New York: Scribner, 1954), chapters 20 and 21; Hugh Allen, *The House of Goodyear: Fifty Years of Men and Industry* (1949), especially chapter 5; Iolo A. Williams, *The Firm of Cadbury 1831-1931* (London: Constable, 1931), chapter 7; Anne Vernon, *A Quaker Business Man: The Life of Joseph Rowntree 1836-1925* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1958); Charles Wilson, *The History of Unilever: A Study in Economic Growth and Social Change* (London: Cassell, 1954), Vol. 1, chapter 10.
3. For company works on Port Sunlight see Wilson, *op.cit.*; and Unilever Limited, *The Story of Port Sunlight* (Port Sunlight, 1953). A more detailed account, despite coming from a contemporary apologist, is provided by W.L. George, *Labour and Housing at Port Sunlight* (London: Alston Rivers, 1909).
 4. Wilson, *op. cit.*, Vol, 1, p. 198.
 5. Arrow, 2 May, 1914, p. 2.
 6. *ibid.*, 12 June, 1915, p. 2. The competition was for Club League teams affiliated with the Metropolitan Football Association. See *Referee*, 24 February, 1915, p. 13.
 7. The Association was certainly operating in 1924 but, with the soccer club having formed in 1914, it is more than probable that the Association was created during or just after the war. Unfortunately, the records of Lever Brothers are unavailable and secondary sources cannot confirm any foundation date either.
 8. *Trade Hints*, Vol. IV No. 3 (July, 1924), p. 81.
 9. The four companies were British Australasian Tobacco Co. Pty. Ltd., W.D. and H.O. Wills (Australia) Ltd., The States Tobacco Co. Pty. Ltd. and S.T. Leigh and Co. Ltd.
 10. *Trade Hints*, Vol. IV, No. 3 (July, 1924), p. 81.
 11. See *Hordernian Monthly*, January, 1938 (Australia's 150th Anniversary Number), pp. 100-109.
 12. Justly Rawlings, "Welfare Work at Anthony Hordern and Sons Ltd.", *Health*, Vol. III No. 3 (May, 1925), p. 74.
 13. Jennifer MacCulloch, "'This Store is our World': Female Shop Assistants in Sydney to 1930", in Jill Roe (ed.), *Twentieth Century Sydney: Studies in Urban and Social History* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1980), pp. 166-178.
 14. See G.R. Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency: A Study in British Politics and Political Thought, 1899-1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), especially chapter 3; also Bernard Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform: English Social and Imperial Thought 1895-1914*

- (London: Allen and Unwin, 1960), chapter 3.
15. There is a mountain of literature on the origins of British welfare and social policy but Roy Hay's series of articles, concentrating on employers involvement in welfare, are exemplary. See his "Employers and social policy in Britain: the evolution of welfare legislation, 1905-1914", in *Social History*, No. 4 (January, 1977), pp. 435-455 ; "Employers' Attitudes to Social Policy and the Concept of Social Control, 1900-1920", in Pat Thane (ed.), *The Origins of British Social Policy* (London: Croom Helm, 1978); "The British Business Community, Social Insurance and the German Example", in W.J. Mommsen (ed.), *The Emergence of the Welfare State in Britain and Germany* (London: Croom Helm, 1981) See also his book *The Development of the Welfare State in Britain, 1880-1975* (New York: St. Martins, 1978), a collection of documents on the major issues and views held on British social policy.
 16. See Asa Briggs, *Social Thought and Social Action: A Study of Seebohm Rowntree, 1871-1954* (Longmans, 1961), p. 118. Seebohm Rowntree succeeded his father as chairman of Rowntree and Co. Ltd. in 1923. He was a recognized expert in industrial relations and went on to achieve an international reputation. His list of publications was extensive and included *The Human Factor in Business* (London: Longmans, 1921) and three social surveys on poverty in York, published in 1901, 1942 and 1951 respectively.
 17. *Greater Australia*, 1928, p. 66.
 18. *Sydney Sportsman*, 27 April, 1921, p. 7.
 19. See *Fairplay*, 3 May, 1923, p. 10; and *Soccer News*, 2 May, 1925, p. 5.
 20. *Soccer News*, 18 August, 1923, p. 14.
 21. See *Arrow*, 7 March, 1924, p. 3 and 4 April, 1924, p. 11.
 22. *Trade Hints*, Vol. IV No. 3 (July, 1924), p. 83; and Vol. IV No. 4 (October, 1924), p. 123.
 23. *Arrow*, 7 May, 1926, p. 12 and 14 May, 1926, p. 16; *Referee*, 19 May, 1926, p. 13.
 24. *Arrow*, 15 April, 1927, p. 20 and 19 May, 1928, p. 13.
 25. Details from *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 August, 1934, p. 14; *Referee*, 1 August, 1935, p. 24; *Interview with Alfred Quill* (former Goodyear employee) 16 December, 1982.
 26. Allen, *op.cit.*, p. 175; Commonwealth of Australia, *op.cit.*, p. 84.
 27. Allen, *op.cit.*, p. 175.
 28. Commonwealth of Australia, *op.cit.*, pp. 16-19.

29. Details of Goodyear executives given in Goodyear Tyre and Rubber Co. (Australia) Ltd., *The First Twenty-Five Years: Goodyear Celebrates its Silver Anniversary of Manufacturing in Australia, 1927-1952* (Granville, 1952). Further details of executives' careers found in Allen, *op.cit.*
30. The extent of such activities is measured in British Tobacco co. (Australia) Ltd.'s book *Tobacco Manufacturing in Australia* by the *Subsidiary Companies of British Tobacco Co. (Australia) Ltd.* (Sydney: 1926); and, *Oddfellow*, Vol. IV No. 51 (15 December, 1924), pp. 19-22.
31. The details of such schemes are given in British Tobacco, *op. cit.*, unpaginated.
32. *Referee*, 22 August, 1935, p. 3.
33. British Tobacco, *op.cit.*
34. For example, British Tobacco had *Smoke Signals*, S.T. Leigh and co. *Trade Hints*, Goodyear the *Wingfoot Clan*, Anthony Hordern the *Hordernian Monthly*, John Lysaghts the *Lysaghts Gazette* and B.H.P. the *B.H.P. Recreational Review*.
36. Besides Jennifer MacCulloch's article, quality research is limited to Roy Hay's "'For the Benefit of the Company': the Development of Employees Welfare Schemes in Australia, 1880-1980" (paper delivered to *Economic History Society of Australia and New Zealand Biennial Conference*, A.N.U. Canberra, 1980). Superficial details of some companies and the welfare schemes they introduced are given in R.M. Fergus, *Australian Industrial Goodwill* (Melbourne: 1925); and W.W. Woodland, "The Place of the Corporate Body in Public Health" *Health*, Vol. 1 No. 7 (July, 1923) pp. 188-192.
37. Hay (*Social History*), *op.cit.*, p. 440. His article in Thane, *op.cit.*, especially pp. 110-122, explores the question fully.
38. F.J. Riley, "he Attitude of Labour towards the Industrial Welfare Movement", *Health*, Vol. III No. 3 (May, 1925), pp. 65-69 l Anthony R. Middlemiss, "Welfare and Accident Prevention in Industry" *Health*, Vol. VI No. 6 (March, 1928) pp. 47-53; F.R.E. Mauldon Cooperation and Welfare in Industry", in "An Economic Survey of Australia", edited by D.E. Copeland, which is Vol. 158 (November, 1931) of *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*.
39. Middlemiss, *op.cit.*, p. 48
40. Riley, *op.cit.*, p. 67. Irritatingly, the company's identity is not revealed.
41. This argument is used in Mauldon, *op.cit.*, p. 187.
42. *ibid.*, p. 185.
43. Hay, in Thane, *op.cit.*, p. 115.