

AMONGST EQUALS, 1991  
Directed by Tom Zubrycki, 93 minutes  
and

ZUBRYCKI'S POINT  
*Amongst Equals*, utilitarian film in the  
Australian labour movement [Excerpt],  
by John Hughes

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## 1856

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PREFACE

This pamphlet publishes an excerpt of an essay by filmmaker John Hughes on the controversy surrounding the production of *Amongst Equals*, an unfinished documentary film directed by Tom Zubrycki which focuses on the history of the Australian labour movement. Purposed for release on the event of the Australian bicentenary of 1988, the film was financed by the Australian Bicentennial Authority, sponsored by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and produced by Film Australia.

Among many of the cultural projects made for the Australian Bicentenary, *Amongst Equals*’ production was directly implicated in the writing of officiated history. Surrounding the making of this film was a series of events that led the ACTU to withdraw its support for the film and rescind its relationship with Zubrycki. At the bottom of this was *Amongst Equals*’ acknowledgement of the historical defeats of the labour movement, and the film’s emphasis on struggle rather than consensus in advancing workers’ interests, which effectively highlighted an ideological division in the union movement that was perhaps at its height in the 1980s. Ultimately, the ACTU’s final position on the film did not reflect the wishes of many unions and trades hall councils across Australia; mirroring the shift in power contemporary with the making of the film, from the grassroots activism of union members on a local level, to the officialdom of the ACTU and the Australian Labor Party.

What was at stake for the labour movement with *Amongst Equals* was the politics of its own history, a politics that is as broad as the political positions operative in the Australian union movement up until this day. The representation of this history came to be the cause of dispute over the film and its eventual censorship by the ACTU.

Today the history of *Amongst Equals* gives cause to questions latent in all projects seeking to represent history: namely, who writes history and signs off on how it is represented; how adequate is any representation of social experience; and in the case of a film such as this—or any work of art with a utilitarian or instrumentalised purpose—who determines the meaning of a work and its story?

The events that surrounded *Amongst Equals* can now be seen in retrospect and the writing of this history has been the cause for John Hughes to to survey the events in which this film was made. What follows is an excerpt from John’s manuscript for his essay “Zubrycki’s Point: *Amongst Equals*, utilitarian film in the Australian labour movement”, later to be published academically.

Nicholas Tammens

It was September 1992 before a negotiated settlement was finally agreed.<sup>8</sup> The ACTU allowed Zubrycki a non-exclusive licence (to complete and distribute the film) conditional upon including a graphic at the beginning and the end of the film: “*This film does not represent the views of the ACTU. It is an independent production which reflects the views of the filmmaker*” (Clause 10).

But this condition was embedded in an agreement containing further crippling conditions; the ACTU approving the final film (Clause 11) and prohibiting reference in the final film to the dispute itself (Clause 12):

The filmmaker undertakes not to make reference to the dispute in written materials promoting and advertising the documentary and to use his best endeavors to ensure that the dispute is not referred to in any promotion of the documentary by the ABC or other media. (Clause 12, ‘Deed of Agreement between Jotz Productions [Tom Zubrycki] and the ACTU for the production *Amongst Equals*’, September 1, 1992)

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS?

This case study starkly designates a threshold dividing the ‘independent film’ from the sponsored, or utilitarian film. By negative example, it illustrates the constraints that necessarily attend utilitarian projects.

Nonetheless, with regard to creative projects in the labour movement in particular, the arguments made by artists and intellectuals engaged with Art and Working Life in the 1970s and 1980s in Australia offer a powerful rejoinder.

What remains are boundary questions: questions concerning the ethical responsibilities of filmmakers (and historians) working under editorial direction on a utilitarian enterprise; questions of historiography and political purpose; and of utilitarianism in the practice of generating historical narrative.

The case of *Amongst Equals* focuses these questions sharply through the politics of an articulation of the past with so much at stake—the status of class struggle, the authenticity of trade union representation of its rank and file, and an informed understanding of the role of trade unions in Australian history.

While the ideological contest of the 1980s and early 1990s seems somewhat distant today, the underlying structural contradictions remain powerfully formative in the political culture and the social formation of the present.

The dispute around *Amongst Equals* highlights a number of contests, demonstrating that the past cannot be locked off with singular meanings and illustrating the authoritarian character of every attempt to do so.

While social and economic inequality in Australia deepens, trade union membership has fallen to an all-time low (15 per cent of the workforce in 2018), coinciding with an all-time low wages growth.

There are still instances of former NCC-controlled unions selling out vulnerable members in deals that only benefit employers and union executives (for instance in hospitality and retail).

Teaching materials offering genuine historical insights into industrial relations, the labour movement, and Australian history from below are as scarce as ever.

And *Amongst Equals* is still nowhere to be seen. The fact that Film Australia’s 16mm camera original negative

cannot be found means that the invaluable first-hand testimonies collected by Zubrycki during the production of the film are lost.

In preparing for the October 2018 screening of the work-in-progress for Melbourne Cinematheque, 30 years after Australia’s bicentennial year, Zubrycki welcomed the opportunity to reflect on these events, saying:

It’s still a shame this film was never completed. *Amongst Equals* was made at a particular historical moment when the trade union movement was collaborating with a newly elected Labor government in the interests of the recovery of the Australian economy. The Prices and Income Accord, as it was known then, was a historical precedent and both sides had a vested interest in making it work.

My film came along at the wrong political moment because it served as a reminder that there was a long history where conflict played an important role in advancing the cause of workers’ wages and conditions. The two things were incompatible, hence the dispute.

However, times have changed, and a new project could be initiated, looking at the thing anew and creating a genuinely critical film history of the Australian trade union movement. This is a project that I felt was long overdue when I proposed it in 1986. It’s even more overdue now.

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Clause 14 (Deed of Agreement [...] 1992) specifies that the ACTU owns unused footage, and that 50% of any revenue will be paid to the Australian Workers Heritage Centre, Barcaldine, Queensland.

It is essential that the ACTU P. R. film paid for by workers money, be a professional production, which will enhance the image of the Trade Union movement, and the TLC of Queensland can have no confidence that this producer is capable of producing that quality or honouring understandings reached with the Trade Union Movement. Would you please convey our concerns to those officers who might be associated with any dealings with Mr. Tom Zubrycki. (Barton QTLC to Keltly, ACTU December 20, 1988)

And later, during the public controversy about the film, Les Carr wrote in the Public Service Association’s journal *PSA*:

The ACTU should be unhappy with the result. Its not a good portrayal of the trade union movement [...] this situation was of their own creation [...] they didn’t control the project and allowed the wrong director to be chosen [...] General Motors would not use the FJ Holden to sell the Commodore [...] large slabs of the union movement are missing. The conservative unions are missing. The Groupers are missing [...] the politics are missing [...] Scenes you won’t see: pictures of [...] individuals in the office doing the everyday routine work of keeping up with members inquiries and needs. (*PSA*, January-February 1991: 19)

In the film and TV industry magazine *Encore*, under the heading ‘Authors Rights Issues at Stake’, Sandy George quotes Ian Milliss who was an Art and Working Life funded Arts Officer with the Miscellaneous Workers Union (MWU), where Martin Ferguson had been General Secretary from 1984 to 1990:

The simple reality [...] is that [*Amongst Equals*] is boring and superficial ...that is basically why it was rejected by the ACTU Executive [...] Similar proposals are received at the ACTU every week [...] on the totem pole of people involved in *Amongst Equals* Tom Zubrycki is a fair way down the line.

#### THE ACTU CALLS ZUBRYCKI TO THE TABLE

Late in February 1991, Zubrycki was invited to meet with the ACTU in Melbourne to negotiate a settlement. He found himself under duress, with several ACTU negotiators making heavy-handed demands in the attempt to force his agreement to ‘punishment clauses’. With the ACTU head, Martin Ferguson, due to fly out of Australia to attend an International Labor Organisation conference, the ACTU insisted Zubrycki sign an agreement by midday the following day. Under this pressure, Zubrycki went as far as initialling an agreement and returned to Sydney.

Fortunately, he had support from trade union officials and friends familiar with the tactics of practiced trade union negotiators, and over the following days he proposed an amended agreement.

The dispute remained unresolved, with an unsigned draft agreement that allowed Zubrycki to use the material in the film at no cost. That is to say, he could gain access to the camera negative under certain conditions. These included:

any film he might make must include a disclaimer<sup>6</sup> he would facilitate the provision of logs of archives used

he would provide an undertaking to withdraw his allegations of misuse of public funds and censorship, and

“not assist or encourage” any further screenings. (Correspondence Ferguson and Zubrycki, February 17-27, 1991)

Ferguson advised Zubrycki’s lawyers that:

Mr. Zubrycki prefers the role of martyr to that of intelligent, reasonable, discussions (nonetheless) please stress we genuinely desire to give Mr. Zubrycki the opportunity to complete the film, broadly in the original terms discussed earlier this year. (Martin Ferguson to Colin Marks, April 8, 1991)

In March, Zubrycki was still “keen to come to some agreement” (Zubrycki to Ferguson March 6, 1991). But at its March meeting, the ACTU Executive again considered the matter, informed by advice from Duncan, and confirmed its previous position.<sup>7</sup>

In April 1991 Zubrycki wrote to *Filmnews* with a brief account of his “bruising” encounters at the ACTU six weeks earlier, saying that he was not prepared to sign “what amounted to a McCarthyism style recantation” (Zubrycki, *Filmnews*, April 1991). Other key thinkers in and out of the labour movement were also concerned:

Labour historians are also concerned that this dispute will set an unfortunate precedent [Zubrycki’s] interpretation is scholarly and well balanced. It would not be detrimental to the public image of Australian unions [...] if anything it is the ACTU’s attempts to censor the film which will rebound to the detriment of the union movement at large. (Australian Society of the Study of Labour History, Sydney Branch [John Shields] to Ferguson March 4, 1991)

*Amongst Equals* is yet another instance of what most historians and historical filmmakers already know—that writing history is an exceptionally political enterprise. [...] Historians [...] are currently waging a major battle in relation to commissioned work [...] In this particular case the ACTU has overridden the advice of its own historian [...] The author or filmmaker, once hired, must control the final product [...] the film may not always be praising the trade unions and the ACTU, but it does, indirectly, support the very foundations on which the ACTU is built, that is collective working class organisation and action. [...] It is about time the ACTU allowed it to be finished. (Curthoys, *Filmnews*, February 1991: pp. 6-7)

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Disclaimer: “This film is not endorsed by the ACTU, the peak council of the Australian union movement as it believes it does not accurately represent the history of the union movement. It represents the particular view of the filmmaker which we believe is a narrow romanticised view of the movement’s history” (Draft February 20, 1991)

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ACTU Arts Officer Peter Duncan’s paper to the ACTU Executive’s March meeting: “In a nutshell Mr Zubrycki’s position is this [...] he wants to be able to continue to maintain that firstly the ACTU has misused government funds and secondly that we have censored him.”

Trade union history is sometimes dramatic. But, for more than a hundred years, fundamental changes affecting a worker’s life have also resulted from everyday union activity. (*Amongst Equals* Narration draft, September 1988)

#### ZUBRYCKI’S POINT

AMONGST EQUALS, utilitarian film in the Australian labour movement [Excerpt], by John Hughes

[A fully documented version of this excerpt, forthcoming in *Studies in Documentary Film*, draws on the archives of the ACTU, the Australian Bi-Centennial Authority, and Film Australia to reconstruct a forensic account of the unfolding spoiling of the project along political lines during the period of neoliberal reconstruction of the Australian economy in the 1980s and 1990s. The article offers an historical overview of Australian documentary film work related to trade unions and the labour movement, and a summary of the Art and Working Life program of the 1970s and 1980s considering its relevance to issues in play around the *Amongst Equals* saga. What follows here is a “third act” in which the filmmaker “goes public” after years of frustrating impediments.]

#### AMONGST EQUALS GOES PUBLIC

Our object of study - the past - is fought over by all [...] [but] history and politics are not the same, and cannot be reduced to one another [...] those who commission histories, whether in film or print, need to respect the integrity of the historian, or the filmmaker, and not attempt to reduce historical work to the immediate needs of politics. Ann Curthoys, *Filmnews*, 1991

It had been a long haul for Tom Zubrycki since he took the concept for a history of the trade union movement to the ACTU in 1986. In early 1991, having forewarned Film Australia that he “might need to go public” as his professional reputation and personal commitment to the project’s integrity were at stake, Zubrycki launched a campaign hoping to embarrass the ACTU into allowing Film Australia to complete *Amongst Equals*. He contacted individual trade unions, peak bodies, labour historians, and the media setting out to publicise the sad history of the project and denounce the position of the ACTU. An article published in the *Sunday Age* finally brought the conflict into the light of day, bringing Simon Crean and Martin Ferguson of the ACTU onto the attack.

The article came about as part of the coverage of the January 1991 *United We Stand* Festival of International Films “with a working class perspective” sponsored by the youth division of the NSW Labour Council. The Festival screened over a weekend at the Tom Mann Theatre in Sydney and featured the canon of American, British and Australian labour movement films then in circulation—including Australian films from the 1940s, and Zubrycki’s *Friends & Enemies*. As a part of this it showed a work-in-progress version of *Amongst Equals*, with Zubrycki supplying the film and addressing the audience at its screening. John Lyons covered the *Amongst Equals* story for the *Sunday Age*:

“We don’t want the film to go out” Mr Simon Crean, the former ACTU president, said this week, “we don’t want to be seen to be censoring, but, on the other hand, we believe we have got a positive message to sell. [...] We expect to get what we asked for [...] We didn’t get to the last big chapter (the achievements of the Accord)” [...] Mr Zubrycki told the audience [...] that Mr Crean had been upset

that the final part of the film opened with a scene of the Prime Minister Mr. Hawke being derided by unionists [...] He said Mr Crean had also been upset that Western Australia’s Robe River dispute and the 1986 SEQEB dispute received coverage - both were defeats for the union movement. “I can’t just ignore the defeats”, Mr Zubrycki said. —Lyons, *Sunday Age* (January 13, 1991, p. 5)

Lyons also spoke to Film Australia’s Bruce Moir:

When asked whether he would accede to the ACTU’s request to have the film returned [Moir] said: “I can’t answer that [...] One doesn’t particularly want to buy into a public brawl with the ACTU. We have been subjected to a major financing review which has not gone through Cabinet yet [...] and a public brawl with the ACTU wouldn’t help”. —Lyons, *Sunday Age* (January 13, 1991, p.5)

Following this screening and the resultant newspaper coverage, Film Australia no longer held the view that it was “not a straight forward sponsored film.” Instead, Ron Saunders, Acting Managing Director, demanded that Zubrycki return his copies of the film.

Film Australia will now deliver all material in its possession [...] to the ACTU [...] please return to Film Australia the copy of the program in your possession, as there is no mention in your contract [that you have rights to a copy] (Saunders to Zubrycki January 14, 1991)

Zubrycki faxed Moir at Film Australia apologising for putting him in an embarrassing situation *vis-à-vis* the ACTU and reminding Moir that he had signalled his intention to “go public” some weeks previously. He went on to say:

The AMWU [Australian Metal Workers Union] co-sponsoring the event, knew that the film was going to be shown. Their state executive approved the showing. I believe the ACTU should take up the matter with them.

As Director of the film, I am entitled to have a copy of the film. This is the copy I showed that night. Apart from that one copy the only others in circulation are 36 dubs from the VHS that I sent back in October to each member of the ACTU in an effort to have the matter raised at the executive. I have no other materials. (Zubrycki to Moir January 14, 1991)

The following day (January 15, 1991) he wrote in similar terms to Ferguson:

As the person who originally initiated the project back in 1986 I feel I have a certain interest in seeing the project through to its conclusion. I am definitely prepared to immediately refrain from making any public statements [...] in the hope genuine settlement negotiations... [i.e. the ACTU could use the material as it pleased and Zubrycki could finish the film for TV].

On the same day the *Sydney Morning Herald* (*SMH*) published a supportive story from John Lyons:



Simon Crean says history is about transition, about placing the future in the context of the present. It is largely because of Simon Crean’s definition of history that Australians are being denied the chance to see a film they have already paid for - *Amongst Equals*, commissioned for the Bicentenary with \$200,000 of public money. [...] If Martin Ferguson, Simon Crean’s successor at the ACTU has his way, you will never see *Amongst Equals* as it was made. It will either be locked away in ACTU House in Melbourne or heavily edited - re-written in other words [...] Mr. Crean argues [that] it does not pay sufficient attention the ‘last big chapters - the Prices and Incomes Accord’. That Simon Crean’s political allegiance - to the Accord and the Prime Minister’s Labor Unity faction - must surely make him subjective on these matters is something Mr. Crean would not acknowledge when interviewed by the *Herald* this week [...]

After more than three years of wrangling Zubrycki has had enough. He now intends showing the film illegally around Australia. Illegally because the ACTU owns the copyright [...] Mr. Crean is not happy with [highlighting] the role of the Waterside Workers Federation in stopping the export of scrap iron to Japan in 1937 by “Pig Iron Bob” Menzies. Nor does he like references to the 1965 bans by wharfs on military supplies to Vietnam [...]

Jim Hagan [the ACTU’s official historian], says Zubrycki has produced “an important pioneering film of the history of Australian trade unionism that should be essential viewing for everyone interested in the movement’s future.” Indeed, all we need now is for the ACTU to lift its effective ban on *Amongst Equals* and the Australian public will be able to make its own judgement.

(Lyons, SMH, January 15, 1991, p.11)

## THE CAUSE CÉLÈBRE INTENSIFIES

The screening and its subsequent coverage served to ‘stir the pot’, this lead to various actions including a petition to Film Australia from filmmakers and their supporters to defend Zubrycki’s screening of the film and admonish Film Australia for its failure to support him. Rank and file unionists and senior executives of progressive unions also came out in support of Zubrycki’s compromise proposal.<sup>1</sup> Some Unions responses in favour of Zubrycki included:

- the Construction Mining and Energy Workers Union of Australia (CMEU, WA Branch) “congratulates Tom on the film [and] calls on the ACTU to reconsider [...]” (resolution job delegates meeting January 18, 1991)
- the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History’s Honorary Secretary Lucy Taksa wrote to ASSLH members: “an institution that claims to represent Australian workers should be treating one in this highly questionable manner [and for historians writing sponsored histories it is] imperative we act to protect our interests in this regard by voicing our disapproval [...] Write to Martin Ferguson.” (undated circular)
- the BWIU (through Danny Connor, Education Officer) circulated its members, and other unions, supporting the film:

At the heart of the dispute seems to be a concern that Tom Zubrycki’s film is too much a history of rank and file struggle and militancy as opposed to a history of the efforts of bureaucrats [...] For anyone involved in trade union education programs it is almost impossible to secure any films or videos which set out the historical development of the trade union movement. To make a decision not to complete such a film made by one of Australia’s leading labour movement filmmakers is almost beyond belief.

(undated BWIU circular)

Support also came from artists, historians, public intellectuals and critics, like Sylvia Lawson:

[finding the film] exceptionally vigorous, provocative and enjoyable [...] a vivid dynamic history which many schools still don’t teach, which the non-unionised middle classes never knew and which many thousands of immigrants have had no chance to know. [...]

The ACTU has nothing to gain in public relations and indeed everything to lose by seeking to reduce *Amongst Equals* from serious and deeply necessary documentary film work to mere propaganda and advertisement. (Lawson January 20, 1991)

Even Donald Horne commented that he was “amazed at ACTU - even Stalin found it difficult to force film directors into a preordained grid [short sighted] they have stupidly failed to realise that the film is actually ‘good publicity’ for the union movement - whereas their reaction can be seen as the reverse.” (January 22, 1991)

This *cause célèbre* intensified with both Zubrycki and Ferguson airing their cases through television and radio coverage, and in the Letters pages of the *SMH*.

Martin Ferguson [...] (SMH Saturday January 19) obviously hasn’t seen the movie [...] One third is devoted to [...] white-collar workers, non Anglo-Saxon workers, Aborigines and women. Perhaps his real concern is the film’s claim that, at certain points in its history unions have been seriously out of step with the demands of exactly these groups [...] the film does not underestimate arbitration [...] the history of the ACTU is not identical with the history of the trade union movement.

—Zubrycki, January 23, 1991 SMH, p.10

<sup>1</sup> “Trish Caswell, Industrial officer VTHC and a prominent member of the ACTU executive is ‘willing to speak out against the ACTU decision’ [as is] Bill Ethel National President of the BWIU.” (Zubrycki to John Lyons (journalist SMH) February 11, 1991) “The Executive of the ETU [Electrical Trades Union] Victorian Branch have viewed the video [and] agreed that you have a valid case for enlisting our support” (Gary Main, ETU to Zubrycki February 15. 1991) NSW Branch of the Australian Theatrical and Amusement Employees Association (ATAEA) “[Regrets the dispute] and as the union representing film production, it wishes to affirm the need for sponsors to respect the knowledge and experience of the worker on the job [...] *Amongst Equals* should be finished by Tom Zubrycki, according to the guidelines originally accepted by the ACTU, and released. It deplores the suggestion that the material should be cut by others.” ATAEA NSW Branch 11.3.91 Carried unanimously.”

A public forum ‘Film, History and the ACTU: the *Amongst Equals* Affair’, was jointly convened by the Australian Screen Directors Association (ASDA) and the Australian Film Institute (AFI) at Sydney’s Paddington Town Hall on February 1, 1991 to screen and discuss *Amongst Equals*.

The day before the screening, Zubrycki issued a press release saying the ACTU had realised that it was politically damaging to continue to stop the film being shown:

I have been very patiently writing to the ACTU seeking a compromise since September last year. In December I put a suggestion to them that the ACTU make their short version, as long as I got the chance to finish the version for television as originally intended. They have totally ignored my suggestions [...] They are now trying to sabotage the project by not allowing me the chance of finishing it. (Zubrycki Press Release January 29, 1991)

The forum was partly documented on video, and the journal *Filmnews* provided comprehensive coverage of the event.<sup>2</sup> In *Filmnews* Hall Greenland wrote “with the exception of Bruce Moir, whose obfuscation was astonishing, two clear positions emerged”. Greenland saw the first of these positions as an issue of Moral Rights in support of Zubrycki, as a part of a regime defending creative work in literature and film with legal force in 60 countries, yet unlegislated in Australia; the second was the competing rights of the ACTU, having sponsored the film.

Greenland questioned whether the ACTU could rightfully claim “the entire thirty-seven member executive [...] guided in its decisions by a six member sub-committee”<sup>3</sup> provided sufficient authority in the case of this publicly funded film. Commenting on *Amongst Equals* critically from the Left, Greenland wrote:

The thing I hate about *Amongst Equals* (and Tom shares this dislike) is the solemn, deathly voiceover [still not voiced by Hazelhurst]. But this is appropriate enough I suppose, because this film and its fate represents the nadir of the union movement in this country [...] the final version of *Amongst Equals* should now include and integrate the story and conditions of its production [...] a film within a film. (Greenland 1991:7)

Citing Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, Greenland suggests a title for the new reflexive version: ‘Some are more equal than others’.

At this time, television current affairs picked up the story. Martin Ferguson and Tom Zubrycki were interviewed on Derryn Hinch’s commercial current affairs show *Hinch*, Ferguson said: “It’s a romanticized view of the individual filmmaker”. He went on to comment that while Hinch’s show is often considered sensationalist, it “pales into insignificance in comparison with this film.” Leading Hinch to remind his viewers “You paid for that film. The ACTU got \$200.000 of tax payers’ money with a Bicentennial grant.” (*Hinch*. Channel 7, February 3, 1991)

Zubrycki took to the pages of *Filmnews* to vigorously defend his position as ‘history from below’—in citation of EP Thompson, the great historian of the English working class. Here he claims an ethical responsibility to historical veracity, and more practically, to the people who had offered testimonies for the film—testimonies that were, in effect, now silenced. He argued, as he had consistently, that these issues were more important than copyright (the legal regime

preventing distribution and exhibition of the work-in-progress) and claimed the ‘moral rights’ to his work over the contracted rights of the sponsor. (*Filmnews*, February 1991, pp. 6-7)

Increasingly, more people wanted to “see the film the ACTU wants to ban”. Among the organisations that wished to convene screenings and discussions of *Amongst Equals* were Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC), the United Trades and Labour Council of South Australia (UTLC),<sup>4</sup> the film industry’s Writers’ Guild (AWG), and the Australian Screen Directors Association (ASDA)<sup>5</sup>

In Queensland the Australian Social Welfare Union held a screening, sending Zubrycki an \$80 donation towards his campaign; and RMIT University scheduled a screening for late February. Zubrycki produced a version with inter-titles identifying scenes that the ACTU wanted revised or deleted, and screened it at the Melbourne International Film Festival in June. Screenings were to continue in community, trade union and professional organisations throughout 1991 in Adelaide, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Perth and elsewhere.

While the early debates between Zubrycki and the ACTU tended to focus on conflicting historiographies, some later panels at screenings focused on the industrial and ethical issues that the dispute raised for professionals working with trade unions.

## SUPPORT FOR THE ACTU POSITION

Support for the ACTU position was scarce. Where it did occur, it was from a perspective that saw the project simply as a product of public relations.

Still smarting from the perceived insult that Zubrycki’s earlier film *Friends & Enemies* caused on its release in 1987, the Queensland Trades and Labour Council warned the ACTU:

<sup>2</sup> Bruce Moir (Film Australia), Ann Curthoys (historian), Michael Frankel (arts lawyer), Ian Millis (Arts Officer, Miscellaneous Workers Union) Roger Hudson (ASDA) and Peter Duncan (Arts Officer, ACTU). Later, others spoke: Julie James Bailey (Media Information Australia), Judy Adamson (Archivist and Historian, Film Australia), Robert Pullan (Free Speech Committee) [see Robert Pullen, Free Speech Committee, January 19, 1991 SMH: “The gifted Zubrycki [...] whose exactitude and delicacy as a filmmaker are matched by his humanity, is treated with contempt by the authoritarian spirits in the Australian labour movement [...] Zubrycki’s title is prescient: there is no censorship amongst equals.”

<sup>3</sup> “Calls for the names of these six [the Film Committee] failed to illicit an answer.” (Greenland, *Filmnews*, February 1991, p.1)

<sup>4</sup> UTLC SA Executive Committee Agenda item 2.6 31/1/91: Chris White says he was present at the ACTU Executive meeting in August 1990 and expressed opposition to that Executive’s decision to cancel the film [...] “there were various reasons given for the cancelling of the film which was obviously not to the liking of the ACTU Executive despite the fact that many people had not seen it.” (White to Zubrycki, February 7, 1991)

<sup>5</sup> The Australian Screen Director’s Association (ASDA) challenged Film Australia: “whilst the ACTU may have the legal power to determine the future of the film we believe that Film Australia as the Producer, has an ethical and artistic obligation to defend the film and the filmmaker [this failure] has alienated the filmmaking community [...] and clearly goes against the spirit [...] of the recently negotiated standard contract for independent documentary directors.” (ASDA to Moir, February 5, 1991)