



## ***So what was the 1946 Pilbara Strike?***

75 years ago, on May 1, 1946, hundreds of Aboriginal workers began walking off dozens of pastoral stations across the vast Pilbara region to fight for wages and better living conditions.

Committed Aboriginal leaders had for months secretly travelled to stations all over the Pilbara to alert Aboriginal workers to the strike, timed to take place just before shearing began in May.

After a hard-fought three-year struggle, the strikers finally achieved their original aim of '30 bob a week', as well as establishing their own communities independent of the previous domination of 'pastoralist, policeman and native welfare officer'.

The Strike was supported 'down south' by church and women's groups, lawyers, unions, and the Australian Communist Party: the WA Government's hand was finally forced in July 1949, when the Fremantle-based Seamen's and Lumpers' Unions voted to blackban wool from Pilbara stations still holding out against the Aboriginal strikers' demands.

The Pilbara Strike movement reshaped colonial race relations in WA and helped to inspire later and better-known acts of Aboriginal resistance like the 1966 Wave Hill walk off in the Northern Territory and the 1980 Noonkanbah blockade in the Kimberley region.

Since then, the 1946 Pilbara Strike has been recognised by the ACTU as the longest strike in Australian history, and has been regularly commemorated by WA unions at their annual May Day event on Fremantle Esplanade.

This May Day weekend we invite you to join us and members of the Pilbara Strike families in Fremantle to honour the courage and determination of the strikers, and commemorate this pivotal, yet little known event in our shared history.

*'Remembering the 1946 Pilbara Strike' 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Working Group*



## ***How can I find out more about the 1946 Pilbara Strike?***

- Follow us on Facebook at [PilbaraStrike75years](#) for events and news throughout the year.
- Monash University's [pilbarastrike.org](#) website documents many fascinating aspects of the Strike.
- *How the West Was Lost*: this highly acclaimed 1987 documentary on the Strike is available to buy or stream via Ronin Films:  
<https://www.roninfilms.com.au/video/819/80/587.html>

### **Recently published books:**

- Nick Everett, 'Solidarity with the Pilbara Aboriginal Station Hands Strike'. Chapter in Charlie Fox et al. (2019) *Radical Perth Militant Fremantle*. Melbourne: Interventions, pp. 83-94.
- Monty Hale, (ed. Anne Scrimgeour), *Kurlumarniny. We Come from the Desert*. Aboriginal Studies Press, 2012.
- Jolly Read, & Peter Coppin, *Kangkushot: The Life of Nyamal Lawman Peter Coppin*. Aboriginal Studies Press, 2014.
- Jolly Read (2004). *Yandy*. WA Premier's Book Award winner for best script 2004. Available at: <https://apt.org.au/script/ASC-825>
- Anne Scrimgeour, *On Red Earth Walking. The Pilbara Aboriginal Strike, Western Australia*,
- *1946-1949*. Melbourne: Monash UP, 2019.
- Deborah Wilson, *Different White People: Radical Activism for Aboriginal Rights 1946-1972*. UWA Press, 2014.

### **Older publications which may be available second hand:**

- Max Brown, *The Black Eureka*, Australasian Book Society, Sydney, 1976.
- Don McLeod, *How the West Was Lost: the Native Question in the Development of Western Australia*. Guildford: Nomads Foundation, 1984.
- Kingsley Palmer & Clancy McKenna, *Somewhere Between Black and White*. Macmillan, 1978.
- Donald Stuart, *Yandy*, Georgian House, Melbourne, 1959.

***Some of these items are stocked by New Edition Bookshop & Bill Campbell's Bookshop on High Street, Fremantle***

