

Brian Manning by Chris White

Brian was well enough to present his story of the historic Wave Hill strike and land rights struggle on 25th September 2013 at the Australian Curriculum Studies Association Living History session in Darwin, with Ted Egan singer and former Chief Administrator NT, Japarta Ryan Central Lands Council and Professor Kathryn Moyle, Charles Darwin University.

I am proud to have met and listened to Brian Manning's stories and politics in Darwin. He was instructive in his political actions as a **Communist** member of CPA and the Search Foundation; as a militant unionist Wharfie in Darwin Secretary WWF- **life member of MUA** and Unions NT; he strongly supported the BLF Green Bans movement; in telling of his role in the Aboriginal Land Rights particularly the NT Council for Aboriginal Rights and his role in the historic **Wave Hill strike and formation of the Land Rights** struggle; in the critical solidarity with the **East Timor resistance** in running the clandestine radio links to the fighters in the mountains of East Timor and hailed as a hero by the East Timorese and Brian would want to be remembered for his critical solidarity with the Timorese peoples, the Maubere peoples, and his fierce loyalty to FRETILIN, the independence party with whom he publicly aligned himself until the end; and his anti-war activity; he led the Darwin waterside workers in struggle against the export of uranium; his support for the Palestine struggle and generally support for social justice and advocate for the womens' and gay liberation movements. I was able to convince him to come to some recent political actions, against the US Darwin Marines base (he described PM Gillard as a traitor to Australian Independence), in Standing Up for the Burrup, in attending APHEDA Ged Kerney Darwin meeting, participating in the Search Foundation Darwin and solidarity with Fretilin when he got me to take the resistance receivers to Dili to present to them. **Brian was 2010 NT Senior Citizen of the Year.** I would have liked to have known him when he was young and a musician and in the jazz era in his band. He loved jazz and was a great trumpet and sax player himself, and helped turn the Darwin May Day into a musical celebration. His son Brian played him some of his favorite trumpet pieces in the last days at the hospital. His MUA Secretary Thomas Mayor was with him. from the MUA: "Vale Brian Manning Yesterday, Brian Manning, one of the Northern Territory's most respected activists and trade unionists, passed away surrounded by friends and family at the age of 81. Manning was a wharfie and staunch MUA member up until his retirement in 2002. He continued to be very active in the trade union movement until his passing. He was famous in the Top End for his social activism, most notably, perhaps, for his role during the Wave Hill Walk-Off. In 1966 a group of Aboriginal people led by Vincent Lingiari walked off the job at Wave Hill Station, 600km south of Darwin, in protest of wages and conditions. This action, supported by the trade union, was central in paving the way for Aboriginal land rights. The struggle lasted for nine years until in 1975, then Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, handed over a parcel of land to the local Gurindji people. During this struggle, Manning and his J Series Bedford Truck, which is now heritage listed, supported the striking workers camped at Wattie Creek (Daguragu) by running supplies to and from Darwin. On the 40th Anniversary of the Walk-Off Manning told the ABC his story: "I loaded this little Bedford with about three tonne of stuff. God, it took nearly two days. "I think we had to camp half way. The roads were shocking – there were no bitumen roads, there were diversions all around the place. "They were making the roads, you see, so it was terribly corrugated. We managed to get there the second night about 9.30pm and drove down into the bed of the river where they were all camped, you know and there was great exhilaration by these people that help had arrived in respect of food." Manning also used his truck to erect an antenna to establish communications with the underground movement (the Fretilin) in East Timor in the early days of the Indonesian invasion. He campaigned strongly for East Timorese self-determination. At the 2011 Fretilin Congress Manning was applauded by 700 Fretilin members for his efforts of coordinating the establishment of the communications in difficult conditions. Manning, who in 2011 was unable to attend the congress due to the stress of his ailing health, was still greatly loved and revered by the East Timorese people. Prior to the Wave Hill Walk-Off Brian Manning was instrumental in setting up the NT Council for Aboriginal Rights and he was also a co-founder in the NT Trades and Labour Council. He was recognised for his hard work by becoming a Territory finalist for Australian senior of the year in 2010, the same year he was named Darwin citizen of the year, accepting his prize

wearing a Morning Star tie in support of the West Papuans' struggle for independence. One of his most recent achievements was relocating and refurbishing the Seafarer's Centre at Darwin while he was voluntary chair of the Darwin Port Welfare Committee. Although he was too sick to attend the grand opening, he said he was very proud of the work he had done with the voluntary committee, in getting somewhere safe for visiting seafarers to recuperate. Northern Territory Branch Secretary Thomas Mayor said that Manning was a supreme mentor and a pillar of support. "When I first became an official, I knew where to go to learn the lay of the land both politically and practically," Mayor said. "One of the most difficult issues was worker's compensation. I knew that Brian was on the Board of Inquiry held that was completed in 1984 and that set the foundations for workers compensation for Territorians today, so I went to him for guidance. "I was also interested in working towards Indigenous advancement and of course Brian's reputation in this area is second-to-none. I spent several afternoons with Brian talking about these issues. He never once tried to tell me what I should do, but his grasp on history and his no nonsense approach have guided me since." <http://www.mua.org.au/news-story/3738/>

Many positive thoughts about this historic comrade. Condolences to his family. If you wish to send a condolence message to Brian's family, you can send it to Brian Jr at bwgmanning@gmail.com. The family is thinking about a private cremation now, and a memorial gathering in about two weeks time.