

The Maybanke Lecture 2021

Work and Advocacy

**Why threats to Decent Work
are undermining our
Democracies?**

Sharan Burrow AC
15 June 2021

*The
Maybanke
Fund*

HONOURING YESTERDAY

INVESTING IN TOMORROW

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NSW Teachers Federation

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Acknowledgements

Sydney Community Foundation is a not for profit, public philanthropic fund which seeks to care for, and make Sydney a better place. We meet on the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, the traditional custodians of much of the land where the Sydney Community Foundation operates. Their cultures and customs have nurtured and continue to nurture this place. I would like to acknowledge their elders past, present and emerging, those who have cared for this land for millenia, and also acknowledge all Aboriginal people here tonight.

The Sydney Community Foundation (SCF) was established in 2004, with the knowledge that community really matters. The Foundation offers a simple way for people from all parts of the community to make small and large tax deductible donations to support the work of charities across Greater Sydney - organisations which work to make Sydney a more inclusive and creative city.

The Maybanke Fund is a sub fund of Sydney Community Foundation.

The Maybanke Fund

The Maybanke Fund honours women's advocate and social reformer Maybanke Selfe Wolstenholme Anderson (1845 – 1927). Once a household name to several generations of Australians, today her name is almost unknown. Maybanke was a woman who made things happen, courageously taking leadership on controversial issues when the times demanded it.

Maybanke Selfe came to Australia aged 9 and grew up in Sydney to become a feminist and educationist. Her own experiences led her to play an active role in the promotion of women's and children's rights in Australia. She was a leader in the women's suffrage movement, and worked for Federation.

Maybanke established the first free kindergarten in Australia to support the children of the inner city and their working mothers, going on to found the Kindergarten Union. She wrote extensively, and published a Newspaper *The Woman's Voice*.

On 6 May 1891, Maybanke gave her first public speech. Now, in her honour, each year a public lecture is held on or near this date to highlight Maybanke's life and work, and to address Maybanke's causes in the context of contemporary Sydney.

Introduction

Sharan Burrow and Friends of the Sydney Community Foundation, Ladies and Gentlemen, good evening and welcome to the 2021 Maybanke Lecture.

My name is Rosalind Strong. My husband Tony and I established the Maybanke Fund within the Sydney Community Foundation in 2010. We are delighted to have so many of you with us as part of the Eighth Annual Maybanke Lecture to be delivered by our distinguished friend Sharan Burrow AC.

This has been a different 18 months and Sharan was due to give this Lecture in person in Sydney in April 2020. We hoped and hoped that the Lecture could be held in person later in 2020. Instead, Sharan joins us now by zoom from Brussels and many of our audience are also on zoom.

Maybanke is my middle name, and I was born 100 years after her. The objective of the Maybanke Fund is to support causes across the range of Maybanke's work and, through this Annual Maybanke Lecture, to celebrate her life, and promote public discussion of issues and areas where she was active, or where she would have been active if she were carrying out her public work today.

Thank you to the many in this room and on zoom who have become donors to the Maybanke Fund. We are slowly building a corpus and have distributed small grants for the last 9 years.

The most consistent granting has funded Maybanke Scholarships to support Indigenous students who are training to become fully qualified teachers in the Warawara programme at Macquarie University.

The idea for these awards came from our early discussion with the Kindergarten Union (KU) founded by Maybanke in the 1890s. We sought their advice about how we could do something which would make a difference in early childhood education in Maybanke's name through regular, long-term giving. There have been 31 Maybanke Anderson scholarships awarded since 2012 with some of these given by the Sherry Hogan Foundation. More than half of the students are from rural and regional areas.

Each year it is great to catch up with news of past awardees.

The 2021 scholars' names are Indianna Gay and Ebony Graney, with the third scholarship to be advertised and hopefully awarded by Session 2. We are delighted to say that Ebony will be graduating later this year, in no small part thanks to the support of the Maybanke Anderson Scholarship. You can read their stories on the Maybanke Fund Website.

The target to Close the Gap in school achievement and attendance

by Indigenous Students is not on track. These scholarships are a step towards creating the conditions where the high-quality education which can assist in closing this gap are provided for all students, and where the fully qualified teachers leading this high-quality education, are Aboriginal.

It is enormously pleasing to see how small grants in Maybanke's name can make a difference to the community where we live. Macquarie University asks me to pass on their thanks to all who have contributed to the Maybanke Anderson Scholarship Fund through the Sydney Community Foundation.

Maybanke gave her first public lecture on May 6th, 1891, and we launched the Maybanke Lecture series on May 6th, 2013, with the distinguished journalist, the late Adele Horin. We have been privileged to hear from a series of stellar women leaders since then.

Susan Feez who gave the 2016 Lecture on the History of Montessori in Australia and the role of Maybanke's nieces Rhoda and Norma Selfe is with us by zoom from Queensland tonight. All the Maybanke Lectures are available in published form and are on the Maybanke Fund website. In 2019 we were honoured to have Dame Marilyn Waring give the 7th Maybanke Lecture. Her 2019 Maybanke Lecture *Work and Advocacy: reflections on Maybanke's life and advocacy. What might we have to say to each other across the years?* is available to all here tonight and on request.

Tonight, we are honoured that Sharan Burrow AC will give the 2021 Maybanke Lecture.

Sharan has been the General Secretary of the International Trade Union Congress since 2010. Prior to this, she held the position of ITUC President since its Founding Congress in Vienna in 2006 and the position of President of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions President since 2004. She is the first woman to have held any of these positions.

Sharan was born in Warren, a small town in western NSW, into a family with a long history of involvement in unions and the struggle to improve the lives of working people. She trained as a teacher at the University of NSW and began her teaching career in high schools around country NSW.

She became an organiser for the NSW Teachers' Federation, and I met her when she was elected Senior Vice-President of the NSW Teachers' Federation and became President of the Australian Education Union (AEU) in 1992. In 2000, Sharan Burrow became the second woman to be elected President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU).

As many in this audience will know, a favourite saying of mine is “a teacher’s influence is infinite”.

This is certainly true of Sharan, and she has made an enormous contribution to the lives of the students she taught, the teachers she worked with, the people of Australia and the world. Sharan was made a Companion in the Order of Australia for her national and global work over many years.

Today, June 15, is the anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta in 1215. It is a particularly relevant date for me to invite Sharan to deliver the 2021 Maybanke Lecture

Work and Advocacy: Why threats to Decent Work are undermining our Democracies

Rosalind Maybanke Strong AM

Founder, Maybanke Fund

Vice Patron, Sydney Community Foundation

Work and Advocacy:

Why threats to Decent Work are undermining our Democracies

By Sharan Burrow AC

15 June 2021

I am honoured to give the 2021 Maybanke Lecture and reflect on the parallels of her era with those of today.

As a campaigner for democracy and inclusion Maybanke would no doubt be very shocked to realise that in 2021 democracy is at risk on many fronts. With less than 50% of the world's people living in democracies and increasing authoritarianism even within democracies, we see a rise in not just disinterest but opposition from young people and excluded groups or communities who have never seen a democracy dividend.

We have historic levels of inequality driving despair and anger. Where people feel they are victims of an economic model with deep income inequity plus continued exclusion of women, migrants, and more and more young people: groups who don't have confidence in secure futures.

The explosion of racism and xenophobia is driven by fear and harnessed by the rise of the far right. Fascism is alive and well in many forms. It has a different face to that of the last century, but the interconnected nature of its global reach makes it that much more difficult to subdue. You can even see the beginnings of appeasement of extremism right here in Australia.

There can be no peace and democracy in the face of denial of freedom of association, freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. Amongst our own ITUC family we have people being killed and incarcerated in too many nations - Myanmar, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Colombia, Honduras, Guatemala, Palestine, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Turkey and so many more, for defending these values and the civic space necessary to fight for inclusive democracies. Unless everyone is safe no one is safe and today our 'common security' is under serious threat including the risk of weapons of mass destruction as conflicts escalate.

Almost 40 years ago Olaf Palme, a previous Swedish Prime Minister headed the Palme Commission which coined the term 'common security'. It was focused largely on the threat of nuclear war and the quest for disarmament. Given the current global risks the ITUC in coalition with the Palme Centre and the International Peace Bureau (IPB) launched the Palme Commission 2.0.

Today 'our common security' is threatened not just by the weapons of war, including renewal of nuclear arsenals, but also by the

breakdown of the social contract and the disregard of human and labour rights along with the destruction of the environment; all destroying confidence and trust in the promise of a just future and feeding the distrust in our democracies. History is again in our hands,

It is fascinating to consider how Maybanke would have viewed this and what she might have done. I was struck by the description of her as a self-modelled 'platform woman' taking on the injustice and inequality of the moment. And this was not today but as a woman in the 1880s - the extreme of exclusion of women, hard for many of us from developed countries to imagine today, but tragically still the reality of too many people who are human rights and democracy defenders, particularly women, in many parts of the world.

As we discuss the perilous state of our world we meet in what for many of us is a political touchstone - the home of the NSW Teachers Federation and indeed Maybanke's life intersects with the history of this enduring union.

From a leader in the suffragette movement as the first Vice-President of the Womanhood Suffrage League and then President during the vital years from 1893 until 1897, Maybanke saw the vote as the 'kernel of all reform'. She was in time a campaigner for the 'yes' vote for Australian Federation,

It is written that her stamina was prodigious. In 1893 while living and working from Maybanke College at Marrickville, in addition to family and school duties and the suffrage struggle, her activities included: foundation Vice-President of Sydney University Women's Society; Council Member of the Teachers' Association of New South Wales; founder and Secretary-General of the Australasian Home Reading Union and vice-president of the International Women's Union; she became a Theosophist and obtained a divorce under Sir Alfred Stephen's radical Divorce Extension and Amendment Act of 1892. The following year she started her own radical feminist paper, *The Woman's Voice*, to spread her reforming ideas still further, and in 1895 helped found the Kindergarten Union of New South Wales, beginning her lifelong commitment to helping the youngest and most vulnerable in society.

So I am proud to dedicate this address to the spirit of such a warrior for justice and inclusion. Given her teaching background, even more in this, the UN Year for the Elimination of Child Labour when for the first time in a decade the numbers of children forced into work, denied a childhood and an education have increased to almost 1 in 10.

This is a global scandal to which sadly we all contribute; when we eat the fish they harvest, or the chocolate, the coffee and other agricultural products, wear the textiles whose supply chains they are found in, or consume the technology for which they mine the rare earth minerals. We know the solutions, we have the means to

invest in quality public education, universal social protection and decent work for their parents with the necessary rule of law that can criminalise breaches, but political leaders have failed the world's children for too long. This must change.

Indeed, modern slavery or forced labour has to be the most brutal of human rights and labour rights violations. It depicts the greatest depravity of what today is a broken labour market. The world of work is central to shared prosperity and stability, yet Governments have failed to regulate even to protect their own citizens in the face of rampant corporate greed. 60% of the global workforce in informal work - no rights, no minimum wage, no rule of law, no social protection and while 40% of us have some form of formal contract more than a third are in precarious or insecure work. And the explosion of internet mediated businesses which are largely informal. Plus 94% of workers in our global supply chains are a workforce generating wealth for corporations who do not know them or acknowledge responsibility for poverty wages, insecure, often unsafe work.

For even before Covid 19 we had a convergence of crises with historic levels of inequality and the climate emergency. The pandemic laid bare the fractures in our world and the despair escalated in almost every continent. It also exposed our dependence on low-paid frontline or essential workers in care- health, education, childcare, aged care, and services - the majority of whom are women.

So here we are in 2021. This is a year when people are still living with COVID-19, insecure work, poverty, and extreme weather events due to climate change. But it is also a year when governments must implement serious plans for recovery.

The choices made by world leaders and by business this year will either heed the call of workers and civil society to reform the failed economic model and help create trust in a just and sustainable future or maintain business as usual and see a model of corporate greed entrench the inequality, exclusion and despair perpetuating instability for our communities and our planet and undermining the stability of our democracies.

In 2015 World Leaders endorsed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Climate agreement. Together these aspirations laid out a roadmap for a zero poverty zero carbon future with people and planet at the heart of a sustainability. Today we are in a race against time to realise this promise. If we aspire to a future where our skies are free of pollution, our rivers run clean and our forests and oceans are living ecosystems; where people are optimistic with full employment, jobs, safe quality jobs with human and labour rights respected, living wages supported by universal social protection, then 2030 is a looming target.

The realisation of the UN Sustainability Goals and at least 50% of emission reductions by 2030 requires an enormous shift but one that is essential to stabilise the planet and to overcome historic levels of inequality and exclusion.

We cannot leave people behind if we are serious about healing our world.

Yet vaccine nationalism is a symbol of a world whose priorities are simply wrong.

The corporate greed that makes vaccines in South Africa more expensive than in the US or restricts the sale of vaccines produced in developing countries on license while exporting to rich nations is scandalous. But so too is the ‘profit-first’ approach that denies technology sharing to allow production and supply chain access to be distributed with capacity support to ensure manufacturing can be undertaken wherever possible. Universal access to testing, treatment and vaccines is of paramount importance. There are solutions that can ensure vaccines for this pandemic and the capacity to manage the next health shock on a more equal basis. Putting lives before profit is a matter of political will. With 9 new pharmaceutical billionaires in the last year alone this industry can afford global solidarity.

Likewise social and environmental challenges require a different choice. An economic model with a fair competition floor of human rights, labour rights and environmental standards is possible. But it will not emerge if we do not decide to share prosperity, ensure safe jobs with rights and living wages for workers supported by universal social protection and begin the repair of our ecosystems.

There are jobs, lots of jobs that come with investment in people and investment in healthy environments, yet too many governments and corporations put up serious obstacles to protect vested interests against those of today's working families and generations to come.

These prescriptions need a new social contract. The dignity of decent work is the heart of optimism.

With almost 255 million jobs lost in 2020 and a future 130 million at risk in 2021, some 80 million leaving the labour market, mostly women, and two billion people struggling in dehumanising informal work, people need a New Social Contract.

In 2020 trade unions established this global call for a New Social Contract for recovery and residence. One year on, even the UN Secretary General is making this call.

This year the ITUC are focusing on the five key demands that workers want in their social contract.

1. Jobs: Climate-friendly jobs with Just Transition.
2. Rights: The promise of the ILO Centenary Declaration of rights and protections for all workers irrespective of employment arrangements.
3. Universal Social Protection: Social protection for all with the fight for a global social protection fund for the poorest countries.

4. Equality: equality of incomes, equality of gender and race.
5. Inclusion: working people want a peaceful world and a just, rights-based development model with the promise of the SDGs.

This recovery must be funded with tax, debt relief and targeted support for developing economies. It will not be achieved with austerity!

And monopoly power and exploitation of workers must be tackled but will only be eliminated if we end corporate impunity with mandated due diligence and the elimination of corruption.

These elements of a new social contract not only help us respond to the destruction of the pandemic - they will also rebuild trust in institutions.

So what do these demands mean in implementation?

Jobs:

With almost 50% of households in the latest ITUC Frontline poll saying they have lost jobs or working hours because of the pandemic, investment in jobs must be at the heart of a recovery. This is even more important for women who are underrepresented in the labour market. Jobs plans should be a feature of every government's ambition for recovery. These jobs must be climate friendly jobs with Just Transition measures.

All sectors must transition to stabilise the planet but while we will not accept stranded people or stranded communities, we must face the reality of this challenge. The good news is there are jobs in the transition. For every 10 jobs in renewable energy there are 5-10 jobs in supply chains and with just wages there can be 30-35 in the broader economy.

There are similar possibilities in all industries and related services if just transition measures are in place. But as technologies change, in all sectors we need to ensure that people have hope of security employment and decent work. This will take planning and agreement to generate trust in the necessary shifts for both workers and their communities. Therefore, workers and their unions must be at the table to ensure transparency and where necessary there must be support for workers through secure pensions, income support for reskilling and, where it's not possible to avoid, redeployment support. Social dialogue and collective bargaining agreements can secure these measures and help build the necessary trust.

There can be no trust if communities are left stranded, so community renewal needs all actors including unions and civil society to be part of the co-design for a secure and sustainable future. Many cities with progressive mayors, are leading the way, including Sydney, with development plans for reducing emissions and ensuring inclusion. Unions and civil society can act as partners in building livable cities.

Then there is the vital element of resilience which also includes investment in care. The overriding lesson from the pandemic must be that never again can we underfund our care services - healthcare, aged care, childcare, and education. These vital public services are the backbone of resilient societies.

Increasing these services also help to ensure equal participation for women through quality jobs for essential workers and also by lifting the burden of care thus enabling work-life balance and removing barriers to women's participation in the broader labour market.

The jobs dividend is significant with up to twice as many jobs as with investment in infrastructure. And while we need both, ITUC analysis with the UK Women's Budget Group has shown that if an extra 2% of GDP were invested in the health and care sector would generate increases in overall employment ranging from 1.2% to 3.2%, depending on the country. Similar analysis has been done by the ILO.

Full employment must be an essential public policy if Goal 8 of the SDGs is to be realised. This requires a jobs target of 575 million jobs by 2030. And the road to inclusion also requires we formalise at least half a billion of informal jobs within the same timeframe. With minimum living wages or incomes and universal social protection supported by rights and the rule of law, this is possible.

Rights:

The repair of a broken labour market, where the despair of informal and insecure work dominates, can only be achieved with a floor of rights and protections for all workers irrespective of their employment arrangements. These are laid out in the ILO Centenary Declaration - the fundamental rights of freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, freedom from discrimination and modern slavery through forced and child labour, must be accompanied by occupational health and safety, minimum living wages and maximum hours of work. This labour protection floor is a test of whether people or de-humanising exploitation sit at the centre of today's business practices including their supply chains.

And monopoly power and exploitation will only be eliminated if we end corporate impunity with enforcement of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights - mandated corporate due diligence for all corporations along with the elimination of corruption.

Universal Social Protection:

It defies rationality that the world has increased its wealth seven times over in just the last three decades, but nearly 75% of the world's people have little or no social protection. Only social protection with income support and guaranteed healthcare can ensure human resilience against family, national or global shocks. Unemployment, accidents, extreme weather events, economic or health shocks are not just events of the past but sadly all too prevalent in any reading of the future. And a global social protection

fund to close the funding gap in the poorest countries who have no social protection is a base test of our humanity.

Equality:

Covid-19 has exposed the despair created by income inequality and the discrimination of exclusion whether by gender or race. Sadly, our world has turned a blind eye to discrimination and distributional inequality. De-humanising exploitation as a basis of the global economy must end. Indeed, millions of migrant workers were simply discarded by nations they were helping and stranded without work or social protection.

Exclusion because of gender or race cannot be a basis for any business model. Full employment with equal participation of women and young people whatever their race or nationality has to become a reality. And for income inequality, minimum living wages, collective bargaining rights, equal remuneration and universal social protection cannot be optional.

Inclusion:

Without peace and a serious shift in development policy with the realisation of the SDGs so that all nations prosper, people cannot live stable and optimistic lives. Global monopoly power in key sectors like technology, pharmaceuticals and agriculture amongst other global corporate activity is crowding out competition and opportunity. Choice for workers and consumers is being stripped away and impunity for rights violations, environmental degradation and taxation contributions are being cast aside along with it.

Without peace and a serious shift in development policy such that that all nations prosper so that people cannot live stable and optimistic lives, social cohesion will remain a dream.

The growing authoritarianism referenced earlier is already threatening democracies and if shared prosperity and sustainability are not front and centre in the choices we make to climate and employment proof our future, it is clear that nothing will change. Rather despair, anger and conflict will grow.

Recovery and Resilience:

Recovery and resilience can be funded and debt relief, debt elimination and taxation reform are critical. We have seen some measures of debt relief and the possible solidarity of liquidity swaps from increased Special Drawing Rights but more can be done. And taxation reform is long overdue. A minimum tax floor for all corporations, a billionaires' or wealth tax, a digital tax and a financial transactions tax with an end to tax evasion and illicit financial flows are possible and would help redirect the pendulum towards shared prosperity.

Tax reform is on the global agenda with the G7, G20, OECD and UN discussions but the opposition is strong and the proposed 15% floor for corporations is too low. People's voices are critical to realise justice.

All nations or indeed communities will have their own additional ambitions as they design their new social contract, be it housing for all or livable cities or safe streets with the elimination of violence and fear. All it takes is the will to ensure a just and sustainable recovery based on the needs of people.

Our common security requires that we fight for disarmament, democracy, jobs, rights, shared prosperity, and inclusion. Together we can progress a new model of the economy and strengthen our democracies as we build a new social contract.

Thank you.

Sharan Burrow AC
General Secretary
International Trade Union Confederation

Vote of thanks

I am delighted to thank Sharan Burrow for speaking today and also thank my aunt Rosalind Maybanke Strong for organising this annual event that we have all enjoyed.

As Maybanke Anderson's great great great niece I am privileged to be part of a family where passion for social justice for women and children, belief in the right to and power of education and commitment to civic contribution to a wide variety of causes is shared.

When I read and hear about Maybanke, I am impressed by her remarkable achievements in spite of great personal difficulties - campaigning for the right of Australian women to vote, fair property and divorce laws, for free kindergartens and children's' playgrounds, for sex education and for adult education.

My aunt Rosalind Maybanke Strong has very similar commitment to Maybanke - and I thank Ros for establishing the Maybanke fund as part of the Sydney Community Foundation and hosting us today. I thank everyone attending for supporting the Fund connecting its community of donors with organisations working to reduce social inequality through education, women's advocacy and social reform – causes that continue to be important.

I think of the experience that Maybanke had, when at the age of 9 in 1854, a time of great change driven by Industrial Revolution, her family left their community in London where the family knew everyone. Arriving in Sydney where poverty was rife and society was undeveloped her circumstances changed completely. Notwithstanding personal difficulty and the need to support her family, her civic contribution driven by belief in the importance of the development of the person and her commitment to advocacy in relation to a huge range of causes was remarkable.

I have been delighted to hear from our guest speaker Sharan today. We have appreciated Sharan's reflections on industrial and COVID driven changes of the order faced by Maybanke including: greed and the increased number of billionaires; greater need for transparency in a time of breakdown of "common security"; corporate accountability; the growth of modern slavery and the need for a protection of rights at work; and distrust in government in the digital age.

The many parallels between challenges faced in Maybanke's era and today have given us food for thought regarding human rights and freedoms that are still at risk

While Maybanke's education was limited, the education and training she had was because of her own grandmother and mother's rare belief in the importance of economic independence for women.

When Sharan talked about the importance of the dignity of decent work and the need for more employment in the care sector - health, education, child and aged care - protecting children and giving women the freedom to fully participate fully in the economy she might have been talking about Maybanke's time.

Thanks Sharan - we do indeed wish you could be with us today in Sydney - we thank you for supporting our being hosted today in the NSW Teachers Federation building. We have been privileged to hear about your courageous and powerful work to increase jobs and reduce inequality in the global arena as General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation - and wish you well in your work.

Jane Spring



From left: Rosalind Strong AM introduces Sharan Burrow AC



Maybanke's great great nieces Rosalind Strong AM, Patricia Spring, Emeritus Professor Christine Deer AM, and three times great niece Jane Spring



In person attendees at 8th Annual Maybanke Lecture, 15 June 2021



Professor Eileen Baldry AO



Rosalind and Tony Strong
Founders of the Maybanke Fund

Photography by Jane Spring



Sydney Community Foundation is an independent, not-for-profit, public philanthropic fund. We help people from all parts of the community set up charitable funds, plan their giving and realise their philanthropic goals.

We build endowment funds for the future and identify priority projects for immediate impact funding. Income generated is used to make grants and build innovative partnerships to support charitable projects that deliver constructive outcomes for the people of Sydney.

At Sydney Community Foundation we connect philanthropy with community needs to help make Sydney a better place. We create strategic partnerships bringing donors to the table as community builders to invest in long-term local solutions.

Sydney Community Foundation helps communities by encouraging philanthropists, business and government to join local residents to support local causes.

For more information about our projects or to make a donation contact:
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