As a professional rather than 'practical man’, Embling explained his interest in the issue on the grounds that:

the mass of present employers were once employed, and because those who were now employed would at some short period hence be employers. He further advocated the movement as giving all the opportunity of improving themselves, and making them worthy, not only to be electors, but at some future period to be elected, and to represent their fellow colonists in the Legislative Council.455

Another speaker, Mr Burt commented that in England,

[T]he masters and the journeymen had been too much separated...[and instead] what was wanted...was to raise the journeyman a step and to lower the master a step so as to bring them closer together.456

Indeed, the colonial journeymen were determined to gain better conditions than the ten-hour day recently gained by their fellow journeymen in the old country.457 With a single dissenting voice,458 the meeting carried the resolutions.459 In order to maintain the momentum, the Chairman offered to award a silver cup to the person who gave the best public address on the benefits of a reduced working day, to be judged by the Lord Bishop of Melbourne and ‘his Honor Mr. Justice [Redmond] Barry’,460 portending of patronage of the movement by Melbourne’s high level boosters.

On 19 April the combined unions’ delegates proclaimed 21 April as the beginning of the eight hours’ day,461 but the builders of Parliament House and the Eastern Markets refused to comply.462 On 21 April, as both a consequence of non-compliant employers

455 As above.
456 As above.
457 Ridley, Ronald T., Melbourne’s Monuments, p.81.
458 The Argus, 12 April 1856, p.5.
459 As if to confirm David Goodman’s proposition that this was indeed a ‘golden age’ for public meetings, at least among men. See his ‘Public Meetings and Public Speaking in Colonial Australia’ in Australian Cultural History: Intellect and Emotion, No.16, 1997-98, p.111.
460 The Argus, 12 April 1856, p.5.
461 The Herald, 19 April 1856, p.8.
and as a pre-planned ‘object lesson’ in workers’ strength and dignity, 463 James Stephens, James Galloway, plasterer Benjamin Douglass and others led a group of 700 building workers from Melbourne University to the Parliament House building site. *The Herald* criticised the ostentatious bargaining method—‘processions first, and jollifications afterwards’ 464—as attracting international attention and a potential influx of emigrants, perhaps fearing a repeat of the gold-rushes. Over the next two months all employers conceded the eight hours’ day to masons, carpenters and joiners, bricklayers and slaters, 465 and then to painters, quarrymen, saddlers and harness-makers. 466 Most of the major newspapers supported the movement (initially at least), 467 and opposition carried little weight in a wealthy economy with a shortage of skilled labour, and the building journeymen gained the eight hours’ day both smoothly and quickly.

The gain of the eight hours’ day was an astounding international precedent, in later decades becoming the exemplar of Australia’s developing international reputation as a ‘social experiment’ and a ‘workingman’s paradise’. New Zealand and Sydney building workers had gained the eight hours’ day by 1848 468 and early 1856 469 respectively, although Sydney’s gains were short-lived. However, unlike their Australasian counterparts, the Melbourne building workers had made their gain without a reduction in pay, with contemporary critics arguing that it therefore ‘amounts virtually to a rise of wages’, 470 or conceding other conditions. 471 The Melbourne workers thus exploited colonial chauvinism, arguing that they had achieved a non-compromised outcome, and

---

466 Inglis, K.S., *The Australian Colonists*, p.139.
467 As above, p.145.
lauded themselves very specifically as national and international pioneers, setting a precedent to which working men of the imperial world should aspire.472

The eight hours’ leaders immediately publicly celebrated and memorialised the gain, in a number of temporary and permanent ways. As we saw with Barry and the 1888 Exhibition, the claim to historicity was a strategy of contemporary legitimation and assertion. On Monday 12 May over a thousand workers, restricted to those from the eight hours’ day trades,473 marched behind a red, white and blue banner emblazoned with the words ‘Eight Hours’ Labour, Eight Hours’ Recreation, Eight Hours’ Rest’474 from the Carlton Paddock475 south through the central city to the Cremorne Gardens, where they held a large fete and sports event. (Illustration 25) Concerned to be exemplary public citizens, the organisers donated the proceeds from the fete to the Melbourne Hospital and the Benevolent Asylums.476 Subsequently held annually on 21 April to mark the beginning of the eight hours’ system, it became colonial Melbourne’s biggest annual procession,477 with tens of thousands of spectators watching between 2000 and 4000 ‘eight hours’ men’ marching. The major spectacle was each union’s ‘emblematic banner’,478 mounted behind horse-drawn carriages. Commissioned for between £100 and £200,479 the banners presented an accurate picture of each trade,480 providing ‘object lesson[s] in industry’.481 In 1879, the liberal Berry Government, which enjoyed a close relationship with the Trades Hall Council including a shared support for tariff protection, announced eight hours’ day as a public holiday.482 In the 1880s the procession reached its zenith—both in terms of workers’ participation, as

474 Murphy, W.E., The Eight Hours’ Movement, Volume One, pp.70-2; see also Inglis, K.S., The Australian Colonists, p.139. The slogan was introduced by Dr Embling at the 12 April meeting. The banner was made by the ‘three interesting daughters’ of Charles Vine, one of the pioneers, based on a sixteenth-century Edinburgh craft guild banner. Its blue, white and red colours confirmed the Victorian eight hours’ movement’s proud Anglo-Saxon lineage.
475 This was the land on which the Royal Exhibition Building would be built 26 years later.
476 The Argus, 13 May 1856, p.5.
478 Selby, Isaac, The Old Pioneers’ Memorial History, p.152.
479 Inglis, K.S., The Australian Colonists, p.141.
480 Reeves, Andrew, Another Day Another Dollar, p.97.
481 Selby, Isaac, The Old Pioneers’ Memorial History, p.152.
Illustration 25
Original Eight Hours' Day banner, 1856
entry became less exclusive— but was adversely affected by the 1890s Depression and newer industrial strategies. The procession, banners and public holiday were repeated object lessons in the strength and permanence of the working class and its centrality to Melbourne's public life, and remind once again of the manifold public forms of history in colonial Melbourne. (Illustration 26)

Also in May 1856, the pioneers proposed the establishment of a Trades Hall as a monument to the gain, symbolising the trades' unions' permanence and legitimacy. Functionally, it was to be a 'people's palace', where workers could pursue cultural and literary interests. Over the next three years the unions raised the funds, and in 1859 the timber Melbourne Trades Hall and Literary Institute opened on an acre of land granted by the Crown on the corner of Lygon and Victoria Streets, with the pioneers claiming that the building was the first specifically-constructed trades hall in the world.

In 1875, the Trades Hall Committee replaced the timber building with a much grander structure. Insistent on being part of Melbourne's civic government, the Committee commissioned Melbourne's most prominent architects, Reed & Barnes, who had also designed the Melbourne Public Library. The new Trades Hall referenced the 'eight hours' men's' genealogy in civilisation, with its Greek portico and Corinthian columns, and over the next decade became known popularly as the 'Temple of Labour', the 'Workingman's Parliament' or 'the Parliament of Labour'.

482 Kellaway, Carlotta, 'Melbourne Trades Hall', p.3.
484 The Argus, 24 February 1934, p.7.
485 Also see Inglis, K.S., The Australian Colonists, chapters four to nine. Inglis was the first Australian historian to make a major study of annual holidays as ritual public celebrations of history.
486 Murphy, W.E., A History of the Eight Hours' Movement, Volume Two, J.T. Picken, Melbourne, 1900, p.16.
487 Reeves, Andrew, 'Melbourne Trades Hall Council', p.1.
488 Kellaway, Carlotta, 'Melbourne Trades Hall', pp.3-4.
489 As above, p.4.
490 Dunstan, Keith, 'The Fall of the Temple of Labour' in The Age Good Weekend, 10 June 1988, pp.46-8; Kellaway, Carlotta, 'Melbourne Trades Hall', p.5.
Eight Hours’ Day Procession passing Federal Parliament House, 23 April 1906

Courtesy the University of Melbourne Archives
From the outset, the building workers’ rhetoric around the ‘eight hours’ day boon’ was about victory for the working class. They spoke explicitly of the class tension within the notion of pioneers, arguing that they were the ‘true pioneers of the colony’, implicitly contrasting themselves with the likes of Barry. However, their claim for an eight hours’ day was both an assertive and defensive act, and the class component of the equation was complex. The workers won the argument by agreeing to comply with Barry’s and his civic colleagues’ definitions of educative and moral leisure, a demand which Barry was still vehemently insisting upon fifteen years later.

They also increasingly pointed to the peaceful methods by which they had gained the eight hours’ day (when compared with, say, the Eureka rebels), as further evidence of their acculturation in civility’s language. Further, the ‘eight hours’ men’ were organised building journeymen who could indeed anticipate becoming employers, an expectation which unskilled and unorganised workers could not hold. The ‘class’ demanding the eight hour day was thus a ‘labour aristocracy’—skilled, male, organised and British—who could, ultimately, identify with their employers, but not with the rest of the working class, reinforcing Barry’s concern about the fluidity of class arrangements between capitalist and the working aristocracy in post-gold-rush Melbourne. The gaining of the eight hours’ day itself came to be a mark of distinction for an occupation or industry, consolidating its regal credentials.

However, retaining the boon was precarious. Labour market characteristics of seasonality, need for physical strength and economic fluctuations left both particular...
workers and some trades exposed to poor working conditions, or indeed, unemployment, regardless of the extent of their theoretical status.\textsuperscript{498} Throughout the 1860s most of the building trades retained the eight hours' day, although the industry suffered a downturn and the unions endured a radical membership decline.\textsuperscript{499} Other trades, such as coach-builders, which had initially gained the eight hours' day, lost it in the 1860s.\textsuperscript{500} Like their British guild forebears, the 'aristocratic' trades adopted a defensive system to protect their fragile gains. They dominated the Trades Hall Committee, which refused combined union co-operation, disavowed strike action, and even saw itself as apolitical;\textsuperscript{501} indeed, in the 1870s newly-formed unions of semi-skilled workers struck out against the defensiveness, elitism and conservatism of the original 'eight hours' men'.\textsuperscript{502}

The original 'eight hours' men' wished to delineate themselves from the working-class masses, concerned to highlight their civic acculturation. They showed themselves as major and beneficent citizens, pioneering the nation-building project along with Barry and his cohorts, and their object lessons need to be understood in this light. Their protectionism, resulting in their conservative politics, helps to explain the considerable government and other civic patronage offered to the 'eight hours' men' from the 1850s through to the 1890s, as their class status remained ambiguous at best.

The pioneers had no quibble with the level of civic patronage they received. Rather, they felt that it was their working-class descendants who were forgetting their efforts. Like their civic contemporaries, the eight hours' pioneers felt their own imminent

\textsuperscript{497} Reeves, Andrew, \textit{Another Day Another Dollar}, p.16; Reeves, Andrew, 'Melbourne Trades Hall Council', pp.1,3.
\textsuperscript{499} Reeves, Andrew, \textit{Another Day Another Dollar}, p.76.
\textsuperscript{500} As above, pp.16,74-6.
\textsuperscript{501} Reeves, Andrew, 'Melbourne Trades Hall Council', pp.3,5.
\textsuperscript{502} As above, pp.1-6. William Murphy was Secretary of the Victorian Trades Hall Council between 1877 and 1886 (with brief periods of intermission), and played a major role in reconciling the politics of the labour aristocracy and the new unions. He wrote the history of the eight hours' day upon his retirement, and it is interesting to note that he makes no mention of this vexed period of union politics.
demise, arousing fears of oblivion and extinction of their gains. In 1885, thirty-four ‘pioneers’ of the Melbourne eight hours’ day established a Committee, determining that those who qualified as members were those who had worked in the building trade up to 21 April 1856, thus protecting their exclusiveness by demanding eye-witnesses to history. Benjamin Douglass became its inaugural President. From the Plasterers’ Society, Douglass had been part of the initial twelve-member union executive elected to negotiate with employers in April 1856, and was thus, like Barry, an elite pioneer. Initially the membership aimed to lead the annual procession in order to symbolise their pivotal role in labour’s gains, and to have an annual social gathering. In 1888 they let their feelings be known:

We have much pleasure in noticing that the general public outside of the Trade Societys [sic] and many of the leading citizens and colonists have favourably noticed the work done by the Pioneers and although the young men who form the large majority of the trade societys [sic] fail to appreciate the works of our members in getting for them that great concession...we feel that at no distant date the just claims of the Pioneers will be recognised at their true value.

In 1889 they set about rectifying this lack of contemporary acknowledgement when they established a National Monument Sub-Committee, whose task was to facilitate the erection of a public monument celebrating not just their trans-colonial achievement but the ‘greatest achievement of labor that as yet has been accomplished in the history of the world’.

The monument was to be erected by public subscription across the colony, including unions, state schools and the public services, with a limit of one shilling per person, ‘thus giving it a possible universality’. The Pioneers were thus explicitly placing it in a wide, embracing class effort, especially when compared to the fund-raising intent around Barry’s statue. The Committee estimated the cost of the statue as exceeding

503 The Pioneers conducted a survey in 1886, finding that about 100 from the 700 men who had marched in 1856 were still alive. Serle, Geoffrey, *The Rush to be Rich*, p.100.
504 Pioneers of the Eight Hours’ Day, Minutes, 19 March 1885.
505 Pioneers of the Eight Hours’ Day, Minutes, 5 July 1888.
506 Pioneers of the Eight Hours’ Day, Minutes, 2 September 1889.
507 As above.
£5000, and Douglass was convinced that ‘[A]ll classes...would come forward, and there is no doubt about it’.

The Committee commissioned Percival Ball, who had completed the design of the Barry statue, and was by that stage a prominent colonial sculptor, to submit a design, which was subsequently described as follows:

The group represents the march of Intelligence and Labour: Intelligence is represented by a female figure, bearing a lighted torch in her right hand to symbolise her illuminating power. The scales of Justice, the only weapon she has used in all her great social victories, are suspended from her girdle. The figure is winged, to typify her celestial origin; the wings encompass and throw their protecting shade about the figure of Labour, marching by her side. Labour is represented by a strong, resolute male figure, striking boldly and fearlessly forward, with a hammer over his shoulder and a wedge in his right hand, these two tools being the greatest mechanical forces known to man. In the background is a column upon which the trophy is raised to the greatest victory yet achieved for toiling humanity—the Eight Hours’ Movement. (Illustration 27)

The symbols pointed to a more immediate level of abstraction and a more explicit class allegiance than the Barry statue; the heroic potential lay in the collective action of the humble classes, inspired by a universal ideal. The monument did not necessarily have a different audience to Barry’s: they were both for young boys in particular, but the inspirational deeds they narrated for the audience’s emulation were very different. For Melbourne’s elite boosters, Barry could personally account for the establishment and progress of the colony, while for the eight hours’ men the colony’s progress depended on the anonymous, collective contributions of labour as part of a just and rewarding democratic contract. These were profoundly different symbolic accounts of the colony’s foundation and progress. Their simultaneity proves that particular sectionalised, private groups of boosters could occasionally make an incursion into the elite group of public boosters who controlled this symbolic terrain, producing a prescribed hierarchical pluralism in public historical narratives.

508 As above.
509 Victorian Trades Hall Council, 12/3/17, Research and Information Bureau, Explanation of the Eight Hour Statue (not authored and not dated.)
EIGHT HOURS’
NATIONAL MONUMENT.

New Treasury Hotel,
Spring Street, Melbourne,
20th February, 1896.

Illustration 27
Percival Ball’s Original Design for the Eight Hours’ Day Monument
Ball’s submission was accepted, and only awaited the funds to make it. Amongst the first donors were men with large Melbourne commercial interests, such as Sir Frederick Sargood and Francis Armitage, the latter of whose good taste we saw praised in the 1888 Exhibition. By April 1890 the Sub-Committee had raised £350, a substantial component being from railway workers, while the balance included donations from high-level boosters, including the Governor Sir Henry Loch, Chief Justice Higinbotham and Dr Madden, each of whom donated £10. (The Committee must have made exceptions to its one shilling limit, probably based upon assumption of the class of the donor). ‘[F]or some unexplained cause’, the trade societies did not come forward, giving some irony to Douglass’s prediction that all classes would contribute. The Committee had distributed pamphlets to the National Teachers’ Association, who were so inspired that ‘they contemplated writing a history of the Eight Hours Movement for insertion in the next public school reading book’. Later, however, the teachers reported that they would not distribute the pamphlets until they received approval from the Director of Education, Frank Tate, introduced earlier, suggesting that the state had subsequently stepped in as censor. The major building employers’ umbrella group, the Builders’ and Contractors’ Association, also patronised the pioneers with a donation of £50, and volunteered to write to its members to encourage them to solicit further donations from their employees. Other building industry businesses also offered to donate materials such as cement.

510 Pioneers of the Eight Hours’ Day Movement National Monument Committee, Minutes, 26 November 1889.
511 See page 62.
512 George Higinbotham succeeded William Stawell as Chief Justice. An Irish immigrant, he had edited The Argus, served as Attorney-General and been a Supreme Court judge. He was considered a radical and supported various union causes. Higinbotham was appointed inaugural President of the Executive Commissioners of Melbourne’s 1888 Centennial Exhibition, but resigned in protest in May 1888 because of the budget blow-out. He died in 1892. A monument to Higinbotham was unveiled in Gordon Square in 1937. See Ridley, Ronald T., Melbourne’s Monuments, pp.60-2; Executive Commissioners of the Centennial International Exhibition, Official Record, p.1.
513 Pioneers of the Eight Hours’ Day, Minutes, 3 April 1890.
514 As above.
515 See footnote 184.
516 Pioneers of the Eight Hours’ Day Movement National Monument Committee, Minutes, 23 June 1891.
Throughout 1890 President Douglass met with a range of politicians and heads of government departments, including the Premier and Treasurer Duncan Gillies, Chief-Secretary (and future Prime Minister) Alfred Deakin, Postmaster-General James Patterson\(^{517}\) and Sir James McBain,\(^{518}\) to secure a site for the monument. McBain was President of the Legislative Council and Parliamentary Building Commissioner, and as President of the 1888 Centennial Exhibition, his portrait was hung in the Victorian Loan Collection.\(^{519}\) ‘[F]rom the whole of them, promises of hearty support and assistance had been received’.\(^{520}\) The Government granted a site on the corner of Spring Street and Carpentaria Place, south of Parliament House and north of Treasury Building,\(^{521}\) ‘[T]he part of Melbourne sacred to Parliamentary institutions...and...almost within hearing of the oratory that emanates from Parliament House’,\(^{522}\) and ‘having as a near neighbour the [recently-erected] statue of General Gordon’.\(^{523}\) We thus witness the emergence of a what would become a major civic ‘exhibitionary complex’.\(^{524}\) (Illustration 28)

Thus the substantial and high-level colonial and capitalist patronage which the ‘eight hours’ men’ had received historically continued in the development of the monument, reflecting the continuing relationships of dependency and mutual interest between colonial boosters, capital and labour, especially with regard to tariff protection propped up by racist arguments,\(^{525}\) and as a series of calculated gestures by government officials and capitalists to gain goodwill by sponsoring a symbolic working-class cause. Chilla Bulbeck argues that unlike women and Aborigines, workers have been seen as an integral if problematical part of Australian history, who have on occasion been given their independent monuments, although their status is symbolically attenuated by the

\(^{517}\) Pioneers of the Eight Hours’ Day, Minutes, 9 January 1890; Pioneers of the Eight Hours’ Day Movement National Monument Committee, Minutes, 4 June 1890.

\(^{518}\) Pioneers of the Eight Hours’ Day, Minutes, 6 August and 17 September 1890.

\(^{519}\) See page 65.

\(^{520}\) Pioneers of the Eight Hours’ Day, Minutes, 9 January 1890.

\(^{521}\) Pioneers of the Eight Hours’ Day Movement National Monument Committee, Minutes, 15 October 1890.

\(^{522}\) The Age, 24 April 1903.

\(^{523}\) As above. See footnote 99.

\(^{524}\) Ridley, Ronald T., Melbourne’s Monuments, pp.25,60,63. In 1932 the Reserve’s monumental conglomeration was further consolidated with the unveiling of a statue of Adam Lindsay Gordon, while Justice Higinbotham’s statue was also unveiled here in 1937.

Illustration 28

General Gordon, the Eight Hours' Day Monument and the Grand Hotel, not dated

Courtesy La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria
specific civic space they inhabit and the greater utility of their monuments.\footnote{Bulbeck, Chilla, 'Remembering Ourselves', pp.411-13; see also Bulbeck, Chilla, 'The Stone Laurel', p.1.} '[T]he bigger, self-indulgent, functionless monuments in busy public places are normally reserved for "the great men who made history"'.\footnote{Bulbeck, Chilla, 'Remembering Ourselves', p.413; see also Bulbeck, Chilla, 'The Stone Laurel', p.3.} However, Bulbeck's adjectives also describe the proposed Eight Hours' Day monument, which indeed 'speaks to the fact that, in this instance, there was no serious conflict between labour and capital'.\footnote{As above, p.11.} We have seen, however, that the more neutralised politics lay in an historical relationship between a labour aristocracy, capital and government. Additionally, while the 'eight hours' men' initially exposed the possibility of class distinctions within the pioneer trope, its dominant emphasis on respect for the work of a foregone generation—the very thing the 'eight hours' men' were fighting for—further neutralised the contemporary politics of the monument and its makers.\footnote{A possibility implied by Bulbeck's own argument on pioneers. See Bulbeck, Chilla, 'Remembering Ourselves', pp.406-08.} The ageing boosters had considerable generational sympathy for the Pioneers.

Notwithstanding such patronage, money was far less forthcoming than the Committee had hoped. On 21 April 1891 the Pioneers laid a foundation stone for the monument. The Mayor of Melbourne was to officiate, but he withdrew at the last minute, offended by allegations made at a meeting of the Trades Hall Council, and subsequently publicised, about his association with a business that had not only refused to grant its workers an eight hours' day, but which would not allow them to be union members.\footnote{Pioneers of the Eight Hours' Day Movement National Monument Committee, Minutes, 18 and 20 April 1891; The Argus, 18 April 1891, p.11.} Specific aspects of contemporary relationships between politicians, capitalists and workers, then, interrupted the patronage of the Pioneers. The instance also aggravated the already poor relationship between the Pioneers and the contemporary labour movement, when Trades Hall Secretary Bolger responded unsympathetically to the allegations about the Mayor, dissociating the Trades Hall from the 'old pioneers', who 'were not aware of the whole of the circumstances', while he also reminded Council that
its members had not been invited to the ceremony.\textsuperscript{531} Indeed, the Pioneers blamed Secretary Bolger for their lack of success in convincing the Mayor to change his mind and officiate at the ceremony.

The Committee continued, unsuccessfully, to raise enough money for the monument, while Percival Ball and his design were left hanging.\textsuperscript{532} In December 1892 Douglass fell out with the Pioneers' Committee, and was replaced as President by Robert Miller. In July 1895 the Pioneers successfully sought Trades Hall's support to 'erect a memorial tablet within the institution in memory of the Pioneers of the 8 hours system'.\textsuperscript{533} In 1890 James Stephens, one of the original leaders of the eight hours' day movement, died, and in 1898 the Ballarat Trades and Labour Council presented his portrait to the Melbourne Trades Hall Council. The Pioneers, friends of Stephens, were invited to the ceremony and addressed the Trades Hall Council, reiterating their concern at being forgotten as historical actors. The President of the Trades Hall Council thanked everyone 'and expressed the hope that the younger generation would endeavour to follow in the footsteps of the pioneers of the movement'.\textsuperscript{534} The question of the monument remained, and when in 1899 the Pioneers attempted to lobby the Trades Hall Council, it responded coolly that it would consider the monument 'on the understanding that the Council be not bound to any proposals [put] before [it]'.\textsuperscript{535}

In 1900 Percival Ball died,\textsuperscript{536} which seemed to undo the paralysis that had beset the Pioneers' Committee due to the interrelated questions of cost and design. It redesigned the monument for a much-reduced budget of £2000.\textsuperscript{537}

The monument stands about 25 feet high, and is decorated at the top with a gilt ball or globe, intended to suggest the world wide scope of the eight hours movement. It rests on a solid basis of grey granite, and for the rest consists of a rounded pillar of the same material without figure or ornamentation of any kind. The work is intended to be solid rather than showy. On the base is the following inscription:-

\textsuperscript{531} As above.
\textsuperscript{532} Pioneers of the Eight Hours' Day, Minutes, 14 September 1891.
\textsuperscript{533} Victorian Trades Hall Council, 1/1/1/4, Minutes, 19 July 1895.
\textsuperscript{534} Victorian Trades Hall Council, 1/1/1/5, Minutes, 7 July 1898.
\textsuperscript{535} Victorian Trades Hall Council, 1/1/1/5, Minutes, 28 July 1899.
\textsuperscript{536} Scarlett, Ken, Australian Sculptors, p.34.
\textsuperscript{537} The Age, 24 April 1903.
To commemorate the Eight Hours movement, instituted in Victoria 1856. Erected 1903.\(^{538}\) (Illustration 29)

It was unveiled on the 21 April 1903, the particular year reflecting a vexed and compromised fourteen-year process rather than a symbolic ideal. The ceremony underlined the definitive souring of relations between Melbourne’s boosters and workers between the time of the original proposal and its unveiling, presently symbolised by a miners’ strike in Gippsland. The ceremony attracted 1500 people, far less than the unveiling of Barry’s statue, and they were ‘of the working class’.\(^{539}\) This time, the President and members of the Trades Hall had also been invited.\(^{540}\) It was officiated by Eddie Warde, a minority Labor MLA and President of the Memorial Committee. The vice-regal and elite political circles we have seen officiating at other history-making ceremonies were notably absent. The fourteen ‘surviving pioneers of the eight hours movement...each wearing a badge to proclaim his identity’,\(^{541}\) unveiled the monument.

The temporal emphasis of the ceremony was on the contemporary implications of the class politics the monument represented. Warde stated that the ‘great boon’ needed to be ‘jealously guarded’,\(^{542}\) and that ‘the movement...ought never to rest until they had an Eight Hours secured...by legislation’.\(^{543}\) Tom Mann, a well-known Irish socialist residing in Melbourne at the time, also spoke, ‘congratulating the working men of Victoria upon having secured a lasting memorial to a great victory’,\(^{544}\) and cut immediately to its present implications, suggesting that contemporary unemployment and poverty meant that the working class ought to consider fighting for a six hours’ day. Unlike at the Barry memorial ceremony, the present was not all good, and class conflict was at the heart of the progress problem. The unveiling exposed the potential conflict in allowing historical pluralism on Melbourne’s public platform, which had not been

\(^{538}\) As above.
\(^{539}\) As above.
\(^{540}\) Victorian Trades Hall Council, 1/1/1/6, Minutes, 17 April 1903.
\(^{541}\) The Age, 24 April 1903, p.5.
\(^{542}\) The Argus, 22 April 1903, p.6.
\(^{543}\) The Age, 24 April 1903, p.5.
\(^{544}\) The Argus, 22 April 1903, p.6.
Illustration 29
Eight Hours’ Day Monument, not dated
Courtesy University of Melbourne Archives
apparent at the time that the ‘eight hours’ men’ made their incursion into Melbourne’s elite circle of boosters.

The route of the Eight Hours’ Day procession changed from 1903, in order to pay homage to the new monument. But the contemporary tension between capital and labour was exacerbated, especially by bitter industrial disputes in the wake of WWI. In February 1923, Melbourne’s Lord Mayor attempted to move the routes of various processions, ‘and it appeared to [Mr Turner, the President of the Trades Hall Council] that the Lord Mayor was against processions such as ours being allowed unless the march took place outside the Tramline’. Notwithstanding the suggestion of conspiracy, this was part of Melbourne’s civic officials’ ever encroaching moves to ‘clean up’ the popular use of central city streets, pointing to the more general unease between civic officials and people. The Trades Hall lobbied successfully to retain the eight hours’ day procession within the central city but outside the tramline, thus symbolically relegating its civic importance. It agreed to move the monument and to alter the procession route accordingly, and in January 1924 the monument was unveiled on a corner reserve opposite the Trades Hall, on a site which spoke more explicitly of its partisan origins. (Illustration 30)

**Conclusion**

In his ‘revisionist’ article on James Gilbert, Ronald Ridley traces the development of a range of major statues before and during Gilbert’s sculptural ‘reign’ in the 1870s and

---

546 Victorian Trades Hall Council, 1/7/5, Eight Hours’ Day Anniversary Committee, Minutes, 14 February 1923.
548 This sequence differs from Andrew Brown-May’s, who suggests that the processional route was changed in response to the monument’s move, in *Melbourne Street Life*, p.198. However, the primary sources make the sequence of events clear, and add to Brown-May’s central thesis that over the twentieth century, civic boosters incrementally relegated the popular use of the central city.
549 Victorian Trades Hall Council, 1/7/5, Eight Hours’ Day Anniversary Committee, Minutes, 14 March 1923; *The Argus*, 5 January 1924, p.19. The monument’s complex provenance and most especially the timing of its respective locations are not reported accurately in most of the secondary sources I have used except Andrew Brown-May’s *Melbourne Street Life* and Geoffrey Serle’s *The Rush to be Rich*, due to the fact that the authors have neither researched
Illustration 30
Three 8's Street, by Alan Sumner, 1945
Courtesy National Gallery of Victoria
1880s, and notes as an aside that ‘[I]t is striking how often the same notables played the same role in so many of these commemorative matters.’ It may well be striking, but it is to be expected. The notables were Melbourne’s elite boosters, identifiable to groups of individuals and positions at different points in time, and many of whom we saw as historical actors in Redmond Barry’s quintessential world of civic development.

In this context, the Eight Hours’ Day monument appears at first to be a glaring anomaly, but on closer inspection seems to allow for a carefully-prescribed and occasionally precarious hierarchical pluralism in the central civic sphere’s historical landscape. From the beginning the workers justified the eight hours’ day in the very language of the boosters, and indeed the eight hours’ day became the mark of a trade’s closer alignment with the civic elite and increasing divorce from the working-class masses. The civic boosters’ sustained and mostly unproblematic patronage of the monument reflected their relationship, although specific contemporary relations between labour and capital upset the arrangement momentarily, and then for a more enduring period around the time of its unveiling. We also saw how the pioneer trope, which to some extent allowed the masses into history, helped to neutralise the politics of the monument. Indeed, it may have accounted for the extent of the patronage due to the generational empathy of the boosters for the more overtly private group of retired builders.

Both Barry’s statue and the Eight Hours’ Day monument were marked by considerable delay, most especially caused by lack of funds, and it was the deaths of key players which tended to reinvigorate the monument-making efforts, reinforcing their discourse as acts of closure, especially of lived memory of the past. Ultimately both monuments reflected the compromised ideals of the monument-makers, problematising the nature of public history-making efforts and especially any surface reading of the monumental landscape. Notwithstanding the rhetoric of public possession, the support for each monument was from a complex mix of class interests rather than the general public at

---

the minutes nor read the published primary sources accurately. The public information about the provenance of this monument is therefore largely inaccurate (and contradictory).

large. The commonness of the lack of widespread public developmental support\textsuperscript{551} suggests that while the Melbourne public may have momentarily embraced object lessons as spectacles, it did not necessarily embrace the monumental language of history in a sustained way. Indeed, it seems to reinforce the monument-makers’ concern about generational disrespect, and accounts for the emphasis at the unveilings on seeking endorsement from future generations.

The monuments were conceived in the epic tradition. Their status as works of art allowed a creative, inflated narrative. However the monument-makers were more concerned with didactic rather than aesthetic terrain, often to the chagrin of the sculptors. With Barry’s statue verisimilitude mattered more than artistic values, while the compromised outcome of the Eight Hours’ Day monument was justified on the grounds of solidity over artistic merit.\textsuperscript{552} Indeed, the historical narrative has mattered more than the artistic one in the many history-making concerns we have so far witnessed.

Both monuments had their distinct rhetoric, between them offering an increasingly irreconcilable lecture on class, marked to an extent by the unveiling and after-life of the Eight Hours’ Day monument. However, both of them sought generational endorsement of the past, a discourse which was central to the monumental history-making genre, and which tended to be common to all monuments. While the specific politics of the contemporary relationships symbolised by the monuments changed, it was this common message in particular that allowed the development of Melbourne’s pre-War monumental conglomerations over time and space. Nevertheless, the pluralism within each conglomeration was limited. The Eight Hours’ Day monument might have

\textsuperscript{551} Ridley, R.T., ‘James Gilbert’, pp.18ff. Ridley, Ronald T., \textit{Melbourne’s Monuments}, p.69. An overall reading of Ridley’s work on monuments shows how so many of them were subject to problems with funding, which usually caused considerable delays and sometimes compromises in designs. An exception is the statue to General Gordon of Khartoum, where the public appeal produced an excess of funds. The rare success of public subscription in relation to this War figure reminds on a lesser scale of that of the Shrine, elaborated in Chapter Three

\textsuperscript{552} Several decades later, the Eight Hours’ Day Monument was described as ‘Australia’s most inartistic memorial’, doing an injustice to Percival Ball’s original vision, while General Gordon’s statue, adjacent to the Eight Hours’ Day monument, was described as ‘Australia’s most artistic memorial’ in \textit{Building}, 12 March 1918, pp.90-1.
represented the limits of overtly sectional incursion into Melbourne’s elite boostering circle—politically and temporally—and most central city monuments were in the image of Melbourne’s elite boosters.