



# The Ballarat Times

BUYERS & CARRIERS ADVERTISERS.

## DISTURBANCE AT THE UNITED STATES

**HOTEL**  
MAIN ROAD BALLARAT

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**VEXILLOLOGISTS**  
**TAKEN INTO CUSTODY**  
FOR BEING  
**DRUNK & DISORDERLY**  
AND DISTURBING THE PEACE

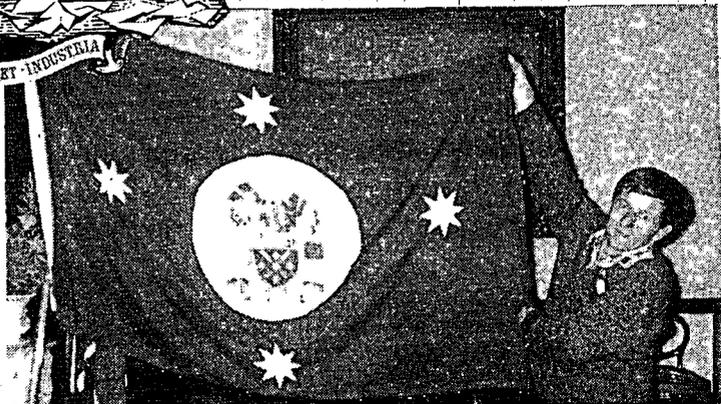


**SOVEREIGN  
HILL  
BALLARAT**

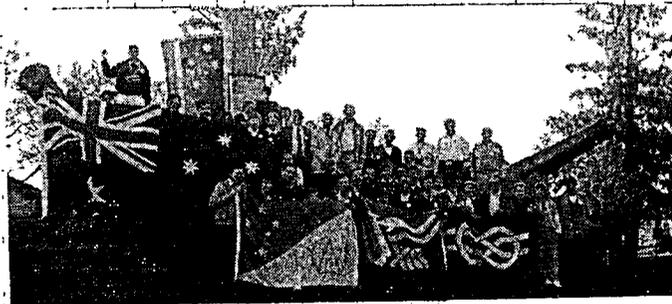


Arms of the  
City of Ballarat

Alain Raulet  
finds the Southern Stars



Ballarat City Library



**EUREKA,  
BALLARAT**

The Spirit of  
Eureka Survives



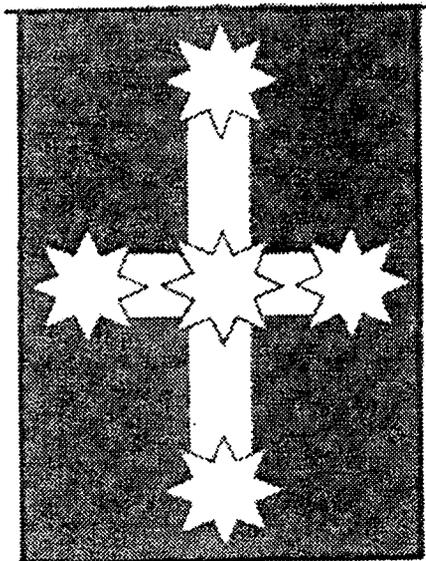
## A FLAG THAT MERITS BETTER

*When the conference delegates first assembled at Queen's College on Sunday evening, September 24, they heard an introductory talk given by Dr Bernard Barrett, the State Historian for the Government of Victoria. Dr Barrett spoke about the flag of the Southern Cross, popularised by the Eureka gold miners in Victoria 135 years ago. Dr Barrett's talk was similar to an interview he had previously given to the Ballarat courier, published on 9 February 1989 and reproduced here.*

Today, February 9 is the centenary of the death of Peter Lalor, the first person to swear an oath to the Australian flag. Lalor who led the miners at the Eureka goldfields in Ballarat when they clashed with British troops in 1854 later became speaker of the Victorian parliament and died on February 9 1899.

Victoria's State Historian Dr Bernard Barrett said yesterday "undemocratic behaviour by British officials and soldiers turned Lalor into a political activist."

On Thursday November 30 1954 armed soldiers and police carried out an aggressive licence hunt on the Ballarat gold fields and even fired on some miners. Thousands of angry miners then assembled for an open-air protest meeting at Bakery



Hill in central Ballarat and when their usual leaders failed to appear a 27 year old Irish civil engineer named Peter Lalor mounted a stump and made his first major political speech.

Lalor called for volunteers to form into ranks to defend the mining community from further military attacks.

Dr Barrett said someone had hoisted a new home-made flag later known as the Eureka flag at the meeting. It featured a white cross on a blue background to represent the stars of the Southern Cross.

Lalor swore in his volunteers under this flag, proclaiming proudly:

*We swear under the Southern Cross to stand true by each other and fight to defend our rights and liberties.*

The crowd shouted *Amen!* and then marched behind the new flag to build a defensive barricade in a on a hill at Eureka several kilometres away.

Three days later British troops attacked the stockade killing at least 30 miners and wounding at least 50 others. Dr Barrett said most people today would be surprised to learn that Lalor was rather conservative, not a revolutionary. He was not claiming something new but was trying to return to the rights that the Diggers had lost simply by being on the gold fields.

When he entered the Victorian parliament after Eureka, Lalor took a conservative stand on many issues and once he even voted with the squatters to oppose a land reform bill.

There is something in Peter Lalor for every Australian, whether left, right or centre. But Dr Barrett said the Eureka flag was not the property of any one political group. This flag has been hijacked at various times, not only by left wing groups, but also by the extreme right and racist groups. At Ballarat the flag merely symbolised the miners commitment to democratic freedom in their new land in the southern hemisphere.

Dr Barrett said this flag was hoisted on Bakery Hill in central Ballarat and was only afterwards taken to Eureka. The flag would be more accurately called the Bakery Hill flag or the Southern Cross flag, he said.

In recent years the Ballarat tourist authorities have begun flying the flag proudly on a pole at Bakery Hill where Macdonald's restaurant now stands.

