

Mr Laurence Elwyn Short AO OBE

Laurence (Laurie) Elwyn Short AO OBE, leading trade union identity, a key figure in the fight against communist control of unions in Australia, and a Fellow of the University Senate from 1978 to 1986, was awarded an honorary Doctor of Science in Economics degree on 29 April 1994 at a graduation ceremony in the Great Hall.

He later gave the occasional address.



In the Quad after receiving his honorary doctorate, Laurie Short (right) and his wife, the artist Nancy Borlase, greet an old friend, Sir Richard Kirby, AC, President of the former Commonwealth Arbitration Court., *photo, 'The University of Sydney News', 10 May 1994.*

Report

'Laurie Short was respected as the responsible, dedicated and incorruptible leader of one of Australia's biggest and most important trade unions,' said the Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor Derek Anderson when reading the citation, before the Chancellor, Emeritus Professor Dame Leonie Kramer, presented the degree.

'For 31 years Laurie was National Secretary of the Federated Ironworkers Association (FIA) and he became identified with the anticommunist fight in the unions.'

Professor Anderson described Laurie's entry into the workforce, at the Stromberg Carlson factory, and some of the highlights of his career. At sixteen Laurie joined the Young Communist League, was arrested during a demonstration, gave his age as eighteen and was goaled for two weeks. In his teens, in the 1930s, he became friendly with the University's Professor of Philosophy, John Anderson, and visited him for talks about communism. But Laurie gradually became strongly anti-communist and at seventeen he was expelled from the Young Communist League. Thus began his fight against the Communist Party of Australia. He joined the communist-controlled FIA in 1937 and became critical of ballot rigging. In 1951, after a long court hearing when Laurie challenged the results, Laurie was declared National Secretary of the FIA. He was confirmed in the position in the 1952 elections.

Laurie was the first union leader to achieve national prominence by speaking on radio and television. He has held many public posts. For seven years he was an ABC commissioner, he has been a trustee of the NSW Art Gallery, and a member of the NSW Parole Board and NSW Chairman of the Commonwealth Trade Union Training Authority. He was awarded an OBE in 1971 and an AO in 1980.

Laurie Short is a figure of immense significance in the Australian trade union movement, Professor Anderson concluded, a man of outstanding courage and tenacity who became a legend in his own time.

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