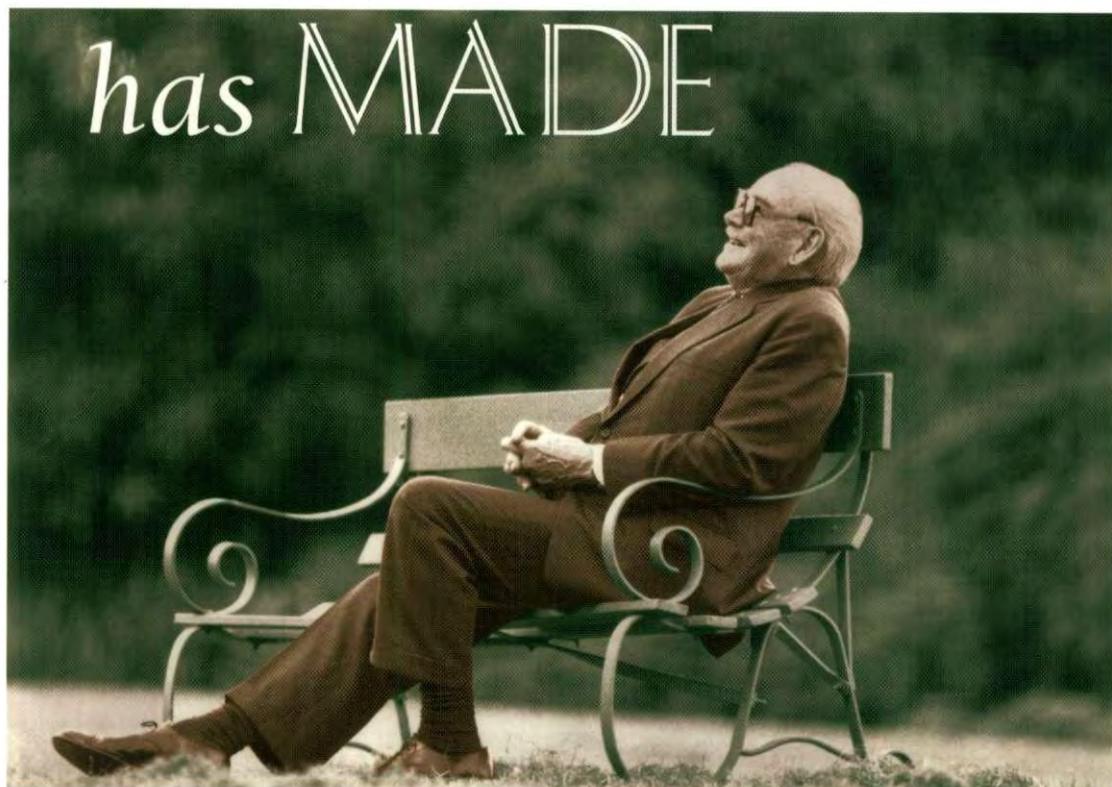


LIGHT *that*
TIME

has MADE



Paul
HASLUCK

LIGHT THAT TIME HAS MADE

by

PAUL HASLUCK

with an introduction and postscript by
Nicholas Hasluck

National Library of Australia
1995

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INTRODUCTION

My father, Sir Paul Hasluck (1905–1993), died at the age of 87 after a long career in public life, and having had an even longer innings as a writer. He started off as a journalist on the *West Australian* in the 1920s and the training he received served him well. Thereafter, he wrote fluently on a wide variety of subjects, as a journalist, a poet, a drama critic, a social observer, a historian and as a participant in public affairs. The fruits of his pen are to be found in many places, ranging from two volumes of the official war history covering political and social events in Australia during the 1939–45 war—perhaps his finest achievement—to doggerel circulated at Cabinet meetings, not always to the amusement of his colleagues. His last publication, a small book of verse called *Crude Impieties*, included 'A Lullaby for Legislators' and 'The Poet's Guide to Social Hypocrisy', proof that the independent spirit which is a feature of his work continued to the end.

It is the sense that one is hearing an independent voice which makes the publication of this further book worthwhile. We seem to be moving into a new age in Australia in which, increasingly, many opinions sound the same, too often shaped by orthodoxies originating overseas, dogmas that reach our shores couched in quasi-academic jargon or chanted as a mantra. That being so, it scarcely matters whether one shares the views expressed in this volume of reflections. The general reader will find pleasure in responding to clearly expressed insights drawn from many areas of Australian life as the twentieth century unfolded.

My father's account of how he became interested in the essay as a literary form is worth repeating for it casts light on the contents of this book. One evening in winter, as a boy aged 11, he was sitting in the kitchen of the Aged Men's Retreat at Guildford in the Swan Valley run by his Salvation Army parents. The evening meal had been cleared away and most of the others in the household had gone to bed early, so my father was free to finish the book he was reading near the warmth of the big stove. When the kitchen man came in to lay the fire ready for the morning he noticed that the book was Thackeray's *Henry Esmond* and asked my father if he had read the leading article in the Saturday edition of the *West Australian*. It was on the historical novel. The kitchen man gave his view that *The Cloister and the Hearth* and *Vanity Fair* were the two greatest historical novels, and encouraged my father to say a few words in favour of Thackeray.

Fascinated by the encounter, at having been treated as a grown-up, my father tracked down the newspaper article and soon afterwards acquired the two novels recommended by the kitchen man. It came as a revelation to my father that not only could books be read but also one could discuss their merits, and commune about the

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insights they contained, with like-minded readers, taking into account the views expressed by critics in the local newspaper. This was his introduction to literary criticism and the discursive essay.

My father refers to this incident in his autobiography, *Mucking About*. He says there that the kitchen man was an educated fellow who had fallen on hard times, part-inmate and part-employee, but one who had retained an interest in the world of learning. My father goes on to say that a number of the inmates at the Aged Men's Retreat had convict antecedents, although the one he got to know best, a man who had been transported to Western Australia in the 1860s, seemed to have no resentments, nor any memory of ill-treatment. He thought that being transported to the Swan River Colony was one of the best things that had happened to him. Unlike the kitchen man, these others had little schooling and were not always able to sum up the nature of their experiences.

My father's autobiography is rich with odd encounters of this kind, vignettes which vividly recapture the taste and feel of the era. If readers wish to find out more about the personality of Paul Hasluck, the life and times of a young Perth-based journalist during the between-wars period, or if they wish to be reminded of the amusing minutiae of Australian life 75 years ago—the mangle wheels, the dunnies, the milk pails, the penny dreadfuls, the school picnics, the black bloomers, the grubby inkwell monitor and the Christmas pudding suspended from the rafters—the snippets we hunger for and have come to expect when a writer looks back, *Mucking About* is the place to begin. It recreates a bygone day with verve, and with affection. This book, however, is of a different kind. In many of the pieces that follow, the author starts with details but goes on to relate them to a broader picture, looking at the way in which habits have changed—the nature of social transformation. It is a summing-up. To echo T.S. Eliot, I see this further work not as an expression of the author's personality, but as an escape from personality: a companion piece to a number of his earlier works which were predominantly autobiographical. In that category I include not only *Mucking About* but also *Shades of Darkness*, which refers to my father's long involvement in the field of Aboriginal affairs, and *Diplomatic Witness*, which describes his career in the Department of External Affairs during the war years. In the present volume, in a manner reminiscent of Montaigne, a writer once active in the world of affairs, who has already recorded what he did elsewhere, moves on and ruminates in more general terms about the Australian way of life.

The encounter with the kitchen man seems to have been the beginning of a life-long habit, the process of appraisal, of reflecting on events in the belief that this will be of interest to others. When I try to conjure up an image of that meeting in the kitchen between the small boy and the old-timer, I rather imagine that the

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exchange, although intensely experienced, was in a quiet tone of voice. A degree of detachment is almost inevitable when one is trying to work out what one thinks, and this is apparent as my father looks at the various issues he raises for discussion. The same tone is apparent later when he talks about the personalities of some prominent Australians. He finds in them traits which are visible in the national character. One does not have to be strident, or denounce an opponent, in order to make a point; and indeed, for most of us, what we think eventually is more likely to be influenced by the quietly reasoned manner of a respected confidant than by a diatribe delivered on the hustings or flung into our living rooms by some beleaguered politician on television. Restraint is often a sign of strength.

I find support for these comments in my father's papers. On a fragment in a file where several of the pieces included in this volume were found, referring to his work in helping to establish the Royal Historical Society of Western Australia, he said this:

Over 60 years ago, in the early days of the century, I used to do part of my duty as honorary research secretary by interviewing old colonists to hear their stories of the early days. It was most rewarding to meet old-timers in their mid-eighties and still in full possession of their faculties and to be told what life was like in 1850. I yarned with one or two who could recall what it was like in the 1840s.

Now, having passed the age of 85 and having a reasonably clear memory, I thought I ought to interview myself and, before I forget, tell a few yarns about what life was like about the time of the First World War, 75 years ago.

Most of these pieces, then, some published before his death, many found in draft form among his papers, can be regarded as 'self-interviews'.

It was clear to me from the outset that he was not simply interested in telling yarns and looking back. As he puts it in his essay on history towards the end of Book 1, 'a knowledge of the past helps us to understand better what is happening in the present day and what may happen in the future, and this understanding gives a better chance that we will speak and act wisely in managing present-day affairs'. His reflections were written with that thought in mind. They are linked by a common thread—the contrast between 'then' and 'now'. Thus, the papers were accompanied by what seems to be a short preface to the series:

For the sake of simplicity I begin my comparison between "then" and "now" by looking at the signs of change in the habits and customs most readily seen in the day-to-day life of the people—the way we live. In describing what can be seen on the surface I may occasionally offer some guesses about what is

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under the surface and advance some views about these indicators of deeper change. Eventually we may accumulate a big enough heap of guesses and indications to support some more solemn observations about what happened in Australia in the twentieth century.

This brings me back to the meeting with the kitchen man, the companionable chat beside the big stove. The embers of the stove were slowly expiring. They had to be raked out so that a fire could be laid for the morning, but the talk ran on. Thackeray. Sir Walter Scott. *The Cloister and the Hearth*. *Vanity Fair* ... It is hard to imagine such a conversation taking place today between an old-timer and an 11-year-old boy. Indeed, one suspects that, in the modern world, conversations of such a kind between adults are rare; an essay in the local newspaper about historical novels even rarer. This makes the conversation of additional interest, for it gives a glimpse of how people thought at that time, and of the points of reference that influenced their thinking.

It is not my purpose in this introduction, of course, to put a case as to whether things have changed for better or for worse. What I do suggest is that one has to understand the extent to which the essays which follow are influenced by the author's background and the circumstances of a different era. The point is obvious but often seems to be overlooked. There was a time before the advent of post-modern theory when it seemed natural to classify some books as classics, and to speak of one novel as being better than another. There was a time when literary criticism was written not to advance or impede an academic career but in the belief that it would be a source of interest and enjoyment to readers of the local newspaper. There was a time, especially in the comparatively small city of Perth, where people thought of themselves as belonging to a community, sharing certain values, having a verifiable history, living in a land of opportunity.

A commentator of an acerbic and contemporary cast of mind could weigh in at this point and say how appalling it is that attention is being focused on a literary discussion which extols the virtues of some moribund English authors and contains no reference to Australian literature ... and so on. Interventions of this kind are not uncommon. The thesis seems to be that, unless a conversation or a piece of writing resounds with overtly contemporary concerns, then it does not count or can be dismissed as quaint. Such an approach is usually short-sighted. An attempt to see what happened in the past requires an understanding of the way in which one's predecessors saw what they were doing. We need to know their own evaluations of the circumstances in which they lived their lives and made their decisions. Hence, a sense of period is essential. Unless the historian is equipped accordingly, he or she can make judgments just as absurd as saying that the kitchen man is not worthy of our respect because he laid a fire in the stove for morning, instead of setting the timer on the electric oven.

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A study of the past is a means by which society may arrive at an understanding of what it is. That is the author's theme. Perhaps the best argument for publication is the author's hope of sharing his views with a contemporary audience and sowing some seed that will come to full bloom among his successors. To such an audience, two pieces in Book I, 'Republican Pie' and 'Tangled in the Harness', in which the prospects of Australia becoming a republic are canvassed will be of particular interest. Having raked out the old embers, what will we put in their place? Certainly, for myself, as appears in the piece I have written in the postscript to this book, 'The Garter Box Goes Back to England', much of what my father has to say about this topic is of value to someone of my generation who is concerned about what happens in the next century. To others, disagreement may help to clarify the issue.

This brings me to the title of the book: *Light That Time Has Made*. Suitable titles do not always come to mind easily but in this case the answer was close to hand. As a young journalist my father not only took an interest in the early history of Perth but also was well known in literary and theatrical circles. It was in this way that he met his future wife, Alexandra Darker—known as 'Alix' to her friends—who was active in the University Dramatic Society. They married in 1932 and left immediately for a year away in London. It was during that year, I gather, after several excursions within England and on the continent, that my father embarked upon the research which led to the publication of his first book a few years later, *Black Australians*, a survey of native policy in Western Australia in the nineteenth century. It happened almost by chance. My mother was determined to spend the last few months of their sojourn overseas writing a novel and it was therefore convenient for my father to spend his time in the Reading Room of the British Museum looking into some of the social issues which had crossed his path as a journalist. One such issue was the plight of the indigenous Australian.

Like many of their Australian friends who were in London at that time, my parents came back from overseas with something like an apostolic zeal to bring changes to Australia as a land where aspirations could be realised. They were full of ideas about what music should be played, what plays put on, what books written, what social conditions improved. As it turned out, affected by the Depression, many of these dreams could not be fulfilled. Nonetheless, when my father returned to the *West Australian*, in one or two small ways he sought to build upon his overseas experience. At his insistence he was appointed drama critic for the newspaper. He joined the Australian Aborigines Amelioration Association (the four As) and not long afterwards, when one of the stipendiary magistrates, Mr H.D. Moseley, was appointed as a Royal Commissioner to investigate the administration of Aboriginal affairs in Western Australia, applying his research and his knowledge of local conditions, my father wrote a series of articles describing the various policy adjustments that had been made since the early days of the colony. He went on to cover the work of the Royal Commission

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as it visited various corners of the State. Most commentators agree that these articles were of considerable importance in drawing attention to an issue which had been sadly neglected until then.

As a result of his research at the British Museum, my father also wanted to set up a small privately owned publishing house to publish early colonial texts. One possibility was a translation into English of the memoirs of Bishop Salvado and another possibility was a book, *The Trial of John Death*, which would reproduce the contemporary record of the trial of a settler with that odd name after the death of Aborigines from eating poisoned flour. Before these projects could be completed, however, the Second World War intervened and my parents moved to Canberra. The operations of the publishing house, known as Freshwater Bay Press (named after the stretch of water close to my family home in Claremont), went into abeyance, leaving behind only a slim volume of verse written by my father, *Into the Desert*, and a volume of essays, *Venite Apotemus*, by Tom Turnspit—the nom de plume of a local scribe who wished to remain anonymous.

Many years later my father sold Freshwater Bay Press to me for a token dollar. Three more books were produced including another slim volume of poetry by my father, *Dark Cottage*, which was launched by Max Harris in 1984. When he received the invitation to launch a further offering by what is surely the longest running 'smaller-than-small' publishing house in Australia, the former editor of *Angry Penguins* probably wondered whether the ghost of Ern Malley had risen to visit some further hoax upon him. Too bad. Max bravely came across to Perth for the occasion, noting, as he wet the prow of the tiny craft, that Freshwater Bay Press had been churning out its 'product' for nearly 50 years—at the rate of one book every decade.

How does all of this relate to the title of the present publication? The slim volume launched by Max Harris opened with lines by Edmund Waller as an epigraph to introduce the poetry that followed:

The Soul's dark Cottage, batter'd and decay'd,
Lets in new Light thro chinks that time has made.
Stronger by weakness, wiser Men become
As they draw near to their Eternal home:
Leaving the Old, both worlds at once they view
That stand upon the Threshold of the New!

Hence the present title, *Light That Time Has Made*—it seems so apt to describe a collection of ruminations written in retirement. For that reason I quoted from *Dark Cottage* (and from other works written by my father) at the State Funeral service held in my father's honour at St George's Cathedral in Perth. The full text of what I said on that

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occasion forms part of the postscript to this book. I drew upon his writings because in many ways the essence of the man is to be found there rather than in the achievements of his public career.

My father was conscious of an irony in that regard. In his extended essay, *The Poet in Australia*—the first of various books he published in the years following his retirement as Governor-General in 1974, he referred to the fact that Australians are not tolerant of privacy. A man who does not play golf is likely to be considered difficult. A self-communing man is suspected of all sorts of bad habits. 'Moreover,' my father says, 'the urgency of life in a young country, which drags almost anyone who can read and write and who has a sense of community service into some public office, makes it probable that many of our finest minds are engaged in public duties which destroy any hope of privacy.' If one accepts that writers, and especially poets, need a private world in order to perfect their talents, the consequence of too many persons from Porlock appearing unexpectedly on the doorstep will be a ghostly pile of unwritten books. As my father goes on to suggest, rather tartly, perhaps a sufficient mercy for the poet in Australia would be, not to be encouraged by a literary fund, but to be left alone.

Were these comments his response to a personal predicament? His career in Canberra as a public servant took him eventually to the San Francisco Conference with Dr Evatt at the end of the war, and later, with the formation of the United Nations, to New York as head of the Australian United Nations Mission. He then returned to Perth. In 1949 he was elected to the Federal Parliament as the Liberal Party candidate for the seat of Curtin. Two years later Prime Minister Menzies invited him to accept the newly constituted portfolio of Minister for Territories, whereupon the prospects of reviving the Freshwater Bay Press and pursuing other literary interests evaporated.

Although I was only a schoolboy at the time, I can remember vividly the day the invitation came. The family had rented a small holiday shack at Augusta in the south of the State. One evening, as my brother and I tramped back to the shack with my father, wet and sandy, proudly clutching a hessian sugar bag of fish, the landlady at the local pub called in to say that someone had been trying to get through urgently on the telephone. In those days telephone communication with Augusta closed at 5.00 pm but arrangements had been made to re-open the line at 8.00 o'clock. My brother and I sat on the linoleum floor in the main corridor of the pub, our backs to the wall, as my father stood waiting for the phone to ring. It was one of those old-fashioned, two-piece instruments with a handle to whirl when you took a call, a piece of magic which my brother and I were keen to see enacted.

Perhaps some agitation in my father's manner had been communicated to us. As we sat in the dimly lit hall, and watched and waited, it gradually dawned on us that this was an extremely important moment. The whirling handle was about to summon up a world we did not understand. When the call came through and was quickly

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answered, we could see that my father, although he had little to say to the voice on the other end of the line, was listening intently, totally absorbed. The estuary and the boats at the end of the jetty receded.

It was Menzies ringing from Brisbane. The holiday was cut short. We drove home. My father flew to Canberra. As he notes in the first chapter of *A Time for Building*, his account of what happened in Papua and New Guinea during his lengthy period as Minister for Territories: 'this was the last organised holiday I attempted to have for the next 18 years'. Small wonder that he did not publish any books during that period. When, in 1968, after Harold Holt's death, my father nearly became Prime Minister of Australia, perhaps it was a consolation to him, at the moment of being passed over by his party, that he would have more time to pursue his other interests.

Certainly, in going through my father's papers, I discovered that his various intellectual pursuits were not entirely neglected during the ministerial years. He kept up a wide correspondence relating to historical research. He amused himself while travelling by translating French verse into English. There were also moments here and there to build up his library. I can recall an occasion in the early 1960s, while I was still a law student at the University of Western Australia, when I literally bumped into my father in Sydney in circumstances that to most people would seem peculiar, if not positively bizarre.

I was on my way to an inter-varsity basketball carnival and had a few hours to spare before catching a train. While strolling through the centre of Sydney, quite by chance, I came across a second-hand book sale being held at Angus and Robertson. I began moving along the trestle tables, a few inches at a time, settling into that slow crab-like motion which characterises the serious book buyer, a motion which brings with it by degrees a defensive, almost surly outlook and a blinkered range of vision—a mode of advancement which resents obstruction.

Halfway down the second table, close to an especially interesting trove of ancient volumes, I became conscious of a competitor at my side, a solid presence, someone possessed of an unwillingness to make way, to move on, to yield, which was equal to my own. In such circumstances the conscientious book buyer does not waste time looking at the offending party. One censures the recalcitrant foe by deft movements of the hip and shoulder which become steadily less subtle as time goes by. On this occasion the strategy was to no avail.

My exasperation came to a head. I turned to glare at the intruder. It was my father! As great a shock to him as it was to me. We were quickly seized by laughter, astonished at the incongruity of the situation. We had not seen each other for several months. He had just come back from New Guinea and was en route to Canberra. I was on my way to Brisbane. We exchanged news. We compared our prospective purchases. We went back to the books, politely swapping places so that our respective trajectories, which had come to a halt at the crunch point, could continue unimpeded.

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Every family has its own peculiarities and quirky ways. Over the years, I have told this story to people outside the family circle from time to time, and have generally been met with looks of consternation. In Australia, it seems, to find one's father at a football match or in a brothel is more acceptable than to bump into him at a book sale. For myself, I recall the moment with pleasure. Books are a means of kindling and keeping alive an interest in the wider world. The kitchen man moves into the circle of warmth by the stove and begins to talk about historical novels. The world expands. Once acquired, the habit of serendipity and self-education is never lost.

My father had various sides to his nature. There were many facets to his life, but the practice of setting down what he saw and what he thought was a consistent strand. Oddly enough, I have no clear picture of him at work as a writer. I can see my mother at her desk, fingers flickering across the keyboard of the portable typewriter which followed her everywhere. When she lost the use of one hand towards the end of her life, after a severe stroke, I can still see her upright at the desk picking out the letters on the keyboard slowly. To the best of my recollection, however, I never saw my father using a typewriter, although he must have done so as a working journalist, certainly as a drama critic roughing out a quick review to catch a deadline. My understanding is that the various books he wrote during the 20 years of his retirement were done in long-hand, the first draft being typed up by others.

This brings me to my final anecdote. A few months before my father's death he had a fall, which was followed by surgery for a dislocated hip. Owing to the presence of an underlying cancer, his recovery was slow. He was confined to his hospital bed with a large wedge between his ankles to prevent movement. When the hip dislocated again, he was subjected to further remedial surgery and finished up in the same position on his hospital bed, but it was now hard to see what, if anything, the future held, because the deep surgery required to reconstruct the hip would probably be too much for the body to bear.

It was in these circumstances that he wrote the essay in this volume 'National Identity', in which he suggests that a society organised as a nation state needs cohesion, a focus of loyalty that supersedes sectional advantage, in order to survive. He had been asked to present an address to the recently formed Samuel Griffiths Society by John Stone, the former senator, and was determined to fulfil the undertaking, although the likelihood was, as proved to be the case, that I would have to deliver the address on his behalf.

He had no works of reference; he wrote from memory and, as usual, having recovered sufficiently from the side-effects of the second operation (but still anchored to his bed by the device I mentioned), he wrote fluently in long-hand until a first draft was done. Unfortunately, owing to the peculiar circumstances in which the piece had to be written, the draft was mislaid; and now the deadline was only a week away. 'That's it,'

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my father said when it became apparent that his handwritten draft, the only copy, had disappeared and could not be recovered. 'I can't do it again. I haven't got the energy.'

For those of us who were seeing him daily, the loss of the draft came as a relief. The organisers of the event were not aware of my father's condition and I felt sure that when the circumstances were explained, they would quickly excuse him. Two days later, however, before I could say anything, he handed over a fresh handwritten draft. 'Look after it,' the former journalist said. 'I don't like missing deadlines.' And a few days later I rose to my feet in front of an audience and gave the promised speech.

I tell this story simply to illustrate that underlying the pieces in this book was a desire to say something in the hope that the observations might be of use to thinking Australians, a sense of purpose that continued to the very end. There will be many readers who will disagree profoundly with the views expressed, and who are probably convinced they know the right way forward. Time will tell. Let me gently suggest, however, that the views contained in this volume are entitled to that degree of respect which is usually accorded to any sincere enterprise. Besides, it often happens that views which are dismissed too quickly turn out to contain a portion of the truth.

In order to understand fully the views expressed in these pieces, it may be useful for the reader to know a little more about the author's background in the years before the kitchen man appeared. Accordingly, I will draw this introduction to a close by quoting a passage from a letter my father wrote to an inquirer some years ago in which he describes his boyhood as the son of Salvation Army parents living and working in a country town south of Perth shortly before the First World War. It illustrates the old adage: the past is another country.

My father, E.M. Hasluck, was manager of the No. 2 Boys' Home, on the Bingham River, about 11 miles from Collie, from 1913 to 1917 and I lived there as a small boy during those years. The No. 1 Boys' Home was on the Collie River, about seven miles from Collie. Broadly speaking the No. 1 Home was for the "big boys" and included some who might nowadays be called reformatory cases. The No. 2 Home where I lived was for the "little boys" who were mostly orphans or neglected children or the children of a single spouse (such as a man whose wife had died or a deserted wife). The homes were almost wholly self-sustained. They had their own schools and at No. 1 Home there was a store, a bakery, bootmaker's shop, smithy, dairy, etc. They engaged in farming both to produce their own food and for sale.

The homes were run in much the same way as the "farm schools" of more recent days but that phrase was not used. The older boys were taught

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farming and some of the trades (e.g. boot-repairing and baking) and were then found situations in the country. The two homes made a fairly large community. From memory, I should say that there were probably about 200 boys, about a dozen Salvation Army officers, two schoolteachers, two in the office and seven or eight other employees (boundary rider, carters, farm hands, etc).

In those days before machinery, all work was done by horses and I can clearly remember by name at least 15 horses who were in regular use. There were about 20 milking cows and perhaps 2000 sheep. There was some cropping, mostly wheat and oats for chaff, and a good orchard and vegetable garden. Some of the fruit and vegetables and chaff, being surplus to our own needs, were marketed in Collie. The homes also did some carting of sleepers for the sleeper-cutters who were hewing on Crown land and they also maintained two stallions to serve the district—one a thoroughbred and one a Clydesdale. There were of course the usual farmyard host of chooks, dogs and cats.

Communication with Collie and between the two homes was maintained by horse. There was a regular run by horse and sulky into Collie to post and collect mail, pick up the newspapers and carry messages. When passengers had to be carried they used a four-wheeled "drag" (generally known as "the chariot") which was pulled by four horses (two on the pole and two leaders). Between No. 1 and No. 2 Homes communication was either by horse and sulky or by single horse buckboard. We had a spring dray for carting heavier supplies. The roads of course were just gravelly tracks through the bush.

Although one of the roads from Collie to Williams and Collie to Darkan passed through the two homes, this road was seldom used, for it was only a track in those days and only passable in summer. We never saw more than four or five passers-by in a year at the No. 2 Home. I remember the excitement in 1917 when someone appeared on a motorcycle. My brother and I were driving from No. 1 to No. 2 in the sulky and the poor old mare Kitty sat down in the shafis out of sheer fright.

There was also a Girls' Home about halfway between No. 1 Home and the town of Collie, but I can remember very little about it and I do not think I ever saw it. As the manager's children we ourselves only went in to Collie two or three times a year—perhaps for Christmas shopping or as a birthday present or for something special like a visit to a doctor. I cannot remember ever having been taken to the doctor myself, but I have a clear recollection that the town doctor at that time was Doctor Rigby and everyone used to speak in high praise of him—how good he was, how sympathetic and kind, and nothing was too much trouble. I think he must have kept some kindly supervision over the boys in the two homes. His name is the only one I remember from the town of

INTRODUCTION

Collie, for, as I have said, we lived a self-contained life of our own out in the bush and had very few visitors and seldom went to town.

The bush in those days was almost virgin. There were kangaroos by the dozen and an occasional emu. We often heard the dingoes at night but they were not much trouble to us. Wildflowers were prolific, including boronia. Every year we got honey from wild bees, usually by the crude method of chopping down the tree where they had made a hive and smoking them out with a fire of gum leaves. In rivers there were perch, marron and gilgies in plenty. Snakes, especially the brown snake, were very common both around the houses and fowl runs and anywhere in the bush near water. I have a vivid picture in my mind of a patch of crop in what we called the Seven Acre Paddock and, draped over the wire fence, the bodies of five brown snakes which had been killed during harvesting. There seemed to be a habit, after killing a snake, of draping it on the top wire of a fence for, so the legend ran, snakes did not die until after sunset.

From the age of eight to eleven I grew up as a bush boy in the bush at Collie and, looking back, they seem the most wonderful years of my life.

A final word should be added to my father's account of his boyhood at Collie because it leads into the first piece in the collection. Shortly before the outbreak of the First World War, Paul Hasluck accompanied his father to a Salvation Army Congress in London. It was there, as an eight-year-old boy, that he spent a morning of wonderment at the waxworks of Madame Tussaud and later saw the cinematograph production he describes in 'Gogging'.

I should also mention that on the way home in 1914 an odd coincidence occurred, the existence of which he was not to discover until many years later. Alix, his future wife, had been taken to England by her mother in the same year. (According to my grandmother's diary, when they checked into their hotel near Russell Square, it turned out that the long and tiring voyage was not yet over: 'Alix demanded milk'.) When the moment came to return to Perth, the two children and their respective parents, unbeknown to each other, embarked on the same ship. For a time, while crossing the Indian Ocean, all those aboard had to keep a watchful eye on the horizon in case the German raider *Emden* appeared. Although they were not to know it then, Paul and Alix had no need to fret—over the horizon lay 80 years of Australian life, of which they spent more than 60 years together.

Nicholas Hasluck
Perth
July 1995

BOOK I

AUSTRALIA THEN AND NOW



Paul Hasluck as a member of the Australian Mission to the United Nations, 1945
Photograph by Leo Rosenthal for Pix Incorporated, reproduced courtesy of Nicholas Hasluck

GOGGLING

The camera, the cinema, radio and television are still marvels to a country boy who in childhood was enthralled by a magic lantern projecting an image from glass slides on to a bedsheet hung against the sitting room wall. I saw my first 'moving picture' on a visit to England in 1914. With my grandmother and father I had been taken to spend a morning of wonderment at the waxworks of Madame Tussaud. Coming out we were lured into a small theatre to watch a modern novelty—a ten-minute program of 'moving pictures'. Fuzzy persons walked with quick jerky steps in black and white images across a small screen. Soundlessly a fire engine rushed towards some flames flapping out of the windows of a warehouse. A young woman in sun bonnet and pinafore fed corn to spasmodic hens.

When I returned to my primary school 'down in the bush' I was the only child who had seen 'moving pictures'. Within a few years, however, the habit of Saturday night at 'the pictures' had become the norm, even in small country towns. I was not allowed to go because, even as early as that in the history of the cinema, strict parents already thought that what was shown on the screen was not good for the morals of growing children. I was allowed to go to a special screening of war pictures because they were patriotic and uplifting and taught us to hate the Huns. By 1920 the 'flicks' were commonplace and, as a growing schoolboy now living in town, sometimes I sneaked off surreptitiously to see cowboys and Indians biting the dust on the western plains to the tinkling sounds of a piano played by the brother of our household help.

Those 'mood pieces' on the piano at the pictures were an introduction to a more varied repertoire than the hymns at church and the songs round the piano at home. When, in later years, my interest in music widened through gramophone records, the old familiar pieces at the picture show in the early 1920s revealed their identity. It turned out that Chopin had written the dreamy bit for the sentimental scenes. Moonlight over the still waters of the lake had been provided with an accompaniment by Mendelssohn. Men had galloped into action to the stirring strains of Suppe's 'Light Cavalry' or Strauss's 'Radetzky'. Sullivan had ushered many a child from a deathbed into heaven. At a later stage cinema pianists in the day of silent films used the

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perforated rolls on 'player' pianos, but the early pianists just watched the screen at the weekly show and drew on their memory to produce the sad, the gay and the stirring sounds as required by what they saw.

Film techniques, the skills of filmmakers and the succession of processes by which actions become images on a screen and emotions are awakened in a darkened auditorium all improved beyond the early imagining. An invention became art. Silent films were succeeded by talkies. Before the middle of the century veritable masterpieces of human expression had been produced in this new art form.



Paul Hasluck (middle) on river trip with family and friends, 1925
Reproduced courtesy of Nicholas Hasluck

Another marvel in the past century was 'the wireless'. In Western Australia the first broadcasting station 6WF (established by Westralian Farmers, hence the initials) did not commence until 1926. The radius of reception was limited at first to 40 or 50 miles. I recall vividly the first time I heard a program. My brother was developing a vineyard in the Swan Valley, perhaps 20 miles as the crow flies from the 'wireless station'. Neither of us knew anything about wireless.

With a long weekend in prospect I bought a crystal set, a coil of wire, insulators and a book of instructions from a little shop in Central Arcade. We spent all Saturday erecting two poles about 50 yards apart, one against the chimney of the cottage and one against the wall of the stables. The reason for putting them alongside the buildings was so that we could stand on the roof to attach the wires and insulators to the top of the poles. We led a wire into the sitting room of the cottage and had all in readiness by dusk. On Sunday morning we attached the leads to the crystal set, put on the earphones and tickled the crystal with the cat's whisker. Nothing happened. We checked the insulators and the aerial and tried again, feeling all over the crystal for a sensitive spot. Suddenly we hit the spot. Over the air came loud and clear from 20 miles away the music of a brass band. That first miracle of radio gave me a thrill that was never equalled until many years later when I saw the television pictures of the first man to step onto the moon.

By the 1930s wireless transmission and standard wireless sets for the home had become a normal part of life in the metropolitan and near-rural districts. Thirty years later we had all become accustomed to transistors, portable radios, radio sets in cars and, through them, a wholly new swarm of commentators, entertainers, announcers and, somewhere under the surface, an even greater mass of the expert technicians of a new industry.

The impact of wireless on the dissemination of news grew in intensity year by year. The wireless transmission of world news developed rather slowly. Even when test matches in England were being broadcast in Australia, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the 'ball-by-ball' description of a game was manufactured at a reading desk in Australia from telegrams. The sound of bat and ball was simulated, so the broadcasters claim in their reminiscences of those early days, by the tapping of a pencil on the sports reader's desk. Before long the need for any simulation of effects ended with direct and immediate broadcasts from the source of the news to the local stations.

Later, television added a view of the event to the news of it. A test match in the West Indies or a football match on a neighbourhood ground was presented to the sitting room of any house that had a television set. At home one could be present, safe in an armchair, at a coronation, an assassination, a funeral, the launching of a satellite, the bursting of bombs on a battlefield, or the tangled sprawl of a collision on a motorway. If it is not convenient to be at home at the time, the householder can record it all on a

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video and look at it later. All this would have been the equivalent of science fiction to even the brightest schoolboy in the first quarter of the century. Still an ignoramus about radio telegraphy, I simply press a button and the trick is done by a super-magician. I live in a world of daily miracles. Watching a grand final at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on the television set, I do not have to crane my neck to get a view between the heads of other fans and I see all the tricks that the umpires missed.

I do not have to be a privileged person to see what happens at a royal wedding in St Paul's Cathedral, London. I do not have to be a foreign correspondent to see almost as much as most of the real correspondents of fighting in the Gulf War. I could have seen more than most visitors to Barcelona saw of the many different venues and contests of the Olympic Games without competing for the purchase of tickets. With millions of others around the world I goggle at great events without stirring beyond my front door.

I also peer in wonderment at some of the minor mysteries of existence. From under the seas, from the depths of the jungle, from remote peaks in the Andes, from crevasses in the desert, from the operating theatre or the scientific laboratory, the camera brings to me a knowledge of many other forms of life.

I see at close quarters and sometimes in magnification the strange silent processes and stirrings in the hidden parts of nature. I become familiar with the ways of beasts, buds, insects and plants, of which only a few dedicated scientists were previously aware. Through television I have gained a wider and more discerning vision of life. The cameras under the direction of the scientist and the narrator reveal wonders I could never possibly discover for myself.

Towards the end of the century we are watching and listening more than we are reading and writing. Does all this make us better informed? It probably does, assuming that most people religiously and solemnly watch all the news sessions and assuming too that all reporters—if that antique term is still applicable to television journalists and presenters—are diligent, scrupulous and objective. Some doubt arises, however, about those 'sessions' which have been confided to a variety of persons with all sorts of qualifications and to some persons with no visible entitlement to speak authoritatively on anything.

For a variety of reasons which may be summed up as the necessity of having a large body of viewers and the impossibility of devising television programs to please only a small and select group, television has to be entertaining. In this context an adequate definition of 'entertaining' is possessing an attraction strong enough to keep a watcher from changing the channel.

If a television program is not entertaining the viewers will switch to another station. The main compulsion felt by the commercial stations is the need for revenue, and their revenue depends largely on their rating. The ABC stations, although supported by public funds, feel the compulsion of rivalry and a need to prove their merit not by the superiority of their product but by lessening the big gap between their ratings and the ratings of the popular commercial stations. It is another example of the tyranny of the vulgar and the capitulation of the elite. Even when the ABC makes some profession of intelligent discussion of significant topics, it still seeks popularity. The writer, the producer, the presenter and all others would rather be regarded as entertaining by a large number than recognised as true by a few.

Learned discussion is unavoidably dull and at times tedious. To be entertaining you must tell a good story and the elements of any good story include a plot, tension between opposing forces, heroes and villains, 'goodies' and 'baddies', and conflict. So the ABC cannot present any topic in a way that might bore the ignorant. The target is so close to the producer that it would be bad marksmanship to aim high. The trajectory of television is flat, simply because the barn door at which it aims is right in front of it.

Television in its nature is more than a new means of communication. It is not simply an improvement of the cinema or an additional medium for giving news and information. It has imposed itself on the pattern of living and has had an influence on human behaviour much more extensive than the cinema or the wireless. Television is part of a vast social transformation. The effect of the change will be even more remarkable if goggling becomes a substitute for thinking.

GAMBLING

When I was a schoolboy, attending a Methodist Sunday School in Guildford, Western Australia, I was made aware that gambling was both a social evil and a question of morality. Alongside the Band of Hope, in which we were enrolled to take a pledge against 'strong drink', there was an Anti-Gambling League. Membership of the League meant that we renounced the evil of betting. As I remember it, the lesson for us to learn was that addiction to gambling ruined many lives and caused suffering and distress to innocent dependants of the gambler and that to take sums won at gambling was to take something which did not belong to you. It was not exactly the same as stealing but was the outcome of the same sins of greed and covetousness. Both winner and loser sinned by trying to gain for themselves something that did not belong to them. When seeking such ill-gotten gains they caused harm to others. There may also have been a strong element of the sort of morality developed in the nineteenth century to promote the admirable image of the industrious apprentice who was content with the due rewards of his own industry and did not grasp for more.

Of course in those days the moral lessons taught in the Anti-Gambling League were supported by knowledge we absorbed from other influences. In Hogarth, in Thackeray and in very many stories for children we also learnt about the evils of gambling and the ruin to young lives by this vice. On the other hand, however, we felt the glow of heroism and the glamour of derring-do in other tales of those who would stake their fortune or their safety on a throw, or back their own judgment of a risk and venture their life. Somehow gambling did not appear to be wrong when the motive was not greed for money but taking a chance for some higher cause than self-gratification.

As I grew up, examples multiplied of the ill-consequences of addiction to gambling, both in the ruin of the greedy person and in the infliction of distress on others. Reporting the police courts, as a young journalist, one saw frequent cases where the 'tickling of the till' or defalcations of various kinds by persons otherwise seemly in their behaviour and upright in their reputation were said to have been due to losses in gambling. In every such case that moral was drawn. Within one's personal knowledge the moral was verified. An articled clerk in a law office, for whom a bright career was

expected, had the occasional flutter and the frequent losses led finally to a desperate attempt to recover by 'borrowing' from a trust fund. One morning we woke to the news of his arrest. His career was ruined, his fiancée and his family were shattered by the shame. There was another case of a young man, less well known to me personally but a friend of my friends, who worked in a savings bank, 'got in with the wrong crowd', was at the races every Saturday, and now went down from the dock with two others for a term 'inside' after major defalcation had been discovered. A social worker, whom I interviewed in the course of my work, assured me that gambling was a greater social evil than strong drink.

At the same time there was an easy acceptance of what were probably regarded as milder and non-addictive forms of gambling—namely, the raffle to raise funds for some good cause, the chocolate wheel at the school fete and the art union organised by some worthy organisation as part of its regular fund-raising efforts. Most people who took a ticket in a raffle knew no conflict of standards. The persons who unexpectedly gained a cabinet of cutlery as a 'prize' for supporting the Red Cross never thought of themselves as gamblers. As with the 'cursed drink', there were some 'total abstainers' from all games of chance, but mostly the judgment of the majority of moralists in the 1920s was to make a contrast between temperance and addiction. An occasional flutter, like a social drink, did no-one any harm and brought happiness with the fluttering.

Perhaps the outstanding example of tolerance alongside condemnation of gambling in the 1920s can be found in the practice regarding the lottery 'Tattersall's'. For reasons not wholly derived from judgments on morality, the operation of this lottery had been exiled to Tasmania. It was illegal elsewhere. Yet in every mainland city could be found signs in tobacconists' windows: 'We correspond with Hobart'—meaning that this was a place where one could apply for a ticket in Tatt's. The acme of good luck, as exemplified in an early popular film, was 'a win in Tatt's'.

Early in the 1930s, the beginning of the transition to State lotteries throughout Australia became apparent. In Western Australia, where I observed the change as a young journalist, the creation of a State Lotteries Commission arose out of the proliferation of the number of art unions being promoted as the main form of fund-raising by many charitable organisations. The new Commission, created by State legislation, took over the

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coordination and control of this activity. Its permission had to be obtained for the promotion of an art union or raffle for fund-raising. The Commission conducted regular lotteries on a modest scale itself and distributed the proceeds to deserving and needy organisations. The mixed feelings about this move were revealed in the fact that for many years some religious denominations, holding strong views about gambling, would not accept grants from the Lotteries Commission. Until the middle of the century there was still discernible clear opposition to the principle of State lotteries as such. One still encountered in daily life the refusal by some individuals to take part in 'sweeps', but gradually, as the century drifted on year by year, concern about gambling either as a social evil or as a morally indefensible wrong was steadily dwindling. Tolerance of gambling became full social acceptance of the habit. The extent and frequency of lotteries grew and the size of the prizes increased beyond all expectation. The quiet hint 'We correspond with Hobart' seems almost comic as a memory of the past when we see today the nightly incitement on television screens to 'invest' in lotteries with the lure of millions waiting to be yours in this week's 'Lotto'. Even if you are too lazy to hazard a guess whether one number is luckier than another, the television set assures you, with pictorial illustration, the 'Slick-Pic' will save you the trouble and this effortless flutter will bring a shower of millions tomorrow.

The growth of lotteries as a fountain of hope for a large part of the populace happened alongside a change of social practices in respect of betting on horse races. Betting on the racecourse used to be credited with virtues peculiar to itself, distinguishing it from other forms of betting. It was also somewhat snobbish. Taking part in the 'sport of kings' was not the same as lurking in a gambling den shuffling greasy cards, throwing dice in a back alley or tossing coins in a two-up ring. Racegoers were supporting all sorts of worthy purposes, such as improving the breed of horses and maintaining the noble traditions of 'the Turf'. They were participating in a gracious social event where honourable conduct and good behaviour were preserved by strict conventions and when unquestionably fair conditions for having a bet were ensured by watchful stewards.

The evils stigmatised in the 1920s and 1930s were various forms of off-course betting. What was admirable on the racecourse became criminal in the illegal betting shops and the haunts of SP bookies in laneways alongside suburban hotels. With the advent of broadcasting the SP bookie

with a portable radio set could operate almost anywhere. The person interested only in having a bet need not attend a racecourse or go through the pretence of supporting the improvement of horses or the preservation of a noble tradition. Punters could back a winner down a suburban back lane or even on a telephone without paying for admission, spending a train fare or wasting the afternoon.

During the 1920s and 1930s off-course betting was discouraged and most forms were illegal. Some of the vigorous pursuit and punishment of off-course gamblers may have been related to the view that gambling was an evil, but the interests of the racing clubs, and of the maintenance of the traditional view of the 'sport of kings' and all associated with the established horse-racing industry, were also influential. In the second half of the century any question of morality or social evil seems to have disappeared. Off-course betting was respectable once it had been brought under control. The betting shops of the Totalisator Agency Board operate as part of the normal life of a community. To frequent such shops is quite as respectable as to drink in the saloon bar of the best hotel. There's nothing wrong with having a few bets off the course so long as you do it through the TAB.

Even the two-up schools, once located in out-of-the-way places—with 'cockatoos' on the watch in case of police raids—have come close to respectability. As a young fellow in the 1930s I went one Sunday morning to the two-up school a few miles south of Kalgoorlie. Men sat around a dusty circle. They were mostly seated on upturned pans which had been discarded from a nearby sanitary tip in the red sandy hills. The 'cockatoo' was visible on a nearby ridge within signalling distance. Thousands of pounds were changing hands. Most players had a simple form of keeping track of bets, with one pile of notes under the left boot, another pile under the right boot, and some notes held in the hands. The criss-cross of bets against the ring and against one another was confusing to an innocent stranger and after each throw money was passing here, there and everywhere from one clamped boot to another boot. In Kalgoorlie one feature of life in those days was that most pound notes in current use were dusty, even in the normal traffic of business in the town shops. Two-up today is not picturesque but commonplace.

So customs change. But if a little man from Mars with horns on his head should alight in Perth and ask me about the religious practices of modern Australians, one sight I would show him would be people forming a

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queue at the kiosks selling lottery tickets in one or other of the city arcades, murmuring their invocations for luck as they receive a scrap of paper like a wafer. I would say: 'There is one of our most sacred shrines and the centre of our hopes of future bliss. People bow their heads at this communion rail with undiminished faith that sooner or later a blessing will come. They worship here every day of the week.'

The change came gradually. The Anti-Gambling League just faded away. There was no strong argument about morality. What's wrong with having a bet? The answer, given rather feebly, was that it was greedy and that gamblers were trying to get something that did not belong to them. On the other hand, the national code of sportsmanship and the ideal of courage gave nobility to the idea of taking a chance and staking all on a throw. Gambling gradually lost the taint of being wrong.

Soon the proliferation of lotteries of various kinds led, with the best of intentions of control or moderation, to such developments as State lotteries and State betting shops. The creation of Totalisator Agency Boards, with betting shops in many suburbs, was seen as an enlightened act of progress as compared with the furtive activities of an SP bookie in a laneway. Kiosks in every arcade selling lottery tickets were seen as more honest than the hypocrisy of 'corresponding with Hobart'. The distribution of a proportion of the yield to worthy causes and great social institutions was believed to be wiser than letting a furtive bookie sneak off with most of the takings. The encouragement of greed was obscured by the apparent beneficent outcome of this redistribution of the spare cash of the citizenry. The morality of receiving riches for nothing or taking what did not belong to you was never considered in the glamorous respect of winning the jackpot.

Occasionally a moralist might deplore the signs of addiction in some silly person who kept putting coins in a fruit machine at a sporting club, but the weekly scribbling of an entry in Lotto soon became a normal part of improving one's prospects in life or reconciling oneself to the daily drudgery. The rightness of doing so was strengthened by the fact that this was the only chance most people saw of ever having a big sum of money. It takes a long time to get \$1000 in a savings bank account but any week a stroke of luck might produce \$1 million.

Then came the natural progression to the approval of the casinos, one after the other, in the capital cities of Australia and the presentation of this as

a sign that a community had reached a higher status and had acquired another amenity and another 'attraction' of which it could boast throughout the civilised world.

The change in social standards during the twentieth century is amazing to anyone who can recall the first quarter of the century. Even more amazing is that the general outlook today is to treat the change as a sign of progress and tolerance and not crudely and simply as a manifestation of greed.

In my lifetime I have seen no greater change in Australian social mores than in the popular outlook on gambling. The change I notice is not only the change in laws relating to gambling and lotteries nor the change in social practice but rather the fact that any argument about the ethics of gambling has ended. The lure of getting something for nothing, the hope for gain without effort, brought the nation into a moral vacuum. As a nation we have popularised greed. Ask any computer today whether this pathway to riches has anything to do with a list of the seven deadly sins and the answer will be a blank.

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TALKING

I will start with the telephone. As a small child I was not aware that there was such a thing as a telephone. Living in the bush, my experience was that when any need arose to send an urgent message, someone saddled a horse and rode four miles to carry a message by word of mouth or, in a more complicated matter, with a scrawled note. Then, if required, someone rode or drove a few more miles to lodge a telegram. As a child I once saw a telegraph operator at a post office tapping out the telegraph message by hand on a small brass instrument. As a tenderfoot boy scout I knew that he was using Morse code—something which I could not yet read, for as tenderfoots we had only flapped out the alphabet with semaphore flags and had not completed the alphabet of dots and dashes.

At the age of 12 I came to town. We then had a telephone. It was a rarity in that part of the Perth suburbs, and sometimes a neighbour or even a stranger would come to the front door rather apologetically to ask if he or she could use the telephone to call a doctor or deal with some other emergency. Usually the caller was clutching visibly two pennies to be left in payment for the call.

Our telephone set was affixed to the wall of the central passage. It was a wooden box with a bell on top. The combined earpiece and speaking spout hung from a hook on one side of the box. A handle was on the other side. A caller lifted the hearer-speaker to release the hook and then gave a twirl to the handle. An operator answered. You gave the number and waited to be connected. If it were not a local call, the operator would usually say there would be a delay and she would ring back when she had a line. For some reason telephone operators always seemed to be women. Perhaps because I was young and respectful, I always thought they sounded rather proprietorial, as though they were doing the caller a favour. Consequently, in our youth we were rather shy about using the telephone. It was certainly not a customary means of communication but something used because of unforeseen need. Conversations were brief and to the point. One took pains to speak clearly and distinctly. A telephone call was not a conversation but the use of a tool for emergencies.

In the 1920s when I started to work in a newspaper office as a cadet journalist, I soon became more familiar with the telephone as a tool of trade.

In the newspaper office, however, there was still no personal dialling. One lifted the receiver on the tall handset on the desk and gave the girl on the office switchboard the number. She dialled, fiddled with some plugs and said, 'You're through' or 'The number's engaged'. If it were engaged, you replied 'Keep on trying, please' and waited for her to ring back. For a young reporter, the art of the game was always to keep sweet with the girl on the office switchboard. As those days have passed, there is no practical value in giving one's successors some points on the techniques of switchboard diplomacy. Always saying 'thank you' was not the least of them. A box of chocolates on her birthday was another. If she were attractive, you might even take her to the pictures. If she were very attractive, everyone else was taking her to the pictures and she undervalued your simony.

Even in a newspaper office in the 1920s, there were some limits on what one could do with a telephone. Interstate calls were generally subject to delays, sometimes to interruption and frequently to lack of clarity. Overseas calls were not a routine means of communication. Young reporters did not incur that sort of expense. There was still considerable reliance on the telegram. If the Perth office wanted to make a request or give a reproof to a correspondent in the press gallery in Canberra (from 1927 onwards), they sent a telegram and received either the response or an excuse in another telegram.

I recall vividly in my newspaper days the facilitating of communications to and from overseas when 'beam wireless' was introduced to supplement the service hitherto provided by submarine cables and landlines. One early consequence was the replacement of stilted 'cable-ese'—a cryptic language of its own—by messages in plain but economical prose.

For the general public the improvement of the telegraph service came earlier than the improvement of the telephone service. Urgency in communication was customarily met by a quick and reliable service for the receipt and delivery of telegrams. The telegraph messenger—usually a teenage on a bicycle—was the harbinger of bliss and doom. Pedalling furiously, knocking cheerily at the front door and handing over the yellow flimsy envelope with a flourish, he was one of the romantic figures of the 1920s.

Before the middle of the century telephones were commonplace but not always efficient. A very great change—indeed a miraculous

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transformation—took place in the second half of the century. With the perfection of Telecom, the certainty, the clarity, the continent-wide availability of the telephone and the instant links with all continents made communication by word of mouth to anyone for any purpose at any time in any place as simple as talking to a neighbour. Consequently, just as the provision of a reticulated water supply often means that some people leave the taps running and many people waste water, so people become careless and wasteful and even downright wicked in the way they babble words into the mouthpieces of thousands of telephone sets.



Paul Hasluck with his family following his election to Federal Parliament as the inaugural Member for Curtin, 1949
Reproduced courtesy of Nicholas Hasluck

Once, when a grandchild lodged for a time in my house, I found a need to ask for lists of calls on my telephone account. Forty minutes for an exchange of pleasantries from one side of the continent to another only gave me one tit-bit of gossip to add to the grizzling of numerous other

grandparents about the ways of the young. This is only the innocent babbling of infants. Much more serious are the unrecorded ways of the old in the spilling of words in the transaction of business both private and official.

So much of this effortless flood of words leaves no record behind it. An exchange of letters left a record of a transaction—at least until the shredders got to work—but what is said and what is unsaid on the telephone are left for a future contest between two failing memories or two masters of fiction. The telephone has proved the enemy of history and an incubator of fantasy and falsehood.

The facilitating of communication has been a great benefit for persons with nothing to say. It makes it so much easier for them to say it. Indeed, it encourages people to speak more often, in contrast with letter-writing which usually obliges a person to think about what he or she intends to write and to question whether there is really any need to write it. Effortless babbling on the telephone has become an addiction of the present age. Telephone lifting and pill-popping are much the same for those afflicted with the malady of not knowing what to do with themselves. The addiction is observable in the old and mighty as well as in the young and weak. One fosters an illusion of promptness and executive efficiency by an instant telephone call. You have 'done something' even if you have said nothing.

In recent years, as a user of Commonwealth cars, I have observed with some amusement the way a young and newly appointed Minister had a telephone installed in the car he used for 20-minute rides between office and home, and office and airport. In a later development, some Ministers seem to feel they are lacking in efficiency or dwindling in self-importance if they do not have a portable telephone, so that they will not be incommunicado whenever they stroll out for five minutes to contemplate the heavens or make a visit to the dunnican. Some people may have duties requiring them to be able to give and receive messages every minute of the day, but any 'top' executive with an office and staff lacks organisational skills if he or she cannot spend even half an hour free of being called or calling.

This is all of a piece with other observations that the facility of communication in modern times has produced a host of compulsive talkers. Victims of this strange addiction, having nothing to say, must keep on saying it.

The development and improvement of the telephone and many other devices for transmitting sound and enabling people to talk readily to each

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other regardless of distance or any other obstacle have brought many benefits, lessening isolation and facilitating communication. These blessings, for which we are all truly thankful, have also had what doctors and druggists would call some unpleasant side-effects.

The waste of words by talking too much—the vice of the spendthrift—is a lesser evil than the debasement of words by those who talk a lot but do not read or write. One of the major marks of advancing civilisation was the development of a written language. This opened the way not only to the formulation of language but also to the perfecting of its use in the range of expression, variety and clarity in the use of words and, above all, exactness in meaning. Poetry and legal draftsmanship both disclose a mastery of words and an art higher than that of daily speech. As Bacon remarked, writing maketh an exact man.

It has always been easier to speak than to write. To mumble words requires less effort than to write down the mumblings. It is not impossible for a thoughtful user of our language to make a carefully controlled statement on a complicated problem in spoken words, but the comprehension and study of that pronouncement by others will be more certain if the critical test of putting the thought into writing will probably give it a greater cogency. Writing makes an exact 'man' and a more readily comprehensible 'man'.

What has been the effect of these many inventions which make it easier both to speak and to make a record of speech? In the backrooms of civilisation there are still earnest people with pens in their hands and paper on their desks, but in everyday life it is more common to see and hear persons of all kinds speaking into telephones and recording devices. Too much reliance on writing may be pedantry. The outcome of greater ease in speaking is loquacity—more words with less meaning. At the worst, the obsessed writer is finicky; but the babbling talker is sloppy. Comparing the early years of the century with the present day, I see much sloppiness today, words spilling all over the place and meaning being washed out by the downpour.

A similar addiction is noticeable when one looks at other media of communication. The worldwide activities of the journalists of television, radio and print, each with a camera and a telephone (or some other form of transmitter) at hand, bring an urge to send a message even if they have nothing worth sending. In their case, however, there is a barrier to publication at the receiving end in the form of a subeditor (or equivalent).

Unfortunately, to overcome this obstacle, the sender has learnt how to embellish 'nothing' to make it look like 'something' and often does so. One of the old proverbs that now seems quite silly to every journalist is the one to the effect that 'silence is golden'. Tell that to anyone with a microphone or a mobile telephone in his or her hands. Tell it to the marines. Write it into the journalistic manual of how to succeed as a special correspondent. Do you want them to go abroad with nothing but a cage of homing pigeons and write their despatches on little rolls of paper? They are appointed to spout and they spout like fountains. We are all fully informed like fat geese are fully fed in readiness for the market, but understanding is smothered by the fatness that comes from being stuffed with words. We have heard too much and read too little.

One sad reflection: In this age of incessant chattering, the art of conversation has died. That is a personal loss that can be repaired by a personal search for congenial companions. One only regrets that so many privileged people have never known the pleasures of intelligent and well-mannered talking together. One no longer hears a teacher say: 'Come let us reason together'.

There is a more noticeable loss in the public domain. Wandering quietly around the Australian urban wilderness like a birdwatcher, I have had very few sightings in recent years of the lean laconic Australian—that bird who worked hard and silently and said little and had a look on his face as though he was searching for far horizons of the future for new hope. The lean laconic Australian should be listed as an endangered species. On the other hand, the beer-bellied babblers, the screaming scavengers and the noisy grabbers are being sighted much more frequently. They flutter and screech over every rubbish dump, fighting for the scraps. They are becoming a nuisance, roosting under the eaves of government and fouling the shop floor of industry. The voice of the babbler is loud in the land. The sky is darkened by those who, having nothing to say, insist on saying it loudly and frequently. Very rarely does one meet anyone who talks clearly, exactly and in a few well-chosen words.

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PRIVACY

Each of us has a part of life that is public and a part that is private. There is no fixed and immutable dividing line. The boundaries change with changing times, sometimes to suit the views of the private person and sometimes to meet the claims of public authority.

The way in which a householder disposes of household rubbish is an example. The only worker in the bush kept a tidy camp and either burnt or buried scraps in accordance with his own standards of tidiness and his own rules for keeping the camp relatively free of pests such as ants, flies, stray dogs or marauding crows. If he moved to the suburbs, however, he came under the regulations and the watchful eyes of a superior authority who obliged him to put out a weekly bin at the street verge and told him what he could or could not put in the bin. His private affairs became a public affair.

As a midway example, the taxation authority seeks to compel each of us to give information about our private affairs but promises not to tell them to anyone else (with perhaps changing interpretations of privacy according to circumstances).

As an extreme example, it is no excuse for a criminal to say that it was done in private. We are expected to give a public answer to conduct disapproved by society and to stand up to some public inquiry, by both the police force and the courts, even if we still seek some protection by setting various limits to the way in which that inquiry is conducted and the way that information can be admissible as evidence against us.

At its best, the ideal of privacy is sanctified as well as justified by ideals of personal faith, by one's own modesty and self-respect and by a concern to protect what is nearest and dearest to oneself, in relations either with other persons or with God.

In less worthy cases the ideal of privacy may be no more than a claim to secrecy for actions and ambitions that the actor knows are shameful, improper, illegal, anti-social or merely unpopular. Indeed, one of the greatest contrasts in ordinary day-by-day conversations among chance acquaintances is that on some subjects a person will talk freely, unnecessarily and almost boastfully, but on other subjects the same person will keep a tight cautionary

fence around his or her own business, saying nothing and resisting the inquisitive.

Over the years, I have observed two developments in Australia. On the one hand, there is an increasing presumption on the part of all sorts of authorities that they have a need, and hence a right, to stick their noses into more and more details of a citizen's affairs. On the other hand, there is an increasing readiness on the part of many citizens to seek (or even to enjoy) publicity, although it means the loss of some privacy. There has been both an invasion of privacy and a yielding of privacy. Vanity or just a simple wish for identity lowers the veil. You don't know who I am—I am not always sure myself—but I am someone pretty important and not the non-entity you think I am. Look at me. That is, look at what I want you to see.

As a person who entered the daily traffic of public affairs and occupied successive public offices, I recognise that necessarily I lost some of my claims to privacy when I took public office. I submitted myself (both my actions and, to some extent, my thoughts) to public scrutiny. At the same time, being essentially a private person by nature and by indoctrination throughout my upbringing, I still tried to protect my privacy and to distinguish between what was public and what was private. This meant both guarding against intrusion by others and refusing to exploit private affairs myself. Other persons in other offices of public life exposed themselves more freely. They saw publicity as part of a method and a highly commended practice in public life.

In a very early piece which I wrote on the practice of politics, I deplored 'the vicious cult of personality', and I still deplore it. I would prefer to judge politicians by their policies and their actions than by what their public relations advisers now seek to create as their 'image'. In the same way I would judge soap flakes for their performance, and not for their packaging or a pink display of babies' bottoms on a television screen. I expect people to judge me as a politician by what I do in public duty but do not wish them to share my home life, and see no reason for making a drinking mate out of anyone with a vote. My claim to be trusted must rest on something more than transient camaraderie. Yet other worthy colleagues set out more deliberately to create an 'image' of themselves and to keep it bright as a necessary part of their stock-in-trade. No-one pretends that the 'image' has to be true in every detail so long as it is clear and favourable.

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One of the clearest signs of shifting boundaries between public and private can be seen in the changes in political advertising and the way national elections are now planned and conducted. 'Private' is reduced in meaning to something that does not win votes and therefore should be kept quiet. In one notable recent election, the mass of ill-informed and mostly inattentive voters who had scant interest in public affairs had a better chance of deciding whether Mr Hawke or Mr Peacock had the better hair-do than they had of choosing between their programs for action.

I have made this initial digression about political publicity to disclose some of my own prejudice and possible limitations in writing about the dividing line between 'private' and 'public'. My main interest, however, is in observing changes and the possible cause of these changes in Australian life.

Early in the century, when I was blessed with the innocence of childhood and the awkwardness of adolescence, there was something that used to be called modesty. One respected the modesty of other persons as a matter of course simply because they made a claim to modesty and not because one reached a judgment about what was modest or immodest. The bathroom door and the bedroom door were kept closed as a matter of course if a person wanted it that way. Persons did not discuss their diseases or their ailments. They were reticent about sharing their personal distresses or showing their operation scars. In many matters of deepest concern to each of us we wished to remain unnoticed. Hence any considerate person did not intrude either by pushing into the bathroom or by asking awkward questions. We avoided matters which it was thought better not to notice.

Nowadays, however, everyone seems to be more inquisitive and much less restrained by regard for modesty. The 'shy' person is often regarded as being rather odd. Why does that person not share with all of us a well-established boast about the size and quantity of his or her gallstones? Why do persons who profess to be ladies or gentlemen refrain from talking out about some subjects and still regard some remarks as 'indelicate' or in bad taste?

An illustration can be found in a very simple action. When I was a youth, going to the latrine used to be a private matter. At old-fashioned railway stations, men walked (not too hurriedly) to a remote shed labelled 'Gentlemen' at the far end of the platform. Ladies had an unseen refuge at the back of a room with 'Ladies Waiting Room' on the door. At other places

of public resort, such as theatres and restaurants, there was similar discreet separation and covert withdrawal. Nowadays for the greater convenience to the users, such places are placarded 'His' and 'Hers' and are usually side by side. There is no pretence or subterfuge in going there. To paint the contrast, I recall on my first visit to France as a young man in 1932 being amused at the sight (so very contrary to Anglo-Saxon custom) of a youth in conversation with his girlfriend while he used the pissoir in a corner of a bridge balustrading. This was all very 'foreign' to us at that time. Yet, a few years later, about the middle of the century, I can recall my slight sense of shock when, at a social gathering in a friend's home in Perth, I heard a well-behaved young man asking his hostess audibly, 'Where can I go for a leak?' Years earlier a young man would have fidgeted in modesty until the master of the house remembered to ask him if he would care to wash his hands before going into lunch.

The point of this recital is to suggest that change in behaviour is partly the result of changes in social habit rather than anything more profound. These changes in habit have been immense during the century. Alongside them have been great changes in what one talks about in public or publicly recognises as being part of life. Words are used more plainly without so many euphemisms. Nowadays, in any home with a television set anyone can watch copulation, simulated or actual, in one's own sitting room. It is far less private, even if still somewhat impersonal, than it used to be. In the world of books, things are even more explicit while, in the world of periodical publications, either the daily newspapers or the illustrated monthlies, sexual activity is part of their stock-in-trade for sale to the multitude and certainly not something which one regards as outside public notice. Is this a sign that we are a purer and more enlightened people because we no longer speak of 'private parts' but name the object plainly? I can recall that when I worked as a cadet journalist on a morning newspaper in the 1920s, the style book required us to write 'a public convenience' when we meant 'a public lavatory'.

When one passes beyond this change in daily behaviour to the more contentious areas of argument about pornography, one encounters an even stranger change. The persons who object strongly to pornography or make a narrow definition of pornography are regarded mostly as the people who have dirty minds. Those who are more tolerant of the changes are 'liberated' and 'enlightened'. Only 'hopeless old squares' raise objection to depicting

bedroom practices in the family sitting room. Only a bigoted puritan would think of sexual deviation as 'dirty', and some deviations are now a subject for public parade rather than being hidden or furtively condoned as 'a practice in private between consenting males', which is much to be deplored both for its social consequences and because it is against the order of nature.

Perhaps it is true that Australians have purer minds than they used to have in the days of my youth but, even if this be conceded, we have not yet settled the debate about the boundaries between 'private' and 'public' or disposed of the question whether there should be a mannerly respect for other people's modesty. Let that phase of the discussion rest while I turn to another aspect of change.

The changes in social custom and political practice during the century have come, as already indicated, with both an increase in the claims of public authority and a lessening of reticence by citizens about what used to be considered to be their own business. The schooldays phrase about an Englishman's home being his castle is seldom maintained today in embattled suburbs against the legal rights of all sorts of petty officials to enter property, to inspect and to serve orders, and even to destroy arbitrarily. Only an occasional eccentric old householder contests the fact that he is not master of his own estate in matters like plumbing, electricity connections, drainage, building structures, keeping animals in the backyard or the eradication of pests and mitigation of nuisances. He knows he must do what 'they' tell him to do.

This change has gone so far because nuisances have grown so fast and even a determined individualist like myself will sometimes wish that authorities would do much more against my neighbours in respect of noise pollution. Is there any legitimate claim of privacy in respect of a transistor played loudly in the next-door garden?

What I do personally resent, however, is not so much the attempts to reduce the nuisance we cause to each other but any attempt by 'them' to interfere with my management of my social problems, by appointing various municipal social and recreational officers at my expense to teach me what to do with my leisure, to organise my recreation or to look after my family. For a large part of my life I still want to be left alone. Perhaps others, in loneliness, boredom or sheer lack of resources, would like to be told how to live their lives more enjoyably. There are great contrasts in the response when 'Big Brother' makes the pretension of looking after us. I doubt whether the

new relationship has yet been fully resolved or that we all accept the official regulation of what each of us can do within the private domain of the family. Our personal sovereignty has a much reduced territory even under the bogus claim that we are being 'helped'. Is it anti-social of us to cling to our old notions of self-help?

Perhaps we may find here one of the root causes of the movement among a younger generation in the second half of the century towards finding merit in 'doing their own thing' and 'doing things my way'. Even though this movement seemed to me to have more of the elements of avoiding new responsibility or skimping old duties than undertaking heavier burdens of managing and fully supporting the way they chose to live, it was often a rejection by the young of 'them' for interfering in 'our' own affairs. Stop shoving me around!

A major happening in the history of this change is the growth of social welfare measures conducted at the expense and under the organisation of the state. As a dire consequence we have the emergence of the professional social worker. Social workers, fully employed by all sorts of authorities, are of many kinds, with various levels of training and experience and, in my observation, many contrasting ideas about their own place in the scheme. Many of them are in the vanguard of the attack on privacy. A system that can broadly be described as social welfare has largely replaced the activities (compassionate and often amiable) which were once in the care of unpaid persons, working for nothing in the name of charity to help a neighbour in distress.

The change has had two noticeable results. A larger proportion of those who used to work out of charity are disposed now to think that there is some government department or some official who is on the payroll to look after the unfortunate, and so they refer any hard cases to this official. The other change is that, whereas reticence about private affairs may have been lost in other cases because of a recognition that these have now become public affairs, in many cases of social welfare the privacy is readily given away in the expectation of quicker relief or bigger benefits. In the process one bird that flew out of the window was self-respect and another was self-help. Old-fashioned charity croaks dispiritedly from the nearby treetops while the social worker comes daily in a new runabout to take charge and try to run our new lives for us.

Another change over the years is that Australians are perceptibly moving out of their homes into public places for their social entertaining or even family

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celebrations. This seems to be happening at all levels of social habit. The home that once invited friends or relatives to 'come for tea on Sunday evening' is just as likely now to suggest that they all meet at some local amusement centre and have a pizza. The dinner party planned with elegance for some family celebration is more likely to take place in a restaurant (usually above their means) than in the dining room of their own home. Among other reasons perhaps they no longer have a dining room and, more probably, they have no domestic staff or access to 'temporaries' and, as both husband and wife are



Paul and Alexandra Hasluck, 1930s
Reproduced courtesy of Nicholas Hasluck

employed during the week, they do not want to waste leisure time in cooking and washing up. Some people enjoy the urbanities and style of a cafe society in the heart of the city. Others seek the cosy and well-favoured neighbourhood restaurant, easy of access and chic in its appointments, for it is attractive and convenient and does its own washing up. At the roadside the take-away and chicken grill are a great improvement on the old hot-dog stand with its spattering of tomato sauce on the walls. The pattern of both city and suburban life nowadays has much more eating away from home than it used to have—more like joining in a public event than a private gathering. How many of the graces of civilised living are being lost in this change of habit? Looking after other people's personal needs has become a growth industry with a quick return for anyone who picks up a good idea about lessening someone else's personal worries.

Many of these social changes seem to add up to the probability—perhaps the fact—that in the conditions of urban life we are all getting on each other's nerves more than we did in the past. We seem to suffer more nuisances

from the way we live so closely together and by the pressures that come out of unfamiliar relationships and new demands. Do we really have worse manners than in the old days or are we simply in a greater rush to get to work on time?

I suggest that we need to pursue that line of thought when we show concern about continued respect for privacy and limits to public direction. Does one ease the strain by Valium or by stricter regulations and more traffic control officers, or by being more considerate to each other? I suggest that the main cause of deterioration has been the falling away of consideration for others rather than the absence of rules or the growth of new nuisances. Surely then the remedy lies in more consideration for others than in providing more palliatives or new forms of assistance.

Beyond these social changes, however, I am most deeply disturbed by what looks like a determined attack—perhaps it is the only deliberate attack—on the domain of privacy. This is not a claim to exercise authority for the sake of being orderly or quite helpful. It is the claim plainly and simply to have more publicity for the merit of publicity itself. Many arguments may be adduced that more publicity can ease the possible nuisances that we cause to each another. What is doubtful is the claim that makes publicity an end in itself, especially when the advocates seek publicity for some advantages of their own, not serving consciously the public good but some advantage to themselves. We are no longer talking of ‘private’ and ‘public’ but of one sectional advantage against another sectional advantage. In this contest between ‘private’ and ‘public’ the parties include the campaigner who will use any tactic or disregard any consideration due to others so long as the campaign is won; the journalist who puts ‘getting the story’ above any thought of tenderness for a sufferer or regard for any purpose other than getting and telling the story; the reforming zealot who believes always that the end justifies the means. Under the proud banner of ‘the public has a right to know’, all information and a few guesses are admissible. It is a worthy notion to expose a trick, reveal a truth, uncover the dirt or beat someone else to a good story. Such considerations and the ultimate credit of being the fearless teller of the story must override any claim—even a claim by an innocent person—to have some rights to privacy. Freedom of information means freedom to publish and not merely a pure and ardent search for the facts. Public interest (not even the limits of ‘public concern’) is sufficient argument in a debate on the protection of privacy.

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On various grounds, as we have seen, a public authority may be able to establish a right to know about certain private matters and to limit the freedom of a citizen's actions in respect of what were once regarded as private matters. The dangerous presumption comes when a citizen, a group or an organisation, not endowed with the authority of the constituted state, claims a right to know and to publish solely to serve its own purposes. Invasion of privacy needs a lot more than a good excuse for it. The act becomes offensive when those who make such claims represent that they are not regarded as on a level with other members of the public but are singularly and peculiarly engaged in a gainful occupation that requires them to invade privacy in order to succeed.

Alongside this 'determined attack' on privacy in the name of freedom of information, I have observed, as already noticed, some readiness on the part of the private person to yield some of his or her privacy. Happily, we have seen a dwindling of false modesty regarding certain words and actions not necessarily shameful in themselves. Less happily we have also seen persons yield their privacy often because they wish to be noticed. They object to being non-entities. They like to feel momentarily important even if they are nothing more than the owner of a dog that barked at the right time.

At the same time, for a variety of reasons there are still people who value their privacy and guard it zealously. They should be respected. We are forgetting in Australia that in all these matters the standard of decency and the level of discretion are not matters solely for the most 'liberated' and the most 'enlightened' of our people to make rulings on what can be permitted, but for a considerate society to respect the sensitivity of the innocent. We are often abominably rude to each other. We are often inquisitive about matters of no real public concern. We allow authority to intrude where it need not intrude. In doing so, there is no ground for boasting that we are enlightened and libertarian but only shame that we have become inconsiderate of the feelings of others and presumptuous in our claims to know. It is what we have on the back shelves that really counts—a great wonderland or a grim desert—that will make any difference to the future of Australia. In many an 'arrière-boutique' there should still be this store not yet surrendered to the vulgar. The quality of Australian life depends so much on what is in those backrooms marked 'Private'.

THRIFT

Training in thrift began early in the home with the child's moneybox for the saving of the casual penny, threepence or sixpence. The lesson continued with the school savings bank and the weekly entry of another sixpence or shilling in the passbook as part of the services provided by teachers in primary schools throughout the country. This reinforced the discipline of the home where children were encouraged in the habit of 'saving up' for any special need, such as the buying of a birthday present for Grandpa, spending half a crown on fireworks on bonfire night or doing something special during the holidays.

In the early stages of life youngsters also became familiar in their own households with the practice of putting aside all sorts of things on the principle that 'they might come in useful'. Housewives put aside empty glass jars, sheets of brown paper, pieces of string, buttons and patches of cloth. Handymen had places on their shelves for odd bits of wood or metal, nails, screws, washers, nuts, bolts and much else picked up by chance. We were not a 'throw-away society' in the first half of the century. We were not yet familiar with once-only disposable gadgets, containers, appliances and substances.

The moral code of thrift and the household habit of saving in the present to be ready to meet the needs of the future had their outcome in adult life in taking care with all forms of expenditure. The test question was: Can we afford it? There was a fear of 'going into debt'. There was some reluctance about borrowing because of both the fear of debt and doubt about adding the burden of paying interest on a loan to the actual price of the coveted article. The newly married young couple seeking to build and furnish a home were cautious. They saved up enough money to buy a block of land. They saved up some more to have a sufficient 'deposit' to arrange with a building society or a bank for building a modest house, with monthly repayments over a term of years. Generally they had to prove to the building society or the bank they were a good risk, with steady employment and an adequate deposit. The lenders were themselves conservative, sometimes requiring as much as 75 per cent security of the value of the loan. When the house was built, the young couple were modest about furnishing and, having one 'debt' already for the building, were hesitant about incurring further debts for furniture and equipment.

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I remember clearly in the 1920s and 1930s, among my own circle of acquaintances, in middle-income suburbs, a common practice of furnishing the house bit by bit. Essentials such as beds, chairs, tables and the kitchen stove came first. For the rest we furnished one room at a time. It might take years before the linoleum was replaced by carpet. We hunted salerooms for extra chairs or a chest of drawers, one by one, procurable by spending a couple of pounds out of one's pocket. To serve home-builders on lower incomes, dealers in furnishings and furniture inaugurated schemes of time-payment or lay-by. On a time-payment scheme purchasers had to find a sufficient deposit and commit themselves to pay a fixed amount per week or per month, interest added, until the debt was discharged. Under the lay-by they paid weekly amounts to the storekeeper until their credit entitled them to take possession of the piece of furniture. Again the customer had to do much of the persuading. The seller might advertise, as an inducement to prospective customers, that there were easy terms of payment, but the buyer had to prove acceptability as a customer and was made fully aware of the threat of repossession. When the more vigorous advertising of hire-purchase arrangements started to encourage buyers to incur debt, there was at first some tut-tutting by those who feared the consequences of such prodigality.

The gospel of thrift that was taught in the early years of the century was linked with modest expectations of what was a 'good life'. The modest expectations were in keeping with modest supplies. Appetite was not raised by the availability of all sorts of 'improvements' and appurtenances. The householder did not expect to have, as a matter of course, a refrigerator, an electric stove, a hot-water system, a washing machine, a television set or numerous electrical mixers and toaster. In fact, those things did not exist. A wood stove, an ice-box, a wire toasting fork and egg-whisk, and a copper and troughs in the wash-house were standard equipment. Furthermore, there was a distinct division between what was necessary and what was a luxury and the ambition to have luxuries was not so general as it became in later years.

As a modest and unimportant illustration of the change, I recall that when I was a young reporter in the 1920s I heard arguments in the State Arbitration Court about fixing the 'basic wage' with detailed references to the needs of the 'household basket' of a married couple with three children. The trade unions were beginning to seek the addition of new items and had to justify the addition of each new 'necessity'. I clearly remember one protracted

argument in court on a new claim that the cost of a female shop assistant's clothing should include stockings at a better level than black cashmere. At all levels of employment, the interpretation of 'the world owes me a living' was very modest compared with the expectations that developed in the second half of the century. The outdoor worker and the university student who pedalled to and from home on a pushbike had not yet come to regard a motor car as a necessity.

That change in expectations accelerated in the second half of the century. The basic causes of the change are probably deep in social history, but the acceleration was also clearly linked to a change in thinking about the economy. A refrigerator in every home was the fair expectation for every worker and the stimulus for more factory employment. The expansion of credit was seen clearly as a stimulus to industry. More buyers meant more employment. Providing easier credit facilities for customers meant higher economic activity. Thrifty borrowers were no longer put through an inquisition before they could raise a modest loan but were eagerly encouraged to go into debt. Credit created jobs. It changed the meaning of 'Can I afford it?'

This change was clearly accompanied by a change in advertising. Some might argue that advertising motivated the change in expectations. More probably the new developments in advertising were themselves a result and a symptom of a social change and a response to the opportunities presented by social change rather than being a cause of change. Advertising did undoubtedly help in the acceleration of the change, but it is a consequence rather than a prime cause of new ways in commerce.

Moving into the last quarter of the century one sees that thrift and the underlying idea that it was dishonest to spend more than you have are being discarded. The whole pattern of social life is an inducement to incur debts—an encouragement to want more and more. There are merit and material benefits in spending and none in saving. Profligacy has lost its meaning. Thrift has no benison.

Looking back over the century and reflecting on the changes, I do not feel moved to enter into any economic argument about the increase in purchasing power by the creation of credit and the benefit to industry in planning, management, production and marketing with consequent benefits for the customer. As in most other questions, concern arises about the effect

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that judgments made for materialistic reasons have on personal behaviour and personal standards of morality. The extension of credit means that someone goes into debt. Big lenders can protect themselves from many of the consequences of default; big borrowers can dodge them; for small borrowers, default means either pain or shame. Unless both lender and borrower retain a strong code of responsibility over what they are doing, easy credit may mean financial folly on one side and careless profligacy on the other. Both are harmful to industry and to the person and create problems and burdens for the economy. In the simplest terms the economy and the community are wasting their substance in riotous living and will reap the prodigal's remorse.

In the thrusting, striving and competitive industrial and commercial life of Australia today—and especially in the experiences of the last two decades—there is still need for the old code of being thrifty and avoiding waste. In the management of credit institutions, among the high-flying entrepreneurs and among the tyros of free enterprise, the old commonplace guides for taking care about what you do still have a place. Honesty, in its old-fashioned meaning linked with honour, is still the best policy for both lenders and borrowers. Honesty is still a relevant test before we accord the equivalent of sainthood to every high-flyer.

Thrift is still the practical application of ideas about honesty and of the Commandment not to covet your neighbour's goods. It is a consequence of the renunciation of greed as a guiding principle for life. One of the great contrasts between then and now is in the way old-fashioned banks encouraged thrift and present-day credit institutions mock it.

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UNIVERSITIES

I shall begin by speaking of the years between 1925 and 1930, and of my own university. It was about that time, so far as I can recall, that people at the University of Western Australia really began to think of a future not in the heart of the city but out in the bush at Crawley. The university was moving from its beginning as a cluster of temporary buildings in Irwin Street brought together by the University Act of 1911 to its fulfilment as an institution for 'the acquisition of sound knowledge and useful learning' situated on the banks of the Swan River between Perth and Fremantle.

Irwin Street was usually referred to as 'the Shop' by those who attended classes. The phrase 'Tin Can Alley', which has become a customary name for the place, was only used jokingly in speeches or in literary pieces. Students would not say that they were going to Tin Can Alley. They would say 'We're going to the Shop'.

Nevertheless the literary phrase has some value in recalling that the university was mostly an assemblage of timber and galvanised iron buildings stretching along Irwin Street between Hay Street and St George's Terrace. The front door and the main administrative offices, including a Senate room, were in a central position facing Irwin Street, but the busiest thoroughfare was a gravelled alley along the western edge of the allotment leading from a gateway in Hay Street down the slope to the southern end of the block. The men's common room was at the top at the right-hand side of the gateway and the women's common room was at the bottom. The St George's Terrace frontage was mainly occupied by the science laboratories and the Hay Street frontage was mainly occupied by the library building. An assortment of lecture rooms had the middle ground and here and there the academic staff were hidden in various cubbyholes. Occasionally the students might crowd, five or six at a time, into one of these cubbyholes for a tutorial class, each carrying a chair.

Let us look at the common rooms. The women's common room had access to a sort of scullery with running water and electricity and a bench where a kettle could be boiled and cups of tea or coffee made. The men's common room had no amenities except some rows of hat pegs. We shared the benefit of the scullery when it was used to supply coffee and biscuits after a meeting of some student society. The convention was that the women brought in the

doings at the end of the meeting and the men cleared away and did the washing up. All those who had a cup were expected to put sixpence in a saucer and the surplus went into the funds of the society. Incidentally, in those days there was no instant coffee or tea bags. The equivalent of instant coffee was a bottle of liquid called 'coffee essence' made from some kind of extract of coffee and chicory. It had a taste reminiscent of burnt toast but it was used because it avoided the problems of disposing of soggy tea leaves or coffee grounds.

In the daytime, if a male student wanted coffee, and had enough funds, he crossed Hay Street to Elphinstone's Pharmacy. I have a very happy memory of the year when I had a tutorial class in Economics A between 10 am and 11 am, for, after the tutorial, Professor Shann would cross the road with some of us and we would continue animated talk with him and mostly he would insist on paying for the coffee. 'Animated talk' and 'lively discussion' are key phrases in my recollections of doing the dismal science with Professor Shann. One of the advantages of a small university was the closeness of relations between professors and students.

In those years we thought of the university not as a small place but as a big place. It took me by surprise when I consulted the appendices of Professor Alexander's compendious history of the university, *Campus at Crawley*, and found how small the student body was. Total enrolments in 1925 numbered 364. The Faculty of Arts had 236 students, the Faculty of Science 79 and the Faculty of Engineering 48. The respective totals in 1930 were 341, 127 and 85; and in that year, for the first time, 53 students were enrolled in the newly established Faculty of Law.

Thinking back to the 1920s, I have the impression that the university in those days was predominantly shaped by the old academic tradition rather than by the broader idea which had been considered by some of its founders—and I quote Alexander—of 'marrying the cultural standards of the older universities with the technical services of the modern university'. The student body in the early 1920s was drawn mainly from private secondary schools for boys, four private secondary schools for girls and the co-educational Perth Modern School. The students were largely those who had a professional or academic career in prospect.

Speaking from a close knowledge of Perth Modern School, the situation that I recall from, say, 1920 to 1925 was that the bright boys and girls from the top of the class were the ones who went to university to enrol in arts, science or

engineering. The few who wanted to do medicine, and whose parents could afford it, went to Adelaide or Melbourne. Those who wanted to do law became articled to solicitors and studied to pass the Barristers' Board examinations. Those who looked for other occupations went elsewhere. For example, those who intended to be schoolteachers became monitors in the Education Department and studied to obtain departmental certificates and entrance to the teachers' college for further training. Those who looked for a commercial career took a job in a bank or some well-established firm and studied in their spare time in an accountancy institute. In those far-off days, the interpretation of the university motto 'Seek Wisdom' would have been that the obtaining of 'wisdom' was something different from being trained for a job. A university prepared you for living as well as for earning a living. It gave understanding as well as skill.

I think many of us were rather earnest young men and women. There was undoubtedly a strong sense that we were privileged to attend the university. A new opportunity had been opened before us. Attending a university was not just the customary and expected right which came in the ordinary course of events, like attending a primary school, but was something special which had come our way because we were brighter than other boys and girls. In addition, in that period, a good deal was made of the notion that this was a 'free university', unique among Australian universities because the students did not have to pay fees. This accentuated the idea of privilege. The sense of privilege brought a sense of obligation. We had the earnestness and the commitment of a chosen people.

Another impression that comes from my recollection of the university in those days was that there was a closer link between it and the community—and especially with the wage-earners (a term I prefer to 'working class'). The students were from all levels of family income and social habit but, reflecting the structure of the community, probably most of them came from families in the lower and middle income brackets. The Labor Party, which in an earlier period had included some doubters, had come to have some pride in the fact that the university was being attended by the sons and daughters of the workers. One significant element in the relationship between the university and the community in the 1920s seems to me to have been the way in which the people, mostly wage-earners, came to regard the university as being 'our university' and to have a pride in it, instead of regarding it as a place that belonged to 'the silver tails'. Perhaps this was a distinctive quality in the University of Western Australia

in those days, for the university was within the reach of the lower income groups.

Two personalities who contributed to this development were William Somerville (a member of the University Senate) and John Curtin, editor of the *Westralian Worker*. Curtin, then district president of the Australian Journalists' Association, in collaboration with Professor Shann (Economics and History) took a leading part in promoting a course of lectures at the university for journalists in 1926 and himself attended regularly prior to his election to the Commonwealth Parliament as Member for Fremantle in 1928.

As for Somerville, I think he has not been honoured as fully as he might have been. Of course I had no experience of him in the inner councils of the university and hence he was no thorn in my flesh. I knew him only in the more public part of his activities and so commend him for the very significant part he played in shaping a public pride and a feeling of identity between the community and the institution.

Some further light on the social composition and outlook of the student body in the 1920s might be found in the way they travelled. The daily journey from their suburban dwellings would be either by train to the central station or by tramcar to the Town Hall corner. The tramcar travellers got off at the Town Hall corner because in those days tram fares were fixed in penny sections. Whether you came from North Perth, Mt Lawley, Subiaco or Victoria Park, the section ended at the Town Hall. Why spend another penny to travel a few more hundred yards? Travellers from South Perth came by ferry to the foot of Barrack Street. On fine days, they walked up the hill. On wet days, they took a penny section to the Town Hall.

Apart from an occasional pushbike, there was no problem of parking at the university, for no-one used vehicles. On a social occasion there might be a few lucky fellows who could borrow the family car for the evening, but most of us still depended on tram and train or walked home. If a dance were to continue after the normal service, it was the business of the organisers to arrange for late trams on the principal routes. For some reason a 'late tram' meant one that left the Town Hall corner at 12.45 am. If your partner lived in Mt Lawley and you lived in Subiaco, that was the parting of the ways unless you were so besotted by love to walk back alone five or six miles through darkened streets. Any girl gained an extra attraction if she lived on the same tramline as her suitor. I do

not know whether any of the professors or lecturers had motor cars but customarily they also used public transport to come to work.

The university had no large rooms or central hall of its own. The graduation ceremony was held in Government House ballroom. For any student activity which could not be fitted into one of the lecture rooms, we used such places as the Assembly Hall in Pier Street, the Burt Memorial Hall in the Terrace or the Young Australia League building in Murray Street. An annual black-tie dinner of one of the societies would probably be held in an upstairs room at the Savoy Hotel. I also remember university participation in public lectures on serious subjects at the Perth Literary Institute in Hay Street and elsewhere. In those days professors and lecturers were much in demand and ready in response to make this sort of contribution to the cultural life of the city.

I have already mentioned Professor Alexander. He deserves notice for introducing not only the university but the Western Australian community to a more studious concern with international politics. It was the field covered in his first book, *From Paris to Locarno and After*, and by his academic and public lectures. He brought a new seriousness, a wider knowledge and a deeper penetration to the local discussion of world affairs and, although later he found some ready imitators, I think he was the real pioneer in this field.

My own early close association with him came out of this interest. Especially I recall that in 1932 he took his first sabbatical and toured the capitals of Europe for study and discussion. With great prescience he concentrated on Poland. That was the critical time which most historians would now see as the beginning of the last stage in events leading to the Second World War. In the same year my wife and I were also in Europe and happened to be attending a British and Dominion students' summer school on the League of Nations in Geneva when Alexander arrived there as a member of the Australian delegation to the League Assembly. Later, again by coincidence, we travelled back to Australia on the same ship. It was a memorable experience to have at first hand his impressions of the international scene. That voyage was a very happy one. We discovered that the man who discussed Stresemann and Briand with close knowledge could also sing English ballads in a pleasant light tenor. The voyage was also the first instalment of a large debt of friendship and guidance I owe personally to him. Hitherto I had fooled around at the university in a course for a Diploma in Journalism. Alexander was largely responsible for the fact that on

my return to Perth I built on that slim foundation to proceed to a degree. He was a teacher and a friend.

On a lighter note, I recall that Alexander was also a dress reformer. In the galvanised and galvanic setting of a young university in Irwin Street, he was the first person of senior standing who appeared in public without a hat. Further, following Oxford custom, he initiated the practice of walking in his gown down Hay Street. Fred Alexander also brought the style of Melbourne and Oxford to student gatherings in the 1920s. I remember once when the annual 'do' of the Economic and History Society, instead of being an affair of cocoa and biscuits in a dingy classroom, became a dinner in a private room at the Savoy with specially printed menus. It gave us a pleasant feeling of distinction even if it did cost us half a crown a head, plus the eightpence and the fourpence paid to the Chinese laundry to do a stiff shirt and a butterfly collar. The sense of living in style was increased when on each menu we read: 'Vins. Chacun à son goût et sa propre dépense'.

These recollections suggest that, partly out of its own necessities and partly because of the close interest of the community in the universities, and principally because of its location in Irwin Street, the University of Western Australia in the 1920s was more intimately part of the life of the city of Perth than in later years. With the changes of the past 60 years, it has become more distinctly separate from Perth. It has become a place to which people go rather than being in the midst of people. Its student body is not the straggle of earnest youngsters walking from the Town Hall to Irwin Street but an unseen and reclusive horde whose tribal lands are bordered by long lines of parked motor cars obstructing all other suburban commuters. Another part of the change is that the university is no longer unique. Nowadays, there are all sorts of institutions in and around Perth. Tertiary education is not concentrated but scattered; not specialised but comprehensive. I doubt whether the community thinks today of 'our university' in quite the same way as it did in the 1920s and I doubt whether the university itself (both staff and students) has the old kind of relationship with the public. They are naturally preoccupied with all sorts of new problems of their own domestic management.

You may think that I have been making too much of the relationship between a particular university and the community. I would suggest, however, that it is worth sparing some thought to the question of the influence the community has on what is done in a university and the influence that a

university has on what is done in the community. What is the interaction between them today?

I do not suggest that conditions 60 years ago were either better or worse than they are now, but only that they were different. In any case the wider spread of university studies today invalidates any direct comparison between then and now. Yet I suggest that we might note as an important difference between the two periods that nowadays the major interaction of the university and society is in the greater attention given to studies that have an immediate application in meeting the practical needs of a technological age and the solution of the social problems created by technical change than is given to studies that concern ideas. There is closer interest in the particular than in the universal, more concern about consequences than about remote causes. The relationship of the university to the community is also affected by the way in which a proliferation of other institutions of advanced education seems to be a response not simply to a broader requirement for higher education, but also to a trend in the community that looks towards education to show the best way of training operatives, repairing faults, fixing up a breakdown or finding a better way of handling some new tool or of developing some new skill. Education to meet the need for trained persons or to qualify a student for a gainful occupation seems more important than education as the development of a fully rounded life for a civilised person. How far should a university go in following this trend?

This question is linked with another question about the role of a university as a populariser of learning. This is central to the relationship between the university and the community. Hence, too, I see great differences between 'then' and 'now'. The year 1926, exactly 60 years ago, saw the opening of the first wireless broadcasting station in Perth. I recall clearly in the early days of wireless broadcasting there was a great reliance on 'talks' by university wisecracks. In the morning newspaper more than one professor had a weekly column. They talked and wrote of principles as well as practice.

In half a century the media—a term which started as the phrase 'media of communication'—have changed in character, and any attempt at description today would see the media as a branch of the entertainment industry rather than as part of an education system. Hence there is limited space in the media for university professors, firstly because few of them are entertaining, and secondly because all of them are out-rivalled by the professional entertainers who talk in a more lively and less responsible way and never have any uncertainty about

their knowledge of everything. So I doubt whether the universities have as good a chance as they used to have to be popularisers of learning. Yet I have noticed that when the university does organise special efforts, such as summer schools and adult education courses, there is a decided trend towards 'do-it-yourself' courses rather than to the more speculative and reflective courses that may not be immediately useful to anyone except by improving their minds. I assume that this is giving the public what it wants. Is this the only response that a university should give in the interaction between itself and the community?

Some readers might conclude that I am revealing a nostalgic bias towards an imaginary and romantic past when, in the soft light of academic dawn, the University of Western Australia was sparkling like a dewy lawn where few had trod. I will try to correct that impression and show how practical I really am by giving a down-to-earth illustration of the lines along which I am thinking.

This is an illustration, not an argument. We have a practical problem of safety on our roads. That problem is not overcome by teaching more people how to handle a machine but requires teaching them how to drive intelligently, to show consideration for others and to think about what they are doing. Similarly I suggest that education is a mixture of teaching students how to do things and also how to think about what they are doing and to relate their actions to a wider universe. The distinction between university education and technical training is that thinking about what you are doing is a more important element than training in how to do it.

Let me conclude with another illustration. Statistically we have more university graduates in government today, at all levels from the Cabinet room to the public service. Doubtless they are more skilful in doing. I suggest, however, that having a graduate as a Minister or the head of a department has unfortunately not always meant that there is clearer thinking about what they are doing. When the university gave them a degree, had it taught them to seek wisdom as well as making them confident that they had higher qualifications for gaining office?

My final comparison between old ways and new ways is that in 1928 the University Senate, making a belated decision on its insignia, confirmed the choice made soon after it was founded that its motto should be 'Seek Wisdom'. Today, would they like to change it to 'Seek Funds' or perhaps to 'Seek Qualifications' or 'Seek to Get a Good Label'?

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For the past hundred years at least, Australians have taken it for granted that the public servant acts with probity and is incorruptible and impartial. Citizens do not expect that there will be favouritism or prejudice at the post office counter, the police station, customs barrier, permit office or at any desk where they might make a complaint or seek an entitlement. One does not expect better service from telling the clerk that one voted for the party in power. This expectation of straight dealing without direction from a politician is underlined by the headlines of scandal if there is even a rumour of some departure from the established procedures.

The ideal for which we have striven is a public service which can serve the public without bias and which does not have to curry favour, fear reprisals or solicit benefits for itself. By and large we have achieved that in Australia and the achievement was founded on the idea that appointments to the service and promotion within the service were open and competitive without political patronage or class favouritism. Inside the service the internal discipline and provisions for appeals were devised to exclude influence from outside the service. Salaries and conditions were sought at a level to lessen risk of corruption or nepotism. The probity, independence and non-partisanship of the public service were highly valued. Are they to be eroded thoughtlessly by changes in the method of appointment, selection for promotion and advancement on merit? By 'politicisation'?

It may be argued by the advocates of change that they do not propose that the whole of the service will be changed whenever there is a new government and that they will limit the appointment of politically acceptable persons to those places in the service close to Ministers and to those persons who take part in shaping decisions or expediting action. Even so, thought should be given to the effect any such changes will have on the whole service. If political favour becomes a factor in advancement or appointment to the top positions, the thoughts of all public servants will turn to the questions: Whom am I trying to please? Whom do I serve—the Australian public or the party in power? The influence of such considerations will not remain with the public servants who are already at the Minister's elbow on the executive floor. They will be felt too by all the up-and-coming officers who are waiting for the lift on the ground floor.

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What is the role of the public service? I suggest that it is not only instrumental but also creative and that it has its own distinctive part to play in government. Responsibility rests squarely on the Minister. The Minister alone has to answer to Parliament for whatever is done by his department. When a decision has been made, the public servants have a duty to put it into effect. Public servants do not make the final decision or conduct public arguments about the decision, but until that ultimate stage and that political debate are reached, the officers of the department have their own distinctive role to play. The field of government becomes more complex and more comprehensive every year and the Minister's need for technical advice and the analysing of that advice is greater than ever. More than that, in the shaping of policy, in the presentation of issues for decision and in the processes of putting decisions into effect, the public service can do many things that a Minister is poorly qualified to do and, in doing those things, good government requires that the public service should act according to its own lights and in conformity with recognised codes of proper conduct and not with a simple wish to do what the Minister wants in the way the Minister wants it.

Without this independent contribution from the public service, even the most accomplished Minister would falter in the necessary tasks of coordination of policy and action, the gathering of all relevant information on which to base decisions, exact knowledge of what happened in the past, and accurate forecasting of what is about to happen. The last-mentioned task—the detection of trends—is perhaps one of the most critical areas in shaping present-day social and economic policies and it is a job for professionals. The coordination of policy and action is required both to avoid confusion and conflict and to ensure that a government has a comprehensive view of what it is doing. So many times in recent years hopeful and enterprising governments have appeared to have had tactics without overall strategy.

Added to this specialised contribution of the public service to good government, I would also suggest that, in any discussion of the theory of government, we still have to consider the value of the old doctrine of 'checks and balances'. This is most commonly used as a justification for second chambers in the legislature. Without entering into debate on that point, I also see value in having a public service with sufficient independence and a high enough professionalism to stop Ministers from going off at half-cock.

The independence and professionalism of the public service are a necessary part of any system of checks and balances.

The current argument, however, seems to concern the practice of politics rather than any theory of government. Turning to practice, one notices a tendency among those who advocate 'politicisation' to place some stress on the need for planning and to favour the idea that planning can be done best by those advisers and consultants specially appointed for the task, because they are in sympathy with the government's objectives. In my experience government suffers when planning and administration are put in separate compartments. A clever officer with swarms of ideas and no skill and a skilful officer with no access to ideas are both futile. A way has to be found so that thinking and doing are intermeshed. One respectable argument in favour of politicising the public service is that it may help to bring about such intermeshing. Bright ideas might seem less glossy and duty at the desk's dull wood might be more lively if the political appointee and the career officer argued together. The proof awaits practice. I have not seen it yet.

Continuing a discussion of the practice of politics in Australia, I would offer two observations drawn from my own experience. One concerns the professionalism of the public service and the other the capacity and qualifications of Ministers. During the past 50 years I have been looking at government in Australia from a number of different levels—from the press gallery, from an academic rostrum and from successive posts inside the citadel as public servant, Cabinet Minister and President of the Executive Council. Broadly speaking, I have formed a high opinion of the professionalism of senior public servants and a low opinion of the capacity of Ministers. Of course there are exceptions to the rule with some good Ministers and some bad officials.

My own observation in the half-century has been that the major shortcoming in Australian administration—I write specifically of public administration, not of politics in general—is the lack of capacity in Ministers. Most of the major errors in judgment and most of the failures to act effectively have not been the fault of public servants but were due to the incompetence of Ministers. Our constitutional provisions for a parliamentary executive, our political system and, above all, the processes used by all parties to choose candidates for election to Parliament and to select members of a ministry often bring into office persons who may have skill in electioneering, in debate or in

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party room contests but who know little or nothing about public administration. Such unfledged Ministers often try to fly with scant understanding of how government works and how policy can be turned into effective action. Some develop administrative capacity with experience; some never learn. This is not a matter of their basic education. Some Members who came from farm or workshop with a primary school education have developed into first-class Ministers. Some who had academic or professional status or who claimed great promotional skills were very poor Ministers.

Two men who deserved and gained a high reputation were George Pearce (senator from 1901–38) and Ben Chifley (a carpenter and a locomotive driver) and two of the biggest flops I can remember, from opposite sides of politics, were a man reputed to have been a great success in business and a bookish schoolteacher. The only common factor I could find among the competent Ministers was that they learnt how to use their public servants. The common factors among the failures were either that they were frightened of the public service or that they thought themselves superior to it and had an egregious vanity about their own rise to high office.

My guess is that any Prime Minister would be lucky if he had a ministry in which four out of ten Ministers were wholly dependable at the administrative side of their job. Whether or not that figure is near the mark, the point I wish to make is that, as our party political system and party-room procedures cannot be counted on to produce with certainty a team of Ministers who all have the qualifications, capacity and outlook required for effective administration, we do need a high level of professionalism in the public service. We also need to accustom Ministers to the ideal of working with the public service professionals, not apart from them. Much of the argument for 'politicisation' seems to be that weak Ministers who have the support of political appointees will be able to stand up against the professionals. I doubt whether that will lead to better government. Even the strongest and most capable Ministers—Pearce and Chifley—needed the professionals and worked with them to advantage. The public service has a depth and width of experience which none of the politicians or their new helpers can hope to achieve. From their own training and memory and from the files in departmental custody, the public service commands a store of knowledge both of the facts relevant to the points at issue and of the methods by which decisions can be made effective. The old phrase 'the

machinery of government' is an accurate description of one phase of public administration and the experienced public servant knows a lot more than the newcomers about how to start the machine, how to keep it running smoothly and how to get the best output from it.

It may be argued that the 'politicisation' of the public service does not mean any lessening of the professional standards of the public service, but will be an addition to its expertness and thus result in a strengthening of the support that ill-qualified Ministers may need. Two points need further discussion before that argument can be accepted unreservedly.

The first point is that professionalism in public administration is not readily attained. In my 50 years at the observation points I have mentioned, I have seen several cases where a person highly qualified in one field or another or a person highly successful in business has been called into the service of government in one administrative post or another. Many of them made a mess of it; the best of them took quite a long time to learn the ropes and to overcome the handicap set by their expertness in another field. The more definitive, narrow and specialised the task given to the newcomer the better chance of success. Perhaps that point could be restated by suggesting that it is hard for a specialist to become a generalist and of its nature public administration is generalist, for it covers all that the community does or hopes to do. The higher levels in public administration may call for special knowledge of the task in hand but also require constant awareness of the whole scope of government. The professionalism of public administration has to be recognised as an acquired skill and a process requiring qualities of experience and training different from those that fit a person to run an industry successfully or to deliver a good lecture in a university or do some hard bargaining in the market or the party room.

Because of the wider scope and increased complexity of governmental activity and because new fields are being entered, there is obviously some need for sideways recruitment into the public service. Entry at the bottom and steady progress upwards are not certain to meet every emerging demand for officers with special qualifications. I would suggest, however, that sideways recruitment at the middle ranges is more likely to be successful as a general rule than sideways recruitment at the top, for it will allow the newcomer a few years at least to master the special skills and attitudes of the professional in public administration.

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The second point is that professional public servants cannot be 'yes men'. They have their own function as public servants and their own place. Their function is to inform and advise as clearly, exactly and faithfully as they can—not to tell the Minister what they think the Minister would like to hear. Their place is a secure place in the career public service, not a place in the Minister's pocket from where they can be discarded like a soiled handkerchief whenever the Minister feels like a change.

It is relevant to this point to note the views that the best professional public servants have of themselves. They not only resist the idea of being 'yes men' to a Minister but find their satisfaction as professionals in the esteem of their peers. It is pleasant to have a grateful patient but the real encouragement and reward of the professional are found in the esteem of those who are in the professional's own class of knowledge and skill. A pat on the head from the Minister is a lesser reward for the permanent head of a department than the respect of colleagues in the public service. Ministers come and go. Some are more difficult than others. Some are more comic than others. Some are more competent than others. In time they fade away and new Ministers splash down from orbit. All receive the respect due to the office they hold, and occasionally one is admired. But what really counts for the professional is the opinion of those whom he or she respects as fellow professionals.

Another argument for 'politicisation' seems to be that a government must be able to do what it is elected to do. That claim also needs further discussion. I would suggest that no government is elected to do whatever it feels like doing. The expectation of those who voted for its party is that it will govern according to law and will exercise its executive powers through the recognised political institutions and with deference to the established practices. An incoming government can claim and customarily does assert that it has been 'given a mandate' to carry out its declared policy and to put into effect the reforms and fulfil the promises it announced to the electors in its policy speech during the election. The corollary is that it does not have a mandate to carry out policies it has not declared nor to implement undisclosed changes. The populace does not expect its parliamentary Moses to lead it into the unpromised land. It does not expect that a Prime Minister chosen for the hope he gives of statesmanship will let an unelected personal entourage indulge their own fancies.

Unfortunately modern methods of conducting elections by hiring public relations firms to sell a party, using much the same skills as they apply to selling a packet of soap flakes, bring the risk that the electors do not read carefully the 'fine print' in party policies and platforms. Reliance on a television image may mean that they decide which candidate for the Prime Ministership has the better hair-do rather than which one has the better policy. No mandate can be claimed unless elections are fought on definite proposals and clearly presented issues, and not even a landslide victory gives the winner the right to disregard the traditional modes and manners of a parliamentary democracy.

Let me sum up. My concern about any extension in the 'politicisation' of the public service is twofold. On the one hand is concern about the possible loss of continuity, competent administration and the advantage of experience. On the other hand is concern about the frenzy of political lemmings in rushing into strange places. Temperamentally I do not like enthusiasts, whether in religion or in politics. By all means have ideals and use your imagination but, if you are making decisions that affect the well-being of the whole community, please look before you leap—or, if you are in government, let a trained, impartial, apolitical public service do some of the looking for you. It is not enough to be adventurous. It helps to be wise and, in public administration, the foundation of wisdom is to know what you are doing. In politics indulgence in bright ideas is something like indulgence in drink. No-one objects much if the only consequence is that the drinker is temporarily happy. It is different if the drinker is in charge of a ten-ton truck on a crowded highway.

The only sure and certain protection against authoritarian rule in Australian government is a professional, competent career public service independent of the favour of Ministers and conscious of its own specialised role in the conduct of public affairs. Politics can be volatile; administration has to be stable. The merits of good administration include regularity, predictability, routine efficiency and enough stability to underpin sound planning of both the measures to be taken and the means for ensuring that they are effective. All of those merits can be attained without being resistant to reform or innovation but they cannot be attained if administration becomes subject to uncertainty and rearrangement at every flare-up of a general election.

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ABORIGINES

My interest in Aborigines goes back to my boyhood. I do not know what first aroused my interest but it started in much the same way as some boys like watching birds and some collect stamps. Growing up in the bush, we played with our home-made 'woomeras', 'gidgies' and 'kylies' and threw 'boondies' at all sorts of targets. We fished for 'gilgies' and built our little 'mia-mias' out of bushes. Among my playmates, Billy Boolardie, 'Butterballs' Cox, 'Nigger' Chance, 'Kanga' Latham and Paddy Kumunkas, being Aborigines, could do so many things better than any of us. We made a legend of the skill of the black trackers and tried to learn some of the secrets of tracking. Thus my childhood left me with a foundation of respect for the skills of the Aborigines.

I do not recall that I read any books about Aborigines as a distinctive people. I was unaware at that time of my children's books which had Aborigines as the central characters, but all the tales of the early Australian explorers and first settlers had Aborigines in them, sometimes as savages throwing spears at the intrepid travellers, sometimes as faithful helpers of the heroic pioneers. Both as warriors and as companions they earned a boy's respect.

Although my boyhood was surrounded by many influences from 'the mission field', the missionary stores always had something to do with Africans or Asians—heathens who in their blindness 'bowed down to wood and stone' and called on us to deliver them from 'error's chain'. Aborigines were different because they were part of Australian history and as naturally Australian as the kangaroo. The only ones I saw in my boyhood were part of our own lives and, although they seemed to have an advantage over the rest of us in being free to run around without boots or socks, to be always 'camping out' and never corrected for being untidy, they were seen as part of our own life in our own land.

When in due course I became a journalist and the range of my reading about all things Australian widened, I came to know more and more about Aborigines and to see them in other settings. Naturally I started to write pieces about them. Much of my knowledge was derived from books, and some of it was linked with other hobbies in local history, place names, Australian slang and the Australian bush. Gradually this book-knowledge was

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enriched with increasing acquaintance with Aborigines as persons and eventually the pursuit of the hobby led me towards serious study. The journalistic period shaded into a studious and anthropological period and eventually into a third period of social reform.

As the result of my pursuit of this study in the pre-war years, I became known locally as someone 'interested in the blacks' and my assistance was sought and my encouragement given in many local quarters. Some records of the past and some vocabularies were set down by old-timers. I compiled a book, *Winjan's People*, from rough notes and reminiscences of Jesse Hammond,



Official photograph of Paul Hasluck, federal Member of Parliament for the electorate of Curtin, c1950
From the National Library of Australia Pictorial collection

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published by Imperial Printing Press in 1933, and I gathered a number of other papers about Aborigines.

The second period commenced with more serious newspaper articles and campaigning to promote the welfare of Aborigines. I read a good deal of anthropology and, if there had been any opportunity to do so, would have tried to start academic studies in this field. In 1938 I completed my thesis for an M.A. degree on social contact between settlers and Aborigines in Western Australia in the nineteenth century. This was published by Melbourne University Press in 1942 as *Black Australians*.

After the wartime hiatus, on my return to Australia at the end of 1947, my main public activity centred on foreign affairs for a period but the worsening condition of Aborigines came under my notice and the promotion of their welfare became a matter of prime concern to me. After election to Parliament at the end of 1949 my first major speech as a private Member was to draw attention to this urgent question. Then appointment to Cabinet as Minister for Territories gave me the opportunity to do something for them. For a period of 12 years or more I had a strong influence on the shaping of measures by Australian governments affecting Aborigines and was also active in increasing public interest in their welfare and future relationship with the rest of the Australian community. If I were mistaken in the direction in which I moved—and I do not think I was—that mistake will only be understood by looking at the sources of my views.

One influence was that I had always been more interested in administration than in politics and perhaps was better equipped for administration in the conduct of public affairs than for political contests. In public administration the final test of whether a work is well done is found by looking at the results. When the job is finished, does it serve the purpose intended? Does it function? Does it solve the original problem? Does it serve the public good? These are tests similar to those that any craftsman applies to a chair, or a tool, or an engine. In a political contest the satisfaction seems to come from winning the fight and not from asking whether the work has been done well. In my ministerial work I was primarily interested in what happened to Aborigines and the shaping of Australian society rather than in supporting a fixed idea of what was theoretically right.

A second source of my views probably came from a Benthamite influence in my education, which inclined me still to ask what brought the

greatest happiness to the greatest number. My final test of a social measure and of social conditions at any given place was whether it would be possible for most people to become happy and useful and, as a result, to have both self-respect and acceptance in the community in which they lived. The Benthamite influence was enlarged by a religious and political view that gave first place to the worth and dignity of the human person and by a philosophical view that accepted the concept of free will (modified though its exercise might be by many circumstances). It is the individual who is happy or sad, good or bad, well or sick. Each person has his own soul (as a parson would say) or each person has his own guts (as I once heard an abdominal surgeon say). We live or die as individual persons. One can choose which path to take. In politics I rejected socialism not because I had strong views about state controls but because it substituted the mob for the person and lessened the personal responsibility of the individual to make a choice.

A third source of my views was my own personal relationships with other human beings. 'Nigger' Chance, Billy Boolardie, 'Butterballs' Cox, 'Kanga' Latham, Paddy Kumunkas and other boyhood mates were just mates, not Aborigines. Mixing in more elevated company in more recent years, I knew Charles Perkins (whose progress I followed from the time he was 13), Sadie Corner, May Miller, Ken Colbung and hosts of others as persons, not as members of some strange and different group of Australians. Because I came to know so many of them as persons, it came about that when I was engaged in public administration, I did not think about a policy for Aborigines as a separate race but rather about the circumstances of various groups of human beings, each one of whom had his or her own life, hopes, fears and difficulties and both the right and the capacity to choose. This brings me to the report of a recent visitor to this country which contains an echo of views I have heard expressed by others.

Professor Erica Daes came to Australia at the invitation of the National and Aboriginal Islander Legal Service Secretariat. The 'basic purpose' of her visit was 'to review the human rights situation of the Aborigines and the Torres Strait Islanders and to identify issues which need to be addressed by the Working Group on Indigenous Populations in its ongoing preparation of a draft declaration on international indigenous rights'. Her report serves that purpose but Australians might well ask what value such a report has for Australia in the practical national task of shaping policy and administration in Aboriginal affairs.

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After five weeks of observation and discussion Professor Daes reached the conclusion that 'Australia stands in violation of her international human rights obligations'. Doubtless that statement will be debated in the appropriate committee of the United Nations. Back here in Australia there are more urgent and practical questions demanding the attention of all Australians. What is happening to those Australians who are of Aboriginal or part-Aboriginal descent? Why is it happening and what can best be done about it? Her brief period of observation and discussion did not qualify her to give answers to such questions but her report should help to convince us that we should find the answers for ourselves.

When I look back over half a century of activity in Aboriginal affairs, it seems to me that discussion of rights in recent years has tended to obscure the recognition of the needs and opportunities of this minority in the Australian population.

Professor Daes, in the introduction to her report, declares: 'All Australians without any discrimination should have the right and the corresponding responsibility to live peacefully and creatively in a free, prosperous, harmonious and united society in order to build a better present and safe future for themselves and the succeeding generations.' There is nothing novel in that. Many of us were preaching it in Australia 50 years ago. As the result of our past campaigns, it is now recognised that persons of Aboriginal or part-Aboriginal race are all Australian citizens with the same rights as all other Australian citizens. If equal rights are not enjoyed, that defect would appear to be due to lack of 'the corresponding responsibility' in both white and coloured Australians.

In past years, while working towards the recognition of equal rights for all Australians, we also gave practical attention to overcoming the handicaps and removing the disadvantages suffered by Aborigines so that they too could share in the 'corresponding responsibility' of bringing about a social relationship in which Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians could work together in a 'harmonious society'. My observation is that today we are lapsing from harmony into discord.

Twenty years ago we had a more hopeful prospect than we have today. One of the reasons may be that we have chosen some of the wrong measures. Another may be that we have talked so much about rights that we have forgotten responsibility. A third fact is that in some quarters the

idea that all Australians have equal rights has given place to a view that they have unequal rights. The assertion of unequal rights has revived racial antipathy.

Furthermore, in concentrating on 'rights', many earnest people, including Professor Daes, have not examined closely the exact nature of the disabilities suffered by a dispossessed and underprivileged group in our population. They have not inquired penetratingly into the reasons why these disabilities persist. For example, it is easy but quite unconvincing to argue that the reason why there is malnutrition, a shorter expectation of life or a higher rate of deaths in custody among Aboriginal Australians is the result of a denial of rights, or that the only reason why some Aborigines do not respond to opportunity is that they are disappointed at Australia's record in the observance of the Declaration of Human Rights. Today, far too many Australians are taking that easy way out by making speeches and writing reports about rights and not getting down to the hard and exacting problems of analysing and redressing the handicaps of the underprivileged and the disadvantaged. Having a right is an incomplete benefit. The value of a right depends on the way it is used. So many of the present disadvantages of the Aborigines are not due to a lack of rights but to the lack of care and skill and consideration in the way rights are recognised and used.

There surely can be no other view of the coming century than that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal persons in Australia will live together in the Australian continent. That future will be a troubled one if we do nothing but assert rights against each other and forget our common responsibility to work for a common future.

Reports of the Daes kind are more closely relevant to the international reputation of Australia than they are to the condition of Australians of Aboriginal or part-Aboriginal ancestry. They belong to the debating chamber and have little to do with making life better for the human beings to whom they refer. It may be that we have to defend ourselves in the world forum, but the good harvest for all Australians will only come from doing some hard work in the home paddock. Hard work will be done in vain unless we are clear about what we are trying to do and what we hope to see in the future. The pronoun 'we', as I use it, embraces all Australians regardless of racial origin.

HERITAGE

The term 'heritage' has become quite fashionable in Australia in recent years. We have heritage commissions. We have books about the Australian heritage. We have heritage societies of various kinds. Understandably the word carries different meanings for different people. Some of those whose prime concern is in conservation of the environment think first of the physical features and natural resources of the Australian continent—the soil, the forests, the rivers, the rocks, the scenery and much else, and are deeply concerned about the spoiling, the pollution or the destruction of these treasures.

Some of those whose prime concern is with our history think first of the record of events, achievements and personalities of the past and are deeply concerned about the preservation of archives, structures, historical sites and all other memorials of growth towards nationhood.

Any coffee table book or calendar about our Australian heritage is likely to have the appearance of an album of colour photographs of landscapes and seascapes, historic buildings, wildflowers, animals of the wild, and pictures of famous occasions and deeds of national pride. All this is good.

Similarly, if someone were to start a discussion about our Australian heritage, that person would be likely to speak earnestly about threats to an endangered species of flora or fauna, or the possible demolition or deterioration of some historic building, or the need for restoring or protecting or memorialising something that was notable in our past. All this, too, is good.

One has to remember, however, that part of our Australian heritage was established when the first settlers brought to this land the religious faith and the civilisation in which they had been nurtured and the traditions and skills of the British countryside. What are we doing about that precious part of our heritage? We cannot take colour photographs of these invisibles. We cannot undertake the physical restoration of the fabric of these intangibles. But should we not be concerned to ask whether or not these are neglected, or crumbling or despoiled, or in need of restoration? Have we done as much to improve them and to adjust them to the Australian environment as we have done by good farming and sound husbandry to improve the land and to commemorate our physical achievements.

Perhaps one vivid way of making that point is to speak of a small country town where I spent part of my boyhood. The Church of the Holy Trinity at York has an historic depth which goes back far beyond the 150 years of settlement in the Avon Valley, inland from Perth, through a thousand years of Christian worship and devotion in York Minster. The ancient city has lent its name not only to a country town in Western Australia but also to a vast metropolis centred on the island of Manhattan. This too is a reminder of the links we have to a wider world.

Those who visit the ancient city will find that they can descend into the undercroft below the central tower of the Minster and see the Roman and Saxon remains which were disclosed when a vast work of restoration was undertaken to strengthen the foundation of the main pillars. In the undercroft one can touch the stones set in place by the servants of the Roman Empire and the rough walls raised among Roman ruins by the Saxon invaders. There was Christian worship at York in Roman times. The Romans left and the barbarians invaded. Centuries later in Saxon times Christian worship was revived. A church of wood was replaced by one of stone and that gave way to a Norman minster in the eleventh century. That was succeeded by the present Minster, the building of which commenced early in the thirteenth century and took 250 years to complete. Over 16 centuries we can read a chronicle of light and darkness, of times when faith and Christian worship flourished and times when it faded, times of piety and times of disbelief, times when the barbarians seemed to prevail and times when they themselves were subdued and enlightenment returned.

Beyond the church in the country town I grew up in, one can see other manifestations of the depth of our Australian heritage. The shire offices are an outward and visible sign that local government, derived from ancient British custom, still has a place in our community. In the main street of the town a courthouse is the outward and visible sign that we inherited the idea of fair trial for offenders and the settlement of differences and claims between persons by due process of law. In every shop the fact that a customer expects the shopkeeper's scales to be accurate embodies an ancient British idea about fair weights and measures. One could go on to give many more similar illustrations of the depth and range of our Australian heritage of ideas, traditions and practices as well as the heritage of faith.

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Now I should like to make one thing clear about my own approach to this subject. I believe that the quest for truth and beauty is continuous and that enlightenment is a spreading growth. My reading of a thousand years of the history of the Christian church among English-speaking peoples is that all that is implied by such a term as 'faith' is not static. So I am not saying that we should bind ourselves to a rigid dogma and confine ourselves within the laws and customs of a colonial society. Rather, I suggest that, just as the improvement of our land required the constant and devoted labour of good farming and sound husbandry, so our heritage of faith, ideas and morals requires the constant and devoted attention of all thoughtful Australians to make sure that we have a knowledge, a faith and a practice that guide and uphold us when we face life in our own day and help us to shape the future. The treasure yielded to us by 16 centuries of life in the ancient York is not an unaltered command in a deep language. It is a faith in and a constant vision of the good and a purpose always to seek and to work for that which is good in Australia under Australian conditions.

I find an analogy between the history of the settlers' struggle for physical survival in the Avon Valley and the longer history of the struggle for spiritual survival in the older York. Here the first settlers glimpsed a vision of a new home and a new livelihood in a wilderness. That vision was turned into fact by patient and persistent labour generation after generation. They had many times of doubt and uncertainty. Country people whose families have been in Australia a long time will know the stories handed down by parents, grandparents and great-grandparents—stories of tragic death by accident or violence, the loss of stock by poison plant or wild dogs, the failure of a crop, scab in sheep, bad seasons, destruction by bushfires, a year of drought, a year of flood, falls in prices—and always, in spite of each reverse, starting again.

It was not easy to keep the vision. Only the resolute kept going. One had to endure loss in hope of future gain. One had to find a way to meet each new challenge. That is the story of the pioneering years. And let us not forget that in the darkest tribulation they were fortified by the memory of the homes, the values and traditions of the land from which they had come.

One tradition, one aspect of the Christian beliefs that the newcomers brought with them was compassion. The idea is a complex one. Those who know the Bible will recall what the apostle wrote of charity as one of the three

graces—faith, hope and charity. Charity was more than a code of behaviour; it was a state of grace. It is a base for the whole of one's thinking about any problem and any proposed action. It is a touch of the divine in mankind.

To come down to some common daily occurrences, charity rules out self-importance; it means that a strong person refrains from using that strength against the weak; an active and a gifted person accepts a brotherly obligation to those not so well endowed; it has elements of mutual self-respect among members of society. When I contemplate the whole field of what is called charitable work or social services in Australia today, I am reminded of a remark made by Tom Collins (pseudonym of Joseph Furphy): 'In battle there is something to do besides picking up the wounded.' Are we content today to go on treating casualties without ever striving against the malign forces that cause them? Have we let the idea of compassion waste away into occasional acts of pity in place of a Christian heritage of all-embracing charity?

By all means let us be sentimentally fond of our toys and proud of our prizes, but today the great need for us as a nation is to take care of our values. What faith do we hold, what gods do we worship, what hope inspires us, what charity encompasses us and guides our actions, what standards do we seek in building our own society and sharing in the future of mankind? In the pioneering days, in spite of fire and flood and drought and the cankers and afflictions, they had faith that harvests would come again. Through 16 centuries in the ancient York the light was sometimes dimmed but never quenched.

The lesson of history in both the old York and the young York is that people need a clear vision and they need to be guided and fortified by lessons that will endure both in the bright years of hope and in the times of darkness. Then, year by year, with steady labour of good farming and sound husbandry in matters concerning our spiritual values no less than in our material possessions, we can engage in Australia in a great creative enterprise. We will find that our national heritage is not only something to be kept under glass like a quaint and crumbling heirloom, but can be the inspiration, the traditions and the values by which we live and by which we take our part in the building of a nation and in the striving on behalf of all mankind. Caring for this part of our heritage does not require the setting up of another instrumentality of the state or the formation of yet another committee. Rather it calls for the attention of each and every citizen.

RELIGION

At census time most people make some sort of religious profession by describing themselves on the form as Anglican, Catholic, Methodist or some other denominational adherent. I wonder what it really means. I might hope to stimulate debate among professing Christians, but probably will only cause puzzlement if I assert that the British heresy has become the cost of religious faith in Australia in this scientific age. The 'British heresy', as anyone can learn from the Venerable Bede, was the error of Pelagianism. It was confuted and overcome by the Church in the fourth and fifth centuries. The heretics asserted that one could reach perfection by one's own efforts without any need for aid from the grace of God.

Fifteen centuries later my guess is that this is the way most Australians, whether professed Christians or non-believers, see their own merits and their chances of a better life today. Some may go to church occasionally and still think that religious rites are seemly for marriage and the disposal of the dead. Others may make occasional incantations to propitiate or to solicit the goodwill of the gods of chance, but few would openly ascribe their present welfare, happiness and even their own 'goodness' to the grace of God. Most of them see their worthiness (or, in broad terms, their 'success' in life) as of their own making. In spite of what the census returns show about religious adherence, Australian society today, reeking with the odour of self-made men and self-confident politicians, is an outstanding triumph of Pelagianism. We did it all ourselves. And this triumph owes little or nothing to Pelagius or his proselytes. Australians are natural-growth heretics. We have become Pelagians without thought or discipleship just as, in a season of carelessness, the weeds grow lush in every garden without the need for any devil to go around at night sowing tares. To whom do most Australians pray? To whom are they submissive when they intone: 'Thy will be done'? Having said those words with bowed heads, how many then go out to strive by might and main to outwit their rivals and bring their own designs into effect by their own devious efforts?

There are many other Australians, probably including some who call themselves Christians on the census return, who really have no religious profession or religious practice. They do not attain the dignity of heretics. Nor

have they lapsed from any faith. They are pagans by delinquency and not by deliberation. The description of a pagan is of a person who has no gods to worship, no faith to uphold, no creed to recite. Pagans have no guide to conduct other than their own appetites and those customs of the tribe that aid the satisfaction of appetite. When frightened, they propitiate the unknown by howling and sobbing until fear passes. When cheerful with a bubbling hope they invoke a phantom called Luck and rollick in self-indulgence. They find refreshment in a romp by the seashore or on a playing field but know no need for a penitential walk in hard places and find no comfort in the contemplation of the heavens. They find no merit in self-sacrifice and no civility in deference to others but a great self-satisfaction in being first to the ball and in grabbing something that no-one else has. Their faith is in appetite. Their unacknowledged creed is self-indulgence. In the graphic language of the day and in the expectation of their only counsellors, they 'do their own thing'.

It was not ever thus. One of the most marked social changes in Australia during this century can be seen in the practice of religion and in the influence of any religious teaching or discipline on our daily lives.

Throughout the century scientific and technological developments have had two marked effects among the generality of mankind. One is that we know so much more about space, the universal forces and life on earth that there are few remaining mysteries to which we feel a need for some supernatural explanation. The other is that our capacity to make new instruments, machines and structures and to do so many complex, intricate and stupendous acts of creation, transformation or repair leaves little room for divine power to amaze us with miracles beyond the reach of the scientist or the technician.

In the nineteenth century the popular understanding of Darwinism required some reinterpretation of the Book of Genesis. In the twentieth century, the explanation of space, nuclear physics, electronics, lasers, virology, genetic experimentation and much else—I have purposely used a crude listing of the sort of wonders that any unscientific person can learn about on a television set—has left no physical space where heaven and hell can be located or any field of trouble where a god might be more useful than a scientist or where computers are stumped for answers. In the light of these changes the common person has to think again about whether there is a God

and, if so, what sort of thing God is and how mysteriously He works 'His wonders to perform'.

Some find a quick end to doubt and argument by a present-day refurbishing of the fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible. Others find an easy agnosticism derived from all these discoveries. They are content with a carefree opinion that there's probably nothing 'out there' at all but, if there is, then one day the scientists will find out and tell us what it is and on which star it is located. Among a serious-minded minority, theological fields of study sport many new explanations but, as it seems to me as an observer, part of their renewed faith does not amount to much more than a feeling that there is 'something out there', mostly unknowable but always to be sought. They do not have any depiction of a divine personage as clear as in seventeenth century paintings and sculpture, or as easy to communicate with as the God to whom devout people prayed earlier in this century with a certain faith of being heard, understood and answered. It is an unknown presence rather than a person. There is no sense of 'by the grace of God'.

The influence of religion in the life of a nation, of a community or of an individual is a broad subject. Historians each peg out a claim and sink a shaft. Religion has bound a society together, but is there any cohesion in it in an age of secularisation? Religion supplies a society with ideals and hopes, but what happens when, with major economic changes, an established religion does not seem to supply readily, and in a materialist shape, answers as convincing as those offered by statisticians and accountants? Religion provides a cause for which mankind can fight, but what is the place of religion in a rising nationalism? One could go on for ages asking such questions. On a narrower front the historian might also explore particular questions, such as what part was played by religion in the rise of capitalism. There is also the whole field of the place of religion in psychological studies, and inquiry into the place of religious beliefs and customs in personal adjustment to existence. The study of religion in the twentieth century is still rather scrappy, while diligent historians still chronicle what it used to be in the past and enter purposelessly on the question of whether one religion is just as good as another.

With a comparison of 'then' and 'now' in Australia, however, I direct my attention largely to the more clearly observable field of the effect on the conduct of Australians of the change in the religious customs and practices of the

community and the variations in belief—not so much a decline in faith or an absence of belief as a growing vagueness about what is believed today.

My observation of the century is that, as a social being in a society, the Australian today is losing interest in the possibility that both good and evil are absolutes, that both exist and that there is an identifiable difference between them. As a consequence the meaning of right and wrong is coming more and more to be much the same as legal and illegal, and in many circles the distinction made in practice between right and wrong is what you can get away with. The chief influence in choosing the right is a few guesses about the consequences of being caught.

The youngster today is certainly growing up with fewer chances of hearing discussion about right and wrong except in the sense of the correct or incorrect answer to some arithmetical test, or the placing of a tick in the right or wrong square after a list of questions. We seem to have forgotten that a concern about what is right is so much deeper than making sure you give the correct answer or that you avoid any penalty.

In the early years of the century a large majority of children went to Sunday School as a matter of course and some went to church as well. In all schools, both state and private, there was weekly religious instruction given by visiting ministers of religion or by school chaplains. Whatever the value of 'religious instruction' may have been, the fact was that once a week boys and girls heard some earnest believer talking to them about the difference between good and evil, right and wrong. They heard again and again the simple lesson that they should try to be good and that God would help them to do the right. I would suggest that today only a minority come under that sort of influence from outside themselves.

The practice of religious instruction dwindled during the century. My observation is that nowadays a very large proportion of children reach the age of 18 without having any 'religious instruction', in the old sense of learning the difference between right and wrong, developing some concern about the difference and being encouraged to 'be good'. Life is becoming too complicated for the emerging adult to become fussy about principles when the really important questions are: Does it work? Can you get away with it? What will it pay? It is better to be a winner than a loser.

Analogies might be found and some basic influence on social attitudes discerned in the more universally popular field of sport. Many persons give more

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thought to their pastimes than to life. Perhaps they learn that goodness is sportsmanship. But is the meaning of sportsmanship the same as it used to be?

I follow Australian Rules football closely. The game has changed. The speed of action, the shady areas in interpretation of the rules and the difficulty of umpiring have meant that, although some kinds of play are still considered to be unworthy, the run-of-the mill practice is that fair play means anything you can get away with. The umpire is fair if he is even-handed and more or less uniform in interpretation. Players and watchers do not expect an umpire to see an offence and blow his whistle every time one player grabs another player's ankle, or holds another player by the arm when they are going up for a mark. The play goes on so long as the umpiring does not unduly penalise one side and there is some limit to rough play. The rules are what you make them. The actions of players are justified by results. Kicking a goal or taking a mark is more meritorious than being a stickler for the etiquette of the game, and self-righteously never riding on another player's back.

Just like the football code, the attitude of many a taxpayer or tax consultant is that, if you can get away with it, an action is fair and proper. In matters like that it is not your responsibility to make a moral judgment. Let the tax collector, like an umpire, tell you if you are in the wrong and until then you are right.

Two absurd statements are that football is a religion or that the business executive makes a religion of work. There is no element of religion in either activity today. There is no higher field of reference beyond one's own advantage, no guide higher than one's own endeavour to win and no reliance on anything other than one's own wits and strength.

Perhaps sport in Australia might be looked at as something more significant than an analogy. It is the expression of the idea that winning is the only form of success in life and that there is no grace abounding but only the approval of the crowd. We have regular reports of the size of crowds at football matches but I have not the least idea how many Australians read the Venerable Bede or hear a weekly sermon.

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THE NATION STATE

For strong historical reasons and owing to deeply entrenched ideas about the way the world is organised, most of us take nations as part of a settled order, and the nation state as the unit in discussion for what happens outside our own territorial border. International relations is a distinct field of discourse even if not completely separate from matters of 'domestic jurisdiction'—in real life there is no fixed boundary between one's own affairs and the affairs of a neighbour. (As I discovered at the San Francisco Conference in 1945, one of the minor oddities in devising a new world order was the sudden alarm that arose at one stage about 'domestic jurisdiction'—watchdogs became alarmed at finding that the fences were not in the same old position as yesterday and that there were plans to shift them again. Debates on basic international questions are often complicated in this way. Watchdogs are usually very quick off the bark.)

Certainly, many persons prominent in Australian public life believe that the nation state is the natural unit in relationships between peoples all over the world, often being ignorant of the history of the emergence of the nation state and the interplay of nation states in Europe since the French Revolution, and unaware of the spread of the ideas and aspirations of various nation states into other continents by a process of colonisation, imitation and political ambition. But is the nation state itself on the way out? Already, and foreseeably more so in the next century, the nation state is changing in character and in the way it works. Will it be replaced by some other unit in worldwide relationships between peoples and in control over territories (both physical territory and areas covered by the exercise of any form of dominion)?

The signs are contradictory. Can we reach a conclusion about the European Community apart from consideration of where French and German national ambition leads? In the Balkans is the fragmentation of the old Yugoslavia and some events in Eastern Europe a reassertion that the nation state must be reconstituted? Is the puzzling transition of the Soviet Union from an Empire to a Commonwealth of Independent Nations a move to a new concept or a return to the old one? Do North, Central and South American developments since the slow century-long fading of the Monroe Doctrine mean anything more than assertion of a whole range of national

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ambitions of independence and natural individuality? Is the Republic of China the outcome of a new-style territorial imperialism whereby a powerful nation state will find a stronger base or is it a move towards a wholly different future?

By and large my guess is that the nation state will be recognised as the unit for many decades to come but particular nation states will achieve their objectives in different ways. The old territorial imperialism is out of date, but ambitious nation states will remain as the executants of power in relations between peoples.

Little of this will be under any control. So long as three or four great powers continue to think and act as nation states, there will be a defensive necessity for our own country to be a nation state. The practical political lesson for small and middle nations like Australia is that our integrity and strength as a nation state—the degree of interdependence in making our own decisions to serve our own interests—have to be maintained as a condition of life. Until the new world order comes (and we can still fervently hope that it might be one that suits us), we will have to live in the existing world order. That means a need to understand more clearly and follow more closely the changes taking place in foreign affairs and the changing demands on us. Many of our leading thinkers have dwelt too long on an Australian need to escape from 'the colonial image'. That image has long since passed. Our challenge now is what to do in an era which is vastly more complicated than a 'post-colonial era', a period of old style territorial empires.

NATIONAL IDENTITY

It is just 75 years ago—almost to the day—since I was in the last year of primary school waiting to sit for the annual scholarship examination. It was November 1917, and we were celebrating the opening of what was called the Trans-Continental Railway. We were told that part of the ‘promise’ that had been made to Sir John Forrest at the time of federation had now been honoured. The east and the west were linked by rail. Each child was given a souvenir of the memorable event.

Already in 1917 the waging of the war, and especially the story of the Gallipoli landing, had given schoolboys of those days a new and livelier sense of an Australian patriotism larger than our local pride in our own sand patch. At Gallipoli Australia had gained a proud identity.

Then, in the early post-war years, when I was at secondary school, the aeroplane flew into our daily life. The first airline in Australia was opened on the western coast. Qantas followed in Queensland. The first great intercontinental flights, both in the Northern Hemisphere and from Europe towards Australia and then across the Pacific, made the front pages. The importance of civil aviation, both commercially and socially inside Australia, appeared almost as naturally as the dawn. Where do we build the airfields? Who runs them? Who regulates the industry? Then, wireless telegraphy arrived and we had what were then called ‘wireless’ stations to tell us the news.

The early post-war development of the period was marked by the promotion of migration, extensive overseas borrowing and land settlement schemes. We young people were emerging from secondary school into a land of opportunity in the early 1920s. Railways were thrusting into an undeveloped interior.

During the same period some of us were being introduced to international affairs by occasional enthusiasts in university circles. We became aware of the new international status of Australia as a member of the League of Nations, as a mandatory power in the Territory of New Guinea and the phosphate islands in the Pacific, and as a signatory at Versailles. In a vaguer way, our country, following mainly a Canadian lead after the Chanak crisis, had gradually moved into something known as Dominion status—a

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sort of certificate which Australia treasured but seldom used in asserting both our place in the world at that time and our future links with the Mother Country and the surviving parts of the old Empire. Our Prime Ministers still went regularly to Imperial Conferences.

Australians thought seriously about many emerging problems at home. There was the Giblin–Copland–Brigden–Dyason inquiry into the effect on our economy of the Australian tariff; the Peden Royal Commission into the Constitution; the setting up of the State Grants Commission to iron out the inequalities between the States. Australian government moved into fuller interstate discussion and sometimes agreement. Financial and tax collecting agreements were made. Transport was seen as an Australia-wide problem. Overseas borrowing was coordinated. Industrial relations became more than a matter that could be handled separately and also required interstate consultations.

Then came the Depression with its deep political, social and economic effects both in the life of the community and in the management of public affairs. We realised painfully that we were not fully masters of our own fate. We were subject to what happened elsewhere—in the mood of the times many Australians would have said we were the victims of what happened elsewhere—and we had to make painful adjustments. Trade transfer policy, Empire preferences, overseas debt, massive unemployment at home—all these put a different aspect on government. The young Commonwealth of Australia was being obliged to face the realities of being a self-governing dominion and no longer a favoured colony in a great empire.

War came in 1939. The theme I am developing simplifies at this point. For the waging of a total war, the defence powers of the Australian Constitution meant that a single purpose could be served by a single authority. Functions and powers matched each other. Government was centralised and the fact that a task needed to be done virtually meant that, under the defence power, the due authority had the power to do it.

In the course of the war a change of government brought the Labor Party into office. It would be a fair historical judgment to say that, at this period in the history of the Party, centralised government was itself seen as a desirable goal. For many of its members the key word in debate about the future Constitution was 'unification'. Furthermore, from a variety of sources and influences, an influential element in the Party had become doctrinaire

socialist. They not only saw centralised power as a desirable form of government but also saw their temporary possession of office and centralised power as the opportunity to make changes towards a planned socialist state. Under the demands of total war, uniform tax had been accepted as a necessary measure and federal domination in finance had been established.

Apart from the natural wartime transformation which I have recounted, Dr Evatt was active first to promote the 14-powers referendum to increase federal powers, but also to promote the concept that the external affairs power of the Commonwealth meant that, when Australia entered into international agreements, the commitments it made as a nation endowed the federal government with power to give effect to them. The referendum was lost, but the purpose of a stronger central government and the socialist objective remained until the reversal at the general election of December 1949. Many readers will recall that some of the wartime controls remained until the eve of that election and that issues such as the nationalisation of banking and medicine (to mention just two examples) were prominent in the campaigning.

During the war, necessarily more and more talent was drawn into the service of the centralised government. Some of the best people in the public services of the States, in private industry, in academic studies and in various forms of management and technical expertise were servicing the nation in new capacities. For the most part each had a precise job to do and no need to hesitate about having the power to do it.

Towards the end of hostilities the work of centralised government became focused more and more on the allocation of manpower, the distribution of a due share in resources to one activity in preference to another, the choice of one venture or the meeting of one prospective need in preference to another. Both as part of the necessities of wartime and as part of the occupational interest of those engaged in administration, we moved steadily into a routine where someone with undoubted authority and possessed of undoubted power decided what should be done. It was great fun to be able to move people around.

Enthusiasts for a new order were moving confidently towards a planned society. Post-war reconstruction was both the name of a government department and a political objective. This was a fascinating period in Australian history. As one who was in the midst of it, and who has written

about it in the official war history, I hope that more critical studies of it will be made.

At the election of December 1949, doctrinaire socialism had a setback, prospects for nationalisation were rejected, ideas about a planned economy and a planned society had to be adjusted. Wartime centralised government gave way to the usages of peacetime.

At this point I shall repeat what I have written in other places. One of the great services which Menzies provided for Australia in the years following the 1949 election was the restoration of the orthodoxy of Australian government in respect of both the place and the functioning of the public service and the relationship between Ministers and the public service. I rate this as one of his greatest achievements. He brought good order back into the process of government, restored the public service to its traditional honoured place in the executive as a career service and paid constant and scrupulous respect to Parliament. We who had been reading Dicey as students in the 1930s were recalled to his principles in the 1950s.

Thus we entered on the second half of the first century of the Australian Commonwealth in fairly good constitutional shape and certainly with the foundations still firm. Drawing on an old man's memory of the passing decades, I suggest that the changes in the second half of the century have been more varied, deeper and less readily comprehensible than those in the first half. Personally I can scarcely recognise today many of those characteristics which I thought were native to Australia in 1950.

In the field of domestic politics I suggest that in the 1950s Australia returned to the traditional lines of Australian development as regards both objectives and methods. There was still a major task to be done in transformation from wartime to peacetime—relocation of population, training and occupations for those who were demobilised from one form or another of wartime activity, restoration of trade and industry to a peacetime pattern with opportunity for private enterprise, the review and cancelling of unnecessary controls, regulations and restrictions. There was a great backlog of need for housing, services and utilities, and deficiencies in such areas as the post office, telephone services, public transport and power for industry.

At the same time and linked with these demands, there was a planned promotion of immigration, including the acceptance of an obligation in respect of wartime refugees and displaced persons mainly from Europe. That

period of planned immigration also saw the promotion of some major public works and a careful annual budgeting of the intake of migrants. Special measures were taken to assist the assimilation of the newcomers to the Australian way of life. Good Neighbour Councils, classes for the teaching of English, and organisation of welfare were encouraged to help New Australians find an easier way to acceptance and opportunity. In all walks of Australian life today—in trade, industry, science, academic life, technology and social advancement—one sees many outstanding citizens who, as New Australians in the 1950s, found that this was once again a land of opportunity.

Other features of the earlier post-war period were the building throughout Australia of educational facilities, health services and a wide range of activities and benefits embraced by the term 'social welfare'. The scope of public aid widened considerably. As I have already suggested, this was done mostly along traditional lines. Access to higher education was more open. Notably, in both education and health (as also in fields such as transport), the improvement meant Federal–State cooperation.

During the 1950s and 1960s we faced new problems in the economy. I suggest that our approach to them in the Menzies era might also be described as orthodox both in policy and in administration. Soon after the political changes in 1949, there was a draining away of the various 'think-tanks' which had been making paper plans in various backrooms of government. Happily for many of the persons concerned, the post-war expansion of tertiary education gave them opportunity to work usefully at a new desk, or should I say from a more elevated academic pulpit. The Treasury resumed its strong and central role both in economic analysis and in the shaping of the Budget.

Three points in the then current orthodoxy were: watch the level of employment and keep unemployment below 2 per cent of the workforce; watch the overseas balances and the terms of trade; and check inflation. The phrase which Menzies repeated again and again to his Cabinet was: 'We are walking the knife-edge of inflation'. So public expenditure was rigorously examined in detail each year after a decision whether the economic outlook allowed a balanced budget or the financing of a deficit. In the legends of the period many little wizards were credited with ruling in the darker recesses of government, but my own testimony is that this was a period of strong

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Treasury influence with Menzies himself the upholder not only of the three objectives I have listed but also of respect for Treasury advice.

Later we had to face problems set by changes in world markets and in the opportunities for Australian trade. It is not immediately relevant to my theme to discuss other aspects of our economic problems and particularly the post-war situation in respect of overseas trade, investment, access to markets, and the relationship of these worldwide factors (mostly beyond our national control) to any policy or development of our physical resources or the use of our technological and managerial capacity. Nor will I discuss the strange aberrations of recent years which seem to an old fogey like myself to have landed Australia in an unholy mess. The only rather sour comment I make is that I cannot understand how it was that private greed and personal profit seemed for a period to take front place in shaping national economic policy, and why so many excursions were made by governments into areas that might well have been left alone. Perhaps the fortuitous circumstance of a mineral boom, which exploited idle resources we had done nothing to create, left some statesmen blinking in the glare.

In this cursory review of a century I have drawn on my memories. My only purpose has been to support the propositions that Australia has undergone great changes during the century; that Australia today is a nation state vastly different from the collection of colonies that federated in 1901; that the issues we faced and the policies which we had to shape throughout the century were perpetually changing; and, above all else, that the future will be much more brutally challenging to us than the past. Through all this, it is not the Constitution that has hampered us in the handling of public affairs or prevented governments from working together. The lesson is not that we can prosper only if we write a new text or make major amendments to the old one but rather that we need higher political skill and forbearance in using our Constitution.

On the future I shall be brief, for I have no claim to be a prophet. It should be clear, however, that we are moving into an era where world affairs will be vastly different from that period since the French Revolution during which the nation state emerged and old empires crumbled. How long will the nation state continue as a significant unit in decision making, both within the borders of each nation and in its dealings with other nation states? Already many of the nations who assert their independence are not in fact

masters of all they do but are subordinate, as either mendicants or clients, to other powers. Already some of the more significant nations are grouping protectively. Are we moving into a new era of economic imperialism in which many crucial decisions on whether a nation state survives or prospers are not left in its own hands?

I pose that question starkly, for it may present the ultimate test of the wisdom of what we are doing in Australia in the few remaining years of our first century as a nation state. Journalists sometimes put it even more crudely by asking of the future: Who owns Australia? How do we service our growing overseas debt? Who controls further investment in development? Where does opportunity lie in a continent that we once called the land of opportunity?

For the time being, however, we are still a nation state trying to be our independent self in a world of nation states. Survival, independence, integrity and our own identity as Australia are still, I assume, national aims. If so, we need to cherish more than a hope that it will be so. A nation state needs cohesion, a single clear focus of loyalty, and a rallying point of patriotism that supersedes sectional advantage. As a community of people living together, we have room for a wide diversity of interest, customs, creeds and styles of living, but, as a society organised as a nation state, cohesion, a single loyalty and a body of law applying equally to all citizens, and respect for one form of government under the rule of law seem to be essential.

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TOMORROW

Looking into the years ahead, after analysing present facts and prospects, a student in Australia can make various estimates and predictions about population trends, technological changes, the energy crisis and the state of the economy. Recognising that our future is inseparable from what happens in the world, one can link these studies with foreseeable risks or probabilities in world events and argue about security, international pressures in politics and economics, shifts in power and changes in market demands. One can speculate about the influence of discovery and invention of all kinds on transport, communication, industrial processes, the provision of services for the community, the expectation of life, and much else. With particular reference to Australian political and constitutional history, one can express hope that we will move further from being a collection of six States towards thinking nationally and adjusting our national institutions to achieve national integrity. In all such fields of discourse a guess can be made about the future. It is much harder to say with the same plausibility what life in Australia and the outlook of Australians will really be like after the end of this century.

The way we will be living in Australia in 20 years time might be clearer if one could be sure about what sort of future Australians want to have. The big gap in the material for prophecy about the outlook of Australians is the lack of an Australian ideal. The present-day phenomenon of the 'drop-out', the frequent expression of dissatisfaction by minority groups and the readiness with which campaigns are launched in protest against this or that are only a few of the many signs that we live in a community that is unsure where it is going. There are more signs of uncertainty than of common purpose. There is more excitement about fringe issues than about the nation's prospects. There are more demands about sectional benefits than ideas about the good of the nation. Of course those people who make speeches (the political chattering class) often give us a picture of endless progress but, except that they want something or other to be bigger than it used to be, they are not clear about what life in Australia will be like after they have made this 'tremendous progress'—what people will be like, where they will find their satisfaction and how they will live in relationship with one another and the world.

Our national motto, 'Advance Australia', seems to have taken on the primary meaning of becoming rich. Understandably a young and independent nation is proud of showing initiative and energy in developing its physical resources, in gaining wealth and in beating some less fortunate nation either in a sporting contest or in the amount of food and drink swallowed per head of population. But is this a sufficient goal to be set by our national motto? A nation should be concerned with more than affluence. It should hope to advance to something more than fatness. The ways in which we become affluent must affect any pride in the result. A person may become rich by successful burglary, by winning a lottery or by developing skills and wisdom in tasks that are continuously productive. Has Australia become successful simply by being lucky and spendthrift? Have we gained affluence by plundering resources which we had no part in creating and which we take no steps to conserve or reproduce? Are we simply cashing in on someone else's necessity? Are we living on credit backed by insufficient security? Are we simply exploiting the land or do we have an ideal about the Australia we are building for the future? Have we got any ideals or are we only a people greedy for quick material gains? Does our motto 'Advance Australia' mean much to Australians other than becoming bigger and fatter?

Do we seek more than affluence? A nation and a people not only have to earn a living; they have to learn how to live. What advance has Australia made towards a more fully civilised life? We are certainly better fed, better clothed, better housed and have bigger debts, more vehicles per hundred of population and more sewerage connections and television sets than many countries of the world. But do we live nobler lives? Are we wiser, more considerate of others and happier in ourselves? One very simple way of posing the challenge is to ask whether any person would feel really 'advanced' if described as a pot-bellied bloke who lives in a big house and can splash money around the place. Would that person prefer to be described as a considerate and well-mannered fellow who talks good sense and gets on well with his neighbours?

At present in Australia there seems to be much confusion about what kind of people we want to be and what kind of society we are trying to build. Unfortunately some of this confusion seems to arise, not from a conflict of ideas, but from a lack of concern. 'She'll be right, mate. Not to worry.' Let us all sing 'Advance Australia' at the top of our voices and hope that it has the same effect as when Aladdin cried 'Open Sesame'.

The indifference at one level of society is matched at another level by the noisy assurance of political leaders that we are making tremendous progress. At a third level the leaders of business and the leaders of the workforce both seem to be concentrating intensely on getting their share of the monetary dividends of commerce and industry and in exercising power over the processes by which they are produced. It is hard to discover that they have any ideas about a good society except that it is one where statistics get bigger and people get fatter and they themselves become more important.

If all this gloomy description is true, we ought to worry. As the biblical prophet says, where there is no vision the people perish. If that is true, the surest prophecy anyone could make about Australia's future is (in the old-time phrase of the outback) that we are going to 'do a perish' in the twenty-first century.

Many people may deny that we lack vision. When one examines what is called 'vision' and, indeed, what is proclaimed as 'faith in the future', we usually find that it concerns development of material resources. In many cases, though fortunately not all, the sort of development most favoured is one of exploiting a non-replaceable natural endowment that has fortuitously become valuable rather than a development which would enhance the physical resources of the continent. Decisions are made more often with an eye to immediate economic gain than with calculation about long-term economic consequences. Just as overstocking and bad husbandry caused damage in the early days of farming and pastoral ventures, so some current enterprises may cause harm in the future. Some people have objected to 'selling the farm'; more serious still is the use of methods that will turn the farm into a desert and industry into scrapyards. The future is endangered by self-confident fools who exploit without cultivating, or fabricate without building.

When I write of the confusion and the dimness of vision about Australia's future, however, I think more of the social than of the economic uncertainties. Granted that a society is in large measure the product of an economy, it is also necessary for a people to form some ideals about the sort of society they want to have. In the long run only social ideals will restrain decisions creating unequal opportunities. If that were not so, there would be little ahead of us except contests of greed between one selfish group and another selfish group over sharing the spoils or avoiding the hardships that come with economic change.

At present very great and widespread social changes are taking place in Australia. There are changes in the composition of our population and changes in the motivation of society. The term 'motivation' is used here to embrace all those influences, both social and personal, which shape what people do. Most people recognise changes in custom and behaviour, deploring them or delighting in them. Fashions change and the fashionable must keep up with them. Dress, speech, manners, eating habits, forms of entertainment, methods of communication and much else are different from what they used to be. Behind these surface indications it is apparent too that the component parts of the structure of the community as well as the relationship of various parts of the structure are all changing.

The Australian community today cannot be described, as it might have been described 50 years ago, as Anglo-Saxon, Christian, egalitarian, self-reliant, democratic and moved by a spirit of mateship. But it is very difficult to make a list of characteristics of the new mass. One cannot be sure that the old physical stereotype of the lean, sun-tanned and manly Australian is still the ideal. In spite of the larger percentage of the population entering tertiary education, one finds a fading respect for learning or for 'a good education', and the 'highbrow' intellectual minority is not merely in the discard but has slunk off to worship secretly in the catacombs. The use of new methods of public persuasion, whether in politics or in commerce, and the level of argument on public issues suggest a falling away from the belief that what is stated clearly, exactly and reasonably will carry conviction. Much of today's advocacy or gospelling is only the sort of trickery usually known as 'public relations'.

Whatever truth there may be in these pungent observations, the significant point is that the social changes that are taking place, and the probability that the 'motivation' of society is different from what it used to be, make it difficult to predict what sort of society most people want to build and enjoy in Australia. They also support the suggestion about the need for a clearer vision and the fear that without a vision the people will perish.

What sort of society do Australians think would be best? Some readers may answer by drawing attention to the way in which Australia now handles various social problems in health, education, housing, relief of distress, care of the aged, and benefits for the incapacitated and unemployed. This social service, however, has tended to produce a situation in which more effort is

spent on relieving the discomforts and bringing relief to the victims of a bad society than on constructive measures to build a good society. Little thought is given to what kind of society would be a good society. We are doing a lot about removing bad smells but nothing much about fresh air.

So many of the 'causes' embraced by persons and groups who are rather smug about being more enlightened than the mob are similarly limited. Most of the current agitation about racial discrimination, refugees, Aborigines, immigration and the environment is at the level of fault-finding without showing clear thinking about the final social aim. It is not enough for warm-hearted people to say that we should be a compassionate society and not discriminate unless they also give some thought to the sort of society in which all these components will form harmony rather than discord. At present most social agitation is divisive rather than constructive.

In thinking about the social questions which lie beyond the measures for promoting social welfare, we have to ask two more questions. What cohesive force will hold our society together? Consequently, will most of our people come to agree on what is a good society?

In using the phrase 'most of our people', I am thinking of something different from the bare numerical majority that can decide who will govern the country. The structure and cohesion of society cannot be so flimsy that a swing of three or four per cent in a vote can change it in the way in which a government is changed. For a stable society it is necessary that most people should be in general agreement on most social questions. Society is a compromise by which people can continue to live together to mutual advantage. In that compromise there has to be a recognition of those matters on which a minority need not conform and those matters on which minorities will voluntarily respect the consensus. At present there are many signs that we are a long way from reaching a composition based on an understanding of what ideals should prevail. Unless there is a shared vision of what is a good society, there will be continuing confusion, lack of coherence, lack of purpose and lack of standards by which to test acceptable conduct. We cannot even face the vexed question of how far tolerance of the minority can be stretched unless there is a clearer understanding of what is essential and what is less important in the society that most Australians wish to build. I stress again and again this approach because I myself would fervently hope that, in the lack of social cohesion, the nation will never seek

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a remedy in the authority of the state or the rigid compulsions of the law or any other form of enforcement. Yet if we fail as a nation to find our own standards, the only alternatives left are either confusion and disintegration or an imposed authority. We certainly need moral leadership today but I would dread a moral autocracy even more than an amoral democracy.

Although it lies a little apart from my main theme, it seems to me that one other big area of confusion today makes it difficult to make prophecies about the Australia of the future. This concerns the uncertainty about what is going to happen to the 'little' man or woman, whose place in society is changing. An illustration in the commercial world is the replacement of the local grocer, butcher and baker by the supermarket, the meat packer and the



Alexandra Hasluck at the keyboard of her portable typewriter, 1968
Photograph reproduced courtesy of Fairfax Photo Library

bread factory. Another illustration is the absorption of various enterprises by 'take-overs'. Fewer and fewer boards control more and more. In the organisation of labour the move towards larger and stronger unions means

that control is surrendered to a smaller group of potentates by an acquiescent or indifferent membership. The professional trade union leader often resembles a commissar more than the chosen instrument to serve the members. In politics the voter counts for less and the faction or the party counts for more; persuading the voter seems to depend more on money, organisation and sales campaigns than on direct appeal from a candidate to an elector. The mass media, especially television, submerge the individual person in the blurred identity of 'the viewers'. The way in which in wartime a person loses individual identity in 'manpower' is matched by the way in which in public relations campaigns, either in politics or in commerce, a 'person' becomes part of a 'target'.

This submerging of the individual adds to the uncertainty about what sort of life we will live in Australia in the future. One could speculate rather freely about the sort of life that might be thought best by this or that 'boss', whether it be political boss, trade union boss, industrial magnate or messianic group leader. One can foresee that the realisation of each ideal would require a regimented society under the benevolent guidance of someone who is sure that he or she knows best about everything.

To gain an Australian ideal on which the society of the future will be shaped, it is necessary that most of the people, lifted out of selfishness, form clearer and loftier ideas than they have at present about the sort of life they would like to live in Australia. The restoration of the vision can only come through each Australian. The 'little' man and woman must reassert themselves, but they cannot do so helpfully unless they form an ideal of what they want. As I see it, that is the biggest question mark for the future. Yet the pressure put on the individual by the circumstances in which one can obtain and keep wage-earning employment tends more and more each year to narrow the scope of one's education. Do not waste time in idle reading or speculative thinking when you should train to qualify for a better job, especially as every job becomes more narrowly specialised. The evident area for criticism of education in Australia today does not concern its skill in training the bright and the not-so-bright to perform some necessary services but concerns the narrowness of its conception of what would be a 'clever country'. Surely a 'clever country' needs more than an array of skilled operatives and technicians whether it be in mechanical, commercial or scientific undertakings.

HISTORY

In Perth, not so long ago, the planners, engineers and politicians took actions which resulted in the filling in of about 120 acres of the Swan River in order to make a traffic interchange and carparks at the city end of the Narrows Bridge. In a friendly conversation recently, I heard someone say that it was a pity that so much of the river had been filled in, and the area of water in front of the city reduced by so large an acreage. A confident engineer then responded, quite firmly, that all that had been done was to reclaim a lot of mudflats. Another person asserted that the reclamation and the landscaping were a great improvement on the old unpleasant expanse of shallow water smelling of algae, and in that manner the conversation ran on.

This is the way one invents a past to justify present circumstances. But it is bad history. The engineer's story started at the wrong end. Historians, going back to start at the beginning, turn up the original records, look at maps which show a curving sweep of river called Mount's Bay, and recorded depths of water up to six feet where there is now dry land. They examine paintings and photographs of an expanse of water (not mudflats) with boats on it. They hear evidence of old-timers who fished and rowed in those waters. They start at the right end, working forwards from the past. In the same way as that engineer imagined or invented a past to suit present-day conditions and to justify his work, so many nations create their legends of a national past which suits their argument for national greatness. Communities build up a romantic past which fits in with their picture of themselves today. People who have already chosen for themselves certain doctrines or ideologies look only for facts that confirm the beliefs they have already formed.

Other influences also lead to error. The history of a struggle is often written and established by the winning side and the winner does scant justice to the loser, trying to show that the winner had right as well as might on its side. Winners sometimes go so far as to start the history by saying that God told them to do it. The history of change is often written to support a doctrine. The history of great events or unusual men and women is often written to make a good story. Some writers go back into the past to find something that will cause a sensation or can be sold to a newspaper or a

magazine or will become a best-selling book. When the aim of writers of history is to prove that their side was in the right, or that their doctrine is good, they will only discover a past that suits their book. If their only aim is to tell a good yarn, then they will only be looking for material for their story and that may not be the same as the truth. Their product can be better described as a romance of the past than as history.

Now, I do not say that no-one should try to prove a theory or to engage in journalism, but only that we should not confuse what they are doing with the study of history. Let me illustrate the point by saying something about the popular interest shown by Australians today in the early days of our country. How much of this is only an interest in a romantic past or a reflection of present-day attitudes and how much can truly be called history?

Let us make a contrast between two kinds of story. One concerns the grand old pioneers. In that story almost every early settler is heroic. The other concerns the treatment of Aborigines and, in that story, every early settler is a villain. In the first story the colonial period is a picturesque scene crowded with people with quaint manners going around in fancy dress and seeing visions of the future. In the second story the colonial period is a grim scene in which greedy ruffians spend most of their time stealing land from Aborigines, shooting them down and distributing poisoned flour to them. Both versions are not history but romances of the past. When one goes more deeply into the history of early settlement in Australia and the history of contact between settlers and Aborigines, one finds a much more complex series of events than can be told in a story of either heroes or villains.

History is not the same as curiosity about the past or a liking for strange stories about olden times. Historians are concerned with more than what has happened. Although they start by trying to establish the factual truth about what happened, where it happened and when it happened, they also raise the questions of how and why it happened and the relationship of what happened to many other aspects of human inquiry. The study of history is an intellectual process. It is part of mankind's quest for the truth and we need to remember that truth has a wider meaning than facts. The aim of any historian is more than to tell a story. They seek to understand the meaning of the story. They do more than dig up material so as to help us to handle present problems. They try to understand the nature of the problem.

Out of the study of history two themes seem to me to emerge. I would describe them broadly as the theme of continuity and the theme of change. Human experience and human society have continuity. The nature of mankind today and the nature of society today are both continuous from earlier days. In young and developing countries and in an age of great scientific and technological discoveries, there is a tendency to think that the present is so vastly different from the past that it is a wholly new phenomenon and that all the great and grand things we see about us only came when we ourselves worked some sort of miracle.

I think we are prone to this fault in Australia today. One often hears the confident politician or the industrial giant say in effect: 'There was nothing here until I made it'. Often being without any knowledge of history and usually being bemused by the idea of what is called progress, such a person also says in effect: 'There had never been any progress until I started it. I made all this'. Such people may speak in this way about some social service, some economic enterprise or some human relationship or pattern of behaviour which seems to them to be novel. The study of history, leading to a sense of continuity of human experience and human society, however, would bring a more modest outlook and a deeper understanding of what is happening and perhaps, too, a clearer perception of what is likely to happen in the future.

There are no sudden departures or sudden endings in human history. Most changes are long in preparation and slow in acceptance, so one cannot read history as a series of explosions or a long procession of unexplainable miracles. One can trace the rise and the fall, the growth and the decline in the continuity of human events. There is perpetual change. We will understand the nature of all changes much better if we are also aware of the continuity of events. Some of the lack of understanding of what history is and some of the faults in historical method often arise because, in looking at changes that have taken place, some observers, writers and speech-makers are more vividly aware of what they call 'progress' than they are of the continuity of events. I doubt if any understanding of historical change can come from a one-eyed view of progress, even if the one eye of the benign Cyclops has a visionary gleam and is set in a face radiant in the glow of some political millennium.

There is no doubt at all that over the centuries the condition of mankind has become better in many respects. In the past two centuries many

communities have gained in material well-being, have vastly improved their sanitary conveniences and have added to their physical resources. We can also trace the emergence of those ideas and values which distinguish a civilised society from a brutal society. Yet as we also trace the unevenness of the application of those ideas and values, the study of history does not suggest that there is a steady climb upwards. There are times of retrogression, when a society seems to relapse into violence, into lower zeal for justice and the neglect of reason, and into habits in which personal greed and self-indulgence are less restrained by social obligation or religious conviction. We can be sure changes will continue to come; we cannot put any historical faith in the idea that every change will be for the better. Some great historians have seen the pattern of change as the rise, decline and fall of successive civilisations.

I think one becomes more sensitive to these themes of continuity and change if one has the opportunity to visit some of the older centres of civilisation, including the ruined and dust-encumbered vestiges of ancient cities, and to see the span of human life and endeavour and the growth of human society across a greater stretch of time than the marvels of the last ten years. It is like watching the ebb and flow of oceanic tides rather than something spouting from a downpipe after the last shower.

One reason why I find myself out of sympathy with the present-day tendency in some universities to put young students to work on a thesis about what was happening in the last two or three years is that this journalistic focus tends to leave them without sensitivity to the themes of continuity and change. Their study has a limited time span and few links with the past. They get a sense of the immediacy of history but no sense of its depth. Students need to have some concept of the passage of centuries before they are equipped to study the events of a recent decade. They cannot ask intelligent questions about what happened last year and this year and when, where, how and why it happened unless they have some knowledge in depth of the history of preceding years.

In studying the ebb and flow of historic change, historians observe the ways in which one period is different from other periods and also become aware of some of the constant elements in human nature and human society. One has to be careful to give due value to both the differences and the constants. If historians do not do so, they may fall into error. One common

error is to write of the past in terms of the present. You have to study the age in which people lived as well as the people themselves and appreciate the setting in which they acted and the ways in which they were different from us.

Another error is to think of the people of the past as though they were not human beings but quaint historical characters. You have to be aware of the continuing elements in human nature. One of the values in studying literature as well as history is an enrichment of the human element in the chronicles. Some of the academic growth of specialisation in historical studies has had a narrowing effect. How can anyone understand any aspect of European history in the nineteenth century (or any other century) if they have studied only industrial change or political reform and are unaware of what was happening in religious life, literature, art, scientific discovery and exploration of and settlement in other countries.

These errors multiply when historians try to describe a change without knowing enough about the circumstances and the period in which the change took place. We could all readily detect an anachronism if a writer made the hero fire a gun at the enemy during the Crusades because we know that firearms were not in military use at that period. There are equally absurd errors when someone writing a story of the past ascribes to historical personages thoughts, ambitions or ideas which historically were of little or no importance in the age in which they lived. In order to understand what happened, the historian has to know a great deal about the age and the setting in which the events took place and the ideas which influenced the actions of men and women and shaped the social changes which took place.

The study and the writing of history are not static. Those historians who think they have said the last word on a subject, once and for all time, or any readers who claim to know all about the history of something because they consulted the best books on it are both foolish. Historical research is a constant exploration. The writing of history is a constant revision.

There are several reasons for this. The simplest one is that from time to time new material may be discovered or new knowledge may give new light for the interpretation of the material already known. Another reason is that, as the result of continuous change, the relationship and significance of events may take on a new shape. As an illustration, may I suggest that any

Australian historian writing in 1875 from an Australian standpoint on the history of Japan would probably have recounted the end of the Shogunate and the opening of the Japanese ports as a story of Japanese domestic politics and of international diplomacy. Today, with an Australian experience of two world wars and present trade relationships, the historian might well see that the same events had their chief significance in the emergence of Japan into the modern age of industry and commerce.

Another reason for the perpetual revision of history is that ideas change. What people wrote when they thought that certain things happened because the 'gods were angry' is different from what they wrote when they did not believe there were any gods. The version of history given when the historian accepts one account of the nature of human existence and one explanation of human conduct will be revised when a later historian has a changed view of human existence and human conduct. For these reasons and others, no good historian ever thinks he or she has said the last word. They know that they are taking part in mankind's perpetual search for the truth. One oddity you will notice among historians is that the most authoritative person is often the one who knows least. I would suspect the capacity of any historian who was quite sure that he or she was the final authority and who could not bear even a question let alone a contradiction.

A trained historian should have technical competence in answering exactly those first three questions. What happened? Where did it happen? When did it happen? Technical competence will enable the historian to find answers which are not only factually exact in a narrow sense but which place each event in its relationship to other events. The answers to 'what', 'where' and 'when' can be relatively simple. The answers to 'how', 'why' and 'with what result' are more complicated. For example, one can say: 'The colony of New South Wales was established at Port Jackson in 1788'. This is a fact. But it is not the only fact. One can also say: 'The first permanent settlement by Europeans on the Australian continent was made; a continuing association between the unknown south land and the civilised world commenced; the history of the Australian nation began; the problems of social contact between an Aboriginal people and an expanding European society started to take shape; a new British colony appeared as part of the growth of the second British Empire; any possibility of colonies being planted on the Australian continent by the French or the Dutch was lessened; the transportation of

convicts from the British Isles turned in a new direction; a new port was established facing the Pacific Ocean and the extension of European interest and influence in the Pacific region was extended into the south-west Pacific'.

One could go on saying all this and more about what it was that happened at Port Jackson in 1788; and, to understand more fully what it was that really happened, the historian would need to study many surrounding events and have a knowledge and understanding of much more than the actions performed by Captain Phillip in January 1788.

What I have to say can probably be summed up in a few propositions. A knowledge of the past helps us to understand better what is happening in the present day and what may happen in the future, and this understanding gives a better chance that we will speak and act wisely in managing present-day affairs. The study of history is a preparation for our own work today. We all draw on our experience when we face a task. History gives a wider range of experience. Knowledge and understanding, based on the study of history, give a deeper setting and a wider purpose to all we do. They help us to become more clearly conscious that, in our own time and place, we belong to what Masfield called 'the old proud pageant of man', and to feel the inspiration of the great qualities shown by human beings and of the heroic deeds, the gentleness and the courage, the self-sacrifice of which human beings are capable. When we talk admiringly of a great tradition, we are talking of something which history has had a large part in shaping. History, too, kindles a broader vision of where we are going as well as a clear understanding of the place from which we have come.

There is something grievously wrong with a society when some of its members, including many with advanced schooling, are unaware of what mankind has done and what it can do. History gives a people a different heritage. The study of history also brings us close to those qualities and those delights which poetry and music give. What I have said earlier may have left an impression that the practice of history requires a careful attention to fact, a scientific procedure to ensure accuracy, and close reasoning to prove the conclusion. That is true up to a point. The craft of history also calls for imagination—the imaginative grasp of the overall meaning beyond the recital of facts. The study of history stirs the imagination so that one sees more than one's present situation. History does for human reasoning what perspective does for painting.

BOOK 2

REFLECTIONS



The first part of this book consists of a series of discursive essays in which my father looked at what went on in Australia during the course of the twentieth century. He identified some of the old certainties such as 'thrift' and 'privacy' and talked about the changes that had overtaken them. He noted that the social history of dress says something about the habits and standards of society. Changing attitudes are eventually reflected in the actions and pronouncements of political leaders.

Discussion of this kind will inevitably lead to an intriguing question: was there a distinctively Australian body of thought shaping what happened in Australia during the twentieth century, or did progress occur simply in response to what was going on in other parts of the world and as a consequence of random events?

In this part of the book I bring together various book reviews written by my father during the last years of his life, and some comments, not previously published, on books that he acquired. In these additional pieces one finds an echo of themes explored in the earlier essays, and some attention to the question I have just posed. Certainly, these 'reflections' upon the life and times of various famous Australians add another dimension to the discussion. I have included them for that reason.

Paul Hasluck in his study at Claremont, Perth, 1990
Photograph courtesy of Nicholas Hasluck

WALTER MURDOCH

John La Nauze, *Walter Murdoch: A Biographical Memoir*
(Melbourne University Press, 1977)

This is an agreeable book. It is nicely balanced, neither making too much of its subject nor giving too little.

It is also well timed. If a biography of Murdoch were not done now, it might never be done. By the customary measurements of celebrity—works accomplished and offices occupied—he was not one of the great Australians and his life was not extraordinary enough to attract the sort of biographer who only looks for a lively story. So much that made a biography of him worth doing was in his personality and influence rather than in his achievements.

It was a happy stroke to have the work done by John La Nauze. A biography written so soon after the subject's death might have become a work of piety, but La Nauze the historian has worked in happy partnership with La Nauze the friend who remembered his professor with affection. Although he modestly calls the book a memoir, he has written a satisfying and sufficient biography and made a useful contribution to the historical study of a period.

The author's studies as biographer of Alfred Deakin and historian of the formation and early years of Australian federation are outstanding qualifications for writing about Murdoch, for Murdoch was the product of that period. Reading this biography any Australian will learn much about the cultural development of Australia from 1890 to 1930. It illuminates that period in much the same way but with a wider spread as *Books and Men*, the recent edition by La Nauze and Nurser of letters and comments exchanged between Deakin and Murdoch.

The writing of Australian political and social history has suffered in recent years by falling into the hands of young authors with a poor sense of period, so perhaps these two books might be made required reading for anyone starting another doctoral thesis on the rise of this or that from 1880 onwards. The student may not get a big meal of new facts but may pick up the flavour of the times.

Murdoch moved to Perth in 1913 at the age of 38 years and lived here for the next 57 years. Yet he remained, essentially in matters intellectual, the

man produced by the Melbourne climate in the generation from 1890 to the outbreak of the First World War. He was nourished in Melbourne by the same soil as Deakin, Garran, Eggleston, Latham and Rivett—men who had a great diversity of achievement but common points of reference when making judgments on the comparative value of things. Although Western Australia naturally became proud of Murdoch as a local author, he remained essentially an Australian rather than a Western Australian and, at the university and in the general community, part of his beneficent influence was that he thought and wrote as an Australian. Furthermore his range of reference was the whole spread of English literature and was much deeper than any obsession with the latest discovery of talent. He played a significant part both at the university and in his literary journalism in widening the cultural horizons of Perth.

To stress that he was a man of his period is not to suggest that he was only a 'survival' of a former age and nothing more, for he continued to grow after he came to Perth but that growth was on lines already established. What Perth gave him was a peaceful climate, congenial to a character that was more fitted for musing than for making, the questioner rather than the campaigner.

One of the few minor questions about La Nauze's biography is whether he looked closely enough at the two little school textbooks on the subject (now apparently in pedagogical discard) of 'civics'—*The Struggle for Freedom* (1903) and *The Australian Citizen* (1912). These admirable textbooks are interesting today both as documents of the period in which they were written and as signposts in the intellectual biography of the man who wrote them.

The concluding chapter of *The Australian Citizen* contains sentences Murdoch might have written in his maturity as well as in his young manhood: 'Our duty to society is to be discontented with society so long as it harbours one preventable evil ... all our progress in the past has been due to discontented people; if the contented people had been listened to, we should still be cave dwellers.' 'The good citizen is he ... who strives with all his might, in however humble a way, to make his country one in which justice prevails, in which freedom is real and no shadow, and in which the spirit of brotherhood rules.' He writes too of those who 'have striven with all their might to make their countrymen see the right course and pursue it. And

the man who can do that, however unpopular he may make himself at the time, comes to be known in the long run for the very best kind of citizen'.

Murdoch was a man who found his creed early and who kept faith and fought the good fight, as he saw it, to the end of his days. In a paradoxical way, scepticism was part of his creed. He perpetually encouraged people to question and to think. No wonder that Whitfeld's humorous and friendly way in committee was sometimes to address Murdoch as Socrates.

There is only one place where a reader who had some personal knowledge of the time and place might raise a mild doubt about La Nauze's study of the man. It concerns Murdoch's entrancement with Douglas Social Credit. Murdoch, the questioner of established ways, appeared as a kindred spirit to some local amateur economists who were challenging the current economic orthodoxy and they made Murdoch into their 'guru'. Perhaps the 'guru' responded to his worshippers rather than being the originator of their theology. The incident about the cessation of his articles in the *West Australian* (referred to briefly at page 117) shows how like a 'guru' he had become. As I remember it as a member of the newspaper staff at that time, the editorial attitude was simply the old-fashioned notion that in a newspaper there was a proper place for everything and, just as a reporter in those days was not allowed to introduce opinion into a news story, so a regular paid contributor should not introduce political and economic comments and start a dispute on editorial policy in an article on a literary topic. Murdoch took offence and thought he was being gagged. This was perhaps the one occasion when he fell into the fault of taking himself too seriously—a fault at which he usually poked fun when he observed it in others.

As Murdoch was Professor of English at the university for 26 years, some academic readers may think that his biographer should have tested him for an academic rating. How much learned research did he do? How many great English scholars did he produce? Did he keep in the forefront of contemporary changes in literary studies? And so on. La Nauze properly makes no attempt to conduct this sort of examination of his candidate for honours. In any case it is difficult to decide what is a successful professor. Perhaps Murdoch's outstanding qualities as the occupant of a chair of English were that he developed in students care over the clear and exact use of the English language, revealed to them English literature as a continuous growth

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and brought to many of them appreciation of and pleasure in the great authors. He did not fidget or scratch around his subject but introduced us to the companionship of books. Many professors have won high academic distinction and done much less. As a figure at the university it was both in keeping with his personality and in character with academic mode of his period that his influence on students and on colleagues was to promote a spirit of inquiry and the seeking of wisdom and not to convert or lead them to make assertions in support of preconceived opinions.

When he was appointed to Perth, the university gained, as La Nauze states it, 'not a second-class scholar but a first-class man of letters'. The community also gained, not one who shaped students to demonstrate in support of fixed opinions, but someone who influenced them to look more closely at their own oddities and shortcomings, and to seek the tests of truth outside their own dogma.

(Previously published in *Studies in Western Australian History*,
Vol 2, March 1978.)

THE REBEL JUDGE

John Rickard, *H.B. Higgins: The Rebel as Judge*
(George Allen & Unwin, 1984)

Nearly 60 years ago, when I took first-year economics under Professor Shann at the University of Western Australia, I learnt that H.B. Higgins was an Australian visionary who had given us cause for national pride by leading the way into a new province of law and order. Thanks to him, our approach to wage regulation and industrial relations was more enlightened than the obsolete ways in other lands.

Perhaps this personal background is why I ask whether the title of this book is accurate when it describes Higgins as a rebel. Rather he seems to me on the evidence presented in the book as a man who worked constructively, using established procedures, not someone who was in rebellion against society or its legally constituted authority. He might disagree with certain decisions but he did not reject either the authority or the system of government from which they derived.

This quibble about the book's title is raised because I also have some doubt whether the author has fully comprehended Higgins and his times. This doubt may mean little more than that the way men of my generation understood the Australian scene in pre-Depression days differs from the way it is interpreted by a younger generation. One of the ideas very influential in the pre-Depression period was the idea of social justice. In the field of industrial relations Higgins did perhaps more than any other person to give form to this idea in Australia. The objective of consensus, which is popular nowadays, would have been considered by men such as Higgins as a whittling away of the higher purpose of doing what was just. He applied the principle of social justice to mean that in the interpretation of fair and reasonable wages the needs of the worker were put above arguments about the capacity of industry to pay, the profit incentive, the competitive market or strength in bargaining. The vision was that, as a result of doing what was 'fair and reasonable', Australia could hope to achieve a more harmonious society and a concerted effort to build an efficient economy. Higgins also expressed and helped to shape ideas about the standard of living, one of the dominant

influences in shaping Australian policies on subjects as diverse as immigration, the tariff, relief of unemployment, and fiscal management.

Hence, in my opinion, Higgins has a more significant place in the history of ideas in Australia than in any history of rebellion. In the conduct of affairs he was more stubborn than adventurous—one who pointed out the difficulties and contradictions and debated the principles but not one who stormed the barricades. His colleagues sometimes found him stiff-necked but seldom hot-headed.

A reviewer should review the book that has been written and not the one he thinks should have been written, but the criticisms I shall make of Dr Rickard's book will only be understood if I frankly discuss why it is odd to find Higgins labelled a rebel and why I think he has a more significant place in the history of ideas than in the history of rebellion or even in the history of reform.

Henry Bournes Higgins was born in Ireland in 1851, the son of a Wesleyan preacher. When he was 18 the family migrated to Victoria. In Melbourne he gained a post as junior teacher in a private school and happily found a chance to continue his own studies. He matriculated, won the university exhibition in classics and from 1871 was an undergraduate at Melbourne University while also earning a living as part-time teacher or tutor. He switched from classics to law and in 1876 was called to the Bar. Within ten years he had established a sound reputation as an equity lawyer. During the same period his interest in public affairs had grown and associations had been formed with other men destined to enter public life. In 1894 when he was elected to the Victorian Parliament he was, according to the recollection of Alfred Deakin, a man 'with fixed principles and well-thought-out ideals, having followed British politics with the keen interest of an ultra-Radical and a Home-Ruler'.

Rickard writes well of some aspects of the transformation of the shy and stammering immigrant youth of 18 years to the notable radical and well-established lawyer of 40 years—the persistent Irish interest, the departure from a fundamentalist religious faith and personal religious experience, and the laborious process of 'getting on'—but I would like to learn more of the influences in Melbourne that fostered his ideas and enriched his learning. What was the ferment in Melbourne in the 1870s and 1880s that worked on Higgins and so many other up-and-coming men who were to be active in the founding and early development of the Commonwealth of Australia? Perhaps

a separate book awaits another author—someone who will do for Australian political growth in the Melbourne setting what David Walker did so interestingly for literary and cultural growth in *Dream and Disillusion* (1976). While not requiring Rickard to do all that work, one senses some inadequacy in this part of his biography of Higgins. Similarly, there are some shortcomings in a chapter on Higgins as ‘Man of Letters’—a chapter detached from the main narrative—in which there is interesting light on the development of Higgins in his career as a public man but a less convincing account of the shaping of his mind or the influences that surrounded him during the period of growth.

While still a newcomer in the Victorian Parliament, Higgins gained election as one of the colony’s ten delegates to the Federal Convention of 1897. He went to Adelaide comparatively unknown and Rickard comments that his ‘inexperience as a politician separated him from the dominant cluster of colonial leaders’. He was active and conscientious but less willing than others to make the compromises necessary to obtain agreement among the six colonies. Perhaps while others saw federation as the goal, Higgins thought the goal was good government for Australia. L.F. Crisp in *Federation Prophets Without Honour* (1980) has written a better account of the part played by Higgins at the Convention and afterwards, but Rickard has dealt with it adequately for the purpose of biography.

When the Convention rose Higgins found himself unable to support the Constitution as framed. He campaigned against its adoption. He was not against federation but against this particular Constitution. The areas in which he raised his major criticisms were the structure of the Senate as a States’ house, the powers of the Senate on money Bills, and the lack of flexibility in the process for amending the Constitution. Eighty years later many Australians would think that he spoke good sense. His fear of continuing ‘provincialism’ has proved to be justified.

Although most of his ideas were rejected and he did not vote in favour of the federal Constitution, he could claim chief credit for two elements in it—religious freedom (Section 116) and conciliation and arbitration for the prevention and settlement of industrial disputes (Section 51). The debates on federation shed one clear ray on his character. He did not think that bargaining was the best way to get a good result. He was not a trader or a muscle man, and perhaps also not a typical politician.

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Shortly after the Convention Higgins lost his seat in the Victorian Parliament. In Rickard's interpretation, his opposition to the draft federal Constitution and other controversies, especially his failure to applaud the Boer War, had transformed him 'in the eyes of the conventional public from a dedicated but cautious progressive into a perverse and wayward radical' and that was why he lost his seat. If that was indeed what the public thought, I wonder whether it was a true assessment of his character or of his place in politics.

At the first federal election he became a candidate 'in the liberal and protectionist interest' and, with the tacit approval of Labor, which had not yet emerged in Victoria as a separate and distinct organisation, he was elected Member for North Melbourne. In due course he became Attorney-General in the first Labor Ministry under Watson but did not become a member of the Labor Party or attend Caucus and, another oddity by today's standards, he discussed with Deakin, the Liberal leader, whether he should accept the Labor leader's invitation. A further oddity in the eyes of today is that, after a change of government, the Liberal Prime Minister nominated the former Labor Attorney-General to a place on the High Court.

During the five years that he was in the Commonwealth Parliament Higgins made some puzzling moves. Rickard does not solve the puzzles and I found the treatment of those five years the least convincing part of the biography. Recalling the work of Higgins at the Federal Convention and his subsequent exposition of his views (so clearly recounted by Crisp) and looking forward to the well-reasoned argument in his Harvester judgment and later elaboration of ideas about a new social order, I have difficulty in accepting that the 50-year-old Higgins was confused about the practice of politics and uncertain about objectives. Is it a case that Higgins was muddled or that his biographer is baffled?

Was it a 'rebel' who became a High Court judge when in his middle 50s? Certainly he was not compliant. Certainly he thought independently. Certainly he had a concern about social justice. Certainly he wanted to make changes. But if rebellion is considered as a method of achieving objectives and not as having unpopular opinions, he was not a rebel.

But whether he be described as a rebel or a visionary within the law, the outcome has not been as good as he hoped. On the evidence presented by Rickard, neither federal politics nor industrial relations in Australia have

worked out the way Higgins wanted them. That conclusion might be put in another way. The misgivings he had about constitutional compromise and industrial bargaining were soundly based and the hopes he had were part of a vision of a different sort of Australia. Higgins belonged to the same period as Bernard O'Dowd, and the poet spoke admiringly of 'the clear brain and the human heart'. Recalling what I understood about Higgins when I was an undergraduate 60 years ago, I also recall O'Dowd's sonnet on Australia and its challenging questions whether our land was to be 'a new demesne for Mammon to infest? Or lurks millennial Eden 'neath your face?' I think Higgins belonged to a period when people asked such questions.

In spite of my doubts about some of the author's interpretation of Higgins, this book, and the wide and faithful research on which it is based, is an outstanding contribution to Australian studies. It is a high tribute to any work of history or biography to say that it provides material for first-class argument and for testing the preconceptions of other experts. That tribute is paid unreservedly and the book commended as 'required reading' for all Australians who are interested in our past and concerned about our future.

(Previously published in *The Age*, 8 December 1984.)

KINGS' MEN

Christopher Cunneen, *Kings' Men: Australia's Governors-General from Hopetoun to Isaacs*
(George Allen & Unwin, 1983)

This book serves a twofold purpose. It chronicles the succession of Governors-General of Australia from 1901 to 1936 and, in so doing, contributes to the study of the evolution of the vice-regal office. Although the author is more highly qualified as a biographer than as a constitutional historian, his work is valuable under both headings. He recounts the main political events of the period and brings under review the significant issues and characters. The research for the book was extensive, including work on the Colonial and Dominions Office records in London, the Australian Archives and a number of private papers in both British and Australian libraries. The bibliography suggests a wide reading of secondary material although some inclusions and some omissions are puzzling. His notes on sources are thorough and enlightening. All in all he has done his own narrow task well and pointed the way to broader and more highly specialised studies on constitutional developments.

One circumstance revealed by Cunneen's work is that, in the early years of the Australian Commonwealth, ideas about the nature of the vice-regal office were nebulous. Both the political leaders and the occupants of the office were rather hazy at times about what a Governor-General should or should not do. The Commonwealth was a federation of six colonies and the experience on which the framers of the Constitution drew was limited to the work customarily done by the governors of British colonies. Such governors were the heads of the colonial executive, the representatives of the Sovereign and the agents of the Imperial Government. In 1901 the conception of a Governor-General was of a superior sort of governor of a special sort of unit in the British Empire. In domestic matters such a Governor-General would have Australian Ministers as his advisers but, in questions of Imperial concern, he might receive instructions from the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Part of his duties would be to keep the Imperial Government informed about Australian affairs and at times they might convey

information and indeed even try to persuade them to accept such views. For most of the period the Colonial Office had probably more influence on the choice of nominees for the post than the Australian Prime Minister. The first eight holders of the office of Governor-General were British and derived more of their ideas and attitudes from their career in British service than from Australian experience.

Slowly the vice-regal office began to take shape as London and Melbourne worked out the answers to such questions as whether Australian legislation should be reserved for Royal Assent and, if so, what was the power of the British Government to advise the King on such a matter; what was the relationship between the Governor-General and the Governors of the States; what was the procedure for communication between the Australian Government and the British Government; what was the procedure in relations between the Governor-General and his Ministers; and what consultations might the Governor-General seek with other sources. There were many other minor questions of staff, financial provision for Government House, the need for the Governor-General to be kept informed of the government's decisions on policy, the social role of the representative of the King in the Australian setting, and much else. Gradually vagueness gave place to a clearer understanding. Cunneen chronicles the developments step by step through the term of office of nine successive 'Kings' Men' and gives some entertaining accounts of the character and contribution of each of them.

It can be granted that they behaved correctly according to expectations of their own day. Some were better than others, being more skilled in politics or more happily partnered in their social duties. Three, or perhaps four, of them were more diligent and had wider experience than the other five or six. Nevertheless it is hard to build a case that any of them had a decisive role in Australian history or in bringing about change in the vice-regal office. This was not a personal shortcoming. The essential function of the head of state is the stability of the state, both social and political. Even if he comes to office by overthrowing the old order, his Napoleonic purpose as head of state is to defend and maintain the new settled order. The representative of a constitutional head of state in a parliamentary democracy is not expected to be a reformer or an innovator but is required to behave correctly within the limits set by the prevailing interpretation of the Constitution from which he

receives his functions and powers. Behaving correctly, in its utmost meaning, may also embrace the ideas of behaving with political wisdom and for the common good but anyone who invokes that liberty has to recognise that judgment on what is wise and what is for the common good may be chancy, running the hazards of longstanding prejudice or temporary advantage.

While the Governors-General were behaving correctly, changes in the office were being shaped by changes elsewhere. Dr Cunneen has not professed to do more than tell how nine men played the roles in which they were cast from 1901 to 1936, so his account is incomplete. The student will need to read more widely to learn about the transition from British Empire to Commonwealth of Nations, the growth towards Australian independent nationhood, the formal identification of our head of state as Queen of Australia, advised only by Her Australian Ministers and with direct communication between Canberra and the Palace. Furthermore there were such developments inside Australia as the increase in the duties laid directly on the Governor-General by Australian statutes and the establishing of Australian conventions and practices in the performance of the duties of his office.

Dr Cunneen has done a useful job of work on the first 30 years. A more complex and varied task awaits the constitutional historian and biographer for the subsequent 50 years.

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Vol 11, No 4, Summer 1984.)

THE CASEY/BRUCE LETTERS

My Dear P.M.: R.G. Casey's Letters to S.M. Bruce 1924–1929
(Australian Government Publishing Service, 1980)

The dustjacket of this government publication gives a suggestion of high society memoirs. Below the title *My Dear P.M.* are portrait medallions enclosed by flowing gadroons. It might be something of the Edwardian period. Whether that effect was intended or not, the design is apt for this pre-eminently a period piece. The letters written from London by R.G. Casey to S.M. Bruce offer a fascinating piece of social history as well as being a source book for the study of Australia's emerging interest in international affairs nearly 60 years ago. They tell less about international issues or Australian foreign policy than they reveal about the modes and manners of Australian government and of official life in London in the 1920s.

The reader will not find here an outline of world affairs in the 1920s. Indeed an unfriendly critic would remark on the scant notice taken of the reparations problem, disarming proposals, the external policy of the Soviet Union, the effect of the rise of Mussolini on foreign relationships in Europe, and the uncertainties regarding the role of the United States of America in world affairs. Against that criticism may be set the fact that Casey was despatching a mass of other material to the Australian Government as well as writing these personal and confidential letters to Bruce. Nevertheless one does wonder what exactly the Prime Minister gained from the correspondence in shaping his views on world affairs and Australian interest in the major international questions of the day.

He probably gained only what the present-day student can gain—not an analysis of the problems or the causes and consequences of events, but some information about the persons prominent in British politics, some account of what was being said and done by various persons on various topical issues, and a picture, painted with much liveliness but little depth, of the scene in and around the British Foreign Office and the Committee of Imperial Defence in London. So while students need not go to the book for a history of foreign affairs, they can gain much in an understanding of the period. This was a time when the future of Europe was being shaped and the

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pattern of future international conflict was being laid down, a time when Britain's place in world affairs was changing, and a time for seeking a new relationship between Britain and the Dominions, especially in the formation of foreign policy. It is salutary for the historian of these events to forgo the superiority of hindsight and look at the period through the eyes of those who lived through it and who did not know or even imagine what was lurking round the next corner.

One point that emerges very clearly from this entertaining record is that in 1924, while Australia was taking some timorous steps towards having its own Department of Foreign Affairs, it had not done much about having its own foreign policy. There is nothing in Casey's letters to contradict the judgment that at that time the Australian Government sought primarily to be informed about British foreign policy and, having received that information, to have an opportunity of making comments on it or entering some respectful caveats. The concern seems largely to have been less about the wisdom of this or that policy in its effect on international affairs than a concern lest Australia might be involved in some commitment or expense that she did not want to bear.

Similarly, although this was the first appointment of an External Affairs officer for duty overseas and although from time to time suggestions were made about further appointments, Bruce and Casey seemed to have had no clear purpose at that time regarding an Australian foreign service. Diplomatic representation was being sought by Canada and South Africa but, though Casey appears to have been more enterprising than Bruce, his thoughts were along the lines of strengthening the liaison office in London and having Australian attachés at British embassies in Tokyo and Washington. In March 1926 when Dominion participation in the League of Nations was under discussion, Casey's opinion was against permanent Dominion representation in Geneva and he thought that they should continue to rely on the British Foreign Office for information. Even if they might not always agree with British opinion, they should go to the Foreign Office for the facts on which opinion was built. While there was need for cooperation between Dominions and Britain, he said, 'even a cooperative society had to have an executive head'.

Unintentionally the letters tell a lot about their writer as well as about the people he met. The editors' introduction to the collection speaks of

Casey's 'energy, alert curiosity and sociability'. The terms were well chosen. The letters themselves are also well described as 'intimate, gossipy letters obviously meant to entertain as well as to inform, to keep Bruce alive to the currents of Whitehall chatter'. Bruce retained them as personal letters and they did not reach the departmental files. In 1966 Bruce, then in retirement in London, was much concerned about the disposal of his papers and he consulted me on several occasions about historical and archival practices. The Casey papers were a special problem as he thought they might embarrass the writer, who was still in public office. He decided to separate Casey's letters from the papers he intended to send back to the Australian Prime Minister's Department and he returned them to Casey. It was by Casey's own decision that they eventually rejoined the rest of the Bruce papers in the Australian Archives. In 1973 Casey authorised their publication by the Department of Foreign Affairs.

At the time the letters were written, between 1924 and 1929, Casey was, in public service terms at least, a senior clerk in the External Affairs branch of the Prime Minister's Department, appointed as Australian liaison officer attached to the Foreign Office in London. If that designation were taken at its face value, some parts of this correspondence would seem most extraordinary. This clerk was writing personally and confidentially to the Prime Minister of his country about such questions as who might be the next Governor-General, the topics the Prime Minister might like to cover in his speeches, arrangements that might be made about new overseas appointments, the fitness of various persons to fill such posts, and the places that Casey himself would like to have. He wrote about senior people at Australia House, including the High Commissioner, and commented that he was sure he would have no difficulty in working with them. Clearly this was not an ordinary clerk doing ordinary duty in a public service post.

Casey had been selected for the public service vacancy in the usual way from among a strong field of applicants. It is interesting to speculate what might have been the outcome for both the person and the nation if one of the rival applicants had been chosen, for they included men who later became Sir Kenneth Bailey (Solicitor-General), Sir Alec Reid (Under-Treasurer in Western Australia), Senator N.E. McKenna (Minister in the Chifley government) and L.S. Jackson (Commissioner of Taxation). Any one of these would have done the job competently but done it differently.

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Major Casey's paper qualifications were early but brief study in engineering at Melbourne, a Cambridge degree, a good war record with the A.I.F. winning the M.C. and D.S.O., post-war travel in North America and Europe, and some competence in French and German. His major advantages were in manners and personality. He had already impressed eminent men and his application had been supported, among others, by Sir John Monash. It is doubtful if any of the other candidates could have got on such close terms with Bruce as Casey did—and that closeness was due not simply to the fact that both had been to Melbourne Grammar and Cambridge and served as officers in the A.I.F., but also because each could recognise the other as an officer and a gentleman 'of a particular stamp', obscuring the fact that one was Prime Minister and the other a clerk in the public service. Casey had the advantage of private means. He purchased his own house and car in London and it is obvious that his capacity to take men of importance to lunch and dinner was far beyond the pay and allowances of a senior clerk.

After six weeks in Melbourne Casey started the new job in London. He was provided with a room in the British Cabinet Offices in Whitehall Gardens and, having escaped the 'official clutches' of the Australian High Commission (to use his own phrase) and having cleared with the High Commissioner, Sir Joseph Cook, that he was to have direct communication with Bruce, Casey henceforward worked independently and without subordination to the rest of the Australians on duty in London. As Hankey's office was also the secretariat of the Committee of Imperial Defence, he was in a more advantageous position than the service representatives at Australia House and communicated with Bruce about defence as well as foreign affairs.

It is plain from the letters that the strongest influence on him in developing ideas about his function in London was Hankey, the Australian-born Secretary to the British Cabinet. To a very considerable extent any evaluation of Casey's contribution either to the shaping of relationships within the British Empire or to the acceptance of British foreign policy has to be seen as subsidiary to the major role taken by Hankey in that field. At times he appears as Hankey's liaison officer with Australia rather than the other way round. Casey himself saw his task as sending to Bruce 'accurate information of events and tendencies' and to do so in sufficient time for the Prime Minister to make his voice heard on the subject. In doing this he did not, at that period at least, see any urgent need for separate Australian

representation overseas, and indeed it was in keeping with the outlook at that period that in his letters to Bruce he occasionally used phrases such as 'our Embassy in Paris' when referring to British representation. The practical objective of his work was to ensure that Australia had an opportunity to comment on British foreign policy and influence the shaping of it, and to do so for the sake of harmony between Britain and the Dominions in what was still called 'the Empire'. He quoted with approval a remark made on the contrast between Canada and Australia in their approach to foreign affairs. Australia was on the inside looking out; Canada was on the outside looking in. Both Bruce and Casey gave great value to the ties of Empire loyalty. They were happy to be on the inside.

So the eager, active and personable Australian set about meeting people, reporting their comments and sending Australia sheafs of documents. His presence and his activity were a constant reminder that Australia should be kept informed.

One element in his approach to the job was getting to know the right people—the 'people who counted'. In Casey's own phrases, one 'got alongside' such persons and set out 'to work with them'. He carried letters of introduction from Bruce to the Prime Minister and senior men in the Foreign Office and Colonial Office. Without lessening one's admiration for Casey's abilities, it may be remarked that his definition of the 'right people' was rather narrowly selective and belonged to a period that was ending rather than of the rougher and ruder world that was emerging. Throughout his life he kept this interest in persons rather than in any analysis of social or economic forces and pressures that might result in the 'right people' of today becoming the discarded or inconsequential people of tomorrow.

In the midst of the information sent to Bruce about foreign affairs there are many tidbits of gossip. The Baldwin government was worried about the need to find a wife for the Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII) and tried in vain to awaken his interest in the Crown Princess of Sweden. Sir Hubert Murray (Administrator of Papua) was in the habit of writing letters to his brother Sir Gilbert Murray putting Australian administration in the mandated territory of New Guinea in a bad light, and Sir Gilbert passed these to Lugard who was on the Mandates Commission in Geneva. When the Duke of York (later George VI) was informed that he was to make a tour of Australia in 1926, his father the King led off: 'Now, Bertie, no more babies

for a bit. You've got to go to Australia on a job of work.' In October 1928 Casey went to 'a private demonstration of television' and saw 'representation about six inches square of the head and shoulders of the person broadcasting'.

There are passing references to various public figures. For example:

Sir Philip Sassoon (Under Secretary for Air): 'Did not have very much to say. He smelt of scent.'

Sir Alexander Hore Ruthven (later Lord Gowrie): 'He is a good type and should go down well, not too intellectual, nor too sporting, nor too anything else, and an easy and pleasant fellow to talk to. His military record, of course, is first class. His wife is Irish.'

Mackenzie King (Prime Minister of Canada): 'Surely no one man can claim credit for having done so much as Mackenzie King to damage what remains of the British Empire. His efforts to make political capital out of his domestic nationalism are analogous to a vandal who pulls down a castle in order to build a cottage.'

Neville Chamberlain: 'Hankey thinks that he is well in the running as successor to Baldwin as he seems to have many bread-and-butter virtues. But he says he is a cold fish of a man with very little attraction.'

Sydney Webb (Lord Passfield): 'He is a pleasant and genial old man who talked away happily for half an hour. A doctrinaire rather than a doer, who has embraced socialism because of his altruistic pity for the underdog and who has never encountered the difficulties of putting his doctrines into effect.'

Ramsay MacDonald: 'It is a most strange commentary on democracy that men of such mediocre ability as this gentleman and his immediate predecessor (Baldwin) should hold such a high post. He is vain to a degree, lacks clarity of thought and expression and wraps up everything he has to say in a dense cloud of meaningless words. Also, to my mind, he has a shifty eye, and looks the reverse of almost everything that a man in his position should be.'

Casey sometimes drew the attention of Bruce to newly published books. One of the less happy references was: '*A Grammar of Politics* by Laski, a young Radical Jew lecturer in economics in, I think, London University, has attracted considerable notice lately ... It is very long and detailed.'

The letters range over a wide field and are easy to read. One can foresee many postgraduate students engaged on a foreign affairs thesis combing the excellent index to pick up snippets of fact and quotable

passages. They would be well advised to neglect the index and read the book from cover to cover, not for scraps of fact, but for the better understanding of the period. As mentioned at the start of this review, this is a fascinating period piece. No judgment on the young Casey or his approach to foreign affairs or the aims and methods of diplomacy nearly 60 years ago should be made outside the setting of the period.

One final word of unqualified praise for the editing of the volume. The publication brings high credit to the Historical Research Section of our Department of Foreign Affairs and the scheme for the publication of Australian documents on international affairs.

(Abridged version published in *The Age Monthly Review*, 1 June 1981.)

INTELLECTUALS IN POLITICS

Warren Osmond, *Frederic Eggleston: An Intellectual in Australian Politics*
(George Allen & Unwin, 1985)

The subtitle of this biography of Frederic Eggleston is *An Intellectual in Australian Politics*. Conservatives and their co-religionists in the conservation lobby will at once recognise the book as a description of a rare and endangered species. The species has never been prolific. Political historians with a nice feeling for nouns of congregation occasionally note an occurrence of intellectuals but never report a swarm of them. There have been no recent sightings.

The intellectual in politics is rare but not remote. Eggleston had repeated chances to take part in the game. He was on the delegation to the Paris Peace Conference in 1918. He was a Member of the Victorian Parliament from 1920 to 1927 and a Minister in the State Cabinet for three years. In 1933 he was appointed first chairman of the Grants Commission. He sat on various governmental committees and boards. In turn he had two diplomatic appointments as head of mission in China and Washington. He was on the Australian delegation to the San Francisco Conference that made the Charter of the United Nations. Thus he had some experience of doing, although his major contribution to Australian political life was in thinking and writing about what was done.

In the preface to his book *Search for a Social Philosophy* (1941), Eggleston described how he grew into this political role. His studies to qualify as a lawyer led him to reflect on the historical origin of laws and to try to formulate a theory of society. His experience at the Paris Peace Conference started a train of thought about the problems of international conflict and peace and the issue of force and, behind those problems, the status and structure of national states. His experience as a Minister in the Victorian Government, with responsibility for State utilities such as railways, irrigation and electricity, led him to an analysis of the relationship of the state and the individual citizen. In each case, having started to think, he read extensively to benefit from the thinking of others and then he entered into wide speculation and discussion among his own countrymen close to the

centre of public affairs. A person such as Eggleston became not only a critic and commentator on politics but someone prompting and prodding those who were in office and an authoritative writer on public questions.

In the period between the two world wars, and especially in the 1930s, he was prominent in various circles—the League of Nations Union, the Australian Institute of International Affairs, the Round Table group in Melbourne, the British Commonwealth Relations conferences and the Institute of Pacific Relations. In those years, as I remember them, no young fellow could take a close and studious interest in Australian public affairs without hearing the name of Eggleston and eventually meeting him. He was certainly not a grey eminence in the shadows behind the seats of power but he was a significant and persistent influence in any serious discussion about public questions in Australia.

Although I had some contemporary knowledge of him, it was a revelation to me to learn from this biography how voluminous were his published and unpublished writings. His occasional articles in the daily press and his contributions to the learned journals were supported by unpublished memoranda and correspondence equally extensive. He wrote five books and edited or contributed to six others. His 'literary remains' are substantial. His influence among his contemporaries was considerable. But today his name and his achievements are probably halfway to being forgotten.

Towards the end of his life Eggleston, rich in thought and stocked with experience, had the regretful feeling that he was not used as much as he might have been used. This was due in part to a physical infirmity that lessened his mobility in his later years and in part to changes in outlook and style in Australian politics. The pace had quickened; public life was less urbane and politicians were engrossed with the means to an end rather than re-examining the ends they had in view. Since his death these changes have accelerated. Eggleston would not find opportunity today to do what he did in pre-war years.

The extent of one area of change is indicated by the way in which the term 'the press' has been replaced by 'the media'—a term which may cover anything from a private inquiry agent peeping under drawn blinds to a slick entertainer making a highly personal display on television even if a solid core still practises the old-fashioned craft where comment is free and facts are sacred.

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A parallel change has taken place in the practice of politics. Today, in a parliamentary scene of data processing and information retrieval systems, where research assistants work like the crew of a suction dredge to deliver whatever material is required by the market, there would be no congenial habitat for an Eggleston.

Must these gloomy musings end with Hamlet's sadness: 'I shall not look upon his like again'? Undoubtedly there are still intellectuals in Australia but is there any place for them in politics today? The fact that such comments have been provoked by Dr Osmond's book is testimony to its value. His biography of Eggleston stimulates some doubts about the way we live now, while at the same time it contributes to a better understanding of the political history of Australia during the first half-century of federation. The author's own summing-up bears quoting:

Ultimately, the rationale for this book is to celebrate Eggleston's commitment to intellectual leadership, his consistent defence of liberal and humane values in Australian public life, and to affirm the unique psychological equanimity with which he defended these values and maintained a consistent commentary on the inadequacies of Australian culture in his time.

The author gives three main reasons for Eggleston's significance in Australian history. He pioneered rigorous strategic and foreign policy analysis. He contributed to the 'renovation and rationalisation' of the federal structure of the Australian nation. His writings gave shape to the tradition of 'Deakinite liberalism' which continues today in both the Liberal and Labor parties and he attempted to extend his political theory into a social philosophy. He brought all three fields of interest into public debate and argument, but, although he had his protégés, there was never an Egglestonian school of thought. He had influence but not leadership.

As one who knew Eggleston, I think this is a fair summary of his achievement. Here and there, a critic may find a point on which to join issue with the author but by and large the work of telling what Eggleston did and thought has been accomplished faithfully and his period presented clearly. One question that crossed my mind was whether the biography dealt adequately with Eggleston's pre-war interest in Papua and New Guinea.

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Another place where I hoped for something more was the chapter on the early formative period in Eggleston's career. He came from a strict Methodist family of suburban comfort and respectability. His father was a lawyer. Frederic served articles in the family law firm but did not attend university. I should like to read more about the influences or the personalities which gave him a wider intellectual concern. At the age of 20 Eggleston was already a precocious young intellectual, bound to take a place in the community other than a safe family law practice. Something was seething in the Melbourne of 1895, but how and when did the ferment start to work on this youngster serving his articles as a law clerk?

The biography, which is described by the author as a 'reduced version' of a doctoral thesis, is obviously based on thorough and extensive work on a mass of material. It is highly recommended both as a portrait of a remarkable man and as a contribution to Australian political history in the first half of this century. Eggleston helped to shape Australian political thought with his persistent and open-minded faith in serious discussion and appeals to reason.

(Previously published in *The Age*, 15 March 1986.)

P.R. 'INKY' STEPHENSEN

Craig Munro, *Wild Man of Letters: The Story of P.R. Stephensen*
(Melbourne University Press, 1984)

'Inky' Stephensen devoted much of his life to writing and printing but his nickname had nothing to do with ink. He gained it as a boisterous undergraduate (to quote Munro) from his 'habit of singing at the top of his voice snatches from the wartime favourite "Mademoiselle from Armentieres" with its refrain "Inky pinky parlez-vous"'. This epitomises his career, for this self-styled man of letters attracted more attention during his lifetime for the loud and joyful noises he made on borderline subjects than from his claim to notice as author and publisher.

The question might be asked whether 'Inky' merits a full-length biography. If one were to measure his achievements against those of painstaking contemporaries who, in 50 years time, may get half a page in a biographical dictionary, the answer would probably be 'No'. There are other grounds, however, for saying that this book was worth writing and is well worth reading.

Percy Reginald Stephensen was born in 1901 in Queensland. One grandfather was a migrant from Denmark and the other a migrant from Switzerland. His father was in turn blacksmith and storekeeper in a country town. He grew up as a small-town country boy. Home influences were strong on Australian nationalism and democracy. After attending the local primary school he became a boarder at Maryborough Grammar School and passed from there to the ten-year-old University of Queensland. Of his schooldays his biographer says: 'He was also a natural exhibitionist, willing to initiate any anarchic or foolhardy stunt ... He was, as one of his school contemporaries said of him, a rebel in search of a cause. But it had to be a cause that provided plenty of fun and allowed him to stand centre stage before as big an audience as possible.'

It was much the same at the university. He was excited rather than stimulated by new influences—everything by starts and nothing long. Concern for social justice, ardent nationalism, derision of puritanical morality, prejudice against Jews, sympathy for Aborigines and other notions all had their turn. He

plucked causes from every bush. He joined the Communist Party but did not renounce bourgeois self-indulgence. He seemed more eager to break old idols of clay than to fashion new ones. 'His iconoclasm, however,' says Munro, 'was always liable to turn into larrikinism.'

Then, 'to everyone's amazement, including no doubt his own,' he was awarded the 1924 Rhodes Scholarship for Queensland. In England the small-town colonial dived headlong into the glittering waters of the Roaring Twenties. He came up spluttering but boyishly confident and dog-paddled around the pool among better swimmers than himself. He enjoyed the splash. Seen across the gap of 60 years, his bohemianism, Communist Party activity and mixing with the literati do not seem remarkable, but the experience exhilarated Stephensen himself. The liberation of the young is more in what they feel about themselves than in what they actually succeed in doing.

He explored Paris and translated Lenin. From a shared enthusiasm with Jack Lindsay he became manager of the Fanfrolico Press or, as his biographer puts it, entered 'the bizarre world of Fanfrolico'. This also meant the literary bohemianism of Bloomsbury. He started a magazine, the *London Aphrodite*, and entered on a new publishing venture called the Mandrake Press. These years have also been vividly recorded by Jack Lindsay in his autobiography. As Stephensen saw himself, he was engaged in a campaign against philistinism and sexual repression. Some others saw him as 'a raucous pornographer'. His publishing ventures brought close but uneasy relationships with D.H. Lawrence and Aleister Crowley, Norman Lindsay, Jack Lindsay and others. In general the rumbustious literary life gradually overshadowed his communism and at the end, if he had any guiding light other than his own changing enthusiasms, it came from Nietzsche.

By 1932 he was in a mess intellectually, financially and domestically. Relief and hope came in a strengthening Australian nationalism. Some might say that his nationalist fervour had in it elements of homesickness and a hope to escape from a thicket of dying dreams by returning to Australia, of which he had once written to his sister 'the country I love and the people I hate'. His most substantial piece of authorship while in London had been a book, *Bushwhackers*, formed from the stories and legends of bush life remembered from his boyhood.

His return to Australia in 1932 was the outcome of a new crusade started by Norman Lindsay to establish a strong publishing industry in

Australia. Stephenson was to go to Sydney to run it. All they had to do was attract investment. Norman and 'Inky' shared unlimited disgust with the narrow and puritanical ideas of the old order. They had great ideas for fostering a national literature with a publishing house and two magazines. What they did not have was financial backing. Eventually the Endeavour Press came into being as a subsidiary of the *Bulletin*, with Stephenson and Lindsay as minor shareholders and Stephenson on a salary as managing director.

I remember in those days having a conversation in Sydney with Stephenson, who wanted to know what authors in Western Australia might be seeking a publisher. We were all elated. The hope faded. He lasted only a year. Then he founded his own publishing house. He envisaged a vast enterprise and drew up a long and detailed prospectus but his scant capital came mostly from prospective authors. After an enthusiastic and hectic career he went into voluntary liquidation in February 1935. The firm had never lacked ideas but was always short of money. A few months later the Endeavour Press was also wound up. Munro comments: 'Stephenson's two Sydney companies had been a daring experiment at a time of financial depression and cultural indolence, but this did not reduce the bitterness he always felt over their failure.' Out of this bitterness Stephenson was confirmed in the idea that nothing was wrong with himself but everything was wrong with Australia. His inability to conquer Britain had already left him with a lively sense that there was a great deal wrong with the British.

In 1935, with new-found optimism, he started yet another magazine, the *Australian Mercury*, which was 'to stimulate the intellectual minority in Australia to foster indigenous culture'. Only one number appeared but the issue contained the first instalment of a work which was completed and published as a book, *The Foundations of Culture in Australia*, in 1936. It is significant in both Australian history and literature as a strong expression of the nationalism of that period. The assertion of Australian patriotism and the urge to develop a distinctive Australian culture still had a rebellious note—a last outcry against colonialism. It still had the uncertainties revealed in the notion that culture was something that had to be made, not something that existed and should be recognised. Stephenson wrote vehemently what many Australians of his age already felt.

The publication of this book was made possible by a new-found patron, W.J. Miles, a Sydney businessman whose hobby-horses included

nationalism and the evils of British imperialism. Penury, like misery, acquaints a man with strange bedfellows. Miles planned and financed a new magazine, the *Publicist*, and Stephensen, still facing bankruptcy proceedings, was given a retainer of £5 a week as 'literary adviser'. This association eventually led to the formation of the Australia First Party and the publication of a 50-point policy, a provocative list to which both Miles and Stephensen contributed their pet prejudices.

Munro deals very well with the confused story of Stephensen's decline from nationalism to cranky protest, isolationism and something that resembled fascism. The war came. Stephensen attracted both hostility of the political Left and the bumbling suspicions of security intelligence. In March 1924 he and 19 others associated with the Australia First movement were arrested and interned.

In 1951, as one of the official war historians, I wrote that their detention was 'the grossest infringement of individual liberty made during the war and the tardiness in rectifying it was a matter of shame to the democratic institution and to the authorities concerned'. That was a very restrained statement. Munro tells again the story of stupidity and persecution without throwing new light in the dark corners but he gives a fuller account of the suffering caused and the damage done to the chief victim. It was the end of Stephensen's public career. Released tardily, he spent the remaining 20 years of his life mainly as a ghost writer for that regrettable character Frank Clune, who established a nice cottage industry making books for the populace and a reputation for himself. Munro lists 56 books published under Clune's name and written for him by Stephensen.

Why is Stephensen memorable? As a person he had few of those monumental qualities that usually earn for a man either a statue or a biography. The question is left open by the title of this book but one sympathises with the author and publisher in the difficulty they must have faced in finding the right label to put on the title page. 'Man of letters' was the description Stephensen gave of his occupation when he appeared before a court. It was not an exact description. He was not a scholar nor did the study or practice of literature have first place in his life. Other terms which he might have used, such as printer, publisher, publicist, business manager, ghost writer, cult leader or strayed reveller, would also have been true but incomplete labels. Similarly the adjective 'angry' in front of 'man of letters'

only tells one fragment of the story. Words such as disappointed, foolish, provocative, victimised and boisterous would each carry a grain of truth. I suggest that his lasting claim to notice lies in *The Foundations of Culture in Australia*. Anyone trying to disentangle the strands of Australian patriotism will have to read Stephensen. Similarly, anyone trying to understand the discontents and the aspirations of young Australians in the period between the two world wars would seek this source. That was a period when the young were clamant in their dissatisfaction with the stuffiness, the materialism and the limited encouragement of the arts in a land that seemed to them to be obsessed with wheat and wool and the balance of trade.

The story of Stephensen may also be read as a cautionary tale of what happens to eager and ambitious youth who want to make an impression and to draw attention to themselves but have no notion about what blessings they will bestow when they have the crowd staring at them. I recall a conversation I had with the late Herbert ('Joe') Burton, a lifelong friend of Stephensen, shortly after Stephensen died. 'Joe' spoke of the bright promise and the liveliness of the undergraduate and said something sadly about his 'going off the rails'. I asked, 'Did he ever have any rails?' and Burton replied, 'No, I don't suppose he did. He had plenty of steam but no firm track.' Perhaps the epitaph for this unfulfilled patriot might be: 'Enthusiasm is not enough.'

Craig Munro has been diligent in his study of the extensive material available in the Stephensen papers in the Mitchell Library, Sydney, and in other manuscript collections and a wide range of printed works. He has written a vivid and straightforward life, and done a service to the study of Australian history and literature. His narrative of what Stephensen did is enlivened by accounts of other men and women who were active in authorship at the same time. One less favourable comment might be that Munro lacks sophistication and intimate knowledge when writing of the Roaring Twenties in London or of wartime politics in Australia, but this is a niggling criticism as though one praised a portrait painter for his fidelity and skill in painting the face and hands of the sitter and then questioned whether his background showed the talents of a great landscape artist. He has told well and truly the story of P.R. Stephensen.

(Previously published in *The Age*, 28 July 1984.)

DOUGLAS STEWART

Douglas Stewart, *Douglas Stewart's Garden of Friends*
(Viking, 1987)

For nearly 50 years Douglas Stewart had a central place in the making and discussing of Australian literature. He contributed to the Red Page of the *Bulletin* from the 1930s and was literary editor from 1940 to 1960, a period when the Red Page was a recognised forum for literary discussion and the magazine itself was one of the few markets for new writers. Then he became literary adviser to the publishers Angus and Robertson, and for another score of years was active in the encouragement of literary endeavour. During these years he was the author of six books of poetry (culminating in *Collected Poems 1936–1967*), five verse-plays, one book of short stories, four volumes of criticism and three or four books of literary reminiscences and autobiography. Now we have his last work: *Garden of Friends*.

Those of us who knew Douglas Stewart and had visited him in his home and garden at St Ives will find both poignancy and delight in these diary entries from the last year of his life, when failing health kept him at home and the focus of existence narrowed to his desk, his garden, the calls of his friends and a vivid awareness of birds and flowers. The little happenings in a small tract of earth had brightness and delight for the poet. He had become physically frail but the spirit was robust. His daughter Meg Stewart, who saw his manuscript through the press, truly remarks: 'It is so like the man we knew talking.' That is well put and many of us will find here, in a book aptly titled *Garden of Friends*, the last fond memento of friendship. He died in 1985, a month after the last page was written. With characteristic quietness he takes his farewell in these pages.

While the book is primarily one for his many friends, the general reader also will have to read the book for an understanding of Douglas Stewart and his work. Perhaps every poet is self-revelatory in a greater measure than the novelist. (A poet who is not expressing himself is only an imitator of the latest fashion in verse.) The self-revelation in the poems, however, can be enhanced by other disclosures (as in the letters of Keats or

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the *Autobiographies of Years*). The poetry of Douglas Stewart is illuminated by this last testament, eloquent in its simplicity.

Stewart has a corpus of work which is considerable enough to require serious evaluation as an abiding part of Australian literature. His verse-plays—a form of composition which was the outcome of early conditions in wireless broadcasting when, unlike the usage of stage or television, words were the only medium for depicting scenery and action—have to be considered as part of a chapter in our literary history as well as being judged as poetry. His collected criticisms reveal the width of reference, the standards of judgment and the changing literary interests over the period of 40 years, during which he had a notable influence on Australian cultural development—a period in which some of the established writers of today were heard and appreciated for the first time. The general reader and the academic student need to know what sort of a man Stewart was so that they will understand both his creative work and his critical commentaries. He wrote an autobiography of his youth (*Springtime in Taranaki*) and two books of reminiscences (*The Seven Rivers* and *Norman Lindsay: A Personal Memoir*). His critical assessment of Kenneth Slessor, *A Man of Sydney*, also gives some personal associations with the literary life of his day. Meg Stewart's *Autobiography of My Mother*—a life of Douglas Stewart's wife, Margaret Coen, the artist—adds an intimate view of the family. Now, *Garden of Friends* has the last word. These have to be read before his poetry, drama and critical works are revalued.

This is a pleasant book to read and pleasant book to look at and to handle, for it is illustrated by Margaret Coen. Viking is to be commended for the standard of book design and production—a word of appreciation which I can rarely give Australian publishers nowadays.

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JOHN CURTIN

Norman E. Lee, *John Curtin: Saviour of Australia*
(Longman Cheshire, 1983)

The latest book on John Curtin would probably be ignored if another Prime Minister of Australia, Mr Hawke, had not contributed a foreword commending it as 'an important contribution' to filling a gap in studies of Curtin. The most charitable assumption is that Mr Hawke has not read the book he commends or has undervalued the patient research over a long period by Lloyd Ross and the resultant large-scale and documented biography of Curtin that Ross published in 1977. The book by Ross may not be the last work on Curtin, and there may still be a 'gap' waiting to be filled, but Norman Lee's book does not do anything that Ross and several other writers have not done better, notably D.M. Horner in *Crisis of Command* (1977).

Moreover, Lee's book has serious faults. These arise partly from the author's approach to his subject and largely from his ignorance or disregard of the abundant source material available for a serious study. He has relied chiefly on secondary sources and appears to have a limited knowledge of the field. For example, the authorities on whom he relies for information about General MacArthur are MacArthur's own book entitled *Reminiscences* and William Manchester's *American Caesar* and he accepts them uncritically, apparently unaware of the many qualifications historians would make about both books. The Australian books which he has read are similarly mostly of questionable standing. Moreover, he uses all his secondary sources selectively, picking out the bits that suit his theme and ignoring all else.

His theme is made plain in the subtitle of his book, *Saviour of Australia*. He means that Curtin saved Australia from Japanese invasion and probable conquest by the decisions he took as Prime Minister in 1942, but he gives scant space to examining the evidence whether such an invasion was planned and, if it were planned by the Japanese, how and by what means it was thwarted. His story that Curtin made a deal with Churchill to bring MacArthur to Australia and thus saved Australia from defeat is contrary to all the documentary evidence. The discussions between Curtin and Churchill

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concerned the defining of new areas of command and ended with the naming of Brett for the south-west Pacific area. The decisions that related to MacArthur's departure from the Philippines and arrival in Australia were made separately and Curtin had no part in making them.

The major criticism of the book, however, does not concern the errors of fact but that, in drawing this haloed picture of 'Curtin the Saviour', the author obscures the study of John Curtin the man and Curtin the Prime Minister. Although he sketches briefly some of his early life and touches rather unsatisfactorily on some other crises during his Prime Ministership, he never really concerns himself with the whole man, nor does he make any reasoned evaluation of his achievement as Prime Minister.

A better study of Curtin might find clear evidence of his greatness in the work he did as a Labor Party official and parliamentarian to the point where the Labor Party chose him as leader in 1937 as well as in the last four years of his life. To be a Prime Minister is a great thing; becoming one is no less remarkable. Furthermore, the quality of Curtin's Prime Ministership was revealed and his character and political skill were tested more significantly by issues other than those in early 1942. To do justice to Curtin the whole term of office needs penetrating analysis.

Because the author concentrates on one part of Curtin's life, he exposes his book to examination as a contribution to the history of Australia in the war of 1939-45 as well as a biography of one man. Here it falls down badly. It gives scant notice to other significant figures in the conduct of the war. Shedden, Essington Lewis, Blamey, Wurth, Chifley, Evatt, Dedman and others of their kind are either not mentioned at all or get only a few words and no attempt is made to examine Curtin's working relationship with them.

As one example of several omissions, in the last two years of war the nature of the Australian war effort was determined largely through a domestic contest over the allocation of manpower. In this struggle the question for a biographer is whether Curtin was the leader who decided what happened about the allocation of manpower or the one who tried to calm down the stronger contenders. As another example, the question is open whether, in the attempts of Australia to enter the higher councils of work—most unsuccessful attempts—Curtin was the leader or the one who restrained a more impetuous Evatt. In the mobilisation of Australian industry for war purposes, what political part in obtaining production was due to

Curtin and what part to McKell, the Premier of the major industrial State, or to Essington Lewis, the organiser of production, or to Dedman, the chief facer of the music even if not the conductor of the effort?

Curtin made speeches enjoining austerity and patriotic effort; Dedman met the resistance to the appeal. Especially when one turns to economic policy, both in relation to the war effort and, more importantly, in the continuing post-war effects in Australian history, it would seem that Chifley was a more significant wartime figure than the Prime Minister. In short the subtitle of this biography, *Saviour of Australia*, may seem to be true if it means that, on the political scene, Curtin was the one who was crucified, but in all other meanings it deserves a wider and more critical examination than the author is qualified to give to it.

These criticisms of this particular book are not necessarily denigration of Curtin. The examples have been used to underline the fact that a good biography of Curtin needs a penetrating study of the nature of his wartime leadership of the nation. Perhaps the chief praise that can be given to Norman Lee's book is that it has pointed to the need for further studies of Curtin. The full assessment of his place in Australian history has not yet been made, although Lloyd Ross has assembled a useful and balanced account of his life. The further documents now available for general study and the work already done by historians of Australia in the war of 1939-45 show that the answer may not be a simple one. Two areas of doubt are whether the response (in broad terms the patriotism) of the Australian people was awakened as fully as wartime statements purported to show; and secondly whether in practice the Australian Government virtually lost control of the Australian war effort and the nature of the Australian contribution to the war before the war ended. My own hesitant judgment is that eventually Curtin, the whole man, will emerge as a greater figure than Curtin the Prime Minister in wartime.

In the history of the war years in Australia after December 1942, one finds little support for a view of history that would allow the force of a personality to be stronger than the force of events. I doubt whether Curtin made or could have made any decision that changed the course of events except the decisions to bring troops back to Australia from overseas and not to allow the diversion of the returning troops to Burma. I doubt whether the story which journalists use so much about his appeal for American aid was really a considered decision as the outcome of thinking about the course of

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Australian history. Rather it was a rhetorical flourish to help familiarise Australians with the plain fact that the only possible source of foreign military support for Australia was from the United States of America and not Britain. He did not decide that this should be so. He accepted it with a few striking phrases. The strategic necessities of war in the Pacific after the fall of the Philippines would have brought Americans to Australia whether or not Curtin had made this speech.

If one looks for achievement in the sense that he did something that without him would not have been done, one comes back to the affairs of the Labor Party rather than of the nation. Without him the conscription issue would probably not have been decided in the way it was. Without him there might have been less trust of the government. Curtin channelled Australian patriotism into respectable and useful courses and, despite an occasional lapse due chiefly to the need to please some of his own Ministers and party supporters, he made it a common patriotism and not the preserve of a class. This was no small thing to accomplish, having regard to the divisive influences. Considering the failure to master fully the coalfields problem, either by ruthless demand and compulsion or by persuasion, one makes cautious claims for him. Perhaps the verdict might be that, although he did not rally and inspire the nation to unity by an inspired leadership, he kept it from falling apart by exercising continuous political skill and by his own increasing dedication.

His term contains the record of an honourable, devoted, self-sacrificing and, at the end, an anguished and very lonely man—a man deserving of deep respect, of admiration for his discipline and his restraint, of sympathy for his suffering; a man who reached nobility through humility, a man who came to know disappointment with some of those persons and institutions on which his political faith had been based and who felt the anguish of wondering if he himself had done well enough. It is not the record of an iron man of destiny. He winced at physical danger with courage but with misgiving. He put his duty to his country above his personal convenience and saw the danger of his country in a time of peril as something that superseded any political creed. He was not a great man in the heroic tradition; he was a great man who could be tested in the simpler and less showy human virtues. He was a politician who became much greater than his politics.

B O O K 2

He did not make any pretension to statesmanship. He served his country dutifully without holding back anything and he served it well. There were in his Cabinet and in Parliament men of keener intellect, men of more ruthless drive, men of stronger purpose and longer vision but there was no better man in the public life of Australia in his time. At a time when principles and conventions of political conduct were under pressure and when he was working among and depending on the support of men who wanted to take advantage of the war to serve lower purposes than the task of winning it, Curtin rose above his surroundings and resisted the compulsions of his associates and kept the conventions, maintained the standards of right conduct and served the single and urgent cause of the survival of the Australian nation.

(Abridged version published in *The Age*, 1 October 1983.)

H.V. EVATT

Kylie Tennant, *Evatt: Politics and Justice*
(Angus & Robertson, 1970)

I was taken by surprise to find the word 'genius' used in relation to Evatt. To test my own understanding of the word I looked up the Oxford Dictionary and found that what I understood by the word was what the dictionary said: 'Native intellectual power of an exalted type; extraordinary capacity for imaginative creation, original thought, invention or discovery. Often contrasted with talent.' Evatt had exceptional mental powers and ability to learn by memorising but he certainly did not have capacity for 'imaginative creation, original thought, invention or discovery'. Indeed his shortcoming was in the lack of that sort of capacity.

His mental brilliance showed up most impressively when he was working on other people's texts—finding flaws in other people's cases and finding ways around other people's arguments. He was quick to see an issue on which he might score a point; he was slow to find a principle. He had scant powers of creative thought and little originality. His success in using novel arguments was largely due to a memory of something he had read and a readiness to twist it into a new application. If the author had stated this part of her argument more modestly instead of making the contrast between 'genius' and 'talent', I could have agreed in part with her. I would agree that Evatt had mental powers well above the ordinary, that, in order to fit into a society that was somewhat hostile to the exceptional man, he may have had (in Kylie Tennant's phrase) 'to make what he could' of the society in which he found himself, and that this dissimulation and accommodation to a hostile force may have had some twisting effect on his work and on his character.

I think this is true of many exceptional boys of his generation in the Australian environment. A true 'genius', I think, would not have conformed or tried to ingratiate himself in order to gain advancement, but Evatt, moved by a most powerful ambition, certainly did so. In the Australian environment, too, the exceptional boy had to be perpetually striving against the influence of mediocrity. It is an unplumbed mystery to me whether the strange twists in Evatt's character were the result of an inordinate ambition

working on the compromises that a brilliant boy made with society or whether his ambition and the twists of character were not the consequences he suffered, but part of the nature he brought to the struggle.

One fact that the author seems to me not to have seen (or to have undervalued) is Evatt's inordinate ambition. He wanted so much to succeed, and to succeed at everything and every time. If a committee were formed he wanted to be chairman regardless of the possibility that it might serve his other objectives better if he let someone else sit in the top seat. This ambition accounted for some of his most glaring defects, such as his dishonesty, his bitter envy and hate towards rivals, and his 'tantrums' (very considerable) when he was disappointed or foiled. I used to trace most of his less worthy behaviour—his bullying of inferiors, his suspicion of equals, his petty derision of anyone who seemed even momentarily to be his superior, and his childish rages when thwarted—to the fierceness of his ambition. It was not his greatness that people disliked; it was those things in which he fell far short of greatness. Much of the constant curiosity I had about him as a person concerned the origins of his ambition and I used to speculate, after something I was told about his boyhood, that it may have been the result of the driving force of a possessive mother and her determination that he should 'make good'. The pressure on him to succeed and to be worthy of a mother's ambitions seemed to me to have given a sort of emotional frenzy to his striving to excel.

I have no first-hand knowledge of his childhood years and family background. He never talked about them; his reminiscences, when talkative, never going back beyond his university years and never very deeply or very often into those. Even at times when it might have been apposite to do so, he never made any story about humble beginnings or being 'one of the people'. All his attitudes were bourgeois, not popular, and I never heard him say anything about lack of money in the home when he was young. I have met a number of people who were at Fort Street and university with him. Few had any good words to say of him. His contemporaries have stories to tell of his eagerness to get various student offices and the manipulations he used to get appointment or election.

Evatt himself once told me with some glee how he got a trip to Melbourne. He found out that there were a few students who had played Australian Rules football and linked this with his other knowledge that there

were some spare funds in the Sports Union and that Melbourne University was trying to get an inter-varsity football carnival. He organised the few students into an Australian Rules team, had himself appointed manager, through his position on the Sports Union got some money for the trip and had a visit to Melbourne. He chuckled mainly over the way in which he introduced Australian Rules to the university without most of the university being aware of it. He then went on to tell of his separate achievement in introducing Rugby League, but this was a highly involved story and I never rightly understood why and how he did it. His chief joy in the recollection was that he had outwitted the Rugby Union crowd.

Another area which I think a good biographer would need to explore more perceptively than Kylie Tennant has done is the relationship between Evatt and his wife and the effect it had on him. I did not meet either of them at close quarters until early 1942 and know nothing of the years before that. One cannot travel with them and live for weeks on end in a hotel or on a boat and accompany them to meals and private engagements, as well as working officially for them, without seeing them at very close quarters. Evatt depended a great deal on the comfort, solace and reassurance that Mary Alice gave to him. He was handicapped by the prejudices against persons that she either communicated to him or helped to reinforce and by some of the influence she had on him in making him trust or distrust persons with or against whom he had to work. The relationship was much more like that of mother and son than wife and husband, both in the soothing of him in his tantrums, mothering him against his enemies and taking his side protectively and possessively, and also in encouraging him to do better. I doubt whether Evatt could have survived without her and yet I wonder whether he might have been a more successful man if he had not had this continuation throughout his life of the influence of one whom he substituted for his mother.

The author's treatment of Evatt's period in the High Court brings to mind a discussion I once had with Evatt himself about some of the work of the United States Supreme Court. Something I said led him to say that I should not imagine that judges were completely impartial or above politics. In some cases they could be, but many cases were of such a nature that a judge, expressing an opinion that was his own opinion, could not help being swayed by his views on a wide variety of subjects. Then he spoke of the Australian High Court which, in constitutional cases, had to pronounce on

matters which were partly political. He said that it was all to the good that Justices of the High Court should know about politics and that their judgments were in touch with political realities and he warned me never to assume that judges were not politicians. The references in the relevant chapter to Evatt's impatience with life on the Bench recall a view I have heard expressed that when Evatt went to the High Court he had grounds to expect that he would move quickly to the Chief Justiceship. When it failed to materialise he left the Bench for politics.

The author's suggestion that 'Until Evatt moved in there was no effective Department of External Affairs' is unjustified. Pre-Evatt departmental strength included Hodgson, Officer, Stirling, Watt, Hood, Hasluck, Heydon, Hay, Wynes, Moodie, McIntyre, Shaw, Quinn, Harry, Murchison, McMillan, Bridgland, Waller, Oldham, Lee, Eckersley (I write from memory of diplomatic officers) and Burton had just been transferred on probation from Labour and National Service. The structure of the department at Canberra was only subsequently varied in wartime by the creation of the Post-Hostilities Division and the Political Warfare Section. The recruitment of diplomatic cadets was started in 1944.

Kylie Tennant gives scant attention to the 1943 election and to Evatt's attitude during the campaign. It was a highly critical period in his own personal career. My own view is that, on the one hand, the 1943 election was a cause of frustration to Evatt and that, on the other hand, it was a cause of increasing suspicion by Curtin of Evatt. At the time there were doubts about the seriousness of Evatt's illness. Curtin and others believed that Evatt was lying low to see how the election turned out so that he would be ready to lead a 'national' government if Curtin lost.

The portrayal of what took place at the San Francisco Conference is badly garbled. The account of what happened after the conference is quite contrary to my own memory of events. Evatt fell into a period of worry and indecision. This was not unusual with him after periods of intensive effort. He had also been approached by a firm of publishers to do a book on the United Nations with an expectation of big sales if he could do it quickly. From what I heard him say himself he was also uncertain which route to take back to Australia and whether to go back quickly or to delay his return. He knew of Curtin's illness. It was discussed between him and Forde before Forde flew off to Australia.

As soon as Forde had gone, Evatt was in a heightened state of uncertainty whether he should go too. Mainly because of his commitment to do a book—or so I understood it—he held me back with his personal staff, Burton and Atyeo. Waller, who had been secretary of the delegation, also remained to do some clearing up. I do not know who persuaded Evatt to do so, but almost overnight plans were made to go off to Yosemite for a rest. It may be that a boat was not available. At Yosemite he and Mrs Evatt occupied one cabin. Atyeo, Burton and I occupied another cabin. I never knew how long we were to be there or what we were to do. We just sat around or looked at the sights. The Evatts seldom emerged.

Just as unexpectedly, we left one day. Waller, in San Francisco, had got us on a ship. Although we went on board, up to the moment the ship started to move away from the wharf, we were not sure whether we would be making the voyage. News had come of the further deterioration of Curtin's health. Evatt could not make up his mind whether to fly home or to go by ship. My own impression is that Mrs Evatt had got him on to the ship out of concern for his own tiredness and nervous strain and that he did not have the decisiveness at that stage to get off. We sailed in the late afternoon of 4 July. Just as we were leaving we heard of Curtin's death. For the first few days Evatt was incommunicado. Burton, Atyeo and I had been joined on board by George Warnecke, an Australian journalist. The story relayed to us by Burton was that we had to spend the three weeks or so of the voyage 'writing the Doc's book'. I was to supply the material, assisted by Burton, Warnecke was to 'dress it up' in attractive style and then the Doc would give it the final touches.

About the third, fourth or fifth day out—I am not sure which—we had a brief informal discussion about the book. We did not get far because Evatt seemed to have the vaguest ideas about what he wanted to put into the book and Warnecke seemed to have a simple view that it ought to be a collection of anecdotes and pen sketches of various persons at the San Francisco Conference. It was later the same day, in the afternoon, that an aeroplane appeared coming up from the south. It made a pass over the ship and presumably signalled something to the bridge, for the ship, the *Kanangoora*, stopped and some sailors prepared to lower one of the lifeboats. Then the plane returned and dropped a bundle to which long streamers were attached. It fell in the water perhaps 150 or 200 yards astern and spread a

deep purple dye where it fell. Before the boat could reach it, the whole thing had sunk. A second bundle was dropped and also could not be recovered, but a third, falling nearer to the boat, was picked up. The plane, making another pass, flew away to the south and the boat's crew returned to the ship. The bundle was carried rather importantly to the bridge and, equally important, the captain descended to carry it down below to Dr Evatt.

In due course we learned that the bundle contained a message from Forde saying that, following the death of Curtin, Forde had become Prime Minister and he asked Evatt to continue as Attorney-General and Minister for External Affairs. This method of giving the message had to be used because the ship was sailing under radio silence. For the next three or four days Evatt was unapproachable. Then he revived and the last ten days or so of the voyage on the *Kanangoora* were reasonably pleasant. There was no further mention of the book. We all, including the Doc, just enjoyed doing nothing. Late each afternoon we played net quoits for an hour or an hour and a half, the Doc being boyish in a pair of shorts and bare legs; but most games ended in accusations of cheating between Evatt and Atyeo. The wife and family of the new Chilean Ambassador to Australia were on board, including two very young and attractive children, and I saw Evatt's most tender and pleasant side in making friends with them.

The author seems to have no idea of the sequence of events or the exact nature of the various international discussions in which Evatt took part, or sought to take part, in the period following the San Francisco Conference. Evatt returned to Australia at the end of July 1945. I was immediately sent to London to represent Australia on the United Nations Executive Committee and remained there until February 1946, when I crossed to New York to establish the Australian Mission to the United Nations. I remained in the United States until July 1947. The first part of the first session of the General Assembly met in London in January–February 1946; and, after the election by it of the non-permanent members of the Security Council, the first session of the Security Council was also held in London in the same period. After the United Nations had established its headquarters in New York the Security Council took up the Spanish Question. Under the strong initiative of the United States the Atomic Energy Commission was established and presented its first report by December 1946. The second part of the first General Assembly was held in New York in the northern autumn of 1946.

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Evatt was briefly in London in September 1945 (or thereabouts) and was very ill at ease and bad-tempered throughout. I had little to do with him as I was working day and night on the United Nations Executive Committee but I recall that one of the matters on which he was active was trying to get the appointment of an Australian to the war crimes trials. As I have mentioned elsewhere he was very emotional about wartime atrocities but this was one of the cases where he had apparently not read his documents carefully enough to appreciate fully the way in which the European and the Japanese 'war crimes' were being distinguished from one another. At this time



(from left) Paul Hasluck, H.V. Evatt and David Owen (Britain) in the canteen at Church House, Dean's Yard, Westminster during Evatt's first visit to the United Nations Executive Committee, London, September 1945
Photograph by Ian Smith for Life Magazine, reproduced courtesy of Nicholas Hasluck

Bevin was just establishing himself as Foreign Secretary and my recollection was that Evatt was full of admiration for him, perhaps, if for nothing else, because Evatt had always felt he had been humiliated by Eden and hated him for it.

My understanding was that Evatt was 'called home' from London and left much against his will. He certainly went quickly and in a bad temper. After consultation with him I had persuaded him that he should give a reception at the Savoy, especially to confirm among the London diplomatic corps the success he had made in San Francisco. We arranged it on a date to suit him and the evening before it was to be held he said he was going the next morning. Except for telling me that I was not to let Bruce have anything to do with it, he left the whole thing in my lap. So, a few hours after his departure, I stood alone to receive guests who had come to meet the great Dr Evatt and lied like a Trojan, expressing the Minister's deep personal regrets that urgent business had denied him the pleasure of receiving each of them. It was a good reception. Terry Glasheen, who was secretary to my United Nations delegation, had done a marvellous job. He was a master of that sort of thing and a most congenial and resourceful colleague.

The sequence of subsequent events on the United Nations side was that, by arrangement, Hodgson, who was newly appointed as Australian Ambassador to Paris, was to lead the delegation to the Preparatory Commission with support from myself, Watt, Bailey and the members of my United Nations Executive Committee delegation. A little later, after the Preparatory Commission had done its work, Norman Makin came over to be Resident Minister in London and in due course he led the Australian delegation to the first part of the first session of the General Assembly, supported by three of us who had been on the Preparatory Commission.

The General Assembly was not held in Paris but in London. Australia's election to the Security Council was not quite as recounted by Kylie Tennant. At that time, with only 51 members of the United Nations and six non-permanent seats it was tacitly agreed that one of them should go to the British Commonwealth, one to Western Europe, one to Eastern Europe, one to the Middle East and two to Latin America. It was also tacitly agreed that Canada, as the senior Dominion, would have first turn at the British Commonwealth seat. On Evatt's instructions Australia broke the neat pattern and lobbied very heavily. Hodgson and I had to do most of the legwork. A strong point in our

case was that the pattern would give no voice to the countries in the Pacific and to those who had fought Japan (other than the United States). Among the Latin American countries we also got some support for the claim that, as Dr Evatt had shown at San Francisco, Australia would speak for the 'small nations'. We had other odd arguments. I am sure that Hodgson got the Turkish votes, in an unorthodox way, by slapping his gammy leg wounded in Gallipoli and saying to the Turks with a grin: 'You bastards did that. Now do something else for me or Dr Evatt will tear my balls off.'

One factor that told against us was Soviet suspicion that the active campaign by Australia was only a trick by the western world to get both Australia and Canada elected and thus give the West two 'stooges' on the Security Council. I assume, although I do not know for sure, that Great Britain and the United States voted for Canada but, if they did, I would interpret their action simply as keeping to a prior understanding of what should happen and not a deliberate move against Evatt. Similarly, I think the author is astray in thinking that there was some attempt to stifle Evatt by putting him on the International Court. Ken Bailey was very keen to go to the Court. As a friend I hoped he might be nominated. So far as I was aware, Evatt had no intention and saw no opportunity of getting on to the Court himself but, in a strange way, was jealous of Bailey and hesitated too long over his nomination to give him a chance of succeeding. Perhaps, too, Evatt was unfamiliar at that time with the usages of international conferences under which it is customary to try to make some reasonably even apportionment of offices among nations and groups of nations by prior discussion. Our interests suffered somewhat at this and later periods because Evatt's method of working gave Australia a reputation of wanting 'to be on everything' and to get what we wanted by lobbying and bargaining in disregard of others. Bailey was unlucky. A straight vote on his personal merits might have given him a seat on the Court but he was handicapped by the other Australian activities taken at the direction of Evatt.

There is also an error in fact in the reference to Hodgson attending United Nations meetings in Paris. Although Hodgson was Ambassador to Paris, where his wife was dying, Evatt had ordered him to New York to sit on the Security Council as 'acting representative'. One of the oddities of the situation was that Evatt instructed that he (Evatt) was to be nominated as Australian representative on the Security Council and Hodgson and I who,

in succession actually sat at the Council table, were designated 'acting representative'. The purpose Evatt apparently had in mind was that whenever he chose he could fly to New York and take an active part in the Council's proceedings. He was keenly ambitious at this time to be one of the big men of the world. He did the same thing with other United Nations organs regardless of the fact that, as Foreign Minister, he could have had a recognised place in United Nations affairs without going to the odd device of virtually appointing himself an Ambassador to the United Nations or Australian representative on every possible United Nations organ.

The author's reference to Manus and to colonial trusteeship seem to me to be out of sequence. At the San Francisco Conference in mid-1945 Australia was active in debates on the chapters on trusteeship. Those provisions of the Charter included provision for strategic trusteeship. In due course Australia had to negotiate a trusteeship agreement in respect of the territories she was to place under the United Nations trusteeship system, but before that could happen a good deal of work had to be done on such preliminary questions as the transfer to the United Nations of the assets and legal rights and functions of the League of Nations, including mandates, and the structure of the trusteeship organisation in the United Nations Secretariat. The Trusteeship Council had to be brought into being. These and similar matters occupied a good part of the first General Assembly. Then the way was clear for Australia to negotiate an agreement with the General Assembly in respect of New Guinea and for the United States to seek from the Security Council a strategic trusteeship in respect of the former Japanese mandated territories in the Pacific.

The main burden of the negotiation of the Trusteeship Agreement on New Guinea fell on Kenneth Bailey. The position as I saw it was that Evatt, having gone a bit beyond Australia's own immediate interests in his advocacy of a trusteeship system at the San Francisco Conference, now had to instruct Bailey to recover as much as he could to preserve Australian interest. This meant seeking some terms of the agreement different from the 'model' agreements that had already been made. I suppose this is what the author means by 'a special trusteeship'. The Australian agreement with the General Assembly was concluded in December 1946. It was a real achievement for Bailey. The United States strategic trusteeship was approved by the Security

Council in April 1947. This is the time frame into which the author's ramblings about Manus have to be fitted.

My personal view about Manus is that it was in fact too far south to be of interest to the post-war strategic planning of the United States. Evatt was slow to realise that fact. He could not have done anything to have Manus maintained as a strong United States naval base, even if he had wanted to, and his main error was in imagining that it had any value as a bargaining counter. I always thought the Liberals exaggerated the attack on him over Manus and I never joined in it.

The author is widely astray in the reference to atomic energy. At the sittings of the General Assembly in London in January 1946, a decision was made to establish an Atomic Energy Commission. Soon after the United Nations Secretariat established itself in New York, the United States team under Baruch and with people like Eberhard, Groves, Oppenheimer et al in it, moved into offices in the Empire State Building several floors below the Australian Mission. For a period of months there were informal talks, in which I represented Australia, about the planning of its work and arrangements were made for the first meeting of the Commission in June. Under the rule of alphabetical rotation of chairmanship, it was expected that Australia would have the chair for the first month. It was after he heard this that Evatt came to New York.

He had a frenzied month in the chair. It was far and away the worst performance at an international conference I ever saw him give. He did not inform himself fully on the months of preparatory work that had been done and he seemed to be under the illusion that the whole task could be finished in a month. Perhaps he had an ambition to go down in history as the statesman who had fixed up the international control of the atom bomb. He left the Commission in an awful mess a day or two before the end of his month. In the next month under an amiable but rather showy Brazilian chairman, Captain Alberto (followed by about six other names), we recovered a bit of the ground. I worked happily with Oliphant and Briggs as technical experts and came to enjoy as well as to gain in experience in working opposite Bernhard Baruch, one of the few great men among the many whom I met in this period.

The last 100 pages of the book, covering a period of nearly 15 years, during which Evatt came to his highest political office as Leader of the

Opposition and faced great tests critical for his reputation, seem to me to be dealt with inadequately and with imperfect understanding of what happened both to Evatt and to the Labor Party in this period. It does not even stimulate me to contradict or explain anything. My purpose (as in other notes I have written on books) is not to enlarge upon matters that can be well tested in the records but to add those odd bits of information that would be lost if I did not jot them down; or to make those minor corrections that are necessary for a clearer and truer interpretation of events and estimation of characters.

One cannot discuss Evatt or comment on anything written about him without exposing his odd traits. Although I doubt whether Kylie Tennant knows that she has done so, I think this book exposes much more of this oddity than of great qualities in her hero. As a study of the politics of the period I rate the book very low. It has many inaccuracies, both little and big, but they can be corrected from the reputable sources. It shows a poor understanding of the political situations through which he moved and of the nature of the political contest. It misrepresents the role of several of the other actors, both on the Labor side and on the Liberal side, and omits a good deal that I would have thought to be politically significant. As a biography of Evatt it fails to present the whole man and, to my mind, does not penetrate deeply enough into the various crises through which his character was shaped—crises of both personal life and public contest.

He was a fascinating but very complex subject for a biography but this book only adds a few splashes to the total picture and obscures (or ignores) as much as it exposes. I had a strange sort of liking or fondness for the man, as for a naughty child, although I could have little respect for some sides of his character. I could admire his great mental capacity while also seeing great holes in his appreciation and understanding of many phases of life. Much of what journalists praise was a sham. The last time I saw him was a saddening experience. After he had returned to his home in Sydney from Fremantle, the newspapers having reported that he was ill, I called at his home in Mosman to inquire after his health. Mary Alice insisted that I go in. Perhaps she thought it might help him. We sat in the sitting room and after a while this figure, closely followed by a nurse, came in and sat alongside me. I spoke. Mary Alice reminded him who it was. He grinned and gave a chuckle much like he used to and said: 'Yes. San Francisco. Remember what we did to Stettinius? Yes. Paul. You were there. Stettinius ...' His mind left us and never returned.

Occasionally, when he was still in Parliament, we used to talk together about the conferences in which we had worked and the personalities we had met. There had never been a close friendship between us but some dependence on me and some liking on my part as well as respect for the office he held. I think he appreciated my willingness to work hard and my capacity to do most of the things that had to be done but I suspect that he found it hard to understand me, even though he valued me. Perhaps he could only understand one kind of ambition—his own kind of ambition.

The beginning of our working relationship came only a month after first meeting him. He started to abuse me in the way in which he roused on so many people. I said: 'Don't talk to me like that, sir. I will not allow anyone to address me in that way. I can work for you and have my work criticised or corrected without being abused.' He stared, said he was sorry, and never addressed rough words to me again.

Discussing his oddities once with Arthur Calwell, after Evatt had left Parliament, Calwell told me that Evatt liked me. I expressed great surprise. Calwell said that when I was first elected to Parliament Evatt was very nervous that I might make use of my prior knowledge of some of his activities for political purposes and was at first surprised and then grateful that I did not do so. Ward used to tease Evatt, saying that he had heard that Hasluck was going to 'spill the beans tonight'. According to Calwell, it was enough for Ward to say that Hasluck had got all his notes ready and was going to speak about 'the Doc', to send Evatt hurriedly into the House. Well, he is dead. We still lack the total picture of a puzzling man. Sometimes I think of him as a tragic figure, sometimes as only a sad one. From his own point of view, part of the handicap was that Australia was not big and important enough to enable him to play the influential world role to which he aspired. From a world point of view, it was lucky that he did not have a base sufficiently strong to enable him to do more than agitate and assert (sometimes in a useful way) a particular view, for I think that most of his judgments in foreign affairs were unsound. From an Australian point of view, he helped to write the nation's name more boldly but I always had a feeling that when he evoked 'Australian' interests he was using Australia, as he had used the players of Australian Rules football at the university, to advance the interests of Evatt.

ROBERT MENZIES

Robert Gordon Menzies, *The Measure of the Years*
(Cassell, 1970)

I had hoped that the former Prime Minister's second book of political reminiscences might have been more substantial than this one, but perhaps he was under some sort of persuasion from his publishers to produce this kind of volume; or he may have been persuaded by them that it would sell better if written in this way. Perhaps its chief service to the historian will not be in putting new windmills into the landscape but rather in helping to identify the other landmarks more clearly and to see the whole scene in perspective.

For general readers I am sure *The Measure of the Years* will help to put the record straight on many important incidents in Australian history. For journalists, I think it will remind them of what they ought to know but in some cases seem to have forgotten; and for more serious historians, I think the outstanding value, as I have tried to indicate, will be in an adjustment of view and in helping them to achieve balance and perspective.

Of course, for historians, too, any book written by a man who has taken a prominent part in affairs will be an intimate disclosure of the nature and the quality of the man, and in this case the book does disclose something of the nature and the quality of the man who, for a period of 30 years, was a most significant figure in Australian political life and a man of note outside his own country. I think that Sir Robert in this book reveals himself in revealing those things he likes best and those principles which he respects.

Sir Robert Menzies has had very many friends, very many admirers. He has also had opponents and detractors. Looking back, it seems to me that some very unusual arguments have been used by the detractors when they have dealt with the fact that for nearly 20 years Sir Robert Menzies gave unbroken national leadership to the Australian nation. They go on to try to show that he really was not very good and, of course, if detractors get into that position, what they are really doing is producing an argument that the Australian people are really not very good but are stupid or very gullible, because, unless you think of Australians as a pretty poor lot, how do you explain the fact that for 20 years or more Sir Robert Menzies had their confidence? You do not explain

that fact away by detraction of Menzies. You can only explain that fact away by detraction of the Australian people.

I have mentioned this fact of detraction because it has been constant throughout his career as it has been throughout the career of most people who engage in public life. It is not always possible to define exactly where criticism ceases and detraction begins, and it is one of the good features of Australian political life that there should always be strong, searching and constant criticism of its public figures. But those whom I identify as his detractors have shown a great tendency to give currency to certain clichés and to repeat them again and again.

Most of us who have been in public life know the experience pretty well of having articles written about us by persons who claim very close intimacy but who have never met us and never had a word of conversation with us. I have a theory that this is all due to press clippings and that the press clipping becomes the substitute for first-hand knowledge. I can illustrate what I mean. In 1945 when I was briefly in the public eye, someone wrote an article, which was mainly true, giving a picture of me riding around Canberra paddocks on a black thoroughbred mare. Then in 1968, when once again I was briefly in the news, I found that 20 years later I was still riding around Canberra paddocks on a black thoroughbred mare, although in the intervening years the mare had gone to her rest, the paddocks had been built over and in fact I was now riding in the pine plantations on a brown gelding. I expect that so long as I remain in public view I will still be mounted on that poor old black mare.

Among the stories of a similar kind that are repeated ad nauseam about Sir Robert, I think that several will be amended after the reading of this book.



Paul Hasluck in the grounds of Government House, Canberra, c1970
Photograph courtesy of Nicholas Hasluck

One of those stories is that he had no interest in Asia. Fancy saying that of the man who opened the first Australian diplomatic posts in Asia! In my ministerial experience there was no-one in the Cabinets in which I served in my time from 1951 to 1969 who had a clearer view of the importance of Asia in world affairs and a sharper understanding of the impact of Asia on Australia's future than Sir Robert Menzies had. Yet the story goes that he had no interest in Asia and that his eyes were perpetually turned towards Europe, and to nowhere else.

There was another story that he knew nothing of economics. I would like to suggest that it was not in spite of, but because of, his Prime Ministership that stability of the economy was achieved after many initial difficulties and maintained through difficult times over a long period. It was not in spite of, but because of, his Prime Ministership that changes were made in the Australian banking structure. In this book, while Sir Robert deals with some of his work in banking and in establishing economic stability, he could have done even fuller justice to himself if he had recalled and quoted some of the speeches that he made on economic policy in 1945 and 1946 when he was in Opposition, when he was not reading something, if ever he did, that departmental officers had written for him about economics but was developing an economic theory in opposition to the economic theory which was being advanced by the then government and a theory which he himself applied when he took office again at the end of 1949.

Another story is that he was a great speaker but a very poor doer. One of the impressive parts of the present book will be found to be the chapters dealing with defence, education, health, social services, airlines, the civil service and the post-war building of Canberra—an amazing story, not of things spoken about, but of things done. Yet another story is that he ran a one-man Cabinet. That is not my recollection. I learned to respect his views by often opposing them. Like other Ministers I was encouraged to put forward my own views. Certainly it was not a one-man Cabinet, nor was this domination that has become the subject of popular stories a feature of the Menzies Cabinet.

Among the chapters of this book that I myself appreciated most were the opening chapter on the 'Science and Art of Politics', the one on 'The Gentle Art of Opposition' and the occasional references to the Cabinet system and the public service. I thought there was a fine garnering of good sense and wisdom from long political experience in those particular parts of the book. I have thought for a long time that there is a great need in Australian literature for an historically descriptive account of the working of Australian political institutions. By

institutions I mean the electorate and the bodies that support the electorate—the Parliament itself, the executive, the judiciary, the public service.

As to other aspects of the present book I find that I have little to add by way of embellishment or correction to what he has written of events and situations of which I had personal knowledge. In regard to National Health, I think the author might have prepared the background better with some fuller references to the health scheme as an issue, and to the difficulties of producing an acceptable health scheme after he came to office. The peculiarities, including at times the incomprehensibility of Page, in working out this scheme and submitting it to the Cabinet and to the party room, deserved fuller attention. I find this chapter very sketchy in comparison with the others in this section of the book.

There is reference to Mrs Petrov's journey to Darwin. By coincidence, on the evening of 19 April, several Ministers, including myself, were having dinner at the Lodge with Menzies. Our being there had nothing to do with the Petrov case. It was a men's dinner and, although Dame Pattie presided over the pre-dinner drinks and superintended the commencement of the meal, she then retired. The news of the incident at Sydney Airport was telephoned to us and we had a sort of impromptu Cabinet meeting at which it was decided that the critical question was whether Mrs Petrov was going willingly or unwillingly. There were numerous messages, each being discussed by all the Ministers. As I was then Minister for Territories it became my responsibility to telephone Leydin, Acting Administrator, at Darwin, tell him of what was going on and give him his general instructions. It was a tense and rather exciting evening for us all, and we stayed at the Lodge until the final stage of the episode with news of the departure of the aircraft from Darwin with the Russian guards on board and Mrs Petrov left behind. In his account of what took place, Menzies has lost much of the atmosphere at the Canberra end. In my mind, the memory remains of the mounting dramatic suspense as we received successive reports from the aircraft in flight, from Darwin, where the reception party was waiting, and then the news that the aircraft was coming in to land.

All the legal stories are familiar ones. It was the great delight of Menzies to tell stories about his early days at the Bar. He really revelled in these anecdotes. It must have been an exhilarating period for him. Whenever, in the Cabinet ante-room late at night, he relaxed with a glass in his hand before going home, so much of his conversation would be about his days at the Bar.

BUNTING'S VIEW

John Bunting, *R.G. Menzies: A Portrait*
(Allen & Unwin, 1988)

John Milton and John Bunting have one thing in common. They both worked close to a head of government and both admired the master. Milton, addressing Cromwell as 'our chief of men', wrote of the 'cloud not of war only but detractions rude' through which his leader had pursued the work of God. He exhorted Cromwell to make further conquests—'peace hath her victories no less renowned than war'³—but Bunting can make no such exhortation for he writes 20 years after his leader's retirement and ten years after his death. So he devotes himself to the modest but useful purpose of clearing away the cloud of detractions rude to reveal 'Menzies the man, separate from the politician'. Implicit in all he writes is that Menzies might well be addressed by Australians as 'our chief of men'. He is not blind to the warts but he sees his subject as a man of Cromwellian stature in Australian history.

These comparisons may not be wholly fanciful. It is true that Bunting will not go on to write another *Paradise Lost* and Milton the Latinist would not have been a success as Secretary to an Australian Cabinet. But in their time both were diligent servants at the heart of government. Menzies would not have triumphed at Marston Moor and it is doubtful whether Cromwell could have won as many successive elections in Australia as Menzies did. But both had dominance in their time.

In the foreword to Bunting's book, Lord Carrington, one-time High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in Australia and later distinguished for his service in higher offices, says that Menzies was 'perhaps the greatest man Australia has so far produced'. This judgment by a Briton would be supported by some Australians and contested by many others. One can hear the detractors asking whether Carrington has ever heard of Ned Kelly, Henry Lawson, Paul Hogan, Manning Clark or Phar Lap. What was so special about Pig-Iron Bob?

Carrington was probably thinking of the qualities and achievements of a statesman. How does one measure greatness in that domain? The naming of the greatest cricketer, the greatest musician, the greatest scientist or the

greatest explorer can be justified by reference to the score book or its equivalent in each field of endeavour. How does one pick the greatest statesman? In such matters the judgment is the result of recognition rather than of exact measurement in the same way as one knows without the use of a foot rule that a person is outstanding. He is better than the rest of them. He is as obvious as the tallest man in the room. Carrington's judgment does not rest on a table of batting averages but on a response to the great man's presence. Similarly Bunting makes no attempt to give a tally of achievement, but what he tells about Menzies certainly makes a picture of a man with size and character beyond the ordinary level.

Some indirect evidence of the size of Menzies can be found in the way in which he has been seen in so many different shapes from different standpoints. Kevin Perkins, Percy Joske and Cameron Hazlehurst have attempted biographies. Each of them saw a different Menzies. Spender (*Politics and a Man*, 1972), Beale (*This Inch of Time*, 1977) and Downer (*Six Prime Ministers*, 1982) have written substantial chapters on him. Many journalists have scribbled odd 'pieces' and 'profiles' about him, mostly using each other's press cuttings as source material, and a public relations officer Edgar Holt did a book of friendly gossip (*Politics is People*, 1969). My own brief account of the man I knew was published in 1980 in the series of Mannix Lectures. The balanced assessment, the full record of achievement and the rounded character await a major study. Broadly speaking, those who knew Menzies at close quarters and worked alongside him rated him more highly than those who watched from the sidelines. Players often see more than spectators, both the weaknesses and the strengths.

Bunting worked close to Menzies from 1959 to 1966 in the offices of Secretary to Cabinet and Secretary to the Prime Minister's Department. Previously as a senior officer of the Department he had some opportunities to observe him in action. Later, after the retirement of Menzies, he enjoyed a friendly relationship with the family limited only by his own sense of discretion as a public servant in official harness. Thus he knew and observed Menzies at the apex of his Prime Ministerial career when his political leadership in Australia had been established and his high standing overseas was recognised. Bunting's reminiscences are of the statesman at the apex of his career and not of the period when ambition had not been fully served. He describes the end product rather than the way in which it was developed.

Recognising that limit, one can commend this book as the most lifelike work yet done on Menzies. The dustjacket of the book carries a reproduction of the dramatic portrait by Ivor Hele. The book itself is subtitled *A Portrait* and tells a story consistent with Hele's celebrated picture but quieter in tone and more penetrating in insight. All Ivor Hele's political portraits have an air of braggadocio. Those of Mr Speaker Cameron and Mr President Mattner are larger than life and make the subjects look greater than they were. His painting of Menzies is a good likeness and any biographer might profit by contemplating it, but it is clearly a picture of a statesman on the model's throne in the artist's studio, head poised and the lighting dramatic. It seems to me personally to be an artist's rendition of the way Menzies saw himself. Much more can be learnt from Bunting's prose for he gives not a posed 'portrait' but a whole series of sketches from all sorts of angles of a subject who has not been placed to catch the best light but is moving here and there about his daily work and is relaxed and easy.

Bunting makes no assessment and does not recount the career and achievements of Menzies but draws on his own working association with him, at the apex of his career, to tell something about the sort of man he was. He describes his manner and method in his office, in Cabinet, on overseas missions and at home, and his relationship with senior public servants and with other public figures. There are also glimpses of the less serious man, whom Bunting calls the 'private and festive Menzies'. Having observed Menzies myself during the same period at close quarters as one of his Ministers, I would neither contradict nor embellish the account of him, though recognising, as I am sure Bunting would also recognise, that the politician and the public servant may sometimes see 'the boss' in different ways.

There are only two chapters on which, as a politician, I might make a gloss. In Chapter 6, headed 'The Boys', Bunting writes about those public servants who 'by their roles were close and familiar to him' and whom he valued, trusted and acknowledged and who were also 'companions'. Bunting is right in all he says about the respect Menzies had for the place of the public service in government and for the professional integrity and skill of the senior men, and gives a fair description of the working relationship Menzies had with them. It seems to me, however, remembering occasional remarks Menzies made in private, that Bunting has erred in interpreting the correctness of the Prime Minister's relationship with public servants as a sign

of equal regard for all of them. In my experience he took less notice of some than of others. Not all of those on Bunting's list were as influential or as intimate as they fancied they were. None was his 'adviser' in the sense in which that term has been applied in later Prime Ministerial entourages.

The second gloss concerns some remarks Bunting makes in Chapter 4, headed 'Cabinet Government'. He seems to make a contrast between 'Cabinet government' and 'ministerial government'. He writes that, in the Menzies days: 'The ministerial basis of government was specifically and superbly recognised' and then deplores that in later years Cabinet has 'grown to be a new and insistent element in government'. He says of Cabinet: 'It is now overgrown. And the balance has swung against Ministers. The Cabinet much more takes first place and the Ministers stand to receive instructions, to obey rules and to get permission'. I recognise the grounds for criticism but it seems to me that the issue is one that does not concern the system but rather the practice. The core of the system is 'the government' in the highest sense of the term and neither 'the Minister' nor 'the Cabinet'. The government can sometimes work best through Cabinet decisions and some through ministerial decisions. The criticism surely is about bad practices and not about any theory of government. In my time as a Minister there were many matters of administrative routine or matters on which policy and practice were well established and Ministers made decisions on them. Many other matters were taken to Cabinet because in the Minister's judgment new policy decisions were raised, major new expenditures were required or there might be political repercussions in the party room or in the electorate. Appointments to top posts were usually taken to Cabinet. Sometimes, too, when there was a difference of view between several departments, the responsibility was placed on Cabinet to resolve the difference. A departmental recommendation to a Minister to take a matter to Cabinet was mostly to settle inter-departmental conflict or to obtain Cabinet endorsement for increased expenditure and so overcome or forestall possible objection from the Treasury.

In my own experience under Menzies, any Minister who was in doubt would seek the Prime Minister's ruling whether a matter should go to Cabinet. This practice of sometimes relying on Ministers and sometimes having recourse to Cabinet derives primarily from the need for stability in government and I would suggest that any practice of rigorous direction from Cabinet would

be a sign of some nervousness about stability. When, during my term at Government House, I was President of the Executive Council, I always had clearly in mind the interests of the Crown in the stability of government and the role of the Governor-General in Council in ensuring such stability. There is a tendency for some public servants to regard Executive Council as only a formality to put a stamp on ministerial decisions. Two questions which I sometimes found it necessary to ask in Council on matters of major significance were: 'Does the Prime Minister know of this recommendation?' and 'Has this subject been before Cabinet?' The objective served in asking such questions was the stability of government, which depends mainly on the authority of the Prime Minister over his Cabinet and the settling of any divisions among Ministers before any individual Minister takes action. Perhaps, on reconsideration, Bunting, as a former secretary to Cabinet, would agree with me on that, although continuing to deplore some of the practices which he thinks have diminished the authority of Ministers, Cabinet is the place where any uncertainties, differences on policy, or clashes of interest have to be resolved and that Cabinet as a whole is necessarily superior to any Minister. I feel sure that I would have the agreement of Menzies.

This 'portrait' of Menzies by a person as well qualified as Bunting is timely. A major biography of the statesman is now being undertaken. Both in that enterprise and in public discussion the need for a calm reassessment of Menzies is clear. He has left political controversy; he is remote from journalistic sneers and detractions rude and has entered Australian history as one of our major public figures—perhaps even 'our chief of men'.

(Previously published with the title 'Menzies: Our Chief of Men?'
in *Quadrant*, No 249, October 1988.)

THE HOWSON DIARIES

Peter Howson, *The Howson Diaries: The Life of Politics*
(Viking, 1984)

Every now and again this book reminded me of scenes in the television series *Yes, Minister*. It would be unfair to the author and misleading to the public to pursue the comparison. Peter Howson the politician always took himself very seriously and he has a right to expect that his diary will be received in the same way. And the public should be made aware that this is not light entertainment. The book fills more than a thousand close-packed pages, runs to half a million words and weighs over a kilogram. Purchasers, after taking a rapid-reading course, will have to settle down to 40 or 50 hours of reading, plus a few breaks for stretching, yawning and renewing their strength.

My own respect for the production comes when I look at it not as a book but as an archival repository. Being a devotee of archives, I commend without reserve the industry of Mr Howson in keeping a diary, his sense of public service in opening it to the public, and the skill and patience of Professor Don Aitkin in selecting, editing and annotating. Students of Australian politics or historians can be grateful at having this source material in print in their libraries instead of in manuscript or microfilm in some remote crypt. Less dedicated readers may also find it handy to look up the indexes (one for subjects and one for persons) and pick out the pages on which they or their enemies get a mention.

It is no criticism of an archival repository to say that I disagree with many of Howson's judgments and would flatly contradict his account of some events. This is source material to be evaluated, weighed as evidence and compared with other records. My only comment on the value of this evidence is that many passages are a record of what someone told Howson and not a record of what happened. In politics the story and the fact are not always the same, but it is relevant to political studies to know what stories were being told.

It also has to be recognised that Howson was never close to the centre of power. He was a Member of the Commonwealth Parliament from

December 1955 to December 1972 and had two brief terms as a junior Minister for a total of five years between June 1964 and December 1972. His diary runs from January 1963 to December 1972, but it is by no means a complete account of government during that period. Much was done of which Howson seems to have been unaware and, in all except three peripheral questions, his diary gives little information that could not be obtained elsewhere. The three questions on which Howson adds some information worth having are the



Menzies Ministry, early 1960s, including Paul Hasluck, John McEwen, Harold Holt, John Gorton, William McMahon and Garfield Barwick

Photograph by Australian News and Information Bureau; reproduced courtesy of Nicholas Hasluck

purchase of the F111 aircraft, the parliamentary controversy over the use of V.I.P. aircraft, and the early years of greater federal activity in the administration of Aborigines and the protection of the environment. A personal antagonism to John McEwen and John Gorton has resulted in an imperfect account of the part each of those leaders played in decision making and the scant references made to such Ministers as Spooner, Paltridge, Anthony, Henty, Hulme, Sinclair and Cotton are a further indication that Howson's experience in government, both in subject and in personal contact, was on the outer rim. On major questions of policy he was not a major figure.

The main value of the diary to the historian will be in what it reveals of the author himself, and especially what it reveals of the way in which the Liberal Party functioned during this period—the atmosphere of the parliamentary party room, the way in which Members behaved, and the conditions in which party decisions were discussed. It also reveals something of the changing values and the shifting influences within the party.

So much for the archival repository. What of the general reader? As already indicated, this is not the full story of Australian government or a well-reasoned and balanced account of policies and persons. Some general readers may have a vicarious excitement in sharing Howson's parliamentary life—the meaningful talks over lunch, arranging a significant dinner, going to the club, telephoning this one and that one, discussing problems with leaders of industry and commerce, having talks with journalists on the side, hobnobbing with distinguished citizens, catching aeroplanes here, there and everywhere. I doubt though whether Howson was a typical Member. His political lifestyle, as disclosed by his diary, was certainly very different from my own and that of the Members whom I knew well. Howson obviously enjoyed being busy on the gossip fringe of government. The scene in total, especially during the Gorton and McMahon years, is rather grubby, and the diarist gives more attention to the grubbiness than to the discussion of the substance of any argument.

If any political novelist should arise to emulate the young Disraeli in writing the Australian equivalent of *Coningsby* he may find some background here, but his difficulty will be in deciding whether Howson should be the model for Coningsby or Taper. In the diary he presents himself first in one role and then in another—the shining hope of the side and the backstage contriver. And, as one reads the diary, there are those repeated reminders of *Yes, Minister*. Here is James Hacker come to life. Perhaps the most persistent theme in the diary is Minister versus public servants. Although Sir Humphrey is not in the cast, his part is played by a succession of characters bearing such names as Len Hewitt, John Bunting and Nugget Coombs.

(Previously published in *The Age*, 9 June 1984.)

THE GORTON EXPERIMENT

Alan Reid, *The Power Struggle*
(Shakespeare Head Press, 1969)

Alan Reid, *The Gorton Experiment*
(Shakespeare Head Press, 1971)

I first met the author of these two books in Canberra when I was working there on the official war history in 1948. He approached me one day in King's Hall, claiming acquaintanceship and asking how my section of the history, *The Government and the People 1939–1945*, was 'going'. He said he might be able to help me as he was 'in the know' on many things. After a pleasant enough conversation I had to ask someone who he was, and did so with a feeling that my memory was beginning to fail as, although he claimed a very old and close acquaintanceship with me, I could not remember ever having seen him before. In subsequent months I still saw him occasionally. For a brief period I was impressed. If I mentioned a certain episode on which I had been doing research, he was likely to say 'Funny you should mention that. You've come to the right man. I suppose I know more about that than anyone.' Then I might mention what I had written. He would shake his head in an amused way. 'Do you want the real low-down? That was what a lot of people thought but I've got the low-down. You know John Curtin used to tell me things he never even told his Cabinet. Now what really happened was this ...' Then he would give me the true inside story.

As I say, at first I was impressed. Invariably I found on checking that his version was not only unsupported by any evidence but was contradicted or rendered impossible by the evidence. My colleague Sid Butlin, doing the Economic volumes, told me he had a similar experience. He invented the phrase 'The Low-Down School of History' to describe the stories that Reid told—characterised by the fact that it was history that no-one had written down and that it was always low.

Reid, as a journalist, always specialised on this 'inside' story—something always much more involved and tortuous than normal human behaviour and usually founded on what someone had told him. For a time in politics he

concentrated on the inner history of the Labor Party and enraged that party by his 'disclosures' of how this or that secret transaction had been done. During the years that I was Minister I had very little to do with him and he had very little to do with me. So far as I was concerned, he was never 'in the know' and I did not give to his 'disclosures' about the Labor Party the credence that some of my colleagues did. I could not endorse the description of him on the dustjacket of the first of these two books as 'Australia's most brilliant political journalist', unless 'brilliant' means something like unreliable, glittering, meretricious and second-hand. He is a competent though somewhat venal purveyor of political gossip and has no intellectual qualification to be the historian of anything. His kindest epitaph would be: 'Here still lies Alan Reid, in the sure and certain faith that he now has the low-down.'

He begins by dealing with the events immediately following Harold Holt's disappearance in the surf at Cheviot Beach, and the need to find a new Prime Minister. I would be prepared to believe that Erwin, Scott, Fraser and Gotto were quick to see a chance for Senator Gorton (as he then was) to become leader of the Liberal Party, but I know nothing of it at first hand. There are members of the Party who believe that these people and Gorton had started working to displace the incumbent before Holt died.

Gorton's career in the Ministry at that stage, however, was not as calm as the author suggests. Gorton had trouble in the Navy and had to be shifted out of it by Menzies. He was opposing his own advisers on matters of technical judgment and Menzies did not like that. In Education he had got into difficulties both with his permanent head, Ennor, and with the universities. It is an exaggeration to say that his performance in Education impressed the party. Indeed, the whole of the first chapter of *The Power Struggle* seems to me to give a false setting for the book in so far as it represents Erwin and his colleagues as masterminding the Gorton campaign. Erwin, Scott and Gotto were the minions of Gorton, not his promoters. They were tools, not planners. They did not have to persuade Gorton to stand. He had longstanding ambitions of his own. Fraser was in a different case. He was after his own ministerial advancement and his association, if any, with Erwin and Scott would have been temporary and opportunistic. He was more intelligent and of a higher grade than they were.

It is characteristic of Reid that when he looks at the principal protagonists in the drama—Menzies (the founder of the Liberal Party),

Casey (the Governor-General), McEwen (the incoming Country Party 'caretaker' Prime Minister), McMahon (the Treasurer and an aspirant for the leadership)—he over-dramatises the feelings of characters to one another. He says that Casey disliked McEwen; Menzies and Casey had once been 'bitter enemies'; McEwen had a 'feud' with McMahon. This is not real life but picturesque journalism. The relationships of people in politics are not as stark as Reid makes them and they are made up of many strands of advantage and disadvantage.

Errors in matters of detail soon appear. On the day after Holt's disappearance Casey and McEwen did not 'spend the evening together'. McEwen had left before 9.30 pm when the Governor-General telephoned me. Most of the second chapter does not even purport to be a direct account of what McEwen did and what Casey did but is an argument about what Reid assumes that they did. I see no signs that Reid obtained from either McEwen or Casey any account of the conversations that passed between them and yet they alone would know what was said. I do not believe that either McEwen or Casey told Reid what happened between them. Each of them told me what had passed. Accepting their first-hand story, I believe that both Casey and McEwen acted with meticulous correctness and not along the lines that Reid assumes and argues.

The same criticism applies to Reid's account of the background to McEwen's declaration that he was not prepared to work with McMahon, a declaration which in effect put an end to McMahon's leadership aspirations—for the time being at least. This version reveals even more clearly the errors that result if a writer tries to recount all events in their relationship to one single issue.

The dominant issue of the period covered was not tariff policy, nor was the dominant contest one between McEwen and McMahon or between Trade and Treasury; and, as a consequence of his error on this, Reid goes astray by bending every incident to fit into a story of this issue and in interpreting every action in terms of this contest. To prepare a good scenario for his power struggle he has either ignored or been totally unaware of the more important trends and influences that were to be seen in this period. He magnifies unduly the role of Bert Kelly and makes Kelly less of a crack and more of a significant figure than he was in fact.

One minor point is Reid's description of the attitudes of Liberal Ministers on tariff policy. He could not know anything of this unless a

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Minister told him what took place in Cabinet. His versions, wherever he got them, are mostly incorrect. As an example, he is unaware of the fact that I was very active in argument about tariff policy and took a line usually contrary to that of the Department of Trade and closer to that of the Treasury economists. This recital of the attributes of Ministers is typical of Reid's assumption that he knows the inside story. He is so wrong that it is plain that he does not know but makes assumptions based on either intuition or hearsay.

To my mind, and with my knowledge of many things that Reid apparently does not know, the early part of the book presents a partial account favouring McMahan and quite unfair to McEwen. In the experience of most senior members of Cabinet, it was not McMahan who was on the defensive against a wicked attack by McEwen, but rather McEwen who was being subjected to constant misrepresentation, disclosures to the press of departmental information, and attempts to rally various lobbies of opinion against him. Reid has become a partisan. There are indications that the source of his gossip was McMahan himself and these indications turn into certainty in the version the author gives between pages 71 and 76 of a meeting in the Prime Minister's room.

This version purports to recount what was said. It credits McMahan with having given some detailed and specific answers to charges made against him and with having explained in a favourable light his own activities. I was present at the meeting throughout and very few, indeed scarcely any, of these things recorded by Reid were said by McMahan at the meeting at all. Any third party who was present could not have reported them because he would not have heard them. The man most likely to know what was in McMahan's mind was McMahan himself. The only person present who would have a reason for representing that McMahan made those long and detailed accounts of his conduct, when in fact he did not make them, was McMahan himself. I can find no reason why any other informant would have dressed up McMahan's unspoken justification of himself in such terms as those that Reid sets down. Hence I deduce that Reid has depended chiefly on McMahan and perhaps solely on McMahan for his account of what was said. Having done so, he falls far below any reasonable and normal standard of historical judgment in adding his account of this meeting to the evidence for his general case.

The passage 'McMahon sought a reconciliation with McEwen' is a false introduction to this part of the narrative. The situation as I saw it was that McMahon was pursuing to the limits his own campaign and it was McEwen, driven to an unusual state of desperation, who sought some sort of confrontation in the presence of other Ministers. The calling of the meeting did not take place in the way that Reid recounts. McEwen asked Holt for Liberal Ministers to be present (or so Holt said to me when explaining his invitation to me to attend) because McEwen had become so annoyed at the misrepresentation of his attitude by McMahon to other Liberals and to the press and lobbyists that he would only say what he wanted to say in front of some of McMahon's colleagues in the Liberal Party. For the same reason he had refused to speak with McMahon alone or with only McMahon and the Prime Minister. I was told by Holt that he (Holt) also thought this was the only way to handle the matter. Those present, in order of seniority, were Holt, McEwen, McMahon, Hasluck, Fairhall, Anthony, Sinclair and Gorton. As the Senate was sitting and some debating crisis had arisen, Gorton was present for only a part of the time and had to go out at least twice for long periods.

McEwen opened, speaking calmly and firmly, and recited with some detail, supported by the production of documents, his charges and the supporting evidence. This did not amount to any recital of different views held by Trade and Treasury on economic matters but rather that McMahon personally was giving away information that assisted the critics outside Parliament of the tariff policies, on which Cabinet had made decisions; that McMahon was providing opportunities for other persons to assist the critics of the Government's policies; and that when he did not get his own way in Cabinet, he did not loyally accept Cabinet responsibility but continued to work against Cabinet decisions. With rather more warmth McEwen then produced evidence of the repeated denigration of himself and the continued spreading of rumours about controversy in Cabinet in a form unfavourable to himself. He quoted the newsheets and gossip columns and other reports damaging to the government with which all of us were already familiar and stated as his own suspicion that McMahon had a hand in all of it. Then he referred particularly to Maxwell Newton, the journalist. He quoted documentary proof which he had gathered to show that Newton had accepted substantial sums to act as the paid agent of the Japanese Government to defeat the tariff policies of the Australian Government. He

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was paid to serve the interests of a foreign government against the interests and policies of the government of his own country. This man was in such close association with the Treasurer, McMahon, that it could only be called a guilty association. He quoted in some detail his evidence of that close association.

McMahon protested rather feebly and briefly. McEwen said coldly that he had expected McMahon to deny these statements but all he could say was that he did not believe McMahon's denials because McMahon was an habitual liar and everyone in the room knew him to be a liar. There was no demur from anyone at this strong statement. McMahon then tried to answer by talking about the need for the parties to work together and deploring that the Country Party Leader should have spoken in a way so damaging to the coalition. McMahon also made some profession of his own loyalty. This diverted McEwen into some talk about attacks on the Country Party. After this had proceeded for some time, I intervened, being the first of other speakers to do so. I said the situation was not one of Liberal Party or Country Party but of the government. The campaign of rumour, innuendo and misrepresentation with which the activities of Newton had been associated was directed not only against McEwen. The Prime Minister (Holt) had suffered even more from it. Fairhall and I myself had been the victims of misrepresentation and false reports. Holt came in with a similar observation and said this was a problem for the whole government.

The statement made by Reid on page 76 ascribing to Holt the view that McMahon had 'dealt satisfactorily' with the question is wholly false. Far from saying that, Holt left the whole matter in the air in a way that made it plain that no-one in the room believed McMahon and Holt directed McMahon not to have any further association with Newton and did so in terms that showed he believed there had been an undesirable association.

I stayed behind with Holt after the others left. He asked me if I thought the meeting would do any good. I said that it would make McEwen feel a bit better and it was probably good that the matter had been aired but I did not think that McMahon's nature or his conduct would change much. He would only be rather more cautious. Holt then spoke feelingly about the disloyalty of McMahon to him. He said it was all very well for McEwen to complain of McMahon but he (Holt) had just as much cause. In characteristic buoyancy he then laughed a bit over the oddity of McEwen's

complaint a little earlier that Fitchett (*Sydney Morning Herald*) was being 'fed stuff' by McMahon, for at one time, so Holt said, Fitchett was being 'fed stuff' by McEwen. In the same conversation Holt made the complaint that Bob Menzies used to grizzle about McMahon but he did nothing about him. 'If only Bob had done something about it we all would have been saved a lot of trouble.'

None of the Ministers present believed McMahon's denials of McEwen's charges. Talking with them afterwards (excepting Gorton, who was only there part of the time), I found common support for McEwen in his complaint of disloyal and unethical conduct by McMahon.

I know nothing of the truth or falsity of the subsequent narrative by Reid about opinion in the Press Gallery. Reid himself seems to have been exceptionally ignorant or innocent in his recital of the activities of Jetro. He is wholly false in saying that Holt was not impressed with the case made against Newton. Holt took journalists in a very cynical way.

Let me return to Reid's sentence 'McMahon sought a reconciliation with McEwen'. In his protestations at the meeting in the Prime Minister's room, one of the first things McMahon said: 'I offered to talk this over with you in your room and you refused.' McEwen answered: 'And you also know why I refused. From experience I know you to be a liar. I said I would only discuss this with you in the presence of witnesses and I asked the Prime Minister to call this gathering so that I could talk to you in the presence of witnesses. The Prime Minister has agreed with my request. I would not talk with you alone because I would not trust you not to spread a false account of what passed between us.' McMahon does seem to have spread a false report. I certainly did not talk to Reid. Holt had passed beyond talking when Reid was gathering material. I doubt whether Fairhall would have talked. Gorton was not equipped to give an account of the meeting as he was absent most of the time. I doubt whether McEwen, Sinclair and Anthony would have given the incorrect version that Reid prints to the disadvantage of McEwen for they had no possible motive for doing so. McMahon seems to have spread reports in his usual way.

Chapter 6 is an outstanding example of the methods employed in the Reid type of journalism. This method is to construct the historical narrative so as to lead to the dramatic denouement or, as a journalist of this type might say, the 'punch line'. Hence he represents the Cabinet discussions on the

effects of the devaluation of the pound as another episode in the McMahon–McEwen struggle. The chapter as a whole is spotted with little bits of fact but as a whole is untrue. It is a fact that Anthony was somewhat limited in his approach to the problem, partly because his portfolio of Primary Industry made it his responsibility to be concerned about the marketing of primary products and partly because he was not so broadly educated as Sinclair nor so deeply experienced as McEwen, and tended to see most issues for the way they affected either his department or his political supporters. He was certainly passionately concerned about the effect of devaluation on primary products. I think, too, that he may have been over-anxious during the period of McEwen's absence overseas, to acquit himself well as Deputy Leader of the Country Party.

All senior Ministers, including McEwen, when he returned, saw the problem in the round and on the various occasions when it came up in Cabinet it was discussed in the round, with all recognising that the decision that was to be made about the Australian currency had to be based on a wide range of interests, including international interests. Indeed in my own participation in the discussion I gained considerable support for the view that the biggest risks to Australia were that a first move to devalue might be followed by a second and that the support of the United States was vital to the world economy and hence we should be considerate of the United States representations to us (firm ones) and that we should not act in a way that impaired the good effects for Britain of the devaluation. These and similar 'international' reasons and the advice of the Reserve Bank, Treasury and Trade on the effects on the Australian economy likely to follow from the respective decisions open to us brought Cabinet to full agreement not to devalue and it was accepted that, as the effects of this decision, reached for national reasons, would fall more heavily on some primary industries than on other sections of the community, there should be some direct financial assistance to them. The unresolved question was how to calculate the amount and identify the recipients of this assistance.

I think McEwen acted unwisely and spoke with needless exaggeration in making a public speech about the claims of these industries and I myself read this as being, in part, something to satisfy his own supporters that he was still fighting for their interests—there were those who criticised him for joining in the decision not to devalue—and in part an opening move to have

the calculation made as liberally as possible. Reid greatly exaggerates Holt's concern. What was chiefly happening was the persistent activity of McMahon in trying to stir up a row over it. The meeting Reid mentions of a few senior Ministers in Holt's room had as its objective the quietening of McMahon and the stopping of his activities just as much as seeking counsel about what to do with McEwen's statement. I find in this part of the book one reasonably accurate account of my own views: 'Hasluck ... advised tackling the issue in a low key'. I got Ministers to look for the first time at the actual text of McEwen's statement, which McMahon had been describing as a 'challenge' which must be met. I pointed out that McEwen, who was quite an experienced politician, had left a good deal of room for explaining away his words. Most Ministers agreed with me that the first step was a plain talk between Holt and McEwen.

In the event, they had the talk, and the whole incident was soon over. Holt told me afterwards that there had been no difficulty or feeling between them. I thought at the time that the press had overstressed the incident and I think now that Reid has given too much attention to it. The account of a Cabinet discussion at page 97 is not true in its suggestions that some sort of 'crisis' was continuing. It was an even-tempered and businesslike discussion on the most equitable and most practical way of putting into effect a decision we had already taken to assist industries directly affected by the British devaluation. Hence the ill-based conclusion that 'McMahon was in process of winning the policy battle' seems to me to be irrelevant and, if indeed relevant, to be ill-founded. But it is the one statement that Reid has to be able to make at the end of the chapter in order to get his journalistic 'punch line'. 'Holt would not be seen alive again. McEwen was back on top, again in a position to divert attention from an attack to the attacker' etc, etc. If there were nothing else, to make rubbish of Reid's claim to have written 'the full story', this episode does.

Reid refers to a meeting of senior Liberal Ministers. This took place by common agreement among Ministers when some of us happened to be talking together at Parliament House, in the Cabinet ante-room. We already knew by then that McEwen had told the Governor-General that he would not serve under McMahon. The sorts of things we discussed were, besides the date of the party meeting, the period before a new Prime Minister would succeed to McEwen, particularly if a senator were elected leader; the timing of the

by-election; and a few minor problems I had as Minister for External Affairs with such matters as overseas visitors. The only question affecting McMahon was whether or not he would contest the leadership (already knowing that he could not win) and, if not, whether he would allow the deputy leadership to go to the vote too. McMahon gave no indication of his views but already it was plain to us that the only question affecting him was whether he allowed a vacancy to occur in the deputy leadership.

Reid also refers to a letter from the Governor-General to the Prime Minister, prior to the latter's death. I knew nothing about such a letter from Casey to Holt. I do know from Casey's own lips that on two separate occasions he had a personal talk with McMahon, the first one at Admiralty House in Sydney and the second at Yarralumla. He had done so mainly because of what he had been told outside government circles. Casey had a habit of asking various persons to call on him—leaders of industry, scientists, departmental permanent heads, editors, bankers—for a talk about the state of the nation. It was the way he had of keeping himself informed about the state of thinking and the progress of affairs in the nation at large. In the course of these talks he had gathered certain impressions of McMahon's activities and so he talked to him. What he talked to him about was the simple question of loyalty.

As Casey told it to me, he said in effect that McMahon could be a very useful member of the government, but he had to learn the simple necessity of loyalty to his Prime Minister and his colleagues. My impression was that Casey had *not* talked about the Coalition, party politics or anything except the good of McMahon himself. And my impression, too, was that the origin of Casey's action, perhaps an unwise one in hindsight, was just the reaction of a person of probity, some standards of correct conduct, and a 'gentleman' in the clubland sense of the term, at the discovery of disloyalty. Being an older and a more senior man he dressed McMahon down. When I asked Casey whether he thought this did any good—my intended meaning being to hint that Casey's action might be misunderstood—Casey said, indicating the settee in his study, 'No! The little fellow just sat there and told me one barefaced lie after another on things that he must have known I knew the truth.' So far as I was aware, Casey did not try to do anything more than an evangelising job on McMahon. I have no knowledge of any conversations or other communications he may have had with Holt or McEwen and I never repeated to anyone the conversation he had with me.

The remaining chapters are a horrifying, dimly lit tracking down of cockroaches and mice running here and creeping there. It is the sort of sport that Reid enjoys. I do not even know whether there is a world of the kind he describes. It is unknown to me. I knew, or rather strongly suspected, that Reid loved chasing these creatures, but I am more worried to think that some of his informants may have revealed the twists of their minds in joining in the gossip with him. Subsequently, I heard that the book was written at the direction of Sir Frank Packer and to accord with directions Packer had given about its purpose, namely to denigrate McEwen and rehabilitate McMahon. What we know for certain is that in the final ballot in the party room Gorton defeated Hasluck, and the nation had a new Prime Minister. This brings me to Reid's second book—*The Gorton Experiment*.

In this book there are fewer places than in *The Power Struggle* where I have personal and first-hand knowledge. I will make some comments on the few instances in which I know myself, as a principal party, what took place. I will also make occasional comments on some of the other allegations which, from my own knowledge, seem to be doubtful.

Reid refers to the influence of the 'Mushroom Club'. I think this is exaggerated. I never had anything to do with this so-called 'club' but, from what I heard about it, there was none of the factional activity that Reid ascribes to it. It was one of the typical short-lived eating and drinking groups, mostly of ex-Air Force men, that are found from time to time in a spirit of fun in Parliament.

Likewise, references to the 'cocktail cabinet' are greatly exaggerated. At page 41 the reference to senior Ministers who 'stayed aloof, uneasily conscious of the growth of an unofficial group that had access to the Prime Minister's ear' seems to me to be silly. Throughout this period I was working out my own relationship with the new Prime Minister as his Minister for External Affairs and adjusting myself to his methods of working and believe I did so with a good measure of success. I certainly was not staying 'aloof' and I certainly was not conscious of any impediment from another group or of any influence of the kind Reid alleges. There were problems of learning Gorton's way of working but I believe that, within about two months, I was receiving a very high measure of confidence from him. He was certainly excluding McMahon, whom he did not trust, and this may be the source of Reid's exaggerated references to a 'cocktail cabinet' that had an access to the Prime Minister that he did not have.

Similarly, I think various references to Hewitt are unfair, as is the specific allusion to his occupying a room next to the Prime Minister. Previous heads of the Prime Minister's Department such as Allen Brown and John Bunting had both used the same room before Hewitt. I think Hewitt did an admirable job in making the system of government work in spite of the untidy working procedures of an unsystematic Prime Minister.

The author also makes much of problems associated with Gorton's visit to the United States. This certainly gave Plimsoll, Waller and myself some anxiety but we worked hard at it. The Prime Minister's confidants, Tony Eggleton and Ainslie Gotto, were a perpetual nuisance but the visit did not go off as badly as represented. I agree that Gorton's Asian visit went badly. I do not confirm the statements made by Reid, probably based on what the journalists in the Prime Minister's party saw, but our heads of mission did inform me of some more embarrassing incidents and a general lack of success. Reid is quite wrong about the suggestion for a non-aggression pact with Indonesia. Before he left Australia Gorton had some vague ideas about such a pact. I was able to inform him of some of the difficulties in the way and warn him of the probability of Indonesian rejection. We substituted a cultural relations agreement, which gave satisfaction to Indonesians. All this was cleared up before he left Australia. Reid misrepresents the position when he says that Gorton 'persisted' in suggesting a non-aggression pact and that Indonesia rejected it. As in the United States, Gotto and Eggleton were a nuisance on the Asian tour and an impediment to Australian interests.

In regard to Asia, Reid attributes to me the phrase 'forward defence'. This is a phrase I abominate and never used. Time and time again I argued in Cabinet against the use of this 'cliche' and for a more comprehensively considered view of the nature of the Australian national interest that would be served by the presence of any Australian forces in Asia. 'Forward defence' was a military term that seemed to me to be quite out of date and inapplicable to the sort of things we were talking about in Cabinet. Both under Holt and under Gorton himself, one of the few members in Cabinet from whom I could expect some understanding of my views on foreign policy and defence was Gorton. It was mainly because of this experience that, after Holt's death, I told Gorton of my view that he and I were the only two who had the intellectual capacity to fill the Prime Ministership. This sounds terribly arrogant but I still think it was true, even if immodest.

'The Hasluck-Fairhall defence and foreign affairs line'—there was no such thing. I do not remember any occasion in Cabinet when McMahon gave any backing to my views on foreign policy and defence. My memory of this period is that it was not Gorton but McMahon who was perpetually trying to prevent or block my Cabinet submissions. By a strange twist, of which he may be unconscious, McMahon, in gossip to Reid, may have ascribed to Gorton motives for my removal from Cabinet which he (McMahon) himself mused in secret. This is pure speculation on my part some years after the event. If I were seen by some to be a potential rival to Gorton, by the same token I was no less dangerous to any ambitions that McMahon might have had for the Prime Ministership. I was an alternative for the party to prefer to either of them.

What Gorton knew and what McMahon did not know—for I confided in Gorton but not in McMahon—was that I would probably not contest my seat at the 1969 election. What Gorton knew and McMahon, judging others by himself, may not have known was that I was giving loyal support to Gorton and he was depending on me more and more as External Affairs Minister and confiding in me more and more. As I recall the events of 1968, I suffered more attempts by McMahon to oppose and nullify my ministerial work and my standing in Cabinet than I did from Gorton. I strongly suspect McMahon as having been the source of Reid's stories about me. I felt at the time that McMahon was doing a great deal to denigrate me and to harm my reputation and his only motive that I can see was to destroy me as a possible rival.

It is so obvious that Reid's second book was aimed at damaging Mr Gorton and promoting the interests of Mr McMahon. It is also obvious that the author chose to accept any story that fitted in with this purpose and to reject any story to the contrary. There is also strong presumptive evidence that the source of some of the stories was probably Mr McMahon himself. The main body of the book was written when Mr Gorton was Prime Minister, so it was intended to help destroy him as Prime Minister. Then the last 60 pages were added after he had resigned as Prime Minister and they seem to me to be intended, not to round off the story of his term in office, but to destroy him as a possible continuing rival to Mr McMahon.

THE WHITLAM GOVERNMENT

E.G. Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government 1972–1975*
(Viking, 1985)

To quote an election-winning slogan, 'it's time' this book was published. For ten years Mr Whitlam and his supporters maintained their rage over the events of November 1975, and the consequence is that their hero has been given the crown of martyrdom and robbed of any claim to achievement. Just as Charles I is popularly known as the king who was beheaded, so Whitlam faces the risk of being remembered only as the Prime Minister who was sacked. That would be unfair to him and bad history. Any chapter of Australian political history that recorded only his dismissal and gave no account of what was done during his term in office would be ludicrously deficient.

In this review I shall look at his book as a contribution to Australian political history and try to write as a political historian. Although the limits set by propriety and discretion are perhaps not as narrow today as they were at the time when I left public office, they still impose some restraints. During his term as Prime Minister my official and personal relationship with Mr Whitlam was always both correct and pleasurable. The exchanges between us were frank and marked by mutual respect and, as far as I am aware, were kept in confidence by both of us. That confidentiality will not be breached now.

This book is a welcome contribution to Australian political history. As well as being overdue, it deserves a cordial greeting because hitherto Australian Prime Ministers have done little to record history or reflect on political events. In the United Kingdom in recent years books have been the customary by-product of a term at Number Ten. Churchill had six volumes. Attlee had one. Macmillan had six. Harold Wilson has already reached three. Douglas-Home wrote one graceful, modest and engaging book reflecting on his part in public affairs. Heath has written books on sailing, music, travel and Christmas carols, with a few political memories incidental to these more abiding interests. In Australia, in 80-odd years, the Prime Ministership has yielded only some unpublished ramblings from Deakin, and books from Menzies and Whitlam, leaving on one side the memoirs of two short-term

Prime Ministers, Page and Fadden. Whatever criticisms one may make of Whitlam's book, one must praise his purpose and his industry in producing it. He is the first to give so full an account of political life as Prime Minister. Menzies wrote one volume containing a penetrating study of central power in the Australian Commonwealth and two books of memoirs in which some enlightening information mingled with some entertaining reminiscences, but he never offered a ball-by-ball description of 30 years in high office. Whitlam now gives a long account of his four years. No criticism by the political historians should lessen their appreciation of that fact.

This book is being promoted, however, to reach a wider public audience. Any reviewer of any book needs to ask: Who are the readers to whom the author submits his work? I can think of three possibilities—the devout worshipper at the Whitlam shrine, the general reader who is looking for a good story, and the voter with a serious interest in politics. All three are likely to put this book to the first test: Is it readable? The answer would be that it is good in parts but calls for a dedicated effort to read it from cover to cover. It is certainly not one of those books that you 'cannot put down'. Someone who had passed a rapid-reading test and whose concentration never flagged might get through it in a total of 20 hours of reading. Less determined and slower readers will probably have to give up 30 hours of their life, and I doubt whether they will all last the distance. This prediction is not based only on the length of the book but on the organisation of the material. The author takes topic after topic—foreign affairs, economics, health, education, law, Aborigines and so on for 20 chapters and each chapter is monotonously the same. Whitlam was wise; his opponents and sometimes his colleagues were stupid, and all the good things were done by him. A readable story needs some setting of the scene, some description of the problem to be solved, and a narrative in which the hero's purpose, the difficulties he encountered, the setbacks he overcame and even the mistakes he made are all revealed. Monotonously the hero of this book is never wrong. Here and there he pauses to mop his brow and tell an anecdote or make a quip, but I doubt whether this book is what any borrower from the local municipal library would recommend to a friend as 'a good read'. Even the most fervent loyalist finds a never-ending victory parade a bit tedious, especially when the commanding officer who marches, chin lifted, sword drawn, at the head of each contingent always turns out to be the same person.

THE WHITLAM GOVERNMENT

There still remains what might be termed the specialist reader—the person who makes a study of Australian political history and is prepared to sweat a little to gain information. Some such students may master the book, read it from beginning to end, find some statements they endorse and just as many they wish to contradict, some claims they find convincing and some they would question. Even the author's former colleagues and closest followers may wish to qualify or enlarge on his account of certain events. His political opponents will join issue on every chapter. In other words the book is a significant and helpful contribution to the study of the Whitlam years, but not by any means the definitive account.

My own personal reaction during a rather laborious reading of the book was not one of outright contradiction, or even a serious questioning of his claims, but rather that, on most occasions on which he wrote of any event of which I had personal knowledge, his account was incomplete. He was either ignorant or indifferent to much that had been done before he came on the scene, and he disregarded many of the factors that impinged on the situation which he faced.

The book is uneven. There are some signs that he may have worked on draft narratives prepared by assistants. This is a recognised practice by authors who are busy as well as distinguished. Churchill did it in writing *The Second World War*. When this method is adopted, drafts are reshaped, embellished and in some places rewritten by the author and, whatever the process of composition may have been, the author has both a legitimate pride and final responsibility for what is published under his name. In Whitlam's book the literary style and the manner of reciting the facts sometimes reveal contrasts. Whole pages, sometimes a whole chapter, are vintage Whitlam. One can visualise the gestures of the speechmaker. Other pages bear the mark of the diligent assistant. One such instance is the chapter on economics which, except at the beginning and end, has few embellishments and is a singularly straightforward recital. Whether or not the political historian has doubts about the rightness of the Whitlam government's management of the economy, here is a reasonably clear account of what it did and why it did it.

The same cannot be said of all chapters. In other chapters, as one reads the flowing periods, one can almost see the lifted head, the glare of triumph as Whitlam demolishes another adversary. He writes history in the same style as the writing of speeches. For example, he does not pay attention to

chronology when his interest is to produce one illustration after another to support his theme, or to quote one instance after another to prove his case. The political historian cannot help gasping now and again at his effrontery while at the same time admiring his eloquence. The technique of the speechmaker is also apparent in the conviction with which he ascribes opinions or statements to other persons without pausing to identify or verify the source of his information. These defects are clearly apparent in his chapter on international affairs—a chapter that perhaps more than any other reveals the author's political limitations. That chapter is also entertaining for the reader but questionable for the student by the way in which the repetition of passages from his own speeches is used as evidence of the truth of the statements he is now making. The needs of the eloquent speechmaker may also excuse some flightiness in bringing into juxtaposition something said or done at one time with something said or done at another time and using this device not to find historical cause and effect but to indulge the vanity of having thought of something before someone else did. There is 'a certain grandeur' in his display. Some of the flowing passages turned my thoughts to a comparison with Macaulay, but then my second thoughts were to recall what Melbourne said: 'I wish I was as cocksure of anything as Tom Macaulay is of everything'.

What did the Whitlam government do? What did it fail to do? What more could it have done if its term had not been interrupted? A short answer to the first question might be that it tackled more subjects than its predecessor and acted more quickly. One fact stated in the final chapter is that 'a record number of Bills were introduced and a record number of Bills became law during the Whitlam Government' in spite of a record number of rejections by the Senate. It enacted 507 pieces of legislation, using Parliament 'as the chief instrument of social reform'. There was also a steady flow of Executive Council decisions. I recall that during the first two years of the Whitlam government, when I was still in office, there seemed to be something new almost every week. This liveliness in government was welcome and certainly not disturbing to me, but I also recall my growing puzzlement as the months passed and more and more pieces of bright colour were added to the patchwork quilt. It was difficult for an onlooker to find the design.

My personal view is that one of the basic problems facing any government is to get its priorities right. Some tasks are more important than others, some expenditures more necessary than others, some decisions more

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urgent than others, some steps more practicable than others. Mr Whitlam had the grander view of doing everything at once. Priorities cannot be fixed wisely without a clear and exact assessment of the situation in which a government has to act, and such assessments need to be continuously revised. But that takes time and dull routine, and Mr Whitlam thinks of himself as a sprinter not a plodder.

This book reveals a great deal about what Whitlam is and how he thinks and works. I suggest that he shows himself as a leader who had more interest in bright ideas than in shaping political philosophy, in scoring points off his adversary rather than in understanding him. The biggest gap is that he does not seem to have made an analysis with care and in depth either of the broad needs of the nation or of any political situation he was facing. This comes close to repeating the familiar criticism of him that he was a political opportunist. I do not use that term to mean that he was an opportunist in the sense that he was looking to make a career for himself, but I suggest that he was a political opportunist in his ready response to bright ideas or the hope of a quick success rather than a deeper search for an understanding of the state of the nation and its basic needs. One exception to this generalisation might be found in the chapter on law, where his aims in respect of law reform, constitutional relationships within the federation and the attempt to bring legal and constitutional changes do seem to rest on a doctrine deeply considered and firmly held.

I would also suggest that the political historian will use this book to explore the implication that the Whitlam government stood for reform and its opponents stood for the settled order. This study will impinge on the second and third questions posed above. What did it fail to do? What more would it have done if its term had not been ended abruptly? The Prime Minister's claim to stand in history as a great reformer is largely a claim to what might have been but, on the evidence of what was accomplished, it would seem to me that the major contrast between the Whitlam government and its predecessor and successor was not simply in what was done but rather in the way it was done. Most of the effective decisions made by the Whitlam government were in keeping with trends towards change that are discernible before and after his term in office. He was an expediter and innovator of changes rather than someone who challenged an old faith or established a new one, a political activator rather than a creative political thinker.

Perhaps the final testing of where Whitlam stands in history as a reformer will have to be made outside the confines of the present book, in an examination of what happened to the Labor Party under Whitlam. The simple heroic story is that he led them to electoral victory in 1972 after they had been a long time in the political wilderness. The euphoria of that glorious moment was enhanced by another electoral triumph in 1974. The wind set fair. Then in 1975, following the dismissal, electoral defeat put Labor out of office for another eight years. I would suggest again that the judgment of the electorate in 1975 was not a rejection of the objectives of the Whitlam government nor a considered judgment on a constitutional issue, but rather a vote against the style of the Whitlam government. Nothing about that election seems to me to support a thesis of reactionary rejection of the great reformer. I would also express doubt whether any Whitlam ideas about reform, persisting among Labor candidates, helped the party to regain the confidence of a majority in 1983. If any influence persisted it was still in style rather than in ideas of great reforms. But that is something to be explored by another historian in an entirely separate book about the influence of Mr Whitlam on the political ideas of the Australian Labor Party.

My final comment on this book on the Whitlam government is that the Labor Party appears in it to be less significant than its leader, and the corollary to that is another doubt—whether in the long run the leader will prove to be significant to the party.

But, when all is said, it is a good book, timely, solid and revealing. It repays study and stimulates much questioning.

(Previously published with the title 'Gough Whitlam in Office'
in *Overland*, No 102, 1986.)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Peter Henderson, *Privilege and Pleasure*
(Methuen Haynes, 1986)

Most of this book is a personal account of life in the Australian foreign service from 1951 to 1985 and the experiences at home and abroad of an agreeable man who progressed steadily but not spectacularly from diplomatic cadet to head of mission. Then, after an exacting and educational experience in administrative routine at Canberra as a Deputy Secretary, he was appointed Secretary of the Department. It was a solid and worthy progression which brought a well-grounded professional to the head of the Department.

Henderson had married the daughter of Sir Robert Menzies but, although that gave him personal benefits and happiness, it was probably no help in his career. The Liberals were wary of being accused of favouritism and the Laborites were doubtful about anyone with that connection. Incidentally, his book gives a one-sentence glimpse of the British Ambassador in Paris, Soames, who had married one of Churchill's daughters, and welcomed young Henderson to 'the son-in-law's club'. There is no evidence in Henderson's case that joining the club was a path to preferment and his career provides no reason why the diplomatic prayer book should place 'Prime Minister's daughter' alongside 'deceased wife's sister' in the prohibited degrees of marriage.

The author's non-provocative account of life in the service is disturbed by few references to the situations or the issues with which Australian diplomats were concerned in those years. Probably he thought it inappropriate to discuss foreign policy at this stage in a book of this kind. Occasional passages may be of passing interest to the historian of Australian diplomacy. (For example, at pages 111–116 there is an account of certain incidents in the Philippines affecting the development of immigration policy during the Whitlam years.) For the most part Henderson tells about places and people and leaves policy alone. His choice of title, *Privilege and Pleasure*, and the epigraph on the flyleaf from W.S. Gilbert suggest that he writes lightly of a career spent in running on little errands for the Ministers of State.

Towards the end of the book, however, two more serious topics are raised. One concerns parliamentary privilege and the other the future of the public service in the structure of the Australian government.

In the Senate, in 1983 and 1984, Senator Primmer made a number of statements and asked many questions on notice about the Department of Foreign Affairs. Either directly or indirectly or by implication he gave currency to allegations of misconduct and criminal activities by various officers including Henderson. Among other things he alleged that



Paul Hasluck as Minister for Territories meeting local village leaders in Papua New Guinea, 1962
Reproduced courtesy of Nicholas Hasluck

Henderson, as Secretary of the Department, had covered up the misdeeds of others. No evidence was produced to substantiate the various allegations. Because he spoke in Parliament, the senator had immunity from any legal process for defamation. The persons against whom the allegations were made, being public servants, had limited opportunities of rebutting or even making statements of their own about the unsupported allegations against them. The attack on Henderson was sustained by the senator for two-and-a-half years and the allegations against him were repeated and enlarged throughout that period. Some other senators expressed disapproval of

Senator Primmer's actions and two successive Ministers for Foreign Affairs deplored the attacks and said in effect that they were groundless, but Parliament did nothing to restrain the senator. A gross abuse of parliamentary privilege was unchecked.

Parliamentary privilege developed and should be maintained so that Members of Parliament may not be bullied and so that they can do their work as representatives of the people without fear or favour. It was not developed so that a Member of Parliament can bully others. It does not entitle Members to give unbridled expression to their own likes and dislikes or to peddle scandals of their own devising or, as may be the case in this instance, to repeat the sneaking tittle-tattle of some disgruntled informant. Parliamentary privilege becomes a matter for public concern when it is misused in this way and that concern does not arise simply from the ordinary person's sense of fair play but also from serious concern about the functioning of Parliament.

It might be expected that in Australia any misuse of parliamentary privilege by a Member would be restrained by each Member's own sense of fair and proper debate. If that fails, as it seems to have failed in this case, one would hope that misuse would be checked by the Presiding Officers and that the Parliament would strengthen the authority of the Chair by making appropriate revisions of the Standing Orders to check abuse of privilege. The essence of the matter is not that parliamentary privilege should be curtailed but that Parliament should accept the duty of preventing its misuse. Parliament is the custodian of its privilege and has a responsibility not only to protect the freedom of speech of Members from any external threat but to check any course of action by a Member prejudicial to the privilege that all Members enjoy.

In the case under notice, as the charges were made against public servants, a further question arises from the doctrine that Ministers are answerable to Parliament for the administration of their departments. Any application of this doctrine also arouses argument about the nature of the accountability of public servants and the relationship between the public service and the Parliament. While the public servant can be brought to account for misdemeanours or misconduct by the processes of the law courts or by disciplinary measures under the *Public Service Act* and Regulations, the theory used to be that, so far as Parliament was concerned, the public servant

was anonymous and it was the Minister and not a public servant who was called to account by Parliament. Parliament was not the place to put individual public servants on trial.

That theory, as formulated in the nineteenth century, was that the control of all branches of the administration by Parliament was achieved by making all holders of permanent office subordinate to some Minister. The Minister was responsible to Parliament. The corollary was that, so far as Parliament was concerned, public servants were anonymous. In extreme cases, Ministers resigned but officials stayed where they were. A consequential development was the internal disciplinary measures of the public service and the inspectorial systems to ensure that there was no malfeasance by public servants.

That theory has been eroded. Just as the development of the theory in the nineteenth century had to overcome the pretension to power by public servants themselves and by the boards to which some areas of administration were confided, so in recent years the strength of the theory has been weakened by the claim to notice and to the exercise of more power by public servants. The relationship between Parliament and the public service is one of the many unresolved issues in contemporary public administration in Australia. The inability to clarify that relationship also seems to be due in part to the lack of capacity of Ministers or their own uncertainties about their role in administration. Ministers should never hide behind their public servants or 'pass the buck' to their departments. If Ministers plead that they did not know what the public servants were doing or that they were misled by their public servants, they are confessing to their own unfitness for office. If Ministers do not make due investigation of any allegations against their departments and report satisfactorily on the action taken, they are the ones whom Members of Parliament should attack. Do things really work that way nowadays?

Further discussion of this dilemma would go far beyond the immediate question of parliamentary privilege. It can be suggested, however, that in the exercise of privilege the Member of Parliament should still have the common decency not to misuse the privilege and that Parliament should restrain the Member if that sense of common decency fails. The Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Privilege which reported in October 1984 put the matter clearly:

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We believe that this privilege carries with it heavy responsibilities, and that Parliament and its Members must demonstrate an awareness of these responsibilities and a care for the reputation and rights of others when making claims or allegations that can significantly affect the rights and reputations of members of the public ... In the end, the real answer to the problem of misuse of the privilege lies in the care and responsibility of Members.

The committee then stressed the point that each House has 'the undoubted capacity, where appropriate, to investigate and take any necessary action to deal with abuses such as the wilful and reckless misuse of privilege by a Member'.

The unfortunate experience of Henderson in being maligned under privilege for over two years has at least led to an outbreak of piety among parliamentarians and eventually an unusually pious Minister gave Henderson and a colleague a public certificate of probity saying: 'They have always conducted themselves in an upright and proper way; they have discharged their responsibilities to the government of the day faithfully and well.' That may be small comfort to those who were attacked, for, as Henderson remarks, public statements and the results of inquiries into the matter did not receive the same degree of coverage as the wide and damaging publicity of the senator's attack under privilege.

The second serious topic—the future of the public service—is only touched briefly in a chapter on Henderson's involuntary retirement. What he writes about his own experience might be regarded as a case history for reference in any study of the relationship between a Minister and a senior career officer or in a study of the selection of the permanent head of a department. Since his retirement Henderson has spoken and written more broadly and deeply about the politicisation of the public service and that post-retirement discussion of the topic will command closer attention than the account of his personal experience in this book.

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ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIANS

C.D. Rowley, *A Matter of Justice*
(Australian National University Press, 1978)

H.C. Coombs, *Kulinma: Listening to Aboriginal Australians*
(Australian National University Press, 1978)

Both these books are valuable contributions to the continuing argument about policy and administration affecting Aborigines. They also deserve serious attention because of the standing of their authors. C.D. Rowley was director of the Aborigines research project of the Academy of Social Sciences and made the most comprehensive study yet undertaken in Australia of contact between whites and Aborigines. The highly practical intelligence of H.C. Coombs has been applied eminently for nearly 40 years to several phases of policy formation and public administration in Australia and he played an influential part in shaping comment and policy on Aborigines during the 1970s.

Nevertheless, reading these volumes, one is reminded of the cynical remark that theological studies do not lead to fuller understanding of what God is but only add to one's knowledge of the arguments that men have used about God. In a similar sense these books are not Aboriginal studies but an account of arguments and controversies and different points of view among a white majority about what should happen or might happen to a coloured minority in Australia. The subtitle of *Kulinma* is *Listening to Aboriginal Australians*. That may be true for the author but the reader feels he is listening to Dr Coombs and learns more about the growth of his interest and ideas on this subject than about the mind of the Aborigines.

Both authors say with confidence what the views of the Aborigines are and perhaps, because of their close and assiduous attention to the subject, it is excusable that they should make some claim to know better than most of us what the Aborigines want. Below this is a basic thesis that the Aborigines should choose their own future and that their choice can be effective. Every now and again, however, a reader feels some doubts. One early cause of doubt arises when it seems that the Aborigines always seem to want what

each of the authors thinks could be best for them to want. The account given of the thoughts and feelings of Aborigines usually reinforces the arguments of these two debaters. The reader begins to wonder whether they reached a conclusion by deduction from accumulated evidence of Aboriginal opinion or are reporting those expressions of opinion by Aborigines which accord with their own presentation of a case.

A more serious doubt persists when, after reading what this or that Aboriginal man told them, one reflects on the qualifications of any Aboriginal 'spokesman' or witness to tell truly the mind of an inarticulate crowd. Mass observation is a tricky business even in a community of which the reporter is himself a member. In social history the 'voice of the people' often appears to have been the subsequent response by the crowd to the persuasions of a single reformer or even the outcome of a promoted campaign. Agitation—and the word is not used here in any condemnatory sense—is a stirring-up of the many by the few and the few are not necessarily part of the many. Moreover, organised movements for change or for assertion of sectional claims tend to produce their own functionaries. Even in the long-established field of trade unionism in Australia one sometimes doubts whether the declaration of the militant president of a union always expresses exactly the wishes and views of the main body of workers. Similarly the movements in recent years for the advancement of Aborigines and the provision of special benefits for them have produced the Aboriginal functionary—a person who might be termed without offence a 'professional Aboriginal'. Some of those 'professionals' who are vocal today previously had little knowledge of and limited association with those whom they now call 'my people' and had voiced none of those views on land rights, sacred sites and other topics which they now assert with confidence.

These doubts about pronouncements, either by their own 'spokesmen' or by white debaters, on what the Aborigines themselves want are also conditioned by the diversity one finds in the group of people now identified as Aborigines. Thirty or 40 years ago there was a tendency to differentiate between tribal Aborigines, partly de-tribalised Aborigines and those part-Aboriginal people who were living in various degrees of contiguity to and absorption into the general Australian community and to assume that what suited one group might not suit another. Nowadays the fully tribal desert nomad and the person with tertiary education and only one Aboriginal

grandparent are both regarded as 'Aborigines' having a common voice and a common future. Policy for Aborigines nowadays covers a population that is large and diverse whereas it used to cover a smaller and more narrowly defined population that was nearly homogenous.

Rowley, much more so than Coombs, is aware of the highly significant fact that historical change has taken place and is still taking place among all these people and that the tribal Aborigines in respect of whom policies were shaped 40 years ago are in a vastly different situation and social and personal way of life today than they were then. In 10, 20 or 30 years even greater changes are likely to occur.

Many of these changes have taken place, not as a consequence of policy, but by reason of forces and influences which appear to be at work in all social situations. By and large, using broad and unscientific terms, the observable changes in the last 30 years have made the Aborigines more like Europeans than they used to be in habit, outlook and method.

Leaving aside any question of whether this has come because they chose to change in this way or because they could not resist change, the central question is whether or not this gradual weakening of an old way of life and this move into a new way of life are at the heart of the problem of what is to become of the Aboriginal people in Australia. The Australian situation is not novel. Something similar has happened in many ages in many lands, where minority groups in a community have gradually changed their customs, lost their identity and either disappeared by merging with a majority or accommodated themselves to the larger community. In debating the future of the Aborigines we are not making plans for an unchanging situation or a stable community. Every decade the meaning of 'white' and 'coloured' in Australia is different, and the relationship is being affected by new influences.

In the light of history and current changes we may need to re-examine some of the assumptions which now underlie the policies which found favour in the 1970s, and especially the assumptions about separate development in a multicultural Australia. Can we accept separateness as one of the constants in the social situation both now and in the future?

The two authors appear to have fairly clear ideas about what should be done. Indeed, although 'paternal' is a word usually applied to the policies of half of a century ago, the policies of today are much more definite on what

should be done and what should not be done than they used to be and make less allowance for variation. This is in keeping with current ideas of social engineering in contrast to any idea of letting history happen—a purpose to control and even create the forces of change rather than to accommodate oneself to them in such a way as to minimise injury and injustice to anyone. The social engineers would not admit that the wisdom of political experience is to learn to roll with the punches. Social engineering itself is a concept which may need re-examination.

These general remarks on a changing situation need not detract from the merit of the two books under notice, even though the self-confidence of the authors may have provoked them. The merit of both books is a clear and reasoned exposition of white men's arguments about a major current controversy and some account of recent events in that controversy. Rowley is more comprehensive and more widely informed and has the authority of an acknowledged research worker in this field. Coombs yields much information about the development of his own interest and his own ideas on the subject, and indeed the fact that all except two of his chapters are a reprint of a succession of addresses or papers he prepared when officially concerned with Aboriginal affairs adds to the impression that this is primarily a record of his own growth. Both books make a valuable contribution to the discussion of recent events and to an understanding of arguments bearing on current controversies. They are frankly partisan but all the more readable and useful from that fact. They are not Aboriginal studies in the strict sense of that term, nor are they historical studies even though they yield some interesting material for further historical work.

Rowley recounts and discusses a number of situations relevant to his theme that the Australian institutions for law and order fail at present to ensure justice for Aborigines. He also relates his observations to a wider experience in other parts of the world. He recounts those events which lead to his satisfying conclusion that 'at last Aboriginal man has begun to defend himself by acting like modern political man'. He adds that it is a challenge to the Aboriginal to surmount these hindrances and, 'for the benefit of the rest of us, as well as his own, retain those essential qualities which are Aboriginal'.

This reads rather like a theory that a group can enjoy the benefits and protection of a society without accepting full conformity to it. That is a proposition which also calls for re-examination. The phrase 'multicultural

society' is being used rather loosely today both in this and in other contexts. Does it mean little more than that Jews or Moslems can worship as they please and the Scots can wear kilts at Hallowe'en without ceasing to be responsible members of the Australian community; or does it mean that groups can live in one community while belonging to a separate social system, pressing separate claims to rights and observing separate laws? Or is it just a fashionable label about whose meaning many of those who use it are not clear?

(Previously published in *Aboriginal History*,
Vol 4, No 2, 1980.)

REPUBLICAN PIE

George Winterton, *Monarchy to Republic: Australian Republican Government* (Oxford University Press, 1986)

In the first sentence of his book Professor Winterton says: 'This work commences from the premise that an Australian republic is inevitable.' As he is one of the Australian academics who always uses words exactly, he means by 'inevitable' that it cannot be avoided. An Australian republic is sure to happen. Hence he spares little time in discussing other prospects. He does not complicate the story by discussing when and how the republic will come and the political controversies that may surround the change.

It is assumed that the pathway to a republic will be constitutional. The change will be made in Australia by established procedures for amendment of the Constitution and not by the suspension of the Constitution as the result of a political coup or by the fiat of a Committee of Safety or some such body set up to replace Parliament in an emergency. It will not be a matter of presenting the nation with a new Constitution but a simple case of making a few alterations to the old one. That hope for calm constitutional evolution rests of course on an expectation that reformers will be moderate, the electorate will be both enlightened and attentive, and all parties to any argument will be constitutionalists. Professor Winterton does not state this as another premise but proceeds to discuss the coming republic as though he took it for granted.

He puts the issue simply—whether Australia should remain a constitutional monarchy under the British Crown or whether we should become a republic. In referring to 'the British Crown' he uses the words in the preamble to the *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act* 1900, but later in the book he recognises that the present title of the constitutional monarch is 'Queen of Australia'. The question then arises whether the simple issue is complicated by the difficulty some persons may have in accepting the fact that the Queen of Australia is the same person as the Queen of the United Kingdom and Her other realms and territories.

The book proceeds methodically to serve its avowed aim of discussing the options available should Australia consider departing from the present

allegiance to the monarchy'. In the course of this discussion the issue tends to be simplified into an examination of the best way of having a head of state, how to choose one and what role he (or she) should have in the government of Australia. The author argues at one point: 'Hence the advent of a republic would not require the alteration of any part of the Australian constitutional system except the identity of the formal head of state'. At the same time he shows that there is considerable variety in the options both for choosing and appointing the head of state of a republic and for defining the presidential powers and functions.

In Chapter 3, discussing 'The Crown in Australian Government', the point is made that, while at present the Queen of Australia is the 'formal head' of all Australian governments, the 'de facto Australian heads of state' are the Governor-General and State Governors, who represent the Queen of Australia. Arguing that the institution of a republic would transform the executive branch of government but need not significantly alter the current relationship between government and legislature, the book deals closely with the ways in which vice-regal powers have been used in the past or might be used in relations between viceroy and Ministers. It is familiar ground.

In this limited view of what the constitutional monarchy is and what an Australian republic might be, the change would mean chiefly that the present 'de facto heads of state' would no longer represent the Queen; they would no longer be appointed by the Queen on the recommendation of the Prime Minister and there would possibly be some more precise description of their role and their relationship with the other elements in the executive. Perhaps, having reached this stage of his work, Professor Winterton may have realised that he had over-simplified both the issue and the process of change. The advocates of a republic might want more than this. Is a simple result like this a strong enough reason for making a change? What is gained by changing the identity of the formal head of state? Can the traditionalists throw into the other side of the scale the weight of advantages that might be lost in such a change?

In an early throw-away sentence Winterton observes that 'just as preferences for and against a republic may depend upon the type of republic proposed, so the type of republic favoured will be influenced by the reasons for having a republic in the first place'. To give him due credit, his book canvasses widely the arguments advanced by various debaters for having a

republic and the many types of republican government that could be considered. As a constitutional lawyer he has made a good exposition. It is a service to serious-minded Australian readers to have a lawyer's guidance on what there is to choose and the reasons for making a choice. No study group should be without this book.

Is that the whole of the matter? Only a few practising politicians are constitutional lawyers and a very small proportion of voters form themselves into study groups. The influences felt by most politicians and electors in deciding whether or not to have a republic and what type of republic is best will be the rude stuff of politics. Instinct, prejudice, self-interest, faction, old loyalties, ancient discomforts, future ambitions and much else will be stirred in with the well-reasoned arguments and impeccable theories of the professor of law. Out of this fascinating mess—not out of the learned argument—a decision may emerge. Is it politically realistic to leave the question as a class exercise for students of constitutional law?

As a digression at this point, may I make some personal remarks about my own response to one part of the debate about republicanism that has been conducted in print. So many of those who write about a republic seem to me to use juvenile arguments. They write like youngsters asking why 'a mother country' should have any part of their life now that they are grown-up and independent; why a 'foreign Queen' should be the head of state of a strong and independent nation; they talk of the need to end 'the colonial cringe' and so on. It is the sort of talk one hears from 19-year-olds. The reason why they keep on asserting that they are grown-up is that deep down they are not yet sure of themselves. Australians today have no need to make that sort of assertion if we are fully assured of our nationhood and maturity. These are the arguments of immature minds still in the shadows of the past.

It is all of a piece with other expressions of Australian nationalism. The cheerleaders of Australian nationhood resemble the koala, which only lives on a diet of gum leaves. As an adult Australian must I face the blackmail of 'cultural cringe' because I am more deeply moved by English cathedral music at Ely than by the sound of a didgeridoo played at Kings Cross? Must I expect to be labelled 'expatriate' if I venture the opinion that some Australian writers lack learning and Australian publishers sometimes give currency to rubbish? Surely adult Australians can find good in other lands and criticise a few shortcomings in their own without being sneered at by

adolescent patriots. I suggest that the outworn phrase 'the colonial cringe' belongs to the pimply years of our national development and is a poor text in today's debate about the future government of Australia.

This digression and expression of a personal prejudice were made to clear the air a little before turning from constitutional law to practical politics. I submit that the only debate for Australians today concerns the best arrangements that can be made for the government of Australia now and in the foreseeable future. An intelligent discussion on that issue has no place for small boys cocking a snook at the past or old boys shouting out the battle cry of freedom. The achievement of Australian identity and independence does not oblige us to become republicans.

I submit further that the debate about the best arrangements for the government of Australia will necessarily be a political debate. Winterton has said that something is sure to happen. He has written learnedly of the various shapes that 'something' may take. He has given less attention to how and when it will happen (for these are questions of politics as well as law), but he recognises that the answers to 'how' and 'when' will be influenced by the answer to what the 'something' is and the answer to that question will be shaped by the answers to 'how' and 'when'.

Being a constitutional lawyer and not a politician the author seems to me to give scant attention to the tangle of political arguments that lie behind this observation. He sets out the options clearly. What he has written should help both Members of Parliament and the voters to consider with fuller comprehension whether they want a republic and what kind of republic they would like. It is a useful service, but it is only on the fringe of contention.

In practice, the path to constitutional change is different from holding a public opinion poll on some broad question such as 'Do you want a republic?' Any proposal for change would have to be presented in more precise terms. The steps in constitutional alteration are the passing of a Bill by Parliament and asking the electors in a referendum to say 'Yes' or 'No' to a precise question whether they approve of the proposed law. I suggest that there will be two stages of intense political contention. The first stage will be in the shaping of the question put to the electorate. The second stage will be in the electoral campaign when the politicians and constitutionalists, the centralists and the State righters, the monarchists and the republicans, the traditionalists and the iconoclasts and many others start hammering the voters.

The founders of the Commonwealth of Australia recognised that an essential condition in a constitutional democracy is that the form of government is acceptable to a majority of the people. In a dictatorship a form of government may be imposed and enforced but in a democracy it has to be broadly acceptable or it will not be observed. To be broadly acceptable it has to be understood—perhaps not understood in every paragraph of the fine print but understood in its purpose and its method in general terms. In the beginning the Constitution was accepted after reference to a popular vote and now it can only be amended when acceptance to change is given at a referendum. As a politician I would predict that, if and when the question of ditching the monarchy were put to the people, opinions would run high and would cut across customary party allegiance. One of the decisions to be faced by any party leader with a nose for political advantage would be whether anything was likely to be gained in putting up this question for argument and whether any support might be lost. Is it a question to be given priority over matters which the electorate may consider have an urgent and direct bearing on their welfare and standard of living? One of the decisions to be made by any national statesman would be whether he or she should risk dividing the Australian people on a question so closely linked with patriotism. Only a precipitate and determinedly republican Prime Minister would be likely to force the issue, and he will probably split his party if he does so. I question Winterton's use of the word 'inevitable' in his first sentence. It seems to me that for politicians the issue will be regarded as eminently avoidable.

One political problem the author recognises is posed by two questions asked in Chapter 6. Must the Commonwealth and all States become republics simultaneously? Need all States adopt the same form of republican government? He deals learnedly with the legal arguments and the views held by eminent authority but, in this area perhaps more than any other, any contention about a change from a monarchy to a republic is likely to be a matter of politics rather than of law. Recent changes seem likely to encourage the persistence of the pretension that the States have 'sovereignty' of their own distinct from the 'sovereignty' of Australia and have a link with the Crown parallel to the link between Commonwealth and Crown. To force the issue of discarding the monarchy will be divisive. At this stage in our national history surely no Australian politician would see advantage to the nation or even to his or her own party in such divisions.

Let us return to Winterton's argument that all that is needed is an alteration in the identity of the 'formal' head of state. It seems to me that Winterton undervalues the function of a head of state as a symbol of unity, a focus of loyalty and the expression of national identity. His use of the word 'ceremonial' in respect of certain duties of a head of state shows an awareness of some of the outward and visible signs of this function but a limited appreciation of the inward grace which awakens and expresses a sense of unity, loyalty and national identity.

Still he has meticulously set about the task of constitutional exposition and has written clearly within the limits of his theme. It reads as easily as a cookery book so long as you do not think too critically about where you can get the ingredients, what sort of stove is within reach, who will be the foolhardy chef and whether lashings of republican pie provide the best diet for our young nation. No-one could have made a better list of recipes.

In the interests of historical accuracy, however, let me conclude by offering a footnote from my first-hand knowledge to a minor question arising from the disappearance of Prime Minister Holt in 1967. Apparently relying on a gossip-mongering journalist for a 'detailed account of these events', the author suggests that the Governor-General, Casey, sought to exert his influence on a choice of a successor. Winterton submits that the 'coalition parties would be well advised ... to reach an agreement or understanding as to what would happen on the unexpected death in office of a Prime Minister or Premier'. My experience as a senior Minister at the time of Holt's death was that Casey sought my view initially on only two points. One was whether he should assume that Holt was dead and the second was whether he should commission the Deputy Prime Minister, McEwen. I answered 'Yes' to both questions. My impression from the conversation was that Casey had already reached an opinion that this was the proper course but wanted to check with senior Liberals whether there might be other views. My further impression was that, at that stage, he had talked only with the Chief Justice (Sir Garfield Barwick) and myself and had consulted us only on the question of presumption of death and sending for the Deputy Prime Minister. Subsequently, after Casey had seen McEwen, I heard from McEwen what he proposed to do and what he had said to the Governor-General in accepting the commission. The other matters referred to by Winterton were canvassed at a later stage after McEwen had been asked to form a

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government. I have a clear and strong view that the Governor-General has no role to play in matters that have to be decided by the two parties in a coalition government. He can only send for the Deputy Prime Minister and await his advice. I believe that this is what happened. If Casey had done otherwise and had sent for anyone other than the Deputy Prime Minister, there would have been another 'Hopetoun blunder'.

(Previously published in *Quadrant*, No 245, June 1988.)

TANGLED IN THE HARNESS

George Winterton, *Parliament, the Executive and the Governor-General: A Constitutional Analysis*
(Melbourne University Press, 1983)

My own impression as a constant reader and one-time practitioner in the field of government is that, during the past two or three decades in Australia, legal and constitutional studies have attracted keener minds and have attained higher levels of scholarship than the study of political institutions and political practice. So much that passes for the study of politics in Australia today can scarcely be called a rigorous academic discipline whereas the lawyers are painstakingly and scrupulously professional. As a person not trained in the law I have a blind veneration for their learning. I admire their contribution to the great debate about the future of parliamentary government in Australia and I envy them the polished apparatus they use in their scholarly exercises. What they profess and do is so different from the dabbling and gobbling that goes on around that strange academic gallimaufry called political science. It is perhaps one of the unavoidable consequences of having a written constitution that we foster more and better lawyers than political economists (if one may use that discarded term) and that we give more scholarly attention to functions and powers in our discussion of politics than to purposes, principles and practices.

At the same time I also regret sometimes that so much of the argument on constitutional law in Australia seems to be concerned with the past rather than with the future. So many arguments about the place of the States in the Australian Commonwealth seem to be founded on a thesis about a separate sovereignty and independent existence for the States. Surely that thesis started to dissolve like morning mist with the dawn of the Australian Commonwealth 80 years ago. Very little of the current contention about the sovereignty of the States, State rights, centralism and the 'new federalism' and very few of the arrangements made for convenience between the State Premiers and the alien power which they call 'Canberra' can raise any hope that eventually we will move out of the past to consider the

question of the better government of Australia in the future—the government of the Australia of the year 2000, and not the Australia of 1900. Arguments about texts—interpreting the letter of the law—are of their nature conservative, and even those who hoist a banner of constitutional reform when they walk to the rostrum often stride into the past instead of the future. Most of the amendments they propose are to patch an old garment or let in a gusset to make it more comfortable for their own expanding waistlines. Seldom do we see a hope of cutting new cloth.

Preoccupation with the past appears too in the way in which the text of the Australian Constitution is still interpreted mainly as an instrument by which federation was achieved. We tend to examine the text as the terms of a contract under which the 'rights' of the contracting parties are maintained rather than as the beginning of a growth towards nationhood or as the commencement of an evolution which would ensure that, when nationhood was achieved, the arrangements best suited to the government of a nation could be made. The constitutional lawyers, and especially the host of eager amateurs who join the professionals whenever State rights are in question, mostly sound like flat-earth fundamentalists in their arguments about the Constitution.

Another consequence of concentrating attention on the text of the law of the Constitution is that we tend to undervalue the importance of the unwritten conventions or, to put it in less academic terms, the need for commonsense and the political wisdom of trying to be fair and reasonable as well as maintaining every claim to rights and exercising to the last scrap every claim to powers. In the past 80 years the Australian political scene reveals greater sophistication in legal argument than it shows a growth towards wisdom in pursuit of political objectives, of skill in political management, or of a civilised urbanity in political behaviour. Even our legal wiseacres often wear the clothes of political adolescents. Often when I hear doubts expressed about what the doubters call 'the Westminster system' of government, it seems to me that the truth they are confessing is that they doubt whether Australians have the urbanity, the reasonableness or the respect for the other fellow's view that are necessary for the spirit of compromise in which the system works.

It is perhaps unfair to use Winterton's book as a peg on which to hang these remarks, for the book commends itself as the best kind of legal exegesis.

BOOK 2

It has the outstanding merit of wide-ranging study and clear writing on one of the central constitutional problems and one of the highly contentious areas of current political argument. The author examines federal executive power. What can the Commonwealth Government do without legislative authorisation? What is the constitutional relationship between the Queen and the Governor-General, the Governor-General and the Ministry, the Parliament and the Executive? He examines the extent to which the courts can review governmental action based upon constitutionally conferred power and concludes with a review of the role of the Governor-General's reserve powers. That is the way he himself describes the task he set himself and a reviewer's first comment must be that he has done the task faithfully and well.



Sir Paul Hasluck, Governor-General of Australia, inspecting mounted police guard, c.1970
From the National Library of Australia Pictorial collection

The book is arranged in two parts. The first 160 pages are a straightforward exposition of the theme, discussion of the problems raised and the interpretations given or the views held about them by various authorities, with the author's own analysis of the points at issue. The second part, called an appendix, is as long as the first. It contains the text of the Constitution, an extensive bibliography, a table of cases and, most

importantly, 132 pages of 'References'—a label which covers both the sources from which the main exposition was drawn and occasionally a gloss or a commentary on the principal text. While it would be possible for a general student to read the principal text cursorily—for, as remarked above, Winterton writes clearly—the more specialised reader will have to keep fingers in two places in the book and will find it necessary to pause as often as five to ten times per page to consult the 'references'. Winterton has done a thorough job.

It can be left to the law journals and the lawyers to assess the work as a legal treatise and a person not trained in the law should not presume to undertake that critical duty. After praising Winterton for the clarity of his exposition and the even temper of his book, however, one can venture to make a few of the points that occur to the layman. On a sound historical foundation Winterton commences by discussing the way in which the makers of the Constitution were influenced by the American interpretation of the doctrine of separation of powers. Although in the course of his exposition he recognises that there cannot be a strict separation of legislative and executive powers and sees the possible futility of trying to maintain the doctrine strictly, one may still ask whether he has fully appreciated how much the changes in political outlook and political practice have lessened the relevance of that doctrine to any description of what actually happens in present-day government in Australia.

The doctrine of separation of powers was linked with the idea that checks and balances were needed to protect the freedom of the subject and lessen imperious action or arrogance in the government. Today, that end is more likely to be served through improved political practice than by more precise interpretations of the text of the Constitution. The responsibility of the ministry and the answerability of the ministry to Parliament are more important than the separation of powers as a condition for the smooth functioning of government and for restraint on arrogance in the ministry. The good sense of democracy is that, in the final outcome, the major check against oppressive action is that those who exercise power will have high regard for principles of liberty, that they will be responsive to the pressures of public opinion and that the community itself will be so sensitive and clear-minded on such questions and sufficiently active and free in the exercise of their democratic role as an electorate that those who have power will not

abuse the use of it. The maintenance of democratic principles in the community is a more important measure for the protection of freedom than the most carefully devised and the most narrowly restrictive amendments to the text of those sections of the Constitution that deal with the separation of the powers of legislature and executive.

Another point to consider in a discussion of the relationship between the executive and the legislature is that, unlike the American system, an Australian government cannot exist unless it has a majority in the House of Representatives. Consequently any question whether the executive can act or would try to act without legislative authority is not simply a question of constitutional law but also one of political management and any question whether the executive can continue to control the passage of legislation probably has more to do with party discipline than theories or texts on the separation of powers. If this argument is accepted, the remaining check on the executive would appear to depend on the composition and the powers of the Senate.

It is surprising to find constitutional lawyers who generally base their arguments on the separation of powers becoming partisans on such questions as whether the Senate should be able to block a money Bill and to find them devising possible amendments to limit this power. Winterton (at page 149) even discusses the possibility that a newly elected government might 'cushion' itself against future action by the Senate by obtaining supply for three years in a single Appropriation Bill at the commencement of its term in office. They seem to give scant attention to the political reality that the use of this power or even the possibility that it may be used is one of the few restraints on arrogant or precipitate action of the part of the executive.

Winterton's arguments on these points seem to me to illustrate the way in which political events of 1975 have obscured with seasonal clouds the debate on constitutional reform. The dismissal of the Whitlam government in 1975 is a dangerous ground for discussion by someone who once held office as Governor-General. Nevertheless I will venture onto that area after making plain that I do not offer any comment about who was right or who was wrong. Nor do I form any judgment on other matters still in controversy. My first comment is that one of the unfortunate results of that episode is that the question of what powers the Governor-General has or should have and the question whether the Senate should be able to block supply have become the centre of most of the recent discussion about constitutional reform and often the discussion even

among lawyers has been coloured by the views of the debaters whether the outcome of what was done in 1975 was a good thing or a bad thing.

The second comment is that, as I saw the events, the faults in our system of government appeared, not in the crisis that had its immediate outcome in the dismissal of the Prime Minister, but firstly in the apparent inadequacy of communication and consultation (and perhaps lack of confidence in each other) in the relationship between Governor-General and Prime Minister, and secondly in the apparent failure to use the arts of political management and of political adjustability in the situation between the executive and Parliament. It is not for me to say who was at fault. I simply make the observation that in the parliamentary situation there was an obligation both on the ministry (especially the Prime Minister) and on the opponents of the government in the Senate to try to settle the matter in Parliament by parliamentary means. The conventions and the necessities of parliamentary government in a democracy require from both sides a good deal more than stubborn confrontation. In the situation between the Governor-General and the Prime Minister, it seems to me that the real breakdown was that they were not talking enough to each other. Again I do not pretend to know who was at fault.

Where I join issue with Winterton and others is on the question whether amendment of the Constitution is the only way or the principal way to repair whatever damage was done in 1975 or, as the argument more frequently runs by those who did not like the outcome, to make it impossible for such things to happen again. I suggest that if there had been more talking and a higher measure of confidence between Governor-General and Prime Minister it is probable that no crisis would have arisen. The role of the Crown (and hence the Governor-General) to be consulted, to encourage and to warn can only be fulfilled if they talk to each other in terms which reflect that they have respect for each other. The clearest way to improvement is not by changing the constitutional role of either office but by establishing more strongly a convention that the Prime Minister makes regular calls on the Governor-General as a matter of governmental routine.

The essence of a political judgment on the events of 1975 is whether it was either necessary or wise to use the reserve powers. The fault in the smooth working of the Australian Constitution did not come with the use of a power of dismissal but with an apparent breakdown in consultation

between Governor-General and Prime Minister. Such consultation is both one of the conventions and one of the essential conditions for the smooth working of our system of government. When lawyers write about amendment of these powers the implication is that they always envisage a crisis of some kind. The practical wisdom of politics in a constitutional democracy is that crises should be avoided. The history of Australian politics is rich in examples of the folly of those political figures who thought they were settling something or other 'by having a showdown'. The good sense of our system of government is not in tests of who has the power but in consultation and compromise.

In this connection, too, the lawyers should not overlook the fact that the Governor-General is not only part of an executive authorised by legislation to perform certain executive functions but is also one of the three constituent parts of Parliament and takes the final act to complete any piece of legislation. The office of Governor-General as a constituent part of both the legislature and the executive is protected by the Constitution. As a speculative digression, it would be interesting to consider the possibilities if the Governor-General were presented with a piece of legislation transferring some or any of the executive functions of the Governor-General to another authority. Could such a transfer be proposed without a constitutional amendment requiring a referendum? In political practice, leaving all such speculations aside, the Governor-General is the arbiter (or conciliator) in any crisis between executive and legislature. He has responsibilities to both.

As I have written elsewhere, it is competent for a Governor-General when a Prime Minister seeks the dissolution of one or both Houses of Parliament to satisfy himself that the situation is one that cannot be resolved in Parliament and can only be resolved by the electorate and to ask for a written submission from his Prime Minister dealing precisely with the parliamentary situation and the grounds on which a dissolution is sought. In practice, the corrective of any precipitate or improper advice by a Prime Minister is not really that there may be an issue about powers but that the Prime Minister can be required to justify his advice in terms that can stand up to strict historical scrutiny. Conventionally any such exchange of communications between Minister and Governor-General should be tabled in Parliament and I suggest that it is important that this convention be maintained. The ultimate political judgment on a Prime Minister is made by

the electorate and I fancy that even a self-willed Prime Minister would also hope that he will deserve well of his biographer.

In another place in his book (page 155) Winterton argues that 'since unconstitutional or illegal ministerial behaviour can be brought before the courts, as well as Parliament and ultimately the electorate, the reserve powers are not *necessary* to protect the country from it, and therefore ... they should not exist'. This legalistic view also undervalues the convention of discussion between Governor-General and Prime Minister. So far as the courts are concerned it seems to a layman that 'behaviour' may not always be a justiciable matter but it is certainly a matter which the Governor-General can discuss with a Prime Minister. The courts would have to await the presentation of a case to them and presumably that case would be to test the legality not of an intention or a proposal but of an executive action that has been completed. Similarly both Parliament and the electorate have to await the opportunity to restrain or correct the executive. The role of a Governor-General comes at an earlier stage. In practice the customary situations do not require him to issue immediate prohibitions or to make dismissals or dissolve Parliament or to pronounce on questions of constitutionality. The consultation, advice and warning precede any use of reserve powers and, speaking solely from my own experience, this consultation would include a reminder or a question whether the Prime Minister had considered the possible testing of constitutionality of his action in Parliament, the electorate and the courts. 'Reserve powers', if one may give a double meaning to their description, are powers to be held in reserve and not used in the front line except in extreme and unpredictable situations. An incident once in a lifetime does not make a record of normal behaviour or provide enough evidence to support a case that the powers should be withdrawn.

The conclusion that can fairly be drawn from my observations is that in my view the experience of 1975 points more clearly to the need for development and observance of sound conventions and for political wisdom than it does to the need for amendments to the text of the Constitution. The book now under notice deals only with one part of the Constitution. It would seem to me that if constitutional amendment is to be attempted, there are other areas that are more urgently in need of attention, particularly the relations between the Commonwealth and the States. The major problems and the impediments to reform do not lie in the areas of recent controversy but in the

more fundamental questions of federation and nationhood. In this area, too, not being a lawyer, I am inclined to place more emphasis on wisdom and restraint in the practice of politics, and on the observance of the conventions of political behaviour than on the text of the Constitution. Unfortunately it is an area in which, the professionals being joined by the amateurs, the cloudiness of constitutional argument merges in the smoke of battle and it is difficult to see whether any of the debaters has a clear idea of where we are going.

As this part of the constitutional debate still carries many echoes of colonialism I take an analogy from the far-off days of early settlement. When a horse-drawn team seemed to fall down on the job and could not shift the load, improvements could sometimes be made by adjusting the harness, but it was seldom enough to tighten or loosen a few buckles or straps. The wagon will still get nowhere if each of the seven horses is pulling in its own chosen direction and if the teamsters know far less about handling the horses than they know about pushing a barrow through gaps in a statute—even if the barrows are heavily laden with a precious cargo of paper. When debaters become tangled in the harness they seem to forget about the horses and the purpose of the journey. Good government of the Australian nation today requires so much more than the amendment of the text of the Constitution. Fiddling with the harness—and the process of constitutional amendment seems to mean that we can only fiddle—may be of occasional use but will not get the wagon on the move unless the team can work as a team and teamsters can master their job.

Our central problems today seem to me to arise from the fact that a federation of six colonies has developed to independent nationhood. The traditional principles of parliamentary democracy, constitutional monarchy and responsible government do not seem to me to be in conflict with nationhood even though some adjustments may be necessary from time to time. The more serious problems of constitutional reconstruction lie in the question whether federation is the end-all and be-all of government in Australia or but one stage in the evolution to nationhood. Our capacity to grapple with that question is not primarily a matter of learning and skill in constitutional law but the need for that clarity of ideas and that maturity in political wisdom demanded for the fulfilment of nationhood.

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POSTSCRIPT

by

Nicholas Hasluck

The introduction to this book reveals that in going through my father's papers I decided to bring out a collection of occasional pieces written by him in the years before his death, as a key to his thinking in later life and as a companion piece to events documented at greater length in his various autobiographical works. It did not take long to prepare the manuscript. In the meantime, as the weeks went by, it was gradually borne in to me that my father's passing coincided with the end of an era, both for me and in the public domain. Things would never be the same again.

My mother, Alexandra Hasluck, was in a frail condition at Alfred Carson Nursing Home in Claremont. She was becoming weaker, seemingly incapable of grasping the news of her husband's death, although, when I came to her bedside to tell her what had happened, she, without quite taking in my words, clearly sensed that the person speaking to her, a familiar face, was gripped by a strong emotion. She put her hand out to touch my cheek, her dark eyes searching mine with the look of a child who is on the brink of finding, not losing, the gift of speech.

The photographs on the cabinet beside her bed came from a family home which was still equipped with cutlery and crockery and cooking appliances, a refrigerator in working order, shelves laden with books, paintings, ornaments, umbrellas, but a home which was silent now. It would never call back if I stood in the hall and hollered as only a member of a family can.

In the public domain a federal election was taking place. The republican issue, which had been dormant for many years, was suddenly back on the agenda, raised for debate by the Prime Minister himself. It was difficult to foresee where the debate would

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lead. At the time of the election, like many others, I was one of those in the undecided category when it came to considering newly promoted ideas for changing the Constitution—capable of being persuaded to support the republican cause, but not if I were to be immediately denounced whenever I raised a query or sought clarification. Perhaps I was partly influenced by the need for caution espoused by my father in the two pieces in this volume dealing with the constitutional issue: ‘Republican Pie’ and ‘Tangled in the Harness’. In the months that followed as the debate progressed, my views began to change. In thinking about the matter it was helpful to reflect upon the changing nature of Australian society as detailed in this volume of essays, and to ponder the way in which some of the leading figures in the political life of the country—and especially those mentioned in my father’s book reviews—brought their own distinctively Australian qualities to the roles they played.

In this first century of Australia’s life as a nation, the Federal Parliament has been a platform for many political leaders of great integrity, on both sides of the House, and I imagine that many of the same ilk still exist—hard-working, punctilious, determined to keep commitments—but I fear that we are in grave danger of giving insufficient recognition to the qualities I have just mentioned, and thereby ceasing to attract such people into public life. The current and rather cynical assumption seems to be that ‘pollies’ and ‘ex-pollies’ (to use the vernacular of the ABC’s principal television commentator in Canberra) are only in it for themselves, for the money, the limelight, the power and so on. The numbers man is revered, while anyone with a serious point to make is quickly dismissed as a bore. At times, looking at what tends to happen in Australia in the 1990s, one could almost believe that any purposeful endeavour, carried out conscientiously at considerable personal cost, is bound to be greeted by indifference, or reduced to farce, unless it conforms to current political orthodoxy. Long-term considerations rooted in the past are often overlooked.

What do we want? Where are we going? Does anyone know? Are any of our traditions worth preserving? Who do we respect?

It was at this stage, having ruminated about such matters, that I began to think it might be useful to add to the essays, as a postscript, a few extra documents which will not only provide a further glimpse of the era in which my father lived, the habits of an earlier generation, but also draw the narrative to a close in a way which casts some additional light on the topics he addressed. For reasons which appear in the pages that follow, my thoughts were prescient. I had an intriguing trip to make, and more to learn about life and family and other matters. What I thought then, at the end of an era, has a bearing on what I do now. I like to think that this sense of rounding off, but journeying onwards, will be of interest to others. It is against that background that I add to the volume a farewell message for my father, my essay ‘The Garter Box Goes Back to England’ and a final piece concerning my mother.

PAUL HASLUCK— A FAREWELL MESSAGE

(delivered by Nicholas Hasluck at the funeral service for Sir Paul Hasluck held on 20 January 1993)

It was the express wish of my father that no eulogy should be spoken. Perhaps it went against the grain of a former subeditor and historian that errors of fact might be made without him being given a chance to put them right.

In any event, he said to me: 'Towards the end of a long life I feel contrition for what I have done badly and for my failure to do all the good I might have done. I seek no secular tribute for anything I might have done well. I also feel thankfulness to God for the happiness with which I have been blessed on earth in the deep and private enjoyment of the sweet simplicities of life.'

Listening to music was one of his great pleasures. His taste ranged from the works of Palestrina, Bach and the composers of the English cathedral tradition to the American spiritual by James Black which will close today's proceedings.

Had my father been with us today I am sure he would have urged us to go straight to the next hymn without further ado. But as he himself mentioned his enjoyment of 'the sweet simplicities of life', before we move on, I feel it is incumbent upon me to illustrate what he meant. I won't tempt fate by citing facts. I shall rely upon the truths contained in his own words.

His autobiography, *Mucking About* (1977), includes a passage called 'Growing up in the Bush':

After ploughing there was harrowing and seeding and then around to the harvest again. Whatever the operation, my mates and I used to go out when school was over and sit on the gateposts until the day's work was ended and the horses were unhitched. Then we would be lifted on to the back of a horse for the ride home, barebacked and without bridle or reins. The horses knew the way. First to the waterhole. They set off trudging, weary from the day's work, perhaps still feeling the drag of an imaginary plough behind them. As they neared the waterhole the walk quickened. Their heads came up. They waded into the water, sniffed it, ruffled the surface with their lips and began to drink. Their flanks heaved. Through my bare legs I could feel the contentment of the animal. After drinking, they stood awhile, looked around, savoured the distance, swished their tails and

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then slowly heaved themselves around and out of the water and up the bank and set their heads for home. Their walk was now purposeful and steady. It livened up a little and, in sight of the stables, they broke into a fumbling trot. We wobbled about on top of our mounts. Then into the stable and each to his stall and we could clamber down on to the rails and to the earth, giving a last fond pat to the withers.

I would linger awhile in the gloom of the stable just to hear for a little longer the steady munching of their feed, the occasional fluffing through their nostrils and the sound of horses munching again—a lovely sound of peace, contentment, work done and animals safe at home and cared for in their stalls.

Many years later his love of horses brought him enjoyment of a different kind. This passage comes from *A Time for Building* (1976):

I recall the happy personal associations I had and the friendships I formed with my Dutch colleagues ... I found it very refreshing to be working with men who, when business was over, could talk of something else and who, when business was on, could examine a question against a wide background of knowledge and pick up an allusion or understand a phrase with some exactness ... At Canberra the Netherlands Ambassador, Tony Lovink, had become a personal friend mainly because, early in our acquaintance, we started horse-riding together on Sunday mornings. At that time we each had a retired racehorse as a hack and memory still recaptures in vivid detail that long grassy upward slope on the outskirts of Canberra where, on stinging cold mornings, with the wind in their nostrils, we let the horses have their head and galloped laughing side by side for a mad and glorious mile.

That book, *A Time for Building*, describes Sir Paul's work in the administration of Papua and New Guinea. It is interesting to note that vivid sensory perceptions play an important part in the narrative. For example:

The year 1962 seemed to me at the time to be a turning point in the history of Papua and New Guinea. Hard work below ground had been done and progress seemed to quicken.

In this period I had many occasions of encouragement in the opening of hospitals, schools, roads, bridges and other buildings and in little ceremonies arranged to welcome the first fruits of one activity or another ...

[I recall] a visit to a newly opened patrol post at Nomad, high in the mountains of the Southern Highlands ...

The patrol post consisted of an airstrip, which was a bit hard to find among the clouds, and two or three native-material huts perched at the edge of a great declivity. Down below, a river ran invisibly but audibly between intertwined jungle growth. A score or so of the pygmies were watching from a distance when we climbed out of the two-seater. One, a sort of spokesman, came close to us, gave a subdued greeting and fingered my clothing in curiosity ...

As the two young patrol officers and I made our inspection, the men slipped quietly from one obscure place to another and looked at us around the corners of the huts ... They were naked, except for a tough, hard belt of bark around the soft part of the body, protecting liver and spleen from the arrows of enemies. Each man carried a bow as tall as himself and a clutch of arrows. They had not yet consented to lay their weapons down when they came into the patrol post.

The pilot and I had some food and a yarn with the two boys ... They had only been there a few weeks. There had been no incidents. These boys were completing the policy of bringing the whole of the Territory under administrative control. As keenly as ever, I felt the immensity of the task that had been done over the last ten years and was thrilled with the young Australians who had done it. Less than three years later the Nomad people were voting for the House of Assembly.

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These visits were among the most interesting I had during twelve years as Minister. I flew mostly in a two-seater single-engine charter aircraft down the magnificent gorges of the central mountain spine or over the vast waterlogged plains of the Fly and Strickland Rivers, sometimes amid great cloud turrets whose grandeur and majesty, touched with evening light, had an unearthly beauty. In a mosquito-sized aircraft among great mountains of cloud one gains a sense of immensity and self becomes insignificant. This brings its own calm, for one is only a small speck in great space. I had come under the spell that so many lonely travellers have felt in the New Guinea wastelands.

* * *

I had developed a deep affection for the land and its people and had begun to develop some of the characteristics of the 'old hands'. We had worked for this country when few others showed much interest. We had stored up pleasant memories. I had yarned on clear tropical evenings in remote places with those who had taken an earlier part in the exploration of Papua and New Guinea and made first contact with its people. I had talked with the people in their villages.

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I had responded to the grandeur of its mountains and the whispering warmth of the sea on its coast. My sympathy for the indigenous people and hopes for their future had been kindled. In its own subtle way Papua and New Guinea had taken possession of me. Perhaps this showed. Perhaps some of the newcomers and one-week journalists thought I had been deluded into thinking I owned the place, when in fact I was the one who was possessed.

In a passage towards the end of his fine war history, *The Government and the People 1939–1945* (1970), my father also reveals an understanding of what it took for Australia to become a nation:

To the people the war had brought sorrow. It had also brought pride. The consolation of those who mourned lies in the privacy of their minds. When it was expressed in public it would seem to have been the consolation of knowing that a husband, son or brother had acted worthily. He had done his best, had stuck by his mates, had come through the testing time, had given his life for something greater than himself, had defended what was right. No one should reject or mock the well-worn phrases for behind them is the sadness and the pride of a noble people, and each word hides the grief at the loss of what one human being had loved more than anything else on this earth.

That personal grief and pride were shared by many more when the troops marched. Anyone who stood in wartime in an Australian city, immersed in the crowd, and watched the troops go by knew the strong and binding comradeship that a shared grief and pride can bring to men and women. It was not at the moment when the crowd cheered, but at the moment when emotion quietened them and the tears came unbidden while the men who had fought, strong, sun-tanned, tight-jawed and fit, swung past with that loose and confident stride that only Australian soldiers have; and, as rank succeeded rank, thoughts turned to those who had not come back and hearts were deeply moved by the patriotism which brings the dedication of men and women to causes that lift them out of themselves.

It occurs to me that only a poet with a deep love of the land and an understanding of 'the sweet simplicities of life' could have written such passages. So let me now refer to a poem from *Dark Cottage* (1984), a book my father wrote in retirement. The poem is called 'Space Probe':

You went away loudly and have come back
To the small hushed ripples of the sea.

You have explored the surface of the moon
And outer space and gazed on silvery earth
From far away, found stars beyond the stars
And still know nothing more than I have known
On one small hilltop, drowsing at mid-day
Where on a swaying thistle stalk
A winter robin perched,
And the brilliant declaration of its breast
Shone as a revelation of all life.
The emptiness of space
Shrinks to the fulness of this patch.
Here flames the red-breast truth,
From here the living Me,
Lifted in exultation,
Inhabits without vehicle the whole universe
Hearing the singing sound of space illimited
And the small noise of beetles in the grass.

I began by mentioning my father's love of music. I will conclude by reading his 'Footnote to the Last Poem in the Book':

Of recent years, for a number of reasons including the noisiness of suburban life, most of my listening to recorded music has been in the loneliness of a patch of bushland in the hills behind Perth. Listening in the still hush of noon, looking out on gumtrees, blackboys, zamia palms and the mingled green and brown of untouched forest with brilliant patches of blue sky beyond, I realised that this is both a natural and a perfect place to hear Palestrina. The sound belongs to the setting. The setting enhances the sound.

A century or two ago people who thought of such music felt like exiles sad and sick for home. I listen to it feeling that it belongs to my home.

What recorded music has done for sound the printed book has done for words, making them available anywhere and to anyone who can grasp their meaning. The score or the poem may have been formed in another land and at another time but they can now be our own possession and part of our own time. Our inheritance is not nostalgia for Europe but the fulness of a new experience in Australia.

THE GARTER BOX GOES BACK TO ENGLAND

Soon after my father died I unlocked the safe containing his valuables and came across a black rectangular box, slightly larger than a family Bible, marked in gold lettering 'Garter Box'. I opened it. There, at rest on a small blue velvet cushion within the shallow enclosure, lay a gold badge and a brilliant silver star dominated by the red cross of St George. Beneath the velvet cushion was a red and blue sash.

Garter Box! Such an enigmatic description; two simple words, but in combination enriched by mystery. I went back to the safe for guidance. A Deed of Covenant signed by my father on 15 June 1979, shortly after his appointment as a Knight of the Garter, supplied the answer:

I, Paul Meernaa Caedwalla Hasluck, hereby covenant and promise that I will make provision for the restoration by my personal representative on my decease of the complete insignia of the Order of the Garter, including the Garter, the Lesser George, the Star, and the Collar with the George appendant, which I have received on my appointment to be a Knight of the Order.

An accompanying letter revealed that the Knight of the Garter Collar was held at Central Chancery in London.

It had fallen to me to return the insignia to the Queen. Hence the title: 'The Garter Box Goes Back to England'. This is an account of the steps I took to honour the undertaking given by my father at the time of his appointment.

Should I tell such a tale in public? Lawyers know that clients will only talk frankly if they can be certain that what they say is privileged. To be an effective head of state one has to apply the same rule. My father was the soul of discretion, as evidenced by the way in which he dealt confidentially with Ministers of the Crown during his term as Governor-General, and he would probably not be pleased to learn that what passed between his personal representative and the monarch might become common knowledge. On the other hand, as I discovered from copies of his personal correspondence, including a letter to the Prime Minister of Australia at the time of his appointment, he thought of 'The Garter' as one of many subtle links in the bond

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between two nations. I see this as the justification for providing an account of how a particular link was forged and finally severed.

A few years ago, in the course of an address to the Friends of St George's Chapel, my father said that Australians should avoid the risk of becoming so involved in their own nationalism that they forget they are a part of civilisation. He added that one would not expect an Australian of Greek origin to forget Agamemnon any more than one should expect an Australian of Anglo-Saxon origin to forget all about the chivalry of King Arthur. In telling the tale of a journey with an unusual destination, I will explore the implications of those remarks. They are relevant to the ongoing constitutional debate in Australia today.

* * *

The Most Noble Order of the Garter was founded in 1348 and is the oldest order of chivalry in Christendom. From its inception it has been linked with St George's Chapel, Windsor, and the insignia of the Order includes emblems of the patron saint. The number of Knight Companions is limited to 24. Appointments are made by the sovereign's own decision (not as part of an honours list recommended by government) and are usually announced on St George's Day, whenever a vacancy occurs.

According to some accounts, the Order was founded by Edward III after the capture of Calais. One story tells of a celebratory ball when Joan, Countess of Salisbury ('the Fair Maid of Kent'), dropped her garter. Amid ribald amusement it was retrieved and Edward III tied it around his left knee declaring 'Honi soit qui mal y pense' (Shame on him who thinks evil of it). Other texts suggest that the Garter was brought into being essentially as an order of chivalry, having been established with King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table in mind.

These tales quickly conjure up echoes of bygone days and legends which are as deeply rooted in our consciousness as Homeric myths, notwithstanding our distance from Europe. Many cinema-goers will have seen the recently released film *Shadowlands* starring Anthony Hopkins, a dramatic reconstruction of the later life of the famous English writer C.S. Lewis. In one scene a schoolboy visitor to the Lewis home asks if he can go up to the attic to view the mysterious cupboard C.S. Lewis had spoken of in one of his stories. Behind the cupboard doors, beyond the hangers laden with sports jackets and old fur coats, the young visitor expects to find a fabled land—the realm of the imagination, a place where history and speculation meet.

For many of us this sense of curiosity, the wish to push through the arras of fustian clothing and discover another world, remains undimmed from youth to old age, and is enlivened in all sorts of ways—by peering through magnifying glasses, by examining antique scrolls and illuminated texts, by studying the heavens with

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massive telescopes. Something of the same feeling attaches to an opening up of the Garter Box. It matters not whether one lives in Australia or in Japan—one responds to an ancient secret with a tingle of anticipation. Indeed, in recent times we have seen our own Prime Minister honoured with the Most Exalted Order of the White Elephant by the King of Thailand. In that respect, as in many others, Asia understands the importance of venerable symbols and appreciates the strangeness of history, and of human nature. It would be unwise and petty-minded to slam shut the Garter Box with a gesture of the anglophobic derision which has become fashionable in modern-day Australia—the Order of the Garter is simply one of the world's many richly rewarding mysteries.

Thus, it is with a sense of persistent 'curiosity', and with something of that ability to view things from the new and distinctive vantage point which forms part of our geographical inheritance in the antipodes, that I turn now to some of the customs associated with the Order and to the history of St George's Chapel.

A newly created Knight is sworn in at a solemn ceremony of investiture in the Throne Room at Windsor Castle in the presence of all the members and officers of the Order. The ceremony is followed by a service of installation in St George's Chapel, where the Knight takes his place in a stall allotted to him. His banner is mounted above the stall.

The collection of heraldic plates affixed to the various stalls over six centuries is truly unique. The design and execution of the plates reflect the artistic taste of the various ages in which they were made. The oldest plate in St George's Chapel depicts the arms of Ralph, Lord Bassett, and dates from the end of the fourteenth century. Out of a total of about 600 Knights of the Garter during the past 640 years, only two have been Australian-born, namely Lord Casey and Sir Paul Hasluck. Visitors from Down Under, I am told, have always been keen to see the stalls allotted to their compatriots, and to press the Chapel guides for information about the relevant heraldic devices.

At the time of his death, the banner hanging above my father's stall contained a device of his own design—three catherine wheels. They were taken from a shield in the armorial bearings granted to him by the College of Arms. These armorial bearings incorporated several distinctively Australian features. The supporters are a pelican and a cormorant and the crest above the helm includes the seven-pointed Australian Commonwealth star and the formalised representation of the Xanthorrhoea (the plant more commonly known as the blackboy). The catherine wheels on the shield of the armorial bearings were adopted from the coat of arms granted in 1563 to 'Aslake' of Holme in Norfolk, an early version of the family name.

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In returning the insignia to the Queen at Buckingham Palace, arrangements also had to be made for the removal of my father's banner from his stall in St George's Chapel.

* * *

This brief description of the banner is a reminder of the many domestic links which exist between families in England and Australia. It should not be thought, however, that my father came from a privileged background. Far from it. He was born at Fremantle, Western Australia, in 1905, the son of impecunious Salvation Army officers. His bush childhood is vividly described in his autobiography, *Mucking About*. He won a scholarship to Perth Modern School and in due course became a journalist on the *West Australian* newspaper. He was then recruited to the Department of External Affairs in Canberra by John Curtin, at that time Prime Minister, but known to my father principally as a former colleague in the journalistic world. Paul Hasluck went on to represent Australia at the formation of the United Nations and was later elected to the Federal Parliament, serving as a Cabinet Minister continuously from 1951 to 1969. After five years as Governor-General, he was appointed to the Order of the Garter in his retirement.

* * *

The first step I took was to write to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Canberra, seeking their assistance. In due course I was advised that the Department would be happy to transport the Garter Box to London via the 'Safe Hand' bag. This was said to be the most suitable means of ensuring the safe custody of the precious insignia. I was told, to my astonishment, that the 'Safe Hand' bag follows a circumvolutory route from Canberra to Perth, and thence to Africa, then back to Perth, and finally onwards to London. I was left with a vision of 'our man in Africa' traipsing around the dark continent with a large bag strapped to his 'Safe Hand' full of whatever bits and pieces were given to him at Australian outposts deep in the jungle or in the midst of desert sands. I wrote a letter to the High Commission in London to accompany the Garter Box on its peregrinations, and added a silent prayer for its safe arrival.

I also wrote to the Queen's Private Secretary. A few weeks later I was advised that the Queen would receive me at Buckingham Palace. The Private Secretary informed me that at the audience with Her Majesty I would hand back only the badge and star of the Order—the items in the Garter Box—as the Collar would continue to be held at Central Chancery. The property in the insignia is vested in the Garter Principal King of Arms.

I then commenced a correspondence with the Very Reverend Patrick Mitchell, Dean of Windsor, as a result of which arrangements were made to hold a

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Memorial Evensong for the laying up of my father's banner on Friday, 28 May 1993, two days after my audience with the Queen. Family and friends were invited.

* * *

I was ready to depart. I had delivered the last of my father's official papers to the Australian Archives and answered the many letters that had come in from every corner of Australia. The Garter Box was on its way. Feeling in need of a respite, I decided to break the long flight to London by including a stop-over in Greece. The pang I felt on saying farewell to my mother was rendered doubly acute by remembrance of an occasion, 25 years earlier, when we met in Athens, at the start of what proved to be an enjoyable holiday. We had explored the islands together, and visited the famous sites. Such moments lay in the past now, and could not be repeated.

* * *

I was reminded of this a few days later when I stood in the Throne Room at the Palace of Knossos on Crete and looked at a replica of what is probably the oldest known throne in Europe, a seat once flanked by paintings of griffins, those mythical creatures with a lion's body and an eagle's head. In this century a throne found at the bottom of a pit, a place where legend and archaeology briefly intersected, has taken its place in reality: the Minoan seat was used as a model for the imposing chair now occupied by the President of the International Court at the Hague.

From the earliest times, of course, Crete was the setting for many of the Greek myths, although, as a succession of archaeologists have revealed during the course of the last 100 years, some of the Homeric myths are linked to real events. In 1870 Schliemann set off, the Iliad in his portmanteau, and discovered Troy. Later, south of Athens, he unearthed tombs around the rocky outcrop now identified as the ancient city of Mycenae and declared that he had found the gold mask of Agamemnon himself. Schliemann was followed by Sir Arthur Evans. The tenacious Englishman placed the centre of the Minoan civilisation at Knossos and transported a large collection of artefacts to the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford. Indeed, as I discovered during the course of my journey, since I had last visited the Aegean with my mother many years ago, the ruins of another ancient city had been discovered at Akrotiri on the island of Santorini near Crete, under thick layers of volcanic ash, renewing speculation about the fate of the lost civilisation of Atlantis. On a time-scale of this kind, where civilisations rose and fell as the centuries went by, a Constitution for Australia promulgated in 1901 seemed less entrenched than one had assumed. The way it worked was the important thing.

* * *

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I soon had cause to ruminate further about such matters. The day after I arrived in England, I hired a car and drove to Windsor. There were still two weeks to go before my audience with the Queen, but various details had to be finalised concerning the Memorial Evensong. It was summer; a splendid day, I took time off to enjoy the countryside, calling in at Runnymede on the outskirts of Windsor, a site well known in the annals of English history.

From 10 to 15 June 1215 'the meadow that is called Runnymede between Windsor and Staines' was the scene of momentous activity. A truce had been arranged between King John and his rebellious barons. Before the truce expired, the barons' demands for law and liberty were agreed upon and the parties concerned, surrounded by a vast assembly, swore to abide by the agreement, known eventually as Magna Carta, the Great Charter of English liberties.

Its most famous clauses declare that 'No man shall be seized or imprisoned ... except by the lawful judgment of his peers or by the law of the land' and 'To no one will we sell, to no one deny or delay right or justice'. So continuously relevant was the expression of individual liberty embodied in the document, that Englishmen came to regard Magna Carta as their chief constitutional safeguard against unjust or arbitrary rule. Its terms were extended by interpretation and carried across the seas by colonists, being reflected eventually in various written constitutions, including our own. It was to have its influence on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948.

Today Runnymede is enhanced by the Magna Carta Memorial which stands within a ring of oak trees on a slight grassy rise. The memorial takes the form of a circular temple enclosing a pillar of granite. Around the stone frieze, this: 'Erected by the American Bar Association, A Tribute to Magna Carta, Symbol of Freedom Under Law'.

* * *

I went on to Windsor, and to St George's Chapel. In the course of wandering around the Chapel one cannot help but reflect upon the beauty of the structure and upon the links in the building with men and women of the past. In the centre of the Chapel, for example, one finds a slab which bears a haunting inscription: 'In a vault beneath this marble slab lies deposited the remains of Jane Seymour, Queen of King Henry VIII, 1537, King Henry VIII, 1547, King Charles I, 1648, and an infant child of Queen Anne'.

The words call to mind a turbulent period in English history, as significant as the fray at Runnymede. From 1629 to 1640 Charles I contrived to rule without calling a parliament. This led to the civil war, and to his downfall. When he was executed in 1649, internment in Westminster Abbey—then still the traditional place for royal burial—was out of the question, for a centre of popular veneration would have greatly

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embarrassed Oliver Cromwell's government. Instead, the King's body was brought to Windsor. This gave it royal burial, but in a castle completely controlled and garrisoned by the Commonwealth forces and unlikely to become a focus of cavalier devotion.

The inscription is not only a reminder of the damaging confrontation between the executive and Parliament but also conveys a lesson to any nation poised on the brink of momentous constitutional change; a lesson which appears with even greater clarity when one looks at the record of Charles I's trial.

It was an axiom of English law that all justice proceeded from the sovereign. Oliver Cromwell and his supporters in the House of Commons tried to replace this keystone of the system by proclaiming the sovereignty of the people and equating it with their own. There remained the problem, however, of on what jurisdictional basis Parliament could claim to try the King, and the further problem of what charge could be brought against him.

This is what the King said at this crucial moment in the nation's history:

If it were my own particular case, I would have satisfied myself with the protestation I made the last time I was here against the legality of the court, and that a king cannot be tried by any superior jurisdiction on earth. But it is not my case alone, it is the freedom and liberty of the people of England; and do you pretend what you will, I stand more for their liberty. For if power without law may make laws, may alter the fundamental laws of the kingdom, I do not know what subject he is in England, that can be sure of his life, or anything that he calls his own.

Put shortly, if a king can be tried and be executed without the tribunal in question being obliged to explain or justify its assumption of power, what ordinary man or woman is safe?

* * *

It emerges, then, from these few examples, that St George's Chapel and its environs are rich with historical associations which not only reverberate in the imagination but also continue to find expression in the laws and customs of the English-speaking world, including Australia.

According to Blackstone, the famous jurist, 'the right of trial by the jury, or the country, is a trial by the peers of every Englishman, and is the grand bulwark of his liberties, and is secured to him by the Great Charter'. Modern scholars doubt this view, suggesting that the meaning of the relevant words is obscure and various related passages were actually intended to secure feudal privileges. As the American Bar Association Memorial at Runnymede shows, however, Magna Carta's precepts were

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gradually received into the common law as an assertion of individual freedom, a recognition of parliamentary sovereignty and a guarantee of the continuance of the common law of England. The greater part of modern Australian law presupposes the existence of the common law and, indeed, Section 80 of our Constitution (which echoes an American provision) provides that the trial of any offence against any law of the Commonwealth shall be by jury.

Thus, one sees the way in which a custom that evolved during the era of Magna Carta and the institution of the Order of the Garter continues to have an effect in modern-day Australia. Likewise, the spectre of fundamental constitutional provisions being swept aside by a Cromwellian figure possessed of arbitrary power operates as a restraining influence upon the conduct of political affairs generally. The separation of powers, a principle which finds expression to some extent in the Australian Constitution, represents an impediment to any section of the governmental system getting too big for its boots. One opens up the Garter Box with a sense of youthful curiosity about ages past, but before long one catches a glimpse of the various conventions forming part of our contemporary political culture.

There were also sites of a more personal kind that I wished to see. From Windsor I drove on to visit members of my wife's family in the Cotswolds. A few days later, I fitted in a visit to Hasluck's Green Lane on the outskirts of Birmingham. Research within the family to date has not yet established a precise connection between the Australian branch of the Hasluck family and this particular street but it may well come to light in due course. The relevant clues are probably to be found not far away in the inner city precinct of Birmingham known as the Jewellery Quarter, an area that at one time was the heart of a thriving industry linking this part of England to various far-flung corners of the world.

My ancestor Samuel Hasluck was a Birmingham jeweller but set up business in Hatton Gardens, the London centre of the jewellery trade. His fifth son, Lewis, came to Western Australia in 1875 after a division of the family business interests and a succession of losses including the defalcation of an employee, two burglaries and a fire. The farming land in the colony he had been promised turned out to be a patch of virgin scrub in the middle of a swamp near Albany. He rejected it and returned to Perth.

As the years went by, Lewis applied himself to various trades and did odd jobs, but without having much luck financially. One assignment included the carving of a wooden coat of arms which can still be seen in the old court building in the Supreme Court Gardens. His son, Ethel Hasluck—my grandfather—went into the colonial postal service. A few years later he left to join the newly formed Salvation Army, being sent immediately to the goldfields during the 1890s rush.

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In sifting through family papers I was intrigued to find that my grandfather's period on the goldfields included some 'goggling', a story which adds an extra dimension to the first essay in this book. It is a well-known fact in Australian cinema history that one of the earliest films made in this country was produced for religious use by the resourceful Limelight Department of the Salvation Army in Melbourne under the American, Herbert Booth. Their spectacular *Soldiers of the Cross* was made in 1899 on a tennis court in Dandenong, Victoria. This production, which incorporated film, slides, music and a lecture on the subject of the early Christian martyrs, was the first film to be shown on the goldfields, although, unfortunately, no print of the film can now be traced.

According to my grandfather: 'Our hall was not big enough to hold all the people, so we hired the Miners' Institute. The miners and their wives and families were very anxious to see it. They came in from as far away as Boulder and Coolgardie.' He himself saw the film two or three times during its Kalgoorlie screenings and remembered one particular scene where 40 Christian martyrs had been placed on an ice floe in the middle of a river to freeze—something to goggle at for a man ordinarily surrounded by the heat and dust of the goldfields.

* * *

Memories of life on the goldfields were a long way from the Jewellery Quarter and Hasluck's Green Lane, but worth thinking about nonetheless. On the way back to London I called in at the Ashmolean Museum to see the collection of material that Sir Arthur Evans had brought back from the excavations at the Palace of Knossos on Crete. The artefacts ranged from miniature bulls to massive jars, from ornaments to mundane domestic implements, vestiges of a fabulous citadel which slowly sank into a hillside.

In a room nearby I came across an exhibition commemorating the work of the Australian scientist Howard Florey in the development of penicillin. This, of course, was a reminder of the many Australians who have come to Oxford over the years including three recent Prime Ministers: John Gorton, Malcolm Fraser and Bob Hawke.

* * *

These ruminations in the Ashmolean Museum also revived memories of my own days at Oxford in the 1960s. Away from home, one began to think about what home meant, and what the future held, especially on Sunday afternoon walks in winter when the bells of Oxford could be heard echoing faintly in Christchurch Meadow and along the tow paths of the Isis River. The contrast between 'then and now' is a familiar way of thinking. C.S. Lewis had this to say about it at the end of *Screwtape Proposes a Toast*: 'These things—the beauty, the memory of our own past—are good images of what we really desire: but if they are mistaken for the thing itself they turn

into dumb idols, breaking the hearts of their worshippers. For they are not the thing itself; they are only the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never visited.'

* * *

While at Oxford I used to attend the Oxford Union, the crucible of many illustrious political careers, but, in my case, simply as an observer, not as a participant in the debates. I was astonished by how many of the undergraduate speakers sought to establish their radical credentials by reference to what seemed to me and my fellow Australians comparatively minor social slights. To us, and likewise to our North American friends, it seemed faintly comical that an orator in full flight could leap swiftly from the occasion when his auntie was snubbed by the Mayor of Leeds to a proposal to nationalise British Steel, as though the two issues were clearly connected. New to England, I had not appreciated how deeply entrenched the class system was, and how keenly felt the resentments it aroused. With the passage of time I have come to realise that there is a connection of sorts, that divisions exist which stunt growth, both personal and economic, and which have a tendency to stifle initiative.

Social commentators in Australia sometimes harbour the belief—a mistaken belief in my view—that if a young man or woman goes off to England to study they are bound to become an uncritical admirer of English ways thereafter. My experience is to the contrary. As appears from the small example I have just given, the visitor from abroad quickly becomes conscious of both strengths and weaknesses, and understands more clearly than before the virtues of the egalitarian ethic in the antipodes.

One aspect of the English 'class' syndrome, the habit of having to defer to 'superiors' in a way that sometimes goes beyond the requirements of common courtesy, can be illustrated by reference to the customs of my own profession. If one watches a British courtroom drama on television, *Rumpole of the Bailey*, for example, the barristers are constantly deferring to His Honour. The august figure on the Bench is a strong presence throughout and has a conspicuous influence on everything that happens below. In the equivalent American drama, however, which always seems odd having regard to the American reputation for brashness and lack of restraint, the judge is a comparatively passive figure. There is no assumption that the judge is more important or much wiser than anyone else in the room. Attention is focused on the advocates and on their clients.

To my mind, what happens on the screen is probably a reflection of an underlying constitutional reality: in the United States legal system the litigant and his or her representative are the ones that count. The litigant is a citizen, not a subject. The judge is there to keep order, and to make a ruling eventually, but the rights of the citizen are foremost. One is sometimes left with an impression, after seeing the British

legal system in action, that a person coming before the courts has to be obsequious in order to obtain relief.

These thoughts crystallised when I returned to London. I went to the Conference Centre at Westminster to attend a symposium billed by *The Times* as 'The Monarchy Debate'—a forum to review the standing of the Crown on the eve of the 40th anniversary of the coronation. According to the widely circulated brochure: 'a crude republicanism has arisen which mirrors a vulgar monarchism. Neither addresses the crux—the centralised sovereignty derived from our own status as Royal subjects, not citizens, that is vested in Westminster and Whitehall. All views will be represented, from ardent republican to fervent royalist to constitutional reformer.'

What a day! Speakers of note from every walk of life had been recruited to the various panels—Lord Rees-Mogg, Shirley Williams, Lady Longford, Barbara Castle, Fay Weldon, Martin Amis, Christopher Hitchens, Stephen Haseler, David Marquand and so on—right across the political spectrum. I trekked from room to room. It was as though one had suddenly been forced to read a year's supply of Sunday papers at once, plus the *Spectator* and the *New Statesman*. Nearly every speaker was eloquent, but in the way that the journals I have just mentioned seem ever so convincing at the moment you put them down—eloquence owing more to finesse than to conviction.

In one session when the playwright David Hare declaimed: 'If we do not have the guts to sweep the monarchy away, we shall mock them like the powerless critics we have become until they will wish they had never been born'—a stentorian voice rang out from the back of the auditorium: 'You bastard!' There were, predictably, many references to mums and dads and aunts being snubbed by nobs and dignitaries.

Much of the debate had little application to the Australian situation. We do not have coaches and Grenadier Guards to attract the tourists and we do not have to support the Royal Family. The question of our sovereignty is not complicated by the European Union. Oddly enough, as one or two speakers pointed out, almost enviously, Australia and New Zealand are able to discuss constitutional monarchy as a form of government on its merits. Unlike Britain debate is coloured by the presence of the incumbent and her family—the living embodiment of a legal principle. Moreover, in the antipodes, the road to change by consensus is comparatively clear: we have a mechanism to change the Constitution by referendum. It was apparent as I listened to the forum at Westminster that many of those who favoured change were frustrated by not knowing how exactly it could be brought about, and this left the way open for moderate reformers such as Shirley Williams to suggest that the answer was to give the Queen a

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greatly reduced role—a proposal which prompted the stentorian voice to ask sarcastically: Shall we give her a bike and a council flat at Twickenham?

At the end of the day, my impression was that nothing would change, notwithstanding the eloquence of those denouncing the Crown and the absence of any well-reasoned defence of the institution. I found this sense of complacency, especially amongst those who favoured the status quo, disturbing. It seems to be principally in Australia that defenders of the existing system are at liberty to emphasise the many subtle advantages of having a politically neutral head of state who symbolises national unity but in fact acts only on the advice of his or her Ministers.

* * *

The conference sharpened up a conclusion I had been coming to for many months: that the time has come for Australia to make a change, although the way in which the change is effected, and the style of persuasion used to create a consensus will be of vital importance in establishing a workable republic. Nor should it be imagined that a republic can be established without risk. If a constitution can be changed to remove a head of state, then it can be changed again to give more power to the executive.

The fact is, however, to my way of thinking, a Queen of Australia is not sufficiently central to our culture to continue as a symbol of national unity. The presence of such a figure, even if a presence only in name, is a vestige of a deferential state of mind which curtails true independence. It should be possible to create a republic which will not only retain the essential features of parliamentary democracy including separation of governmental powers, but also foster national spirit by transferring the emphasis from hierarchical allegiance to the Crown to the needs and aspirations of a community composed of independently minded citizens. Whatever changes are required need not be attended to in a rush. That is what the constitutional formalities and conventions of government are there for—to link one era to another, to provide for change, a handing over.

* * *

The appointed day for my audience with the Queen was approaching. The Deputy High Commissioner of Australia kindly consented to make an official car available to take me to Buckingham Palace and this was much appreciated. Although, in a sense, my audience with the Queen concerned private business, it appears from everything I have said so far that I had a sense of representing an Australian constituency; besides, I did not wish to finish off the appointment I had come so far to keep by standing outside the gates of Buckingham Palace ineffectually trying to summon up a passing taxi.

With 24 hours to go, I visited those portions of Buckingham Palace which are accessible to tourists—the Queen's Gallery and the Royal Mews. Make a note! The

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State Coach was presented to the Queen on 8 May 1988 as a bicentennial gift from the people of Australia. Marble Arch was moved to the north-east corner of Hyde Park when the east front was added to Buckingham House in 1850. If small talk was required, I would not be found wanting.

The appointed day! I was collected by the official car and driven towards Buckingham Palace, a journey into the unknown. The car passed through the front gates. It cruised towards the visitor's arch in the east front and came to rest in the inner quadrangle. The driver was told to wait. There was much to see. One of the ceremonial coaches was standing beneath the Grand Entrance. This, we were informed, was waiting to collect the Ambassador of Greece, who had just presented his credentials to the Queen. When the coach departed our car moved forward. From the Grand Entrance I was guided to the Bow Room, asked to wait, and was then looked after by various members of the Queen's household. The crop of small talk I had garnered the previous day was gradually exchanged for grain of a similar kind. Tomorrow would be an important day, I was told. The President of Ireland, Mary Robinson, would meet with the Queen at Buckingham Palace—the first meeting between a President of the Irish Republic and a British monarch.

It soon became apparent that the Queen was receiving a succession of visitors at roughly 15-minute intervals. Shortly before my turn came to be ushered into her presence, the Master of the Household gave me some instruction in matters of protocol. In a few minutes time, he said, he would accompany me to the entrance to the Audience Room and then, having announced the visitor, he would retire. I would go forward to meet the Queen. It was in the course of receiving those instructions that the Garter Box containing the insignia—the precious cargo which I had last seen in Perth about six weeks earlier—was returned to me so that I would be able to deliver it to the Queen herself. I know not where it went in Africa via the 'Safe Hand' bag, but here it was again, back in England, its 14-year sojourn in the antipodes now over.

The moment came. I accompanied the Master of the Household to the threshold of the Audience Room. The doors were opened. My name was announced. I entered ...

* * *

We are not bound by our fathers but it often happens that we act in accordance with their habits, and with their wishes, that being the way in which customs are handed downwards, independently of what the law prescribes. So, for that reason, aware of a need for confidentiality in certain circumstances, I choose to say nothing about my conversation with the Queen. I can confirm, however, that I acted in accordance with the Deed of Covenant; I delivered the insignia to her. The Garter Box has gone back to England, but recollections of my excursion will remain with me, enriched by

THE GARTER BOX GOES BACK TO ENGLAND

remembrance of journeys undertaken by others throughout the ages, linking the diverse countries of the world.

Two days after my audience with the Queen I returned to Windsor for the Memorial Evensong. As the young choristers appeared and the sound of their heavenly voices floated through the Chapel, one was reminded again of how much history is associated with this patch of sacred ground. Towards the end of the service the Military Knights of Windsor entered the Chapel with a slow and solemn tread and delivered my father's banner into the hands of the Dean. He laid it on the altar, with a prayer to revere the name of the departed Knight and those Companions of the most noble Order 'who have left to us the fair pattern of valiant and true chivalry'. The banner will eventually be installed in St George's Cathedral, Perth, a visible reminder of the bond between the Anglican Church in Australia and the rich and varied history of the Church of England for many centuries in the British Isles. People of good sense from any background will understand that one can revere the past without necessarily being subservient to it. At an afternoon tea on the day of the Memorial Evensong in Windsor I read to a gathering of family and friends this passage from my father's autobiography, *Mucking About*, which expresses for me the reason why we should continue to understand and treasure our antecedents. Here are my father's words:

My own life has been rich in echoes of England. I have smelt, seen and heard as well as read so much of it. I have been as a stranger coming to a place of which he has been told and recognising by sight and sound objects never met before and yet as familiar as his own hand before his eyes and feeling a centuries-deep experience as personal to him as his own breathing. There is a magic of kinship and breed that continues in the blood and in the bones though we stray all over the world ...

Myself enraptured by this experience of familiar places of the spirit, I am kinder and more understanding towards men and women of all races who love their land and are comforted by memory of their own past. My own deeper love and knowledge of Australia are refined by a shared love of England. In love of our own country each of us realises a common humanity coming from deep wells. Patriots are only understood by patriots. A feeling for one's own country is the clearest way to feeling deeply for men in other countries. The folly and the failure of so many attempts by internationalists to do good come from the fact that they lose sight of the true goodness in other countries when their senses are blunted to the goodness of their own.

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ALEXANDRA HASLUCK

(delivered by Nicholas Hasluck at the funeral service for Dame Alexandra Hasluck held on 23 June 1993)

Five months ago I delivered a farewell message at the funeral service for my father, Paul Hasluck; and now, too soon, I am here to say something about my mother, Alexandra Margaret Martin Hasluck.

Her forebears arrived in Sydney as free settlers in 1796. She always described herself, with a sense of pride, as a fifth-generation Australian, and she also liked to recall that her own mother, Evelyn Hill, was one of the earliest women graduates of Sydney University.

Evelyn Hill came to Western Australia at the turn of the century to establish a school for girls. Soon afterwards, she met and married John Darker, an engineer with the Public Works Department. We must now refer to my mother's much-admired autobiography, *Portrait in a Mirror*, for the next chapter in the story, an episode in which the author herself is introduced with a flourish:

I was born in Perth in a house called Windhill, on 26 August 1908, which makes me an Edwardian. I was to be called Margaret Martin after the Martins of Galway connection, but my grandmother Hill, a devoted royalist, and admirer of Queen Alexandra, persuaded my parents at the last moment, practically at the font, I am told, that Alexandra was the name for me, so they tacked it on in front of the other two. I am grateful to her now for a beautiful name, but I certainly was not in schooldays, when the name was considered rather pretentious and I became Alix, and have remained so ever since to my friends.

So let me call her Alix, and let me remind you that the details of her life and times as the wife of a journalist, a diplomat, a Cabinet Minister and a Governor-General are fully dealt with in the autobiography. She carried out her duties with aplomb; at home and abroad, in the ante-chambers of the United Nations, in the wilds of New Guinea, in the corridors of power in Canberra and in the precincts of Admiralty House and Yarralumla. In recognition of her public service she was created a Dame of the Order of Australia and as a tribute to her intellectual qualities an honorary doctorate was added to the B.A. she obtained from the University of Western Australia in 1929. Today, however, I wish to speak of the private Alix, relying mainly on her own words, for it is there that we will continue to find her true spirit. To paraphrase Auden: time worships language and forgives everyone by whom it lives.

A passage from *Thomas Peel of Swan River* shows how the echo of an early settler's name intrigued her as a child, and led eventually to the writing of a memorable story set in a place she loved:

When I was a child of ten, at the end of the Great War, as we used to call it then, I was a dreamy child and used to live in a world of my own, particularly at meals, which I considered a waste of time. Occasionally, however, my parents' conversation pierced that oblivion, and one of the phrases that seemed to occur very frequently contained a name, 'The Peel Estate', uttered in tones of denunciation, indignation and derision ... Only the name remained in memory.

Then it was my good fortune to make a friend for life. I was an only, and often a lonely, child. Another girl at school—Loulou Clifton her name was ...—asked me to stay with her for the holidays at her parents' fishing shack on the Murray River, some 50 miles south of Perth ... the Murray River then was one of the most strangely beautiful places in the world. It had a quality of absolute pristine freshness, belonging to the morning of creation ... Down still backwaters full of snags—submerged tree-trunks rearing black and dragon-like from the water—we would row softly, fisherman's row, standing up pushing forwards to see the way ... A favourite place to go was that which we called 'the Shag Trees'—four enormous eucalypts in a row, where the shags, or cormorants, from the estuary came to roost of nights. This was a good picnic spot, the way there involving dragging the boat over the bar at the mouth of the Murray and round the rushy point of Mill Island, with its old circular stone mill, and edging into the Serpentine. Then there was a long, long pull up that river's snaking windings, occasionally passing small palisades of sticks jutting from the banks into the water—native fish traps, which we fortunately observed with the detail-catching eye of childhood, for they are now all gone.

How fortunate we are that the details caught by Alix's childhood were eventually reproduced in print.

In the prologue to *Unwilling Emigrants*, one finds another fascinating insight into the way in which books come into being:

In the year 1931, a small bundle of tattered letters was handed to the Western Australian Historical Society at one of its Council meetings by a member, Mr John Stoddart. The letters were in a grey kangaroo-skin pouch, fur side out, envelope-shaped and a bit torn. The bundle had been found in a crevice

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during the pulling down of the old police buildings at Toodyay—a country town 63 miles north-east of Perth ... Some 20-odd years later, turning over some papers at home, I came upon the copies of the Toodyay letters made by [my husband], and was again moved by the pathos of the love expressed in them ... What sort of woman was Myra Sykes, poor and illiterate, yet whose words sometimes tear at the heart-strings, and what sort of a convict did she write them to? What sort of man was it that could inspire such faithful love? What was his crime, and what became of him?

My mother wrote the two books I have just mentioned, unravelling the mysteries surrounding Thomas Peel and William Sykes, while my brother and I were completing our school years. We shared her enthusiasms and her adventures and did what we could to assist.

In the introduction to the 'Peel' book one finds this reference to my brother's nautical skills:

Last but not least, I wish to thank my son Rollo for taking me cruising in his launch round Cockburn Sound in the track of the *Rockingham*, to reconstruct the conditions of its shipwreck; and for checking landmarks, currents and winds for me.

In the 'Sykes' book one finds a less swashbuckling and somewhat ambiguous reference to her other son:

I thank our son Nick for listening with patience and some interest while I talked out the problems that arose in writing, and for helping me visit and search various graveyards, with equal patience.

Perhaps that passage contains a touch of irony. In her autobiography one finds a photograph of the son in question sitting on a tombstone under a gumtree, staring gloomily at his dog, while Alix, the indefatigable author, stands nearby, studying the landscape. The caption reads: 'Searching a country churchyard for the grave of William Sykes, with a weary son and bored poodle'.

The photograph tells one story. The words of the 'Sykes' book round off another, and those words not only bring back poignant memories of the summer afternoons we spent together but also are worth remembering:

The more material traces of the convicts are fast vanishing. Many of the roads they made have been re-surveyed and bulldozed out of new country. A few buildings whose purpose has been forgotten and whose walls are crumbling

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remain in country towns. Other quite handsome buildings in Perth and Fremantle whose design recalls the Old World from which their architects came, are marked for destruction by the hand of progress. Soon the convicts will have no monuments.

William Sykes has no monument. He was buried in a nameless grave in the cemetery at Toodyay, at the back of the Protestant section, outside the consecrated ground, in a part reserved for convicts, paupers and suicides, on the slope of a hill covered in summer with dry yellow grass. Two funereal cypresses and a yew shed a strong sweet scent on the hot summer wind, and William Sykes is in good company at last, for below him on the hill lie other bones that once were stout settlers, their lives given, like his, to their new country.

These few glimpses should be sufficient to remind us that Alix led a full and energetic life. She wrote many of her books in the early hours of the morning before starting her daily round as a mother and political wife. It was a lonely life at times but that seldom showed. On social occasions she was warm, witty and vivacious. She enjoyed the company of other writers, especially the companionship of her close friend Henrietta Drake-Brockman, and was a great supporter of literature through her association with the Fellowship of Australian Writers and the Society of Women Writers. When she suffered a stroke ten years ago she faced the ensuing disability with courage. Even though she had lost the use of her right hand she managed to produce one more book, *Western Australia's Colonial Years*.

In addition to the books I have already mentioned, her works included *Remembered with Affection*, *Royal Engineer*, *Audrey Tennyson's Vice-Regal Days* and a history of the Guide Dog movement in Australia, *To Guide and Guard*. She also published a collection of short stories, *Of Ladies Dead*, the title of which comes from a Shakespearean sonnet which is pertinent now:

When in the chronicle of wasted time
I see descriptions of the fairest wights
And beauty making beautiful old time
In praise of ladies dead ...

This is my chance to praise such a lady and I do so willingly, remembering both her beauty and her fortitude. She lived for 84 years and made the most of her experience—as a gifted writer always does. Nothing was lost on her. These reflections lead me finally to the following passage from *Portrait with Background* about the last days of the pioneer botanist Georgiana Molloy, an ending which also reverberates today:

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February passed and the heat grew worse. Her wasted form developed bed sores, and she asked could they make her a hydrostatic bed, of which she had read in the newspapers. Captain Molloy, who had found a description of this contrivance in the *Penny Magazine*, tried spreading a mackintosh cloak over a trough of water, but the cloak was not big enough and let the water through. A more successful attempt was made with a new mackintosh [belonging to the Reverend Wollaston] which was bigger, and for a little while it brought some relief to the sick woman. Watching the concern for her comfort with which it was made must have caused her to reflect on Molloy's care for her, on the years of affection spent with her "excellent husband" as she had called him. A later generation may opine that it was to him she owed her present situation: she should never have had her last two children. But this thought would never have occurred to her. She would see only the years of struggle and happiness, the mingling of mutual interests, the love and respect that makes mere existence a minor detail when life has been lived to the full. With him she had created her posterity; with his help she had pursued her interest in the flowers and plants of her chosen country. In both she had fulfilled herself ...

She had not left her bedroom now for three months. A small, close room, it looked out over the garden and the river. Had its window opened towards the sea, the breeze might have relieved the heat, and at night she might have seen the strange light in the sky that had begun to cause wonder among the settlers. A long stream of light had appeared slanting up from the horizon on 5 March 1843. Some had guessed it to be a comet, though it was not fully to be seen. Wollaston described it in his journal on 8 March as of immense size, with the head just visible. It came more into sight as the nights passed and remained in the sky for about ten days, magnificently brilliant, ... causing wonder not unmixed with awe ... In ancient days it would have been regarded as a portent, and so it was to prove to Mrs Molloy. Each night fleeing onwards into space it left the world a little further behind, and so did she ...

Strangely enough, it was not Captain Mangles, to whom she had written from her very heart, who set down the final epitaph on Georgiana Molloy. It remained for George Hailes of Newcastle, who had had the greatest success in growing the seeds she had sent from Australia, to write to Mangles of a rare and gentle lady: "Not one in ten thousand who go out into distant lands has done what she did for the Gardens of her Native Country, and we have indeed as regards her specially to lament, that 'From Life's rosy Chaplet, the Gems drop away'."

Light That Time Has Made is a collection of essays and reviews written by Paul Hasluck in the years before his death in 1993. A country boy, and son of Salvation Army parents, Paul Hasluck brings to his task of social observation an extraordinary, and unique, background—journalist, poet, drama critic, war historian, author, publisher, anthropologist, public servant, diplomat, parliamentarian, federal Minister, Governor-General.

In a series of essays contrasting social attitudes in Australia early in the century with attitudes 60 or more years later, we see Paul Hasluck the thoughtful, insightful 'private' man rather than the more familiar 'public' dignitary. His skill as a professionally trained journalist is revealed as Hasluck gradually explores an intriguing question: was there a distinctively Australian body of thought shaping events and attitudes in this country during the twentieth century or did progress occur simply in response to what was happening elsewhere in the world, and as a consequence of random events?

With an introduction and postscript by his son, Nicholas Hasluck, *Light That Time Has Made* presents some fascinating anecdotes about several of Paul Hasluck's contemporaries, including Curtin, Evatt, Menzies, Gorton, McMahon and Whitlam, and raises such topical and timely issues as the republican debate, the politicisation of the public service, and equal rights for all Australians including Aboriginal Australians.



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