

FIRST IN THE WORLD

Labor Making Australian History



SPECIAL EDITION

Featuring:

Wayne Swan, Frank Bongiorno, David Day, Ross McMullin, Bobbie Oliver, Emma Dawson, Kos Samaras, Misha Zelinsky, Janet McCalman and Stephen Loosley



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THE TUCSIN

FLAGSHIP PUBLICATION OF THE
**JOHN CURTIN
RESEARCH CENTRE**

Labor ideas for a better Australia

Issue 20, March 2024

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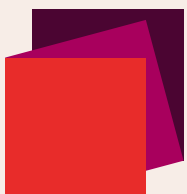
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Editorial

Dr Nick Dyrenfurth

As readers are aware, in its seventh year of existence, the John Curtin Research Centre has established a reputation as the premier labourite thinktank in Australia. Our mission is simple – shaping the national debate and crafting bold new policies so all Australians can live better, longer and more fulfilling lives wherever they reside. In 2024, with lingering economic uncertainty, geopolitical instability, housing crises and climate threats, our mission – waging the battle of ideas on behalf of the labour movement – is as critical as it ever has been.

Here we present the 20th edition of *The Tocsin* magazine, *First in the World*, a compilation of historically-minded pieces by many of Australia's finest historians and thinkers reflecting on the world leading achievements of Australian Labor, beginning with the first call to establish a 'Labor Party' all the way back in 1884. Plus, we feature SDA National Secretary and JCRC Board member Gerard Dwyer in our 'Getting to know you' column, pay tribute to the late former Labor leader Bill Hayden and Israeli peacenik and intellectual Shlomo Avineri, while Ben Wellings reviews Jon Cruddas' recent history, *A Century of Labour*. We are grateful to Maurice Blackburn for sponsoring this landmark edition of *The Tocsin* and its launch event at Trades Hall at the Curtin Hotel on 10 March. We hope to see our supporters there!

Australia's premier labour movement thinktank is also delighted to announce the appointment of a new Chair, Sam Almaliki, and a stellar array of a new board members. Sam is a former refugee, product of public housing, founder and director of many start-ups and long-time Australian Labor Party member. He is particularly passionate about the JCRC's ongoing role in investing in and inspiring future leaders. We are also delighted to welcome onboard our six new board members – Fletcher Adam, Priya Brown, Lewis Hamilton, Kosmos Samaras Stacey Schinnerl, and Sebastian Zwalf – who are drawn from across the full expanse of Australia. The JCRC's new board members, a mixture of new and emerging leaders bring an extraordinary depth and breadth to the thinktank's leadership circle, from the worlds of for-profit and not-for-profit business, advertising and marketing, trade unionism, Labor politics and the law. The details of our full board and advisory council can be found here:

<https://curtinrc.org/our-people/>

In 2024, we invite you to join our new governing body in supporting our movement for bold reform and policy innovation. Your support is crucial to shaping the future

of Australia. As the John Curtin Research Centre strives to advocate for progress and social democracy, every contribution makes a world of difference. We have an incredibly exciting year ahead of us at the JCRC. From our first Curtin's Conversations online event with British Labour MP Jon Cruddas discussing his new book, *A Century of Labour* and Andrew Leigh yarning about his *Shortest History of Economics* on March 12 to our 'Common Good: Connecting Business and Labour' national roundtables to our soon-to-be announced Annual Gala Dinner and very special Annual Curtin Oration in August with Treasurer Jim Chalmers we have a packed schedule. Our research this year will see reports on subjects such as cyber-security and Australia's role in Ukraine postwar reconstruction published by mid-year, housing supply solutions, backing small and medium sized business, climate change and disaster resilience, and more besides, as we once more take to the frontline of the battle of ideas. Our weekly 'Curtin's Corner' roundup of the best domestic and international reads continues, and we launch two new platforms: 'Curtin's Call', our daily political editorial emailed to supporters, and weekly 'Curtin's Cast', our brand new podcast featuring the best thinkers and most thought provoking discussions! We'll also hold our annual Young Writers' Prize, begin our leadership masterclass and young leaders' academy and host launch events of my new edition of *A Little History of the Australian Labor Party*, authored with Professor Frank Bongiorno.

We cannot carry out this work without our supporters. Packages start from \$40 per annum, keeping you informed and engaged in the crucial conversations that will shape our nation's future. In the words of our thinktank's inspiration, Labor's greatest Prime Minister, John Curtin: "it is only through the ideas and actions of working people that a better and more decent way of life can be given to all." Together, let's make our nation a more optimistic, prosperous, and equitable place to live. Visit our website and be part of the change:

www.curtinrc.org/support

Wishing you and your loved ones a rewarding and healthy 2024.



Dr Nick Dyrenfurth
Executive Director, John Curtin Research Centre

1884 The People's Party

Janet McCalman



The Melbourne Trades Hall was opened in 1859. It was the first of its kind not only in the Australasian colonies, but in the world. Just as remarkable was that it was on land gifted by the Victorian colonial government, more than a decade before trade unions would be even legalised in the UK. Remarkably again, the premier, John O'Shanassy was an Irish Catholic, whereas the first baptised Catholic to be prime minister of the United Kingdom was Boris Johnson. Finally, the 1858 Victorian election was the first conducted with near manhood suffrage, a right not extended to all men in England and Wales until 1918. And of course, it had been with a secret ballot.

Americans have long celebrated their democratic exceptionalism, but a century ago it was, and still is, Australia and its politicised labour movement that had a superior claim. Working people's rights were in our colonial DNA. The migrants, assisted and self-funded, who populated the colonies after the discovery of gold in 1851, brought with them ideas, habits and historical memory of mobilisation. The Australian Labor Party was truly a people's party. This is the story of the people who would become the union members and voters and eventually party rank and file to build Australian Labor. The human material of a movement. Yet they have not had a good press from historians: patronised for their political liberalism and their manly respectability. This is to misunderstand them.

The British Government had suppressed radical protest with force: transporting around 3600 political prisoners among 164,000 convicts between 1788 and 1868. Convicts revolted against penal discipline and work regimes, but few who remained in the colonies after sentence, continued their agitations and their impact on Australian politics was small.

The notable exception was a militant leader of the London Chartists in 1848, William Cuffay, the diminutive and

disabled son of a freed slave, sentenced to life for sedition. Like most British political prisoners, he was given a ticket-of-leave and quickly pardoned. But now in his sixties, and joined by his wife and daughter, he remained in Tasmania for the rest of his life, returning to his trade as a tailor, and campaigning against the Master and Servant Act.

Colonial politics was shaped by waves of immigration until the great 'shut down' of White Australia after Federation. The first wave was the gold seekers, half a million to Victoria alone just in the 1850s, most of them self-funded, literate and skilled, hopeful of fortune, land and social respect.

But they were also fresh from the failure of the largest organised working-class movement of the nineteenth century, Chartism. Few would not have heard of it and its five principles for representative democracy: manhood suffrage, secret ballot, no property qualification for MPs, payment of MPs, equal electoral districts, and annual parliaments. Through its newspapers, especially *The Northern Star*, its classes and sections (branches), its Sunday Schools, its women's societies and its promulgation of birth control knowledge; its dances, music and hymns; its monster meetings and conferences; its legends and its charismatic leaders, it had penetrated every corner of England, Scotland and Wales.

The last great petition, of which William Cuffay was a key organiser, called the working men of London to monster meeting at Kennington Common (the Oval) for April 10th, 1848:

The grievances of us (the Working Classes) are deep and our demands just, We, and our families are pining in misery, want and starvation! We demand a fair day's wages for a fair day's work! We are the slaves of capital—we demand protection to [sic] our labour. We are political serfs—we demand to be free.

They were made to assemble south of the Thames so that their path to Westminster to present their petition crossed three bridges, easily defended. They claimed almost 6 million signatures; the Commons clerks hastily counted just under 2 million and served up for a condescending posterity that Queen Victoria had signed 'early and often'. (The more than 3 million signatures collected in 1842 were confirmed: an astonishing logistical feat in a nation of 18 million, nearly half of them children.) Across the Thames, barring their way to Westminster, stood 100,000 armed special constables. They were warned that force would be met with severe

force, so the petition was taken by cab to the parliament. It was voted down, as had the previous two petitions. The absence of a revolutionary spirit, so much lamented by the Left since, was not stifled by Methodism and respectability, but by the coercive power of the greatest imperial nation in the world.

Men had died and been transported for the Charter since 1838; many had been imprisoned. It promoted land reform and the rights of labour against capital. It shared the radical currents of a politically feverish time across Europe, that would travel with refugees to the United States, South America and the British colonies. It was part of what Christopher Clark now calls the "Revolutionary Spring" across Europe in 1848. And its first success was in the Australian colonies in the wake of the Eureka Rebellion.

The new Trades Hall of 1859 was for worker education as well for trade societies union meetings. Australia's new settlers came from a society where ideas and talk were the stuff of life. Novels were serialised, even in regional newspapers. Mechanics Institutes quickly appeared in every new town. A rich radical literature that was read aloud in workplaces and public houses had flourished, despite repression by the state, since the seventeenth century. Notions of English liberty and equality before the law, even the tyranny of the Norman Yoke (since 1066), had never been forgotten. Ideas from below had been unleashed by the English Revolution, and Nonconformist religion picked away at Anglican social pieties. The abolition of slavery had deep roots in Methodism and Evangelical Anglicanism. Scottish Presbyterians believed that all had to be able to read to know God and Scottish courts, especially in the Highlands, had more respect for human life. The Celtic archipelago of Greater Britain saw itself as colonised and oppressed. Add to this mix, Irish immigrants scarred by the Great Famine, long schooled in resentment at the power and disdain of the Protestant landowners, but not conquered and co-opted like the Highland Scots. It made for a powerful brew in the colonies. The English immigrants also came from a society where the state had assumed a form of civic parenthood since the First Poor Law of 1601 secularised the Christian obligations of charity for the destitute, orphaned, sick and homeless. It was England's first welfare state and operated well enough to stave off famine, manage plague outbreaks and care for the helpless poor. It failed under the pressure of urban population, replaced by the New Poor Law of 1834, which criminalised poverty to control the mob. But the Old Poor Law persisted in rural England and Wales, and had shaped Convict transportation, which for all its savage cruelty, was dedicated to the training and reformation of offenders. Here the state assumed a responsibility for the education and health care convicts, and in the colonies with large ageing populations of emancipists, to provide institutionalised care for the aged and infirm. British people expected government to look out for them.

The British state, while submitting under duress to the extension of the franchise, began to reach into workplaces and homes, protecting child and female workers. The sanitary movement, and later, the regulation of food and

drink against adulteration, were powerful interventions by the state in the free operation of the market. Indeed, in British societies, despite the official beliefs in markets and invisible hands, the modern state was being expanded by its increasing powers over public health. Parliamentary government offered powerful tools to the reformer in its powers of investigation through Royal Commissions and Select Parliamentary Committees. Bi-partisan members summoned not only experts, but men of business, working men and women, policemen, clergy, school teachers, community leaders, unionists, to testify and be recorded in their own words. Legislation for education, charitable care, factory regulation, health and housing, taxes and tariffs, would have some evidence base to counter vested interests.

Moreover, the former penal colonies of Australia inherited a practice of centralised government, where the law sought to regulate conditions of life. Convict hospitals, orphanages and reformatories were repurposed in New South Wales, Tasmania and Queensland into public hospitals, mental asylums, industrial schools and benevolent asylums. In the non-penal colonies of South Australia and Victoria, similar institutions were quickly established as voluntary operations. Old age and invalidism were never criminalised as in the English workhouse. On the goldfields the miners raised funds to build hospitals, benevolent and lunatic asylums for old age and destitution in every town.

All this meant, that the place for Labour to be was parliament. They could change the nation through Government. As craft unions flourished, especially in Melbourne where the building of the metropolis provided work for skilled workers, in the goldfields the emergence of deep lead mining called for greater skill and closer collaboration between workers under and over ground. Miners began to transition to wage labour. Thus, the goldfields became the cradle of union organisation from the early 1870s. The Miners' Town Right, arguably the most important outcome of Eureka for the working class, provided social housing that could be passed down families, preserved for widows and deserted wives, single daughters, and the elderly. Some town rights would sustain regional families for over a century.

After 1860, the story changed as the other colonies were populated by government assisted immigration, above all to Queensland, where between 1861 and 1900, just 10,000 of its 223,074 new arrivals were self-funded. In NSW assisted immigration leavened the convict-descended population, but in Tasmania, over forty years, merely 4317 government assisted immigrants arrived. In South Australia they comprised just over half, while Victoria saw just 52,000 out of 403,000. These demographic patterns shaped the political character of the colonies and states for the next one hundred years. Assisted immigrants meant a settler population with no capital, where people had to make their way among strangers. Social networks had to be forged anew by single men of working age unable to settle. Often condemned to years of casual work and itinerancy, mates substituted for families. In Victoria and New South Wales by the early 1880s, the children of the gold rush generation and the convict emancipists had often been lured into

the workforce before they could acquire trade skills. The drought and depression of the 1890s would set them on a track to increasing unemployment.

While skilled workers would be earning comparatively well by the 1880s, the old, the injured, and the young were outside the workers' settlement. They had been highly geographically mobile since the 1850s. The selection acts had generated a new rural poverty for many, compounded by large families where sons struggled to find a secure land for themselves. Succeeding generations in the cities and on the land, struggled to find their place. But because they travelled, they heard stories and were exposed to ideas. They were curiously rootless compared to British rural people, connected to villages and customary relationships for generations, even after internal migration to cities or going 'on tramp'.

And in pubs and around campfires, they read or listened to the words of writers like Dickens, and later, Bellamy, Blatchford, Ruskin and Morris who shaped a young miner in Creswick, William Guthrie Spence. He would go on to lead the Amalgamated Miners' Association, and Australasian Shearers' Union, organising itinerant, seasonal workers across the colonies, the so-called 'New Unionism'. It was a protracted process but working people would come to exercise their political power. The stonemason and former Scottish Chartist Charles Jardine Don won election to the Victorian lower house in 1859, claiming to represent the "the horny-handed sons of toil". Other workers were occasionally elected, such as Angus Cameron to the inner-city electorate of West Sydney in 1874. These experiments were by and large unsuccessful without a dedicated Labor Party. But trades and labour councils emerged in the major cities and towns and the industry-wide 'new' unions of factory workers, wharfies, miners, and maritime and pastoral labourers and female workers such as tailoresses presaged a new, more cohesive political identity. Their leaders argued that all Australian toilers shared common interests. As Spence said, "Every tradesman in the colony had an interest in his fellow-tradesmen, however dissimilar their respective callings might be", even if his union famously barred allegedly cheap 'coloured' labour from their ranks, especially the Chinese, and led the campaign to exclude them entirely from the colonies. Nonetheless, by 1890 the Australian workforce was the world's most unionised. And if working men could combine in the workplace to better their lives, why not in parliament? The 1884 Intercolonial Trade Union Congresses specifically supported "direct parliamentary representation" because "class questions require class knowledge to state them, and class sympathies to fight for them". Freedom on the Wallaby: Labor's early genius was to enlist these roving men, and the men and women of the industrial inner-cities, which was why at Federation, you only needed to be white and have a post-office address to enrol to vote and, by 1891, place a ballot for the new 'Labor parties'.



Intercolonial Trades Union Congress, Melbourne, 1884. Delegates included Ellen Cresswell, a pioneer female Australian trade unionist. A widow and mother of three children she led the Victorian tailoresses' union. Cresswell was one of the two first female delegates to the Intercolonial Trade Union Congress (a forerunner of the ACTU) in 1884. She told congress: 'working men and women' were 'the bees who made the honey—they were the producers— and should not allow their resources to be used against themselves. What would capital do without labour?' Cresswell is seated third row, fifth from the left.

Janet McCalman is a social historian, known for Struggletown (1984) on Richmond (and still in print), Journeyings (1993) on the Melbourne middle class, and Sex and Suffering (1998), on the Royal Women's Hospital, Her latest is Vandemonians: the suppressed history of colonial Victoria. With Emma Dawson, she edited What Happens Next, reconstructing Australia after COVID. She taught for 22 years at the University of Melbourne and joined the ALP in 1971.

1894 The Australian Workers' Union and the Fall and Rise of early Labor

Nick Dyrenfurth



1894 was an intense year and turning point in the history of the Australian labour movement. Queensland and New South Wales were rocked by the second, often violent shearers' strike which ended in defeat for the strikers, inspiring Banjo Patterson's famous poem 'Waltzing Matilda'. Less dramatic, but no less consequential, was the consummation of the merger between the rural and regionally centred Amalgamated Shearers' Union and General Labourers Union, which formally brought into being the 'Australian Workers Union'.

The AWU merger had profound implications for the nascent Australian Labor Party, in the immediate period and long-term. The colonial Labor parties burst onto the political scene during the early 1890s. But was the party born in Barcaldine or Balmain? One version of Labor's birth certificate asserts that 3000 shearers formed the party under the 'Tree of Knowledge' in the central west Queensland town, during a bitter pastoral strike in 1891. Another, however, claims that Labor first took root in the very different soils of working-class Balmain in Sydney during the same year. Indeed, the Sydney Trades and Labor Council officially formed a Labor Party in March 1891. Unionists, socialists and other radicals organised 'Labor Electoral Leagues' (now called local branches). A few months later, the new party's candidates won a surprising 35 of the 141 seats on offer in the lower house and 'balance of power' between Free Traders and Protectionists. For these stunned opponents of working-class politics, "Monstrous apparitions now stalked brazenly through their sacred corridors, from which the vulgar multitude had been hitherto rigidly excluded."

Labor's parliamentary battle in Queensland was gruelling. Some workers were sacked simply for being Labor candidates. However, Labor won a series of by-elections ahead of the 1893 general election, at which it secured 16 out of 72 seats. At around the same time the United Labor

Party and the Progressive Political League were formed in South Australia and Victoria, colonies with strong liberal pedigrees which hampered their development. Owing to the weakness of unionism, no Tasmanian Labor party existed at all before 1900. Western Australia's Labor Party, initially known as the Progressive Political League, fared little better. As the decade progressed Labor parties enjoyed decidedly mixed fortunes. In NSW, by the time of the 1898 election, Labor polled a disastrous 15 per cent of the vote. There and elsewhere, there was a strong possibility of Labor not surviving in its then form – it was not preordained to form state and federal governments over its storied 133-year history.

The reasons for Labor's struggles were twofold. First, here was an inexperienced and often fractious party dealing with institutionalised, powerful vested interests. After electors sent them into parliament, Labor representatives often found themselves divided. These schisms owed much to Labor's novel conception of party democracy. In theory, working-class voters would select candidates, frame policy and coordinate campaigns through their branches. Labor MPs were to be delegates implementing the party's platform, determined collectively at an annual conference, rather than autonomous agents exercising independent judgement. Internal democracy was also deemed necessary in parliament. NSW Labor's first 'caucus' meeting in 1891 resolved that MPs were required to sign a 'pledge' binding them to majority decisions and voting as a bloc, a break from existing parliamentary practice.

This attempt to import the ethos of union solidarity into parliamentary politics met with resistance from within and without. In December 1891 NSW Labor split over the question of free trade versus protection, the called 'the fiscal issue'. Unions disaffiliated and members left the party in disgust. NSW Labor contested the 1894 election with two groups of candidates: 'Solidarities', who accepted the pledge, and 'Independent' Laborites, who rejected it. Labor's vote collapsed – just 15 'Solidarities' were elected to a lower house of 141 – but the result was a more united party. Second, owing to the lingering effects of a world depression and the failure of several large-scale strikes, unions were weak during the late 1890s, representing some 5 per cent to 10 per cent of the workforce. Working-class politics in the years around the turn of the century were inhibited by a dearth of solidarity outside parliament. Labor couldn't simply take for granted that workers would be its natural supporters: they had to be won over. Coalitions

needed to be formed, not just between classes but within the working class itself, and across diverse industries, occupations and regions. "It's votes that count," urged NSW Labor MP W.J. Ferguson in 1897. Ferguson had served a gaol term for his role in the Broken Hill strike of 1892. "Two-thirds of the Sydney workers are not prepared to go to the lengths of Trade Unionism, and Socialism is a step beyond." Enemy propaganda also stymied Labor's progress. In each colony it was opposed by a hostile press that accused Labor of waging the 'class war'. Yet many itinerant workers were denied the right to vote in the first place. Undemocratic obstacles such as plural voting, whereby wealthy men qualified to vote in every electorate they owned property, weekday elections, and appointed or propertied upper houses, also slowed Labor's progress. Anti-Labor politicians soon discovered that their Labor counterparts were on the whole hard-working, respectable men and often teetotal Christians, but this did not stop the press portraying them as dangerous socialists intent on eradicating private property and seeking revolution.

Enter stage left – or right as some critics might have it – the rural and regionally-strong Australian Workers Union. The Australasian Shearers Union had been formed in June 1886 in the central Victorian town of Ballarat. Among the hardy shearers present that evening was a rather unlikely attendee, William Guthrie Spence, then a respected local councillor based in near-by Creswick and a Methodist lay-preacher. Ironically, as the leader of mining unionists, Spence's previous tools of trade were a shovel and pick, rather than a set of shears.



William Guthrie Spence, co-founder of the AWU, 1908

Within the space of five weeks, the new union enrolled 1500 members drawn from across the southern colonies of NSW, Victoria and South Australia. The next year, the ASU merged with several small shearing unions located in western NSW to become the Amalgamated Shearers' Union_of Australasia, electing Spence as its inaugural

President and Temple as secretary. By February 1890, the ASU claimed a membership of 20000. In 1894, following another merger, this time between the ASU and the General Labourers Union, the Australian Workers Union was born. The choice of the word "Australia" would, according to one of the union's co-founders and later Labor MP, Arthur Rae, writing under the pseudonym 'Hank Morgan' two years earlier, express "something real, comprehensive, and national", appealing to the 'common-sense, the sympathies and the patriotism of everyone who is either a native born or adopted citizen of this great land.' "[T]he word "Workers", he noted, "is pure plain English and includes every class of Labor which can minister to the comforts, the necessities, or the legitimate amusement of the people."

Over the next two decades, Australian workers from a variety of industries were drawn into the AWU's orbit. At the outset of the Great War, it was clearly the nation's largest, wealthiest and most powerful union. The AWU's success owed much to the hard work of its leadership and loyalty of its members. It also spoke to an almost religious faith in unionism among both groups. In Spence's words, unions were "part of a great moral and social force and its great progress was direct evidence that it had right upon its side." No other union has penetrated so widely and deeply into the geographically and occupationally-diverse Australian workforce. Until the 1960s, the AWU's numerical strength was unrivalled domestically. Its political influence, coverage of rural industries and so-called 'bush ethos' also gave the union a unique character in international terms. Across the twentieth century the AWU played a disproportionate role in shaping the fortunes of the ALP. In 1949, the Brisbane version of The Worker newspaper boasted, in equal parts exaggeration and justification, that: "It is the Australian Workers' Union which is largely responsible for the return of Federal and State Labor Governments. The Australian Workers' Union in the main provides the network of organisation. Its secretaries and organisers, representatives and rank and file are everlastingly preaching the gospel of Labor in the places where votes most count."

In the 1890s the AWU played an important role in moderating the party's platform and leading political organising in key electorates. Frustrated by internal divisions, a coalition of urban politicians and AWU bush unionists slowly took over NSW Labor, forcing dogmatic, radical socialists from its ranks and imposed discipline upon the parliamentarians. This is not to suggest there were not radical reformists. To be sure, most Labor believed the prevailing capitalist system was untenable and must be reformed or 'civilised' through democratic, constitutional means; a spirit of co-operation and production for human need would inevitably replace the capitalistic ethos of competition and profit. Public ownership of major economic resources, the creation of state-owned competitors to private firms, and the redistribution of wealth to less affluent citizens through higher taxation of the wealthy, would reduce inequality. Many thought of this as 'state socialism'; others proclaimed it to be extending the Australian ethos of 'mateship'. But there was a conflict within the labour movement over how best to achieve 'socialism in

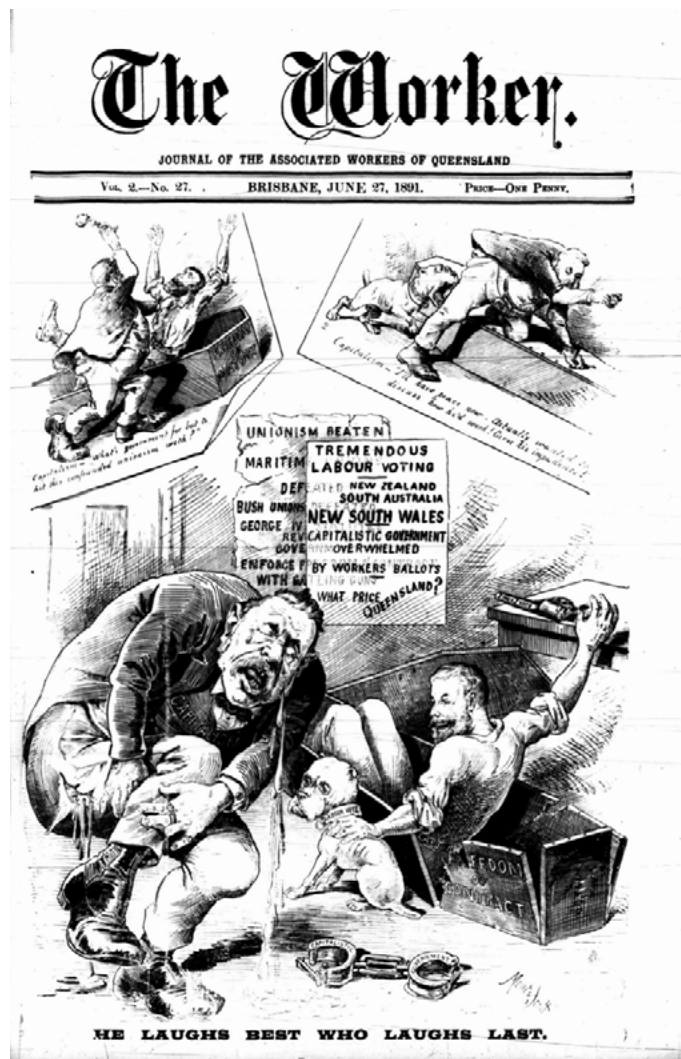
our time'. Pragmatists committed to gradual reform battled militants who insisted that Labor proclaim its socialism explicitly and pursue it immediately. The pragmatists triumphed, at least for now. After the poor showing of Labor nominees in the 1897 Federation convention elections, the nationalisation plank was purged from the NSW Labor platform by the time of its January 1898 conference.

Part of the impulse against the socialist objective was a realisation that appealing to blue-collar workers alone would be electoral folly. Laborites declared that theirs was the 'people's party', standing for all that was distinctively Australian: democracy, mateship and egalitarianism. But who were 'the people'? Primarily they were white British-Australians, citizens of an emergent New World nation whose values stood in stark contrast to the poverty, violence and class inequity of the Old World. They were also "producers", as distinct from "parasites". Andrew Fisher, a then Queensland Labor parliamentarian, distinguished between the "labouring classes" and the "speculating classes", with the latter comprising "systematic swindlers" who promoted "land booms" and paper fortunes; "commercial men" whose low standard of morality was attuned to the age; and "squatters and western landlords" who exploited and manipulated the nomadic bush worker." All toilers, whether working with hand or head, needed to rise up against exploitative employers, unscrupulous bankers and land monopolists. Labor's populist appeal was especially aimed at rural electorates: the dispersed populations of Australia's wheat belts, mining towns and pastoral hinterland. With the help of the AWU, NSW Labor attracted particularly strong support from small landholders, men who often supplemented their farm income by working part-time on the properties of wealthier neighbours: 19 of the 35 seats captured in 1891 were country electorates. Rural domination was even greater by the mid-to-late 1890s.

Labor and union men and women made large sacrifices to ensure Labor's survival in 'old' Australia. They toured the country, recruiting members, founding branches and generally spruiking Labor's cause. Many endured financial insecurity. J.C. 'Chris' Watson was one such man. Born to a Chilean father of German descent and New Zealand mother of Irish heritage, Watson left school aged 10. He migrated to Australia at 19 and worked briefly as a stable hand at *Government House in Sydney* before plying his trade as a compositor and becoming a union official. During the 1890s Watson served as TLC president, chairman of NSW Labor and, from 1894, the MP for Young in rural New South Wales. No great orator, Watson had a tactful demeanour and hard-headed idealism which won him respect – and his party support. His experience as an AWU political organiser stood him in good stead.

Cultural institutions also expressed Labor's aspirations. Union-backed publications emerged, again driven by the AWU: the Worker newspapers, first in Brisbane and later in Sydney; the short-lived Wagga Hummer; Adelaide's Weekly Herald, Hobart's *Clipper*, Melbourne's Tocsin and Perth's Westralian Worker; and the first labour daily, the Barrier Daily Truth, in Broken Hill. Poems by party sympathisers

such as Henry Lawson inspired workers to action. Worker cartoonists Monty Scott, Jim Case and Claude Marquet thrilled readers by depicting heroic unionists battling bloated capitalists dubbed 'Mr Fat Man'. One admirer later wrote that cartoonists were "as dangerous to fat as the ballot-box itself".



Montagu Scott, 'He Laughs Best Who Laughs Last', Brisbane Worker, 27 June 1891, p. 1.

As the 19th century drew to a close Fat's early demise seemed most unlikely. Labor was still distrusted by those who it claimed to represent; it polled poorly in the major cities, Sydney and Melbourne, in late-1890s elections. The party was also divided over Britain's prosecution of the Boer War in South Africa between 1899 and 1902. In the meantime, Labor's still uncertain standing was demonstrated by its inability to play any meaningful part in shaping the Federation of the Australian colonies. Many Laborites believed the proposed Constitution was insufficiently democratic, if not a conspiracy to kill off Labor. "Capitalists rejoiced," noted Spence in his 1909 AWU published book, *Australia's Awakening*, "in the hope that now they would have a Parliament to which Labor could never attain." By the 1899 election, however, Labor was the second-largest parliamentary party in Queensland. Shortly afterwards, former miner Anderson Dawson formed the world's first ever Labor government. It lasted just one week before its opponents found themselves in sufficient agreement to

consign it to the footnotes of history. But its very existence was world changing and suggestive of further triumphs.

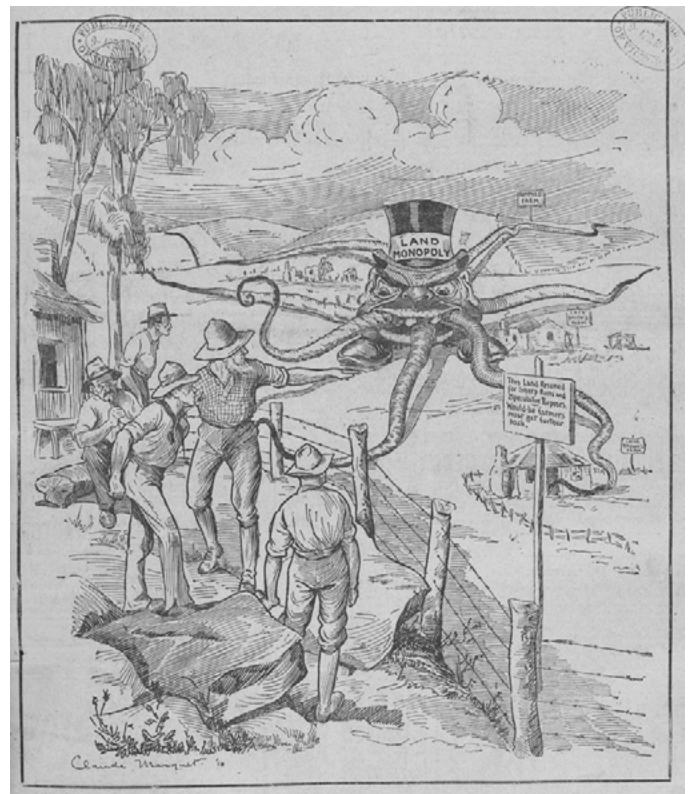
To be sure, the new national polity, combined with improved economic conditions, rapidly revived Labor fortunes. In 1900 the new federal party adopted a four-point platform: electoral reform; total exclusion of coloured and other undesirable races; old age pensions; and the initiative and referendum – the latter a plank allowing ordinary citizens to raise contentious issues and then vote on them. In the first election of 1901 Labor won 24 of 111 seats across the House of Representatives and Senate, securing the balance of power between Free Traders and Protectionists in the former. Adopting the NSW model of caucus supremacy, federal Labor soon dropped the referendum plank in favour of a citizen army and compulsory arbitration. With representatives from every state, they were a colourful bunch, including miners, journalists, a felt hatter, an American-born insurance salesman and even a clergyman. Of these comparatively young, self-educated men, 13 were overseas-born, including seven Scots. Watson was elected by caucus as the first leader of the new federal parliamentary Labor party, with the half-blind South Australian ex-wrestler Gregor McGregor his deputy in the Senate.

Watson forged an informal coalition with the Liberal Protectionist governments of Edmund Barton and, from 1903, Alfred Deakin. Both Labor and the Deakinites believed in using the state to regulate market capitalism to provide a protected standard of living (sometimes called the 'living wage'). Australian industries would be protected to secure plentiful work with adequate wages. Many valuable social and political reforms were implemented during this period, especially during Deakin's second term (1905–08). Yet Labor favoured a more heavily interventionist state than did the Liberals, with an enlarged role for government-owned enterprises. This was an aspiration it was prepared to realise by altering the Constitution. And Labor's union links inevitably meant that it was determined upon tilting the balance of power in the workplace in favour of employees.

Australia in this era has been called a 'social laboratory'; innovative experiments in statecraft were said to be creating one of the most egalitarian societies on earth. And after 1902 women voters won the right to shape the fledgling Commonwealth's destiny. Perhaps the issue Labor pushed hardest was White Australia: legislation that excluded non-white immigrants and repatriated Melanesian or 'Kanakan' labourers who had been working in the northern sugar industry. Likewise, Indigenous people were excluded from the benefits of citizenship; they were supposedly doomed to extinction.

Federal Labor styled itself as Australia's true national party. In part this was to deflect ongoing accusations of class warfare and sectionalism. Labor's leadership team of Watson, Fisher and Hughes, in conjunction with the labour press, relentlessly argued that only Labor could be trusted to put the interests of Australia first, building a prosperous and egalitarian nation. Watson thought "there was no party in Australia likely to push the interests of Australia as

well as the Labor Party." From 1905 this nation-building ethos was institutionalised by the federal party's official objective: "The cultivation of an Australian sentiment based upon the maintenance of racial purity and the development ... of an enlightened and self-reliant community." Three years later the workers' party officially became known as the Australian Labor Party. The 1905 federal conference decreed that Labor's socialist objective merely desired to secure "the full results of their industry to all producers by the collective ownership of monopolies, and the extension of the industrial and economic functions of the State and Municipality". The electoral message was clear: Labor was no band of dangerous revolutionaries, nor a threat to the institutions of religion, marriage and family, as some conservatives alleged. Laborites did not disavow socialism entirely. Some claimed it had already arrived. In 1908 Fisher boasted: "We are all Socialists now, and indeed the only qualification you hear from anybody is probably that he is 'not an extreme Socialist'." But moderation did not go unchallenged, and some worried that precocious success would douse the flames of radicalism.



Claude Marquet, 'The Land Grabber', *Worker* (Sydney), 7 April 1910.

While Labor's politically astute combination of raucous nationalism and moderate socialism helped account for its success, its organisational culture was also critical. By the mid-1900s every state had an extensive network of branches, a state-based executive and a regular – usually annual – conference. There was, as yet, no national executive, but these sovereign state parties came together at a triennial federal conference. Labor also benefited from its connections with the resurgent unions, which covered nearly a third of the workforce by 1911. More informal alliances, such as the growing support for Labor among Catholics,

sometimes encouraged by members of the church hierarchy (such as Cardinal Moran), further buttressed the party's electoral appeal. In the public sphere, the labour press continued to flourish – in Brisbane the union-owned Daily Standard began appearing in 1912.

Above all Labor was a local affair. The mass party's success owed much to its rank-and-file members, many of whom devoted their lives to the Labor cause. Branches sprang up in most suburbs and towns across the nation. Members didn't merely work for their favoured candidate come ballot time, but debated each other with vigour at branch meetings, raised vital funds and actively sought to shape party policy, sometimes by rebuking the parliamentarians. Laborites prized their party membership, and as they worked and socialised together they created a distinctive fellowship. On-the-ground Labor became embedded within tight-knit communities; at meetings or via door-knocking, unionists, friends, fellow church-goers and neighbours were cajoled either to join or to vote for Labor.

With the help of the AWU and the growth of unionism, the ALP went from strength to strength. In the states, too, Labor was doing increasingly well. It governed in Western Australia over 1904–05, in South Australia in a coalition between 1905 and 1909. In Tasmania, the Campbell Town-based AWU not only enrolled pastoral workers and inspired timber workers to form their own union but played a crucial role in the reviving the fortunes of the state Labor party. It provided invaluable assistance wooing rural workers and founded local branches, in large part laying the foundations for the (minority) Labor government of Jono Earle in 1909. In Victoria, where Labor's growth was particularly slow, the AWU played a similar role. In 1902, following NSW's lead, Victorian Labor delegated its organising work to the AWU in country districts. Three years later, the AWU formally affiliated with the Victorian branch and from that moment on virtually controlled preselections in rural and regional seats. In 1908 the AWU appointed Jim Scullin, formerly a grocer, as its Victorian political organiser. He vastly increased the number of branches in the bush, but the left-wing Victorian branch lacked broader support in the non-metropolitan electorate.

As the Victorian example demonstrated the fortunes of the two great labour organisations had become intimately interwoven. Both party and union supported the ideology of 'labourism' – a belief that the election of reformist Labor governments, alongside union activism, was the best means of bettering the lot of the male worker and his family. More and more AWU leaders found their way into state and federal parliaments as Labor MPs. To AWU national secretary and later NSW Labor MP Donald Macdonell's mind this was a natural development, as only such men "who by hard practical experience in the shearing shed and other kinds of bush labor can really understand and voice the needs and aspirations of bush men." In turn, Labor was predisposed to take seriously the union's claims. Large-scale programs of public works, preference for unionists, and extensions to arbitration, were but some of the union-friendly policies which emerged. While arbitration, mergers and economic prosperity played important roles, support

for the union grew as its branches, organiser and leaders, and AWU-aligned politicians become embedded within their communities and localities, particularly in outback and regional centres, from the Victorian mining town of Bendigo in Victoria to the sugar plantations of Bundaberg in central Queensland. These were but a handful of what became known as 'union towns', working-class communities where to join the AWU, or for that matter any union, and vote for Labor at election time, was seen as natural as breathing air.

Labor crusaders believed their party was destined for greatness. Spence's *Australia's Awakening* brashly announced that Labor was now the "dominant factor" in politics. Labor had been progressing faster than anyone could have imagined a decade before. Its primary vote nearly doubled at the 1903 election. To use Deakin's famous cricketing analogy, 'three elevens' – Free Trade, Protection and Labor – now occupied the parliamentary field. No single party had a majority, and Deakin continued in office with Labor support. The Liberal-Labor alliance soon came under increasing strain, though, as the 'fiscal issue' began to resolve itself in favour of protection. Deakin's refusal to extend the principle of arbitration to state employees, especially railwaymen, exposed the limits of his reformist liberalism. He also had a deep dislike of Labor's working-class 'machine' politics of caucus, pledge and conference. For its part, Labor was increasingly determined to govern in its own right. What happened next in federal politics would change Australia irrevocably.

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1904 Chris Watson and the world's first national Labor government

Ross McMullin

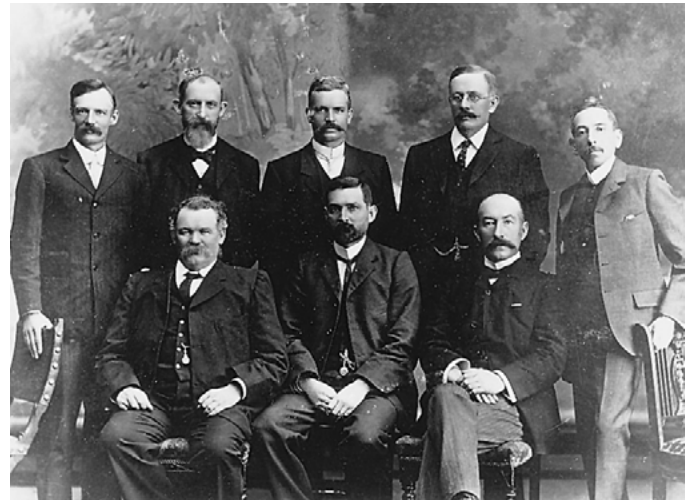


The defining characteristic of the initial phase of federal parliament was that throughout its first decade no party held a majority in either chamber. The parliament sitting after the 1903 election was no exception, Prime Minister Alfred Deakin lost a vote in the House of Representatives industrial relations in April 1904 and resigned. The Opposition Leader, George Reid, expected to succeed him, but Deakin advised the Governor-General to anoint Chris Watson, and the federal Labor leader was formally commissioned on 23 April 1904.

This was an extraordinary development. Nowhere in the world had a labour or socialist party ever formed a national government. Labor had tasted office in Queensland but for only a week, as the unheard-of phenomenon of a Labor government prompted the temporarily divided non-Labor forces to realign hastily to remove it; the ministers who barely had a chance to open the files before being turfed out were not governing the nation.

The government to be led by Chris Watson would be. The 37-year-old compositor who had earned a crust shovelling manure at Government House was not only about to become the first labour prime minister in the world. He would be one of the youngest prime ministers in the British Empire since Pitt the Younger took office in 1783. Caucus agreed to give Watson "a free hand" in the formation of his ministry. The Labor principle that caucus should elect the ministers was not then accepted practice, though it soon would be. Watson invited two certain inclusions, his close colleague Billy Hughes and a widely admired South Australian, Egerton Batchelor, to join him in the selection process. Labor's Senate leader Gregor McGregor, a redoubtable former labourer and wrestler, was an unsurprising choice although he was practically blind. H.B. Higgins, a Deakinite Protectionist and prominent barrister, was included as Attorney-General. A pair of Queensland ex-miners, Andy Dawson and Andrew

Fisher, were chosen, together with Hugh Mahon, a journalist with a "talent for invective" whose devotion to the cause of Irish nationalism had resulted in his imprisonment in Dublin with Charles Parnell.



The Watson Ministry, the world's first national Labor government, 1904.

The pioneering ministers were subjected to a tsunami of fervent hostility even before they were sworn in. Critics in parliament, newspapers and elsewhere regarded the concept of a national Labor government as unthinkable. To them, the very idea that the nation was about to be governed by a cabinet containing a compositor, miners, a blind labourer and an Irish fanatic, together with an umbrella-mender and odd-job-man (Hughes), was preposterous. The Watson government "will exist entirely on sufferance", sniffed *The Argus*, and "has no claim on an extended life". The *Sydney Morning Herald* concurred, scorning the sentiment that Watson was entitled to a fair trial to show what he could do: "Why should he be given time?" it thundered. For sustained vitriol, though, the *Maitland Daily Mercury* was in a class of its own. Watson's ministry was "such an unthinkable monstrosity of a Government", it fumed, and another tirade followed two days later:

To call the Ministry a Government is, of course, a flagrant misnomer, as in no respect can so grotesque and absolutely unique a body claim so distinguished a title ... To call this preposterous production a Government is ridiculous, and would be laughable were it not for the painful pitilessness of having so monstrous a travesty administering the affairs of a great country.

This bombardment reinforced the Watson government's vulnerability. Manoeuvring began immediately to remove it while the blizzard of press animosity continued. Lacking a majority in both parliamentary chambers, the government was under relentless pressure. Getting legislation enacted was almost impossible. In these daunting circumstances Watson concluded that his main task was clear. He and his ministers had to show that Labor could govern. They had to demonstrate that a competent Labor government was not inconceivable or preposterous. This objective suited Watson. He was an instinctive moderate with an amiable personality, a leader of uncommon ability and unflagging affability who tended to get on harmoniously with practically everyone. Watson was acclaimed by those who knew him best, like journalist Alfred Buchanan: "He had poise, tact, foresight, firmness, judgment, and self-control. He had along with everything else a natural unforced dignity, which everyone recognised and respected."

Parliament kept sitting, challenges kept coming, and crises kept recurring. But the government survived. Watson and Hughes had to scramble desperately at times and make unpalatable concessions, but the government stayed in office. As days turned to weeks and then months, Australians realised that contrary to some predictions the sky had not fallen in. Riot, revolution and ruin had not eventuated. The government's administration, in fact, was distinctly impressive. Too impressive, in fact, for Labor's opponents. They came up with a dodgy parliamentary stunt in August, which led to the Watson government's narrow defeat in a vital vote in the House of Representatives relating to preference to unionists. Watson resigned, and his willingness to relinquish office on an issue of principle was widely praised in Labor circles. The socialist newspaper Tocsin's reaction was typical:

Every true friend of Labour must experience a sensation of exultation that the Watson Government kept the flag flying to the last. Ministers conducted themselves throughout their short term of office with the caution which should be observed by men treading new ground ... Where compromise was possible, they met their opponents, but when principle was attacked they nailed their flag to the mast, and went down with the ship.

Watson had achieved his main objective. During his four months in office Australians had become accustomed to the idea of an effective national Labor government. As a result, when Labor returned to office in 1908, this was a less startling and controversial development. Watson had resigned as FPLP leader, and his successor, Andrew Fisher, was the incoming prime minister. Yet again, though, Labor would have to govern without a majority in either the House of Representatives or the Senate. With the principle of caucus election of Labor ministries now established practice, all Watson's 1904 ministers who were still available were included — Fisher himself, Hughes, McGregor, Batchelor and Mahon. They were joined by the capable and likeable member for Yarra, Frank Tudor, Senators George Pearce (WA) and Josiah Thomas (NSW), and the highly strung MHR for Hindmarsh, Jim Hutchison. Fisher's steadfast adherence to Labor priorities was soon on display. A sudden scare

spread about Britain's inadequate naval capacity in the face of Germany's burgeoning power, and a fervent campaign demanded that Australia should fund the urgent creation of a modern battleship to help Britain regain its superiority (as the New Zealand government agreed to do immediately). Prime Minister Fisher, however, was unmoved by the hysteria: his party's policy was to create an Australian navy, not to send money to England to strengthen theirs. Labor's second national government managed to last twice as long as the first before it too was removed by its parliamentary adversaries. This time, though, there was a fundamental difference — Labor's opponents, previously divided into separate parties by the tariff question, had decided to proceed with a formal merger known as the 'fusion'.



Chris Watson, Australia's 3rd prime minister, 1904.

The upshot was clear. Federal politics had become much more straightforward. There were no longer three separate parties, but two. The decade of minority ministries, of inter-party manoeuvring and flirtation, of negotiating temporary alliances to enact legislation — all this was over. It was now simply Labor versus non-Labor. The different political environment was dramatically confirmed at the 1910 federal election. Labor under Fisher exulted in a landslide triumph. The voters made it clear what they thought of the cynical fusion that had been intended to thwart Labor. After no party had enjoyed a majority in either parliamentary chamber for a decade, Labor now had a clear majority in both — 41 of the 75 MPs in the House of Representatives, and 22 of the 36 senators.

This was a remarkable achievement. The Labor Party had not existed two decades earlier. As a novel political entity it had developed procedures based on ideals of

democracy and solidarity so that theoretically all party members had an equal voice in its direction. Under Fisher, who epitomised the virtues of that structure, Labor exuded competence, trustworthiness and stability. And it had now become the first national labour government in the world with a majority in both houses of parliament. Fisher, Hughes, Batchelor and McGregor became federal ministers for the third time. Pearce, Thomas and Tudor were also re-elected by caucus. The cabinet newcomers were Victorian senator Ted Findley, unconventional King O'Malley from Tasmania, and the MHR for Kalgoorlie, 30-year-old Charlie Frazer, one of Australia's youngest ever ministers. A big surprise was the omission of Hugh Mahon, who had been in both the previous federal Labor ministries; this was attributed to his frosty personality — his "snobbish coldness of demeanour would make a snake shudder". Hughes was determined to overhaul the Australian Constitution after its provisions (as interpreted by the High Court) had prevented Labor reforms. He initiated sweeping referenda proposals to extend the national government's powers over trade and commerce, labour and employment, corporations and monopolies. Pearce presided over a vigorous and wide-ranging defence program. Frazer was similarly active as Postmaster-General. Batchelor was, as ever, diligent and proficient as External Affairs minister.

The Fisher government of 1910-13, energetic and purposeful, enacted far more legislation than any of its predecessors. It introduced a land tax on big estates to provide increased scope for small-scale farming. It expanded the arbitration system. It increased welfare expenditure, widening eligibility for the old-age pension and introducing the baby bonus and invalid pensions. It created the Commonwealth Bank. It paved the way for Canberra's emergence as the new national capital. It also involved itself in lighthouses, quarantine, copyright and railways (both uniform gauges and cross-continental initiatives). While the government accumulated a fine record in office (and the economy remained buoyant under the stewardship of Fisher, who was again Treasurer as well as Prime Minister), not everything of course went according to plan. Batchelor's sudden death aged 46 was a dreadful shock. O'Malley's quirkiness was often a hindrance. The anti-Labor hostility of some newspapers remained pronounced. There was unhelpful friction with the NSW Labor government, notably concerning the 1911 referenda, which were not carried despite Hughes's dedicated campaigning. He concluded that the prospects of success would be greater if the government resubmitted them at the next federal election. This occurred in May 1913. It proved exceptionally close. Eventually it became apparent that Labor had lost the election by just one seat, and all six referenda had failed even though each had attracted more than 49% overall support. This was acutely disappointing, even though Labor had retained a clear majority in the Senate. Further setbacks followed that same year. Labor's highly promising frontbencher Charlie Frazer, who was regarded as a potential future leader, died suddenly at the age of 33. A week later, after delivering a typically spirited speech in parliament, E.A. Roberts, Labor's talented MHR for Adelaide who had replaced Batchelor in

the previous cabinet, collapsed with a fatal heart attack. He was 44.

Fiery exchanges were typical of this parliament. The new government was frustrated by Labor's Senate majority. It decided to pursue Australia's first double dissolution, which was granted by the Governor-General. Accordingly, the nation returned to the polling booths little more than a year after the 1913 election. Labor was confident of success, but during the campaign an unexpected crisis emerged that was to become transformational.

*Award-winning historian and biographer Ross McMullin wrote the commissioned ALP centenary history *The Light on the Hill: The Australian Labor Party 1891-1991*, and also *So Monstrous a Travesty: Chris Watson and the World's First National Labour Government*. His biographies include *Pompey Elliott* (which won multiple awards) and *Will Dyson: Australia's Radical Genius*, and he assembled Pompey's remarkable letters in *Pompey Elliott at War: In His Own Words*. His multi-biographies about Australia's lost generation are *Farewell, Dear People*, which was awarded the Prime Minister's Prize for Australian History, and *Life So Full of Promise*.*

1914

Andrew Fisher: from Peace to War

David Day



Andrew Fisher remains one of the least-known Labor leaders. Yet he served three times as prime minister over nearly five years, which is longer than all other Labor leaders except Bob Hawke. Although his first government was a minority one that lasted little more than six months, his other terms saw Fisher lead great nation-building governments. Among many other things, it was the Fisher Labor government that laid the foundation stone for Canberra, established the Royal Australian Navy and the Commonwealth Bank, built the transcontinental railway line and created an Australian currency. He also introduced ground-breaking social policies, including a maternity allowance for women whether they were married or not.

Fisher was leading a government that was intent on bringing white Australians together and investing them with a sense of nationhood. He was already twenty-three years old when he arrived in Australia from his native Scotland. As a teenager, he'd worked as a coal miner and been schooled in labour politics by one of the founders of the British Labour Party, Keir Hardie. Fisher may have stayed in his native Ayrshire had he not been blacklisted by employers after becoming a union official and leading a long strike.

In 1885, he went from mining coal to working in the gold mines of Gympie in South-East Queensland. There, he worked the steam engine that lifted the miners and their gold-rich quartz from the depths, while continuing his trade union activism and joining the movement that would become the Labor Party. Such was his prominence and the regard in which he was held by his fellow miners that he was elected in 1893 to the Queensland parliament. Losing his seat in 1896, he regained it in 1899, when he became a minister in a short-lived State Labor government, the first socialist government in the world.

Transferring to the federal parliament in 1901, Fisher rose

through the ranks to become a minister in the minority government of Chris Watson in 1904, which lasted less than four months. But Labor and the union movement were on the rise. As was Fisher, with his thick Scottish accent and handsome demeanour. Becoming deputy to Watson, it was the dapper Fisher who became prime minister when Labor returned to the government benches in 1908. Again, it was a minority government, which lasted less than seven months.

That changed in 1910 when Fisher led Labor to a resounding victory in its own right, both in the House of Representatives and the Senate. No longer would the party be dependent on Deakin's Liberals to remain in power or to pass legislation. Fisher and his colleagues could now achieve their ambitions, constrained only by the clarity of their visions and the restrictions of the conservative Constitution. With workers being the majority of the population, some dreamt of Labor being able to stay in power indefinitely.

It was during Australia's first majority government that Fisher created the Australian navy, basing it on the fast torpedo destroyers that Japan had used so effectively against the Russian fleet in 1905 rather than succumbing to the pressure to provide a battleship for the Royal Navy. He reinforced local defence by introducing compulsory military training, so that Australian men could be quickly mobilised to defend the continent in the event of an invasion. And he took control of the sparsely-populated Northern Territory from South Australia, making its development a high priority.

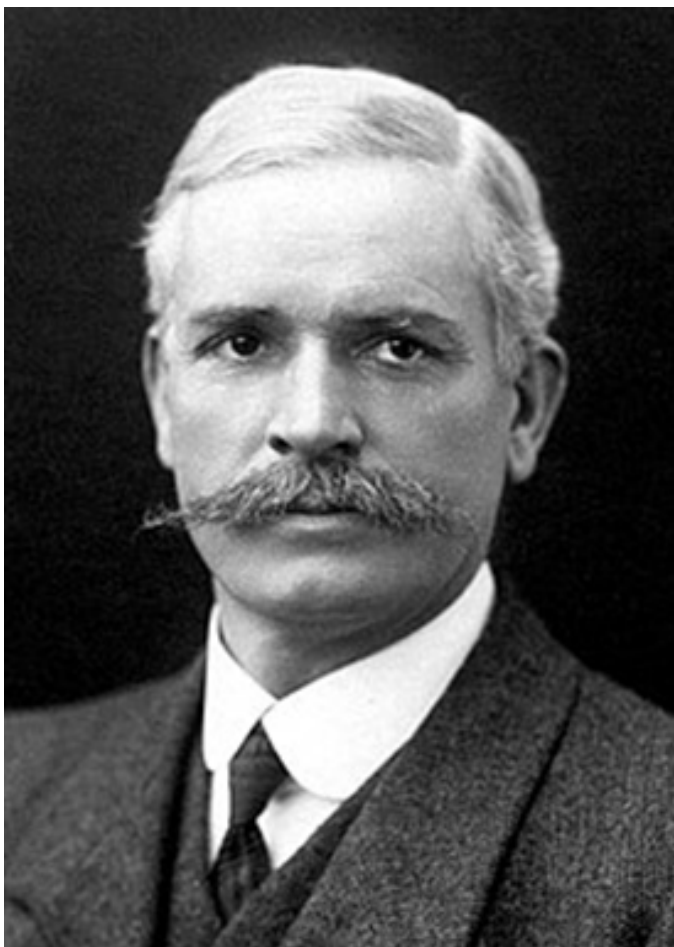
Fisher was also concerned with the symbols of nationhood. He issued a currency celebrating Australian scenes and created postage stamps portraying a kangaroo imposed on an outline of Australia rather than having the image of the British King. He used a visit to London to select a site for Australia House and ensured that the subsequent building would be decorated with Australian motifs and timbers.

With women having been granted the right to vote in Australia, and with workers enjoying a minimum wage, social reformers from Britain and elsewhere visited Australia to witness the further innovations of the Fisher government. When maternity allowances were introduced, it was Fisher, a staunch Presbyterian, who ensured that unwed mothers were also paid the benefit. This might have reflected the influence of his wife, Margaret, a staunch feminist who marched with Vida Goldstein in a massive suffragette demonstration in London.

Fisher could proclaim his government's achievements

when he went back to the people in 1913, hoping for their endorsement. He hoped, too, that they would vote in favour of six referendum proposals that would expand the power of a future Labor government to assert greater control over the economy. It may have been the uncertainty about the referenda questions that frightened some voters into the conservative camp, causing Labor to lose by just one seat while retaining its control of the Senate. Using his numbers in the Senate, Fisher blocked the anti-worker legislation of the conservative prime minister, Joseph Cook, which caused him to call another election. Ominously, it was set for 5 September 1914, just two months after Austria's Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in Sarajevo, which set off the countdown to a world war.

Instead of being able to focus on his election plans for Australia's advancement, Fisher found the campaign being increasingly dominated by far-off events that demanded his response. Would a Labor government send its forces to fight with Britain's in a European war? Prior to Federation, Fisher had opposed sending troops from Queensland to support Britain in the Boer War. This was different. The Boer War involved a fight for independence by the colonists of the Transvaal, which was a fight with which Fisher could identify. A war in Europe was something else. It would be a war between empires that could have dire consequences for Britain's more distant dominions.



Andrew Fisher, Prime Minister of the world's first majority Labor government.

While some in the labour movement opposed involvement

in a European conflict for fear that it might leave Australia vulnerable to invasion, whether by the Germans or perhaps the Japanese, Fisher could not countenance abandoning the defence of Britain, where he and many other Australians still had strong links. As prime minister, Joseph Cook made clear that his government would support Britain. Fisher followed suit. On 31 July, during an election meeting in the Victorian town of Colac, he made an unequivocal commitment in the event of him being elected prime minister, to support Britain to "our last man and our last shilling".

Fisher's ambitious deputy, the bellicose Billy Hughes, had wanted the election postponed because of the war, but neither Cook nor Fisher would countenance such a course. Cook thought he was heading for victory after committing to send an expeditionary force to support the empire. For his part, Fisher emphasised the achievements of his last government, which had made Australia better prepared for war, and pointed to his greater fitness to manage the economic challenges if the country's maritime links were cut by enemy action.

There were no opinion polls to predict the result. Only the mood of the many meetings that Fisher addressed as he traversed the continent in an exhausting itinerary by ship, train and horseback, explaining his plans for a new Labor government. This time, there were no referenda to distract voters, who simply had to decide which party was best suited to guide Australia through the crisis in which it had become immersed. To Fisher's relief, they opted overwhelmingly for Labor, giving it 31 of the 36 senators and 42 of the 75 MPs in the House of Representatives.

Fisher thought he could press ahead with Labor's election program regardless of the war. But the costs to which the country had become committed by the dispatch of an expeditionary force, along with the interruptions to its overseas trade, meant that he would be unable to build upon the historic achievements of his last government. He and his colleagues would become consumed instead with providing his promised 'last man and last shilling' for Britain and with securing the home front. While the former saw tens of thousands of Australians rush to enlist, the latter saw Attorney General Hughes locking up thousands of Australians of German or Turkish background and introducing a raft of increasingly draconian laws and regulations.

Being both prime minister and treasurer, it was Fisher's task to ensure Australia wasn't unduly burdened with war debt, which he did by using the Commonwealth Bank to raise loans in Australia rather than depend on overseas funds, and also to ensure that the enthusiasm for war didn't undermine the freedoms and social advancements for which he'd long been working. With a flood of volunteers, the question of conscription wasn't yet on the agenda, despite calls by some conservative and Labor leaders to introduce it. Those calls became more insistent after the landings at Gallipoli, which caused a slump in recruiting as shiploads of wounded soldiers arrived home.

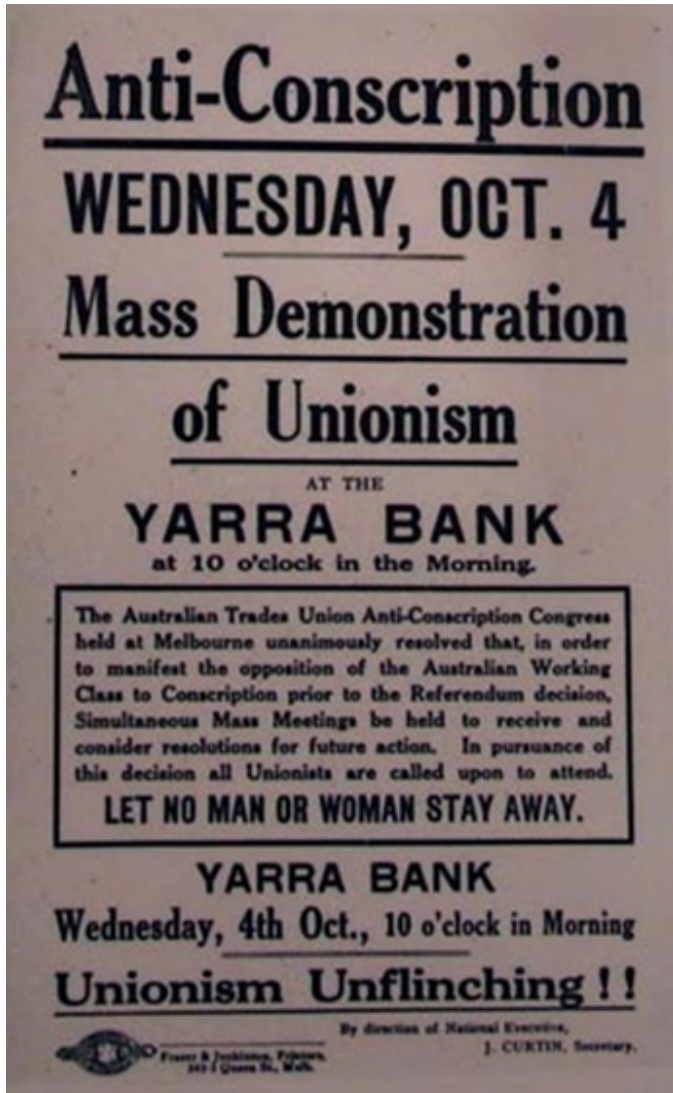
The journalist, Keith Murdoch had been sent to Gallipoli on Fisher's behalf to report on the campaign. His letter

confirmed Fisher's worst fears and raised the possibility of him being forced to resign as prime minister once the full scope of the disaster became known by Australia voters. As the calls for conscription became deafening, Fisher looked for a way out. He may have already been experiencing early intimations of the dementia that would eventually kill him. Although he was opposed on principle to conscription, he would not be able to resist the pressure from Hughes, who was an ardent proponent of the war and hungry for Fisher's job.

its membership of the British Empire and its loyalist citizenry now demanded of him. This made him receptive to pressure from Hughes to surrender the prime ministership to become High Commissioner in London.

The high commissionership might have been an influential position had Hughes not made prolonged visits to London during which Fisher was sidelined. At other times, Hughes treated Keith Murdoch as his de facto high commissioner. It was an unfortunate ending to Fisher's career, as he struggled to cope with the dementia that was clouding his mind. During his five years as Labor prime minister, he had implemented many of the progressive, post-federation hopes of the new nation, only to watch from London as Hughes tore the nation and the party apart.

David Day has written more than twenty books, including biographies of John Curtin, Ben Chifley, Paul Keating, Andrew Fisher and Maurice Blackburn. The first volume of his biography of Bob Hawke will be published this year. A fellow of the Royal Historical Society and the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia, he has served as the official historian of the Australian Customs Service and the Bureau of Meteorology and been an Australian Research Council senior research fellow at La Trobe University in Melbourne, where he is currently based.



Anti-conscription poster authorised by John Curtin, October 1916.

By September 1915, Fisher had had enough. He'd been Labor leader for eight years and prime minister for five, during which he'd fought two election campaigns in the space of a year. His health was failing, despite sailing off on a recuperative voyage to New Zealand in December 1914. He was conscious too that his finances would be imperilled if he lost the prime ministership. He had a wife and six young children to support and a mortgage to pay on the old St Kilda mansion in which his family lived, along with a cow in the garden to provide them with milk.

For several years, Fisher had held the sickly Hughes at bay, only to have the war energise his rival. Whereas Fisher had the vision and intelligence to lead Australia during the pre-war years, fashioning the new nation into a progressive mould of his making, he was less suited to the decisions that

1924 John Curtin at the ILO's 6th International Labor Conference

Bobbie Oliver



In 1924 John Curtin travelled to Geneva to represent Australia as its labor delegate at the Sixth International Labor Conference of the League of Nations, which was held from 16 June to 5 July. The International Labor Organisation (ILO) had been formed as part of the Treaty of Versailles at the end of World War I, in the belief that lasting peace could be achieved only if based on social justice. The ILO held an annual conference. In 1924, 40 nations participated from Europe, South and Latin America, and the British Empire. Few came from Africa or Asia. The United States of America and Russia were both absent, neither being members of the League of Nations. Although each country was expected to send two government representatives, and one representative each for workers and employers, 24 countries, including Australia, sent incomplete delegations. Several sent no workers' representatives. This elicited strong protests from the Workers' Group.

Curtin was 39 years old; this was the first of only two overseas trips that he took during his lifetime. The Australian Prime Minister, Stanley Bruce, had asked the Trades and Labor Council in each state to nominate a representative. Curtin was the Western Australian nominee. The government's decision to appoint him may have been influenced by the fact that he was well-known in Victorian Labor circles before moving to Perth in 1917 to take up editorship of the *Westralian Worker*.

The Bruce government gave little priority to the ILO Conference. Apart from Curtin, they appointed William Thomas as employers' delegate, Sir Joseph Cook, Australian High Commissioner in London, as the government delegate, and Major O.C.W. Fuhrman, the High Commissioner's Secretary, as the delegation's secretary. They had no advisers and Cook never attended any of the sessions. His place was taken by Major Fuhrman, whose service Curtin praised in his post-conference report to the Prime Minister.

The government's poor support of the delegation stands in stark contrast with similar nations. Argentina, for example, provided four delegates, five advisers and a secretary. Britain's four delegates had 27 support staff. Consequently, the Australians found it impossible to attend many of the sessions.

Sir Joseph Cook's absence also hampered the Australian delegation. Australia was criticised for having failed to ratify Conventions agreed upon at previous conferences. As Cook was not present, the delegates had no access to any data explaining why the Commonwealth government had not ratified previous Conventions. Curtin complained of "Australia's invidious record of default", which was "an infraction under the Peace Treaty". Ratifying the Conventions and Recommendations would not require substantial changes to Australia's existing industrial conditions. Australia and other Member-states continuing to avoid their obligations would result in Conference decisions being merely "abstract resolutions".

In the absence of advisers, the Australian delegates had no expert assistance to prepare and present "the Australian view on vital industrial and generally complicated issues". Even so, the Australian delegates managed to make a significant contribution. There were four main issues: developing facilities for the utilisation of workers' spare time; equality of treatment for national and foreign workers regarding workers' compensation for accidents; the weekly suspension of work for 24 hours in the glass-manufacturing processes where tank furnaces were used, and night work in bakeries. Delegates were also to consider Reports on Anthrax and Unemployment. Both Curtin and Thomas succeeded on being elected to the committees dealing with anthrax and night baking and Major Fuhrman represented the Australian government on the Anthrax Committee. Curtin lamented the absence of an Australian delegate on the other committees.

Anthrax was, and remains, a potentially lethal disease affecting people working with infected animals or animal products. According to Mr Gilbert, the Chair of the Anthrax Committee, while there had been few recorded deaths from the disease in Europe, of 703 cases in the British wool industry, 130 were fatal. The discussion stalled in disagreement about the most efficient way of combating anthrax. A majority report, supported by Curtin, recommended the prevention of anthrax amongst flocks as being "the essential condition for the prophylaxis of the anthrax among human beings".

The minority accepted a report from the British government stating that countries should be compelled to set up facilities like the one it had established in Liverpool for cleansing wool. Curtin spoke forcefully against this recommendation. His Report to the Prime Minister listed numerous problems with using Liverpool as a "clearing house" for both imported and locally grown wool including that wool had to be sorted prior to cleansing (thus exposing workers to risk from contaminated fleece), and treated and untreated wool responded differently to dyeing.



John Curtin, 1910.

Curtin was adamant that prevention in livestock was the best means of limiting the spread of anthrax to humans. This strategy was proven in Australia, where the policy had "obliterate[d] anthrax among wool-workers. No case whatever has occurred in recent years of workers among wool being infected by the disease, and ...the steps taken are not associated with disinfection of wool at all". When the vote was taken 86 delegates supported the Majority Report of the Anthrax Committee and only five voted against it. It was agreed that Draft Conventions on the treatment of other animal products (skin, hair, bones etc) should be considered at a future Conference.

The Draft Convention to prohibit night baking recommended application not just in factories but also in hotels, restaurants, and all public and private institutions, including hospitals, and even in small businesses. Again, the British government offered an alternative position — that of limiting the ban to factories, with the British delegate Rhys Davies citing probable difficulty in "securing Parliamentary sanction for an extension of the Bill to cover ... all public and private institutions". Davies also objected to the prohibition on bakers with no employees. The British workers' delegate, Mr Poulton, opposed this position, citing a Report of a Committee of Enquiry into Night Baking, which recommended complete cessation of the practice and advocated passing a law in Parliament to this effect.

The Australian employers' delegate, Thomas, also objected to the proposed prohibition, asserting that it had been tried in Australia without success. In Sydney, an appeal to the Arbitration Court had resulted in the re-instatement of night baking after midnight. New South Wales was not a good example, Curtin said. It had been the only one of the four

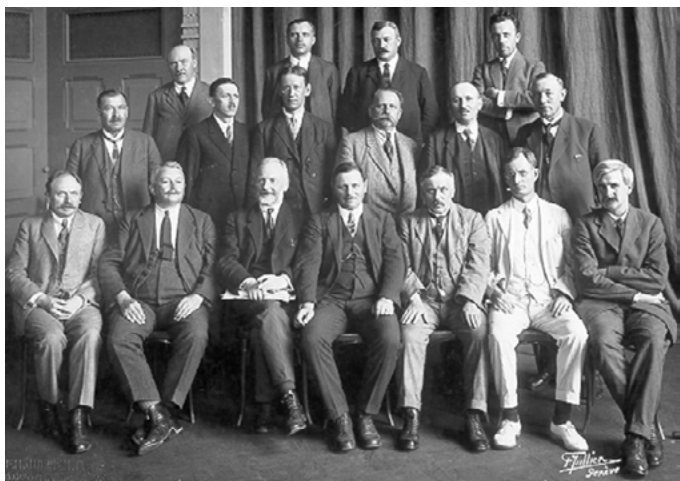
Australian states prohibiting night baking, which did not apply the prohibition to all bakeries. Consequently, smaller businesses continued to bake at night and were able to offer fresh bread in the morning, whereby bakeries limited to day work by the Award were disadvantaged. He agreed with Mr Fontaine, the French government delegate, that any partial prohibition of night baking was unlikely to succeed.

Curtin outlined the experiences of the other three states prohibiting night baking—Western Australia, Queensland and Tasmania— who were all requesting adoption of the Draft Prohibition on Night Work.

They tell you, and I tell you for myself, that every anticipation of disaster which the employers have advanced from this tribunal as being the consequence of a prohibition of night work, has, from the experience of those three States, proved to be absolutely false.

In Queensland, where the "semi-tropical" climate presented more difficulties in keeping bread fresh, the Arbitration Court had recently issued an Award for the baking industry providing for a maximum working week of 44 hours. The Award dictated that work should not start before 7am on Fridays or 8am on other days and must finish by 6pm every day, with no hours to be worked on Saturdays. "Here a State with the experience of the prohibition of night work emphasises its adherence to the prohibition". Curtin added that, internationally, "no fewer than 21 Governments" had asked the Conference to adopt a Draft Convention and "only three Governments have said that a Recommendation be satisfactory", whilst few had opposed the Draft Convention. One of these latter was South Australia, but that was before an election "obliterated" the sitting government. Curtin was confident that the new Labor government would favour the Convention. But the prohibition must be absolute. It would not succeed if some establishments were permitted to work at night and others were not. Despite a long, and often contentious discussion across 15 sittings, the Draft Convention prohibiting night work in bakeries was finally passed by the overwhelming majority of 73 (including Curtin) in favour to 15 against.

Curtin also supported a Draft Convention to institute a weekly suspension of work for 24 consecutive hours in glass-manufacturing processes when tank furnaces were used, and a Recommendation concerning the development of facilities for workers in their spare time. Regarding the former, in the agreed Convention, "facilities" included adequate periods of leisure, consideration of family life and healthy, low rental housing. While not attending the relevant committees, Curtin also reported the outcomes of the equality of workers' compensation pay outs to foreign workers and unemployment discussions. The Conference adopted a recommendation that "equality of workers' compensation" would be limited to nationals of Member-States which ratified the Convention—thus Australia ratifying the Convention would benefit Australians working in overseas countries.



John Curtin (in cream front row, second from right) at the ILO conference, 1924.

Evidently, Curtin was deeply influenced by his experience. On arriving back in Perth in August, when asked by the *Westralian Worker* what his impressions were of events and of people in Europe, he said that "it was extraordinarily difficult to sift the medley of ideas" he had formed. "[P]assing judgment on individuals is no light responsibility. Men may easily be the very opposite to what they appear to be". Perhaps Curtin was rather star-struck by the company of luminaries including politicians, economists, and Nobel Prize winners, but he spoke prophetically on the situation in Europe, where he saw that post-war reparations "whatever [their] justification as a means of punishment for Germany, became the source of aggravated misery for millions embracing every race, and engulfing victor and vanquished in what threatened to become a common ruin".

Curtin concluded his report to the Prime Minister, by emphasising the importance of the ILO Conferences and of ratifying their Conventions:

The spectacle of delegates from 40 countries ... meeting on a common platform to consider proposals for the more humane regulation of industry possesses a moral significance of immense value to civilisation. It is a great and a big thing that the subjects associated with work and wages, unemployment, and industrial amelioration generally, should be regarded the world over as a definite part of the problem of universal peace; it is, furthermore, an immense step forward for the nations to solemnly contract with each other to remove such obstacles as stand in the way of a general improvement of the standard of life which the workpeople of the respective countries have to endure....It is my firm conviction that the stronger the International Labor Organisation or the League of Nations waxes, the more readily will Member-States ratify its Conventions and Recommendations. To assist it to grow and flourish is therefore the duty of all those who seek, not only the welfare of the masses, but who also believe that an International Covenant, uniting the nations in common purpose of establishing social justice is as obligatory of observance as any other International Covenant or Treaty.

The ILO is now a body of the League of Nations' successor, the United Nations. Australia remains a Member-Nation

and continues to send delegates to annual conferences. The stated aims of Australia's involvement are to advise the government on international labour issues; represent Australia at key international labour meetings (including the annual ILO conference), manage ILO development assistance in the region and analyse and ratify ILO Conventions and Recommendations. No doubt John Curtin would be pleased to know that, despite its early failure to ratify Conventions, Australia remains an active ILO partner.

Associate Professor Bobbie Oliver is an Honorary Research Fellow at The University of Western Australia. She has published extensively on the labour movement and the ALP in Western Australia and has contributed essays on John and Elsie Curtin to the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library's website.

The Weekend

A forgotten labour movement triumph

Sean Scalmer



The winning of an eight-hour day by Melbourne tradesmen in the 1850s is rightfully celebrated as a landmark in labour history. It has largely passed from popular memory that this ensured only a forty-eight hour week. Sunday was reserved as a day of rest. But workers continued to toil a full six days in every week, or else to exceed eight hours from Monday to Friday, so that they might enjoy the recompense of a half-day holiday over their Saturday afternoons. There was no modern weekend.

The winning of the weekend was a great labour achievement of the first half of the twentieth century. It was won in circumstances of intimidating difficulty. At least one in ten unionists were unemployed for much of the 1920s; at the height of the depression, in the early 1930s, it was nearly one in three. The Labor Party had been wounded by the wartime conflict over conscription, and it held Commonwealth office only briefly and unsuccessfully from October 1929 until January 1932. No major economy then honoured a forty-four or forty-hour week as a general standard; only New Zealand led the way with its 1936 legislation, which guaranteed a forty-four week. The achievement was therefore surprising as well as significant.

Australian labour's success relied on the interlocking of industrial, legislative, and judicial action. No single agency was capable of securing this important reform. Only workers' collective capacity to deploy industrial as well as political means, and to thereby influence judicial decision, enabled this transformation of working life.

Industrial action spearheaded the campaign. By the later 1910s this had won a forty-four hour week for skilled and well-organised employees in selective parts of the economy, such as building workers in Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales, butchers, engineers and glassworkers in Queensland, and miners in Broken Hill (who enjoyed still

greater reductions). But those with less industrial power struggled unsuccessfully to extend these victories. And even the most well-organised employees, like the building tradesmen of Victoria and Queensland, tried and failed over the 1920s to win a forty-hour week by purely industrial means.

Legislation by Labor governments in New South Wales and Queensland extended the forty-four hour week to all employees and promised to protect it from employer counter-offensives. This was no simple process. First, Labor governments took action only after persistent pressure from unionists and Party members. In New South Wales, a campaign to cease work on Saturday afternoons, several strikes, and then a deputation to the new Labor Premier, John Storey, preceded the Government's action. Conscious of the disputation and anxious to demonstrate the superiority of "constitutional methods", Storey appointed a Royal Commission into the forty-four hour week in 1920, directed it to consider the possibility that the reform might lead to economic dislocation, and then used the Commission's reassurances and its arguments to justify Labor's new laws. The outbreak of industrial conflict brought the issue to the fore; the prospect of industrial conflict in the event of rebuff helped to justify government action.

Storey spoke out in favour of a forty-four hour week, but in Queensland the Premier E.G. Theodore was publicly ambivalent. The State Labor Conference of March 1923 proclaimed a forty-four hour week as a legislative priority. Over succeeding months Theodore was seemingly reluctant to implement this decision, and the Queensland Party's Executive conveyed protests to the Premier from the branches and affiliates; it even called upon Theodore to attend a "special meeting" to explain his indolence. Still the Cabinet dragged its feet, as Theodore explained that competition from interstate made any general reduction in working time economically perilous. The government finally took action only when the bulk of the parliamentary party conveyed its displeasure and its insistence. Even then, the operation of the Act was delayed for a full year, so as to mollify those critics who foretold economic doom.

But the passage of legislation was itself insufficient to win the weekend for all. If Labor governments could pass laws, then their opponents could rescind them. Labor's parliamentary enemies rapidly set about overturning their reforms. In both Queensland and New South Wales, the election of anti-Labor governments brought with them the formal restoration

of a forty-eight hour week. Queenslanders greatly favoured the Labor Party in the years before World War II, so that this constituted only a brief interregnum, between 1929 and 1932. But voters in New South Wales were more likely to swing, and labour legislation in the premier state was therefore repeatedly broken and remade.

NSW Labor's path-breaking reform was first in force only from September 1921 until November 1922, swiftly revoked by a newly-elected Nationalist-party government. It was then reimposed in 1925, with the Labor Party's return to office under the energetic but divisive leadership of Jack Lang. The Nationalist Party pledged to retain the 1925 arrangements. But themselves restored to government in 1927, conservatives then broke that commitment in the first months of the Depression, with the Industrial Arbitration (Eight Hours) Amendment Act, 1930. This was one of the final measures of an ineffectual administration. Lang and Labor reclaimed government a few months later, with a sweeping victory in the elections of October 1930. The second Lang government then reinstated the forty-four hour week under new legislation, from January 1931. It was a dizzying interlude - five changes of law in the space of less than a decade - and a confirmation that progressive reform is only secured after determined battle.

40-Hour Week Official



MRS. MARY WARREN, who has been appointed campaign secretary in South Australia for the 40-hour week campaign being run by the Labor movement. She was elected at a meeting of union delegates.

Even with the law secure, the forty-four hour week was still far from general. Laws made in New South Wales and Queensland offered no direct aid to workers elsewhere in the Commonwealth. Even in these states, the conditions in many workplaces were regulated not just by state laws, but also by the decisions and awards of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court. A High Court decision of 1926, the Cowburns Case, found that in situations of conflict between Commonwealth and State regulations - as when state laws specified forty-four hours and federal awards forty-eight - the federal award would take precedence. This judgement meant that many workers in the chosen states, covered by federal awards, were deprived of the benefits of Labor's legislation. Judicial as well as legislative action was therefore necessary to generalise the standard.

H.B. Higgins, the crusading second President of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court, had in the Timberworkers' case of 1920 sustained the workers' claim for a forty-four hour week. His reasoning suggested that this should be a general standard for all workers, and in the Engineers' case soon afterward he extended the decision to these employees. Spooked by the prospect of a still wider diffusion of the weekend, the Nationalist government of Billy Hughes passed an amendment to the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act (1920). It restricted the future capacity of a single judge to reduce standard hours below forty eight, requiring instead a majority decision of the Court's President and two Deputy-Presidents. Higgins resigned from his position in apparent protest. A more conservative Court, under the Presidency of Justice Charles Powers, then largely reversed his principal decisions.

Even after Higgins' departure, not every application to the Court for reduced hours was rebuffed. In 1927, after Powers' retirement as President, and with the composition of the Court again recast, the engineering industry was granted a new a standard working week of forty-four hours. But this was an outlier. Between 1927 and 1933 the Court rejected all applications for reductions in standard hours; the depressed condition of industry, Judges said, made any alteration impracticable.

Nonetheless, the determination of workers to win the weekend, and the persistence of Labor legislation, imposed a continuing pressure on the Arbitration Courts. Justice Beeby, Deputy President of the Commonwealth Court, declared in 1929 that the only "partial acceptance" of the forty-four hour standard across Australia (with many employees forced to endure forty-eight hours) was a "constant source of discontent". He also cited legislated arrangements in New South Wales in his judgements that supported the extension of forty-four hours to workers elsewhere. Beeby was the most progressive of the Commonwealth Court's jurists, but his judgements - at first isolated - increasingly anticipated later majority opinions. As the terrible weight of the Depression began to lift, and as union members strengthened their organisations, the Court began to award the forty-four hour week to more employees. By the later 1930s, members of the Court now recognised it as the new Australian standard.

AT THE 40-HOUR WEEK DEMONSTRATION



Mr. C. Crofts, secretary of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, driving home a point at the 40-hour week demonstration at Wickham Park.

The forty-hour week was achieved less gradually and more completely with a decision of the Commonwealth Court of Arbitration in late 1947. This established a general standard for all employees. As with the Arbitral decisions of the 1920s and 1930s, it was preceded by the industrial pressure of unions, by selective breakthroughs in well-organised occupations, and by legislation in New South Wales and Queensland. The Court's decision was also expressly supported by the Commonwealth Labor Government led by Ben Chifley.

The Court's judgement awarding the forty-hour standard from January 1948 explicitly noted that recent NSW legislation "did alter very material economic and political factors", presenting the Court with a "fait accompli" and affecting "the freedom with which the Court might otherwise have acted". It further noted that the campaign for forty hours had generated substantial "unrest" and that in the absence of a new settlement it would likely go on doing so. This meant that any economic costs borne by reducing the standard hours to forty needed to be balanced against the likely losses provoked by a refusal:

As realists with past experience as a guide, we know that production would suffer quite substantially by such unrest and thus the difference between what might have been produced in a 44-hour week on a rejection of these claims, and what will be produced in a 40 hour week if they be granted, is likely, on this ground alone, to be substantially lessened.

The Court duly delivered the forty-hour week. But this was a judgement awarded under admitted political and industrial duress. Determined struggle, new laws and partial breakthroughs all created the context for a generalised advance.

A forty-hour week and a full weekend, for so long guaranteed by the victories of the early and middle twentieth century, are now more commonly honoured in the breach than the observance. New reforms are urgently necessary to rebalance the relationship between work and life. These include not just a right to disconnect from workplace communications, but also the right to work from home, extended carers' leave (to enable care for children

and increasingly for elders), and a four-day week. As we collectively contemplate these new industrial needs, the successful campaign to win the weekend can serve as inspiration and as instruction. It demonstrates that Australia's leadership in the winning of industrial betterment was not ceded in the nineteenth century, but extended all the way to the middle of the twentieth century. It further demonstrates that this rested not on fortuitous circumstances - the legacy of the 'lucky country' - but on persistent and adroit struggle, spanning workplaces, legislatures, and courtrooms.

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1934

The Rise and Rise of John Curtin

David Day

The federal election in September 1934 brought little joy for the Labor Party. Its leader, James Scullin had had the misfortune of becoming prime minister in October 1929, just as the stock market crashed on Wall Street. Despite enjoying a massive majority in parliament, the subsequent Great Depression tore Labor apart, as MPs fought over the best way out of the economic morass into which heavily-indebted Australia had stumbled. While some wanted cuts in government spending to satisfy British lenders, others argued for expansionary budgets to tackle the massive unemployment and restore economic activity.

John Curtin was in the latter camp. The son of a Victorian police officer, Curtin had grown to adulthood in post-Federation Melbourne, where he had become a member of both the Australian Labor Party and (briefly) secretary of the Victorian Socialist Party. His rise in the labour movement occurred in the halcyon pre-war years when hope was in the ascendant and Labor's fortunes looked promising. By 1914, twenty-nine-year-old Curtin had become secretary of the Timber Workers' Union, touring isolated logging camps to recruit members for the union and using its newspaper to promote the wider socialist cause.

The Great War ended all that, dividing the Labor Party, decimating the Socialist Party and cutting a terrible swathe through Australia's menfolk. While many in the labour movement succumbed to the pressure to enlist, Curtin became a leading activist against the war and the conscription that was meant to feed its voracious maw. His activism helped to end his time with the timber workers and saw him become secretary of the trade union anti-conscription committee. Curtin's skills as a writer and a powerful platform speaker served him well in this, although the stress of it all nearly destroyed him. It wasn't helped by the alcoholism and depression that dogged his life.

With the labour movement wracked with bitter divisions, Curtin was rescued from the political maelstrom in Melbourne by the offer of a job in Perth and by marriage to his wife, Elsie, with whom he was besotted. Although it took him far from Melbourne, which was still the seat of the federal parliament, he remained passionately involved in politics in his new role as editor of the labour movement's newspaper, the Westralian Worker. He made the paper staunchly anti-conscriptionist and looked forward to the end of the war bringing an end to capitalism. As it had in Russia and seemed set to do in other countries. But it was not to be.

The revolutionary ardour of Europe had few adherents in

Australia. And even fewer in Western Australia, where there weren't many industrial workers and gold had brought widespread wealth. If radical change was to come, it would occur through the federal parliament, which is where Curtin set his sights after a visit to Europe in 1924. He was finally elected to the federal seat of Fremantle in November 1928 and became part of Scullin's Labor government in October 1929. It had been nearly fifteen years since Labor had last been in power and Curtin had been fighting all his life to help transform Australia.

Expecting to be a minister in the Scullin government, Curtin was disappointed to find himself sitting disconsolately on the backbench and 'going on the scooter' with his radical political mentor, Frank Anstey. Over many a beer, they would bemoan Labor's failure to solve the country's economic problems. They wanted to drag Australia out of the Great Depression by nationalising the banks and boosting government spending. With a conservative majority controlling the Senate, there was no possibility of that happening unless Scullin could force a double dissolution.



John Curtin during World War Two

Instead, Scullin and the state premiers agreed on the so-called Premiers' Plan, which was imposed on Australia by a delegation of British bankers. It was all about restoring confidence by returning to balanced budgets, which involved cuts to wages, pensions and interest rates and increases to taxation. Although he'd agreed to it, NSW premier Jack Lang was critical of the plan and called for the suspension of interest payments to British bondholders. Tearing itself apart over the rival solutions, several Labor MPs followed Joseph Lyons into an alliance with National Party MPs, forming the United Australia Party, while an equally disaffected section

gave their allegiance to Lang.

The turmoil ended with Scullin in charge of a minority government whose MPs couldn't agree on a way forward. When Lyons forced Scullin to an early election in May 1931, the government was soundly defeated. Curtin was one of the many Labor MPs who lost their seats. It could have signalled Curtin's political demise. But the hard-drinking Curtin was determined to return to parliament. And to do so by getting back his former seat of Fremantle rather than by accepting the offer of a safe Labor seat in Melbourne. His instincts were correct. The subsequent election in 1934 saw Curtin regain Fremantle by the narrowest of margins.

This time, Curtin would be joining a much-diminished caucus of just 23 Labor MPs, compared with the 54 who'd crowded the caucus room in 1929. The party's defeat in 1931 had been too great and its divisions too deep for it to recover those numbers in a single election. Indeed, Labor's share of the vote had slumped even further, even though the party emerged with four extra MPs in the House of Representatives after they'd won on preferences. In the Senate, Labor's support was so abysmal that none of its candidates were successful, which meant there would only be three Labor senators (from the previous election) in the thirty-six-member chamber.



1943 Labor election advertisement

It was a disaster for Scullin, who'd lost two elections in a row and been left exhausted by his time as Labor leader. Yet the caucus was in no rush to replace him, not least because there was no compelling successor. His deputy, the solid but uncharismatic Frank Forde might have hankered for the position but couldn't count on the enthusiastic support of his fellow MPs, some of whom resented him for supporting the Premiers' Plan. He would also have had a more difficult job bringing the many supporters of Jack Lang back within the Labor fold. With Forde unwilling to challenge for the leadership, Scullin was allowed to plod on. This gave an opportunity for Curtin to position himself as a possible successor to his white-haired leader. He just needed the support of eleven colleagues in caucus.

Curtin's opposition to the Premiers' Plan stood him in good stead with some Labor MPs, as did the support he enjoyed from the powerbrokers of the Australian Workers Union. He'd also gained a reputation as a speaker who could

hold the attention of MPs in the parliament as well as rowdy audiences at political rallies. And there was no shortage of angry audiences, as the Depression ground down the many Australians who were thrown out of work or had their incomes reduced. As the 1934 election revealed, voters weren't yet ready to trust Labor with the management of the economy.

It wasn't just the economy that troubled voters. By 1934, the prospect of another world war was looking increasingly likely, after the Nazi Party had taken control of Germany and the Japanese army had invaded Manchuria. The lingering hopes for peace were dashed by the failure of a disarmament conference organised by the League of Nations. When Australia followed Britain into the Great War, it sent its forces to the other side of the world, confident that it faced no major threat in the Pacific. That was no longer the case. Any new war in Europe was likely to see Japan seize the opportunity to advance its own territorial ambitions in Asia. In such an event, Australia could find itself in the firing line without sufficient forces to defend itself.

For a century and a half, Australia had relied upon the power of the British navy for its defence. That was now in question. Britain would struggle to fight a war against both Germany and Japan (and probably Mussolini's Italy) and would need Australian resources and manpower more than ever. In return, it promised the concerned Australian prime minister, Joseph Lyons to deploy the British fleet in the defence of Australia if Japan ever tried to invade the sparsely-populated British dominion. This so-called system of imperial defence offered more to Britain than to its furthest flung dominions.

For more than two decades, Curtin had been in the forefront of the anti-war and anti-conscription movements, addressing mass meetings on the Yarra Bank during the Great War and writing impassioned articles in labour newspapers in the 1920s. He didn't stop now. Rather than embracing imperial defence, Curtin argued that Australia would be better defended by a system of local defence, building up a powerful air force to ward off any invading naval force rather than relying upon a small and expensive navy backed up by the promise of a British fleet.

Curtin's cogent arguments on defence and international affairs appealed to the many Australians who had had their lives blighted by the last war and wanted to avoid another one. His arguments also added to his appeal in caucus when Scullin's ill-health finally forced his retirement in September 1935. Although some thought that Forde, who was five years younger than Curtin, should be promoted to leader, Curtin won the contest by one vote after promising to abstain from drinking if he was made leader. The caucus decision would prove to be a fateful one for Australia.

1944 Lessons from the '14 Powers' Referendum

David Cragg



We all will have our own bittersweet memories of the Voice Referendum put to the Australian people last October. The aspiration to recognise Australia's First Peoples in our foundation document was worthy – indeed John Howard had sponsored a similar preamble to the Constitution in 1999. Australians are a cautious mob, and the negative votes in both 1999 and 2023 underline how hard it is to persuade a majority of voters, and a majority of states, that change is a good thing.

Now is a good time to consider the bleak history of constitutional change in Australia, and what it has meant for Labor's reform agenda. In short, referendums are hard work, and don't repay rushing into. Infamously, Australia to date has had 45 constitutional referendums (in 20 separate votes), with only eight being successful (7 with bipartisan support, and a solitary referendum – Ben Chifley's 1946 bid for the Commonwealth to legislate for social services – getting up despite vociferous conservative opposition).

Eighty years ago, a popular wartime leader – John Curtin – invited the Australian people to join Labor in a positive, indeed radical, vision for the post-war reconstruction of the nation. By mid-1944, victory over the Axis was assured but the timing uncertain. Many thought war in the Pacific would require a land invasion of Japan and could cruelly last into 1947 or 1948. Prosecution of the war in Australia had been made possible by the emergency National Security Act passed in September 1939 by the Menzies administration, with Labor support. These

extraordinary powers, exercised through a myriad of Emergency Regulations, gave Canberra effective control of the economy, to do everything required to aid the war effort – manpower and material production was under the direction of the Federal Government. But the Act only lasted for the duration of the war and for six months after its cessation.

In August 1944, Australians voted on a comprehensive single question – the Post-War Reconstruction and Democratic Rights referendum (known as the '14 Powers' vote). It was the most radical expansion of central government powers ever attempted and had been drafted by a constitutional convention attended by all major political parties and all states. The four Labor Premiers (NSW, Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania) all supported a Yes vote, in the case of the two smaller states enthusiastically.

Like the National Security provisions, it too had a time limit – five years after peace. Curtin emphasised that Canberra's need was temporary, to rebuild the nation, and the powers "borrowed" from the states would be automatically ceded back to them. Any single state would then be in a position to use their discretion to challenge the continuation of any or all federal legislation they objected to. The proposed powers are still impressive today – inter alia, prices and wages, marketing and manufacturing, employment, health corporations, foreign investment, trusts and monopolies and aborigines (ultimately passed in 1967). As well as the thorny old issue of states' rights – uniform railway gauges. Sadly, what five years of Labor government could have done with this we will never know. The Yes vote of 1,963,400 nationally was a fraction under 46%, solid but not enough. Western Australia (52%) and South Australia (50%) voted for, Victoria just against (49.3%), NSW close (45.4%) but Tasmania and worst of all Queensland languished in the 30s.

The Labor Government had taken office as a minority administration in October 1941, and consolidated its position with arguably Labor's greatest ever federal election victory in August 1943. Prime Minister Curtin and Federal Treasurer Ben Chifley were

in their late 50s (born the same year, 1885), had suffered setbacks during the First World War and the Depression and were determined to not “win the war but lose the peace”.

Curtin and Chifley wanted the mobilisation and unity of the community to last into peacetime, with modern mechanised agriculture and manufacturing industry strong enough to support a vastly larger (and more secure) population. The Japanese march through Asia had irreversibly brought the neighbouring continent to the brink of changes which might challenge the international stability Australia and New Zealand depends on. Moreover, neither Labor leader wanted a return to mass unemployment, which had been high throughout the 1920s, peaking at over 30% in 1932 but still in double digits at the outbreak of war in 1939. In a mark of respect from the conservative Lyons Government, Ben Chifley had been appointed a lay member of the 1935-1937 Royal Commission into the Banking System and had become committed to the view that control of credit was the only effective way to guarantee full employment. In the wartime Parliament House in Canberra, the offices of Prime Minister and Treasurer had a smaller office in between, where Curtin and Chifley would often congregate for a cigarette or a pipe and chat with an older parliamentarian whose office it was – former Prime Minister Jim Scullin. Both Curtin and Chifley had been neophyte MPs in the torrid 1929-1932 Scullin Ministry and had seen a good government, and a decent leader, destroyed by treacherous left-wing and right-wing splits and the lack of power to control a national economy in the face of foreign-controlled banks and alternatively spineless or grandstanding State premiers. Curtin and Chifley respected the old man (who ironically, and to his own sadness, outlived both men) and were determined that their Labor government would be protected from a similar fate. A less scrupulous government might have been tempted to prolong the life of the National Security Act indefinitely or extend its built-in sunset clause from six months to some years. Labor had a secure majority in both parliamentary houses from 1943 on (22:14 in the Senate) and easily could have opted for a law change but chose not to.

Of course, the Chifley administration is mainly known today for two events – bank nationalisation in 1947 and the communist-directed miners’ strike of 1949. Both merit their own discussions, especially how Chifley’s service on the conservative government 1935-37 Royal Commission shaped his (perhaps too rigid) belief that a nationally-controlled banking system would guarantee the resources for equitable nation-building. But in 1948, Chifley had another go

at obtaining constitutional change on at least one of the 1944 ‘14 powers’ – what he thought to be the most important of them, the national ability to regulate prices. In May, Australians on a constitutional amendment to add “rents and prices (including charges)” as a new clause in section 51 (the powers of the Commonwealth Parliament). The result was worse than 1944 – a Yes vote of only 40.7% nationally, with no state voting in favour (No votes ranging from Victoria 55.4% up to the shocking Queensland 69.2%). Chifley had argued in the *Sydney Morning Herald* the day before the vote that “price control by six controlling authorities in the States will not work – the choice is Commonwealth control or no control.” Voters tired of wartime regulation unfortunately gave a pretty clear answer to that choice.



Ben Chifley, Labor Prime Minister (1945-49)

Gough Whitlam often related that voting Yes in the 1944 referendum as a 28-year-old RAAF flight navigator was the singular event to trigger his post-war interest in politics, and to fire his passion for greater constitutional powers for Canberra. In a profound way, the 1973 Wages & Prices referendum was Gough consciously following in the footsteps of his heroes Curtin and Chifley. The twin referendums on Price Control and Income Control again aimed to add two powers to section 51, to enable the Australian Parliament to control prices and to make laws with respect to incomes. The Yes vote on Prices was 43.8% – a defeat, but at least a slight improvement on 1948

– with no state voting in favour but NSW coming closest on 48.6% (and Victoria & South Australia also in the 40s). The Yes vote on Wages was a miserable 34.4% – a nasty deficit of 9.4% of voters, which reflected the sullen opposition of Bob Hawke and the ACTU, who were happy enough for an Arbitration Commission to hand out pay increases but suspicious that a Coalition government might cap wages. Like so much of the Whitlam Government, the aspirations were correct but the political execution showed a lack of practical politicking and effective messaging built up over 23 frustrating years spent in opposition prior to December 1972.

Labor people have to get serious about constitutional change. Do we persist heroically? Can we develop a mechanism to identify and mobilise bipartisan support for changes to the Australian Constitution? Or do we accept the limits placed on Canberra by the States in the 1890s, become born-again Federalists and work through the States? All powers not specifically ceded to the Commonwealth reside with the States – let’s use them.

State Constitutions are acts of the respective State Parliaments. There is no reason in the world why a state shouldn’t functionally become a republic – abolish the position of State Governor, remove royal or other anachronistic symbols and references (perhaps the Eureka flag as the new state flag for Victoria?) If one or more states could demonstrate that “republican” government still functions satisfactorily, with a Chief Justice or other non-political luminary officiating where necessary, then national change after a few years might be a bit more achievable and a bit less susceptible to media scare campaigns.

A multiplicity of Indigenous Voices are indeed appropriate implemented through the states. As we need to consider treaties with possibly up to 500 mini-nations (certainly a good 200+ still existing, most somewhat symbolic but with some in the northern-half of the country retaining an important degree of pre-1900 cultural continuity), it makes sense for the level of constitutional government closest to these mini-states to take the lead in negotiations. The Commonwealth can advise on consistency across the states (“closing the gap”).

An opportunity closer to John Curtin’s vision would be on prices, which can be regulated by the states if they are careful and selective. Section 92 of the Australian Constitution guarantees that trade between the states shall be absolutely free, but economic activity within a state should avoid this potential challenge. As Victorians will recall, during Covid a hot issue

for the Andrews Government was Greens Party calls for price controls on rent increases, a choice that is entirely constitutional for a state to consider. Gough would be happy. Similarly, Gough’s beloved Prices Justification Tribunal (created August 1973, abolished by Fraser in 1981) was largely symbolic at the federal level but could actually have real teeth if legislated by a state. Getting state initiatives past s.92 of the Constitution is not necessarily straightforward, although a full and forensic examination of State governments would draw examples of private sector regulation and public sector enterprise especially in Queensland, Tasmania, Western Australia and New South Wales that could be successfully emulated today. The Constitution even has a section (101) to create an Inter-State Commission to smooth out any tensions which might creep over state borders.

It is hardly a bad thing for a Labor person to want to follow in the footsteps of Curtin, Chifley and Whitlam. And if there is any sure-fire solution to getting changes to the constitution through a vote, please sign me up. But it is difficult for any but the most optimistic to see how the powers of Canberra can be constitutionally expanded (legally expanded is a different option, as we have seen with the High Court’s “generous” interpretation of the foreign treaties and corporations powers). Legal activism aside, we have to seriously ponder whether the book has finally shut on our chances to change the Australian Constitution. I put this just as a question – is it time for Labor to creatively adapt the visionary legacy of Curtin and Chifley, honoured in his own time by another visionary, Whitlam? Can we more usefully work through the states to achieve the reforms we want to see nationally? Could this give us some chance to find common ground with the conservatives? This is a hard ask, just as it will be to try to get the Liberal Party to shift its own thinking beyond the formidable centralists who now dominate its own traditions, Menzies and Howard.

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1954

The Third Great Labor Split

Michael Easson



It is interesting to speculate about what might have been. If Ben Chifley in August 1947 had not pronounced in a Cabinet meeting, un-foreshadowed, his intention to nationalise the banks – leading to twenty-eight months of constitutional challenges, controversy, and defeats in the High Court of Australia – would Labor have cruised to another comfortable win in the December 1949 election? Bank nationalisation was not the only issue in that election. The 1949 coal strikes and other Communist Party of Australia (CPA)-inspired efforts to destroy the Labor Government hurt. As did the incredible stupidity of Chifley's determined insistence that petrol rationing (and other controls) be maintained, all apparently to show 'solidarity' with the UK Labour Government. Better political leadership, especially from the strong result Labor achieved in 1946, should have ensured Labor victory in 1949 which would then have spelt the end of Bob Menzies' political career.

Another ghostly question arises about the 1954 Federal election: If Prime Minister Evatt had emerged from that contest, would the ALP split, at least in its severity, have been avoided? This paper explains why 1954 was a watershed year in Australian Labor's history, the consequences of which are still with us. But, first, back to 1949. Labor had finally got its act together in the war years. Chifley's contribution to various programmes associated with post-war reconstruction was a golden thread in ALP and Australian history. Until the Curtin-Chifley governments, Labor's periods in office nationally were short and ended catastrophically. But at the end of the 1940s, bank nationalisation seeped support away from the ALP, which had won a thumping majority in 1946. As in 1943 an even better result for Labor occurred, its best of all time.

Consider this history. For the first time, in 1910, ahead of social democratic parties globally, Labor won a majority of the vote and a majority of members in the Federal

Parliament. Losing unexpectedly by one seat in June 1913, Labor regained office in September 1914 – both times under Prime Minister Andrew Fisher. His successor, William Morris Hughes, disastrously split the ALP over conscription in 1916 during World War I, and Hughes formed a new anti-Labor Party, the Nationalists. Labor only returned to office in 1929, after the then patrician Prime Minister Stanley Melbourne Bruce proposed the abolition of the compulsory arbitration in industrial relations and lost control of the House of Representatives (Hughes voting against Bruce in a vote of confidence). Bruce called an early election and was defeated by Labor's James Scullin. In office only a few days before the Wall Street Crash of 1929 which ushered-in the Great Depression, the government badly split in 1931, with breakaways from Lang Labor and Joe Lyons quitting and voting against the government, with Lyons leading the newly formed United Australia Party and becoming Prime Minister. Scullin entered government with the biggest win of any party to that time and left government with the greatest loss ever. The latter record is not yet beaten.

Historically, Australian Labor might be said to exemplify the political science equivalent of Dornbusch's Law – the theorem coined in the 1990s that financial crises take much longer to come than you might imagine and then accelerate much faster than you might anticipate. Something similar applied to the ALP. The under-currents might seem tame on the surface, but when a dramatic change materialises, the turbulence becomes more tumultuous than expected. Observers therefore get a chance to be wrong twice in anticipation of the severity of the problem, and then about how all-encompassing and rapid might be the consequences.

The events of 1954 exemplify the point. The party seemed united under Dr H.V. "Bert" Evatt, the former High Court Judge and Foreign Minister, who in June 1951 succeeded the revered, if politically flawed Ben Chifley, who died that month. In the leadup, Labor was ahead in the polls prior to the 29 May 1954 Federal elections. The massive Korea War-fuelled inflation burst of 1951/2 (25 per cent at the end of 1951, but rapidly falling thereafter) dented the Menzies government's economic credentials. Between the Federal elections of 1951 and 1954, the ALP won an absolute majority in Victoria for the first time; returned to government in WA in 1953; won significantly increased majorities in NSW, Queensland, and Tasmania, and was only denied a clean sweep of all states by the 'Playmander' in South Australia which denied the ALP a majority there despite the

party winning 53% of the two-party preferred (2PP) vote at the 1953 state election. Then the ALP won the May 1953 Senate elections. What could possibly go wrong?

Menzies, however, had recovered in polling, with trends beginning to tip in his favour. It was a different Australia then. The Royal visit from early February to early April 1954 – the first tour of Australia of a reigning monarch – had a ‘feel good’ impact for the government. The monarch’s tour was in the works since Chifley’s Prime Ministership. George VI’s illness and death and the wait until the Queen’s coronation in 1953 had successively postponed the visit. Notwithstanding any benign intentions, the 1954 visit should be seen (and not 1975) as the Queen’s most decisive intervention in Australian politics. Her departure from our shores occurred three years exactly to the month of the previous federal election. Most expected that Menzies would call the election soon after her departure. And he did. The election was called in April and held in May. Thereafter, none of her visits occurred immediately prior to a forthcoming election.

At the previous poll, the April 1951 federal election, Labor picked up five seats – which underscored the electoral disaster that was the 1949 Federal election. In December, in an expanded parliament, Labor won only 47 seats to Menzies’ Liberal-Country coalition’s 74. In the previous contest, the 1946 Federal election, won by ‘Chif’, Labor won 43 seats to the Liberal/Country coalition’s 29. (One other seat was held by rebel ex-Labor hater, Jack Lang.) There are two myths about the 1954 election: That Labor triumphed with the popular vote. And that Menzies used the Petrov defection to destroy Labor. First, it is not true at the 1954 election that Labor on a two-party preferred basis easily ‘won’ but lost where it mattered: the seats clinched by each party. With six of the Liberal-Country party seats uncontested, arguably Labor had no 2PP lead, and the formulation of Labor ‘winning a majority of the vote but lost in seats’ is flawed. Overall, it was very close with no clear 2PP winner. The Liberals won 64 seats and Labor 52; but Labor was a long way behind to begin with – part of the ongoing legacy of ‘49.

Second, Menzies was lucky in that a nervous, unstable Third Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in Canberra, Vladimir Petrov, feared repatriation to the Soviet Union. He was part of the Soviet secret service. The ‘liquidation’ of Soviet spy chief Lavrentiy Beria in late December 1953 by the Kremlin leadership made Petrov anxious if purges and executions, the Stalinist model, might follow. Petrov was cultivated by the Australian Secret Service Organisation (ASIO) and he defected to them on the eve of the 1954 election. Menzies had no impact on the timing. But he was deceitful in announcing the defection in the parliament on 13 April 1954, a night he knew Evatt would be absent at a school reunion in Sydney. More than any other event, the two-month visit of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Phillip, immediately before the election, had a profound impact on the electoral climate. Two days after the Queen’s departure, Petrov defected. On 12 April (nine days later) Menzies announced the defection. The Royal Commission on Espionage (as foreshadowed in Menzies speech) was

established on 13 April and Evdokia Petrov was detained at Darwin Airport on 20 April. On the 23rd writs were issued for the election. Stumbles over economic policy, the ‘cost’ of promises in the 1954 campaign, damaged Labor’s chances. And with all of that, Menzies just scrapped through at the election held on 29 May.

Afterwards, Labor Leader Dr Evatt sought answers as to why his ‘obvious’ merits were somehow rejected by the electorate. He came to believe that Catholic Social Studies Movement members and Labor MPs in Victoria associated with them were undermining him. The Movement, headed by excitable Catholic intellectual Bob Santamaria, organised across Australia, recruited co-religionists into the Labor Party to join the ALP Industrial Groups which ran candidates endorsed by Labor in union elections. (Though this varied between the states.) In the mid-1940s the Church was invited to get organised in union affairs, rather than the other way round – by leaders of the ACTU, the Victorian Trades Hall Council, and the Labor Council of NSW, who were worried about communist infiltration. Arguably, by 1953, the job was done in reversing communist infiltration in the unions, but Santamaria wanted to keep going.

There is no evidence that Evatt knew of Santamaria’s ‘Movement of Ideas’ speech given around September 1954 to Movement operatives in Melbourne. Here, Santamaria’s paranoia and ideological sectarianism was on full display. Even union leaders like the Ironworkers’ Laurie Short, and the NSW Australian Railway Workers Union’s Lloyd Ross, two courageous and thoughtful leaders who had battled communist influence, were viewed suspiciously. Meanwhile, in the early 1950s onwards, the Catholic Church had become divided about Santamaria and unchecked Movement activities before the ALP Split. The NSW hierarchy wanted a divorce. Archbishop Mannix in Melbourne, however, was all in favour and perhaps intrigued by Santamaria’s rambunctious boast that not since the Reformation were Catholics positioned to decisively influence the politics of a nation in the Anglo world.

On 6 October 1954, Evatt launched his attack on “disloyal elements”. Immediately Labor was convulsed. He accused “a small minority group of Labor members, located particularly in the State of Victoria” of sabotage, claimed that their criticisms of Chifley harmed his health before he died, and made up that they opposed the introduction of a means test on pension benefits (an issue in the 1954 elections), and noted that the publication *Newsweekly* was the organ for “the small group” of Fascist-like infiltrators. It was incredible, over-the-top rhetoric. Weirdly, a few days later, Evatt telephoned Federal Labor MP Standish Michael Keon, who was close to the Movement, but a critic of Santamaria, to say he never intended to include him in any list of traitors. Evatt said that he would bring his concerns to the ALP Federal Executive. A vote of no-confidence in Evatt’s leadership was lost in the Federal Caucus room, 52-28. The red-faced ‘Doc’, looking a little unhinged, jumped on a table in the caucus room demanding that those who put up their hands against him be recorded. The Federal Executive was thereafter quickly convened and narrowly voted to

sack the Victorian ALP executive and call for fresh elections for Victorian delegates to the National ALP conference due in March 1955. (One crucial vote on the National Executive was WA's Kim E. Beazley, who would have voted with the ALP Right. He was in India at a Christian conference, replaced for this emergency meeting by an anti-Grouper, giving the Evatt forces a majority.)

the ALP (A-C)'s 12.6%. Labor was out of office for 27 years thereafter. The ALP (A-C) became the Democratic Labor Party (DLP) and preferred conservatives before Labor.

Menzies saw advantage in calling a snap Federal election for December 1955. ALP (A-C) candidates ran in every seat in Victoria, and three of 11 electorates in South Australia, three of five seats in Tasmania, but none in Queensland, NSW, or Western Australia. Their antipathy to Labor increased the Liberal majority. In NSW, the Premier Joe Cahill, and the unions centred on the Labor Council of NSW, and the ALP machine, strove to avoid the Victorian disaster. The Catholic hierarchy privately urged that ALP activists stay in the party and not leave. That was broadly the position across the country, outside of Victoria. The hard Left were now in the saddle in Victoria, however, and many of their supporters saw an opportunity to win influence across the country. Expulsions in Victoria and other pockets of the country, including many fence-sitters bewildered by the factional plays, hurt mainstream Labor, and drove some into the DLP, who hoped to be united one day with official Labor. (One reason Victoria, the state most riven by the Split, is today so strongly Labor is because in large numbers ex-DLP voters and their families 'returned' to Labor after Hawke became PM in 1983. They liked what they saw.)

The NSW state election was called for early March 1956, with NSW ALP Assistant Secretary Jack Kane, the campaign Director. Labor Premier Joe Cahill won re-election. But Kane's days in the ALP were numbered. Expelled by the Federal Executive in June 1956, sacked from his party position, Kane went on to form the DLP in NSW in September 1956. He was later elected a DLP Senator in 1970 from NSW (to 1974). But most Catholics stayed in the ALP in NSW (unlike in Victoria). In Queensland, the ALP split was decidedly different. Labor Premier, Vince Gair, by big margins won elections in 1953 and 1956. In 1957 he was ostensibly expelled over a dispute concerning an extra week's long service leave for public servants. The Queensland Labor Central Executive voted 35-30 to do so. All but one minister supported Gair. The Queensland Labor Party was formed, ran candidates, and in 1962 merged with the DLP. Hard drinking anti-Grouper, who styled themselves as part of the Left, ruled the roost in Queensland Labor. The Australian Workers Union, though involved in Gair's expulsion, later disaffiliated from the party. Queensland, where Labor had held office continuously from 1915, but for one term during the Great Depression, was rent asunder, never again the dominant party in regional Queensland, and denied office for the next 33 years. In 1958, the DLP ran candidates in every Victorian, South Australian, and Tasmanian electorate, all but one NSW electorate, seven of nine WA seats, with the Queensland Labor Party running in all but one electorate in their state. All their preferences flowed to anti-Labor candidates, materially assisting Menzies' hold on power. In 1958, Evatt promised to resign in exchange for DLP preferences – another sad debacle after an earlier stellar career.

Cynically, the Left propped Evatt up from 1954 to 1960, when he finally resigned from parliament to become Chief



Brisbane Worker, 17 January 1955, p. 1.

In the ensuing mayhem, the old Victorian executive boycotted the Victorian ALP Conference in February 1955, claiming the new proceedings were ultra vires (that is, illegal under ALP rules). An anti-Grouper executive was elected, and six anti-Grouper delegates out of six delegates were selected for the ALP Federal Conference in Hobart. One of those, Dinny Lovegrove, the Victorian ALP Secretary, a former Grouper supporter, thought that the Movement forces were over-reacting. Two Victorian delegations turned up, the old and the new, with the former refused admission. Then, a few short of a majority (including all the NSW delegation) walked out, believing natural justice was denied to the old Victorian executive. A narrow majority of Federal ALP conference delegates voted for the Evatt position and dissolved the ALP Industrial Groups. From there the Labor split exploded.

In Victoria, Labor had waited to 1952 to form a majority government. Victorian Labor Premier John Cain, a decent man, tried to hold the party together. Mass expulsions occurred under the new ALP executive, Federal and Victorian state MPs, Mayors, and local government councillors summarily included. Keon was one of them. In April 1955, the expelled state MPs supported a vote of no confidence moved by the Liberals. At the May 1955 Victorian state election, each 'Labor' ticket – official Labor and the ALP (anti-communist) – preferred the Liberals ahead of the other. Labor was smashed, winning 32.5% of the vote, to

Justice of the NSW Supreme Court. A low point came in October 1955 in the House of Representatives. Evatt gleefully produced a letter from Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Minister, denying that Petrov was ever a Soviet spy. Evatt paused for a moment, the still broken by laughter from the government MPs and stunned, incredulous silence from the Labor benches. In an instant, his effort to discredit the Royal Commission into Espionage, launched by the Menzies government, after Petrov's defection – along with Evatt's own credibility – turned to ash. Labor was unelectable under his leadership.

in Victoria, 1856-1956 (2012) could have described the ALP nationally, right up to the advent of Whitlam as party leader in 1967. The latter's intervention, through the Federal ALP executive, in the affairs of the Victorian ALP in 1971 was aimed at curing the arrested development of Labor as a credible force in that state and in the nation. Whitlam's reforms had an important consequence: the DLP withered on the vine as Labor's electability recovered from all that erupted in and soon after 1954.

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H.V. 'Doc' Evatt, 1948

The DLP was a negative, minority party; strident anti-communism came to the fore, incongruous in eclipsing their previous, centrist ideas. Reconciliation with mainstream Labor became impossible. The bitterness associated with highly disciplined preferencing against Labor candidates, including moderates, added toxicity to the bitterness. The highpoint for the DLP came in Victoria in 1970 when Senator Frank McManus won 20% of the vote in the Senate that year. In May 1974, however, under Whitlam PM, all DLP Senators were defeated in the House of Representatives and Senate election.

In 1954, the Victorian ALP, that unique and intriguing species among the state Labor parties in Australia, wrought changes that unleashed unexpected forces that swept through the party across the country. Evatt turned on members of his own side. The title of Paul Strangio's biography of the Victorian ALP, *Neither Power Nor Glory: 100 Years of Political Labor*

1964 The Whitlamite Revolution

Stephen Loosely



For Federal Labor, the years 1964 to 1974 represented both the depression of a heavy defeat in the 1966 Federal election (ALP's 43.1% national 2-party-preferred vote) and the optimism of renewal and regeneration, which led to a recovery in 1969 (ALP's 50.2% national 2PP) and eventual electoral victory in 1972 under Gough Whitlam (52.7% national 2PP). It was a turbulent decade across the globe, reflected in the continuing horrors of the Vietnam War and the appalling assassinations of Senator Robert F. Kennedy and Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. Following the tragedy of 1963 in Dallas, Texas, and the murder of President John F. Kennedy, the assassinations seemed to confirm a trend towards violence on the part of those threatened by social and cultural change.

On the positive side of the equation, the civil rights movement in America and indeed in Australia, with the Freedom Rides, was making very definite progress. The overwhelming carriage of the 1967 Australian referendum, with a 90.77% Yes vote nationally, which confirmed recognition of Australia's Indigenous citizens, seemed to suggest there was cause for hope. The fact that the referendum was supported by both sides of Australian politics should have been a lesson to future proponents of social change by the mechanism of the referendum. Unfortunately, the lesson seems to have been lost, at least temporarily.

Australia remained a backwater for reform. Sir Robert Menzies departed the office of Prime Minister in 1965 but his successor, Harold Holt, plunged into the US alliance with the slogan: "All the way with LBJ". The Vietnam War was already divisive, but Holt told Australian troops in Vietnam that everyone at home was with them, except for a few "ratbags". Not only was he misreading an undercurrent of opposition to Australian engagement in the war, but he was pursuing a truly cringe-worthy policy.

At the core of growing opposition to the Vietnam War, both at home and in the United States, was military conscription, or as it was termed in America, "The Draft". Conscription had been reintroduced in Australia in November 1964, and the "lottery" proved just as controversial as at any time in our history from 1916 to 1943. Billy Hughes had broken his Labor government on the anvil of his own ambition, and the cause was conscription for the First Australian Imperial Forces.

John Curtin, Labor's outstanding wartime Prime Minister from 1941 to 1945, had opposed Hughes in both conscription referenda in 1916 and 1917. But Curtin understood the realities of the Pacific War in 1942, where it was emphasised by the United States that American conscripts were dying in defence of Australia, and it seemed only just that Australian forces should also be comprised, in part, by conscripts.

Curtin had handled the issue with great skill and diplomacy and had caused the Federal ALP to impose conscription in 1943 for the reinforcement of Australian forces in the Pacific. The Vietnam War in 1965 was in an entirely different dimension. Twenty-year-old Australian males were conscripted for the conflict. They still did not have the vote, and in the words of the immortal Barry McGuire in "Eve of Destruction," the sharpest anti-war song of the period, conscripts were told: "You're old enough to kill but not for votin' You don't believe in war, but what's that gun you're totin'?"

As in the United States, the anti-conscription movement swelled, and opposition to the Vietnamese War grew. However, in 1966, when the Federal ALP, under Arthur Calwell, campaigned on a platform of opposition to the war and an end to conscription, restoring an all-volunteer military, the voters still saw things through the prism of the Cold War. The 1961 federal election had seen Federal Labor go within a coat of varnish of defeating the Menzies Government (50.5% national 2PP to the ALP). The so-called "credit squeeze" had wreaked havoc on the Coalition Government's fortunes, and even the Fairfax press had endorsed Calwell's alternative. Now, the election is remembered mainly for Jim Killen's fictitious telegram from Menzies – "Killen, you are magnificent" – whose victory in the seat of Moreton by 130 votes returned the Government. But at the time, the post-election mood in Labor's federal ranks was that 1963 would be a year of change. It was not to be. Labor went backwards (47.4% national 2PP), mirroring, perhaps, the reality that "Cocky" Calwell had outlived his usefulness as a leader. 1966, with Labor's national 2PP vote

falling further to 43.1%, appeared to confirm that adage with Dr Evatt, three times tilting for the Lodge, was at least once too many.

When the federal Labor baton was passed in February 1967, it represented a remarkable changing of the guard. Whitlam was a first as a FPLP leader: an urbane and articulate intellectual who had no trouble identifying with the common man and woman, especially in the suburbs, and understanding the kitchen-table priorities. Whitlam soon proved this in two memorable by-elections in provincial Queensland seats, the first in Dawson, won by Dr Rex "Beef Roads" Patterson with a swing of over 11% and another solid win by Dr Doug Everingham in Capricornia. Stories abound of Gough campaigning, especially in rural Queensland. The best was in the front bar of a country pub, where the Labor leader was meeting cane cutters about to go on the morning shift. He attempted to order a lemon squash to be told by the locals that the preferred drink was rum with a beer chaser. Gough obliged, and the story entered Labor folklore.



Gough Whitlam and Arthur Calwell and the Faceless Men, 1963

Gough was adaptable as the tale above confirms. But more importantly, he knew that the ALP itself had to adapt and that this applied not only to the Parliamentary Party but to the Federal executive. In March 1963, there was published in the Sydney Daily Telegraph a photograph of Arthur Calwell and Whitlam, standing outside a Canberra hotel in the streetlight. Inside the Hotel Kingston, the ALP Federal Executive was debating Labor's position on North West Cape, as part of the American alliance arrangements. It was a damning indictment of federal Labor's outmoded arrangement, whereby the "party machine" dominated the Parliamentary Labor Party. Much was made by conservatives of the "36 faceless men", of the ALP machine who were the real powers in Labor's hierarchy.

Whitlam set about changing this, including bringing the parliamentary leadership aboard the Federal Executive,

and when determining internal ALP priorities, he simply crashed through. Indeed, "crash or crash through" became a watchword for Gough's methodology in settling party matters. This culminated in the ALP Federal Executive's intervention in the Victorian and NSW Branches in 1970 and 1971. The Victorian Branch had been lead in Federal Labor's saddlebags ever since the split that saw the birth of the DLP in 1954. Labor was also out of power in Melbourne. Whitlam understood this capacity for ideological failure on the part of the Victorian ALP, telling a Party conference that "only the impotent are pure". Mick Young discovered just how rigidly nonsensical the stranglehold of the Victorian Socialist Left was on the ALP in that state when he paid a courtesy visit on the eve of the 1970 state election. Lunching with the hard Left State Secretary, Bill Hartley, later to become infamous as "Baghdad Bill" over the Iraqi Loans affair of 1975, Young discovered, to his horror, that the Victorian Central Executive of the Party was considering repudiating State Leader Clyde Holding's policy speech. The issue was state aid for non-government schools, and for the Socialist Left, Holding was being too accommodating. Nonsense like this saw the Victorian ALP restructured and opened up after a long and bitter campaign of obstruction led by Hartley. For balance, NSW was also the subject of intervention, but the emerging strongman of the party there, John Ducker, decided to cooperate with the Federal Executive, and while the branch was subject to reform and better for it, fundamentally, it stayed intact.

Legend has it that after the Federal Executive meeting in Broken Hill in August 1970 and the crushing of the Victorian Left, Clyde Cameron from the South Australian branch, who went on to be one of Whitlam's ministers, took out a file of insults that had been hurled at him over previous years. Withdrawing an accountant's stamp that he had retained for precisely this purpose, Cameron marked the file "Paid in Full". Labor's Federal platform was also subject to major revision and modernisation. Beginning with the Launceston Federal Conference in 1971, Federal Labor embraced a renewal of contemporary Australia, which was long overdue.

One long-neglected policy area stands out. This is the arena of the arts and entertainment in Australia, where campaigns for greater Australian content had taken root and were flourishing. Senator Doug McClelland, who went on to be Whitlam's Minister for the Media, was pivotal in building the relationship with the arts community, with Whitlam's willing endorsement. Within the entertainment industry, prominent figures such as Bobby Limb, Jack Neary and Kevin Jacobsen pursued major reform to acknowledge the contributions of Australian artists. We need look no further than the superb "It's Time" commercial from 1972 to see how brilliantly the relationship developed. The entertainers in the commercial, including Little Pattie, Jack Thompson, Jacki Weaver, Barry Crocker and Bert Newton sang Labor's theme tune with gusto. These people were not only household names, but they had a place in the loungerooms of middle Australia. Not since Ben Chifley's campaign in 1946 had Labor so comprehensively occupied the mainstream. The Tories were

in the margins.

Federal Labor's win in 1972 was massive in terms of impact but narrow in terms of parliamentary numbers. The vote recorded for Labor nationally was 52.7% two-party preferred. However, the majority in the House of Representatives was only nine, and the Government was in a minority in the Senate. The Coalition never accepted Whitlam's win and sought to obstruct the new Government at every turn. This was also true in the states, where reactionary figures like NSW Premier Bob Askin and Queensland Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen endeavoured to derail Whitlam wherever possible. Inevitably, this led to an early Federal election in May 1974, where the Whitlam slogan of "Go Ahead" was endorsed, but the Government's majority was narrowed by one per cent to 51.7%, two-party preferred. Gough had survived, but only just. And the Coalition could smell blood in the water. November 11th of 1975 was foreseeable, particularly after Malcolm Fraser assumed the Coalition leadership.

These were turbulent times, and they may be illustrated by a personal reference to the September 1970 Moratorium March in Sydney. At 17 years of age, my mates and I had slipped away from school, still clad in our uniforms, to march against the Vietnam War. Well do I remember Tom Uren addressing the crowd in Wynyard Park. Better still do I remember the brutality of some of Askin's police that day. The next day there was scheduled a by-election for the NSW State seat of Georges River. Askin, always a "Laura Norda" campaigner, wanted violence on the streets of Sydney to boost the Liberal vote. He got the thuggery, but the stinging reality was that most of the violence was occasioned by the police. I learned a lesson that day that I have never forgotten, especially after State Labor won Georges River with a swing of over 11%.

For Federal Labor, winning in 1972 and 1974 represented the culmination of years of recovery and regeneration. The significance of the Whitlam governments, quite aside from policy reforms, was that they made possible the Hawke and Keating Labor governments of 1983 to 1996, representing the greatest reform period in our history since John Curtin and Ben Chifley led the nation between 1941 and 1949. And it was Whitlam who recruited a new cohort of impressive ALP candidates, including Bill Morrison from Foreign Affairs, Lionel Bowen from the NSW Parliament, and Major Peter Young from the military. Never to be forgotten in this group was the inimitable humourist Barry Cohen, who was a haberdasher more successful than Harry Truman. Cohen always maintained that Gough would introduce him as: "Barry Cohen, from the North Shore (of Sydney)". The link with the arts and entertainment communities continued right through the Hawke and Keating periods, being confirmed by the policies inherent in "Creative Nation" and the scholarships commonly known as "The Keatings" for Australian artists. This foundation stone exemplified the change that E. G. Whitlam brought upon the Federal ALP.

For the Australian military, the decade was bookended by the navy's Melbourne – Voyager disaster in February 1964,

the bloody Battle of Long Tan in South Vietnam in August 1966 and the arrival of the first F-111Cs at Air Force Base Amberley in July 1973. These are all milestones in the history of our defence forces. Domestically, like the introduction of the original Medibank, Labor's embrace of the arts was as significant a cultural change as recognition of Beijing was in foreign policy terms. There is a period prior to Gough Whitlam in our politics and history, and then the one that followed where Australia emerged as a far more confident nation on the international stage.

Stephen Loosely was General Secretary of the NSW ALP 1983-1990; the ALP Federal President 1991-92 and Senator for New South Wales 1990-95.

1974 The Forgotten Election

Frank Bongiorno



The Whitlam Labor government is usually recalled as short-lived, as it was. It lasted less than three years, the ordinary length of a full term in Australian federal politics. It is easy to forget that Whitlam's was actually a two-term government. The 1972 election is widely recalled as a watershed moment, the end of a long era of conservative rule and the arrival of a reformist, even radical, government committed to an ambitious program. The 1974 election is hardly remembered at all. Yet it has strong claims on our attention.

The election held on 18 May 1974 was the first occasion on which a serving Labor prime minister was re-elected – Andrew Fisher's two election victories in 1910 and 1914 were punctuated by the narrow defeat of 1913. The 1974 election followed a double dissolution: all seats in both houses of the federal parliament were up for grabs. There have been other double dissolution elections before and since – 1914, 1951, 1975, 1983, 1987 and 2016 – but 1974 was unique in that it was followed by the joint sitting of the federal parliament provided for under section 57 of the Australian Constitution to resolve deadlocks between the two houses over legislation. In this respect, the election of 1974 might be seen as a kind of roadway to reform in the face of obstruction laid by the Whitlam government but left unused by later travellers. That was arguably to the cost of this country: a double dissolution election was a course that the Rudd government might have followed in 2010 following the Senate defeat of its Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. Instead, the government decided to postpone the matter – a decision that some have seen as precipitating the government's loss of public support and moral authority.

Even Whitlam's admirers generally give him too little credit for the 1974 election, his biographer, Jenny Hocking, being a notable exception. As she has suggested, it was brave of Whitlam to call an election less than eighteen months after the last. The Whitlam government had been elected on 2

December 1972 amid great excitement and much optimism. Its majority was not large – at just nine seats – but its mandate for change was very strong indeed. The Coalition had been in power since 1949, winning nine elections in a row. Robert Menzies had been prime minister for sixteen years, followed by a succession of less successful leaders who had nevertheless managed to extend Coalition rule for almost seven years longer, largely on the back of Harold Holt's massive victory over a Labor Party led by Whitlam's predecessor, Arthur Calwell, at the 1966 election.

Whitlam became leader the following February, and in the years that followed gave close attention to policy development, pushed successfully for reform of Labor's decrepit organisation, and publicly advocated for Labor as both electable and worth electing, as John Faulkner has put it. Labor under Whitlam achieved a massive swing at the 1969 election – over 7 per cent on the two-party preferred measure – but it was insufficient to overcome the Coalition's huge majority. There were particular problems for Labor in Victoria, the crucible of a split in 1955 whose legacy continued to hang over Labor politics there. Federal Intervention in the Victorian ALP branch in 1970 reduced left-wing control and, in retrospect, made Labor electable in 1972 and again in 1983.

Whitlam, once elected, did not hang around long waiting to get moving. He and his deputy, Lance Barnard, quickly formed a two-man government – a duumvirate – and went to work. This was the First Whitlam Ministry. There was a spate of decisions before Christmas on matters extending from freeing Vietnam War conscientious objectors from prison and formally recognising the People's Republic of China through to reopening the Arbitration Commission case for equal pay for women and removing the sale tax on contraceptives.

The Second Whitlam Ministry that went to work in 1973 experienced greater turbulence. The attorney-general, Lionel Murphy's, 'raid' on the offices of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation attracted predictably adverse publicity, as did the government's purchase of Jackson Pollock's abstract expressionist painting *Blue Poles* for \$1.3 million – as far-sighted as that turned out to be. The sudden imposition of a 25% tariff cut attracted business and union criticism, but it was designed to deal with the problem of inflation and protect the government's ambitious spending program on social welfare. Two referendum proposals put to the vote to give the government greater control over prices

and incomes were defeated late in 1973, at a time when Middle Eastern oil producers were drastically increasing the price of their product in the wake of the Yom Kippur war against Israel.

The government's legislation often ran into obstruction in the Senate, where Labor lacked a majority. While the parliament passed over 200 bills in the government's first year, it rejected 13, amended another 21 and deferred another 10. Some of the measures most important to the government were among those either lying in the graveyard already or heading in that direction in the back of a hearse. Among these was the government's proposal for a national system of health insurance, Medibank, pursued by social security minister Bill Hayden. It was defeated there on the back of a fierce campaign by the Australian Medical Association, which Whitlam ridiculed as the nation's most militant trade union.



Gough Whitlam, Parliament House, 11 November 1975.

By the time of the 1974 election, both Australia and the wider world were in a very different place to where they had been even just eighteen months before. The quarterly inflation rate to March 1974 was 2.4%, which represented an improvement on the previous year – but Sir Frederick Wheeler, the Treasury head, called it a 'false dawn' and he was right. Annual inflation for 1974 would eventually be over 15%. With unemployment also on the way up and economic growth slowing, the end of the long postwar boom had arrived, in Australia as elsewhere in the world. 'Stagflation' was the term used to describe this combination, and the 1974 election was the first in Australian national politics to be contested in its shadow.

Economic decay around the world was accompanied by political instability, too. The Watergate scandal was unfolding in the United States and would result in President Richard Nixon's resignation in August 1974. Britain had two national elections in 1974 after the first ended in a virtual dead heat. Dictatorships in Greece and (in 1975) Spain would soon fall, while others – such as Augusto Pinochet's in Chile – were only beginning their brutal rule. Left-leaning military officers overthrew the Portuguese dictatorship in the Carnation Revolution while the 1974 election campaign in Australia was being fought. That faraway event would soon have significant ramifications closer to home, since it inaugurated the liquidation of that country's empire,

which included East Timor. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China and the Vietnam war were coming to an end but would be followed by genocide in Kampuchea (Cambodia) and the arrival in Australia of many refugees from Indochina in the wake of years of war.

The level of risk that Whitlam incurred in asking the governor-general, Sir Paul Hasluck, for a double dissolution and an election to be held in May 1974 is better appreciated once this context is in view. It exemplified his 'crash or crash through' approach demonstrated in Opposition. It was also the result of failed brinkmanship on the part of the Coalition. Led by Billy Snedden, it had threatened to block Whitlam's budget; indeed, the opposition leader in the Senate, Reg Withers, who had never sought to hide his disdain for the aberration that he considered the Whitlam government, had moved in the Senate to make the passage of the budget contingent on Whitlam calling an election. A half-Senate election had been due by mid-1974 in any case, since Senate elections were out of kilter with House elections – the Senate of 1974 was mainly the product of half-Senate elections held in 1967 and 1970 (There was no half-Senate election to accompany the House election of 1972).

That was the background to the Gair affair. Vince Gair led the Democratic Labor Party, a product of the Labor split of 1955 that had helped keep Labor out of office in the 1950s and 1960s and now held the balance of power in the Senate. Whitlam arranged for Gair to be appointed to a diplomatic post to create a casual vacancy that would result in six rather than five vacancies in Queensland at a half-Senate election. His aim was, of course, to improve Labor's Senate numbers. Queensland premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen blocked the move by rushing a bill through the Queensland parliament, but the double dissolution election in any case rendered Labor's plan redundant. It was the Gair affair, however, that the Opposition sought to use as the moral high ground for blocking supply and forcing an election.

Whitlam had other motives to go to an election than improving his Senate numbers. He had six bills that fulfilled the requirements for a double dissolution election and joint sitting under section 57. The triggers included a 'one vote, one value' bill feared by the Country Party because it would reduce the variation allowed between the numbers in federal electorates from 20% to 10%. Another bill gave Senate representation – two seats each – to the Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory while a third ensured that such a change, should it be made, would not affect the formula for determining how many representatives in the House should come from each state. Two bills were concerned with establishing Medibank. A final bill concerned the establishment of a Petroleum and Minerals Authority, a government body that would have the capacity to engage in mining exploration and investment. While Whitlam was completely supportive of this instrument to increase Australian control of its own resources and generate revenue, the minister who crafted and championed it was Rex Connor. The opposition hated what it saw as an instrument of socialist control.

Against this background, it was hardly surprising that Labor adopted 'Give Gough a Fair Go' as a campaign slogan. The campaign lacked the joy and excitement of 1972, but there was great determination among Labor supporters to resist a 'born to rule' Coalition's efforts to bring down a government it had treated as illegitimate. Whitlam stood on his record and promised, if re-elected, to continue to act on the mandate of 1972. "The Government you elected for three years has been interrupted in mid-career. Our programme has been brought to a halt in mid-stream". New promises included the establishment of a government insurance office. Snedden talked about rising inflation and economic mismanagement and ran a solid campaign.

There was some bitterness. Virulent anti-Labor television advertising, an initiative of Clyde Packer and John Singleton paid for by businesspeople and authorised by former New South Wales premier Sir Robert Askin, starred 'the Estonian woman', as she became known, who told viewers Australia had gone 'disguised communist' under Labor. Racist agitation against immigration minister Al Grassby, who had pioneered multiculturalism under the Whitlam government, saw him defeated in his Riverina seat but Labor did poorly in rural seats more generally.

The size of the House had increased from 125 to 127, and Labor gained the two new seats as well as making gains in Melbourne, while losing ground in New South Wales and Queensland. Its vote in Queensland declined sharply. On a more positive note, a caucus elected in 1972 without a single female member now had three women: future Speaker of the House, Joan Child, who won Henty in Melbourne, and Ruth Coleman and Jean Melzer as senators for Victoria and Western Australia respectively. Melzer had been given an unwinnable place on the Senate ticket – for a half-Senate election. In the full Senate election that ensued, she was in the box seat at number five.

The House result was 66 to 61: a solid working majority only a little smaller than the nine of 1972. Labor's two-party preferred share of the vote was down by one percentage point from 1972, 51.7% compared with 52.7%, but the decline in its primary vote was very slight – less than 0.3%. The numbers in the Senate were of unusual interest this time round, given the circumstances. Labor and Coalition numbers were now equal, with 29 each. There were two independents, where there had been three. The Democratic Labor Party which had held five seats was gone, swept away by the tide of history – the thawing of the cold war, the emergence of new issues and concerns, and the Gair affair had all contributed.

Taking the two houses together, Labor had just enough votes to get its bills passed at a joint sitting. While it would have to endure an unsuccessful High Court challenge along the way, the historic – and still unique – joint sitting was held in the House of Representatives chamber on 6-7 August. Sir John Kerr, who would later feature rather prominently in the story of this government, was now governor-general. Parliament passed all six bills, thereby laying the foundations of national health insurance – Medibank and, later Medicare – and

a more democratic federal political system. The provision for Territory senators survived a High Court challenge, but the Petroleum and Minerals Authority legislation was struck down by the High Court on a technicality concerning the three-month interval required between the first and second rejections of the bill. Connor – and the government of which he was a part – would have more serious problems on their hands in the months ahead arising from his ambitions for the Australian resources industry. But that is another story.

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1984 The Hawke Government

David Epstein



A frustration of Australia's three-year federal electoral cycle is that competent governments generally hit their stride and focus on governing rather than campaigning in the second year of a term. This constrains their capacity to shape national agendas rather than simply react to them. For first term governments this is particularly so, compounded when returning from a lengthy Opposition.

Federal Labor's experience in 1984, the second year of the first term Hawke Government, affirms truisms about the impact of flexible date three-year terms.

Federal Labor won in 1983 knowing it would likely need an early election in its first term. Malcolm Fraser had rushed to an election in March 1983 via a double dissolution trigger, throwing lower and upper house electoral cycles out of kilter. No matter how long it wanted to run into a three-year House of Representatives term, Labor encountered the double jeopardy of needing to hold a half-Senate election by mid-1985.

Avoiding an early election first-term could only occur at the cost of two campaigns and the additional test of what, in effect, would have been a mid-term referendum.

Hawke describes the dilemma at length in his Memoirs:

... Fraser left one last hurdle we would soon have to jump. It was the need for an early election. ... From the outset Labor had little real choice but to bring on a House of Representatives election early... That was never a serious option. So the first Hawke Government was always likely to be a short run thing – a sprint, even.

From the beginning of 1984, through to the election announcement in the third quarter of the year, Hawke and his Government enjoyed two advantages: competence and popularity. Labor benefitted from the quality and breadth

of Cabinet ministers, the quantity and success of significant policy the Government was implementing, and demonstrable improvements in Australia's economic performance.

By April 1984, the Hawke Government had reached record levels of popularity and was winning international acclaim. Hawke became labelled, in grudging mirth, 'Mr Seventy-five per cent' because of 75 per cent approval rating in public polling. Likewise, Treasurer Paul Keating was named 'World's Best Treasurer' after being voted 'International Finance Minister of the Year'. Public opinion is fickle and oft emotive, but the Hawke Government laid rational grounds for its popularity. Quarterly GDP Growth figures released in March 1984 showed an increase of 5 per cent in real terms, then the highest on record, inflation moderated from 11.5 per cent to 7.6 per cent, and unemployment was declining. Labor had come to office in 1983 promising to create 500,000 jobs over three years and had managed to deliver 234,000 of them within a year of the election. This was proof the new Government could tackle stagflation effectively – a task that paralysed its predecessors. Moreover, Hawke and Keating had floated the currency without the damaging exchange rate gyrations that Treasury Secretary John Stone warned it would deliver.

Elections can be more rhetorical flurries yet by early 1984 Hawke's Government was delivering outcomes demonstrating his 1983 mantra of "reconciliation, reconstruction and recovery" had substance. The foundation of the Government's success lay in the prices and incomes "Accord" between the ALP and the ACTU – who represented the broader labour movement. Albeit from antipodean roots and executed with considerably greater integrity, Hawke Labor's agenda arguably had more in common with Gonzalez in Spain and Mitterrand Mk 2 than the paths followed by Clinton in the US or UK Labour under Blair and Brown.

The first Hawke Government and those following it until 1996 were not nascent neo-liberals, nor did they trade politically under quicksilver terms like 'Third Way'. By 1984, Federal Labor had established a uniquely Australian 'Laborist' approach to progressive government in a mixed economy.

Initiated conceptually under Hawke's predecessor, Bill Hayden, assisted by Hawke's Minister for Industrial Relations, Ralph Willis, the Accord formalised a social compact that included social policy and economic equity initiatives as instruments to trade off inflation-fighting wage

moderation and the transitional effects of wider economic reforms. The Accord began as a wage-tax trade-off, a concept discussed, but never executed, by the ALP and the broader labour movement during the 1970s. This time, however, the capacity for trading off wage moderation broadened to place less pressure on the taxation base by recognising cost saving and equity enhancing public policy reforms could also be trade-offs.

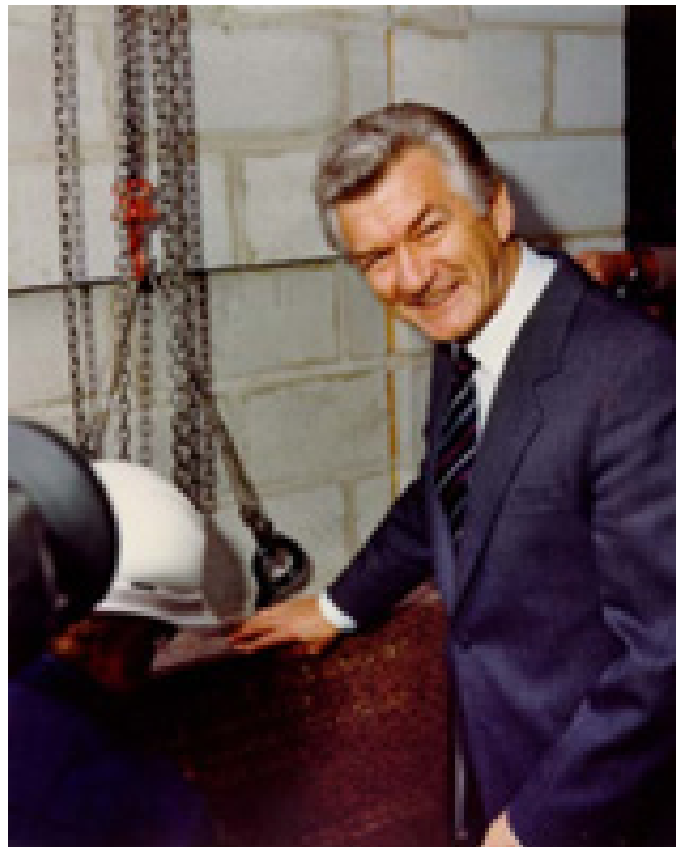
Articulating the emerging detail conceptual architecture of Labor's socio-economic strategy, Paul Keating said what he later called "the Medicare effect" was "...Labor's historic opportunity". Labor's establishment of Medicare in February 1984 was the first illustration of how the conceptual breadth of the Accord could work in practice. Medicare did not simply restore access to affordable health care and restored social equity, it also proved to be an effective inflation fighting tool, notably when recognised by the leadership of the ACTU as valid grounds for moderating nominal wage claims. Importantly, though not widely recognised at the time, Medicare's introduction delivered real macro-economic dividends. Importantly, the trust it built for The Accord across the union movement also laid the grounds for of Federal Labor's greatest ever policy achievements, the introduction of a comprehensive superannuation system. That too commenced in large part because it was accepted by the ACTU as valid grounds for wage claim moderation. This enraged John Stone, the political reactionary Treasury Secretary. Preceding his resignation after the August 1984 Budget, Stone insisted one of his staff memo that Keating had deleted from draft Budget Papers "... material hinting that superannuation was too expensive for employers; that there was a question whether wage rises post-pause might have been still less without the centralised increases; a criticism of the small scope for changing relativities in the Accord process".

An intelligent man, and deeply conservative, Stone recognised earlier than his peers the ALP was demonstrating it had built new capacity to govern effectively over the long-term and entrench significant, progressive reform. What Stone's complaints do not reflect, however, was that effectiveness of the Hawke Government reached well beyond the Treasury portfolio and the impact of macro-economic decisions.

Latter-day reportage and popular history sometimes does not recognise the breadth and depth of talented Ministers in Hawke's Cabinets sufficiently. While the emerging strength of the Hawke-Keating duumvirate was critical to Labor's political effectiveness it was no means the dominant basis for it. Alongside, the duumvirate, Ministers such as John Button, John Dawkins, Neil Blewett, Susan Ryan, Bill Hayden, Gareth Evans, an emergent Kim Beazley, Don Grimes, Ralph Willis, Peter Walsh and John Kerin were proving Labor could be simultaneously rigorous, timely, and progressive, as well as political palatable to middle Australia. The reforms delivered across the portfolios of the first Hawke Government's most talented Ministers during 1984 are multiple. Many endure today, despite multiple attempts by conservative governments to unpick them. They

include the Button Plans for structural adjustment across manufacturing industries, reforms to Commonwealth fiscal governance initiated by Dawkins, regularity reforms in the resources sector applied by Walsh, education funding increases and the implantation of the Sex Discrimination Act advocated by Susan Ryan, welfare reforms launched by Don Grimes and an expansion of the Senate alongside voting reforms in the Electoral Reform Act.

Alongside its successful pursuit of ambitious domestic reforms throughout 1984, the first Hawke Government was highly active internationally, stepping up Australia's engagement in multi-lateral fora as a tool of middle-power diplomacy and focusing more closely on engagement Asia-wide as well with near neighbours in the Asia-Pacific.



Bob Hawke, 1983.

Hawke's efforts to enmesh with Asia affirmed his immense capacity for relationship building and negotiation, and his instincts have largely stood the test of time. The centrality of the US alliance remained, but did so alongside greater "enmeshment", as Hawke called it, with international institutions and other nations, particularly Asian states. Only the year before President Ronald Reagan labelled the Soviet Union an "evil empire", but Hawke had no trouble convincing Reagan that Australia could take a more nuanced approach and still be a valued partner of the US. Differences between Hawke and some ALP supporters, particularly within the Left and the party's intellectual fellow-travellers, made for shaky moments balancing the realities of the US alliance alongside issues such as nuclear energy and nuclear weapons in the Government's second year. Over the course of 1984, Hawke had to contend with the beginnings of the "MX Missile crisis", a mid-year ALP

Conference on uranium mining and fraught debates about nuclear proliferation. Hawke believed strongly Australia could balance this nuanced international outlook and pursue closer engagement with near neighbours yet remain a close partner of the US. He used this to achieve pragmatic bilateral objectives with multiple partners. He worked hard, for example, to position Australia as a trusted conduit that China's leaders could use to re-open formally closed relationships with countries in its region and North Asia, such as Indonesia, Singapore, and South Korea.

Capitalising on a visit to Australia by Zhao Ziyang in April 1983, initiated by Malcolm Fraser, Hawke worked hard to build personal bonds with three Chinese leaders and foster bilateral economic relationships with China. Zhao's was the first of several leadership visits by both sides until the events of Tiananmen Square. Hawke visited China in 1984 and the Sino-Australian Iron Ore Joint Venture was launched within the year, eventually resulting in the Mount Channar mine. Despite the strains Tiananmen triggered, Australia restored the momentum of growing enmeshment with China in the aftermath. Ironically, there is a plausible argument that Hawke's decision to grant visa extensions to Chinese students after Tiananmen improved perceptions of Australia's multiculturalism and its education sector across Asia, possibly adding breadth to our links with China.

Against the background such immense achievement, on 8 October Hawke called the double dissolution election he felt he needed to have to reset the Federal electoral cycle. The election day was set for 1 December 1984, providing for an unusually long election campaign. This to prove a hindrance for Labor, though it prevailed and was able to win a second term. Labor began the campaign with Hawke still holding extraordinary levels of approval in public polls, including a record rating of 75 percent in the ACNielsen poll. As a result there was widespread expectations among pundits that the ALP was likely to win by a landslide with a massive majority with a Roy Morgan poll suggestion Hawke could end up with 100 seats in the newly expanded 148 seat House of Representatives.



Hawke Labor government ministry, 1987

None of the optimistic predictions happened, for several reasons. Hawke, by his own admission, performed poorly in the long campaign. By contrast, Opposition Leader Andrew

Peacock performed very well, unburdened by expectations otherwise, and managed to best Hawke in a widely watched ninety-minute television debate. Labor received a two per cent swing against it and won 82 of the 148 seats in the new House of Representatives, cutting its nominal majority from 25 seats to 16. Hawke, along with the ALP National Secretariat's post campaign report, attributed part the swing to an increase in lower house informal votes from confusion about changes to voting rules, but subsequent research by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) suggests this did not change the result in any electorate. More likely, the shift from the ALP came primarily by changes in voter sentiment, exacerbated by the inordinate length of the campaign. Hawke wore this, along with the impact of his own performance – almost certainly burdened by anxiety about the health of his daughter, Roslyn.

He wrote in his autobiography: "The formal campaign was the longest in federal electoral history... universally disparaged as too long and indeed it was... But family tragedy brought me and Labor's hopes back a little nearer to the field". Nevertheless, the scene was set for another eleven years of Labor in power.

At the time of writing David Epstein was Executive Director of the Chifley Research Centre.

1994 Keating's Working Nation and Labor's Full Employment Mission

Emma Dawson



There have always been those who disdain party politics and seek to unilaterally impose their views on the populace, but over the last decade or so claims that both the major parties are the same have become particularly strident. Both Labor and Liberal are neoliberal parties, apparently; apologists for the capital class, corrupted by money and favours, with no regard for working people or those marginalised by economic rationalism since the reforms of the 1980s. This demonstrably wrong view is ascendant among younger, tertiary-educated voters who came of age in the late 2000s and 2010s. As Macnamara MP Josh Burns observed before the 2022 election, many young voters simply need "to see what a good Labor government can do in order to realise that they have been sold a lie by those who benefit from keeping Labor out of power"; a lie compounded by the disingenuous politics and often outright misinformation spread by the populist left.

If young Australians want to understand the difference between a Labor Government and the Coalition – and they need to understand, for their own and their country's good – then the parties' approach to employment is a fine place to start. Full Employment is a contested term in economic circles, but politically it is a guiding light of Labor administrations. The 1945 White Paper on Full Employment, the core economic policy of the Curtin and Chifley Governments, guided Australia's development for three decades. It was the framework that created what was arguably the most egalitarian, stable and prosperous middle-class society on earth. Its core tenets – government investment in new industries; the creation of secure, well-paid jobs; the establishment of social security and the welfare state; a massive government program to build affordable new homes - were maintained throughout the Menzies years.

What Curtin and Chifley did, in close collaboration with the visionary H.C. "Nugget" Coombs, was to build an

economic framework that was centred on the needs and contributions of working people. The 1945 Banking Act that established the functions of Australia's central bank (initially the Commonwealth Bank, later the RBA) positioned the "maintenance of full employment" as an equal responsibility as ensuring the stability of prices, enshrining it as a core function of monetary policy.

This was the social compact that drove Australian prosperity for decades. Labor's essential commitment to full employment and the rights of workers was the key reason Australia did not suffer the destructive impact of unbridled economic rationalism in the 1980s as did the US and the UK under their conservative governments. While Reagan and Thatcher positioned the unions that represented working people as the enemy to their pursuit of economic liberalism and globalisation, Labor under Hawke and Keating modernised Australia's moribund economy in partnership with the union movement, under the leadership of Bill Kelty. Workers – their needs, their skills, their contributions – were central to the Accord that opened Australia's economy to the world and underpinned a world-record three decades of unbroken economic growth.

Menzies had recognised that to abandon this approach was to lose the trust of the Australian people. Indeed, the only time he flirted with a more rationalist approach to employment, in 1961, he came within two seats of losing power. Throughout his socially conservative rule, the management of Australia's economy, at least, remained geared towards improving the lot of the majority of people, regardless of their start in life. Not until the ascension of John Howard – a poor derivative of Thatcher, whose political vision was entirely regressive - was this social compact completely broken.

If one clear theme has emerged from the first two years of the Albanese Government, it is a quiet determination to restore full employment. The soaring rhetoric of Labor leaders past may be absent, but the work of cabinet is focussed on policies to ensure the power of government is directed to lifting living standards – real wage growth, more educational opportunities, job security, the balance between paid work and family life, access to affordable, well-located housing – for all Australians, not just those born into privilege. The employment portfolio, under Minister Tony Burke and Assistant Minister Andrew Leigh, has been both busy and bold. As Ross Garnaut has shown, a decade of Coalition rule resulted in lower real wages and living standards today than 10 years ago - the first time this has

happened since Federation.

Labor is calmly and determinedly bringing our IR laws up to date, pushing back against years of Coalition-endorsed exploitation of workers by big business. Wage theft, including through unpaid super, rampant deregulation of workers' rights through the casualisation and "gigification" of essential jobs, and the hoarding of profits in place of productive investment by business, have strangled productivity and left too many Australians struggling to make ends meet. The restoration of multi-employer bargaining, targeted at low-paid jobs in the feminised care and social support sector, is a crucial step towards rebalancing the power relationship between workers and employers. Measures in the Closing Loopholes bill to curb false casualisation and give people some certainty over their hours and incomes are long overdue, while the extension of hard-won rights to gig economy workers is belatedly bringing our Fair Work Act (FWA) into line with arbitration systems in comparable jurisdictions. A big increase in the award wage for workers in aged care, and a massive investment in early childhood education and care to support more mothers to get back into the labour force, are critical measures to lift the pay and conditions of women and of staff in essential caring jobs. Public sector workers, for years yoked to a destructive wage cap while seeing their work outsourced to expensive (and sometimes corrupt) consulting firms, are finally leading the way in winning real wage rises, setting the standard for the private sector, as they should, and have in the past.

The Government's willingness to back workers in the fight over flexible hours shows that, unlike many captains of industry, it understands that most employees now do not have a wife at home full time: that the workforce of today is vastly different from, and more diverse than, that of 30 years ago, when our current IR system was set in train. Changes to the Workplace Gender Equality Act to force the publication of wage gap data, along with the removal of prohibitions on employees discussing their pay with colleagues, give more power to workers to negotiate better outcomes for themselves and their families, while increases to the statutory rate of superannuation will give people - especially women - more security in retirement. The Albanese Government has presided over the lowest unemployment rate in recorded history: more than 70,000 people who were, before COVID, long-term unemployed or completely detached from the labour market are back in work. This has mitigated, to some degree, the impact of cost-of-living pressures and provided a boost to tax revenues.

Yet Labor is not resting on these results. Burke initiated the first comprehensive, root-and-branch review of employment services, currently known as "Workforce Australia", in a generation. Critically, he charged the Parliament with this work and, under the leadership of Julian Hill, the report presented to Government calls for a shift in the focus of the system from punishing people for a fate they can't control towards providing genuine assistance to find and keep a job. Taken together, these measures match in ambition the policies set out in the 1945 White Paper. That they have been pursued, and many achieved, in the face of open

hostility from the business lobby and its champions in the media should be celebrated by any social democrat. This is core Labor business.

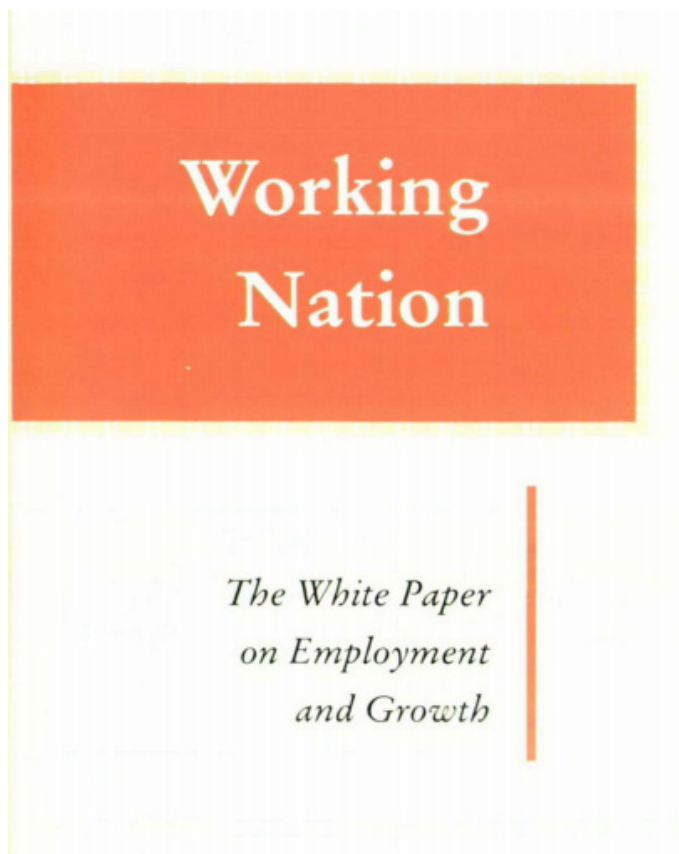
The danger for Labor, however, is that its cautious approach to restoring full employment won't cut through to those voters who have felt abandoned by government for too long. Another threat is that bold intentions will be diluted by conservative thinking in the upper echelons of the public service. In this regard, there are lessons to be learned not just from Curtin and Chifley, but from Paul Keating's Working Nation policy. After winning "the sweetest victory of all" in 1993, the Keating Government was faced with the truly awful fallout of the 1990-1992 recession. Australia's economy was overstretched when the global recession took hold in 1990. Highly leveraged businesses began to collapse under the weight of 20% interest rates, taking key financial institutions with them, while households for the first time felt the pinch of monetary policy due to the deregulation of mortgages in 1989, leading to mortgage interest rates for new borrowers of up to 18%.

There is still dispute about to what extent it was monetary or fiscal policies, or indeed domestic or international forces, that were responsible for the crash of 1990, but the shift in focus to inflation targeting and redressing the asset price boom indicate that it was at least partly because Keating, in his zeal to complete the economic transformation for which he is rightly lauded as a Labor hero, forgot that the key to his, Keltly's and Hawke's success had been the centring of working people in their economic program. The outcome of "the recession we had to have" was an unemployment rate of 10.8%. Working Nation was an attempt to fix that mistake. The original Green Paper released in December 1993 was bold and thoughtful, and explicitly referred to the policy as Restoring Full Employment. Keating's initial vision was for a whole-of-industry approach to building a full employment economy for the era of globalised trade, similar in scope and ambition to the 1945 manifesto.

But by the time ministers returned to Canberra after summer, it was clear that, for young people entering the workforce and older (mainly male and blue-collar) workers who had lost their jobs as a result of economic restructuring, unemployment was becoming sticky. The resulting White Paper on Employment and Industry, work on which commenced in February 1994, became hostage to political pressure and the competing priorities of different government portfolios. What began as a worthy attempt to foster sustainable economic growth through regional development, industry policy and increased trade, underpinned by a full employment strategy, devolved into a jobs and training program to address long-term unemployment. Cabinet papers from the time show that the process was largely hijacked by bureaucrats from the Department of Social Security and the already struggling Commonwealth Employment Service.

Working Nation could have been a transformative full employment program had it been introduced five years earlier, when the global stock market crash and inflated asset prices began to derail the wins of the Accord. Coming

after the recession, in the face of immense political pressure in Labor's last term of government, however, it became a reactive program to push long-term unemployed people into work. The policy became dominated by the ideological pursuit of competition in the delivery of employment services, untethered from the broader industrial and trade policies that were intended to boost regional development and create jobs. Most distressingly, it opened the door to the full privatisation of employment services and the dissolution of the CES under Howard, something that Julian Hill has declared has "decisively failed".



The good news is that the Albanese Government is not making the same mistakes. Some long-time observers of Labor's economic policies have bemoaned the change in title of the current White Paper to remove the word "full" before "employment", claiming that this shows a reluctance to restore genuine full employment and reposition its maintenance as of equal import to the stability of prices. This, they say, is proof that Labor is neoliberal, beholden to the inflation-targeting dictate of the Non Accelerating Inflation Rate of Unemployment (NAIRU), scared to embrace an economic framework along the Keynesian lines that delivered such prosperity in the post-war years. Yet, if we look at the work behind the rhetoric, there is a government quietly and confidently re-establishing the framework of a real social-democratic, full employment economy, updated to meet the challenges of our diverse, modern workforce and the opportunities of the shift to renewable energy.

The reforms to employment law outlined above, the review of employment services, a sophisticated engagement with barriers to women's workforce participation, investments in free TAFE and the courageous scope of the University

Accord, complement investments in building the foundations of a new economy. These include revitalised industry policy through the National Reconstruction Fund, the Powering Australia initiative to invest in regional development, Rewiring the Nation and, not least, the first meaningful, ongoing investment in affordable housing by a federal government in 30 years.

This is not a small target agenda. Treasurer Jim Chalmers has spoken clearly of Labor's intention to create a full employment economy that will share the opportunities of the post-carbon transition with all Australians, even going so far as to say that the NAIRU is "a useful measure, [but] it doesn't capture the full potential of our workforce and it shouldn't – and doesn't – limit the government's ambitions". Albanese's is a government with a stated goal of "pushing the NAIRU statistical measure lower and increasing the speed limit on our economy". To do so, it is pursuing a Hawke-like approach to bringing together all players - business, unions, government, community - to secure a future in which full employment is once again the lodestar of an economy that works in the interests of people, rather than of capital. That's what good Labor governments do.

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2004

A Fork in the Road

Kos Samaras



2004 was a low point in the ALP's history but also laid the groundwork for its electoral revival in 2007 but as I will argue here a longer-term trend away from the major parties. In late 2003, with his parliamentary support base crumbling, Simon Crean resigned the FPLP leadership, becoming the first federal Labor leader to be replaced without contesting an election. The party elected Crean's shadow treasurer, Mark Latham, as leader over Kim Beazley by 47 votes to 45. At 42, Latham was the youngest federal leader since Chris Watson. Claiming a special connection with outer-suburban families, Latham initially disturbed Howard's political centre of gravity with his slogan of Australians climbing 'the ladder of opportunity', especially his promise to empower the 'outsiders' living on the suburban fringe. Opinion polls soon showed Labor well ahead and Latham with the highest personal approval ratings for an opposition leader since the heady days of Bob Hawke.

Alas it did not last long. Howard launched a major spending spree in 2004 to lure back wavering voters. The Liberals also targeted Latham in highly personal terms, such as his promise to bring Australian troops in Iraq 'home before Christmas'. During the 2004 election campaign Howard made much of his government's ability to be 'trusted' to manage the economy and mounted a highly effective scare campaign on interest rates. Latham struggled to maintain his discipline as Coalition billboards dubbed him the 'L Plate' driver who would wreck the economy and destroy private schooling. Then, in the crucial last week, an ill-judged announcement regarding the logging of Tasmania's old-growth forests saw the Tasmanian Labor premier and forestry unions savage his leadership.

In the event, Labor went backwards and Howard secured a fourth term: Labor's numbers marginally declined in the lower house, but the Coalition took control of the Senate for the first time in over two decades. Having resigned the

leadership in early 2005, Latham later released the bilious Latham Diaries, lashing out at the party that had done so much to support him and bitterly attacking virtually every former colleague.

Yet in the afterglow of its stunning 2004 victory, the government introduced anti-union legislation known as WorkChoices. It reduced unfair dismissal laws to near uselessness, placed more onerous restrictions on unions, created a Fair Pay Commission with a conservative agenda for setting minimum wages, and enhanced the power of employers to impose AWAs on their workers. The ACTU responded with a successful campaign known as Your Rights at Work. Public rallies and marches drew hundreds of thousands and effective television advertisements highlighted the threat to 'working families'. Labor's victory at the 2007 election under Kevin Rudd was sown at this very moment.

Yet, since 2004, Australian politics has undergone profound changes, marked by leadership transitions, evolving policy agendas, and shifts in public discourse. From the Howard era to the turbulent tenures of prime ministers Rudd, Julia Gillard, Tony Abbott, Malcolm Turnbull, and Scott Morrison, Australia grappled and struggled with economic challenges, social reforms, environmental concerns, and geopolitical shifts. Much of what these successive governments achieved was predominantly driven by short-term political considerations aligned with the electoral cycle, rather than prioritising measures to adequately prepare the country for the challenges it was to face into the future.

2004 was the fork in the road for Australia, where the post World War Two economic boom drew to a close, with nearly six decades of unparalleled prosperity for countless Australians, regardless of class or social standing, reached its conclusion. Australian governments were given two choices. Maintain the lifestyles and wealth of the generations that had benefited from this boom, or adjust and ensure future generations could live comfortably, be it with less wealth. They chose the former.

They chose the former because in 2004, the electoral roll primarily comprised of Australians born before 1980, with the baby boomer generation exerting substantial influence. In 2004, John Howard's victory was a reward for his steadfast loyalty to this generation. He was tapping into the then deeper undercurrents within Australia's political fabric, which would shape the nation for the ensuing two decades and exacerbate significant demographic

divides. By 2004, the quintessential Australian dream of homeownership had morphed into an addiction, fuelled by policies that encouraged baby boomers to view homes as investment commodities. The extent of this addiction was so palpable that in 2003 a new reality TV series 'The Block', was launched, quickly capturing the zeitgeist of the burgeoning housing boom. It's still on air today, benefiting from Australia's love affair with property.

But for any Australian born after 1980 the relationship with property was not one of love but rather dread. In 1984, baby boomers merely had to borrow 3.3 times their annual income to secure the average property. Contrastingly, Millennials and Gen Z now face the daunting task of borrowing up to 10 times their annual income. Compounded by the reality of an economy devoid of the stable employment and income security once enjoyed by their parents, the financial landscape for younger generations has become markedly worse. Although this predicament is almost universal, it's a lot worse for the children of baby boomers who enjoyed good and stable employment within Australia's once burgeoning manufacturing industry.

These young Australians, particularly from diverse backgrounds, mainly hailing from the Middle East and parts of Asia, face significant challenges. They are disproportionately less likely to have obtained a university degree and more prone to employment in precarious, unstable jobs. In major cities like Sydney, they encounter formidable barriers to accessing the housing market, with affordability concerns posing a significant obstacle to homeownership.

In a broader context, a substantial number of Millennials ventured into the housing market during a period of unprecedented property price escalation. This decision, while driven by the desire for homeownership, came at a considerable expense and posed substantial risks. Consequently, Millennials currently bear the highest burden of debt among all generations, grappling with pronounced levels of mortgage stress as a result. Gen Z and Millennials who were unable to enter the housing market constitute the majority of renters in Australia. This demographic faces a unique set of challenges, characterised by soaring rental prices, limited housing supply, and, in some cases, substandard living conditions exacerbated by a power imbalance between tenants and landlords.

The political ramifications of the major parties aligning with Baby Boomers in 2004 have become glaringly evident. In the 2022 federal election, over 5.1 million Australians opted not to vote for them. In urban centres across the country, a significant portion of voters turned towards alternative options such as the Greens, Teals, and other minor parties, reflecting a shift away from traditional party allegiances. Meanwhile, in suburban and regional areas, discontent was channelled through protest votes directed at parties like the UAP, One Nation, and various micro parties. This electoral landscape resulted in a notable transformation, with the Liberal Party losing ground in every major city's inner suburbs, while the Labor Party experienced significant

declines in its historically strong heartland electorates. One striking example is the federal seat of Fowler, once considered a stronghold for Labor, which saw a substantial decrease in support for the party. Dai Le, the successful independent candidate, garnered significant support from a diverse demographic comprising mainly Millennials and Gen Z. Notably, a large portion of this support base does not possess tertiary qualifications.

These shifts underscore a broader trend of disillusionment with traditional political parties and a growing appetite for alternative voices and perspectives in Australian politics. Both the Liberal Party and the Labor Party must adapt to navigate an electoral landscape where success may hinge on their opponents' losing votes to minor parties, rather than a direct transfer of support between the two major parties. In the years ahead, the political allegiance granted to baby boomers in 2004 may indeed carry significant political consequences for both.

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2014

Abbott's Austerity Budget and the limits of Neo-Liberalism

Wayne Swan



What could they have possibly been thinking? As he happily sucked on a cigar outside the Treasury Building after putting to bed the budget, did Joe Hockey even momentarily ponder the impact of his cuts on the Australian people? Or was he only concerned with ideological cuts to Labor programs, especially to Medicare? Was it more about pay back where they knew it would hurt Labor, than about paying down debt? Because Tony Abbott's 2014 budget effectively declared war on working people. It sought to wind back all of the most significant initiatives of the Rudd-Gillard Governments, and in particular, to repudiate all of the underpinnings of the fiscal stimulus that saved Australia from the recession that followed the Global Financial Crisis, known elsewhere in the world as The Great Recession.

That budget's design was reminiscent of John Hewson's 'Fight Back'. Both sought to wage a class war against Australians on modest and middle incomes. The 2014 budget was part of a wider tranche of measures contained in a National Commission of Audit which sought to cut the minimum wage by \$140 a week. It exceeded even the Commission's recommendations in changes to the pension. It represented a dramatic step down the road of shifting the balance towards corporations and away from working people via, smaller government, less corporate tax and a higher GST. Its centrepiece was a massive \$80 billion smash and grab from public schools and public hospitals the length and breadth of the country.

This so-called response to an "economic emergency" was in reality a stalking horse to justify a broader and hidden ideological agenda. Treasurer Hockey constantly referred to Australia's social security system as a "cargo net" while at the same time throwing adrift the pensioners and low-income families that relied on it. In an Australian first the budget imposed time limited welfare payments. While claiming Australia had unsustainable levels of debt Hockey

and Abbott used their ill-gained budget savings not to pay down that debt, but to plug the revenue holes left by their abolition of the mining tax, the carbon tax and the removal of measures to stop multinational profit shifting. The deficit stayed the same, net debt did not go down but instead went up. It was the classic neo-liberal strategy of starving the beast – imported from the US under Reagan, Bush and the Tea Party. Shrink the size of government by driving the budget further into deficit then aiming political firepower in the need for more cuts to fix the deficit. While the corporate sector took some token collateral damage via a debt tax, middle and lower income Australians copped the cuts to government: denial of Newstart benefit to people under 25, cuts to family benefits for low income earners, A \$7.00 GP tax imposed as a first hit to the crushing of Medicare, real cuts to pensions, working conditions and wages, and to wider health and education.

The fallout from the 2014 budget effectively destroyed Tony Abbott's Prime Ministership moving Malcolm Turnbull to the role. The central issue of this period was Tony Abbott's promise there would be no cuts to health or education. Where was Peter Dutton then? He was busily cutting \$50 billion from hospitals and shredding the Labor Government's health funding reform agreements with the states. He started chipping away at Medicare seeking imposition of a \$7 "GP tax" or cut to GPs medicare rebate – hoping doctors would recoup by charging a co-payment. Even Abbott couldn't stomach that later making the "tax" optional and \$5 instead, but also freezing for four years Medicare fees paid to GPs. In the heady glory of their ideological power, their first budget took on the Medicare Goliath with full intentions of a fatal bleed.

When Campbell Newman was elected Premier of Queensland in 2012 his first budget sacked 14,000 public servants – cuts felt in schools, hospitals and public facilities for years to come. There were additional savage cuts to health and education. You would think that Abbott had paid attention to that. Unquestionably the greatest electoral boil-over in Australian history occurred in the defeat of Campbell Newman and the election of Anastasia Palazczuk. Swings of 20% and more were evident across the state, from outer suburban electorates to regional and far north seats. Following the dispiriting defeat of 2013 Federal Labor was back in the game and highly competitive.

The feature common to the Federal election in 2016 and the Queensland State election in 2015 was the electorates

rejection of austerity, that is savage cuts to health and education and the social safety net. The Liberals had sought to present themselves as moderates, both state and federal – then they governed as extremists. The legacy of Abbott and Turnbull was this Americanised Tea Party agenda, wanting to shrink the role of Government to sell off public assets. While incoming Prime Minister Turnbull sought to take the hard edges of the 2014 budget measures his promise to cut further corporate tax left him politically vulnerable to political attack of the trickle-down agenda. In the 2016 election Opposition Leader Shorten campaigned strongly on these Federal and State issues and despite the Liberal's change of Prime Ministership Labor secured 14 additional seats in a swing of 3.5%. During this period the business community continued to advocate lower company tax and a higher GST as well as shrinking the role of government and privatisation of government work, services and agencies. Labor had struck a chord with the electorate in its call for fairness in the tax system and the need to protect services and support for people on modest incomes. Sadly for Labor these political successes did not result in a change of government in 2019. Indeed in 2019 Federal Labor went backwards in key electoral battlegrounds despite our conservative opponents trailing in the polls for three years, dispensing with two Prime Ministers and sticking to a policy of cuts to vital services with tax cuts for high income earners and large corporates.

Clearly being ahead in the polls and facing an opponent singularly dedicated to widening inequality and coarsening political debate can still result in a loss. Prime Minister Turnbull, in his advocacy for tax cuts for the top end of town, personified the trickle-down neo-liberal agenda, and his replacement with Prime Minister Morrison was outwardly a strategic retreat from that agenda, and arguably delivered the Liberals a third term of Government in 2019.

The standard conservative argument following that election was that Australian Labor lost because it pursued the politics of envy and used class war rhetoric that drove away aspirational middle ground voters. In other words that we went too far to the left. This argument is contradicted by the electoral facts: swinging voters in middle income areas stayed with Labor, upper middle-income earners shifted towards Labor, but lower income earners in regional and outer suburban areas shifted to the conservatives. In reality those allegedly targeted by Labor's policies stayed with us or even increased their support, while the actual beneficiaries of our policies swung against us.

There are critical lessons for defeating a neo-liberal agenda from the 2019 result. When we are assessing how progressive an agenda should be we need to account for both the size of that agenda as well as policy design. In 2019 Labor's agenda was just too big. We were offering too many complex progressive initiatives which made them easier to demonise and sensationalise. In our defence we had a great deal of first aid to deliver to the Labor policies the class-driven 2014 budget had so blatantly attacked. In 2022 Anthony Albanese concentrated on a fewer number of progressive issues, in particular wage and climate policy,

and the consequence was the Liberal scare campaign fell flat and missed the mark.

To win the battle against neo-liberalism we have to become much more effective at communicating our vision through a shorter list of high profile, easily campaignable policies. A defining moment in the 2019 campaign occurred amid a massive scare campaign against Labor's support for a \$1 an hour increase in the minimum wage. Holding up a \$1 coin Anthony Albanese cruelled the scare rendering it "small change". The economist John Kenneth Galbraith once called conservatism "the search for a superior moral justification for selfishness." Two well-heeled Liberal Ministers laid-back sucking cigars in celebration of an austerity budget that hacked away at basic societal supports looks pretty selfish to me. So too the constant attempts by conservatives to demonise mainstream tax policies as anti-business. It's a lie social democrats cannot let stand. It is not a redistributive agenda to ensure prosperity is delivered to those who create it. It's a question of better recognising and rewarding the wealth creators. You don't reward them by sending their hard paid taxes upwards to the mega-rich. You don't reward them by downgrading the health and education services that give them to opportunity to create family income. You don't reward them by mounting ideological warfare against the government services on which they rely. You don't reward them by failing to deal with emerging dangers like climate change, energy transitions and affordable housing shortages. Yet the 2014 Budget did all this and more. In 2016 the conservatives almost paid the price but did not heed the lesson. Peter Dutton still doesn't see it.

Wayne Swan is National President of the ALP. Before entering Parliament in 1993, Wayne worked as a lecturer in Public Administration at the Queensland Institute of Technology, as an adviser to former Opposition Leaders Bill Hayden and Kim Beazley and was State Secretary of Queensland Labor. Wayne was Treasurer from 2007 - 2013 and served as Deputy Prime Minister from 24 June 2010 - 26 June 2013.

2024

Labor's Present and Future

Misha Zelinsky



Close your eyes and ask yourself: it's the year 2124 and does the Australian Labor Party still exist? Fortunately, none of us will be likely around to have our exam papers marked. But as the world enters its most dangerous geopolitical environment since World War Two, it's a question well worth pondering. Because where would Australia be without Labor?

Since its founding in 1891 by shearers under the Tree of Knowledge in Barcaldine, the ALP has been one of the world's most successful political projects. That a group of battered and bruised Australian unionists could give birth to an organisation responsible for husbanding one of history's great nations and egalitarian societies into being is an incredible triumph. Without Labor governments, Australia would be a very different — and undoubtedly worse — place today. But while the scoreboard speaks for itself, a proud record of achievement is no guarantee of future success. As dark forces gather at home and abroad, Australians will need their leaders to be at their very best. More than anything, they'll need Labor.

The three Big D's

There are three major global trends already underway that will remake the world: a shift to clean energy in response to the threat of climate change, a split between advanced economies and the People's Republic China in critical technologies and inputs, and the rise of authoritarianism at home and abroad. The challenges can be summed up as: decarbonising, decoupling and democracy. Each issue alone throws up policy hurdles that are mind boggling in scale of complexity and cost. And due to their potentially existential nature, none can be safely ignored. However, given the overlap and compounding effects of these issues, and the contradictions in priorities and outcomes that

each throws up, devising a coherent suite of national and global policy responses that tackles all three concurrently is wickedly difficult.

For example, should the world prioritise decarbonising as rapidly and cheaply as possible if it allows the Chinese Communist Party to dominate — and weaponise — the energy markets of the future? Or should private technology companies be allowed to develop AI at breakneck speed if means keeping ahead of the Dictators Club who would use it for evil means, even if it risks creating tools that undermine the fabric of our societies and democratic institutions?

The Party of Modern, Modern Australia?

To have any hope of tackling these challenges in a manner consistent with its values, Labor needs to win government more often. To do so, it must win over those who will be most impacted if the planet's ecosystem, economies and democracies collapse simultaneously — the young. A quick glance around Australia would suggest the ALP is in rude health.

Anthony Albanese's 2022 victory over Scott Morrison — only the fourth leader to take the party from opposition to government at an election since Scullin in 1929 — gave Labor the boxset of wall-to-wall mainland governments. But scratching under the sea of red, reveals a political organisation with problems. Put simply, fewer Australians are selecting Labor as their first voting choice. This is no single Labor leader or tactician's fault. But the structural decline is real. And it is perhaps existential. At the most recent election, Labor polled a record low 32.5 per cent of the primary, down from 45 in 1993. With Liberals and right wing nationalists picking away at Labor's traditional working class base by inflaming culture war issues, the Greens going after the radical young and the middle aged affluent, and migrants looking to get ahead suspicious about our big government approach to change — the threat is threefold.

If votes are the lifeblood of a political party, then this is a worrying ailment that will eventually kill the patient. The fact Anthony Albanese was able to form majority government on such a low first vote speaks volumes to the tactical prowess of Labor's campaign machine. But even allowing for Team Albo's ability to squeeze the electoral lemon so effectively, it is impossible to realistically expect Labor to consistently

form government on this kind of electoral base. With fewer rusted on voters, defending government or pursuing policies that upset vested interests, even if they will quite literally save the world, becomes closer to impossible. A party that polls consistently in the low 30s will find itself in opposition more often than not. A party with a vote in the low teens will be irrelevant. Or worse.

Though linear projections are best avoided, if one extended the straight line drop in the primary vote from the nearly 51 per cent the incoming Fisher Government of 1914 received to Labor's primary for a century onwards from 2022, Labor would be a minority party not bigger than the Greens. One of the major takeaways from the 2022 federal election was the 'Americanisation' of the Australian electorate. Because Footscray today bears almost no resemblance in demography, economic footprint or social attitudes to Townsville or Burnie, federal campaigns have never been more difficult. For this reason uniform swings across Australia that would once reliably topple seats in one tidal direction no longer occur. With fewer and fewer seats switching hands at elections as the country became more polarised and politically ossified, we now have a Coalition dominated by the Queensland LNP, while Labor increasingly dominates Sydney and Melbourne. None of this is to say that the Labor Party is likely to lose the next federal election. Looking at the structural problems of the Liberal Party nationwide – and most graphically in Victoria – and its inability to reconcile urbane Tealsters with its Queensland heavy, outer suburban and regional base, you'd much rather be Anthony Albanese than Peter Dutton. But like a melting iceberg where the damage is hidden from view, eventually there comes a tipping point. At which point you have catastrophic collapse.

Only the good die young

Since 2001, the world has been in the grip of a "democratic recession". According to the Economist Intelligence Unit, only 24 countries – just over one in 10 – qualify as full democracies. With the democratic herd thinning a little more each year, a club of dictators is working hard to erase the free societies still standing. They aim to create a "law of the jungle", where might is right: theirs. Defeating this latest surge of evil, most clearly evidenced by Putin's brutal invasion of Ukraine, demands a sustained and co-ordinated effort. However, at this moment of global peril, democracies have lost the thing they need most: the power of their legitimacy. When done well, free societies underpinned by open markets work together to provide a better life for everyone. During the Cold War, West Berlin was fundamentally a better place to live than East Berlin. Eventually, this irrefutable truth caused Soviet communism to crumble. The Berlin Wall came down, humanity voted with its feet.

But with wealth inequality wildly out of control, today's winds of change are blowing the other way. According to the IMF, the world's richest 10 per cent earn more than half of global income and hold three quarters of the wealth. Even in egalitarian Australia, the top 20 percentile has 90 times

the wealth of the bottom. And that's without accounting for the disaster we've created by turning our housing market into a casino for established players only. The toxic impact of the wealth divide become even more pronounced when one considers the gap between the old and young. Every serious analysis shows that as the world has become richer over the past 40 years, more of this wealth has been concentrated into fewer, and older, hands. Not only do older generations dominate the majority of assets, they've pulled up the drawbridge behind them. The middle and working classes – and the young – have missed out. They vote. And they're pissed.

We shouldn't be surprised that young people in particular are losing faith in the value of democracy as a system of government, are increasingly falling into deaths of despair and are starting families later, if at all. Exasperated by a system that locks them out, young people have been behind the rise of right-wing reactionaries around the world promising to blow up the system of privileges that serves the incumbent oldies. And who can blame them? Given how hopeless the situation must feel for anyone unable to get a secure job, buy a home or plan ahead for the costs of parenthood, we should instead be amazed that so many young people still believe in the value of the system at all. It is for this reason that the greatest threat to the long-term health of the Labor Party is from the Greens political party who, while far left in their policies, are tapping into the deep disaffection young people today are feeling with the state of the world with wildly undeliverable, but popular policies. Though it still consistently polls in the low to mid-teens, with minimal appeal outside major cities, the growing competitiveness of the Greens amongst young people should worry Labor faithful.

According to pollster Redbridge, support for the Greens jumps from 13 per cent nationally to 24 per cent amongst to 18-34 year olds. Though Labor maintains an advantage amongst this cohort and is not suffering as badly amongst young voters as the Coalition, Labor's overall lead is far skinnier than the national figures. So while Labor is used to a comfortable flow of Green preferences, the point has now reached where more and more inner urban seats will come under threat from frustrated youngsters. A growing share of the national vote will also allow the Greens to hold Labor's agenda to ransom in the Senate.

The dead end of culture wars

Based on the suite of problems facing, many activists will instinctively believe Labor must "pursue boldness". However, in an era of cynicism about power, the powerful and civic institutions this would be an error. Rather than a "Whitlamesque" approach to change, what's required is consistent and methodical renovating. And doing so in the right areas. As a program for Labor, it could best be described as "defending democracy abroad and making it work at home". This will require a focus on the things that matter most at a national level – economic and national security. Australia's needed investments in vital defence

equipment, its endowments of critical minerals needed for clean and defence technologies, high quality scientific knowhow and deep pools of capital should provide the ingredients to create a prosperous and secure nation. But it will take vision to pull it all together. It will take Labor.

The belief domestic concerns can be separated from national security is the great failure of politics. The right sees security as an end in itself, without a view to what it is protecting. The left naively dreams of a utopia that, once achieved, will never require to be defended against evil. Even if its aims are well-intentioned, campaigning for social justice without a forensic plan to solve economic pain does not build winning democratic coalitions. If it did, Donald Trump and his cronies would already be toast. And yet. The plummet in support for the Labor in the aftermath of the Voice compared to its strong result in the Dunkley by-election, which served as a referendum on the Government's amendments stage 3 tax cuts, is instructive.

While much is made of his hawkishness, the economic justice agenda of George Orwell is often ignored. Orwell hated the tyranny of oppression, whether it was delivered by the jackboot of totalitarianism or the everyday unfairness of being poor. In *The Road to Wigan Pier*, Orwell concluded that everyone struggling to make ends meet shared a common political interest. But even in 1937, Orwell foresaw the political dead end of culture wars. By unnecessarily dividing natural allies via the "humbug" of their identity, Orwell feared progressives risked allowing a "minor issue to block a major one". According to him, culture wars direct "attention away from the central fact that poverty is poverty, whether the tool you work with is a pickaxe or a fountain pen". You wonder what Orwell would make of a progressive politics that has led to the disaffected working class selecting a caustic crook who plays a billionaire on TV as its champion.

Bob Hawke was the gold standard of balancing kitchen table issues with social justice. A beer-drinking larrikin, Hawke didn't sneer at Aussies like many modern progressives. But as a principled man who abhorred racists and helped free Nelson Mandela, there was no pandering either. By prioritising economics and unleashing the middle class, Hawke pioneered policies considered wildly "woke" by the standards of the day. History tells us that democracies are not the natural order of things. They are fragile entities that must be defended from the outside and nurtured from within. As a small democracy that needs friends, Australia stands to lose more than most if the world goes to hell. The military threat of the Dictators Club, while more visibly scary, is perhaps easier to solve. For example, if we choose to arm Ukraine, it will win. Bad guys will be put back in the box. But resolving the internal contradictions is trickier. It requires talking to one another as citizens, not as enemies. And it means standing up to bad people with worse ideas – even if they're on our "team". It also requires those on top to acknowledge that they're there by privilege and not right.

Democracy is the best system of organising societies. Properly regulated free market economies is the best way

of generating wealth. But extreme economic inequality isn't just unfair, it's outright dangerous. If we refuse to civilise the unforgiving brutality of free markets, if we don't heal the economic pain, then something will give. And it won't be pretty. History shows that one way or another, hungry people will eat. The question is whether grotesque inequality will be addressed through modest union agreements, the storming of the Bastille or something entirely darker.

If you're worried, there are meaningful things you can do. Don't just march for justice, join a union. Don't just campaign for Yes, give hardworking people a pay rise. As C.S. Lewis famously said, "good and evil increase at compound interest". If free societies don't unite to stop fellow members from being swallowed up by the bad guys, they can expect to be hunted from existence. But if democracies don't deliver for people at home, who will defend them? An uncompetitive Labor Party can't hope to be the solution to that problem. Or any others.

Misha Zelinsky is a leading expert on the rise of global authoritarianism. A Fulbright Scholar, economist, lawyer, and author, Misha spent 2022 and 2023 covering Russia's invasion from inside Ukraine as a war correspondent for The Australian Financial Review. Misha is personally sanctioned by the Putin regime. He was previously Assistant National Secretary of the Australian Workers' Union. Misha is a contributor to MSNBC, BBC, ABC, and his work features in Australian and international print publications including the Sydney Morning Herald, Daily Telegraph, Foreign Policy Magazine, Times of London, and Financial Times.

*Misha is the author of the war novel *The Sun Will Rise* (2023) and co-edited *The Write Stuff: Voices of Unity on Labor's Future* (2021, with Nick Dyrenfurth).*

Getting to know JCRC Board Member Gerard Dwyer



What got you interested in unionism and politics?

I grew up in regional NSW. Politics was always discussed at home growing up, and I come from a family of many ALP members and trade unionists. Being exposed to history made me aware and then convinced that, in large part, the Australian story is really the Labor story. I am a history teacher by profession and took Australian history electives over the course of 1982-84 when I attended Polding Teachers' College, now the Australian Catholic University, graduating with a Bachelor of Education (History and English). I was a member of the Independent Education Union as a teacher. It was really Bob Hawke's prime ministership which sealed the deal for me – I joined the Australian Labor Party in 1987.

Tell us about your working life

My first classroom teaching gigs were temporary and I also spent an 18 month period working full-time as a builders' labourer. Whilst studying I also worked shifts at a bottle shops (ed. So did Nick!). I left teaching to do social work dealing with young kids who'd left remand centres. I then joined the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association (SDA) in late 1987 and was employed as an organiser for five years working across Sydney and later was responsible for workers compensation and was an industrial officer. I became SDA-NSW assistant secretary and then branch secretary in 2005 and from 2008-14 SDA National President. In 2014 I was appointed SDA National Secretary-Treasurer.

What is the one big policy problem facing Australia and the solution?

Absolutely housing which is why I am so invested in the work of the John Curtin Research Centre. It's not only smashing younger generation but is a national economic handbrake.

What do you like to get up to outside of work?

I love going for long walks, reading, listening to music – from soft-rock, rock'n'roll, and classic blues – but on the latter score I get too many complaints from my kids!

Tell our supporters an unusual fact about yourself?

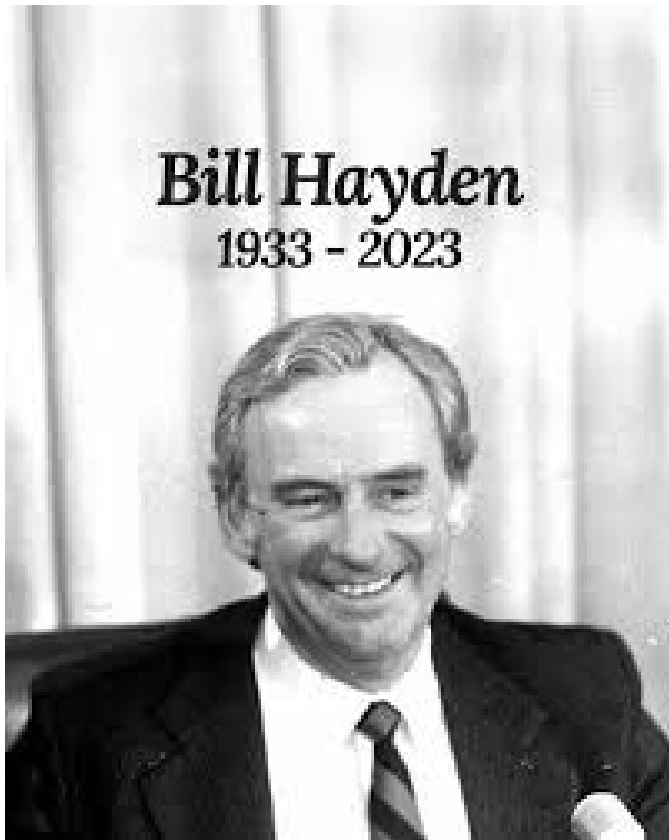
As a kid I wanted to be a jockey! The dream ended in my teenage years. Wrong body shape!

Any advice for young activists?

Politics is the art of the possible. It's good to have passion but one's emphasis needs to be on substance, data and not just emotions. Yes, we need to connect with people's hearts but minds too – working out what is the policy solution and what is realistic. And always keep an eye on the regions – they are an excellent barometer of working class opinion on big issues.

Vale Bill Hayden, 1933-2023

David Hamill



I was at High School when I first met Bill Hayden. He was the Minister for Social Security but more importantly, he was my local MP. He was also an economics graduate and as economics students, we had invited him to talk to our class. He was generous with his time, and he facilitated visits by other speakers including the then Treasurer. Bill was a diligent local member, and it was through hard work that he secured his place in the Federal Parliament.

Bill Hayden's career was remarkable. From humble beginnings in the then, working-class inner Brisbane suburb of Highgate Hill, he worked in the Queensland State Stores before joining the Queensland Police Force. He then spent seventeen years in the Federal Parliament and seven years as Governor-General of Australia before retiring to run a few cattle on a property on the shore of Lake Wivenhoe. It was as a police officer that Bill came to Ipswich, married the love of his life, Dallas and offered himself as the Labor candidate for Oxley, a seat held comfortably by Dr Donald Cameron, the Health Minister in the Menzies Government. The combination of a strong national swing to Labor and a tireless grassroots campaign delivered the 11% swing which

catapulted the young police constable to Canberra.

Although the major centre in Oxley was the Labor stronghold of Ipswich, the Oxley which Bill Hayden won in 1961 extended west into the Lockyer Valley and north through the small rural communities of the upper Brisbane River catchment. He worked assiduously as a local MP, and he spent a lot of time and energy at the country shows and school fetes in the conservative-voting rural areas of his electorate. His reward was increased majorities in both 1963 and 1966, despite anti-Labor swings overall.

The young Bill Hayden was an angry young man. He had first-hand experience of the struggles of many working-class families in post-depression Australia. He had seen the hardships faced by sole parents and was all too aware of the destructive impact of domestic violence. He went to Canberra with a commitment to economic and social reform and a desire to eradicate inequality from Australian society. Bill Hayden also had a thirst for knowledge. As a backbencher in Opposition, he enrolled as an external student at the University of Queensland and completed an economics degree. He embraced an academic rigour which he would apply to the development and advocacy of policies for reforms in education, health and welfare. With the election of the Whitlam Government in 1972, Bill became Minister for Social Security and set about significant reform of the nation's social security safety net. It was in this capacity that he made an indelible mark on Australian social policy and Australian society. Among his initiatives were the introduction of the Supporting Mothers' Allowance, now a component of the Parenting Payment and of course, Labor's flagship policy on national health insurance, which was implemented as Medibank in 1975. These reforms did not receive a bi-partisan embrace. They were resisted tooth and nail by the Liberal and National Parties and in the case of Medibank, also by significant parts of the medical profession. In the face of such bitter and often vicious opposition, Bill was tenacious. In those battles with groups such as the Australian Medical Association, he always armed himself with the facts and figures to support his case. He also held firm to his belief that governments could implement redistributive policies to overcome relative social disadvantage and he sought out advisors from industry, the welfare sector and the universities to assist in developing and critiquing his policies.

As Treasurer in 1975, Bill was faced with the daunting task of rebuilding the economic credibility of the government,

however the constitutional crisis, and Labor's trouncing at the polls ended his stint in that critical portfolio. The election almost ended his parliamentary career as Oxley became a marginal seat. Bill was then the only Labor member in the House of Representatives from Queensland. After another defeat in 1977, with Labor's primary vote falling below 40% - its lowest primary vote in a federal election since the second world war – Bill Hayden became Leader of the Opposition and set about rebuilding the party. Back in the 1960s, Gough Whitlam had seen the political threat posed by Labor's shrinking blue collar constituency. As Bill Hayden wrote in his autobiography:

Labor's problem was one of long-term attrition... Whitlam actively courted the new middle class – paradoxically many the products of Menzies' major initiatives in higher education – by stressing that advancement in society should be merit-based, and this was coupled with material commitment to the less well off.

As did Whitlam before him, Bill Hayden pushed for party reform. He established the National Committee of Inquiry after the 1977 election defeat, pursued organisational reforms in Queensland and Tasmania and started the process which saw branch members directly elect delegates to the Federal Conference. The common theme of these reforms was internal democracy and the opening of the Labor's decision-making processes to the broad range of views represented within the party. Bill Hayden was not a celebrity politician. He was not the populist hail-fellow-well-met, full of flattery and charm. Indeed, in later life when recalling the numerous country shows and community gatherings he attended as the newly minted Member for Oxley, he spoke of "fetes worse than death!" Hayden had an intellectual approach to politics. His commitment was to persistence. He believed in presenting rational arguments to explain policies that were thoroughly researched and costed. He was also a realist. His experiences as a Minister in the Whitlam and Hawke Governments convinced him that a well-managed economy was needed to underpin social advances, and that there were limits to the speed and capacity of governments and the public sector in achieving social and economic reform. He applied four tests for what he called "policy realism." First, a policy needed to be legally implemented. Secondly, it needed to be administratively feasible. Next, it had to be politically viable, and finally, but importantly, it had to be economically feasible.

As Opposition Leader, Bill Hayden reformed the Labor Party and its policy platform and rebuilt its parliamentary frontbench. From the dire electoral result of 1977, under his leadership Labor was competitive in the 1980 election, laying the groundwork for victory in 1983. Just hours before Prime Minister Fraser called the 1983 election, Bill put the interests of the party ahead of his own. He resigned his leadership, clearing the way for Bob Hawke to become Opposition Leader. Hayden's disappointment was palpable, commenting that "a drover's dog could lead the Labor Party to victory, the way the country is." Hawke retained Hayden's front bench in government and Hayden assumed the Foreign Affairs and Trade portfolio, advocating a closer

relationship between Australia and its Asian neighbours. He also focussed on reforming Australia's foreign aid program.

A few months after the 1987 election, it was announced that Bill Hayden would become Australia's twenty-first Governor General. He took up the appointment in 1989. In 1996, he and his wife, Dallas left Yarralumla to retire to their property at Bryden on Lake Wivenhoe, north of Ipswich. Whilst no longer holding public office, Bill continued to engage in public affairs, from time to time proffering an opinion piece for publication. Having resigned from parliament and the Labor Party ahead of becoming Governor-General, in retirement he rejoined the party and in 2007 was awarded Life Membership. Bill and Dallas Hayden had four children; however their eldest daughter had died after being struck by a car at the age of five in 1966. She had just left Sunday School. The family was devastated, and their grief was abiding.

For most of his adult life, Bill Hayden described himself as a humanist or an atheist, or at least an unbeliever. However, at the age of 85 in 2018, he was baptised into the Roman Catholic Church. It had been a long journey, but an ailing Bill Hayden confessed to what he described as "a gnawing pain in my heart and soul about what is the meaning of life" and his role in it. Bill Hayden died on 21 October 2023 and his widow, Dallas died suddenly and unexpectedly three months later. They were a devoted couple, much loved and widely respected. Bill Hayden led a remarkable life and achieved remarkable things. Perhaps his greatest legacy is the plastic card sitting in the wallets and purses of millions of Australians. That green and gold Medicare card is emblematic of a commitment to social justice as it provides access to health care that in earlier times was available only to those who could afford it.

The Honourable Dr David Hamill AM is a professional company director and a life-long Ipswich resident. He served as Bill Hayden's Campaign Director in 1984 and 1987. David was the Member for Ipswich in the Queensland Parliament from 1983 to 2001, Treasurer in the Beattie Labor Government, and Minister for Transport and Minister Assisting the Premier on Economic and Trade Development, and later Minister for Education in the Goss Labor Government. Educated at state schools in Ipswich, he is a graduate of both the University of Queensland and Oxford University, where he attended as a Rhodes Scholar.

Shlomo Avineri (1933-2023): Labour Intellectual in the Land of Israel

Michael Easson

Shlomo Avineri who died on 1 December 2023 was one of Israel's most outstanding public intellectuals. Born Jerzy Wiener in Bielsko, now the twin city of Bielsko-Biala, Poland, Avineri's life mirrored the entire history of the modern state of Israel. Fear and Zionist optimism sparked the move in 1939 of his parents, Michael and Ester-Erna Wiener, to Palestine, thereby escaping the cauldron; despair at the Shoah, the loss of relatives, and ancient Jewish communities of Eastern and Mitteleuropa; witnessing the defence of Israel in the war of independence in 1948; seeing the settlement of traumatised refugees from war-ravaged Europe; studying at the fledgling Hebrew University of Jerusalem; achieving high prestige as a public intellectual of global prominence; shaping the emergence of world-class institutions in academia and the Israeli public sector; serving as Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1975 to 1977 — playing a role in that capacity in peace negotiations with King Hussein of Jordan. In 1996, in recognition of his vast contributions to Israeli academia and public life, he won the coveted Israel Prize.

Avineri's books on *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx* (1968) and *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (1972) became classics of interpretation, clearly explicating what each of those thinkers had to say. He attempted to rescue Marx from the Leninists and Stalinists, insisting that terms like 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' were rarely used by Marx. The latter thought that the ballot box might be the means of achieving change in advanced countries, particularly with England in mind. A consequence of Avineri's interpretations and tracing the lineage of certain Jewish-influenced features of Marx's thought (including ideas of emancipation and liberation), as well as Avineri's dissection of areas of confusion and error, attracted the enmity of communist ideologues and their sympathisers, many of whom he would battle for fifty years in academic journals. One Avineri reply to a Marxist critic soberly stated he would refrain from comparable polemical fireworks and, "instead... focus on what seem to me to be the cardinal points of difference between our varying interpretations..." He saw the place of political democracy as the demarcation point between social democrats and their enemies on the 'Left'.

Arguably, Avineri's most interesting and profound contribution to the intellectual life of Israel and the wider world centre on his writings on Zionism, Israel's relations with the Palestinians, prospects and pitfalls of a potential Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. Works addressing such themes include *The Making of Modern*

Zionism. The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State (1981), *Moses Hess: Prophet of Communism and Zionism* (1985) and *Herzl's Vision: Theodore Herzl and the Foundation of the Jewish State*, English translation by Haim Watzman (2015).

Avineri always considered himself a man of the liberal, social democratic left, balanced by the smelling salts of a Realpolitik outlook. But his opinions shifted markedly over the years, to a deep pessimism about what might be realistically possible. This too mirrored many trends in Israeli attitudes, the healthy tension between desiring peace, respect for the 'other', genuine efforts to understand grievances and alternative perspectives, and scepticism about what might be achievable, and the time it might take to get there. A deep thinker, aware of the complexities of two peoples' narratives — on the one part, the celebration of the ending of 2,000 years of banishment, 'the ingathering of the exiles' in Zionist rhetoric, versus the Nakba interpretation (the Palestinian view of the catastrophe, the defeat and exile of 1948), ensured that Avineri understood any overall solution by fiat should be given short shrift. The only sane way forward was step-by-step, confidence building measures, engagement, and gradual cooperation between two peoples.

In an article in *Commentary* magazine in 1970 he declared: "What I have in mind is a discussion with the Palestinians now under Israeli rule concerning the possibility of establishing a Palestinian Arab state on the West Bank and in Gaza." But he wondered if and how this might be possible. To use an ambivalent Avineri phrase, he came to query if this was "no longer the conventional wisdom of wide circles."

The emergence of the Edward Said (the American Palestinian academic) and Marxist view that Israelis are descendants of colonial exploiters, a perspective which captured the imagination of Palestinian leaders and scholars, meant that achieving 'peace' and normalcy became even more problematic. The intifada in the aftermath of Israel Prime Minister's Ehud Barak's peace offer to PLO Leader Yasser Arafat in 1999-2000, fuelled further disillusionment. Avineri wrote: "When terrorists who blow themselves up in cafeterias, bars, and other civilian centres are hailed as martyrs in Palestinian society and occasionally by Palestinian authorities, the sense that all Israelis — and the very existence of Israel — are under siege greatly diminishes the willingness of many Israelis to take risks in favour of Palestinian self-determination. This is true even of many Israelis who denounce the continued occupation of

Palestinian territories but are sceptical about the chances of peaceful coexistence.”

The Israeli Left were mercilessly flayed by the Likud Party and conservatives in Israel for having dangerous expectations of dealing with the Palestinian leadership. Arafat was no Nelson Mandela. The PLO lacked the courage to sell half-a-loaf as better than none to their population. Israeli Labour melted away in the heat of cheated expectations. Avineri came to realise that the problem was more than a lack of political savvy or strategic nous by the Palestinian leadership, encapsulated in the 1973 quip of Ebba Eban, the former Israeli Foreign Minister, that the Palestinians never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity. No. The failure to truly accept the legitimacy of Israel and the moral right of Jews to a homeland was root and branch the problem. In an open letter to Edward Said in *The Jerusalem Post* in October 2000, Avineri wrote: “For those of us in Israel who thought that an eventual Israeli-Palestinian rapprochement would never wholly satisfy either side, but nevertheless give each a place in the sun, Oslo was the ray of hope. It has now been extinguished.” This was a reference to the 1993 Oslo Peace Accords between Israel and the PLO. But after Barak’s (and in 2008 Israel Prime Minister Olmert’s) peace proposals were rejected Avineri, in his philippic to Said, regretfully wrote: “Somehow, we shall have to pick up the pieces. Israel will have to decide how to withdraw unilaterally from most of the Palestinian territories, because we should not and cannot hold on to them. Your people will then have an opportunity to have state of their own – it should have been achieved through an agreement, but if an agreement is impossible – better a unilateral action that leads to Palestinian statehood, than the continuation of the illusion of historical compromise.” In that pithy statement, Avineri displayed his compassion, disillusion, principles, and realism.

When Hamas in 2007 seized control of Gaza, Israel suddenly had on its doorstep an avowed enemy who fiercely rejected Oslo and fanatically for religious-ideological reasons wanted to drive Israelis from the land. This meant killing and holocaust. The events of October 7th, which Avineri commented on in the last months of his life, highlighted existential threats to Jews and the survival of Israel – indeed the very idea that at least in their own land Jews could be safe. In *The New York Times*, he noted the Hamas view that in Israel “every civilian is a soldier.” He warned: “This was not rhetoric.” This worldview identifies “the vulnerability of the Israeli communities inside Israel.” Hamas believed in victory through slaughter.

Appreciation for both peoples’ indigenous identity and claims to the land – a nuance Avineri always deeply appreciated – was core to the conflict. The 1947 UN proposed partition concerning the formation of a Jewish state and an Arab state out of the Palestine mandate could not be achieved if one side believed Jews had no right to nationhood. The emergence of ferocious anti-Jewish Arab nationalism in the late 1940s and 1950s meant, for the first time in a millennium, the systematic discrimination, hostility, and violence to Jews in the Muslim world. As a result, Jews

emptied from the Arab lands, most moving to Israel. Hence, today, most of the Jewish population in Israel are Mizrahi Jews (i.e., Jews from the Middle East.) The idea – espoused frequently by extreme Israel critics that Jews should go back to where they came from is fanciful. There is nothing to return to. As there was not, realistically, for the survivors of the Holocaust in Poland and Eastern Europe after World War II.

Avineri thought that peopling parts of the West Bank by Jewish settlers added an unnecessary burden in conflict with Israel’s interests. He urged that economic incentives be given to resettle them in Israel proper. (Many, after all, had received subsidies to move to where they were now, a good number located on the West Bank for economic reasons – cheaper land, etc. Not every settler was a religious zealot.) The racist actions of the hard-line settler movement, however, their confiscation of Arab land and harassment of Palestinian farmers, could only stoke tensions. Poking the Palestinians in the eye, so to speak, making ordinary travel in the West Bank, say, from Nablus to Hebron a nightmare of checkpoints and traffic jams because of the location of settler outposts would radicalise Palestinians to despise Israel and Israelis. That was only one consequence. The diversion of resources from the Israel Defence Forces to protect the settlers would weaken Israel overall.

In 1981, he perceptively analysed one dilemma arising from the occupation: “...an army that will, over time, be more and more perceived in the public mind as involved in patrolling occupied Arab cities, imposing curfews on areas under military administration, chasing Palestinian school children out of the streets back into their classrooms – in short, an army that looks and acts like any other army, will cease to be a focus of identification of Diaspora Jews...” He added: “even if many, or most of them, continue to justify the policies making such acts necessary.” He was cautious about the achievable in his most recent prognostications. Nevertheless, Avineri continued to believe Israeli public policy should strive to mitigate the severity of occupation and move both sides eventually to an agreed solution. In 2017, Avineri argued: “Whoever aspires to continue the Israeli control over millions of Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza territories undermines the legitimacy of Zionism and of the State of Israel. Inasmuch as in 1947 it was not possible to obtain international recognition for a Jewish State in all the territory of the Land of Israel, so, too, today it is impossible to reach such an agreement; and whoever does not see that is denying reality and misleading the public.”

Avineri above all was a humanist. He understood the injunction in the *Qohelet* (Book of Ecclesiastes): “For in much wisdom is much worry: and he who adds wisdom adds pain.” His writings and thought emblemise the complexities, challenges, and paradoxes of the nation and region he dedicated his life to understand.

Hard Labour?

Ben Wellings



Ben Wellings reviews Jon Cruddas' *A Hundred Years of Labour*, Polity, London, 2023.

January 2024 marked the centenary of the first Labour government in British history. Given that the British Labour Party has such a troubled relationship with its past – and in particular its times in government – this centenary was little commemorated; another instance of presenting a 'small target' ahead of an impending election. A notable exception was Jon Cruddas' book, *A Century of Labour*, that takes a new look at the Labour Party over the past one hundred years.

For Cruddas, a long-serving MP representing a constituency on the fringes of London's east and a thinker associated with the Ed Miliband years (2010-15), the Labour Party is a 'coalition of traditions'. These three traditions are what he labels ethical socialism, welfarism, and liberty and human rights. The argument of the book is that Labour succeeds when the leader and party can bring these three traditions into alignment rather than impose one at the expense of the other two. This reconciliation needs to occur whilst resisting the lure of the chief philosophical malefactor, utilitarianism, that hollows out the ethical traditions at the expense of power for its own sake. In this light Clement Attlee, perhaps Labour's greatest Prime Minister (1945-51), becomes important not as a highly competent but famously taciturn administrator who oversaw the creation of the welfare state, but as an old-fashioned idealist who did the best job of reconciling and managing all three traditions to produce the most lasting of Labour's legacies.

The book was prompted by the centenary of Ramsay MacDonald's first – and short-lived – government of 1924. However, the contemporary context of its publication is the impending general election which will be a referendum on the Conservative's time in office since 2010. This government's

achievements include the imposition of widespread, long-lasting austerity measures; the UK's withdrawal from the European Union and the negative effects of this on the economy; a poorly-managed response to the Covid-19 pandemic in England; and the degeneration of politics into a series of trust-sapping scandals and 'culture war' issues. The latter includes a morally-bereft and as yet ineffective pledge to 'Stop the Boats' cut-and-pasted from Australian policy. The Conservative government is collapsing by the day and Labour are 20 points ahead in the polls.

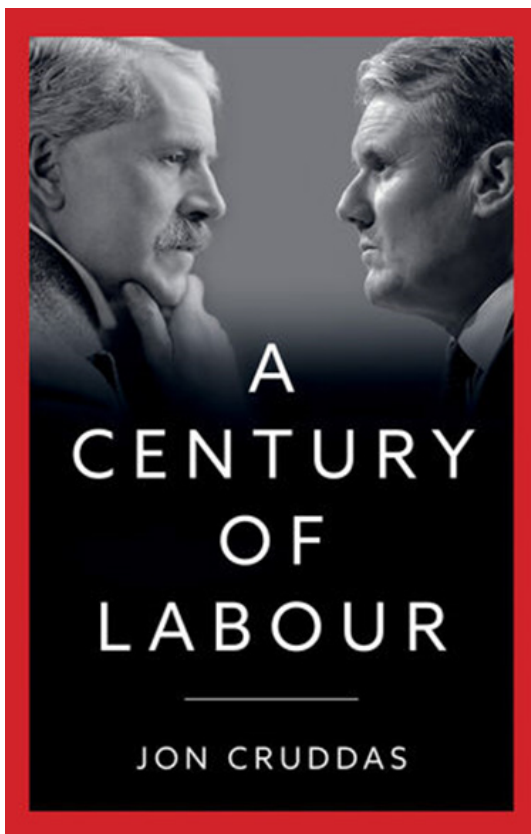
It is at this happy juncture where anyone with even a cursory knowledge of Labour's past starts to get nervous. The Labour Party can hardly be accused of iron discipline, part of the structure of its diverse traditions. Labour has snatched defeat from the jaws of victory too many times – 1970, 1992, 2015 – or lost and considered it a win – 2017 – for its supporters to consider this an open goal. There are too many 'shy Tories' out there who complain about the Conservatives to pollsters but can't quite bring themselves to vote Labour on the day, or who don't show up to vote at all, for party strategists to be relaxed about the significant poll lead established since 2022 largely thanks to the efforts of Boris Johnson and Liz Truss.

It is this vision of the past that Cruddas' analysis seeks to counteract. Such historical analysis allows for the identification of patterns in the interrelationship between ideas and practice that a focus on a single electoral moment cannot bring. In this sense, the similarities in the debates of the 1920s and those of the 2020s seem (depressingly) familiar. Social democratic parties always disappoint some elements of their core support, even – perhaps especially – during periods of government. This is due the compromises to ideals required to participate in Parliamentary politics. In this regard, groups of people bemoaning the excessive reliance on utilitarianism and the principled vacuum at the heart of Labour governments could surely be found in pubs in 1924 as much as 2024.

Of course, adopting the parliamentary mode of politics – a choice Labour made in 1900 – implied that some concessions to ideals would have to be made. Deciding the point at which – and how far – to compromise on ideals creates what Cruddas often refers to as the 'trauma' of government. Centre-right parties are experiencing the kind of factionalism that the left has lived with since forever. But Labour seems unusually scarred by its times in office as much as out of it. Labour's first governing trauma was the

collapse of the second Labour government (1929-31) and MacDonald's part in the 'National' (in fact, Conservative-dominated) government of 1931-35. The next was when the social reforming zeal of the Harold Wilson years (1964-70) atrophied into the industrial 'strife' of the 1970s. The most recent was when the New Labour project lost legitimacy amongst ethical socialists due to the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Cruddas uses his interpretation of the past to call for a renewed sense of purpose for the Labour Party. In his view this should be an alignment of all three of the major traditions he identifies. He argues that the party needs to speak for its traditional supporters, but without an over-emphasis on material dimensions of the good life alone. Nor does he suggest that Labour should seek the votes of the 'Brahmin' educated classes (those tertiary-educated people who voted to Remain in the EU), nor place an over-emphasis on identity politics at the expense of a broader progressive (or at least anti-Conservative) solidarity.



This sounds like a convincing means of party management which – with its own dash of utilitarianism – sounds like a good way to win elections. Yet it also prompts a bigger question: is reconciling the Labour traditions enough to address the problems of the 21st century? The influence of each of the various traditions on the party rise and fall over time – again a benefit of the historical perspective – but what if these traditions cannot keep pace with external challenges, either from innovation within opposing parties (Thatcherism, Brexit), or from major events such as the pandemic. This question relates especially the challenges of climate change to which the current leadership under Keir Starmer seems particularly weakly committed.

Part of the tragedy of this lack of self-confidence to face the electorate on a bold platform of climate action and justice relates back to the lessons of the past. The Labour Party in Britain has internalised the Conservative critique of the years of industrial strife in the 1970s, in particular the 'Winter of Discontent' of 1978-79, that Labour cannot manage the economy without blowing the budget (never mind that the Tories do this all the time). This damaging self-image needs to change for voters to believe in the party.

The Labour Party has a century of major achievements to be proud of. Its top three legacies are the welfare state set up under the Attlee administration; the social reforms steered through Parliament by Roy Jenkins during the first Wilson government in the 1960s, and devolution in the United Kingdom during Blair era, noting the groundwork for peace in Northern Ireland laid by John Major's administration.

Cruddas argues that such success is the product of unity built around a party that is willing to reconcile its three main traditions. In a typically Labour analysis, somewhat at variance with his overall argument, he sees victory as a potential threat: 'Without such intellectual and political reconciliation, a party of labour could be destroyed by victory' (Cruddas, 2024: 247). In the same vein, Cruddas sounds a note of caution when it comes to Labour's chances in the next general election. Labour's two greatest election victories – 1945 and 1997 – came on the back of 10 percent national swings. To gain an overall majority this time around it needs a swing of over 12 percent. The party is currently lucky in the opposition it faces. The Conservatives are deeply unpopular, and the Scottish National Party is losing support. This might be Labour's "1945 moment", a time to tackle gross inequality in the wake of a national crisis. Yet the cynicism generated by Boris Johnson and the Conservatives may adhere to all politicians and voters may simply not turn up on polling day. Starmer remains a cypher in policy terms. This is not necessarily a disadvantage for opposition leaders, but the backsliding on green pledges made during the leadership campaign in 2020, swapping principle for economic orthodoxy, may backfire.

As always for a Labour win there is much work to do. The tension between the ethical tradition and utilitarian pragmatism remains constant. 'Twas ever thus. I'm not sure if the pun in the title was intentional, but being Labour in Britain over the past century has been a lot of hard work. This doesn't look like changing anytime soon.

*Ben Wellings is an Associate Professor in Politics and International Relations at Monash University in Melbourne. His research interests include nationalism in the United Kingdom and the European Union, and the international politics of the Anglosphere. He is the author of *English Nationalism, Brexit and the Anglosphere* (Manchester University Press, 2019) and (with Andrew Mycock) co-editor of *The Anglosphere: continuity, dissonance, location* (Proceedings of the British Academy 232, 2019).*



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Labor needs to call out the cynical and posturing Greens

Ideology
Increasingly, the Greens are shaping policy in Australia, yet somehow they are allowed to slide under the radar of proper scrutiny.



Nick Dyrenfurth

The political blowtorch is being applied to Anthony Albanese as the year begins. The PM's second half of last year mirrored champion cricketer Steve Smith's chequered recent form. And questioning Albo's performance, ditto Smith's woes, is how democracy works.

There were some – but not enough – analyses of Opposition Leader Peter Dutton. The efficacy of his negative strategy will be probed this year. After all, when economic insecurity dominates, Labor would be wise to draw attention to Dutton never having held a serious ministerial or shadow ministerial portfolio in the economic realm. Culture war sortifies into Woodworth's selling Australia Day merchandise won't cut it.

Yet one political party seems to evade critical scrutiny, passing through the slips cordon of democratic accountability with alarming ease. The Australian Greens, led by Adam Bandt, have become a more formidable force in recent years, even if their tally of legislative runs on the board would seem to have inspired the paltry efforts of recent touring teams. Compared with the major parties, the Greens glide under the radar, shielded by an aura of feel-good environmentalism and virtue signalling.

The Greens' vote among young voters is growing. They are not merely shifting on climate and environmental concerns, but sense that the Greens are on their economic side. Yet it's time to question the immunity granted to Bandt and his party, a green light for unbridled ideological flights of fancy and

It's time to dial up the volume of accountability on international affairs from the Greens.

climate policies, consider housing. The left-wing populism spouted by Greens spokesman Max Chandler-Mather is cutting through with Generation Rent. Proposals for a rent cap and freezes are foolish in the extreme. The Greens have the luxury of never actually implementing them or dealing with their consequences – landlords would simply jack up rents ahead of any change, blunting its practical effect. There's also the problem of caps not working in practice overseas.

In the manner of last year's wrangling over Labor's Housing Future Fund, the Greens are the enticing to block the government's shared equity "help to buy" scheme in the Senate to again push for freezes and caps. Bandt mocked "Labor backing unlimited rent rises, handouts for property moguls and tax cuts for politicians and billionaires".

Treasurer Jim Chalmers, who wrote his PhD thesis on Paul Keating as "brawler statesman", and Housing Minister Julie Collins need to get on the front foot. Where is the economic modelling underlying the Greens' proposals?

with the senior Social Democrats, have taken a mature, ethical position on Israel's war against Hamas, spearheaded by Vice-Chancellor Robert Habeck. Australian Greens have behaved recklessly, with no regard to facts or social cohesion at home.

On and after October 7, as rockets rained down on Israel and Israeli citizens were murdered, mutilated, raped and kidnapped into Gaza, there was deafening silence from Bandt's Greens – a brazen display of selective empathy. The Greens' failure to condemn Hamas terrorism reveals a glaring blind spot in their purported commitment to human rights. For all intents and purposes, their call for a unilateral ceasefire is a pro-Hamas stance.

Moreover, Israel is the only nation in the Middle East that shares the Greens' stated values – a commitment to democracy, freedom to protest, environmental bona fides, a free press, a free judiciary, equality of the sexes, rights for LGBTQIA+ people.

Social cohesion matters, too. In his reckless politicisation of the conflict and loss of mostly innocent Palestinian lives in Gaza, Bandt is taking Australia down a divisive path, cynically seeking to exploit the sympathies of Muslim voters in Labor-held seats such as Wills.

The Greens have plumbed new lows. Responding to US and UK airstrikes against the Iran-backed Houthis menacing Red Sea shipping, defence spokesman David Shoebriest took aim at the Australian

embassy. Dutton said the strikes were Yemen, killing of hundreds of thousands of innocent Yemenis, and slogan of "God is the greatest, death to America, death to Israel, a curse upon the Jews, victory to Islam" – how can a serious and secular political party oppose action against genocidal, racist terrorists targeting civilian shipping? The strikes are in our national interest, protecting living standards given the necessity of protecting trade routes we rely upon and uphold a rules-based global order.

It's time to dial up the volume of accountability on international affairs from the Greens.

On post-material issues, Bandt is being allowed free rein. He lambasted Labor for putting the republic on ice given economic gloom and the defeat of the Voice referendum. Yet Bandt contributed next to nothing to the Voice campaign. How would inner-city Adam pitch to voters in outer suburban and regional seats who knocked the Voice on the head – in almost identical terms to the 1999 republic referendum? One suspects he wouldn't recognise a working-class Australian if he ran over one in his EV.

Australians deserve a transparent, comprehensive understanding of policies determining their future if shaped, by extremist Greens ideology. In an era of disinformation, they deserve more than vague promises and cynical posturing. If not, our nation risks becoming captive to unchecked ideology at the expense of practical governance.



TO NEWS

DECEMBER 17, 2023 SUNDAY AGE

Youth support for far right a threat to PM

Paul Skidell
Federal politics correspondent

The Labor Party risks being courted by disillusioned young voters, who leaving Australia think tank has warned as it tracks a surge of support for far-right parties across the world by people under 30.

A new paper from think-tank Curia Research Centre suggests that Labor's near record low primary vote could be further depleted if it fails to win the trust of a lost generation of younger Australians unable to afford homes.

The party's youth wing must radically change from a culturally homogeneous group of privileged university graduates to one that embraces TAFE students and workers, the Labor signed think tank argues.

"Over the past few generations, the children and grandchildren of working class Australians reared by Paul Keating's recession are not to have of the early 1990s and who were bedeviled by the global financial crisis and then COVID, have given the finger to the ALP," writes the think tank's director, Labor historian Nick Dyrenfurth.

"They too are angry and alienated from the economic system which they had to grow up in. They are not just angry about their primary needs, such as a lack of power educational outcomes, fewer training and job opportunities, unemployment or underemployment and no hope of becoming homeowners or retiring on full terms."

Dyrenfurth said that "contrast to right-winging", their will was not being driven by socialist media and the culture wars.

"It's the economy, stupid! And if Labor continues to think those young voters are the problem, they're stupidly stupid – they've discovered this," he wrote.

The paper also compared them to European and US America that



Julie Gillin, Scott Wilson and Adam Bandt and Max Chandler-Mather. Photos: Getty Images, Alex Ellinghaus

show a rise in support for right-wing parties among young voters.

The party of new anti-immigration Dutch Prime Minister Gijsbert Wiersma was always about of the vote among 18- to 34-year-olds than any other party. France's far-right winner Marine Le Pen was a large margin among young voters.

In Sweden, the spiritual home of European social democracy, 27 per cent of voters aged under 25 voted for the right-wing party in 2022 – up from 18 per cent in 2018.

In last year's run-off election, French right-winger Marine Le Pen won half the votes of those aged 18-34, and in recent German state elections the anti-immigration Alternative for Germany came top among voters under 30.

"It's the economy, stupid!" Labor historian Nick Dyrenfurth

Writes in the final year of school in the US we nearly twice as likely to identify as conservative than left-leaning, according to last year's Monitoring the Future survey – revealing trends of decades past.

However, the survey also showed the majority of young men that had no politics or identified as moderate. The same survey showed young women drifting leftward.

"If Labor fails to link young people with their vote for right-wing, we will see a loss of support, and that they, as a whole, are moving leftward or none at all become progressive, think again," the paper states.

Many Gen Y and Gen Xers had little regard for the judicial system. "There is every possibility of a second place threat from a new or renewed party on the populist right," it states.

"Most young people are not sympathetic, but their sense of precarity, and their sense of the availability and nature of work, and of housing and healthcare options."

Dyrenfurth says the Australian Greens – led by Adam Bandt and housing advocate Max Chandler-Mather – has morphed into a party interested in young voters economic right rather than simply environmental policy.

"The left-wing populism spawned by the Greens, especially Chandler-Mather – issued a rant and almost literally enter in federal parliament – insisting through with 'Generations Rent', the paper states.

Backpackers not a solution to our climate disasters

Nick Dyrenfurth

The federal Labor government recently announced, via a press release from Immigration Minister Andrew Giles and others, a new policy touting how "Backpackers (would) lend a hand in natural disaster recovery", focusing on Queensland.

It comes after the wettest tropical cyclone in Australia's history crossed the Far North Queensland coast last December. This entails a well-meaning but deeply misguided program to rely on backpackers to

second or third time if they volunteer on cyclone or storm surge disaster responses rather than just floods and bushfires as originally constituted.

The rule change itself is not the problem. The problem is that the government seems to think that this constitutes some kind of significant reform to emergency management.

Indeed, it flies in the face of Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's recent comments suggesting he is considering the possibility of setting up a reserve force to respond to natural disasters, while flagging that the Australian Defence Force would still have a role to play.

Let's be clear – backpackers are not reliable sources of labour. It's great if they want to contribute in order to get paid while on holiday, but we cannot have backpackers as the backbone of our disaster response system.

inversely correlated. When you need them the most, that's when they'll be hardest to find, and when everything is going well, that's when backpackers will be in abundance.

They're not disaster responders. And surely, even in a time of relatively low unemployment, there are Australian citizens and residents who could be called upon.

Nor do backpackers have any of the training required to respond to climate disasters.

What we need is a system that guarantees a surge workforce with basic training in the wide variety of skills that climate disasters call for and who are available to be called upon on demand in a way that central authorities can efficiently manage.

Ideally, they should have ties to the local community so that when they're

backpackers, but a dedicated, well-trained and properly funded disaster reserves force that can respond when needed. The advantages of such a force are manifold.

Paid training for reservists could act as a limited form of job guarantee and create a workforce of full-time, well-paid and securely employed trainers and mentors and the sort of new industry this country sorely needs.

It would break down silos of inequality, particularly for young people, who might be unemployed, underemployed or studying, and older workers retraining or looking for new jobs, as well as First Nations peoples and new migrants, forging bonds across different socio-economic and different ethnic populations.

It would help build social capital in

Climate change is too big a problem to be solved by backpackers.

If we want to be remotely serious about climate action, we need to treat it seriously policy-wise.

And we need a solution that is sustainable and actionable.

In fact, dealing with climate and natural disasters more effectively is part of the cost-of-living crisis – food prices especially are devastated when farmland is flooded or destroyed.

Getting those communities back to production as quickly as possible should be an essential part of our economic security.

We need a sovereign capability, not a Brit or any foreign national hoping to extend their holiday.

This policy, a rare federal government misstep in what has

Was Morrison the worst PM? Maybe, but only time will tell

ANALYSIS
James Massola
National Affairs editor

Where does Scott Morrison's time in power place him in the rankings of Australia's 31 prime ministers? Morrison became a polarising figure during his time in office, from daffy dad-and-son who pulled off a miracle election win to a leader who provoked a racial uproar and led the Coalition to lose 19 seats and government.

His infamous Hawaii holiday and "I don't hold a hose, mate" remark, his references to wife Jenny when discussing the Brittany Higgins rape allegations, the "it's not a race" comment about services and the shortage of RATs in Australia exposed his borders to non-birth people.

There was also the multiple ministerial affairs, the Rabodot scandal and the Covidian phrase "no-water matters" that he used to avoid commenting on the burning back of Sydney's eucalyptus forests.

But, as the former leader pointed out this week, there were also achievements: the 2019 election win, the AUKUS defence agreement, the early decision to shut borders to prevent a viral response to COVID, and significant funding for mental health which saw the suicide rate fall despite people being locked down during the pandemic.

As immigration minister, Morrison stopped the flow of asylum seeker boats to Australia, while as treasurer he delivered stages 1 and 2 of his tax plan and struck a deal with Western Australia on GST distribution (which has been criticised by the coal, coal seam gas and many economists).

So where does our 30th prime minister sit in the ranks of prime ministers?

Nick Dyrenfurth, an author, historian and executive director of the Labor think tank the John Curtin Research Centre, who helped compile Monash University's 2020 list of Australia's best and worst prime ministers, says at least a decade must pass before Morrison's legacy (or that of any prime minister) can be assessed.

That list assessed former prime ministers according to their ability to manage cabinet, leave a policy legacy, hold their parties together and maintain a relationship with voters.

It placed World War II Labor prime minister John Curtin first and Bob Hawke second, with Alfred Deakin, Ben Chifley, Robert Menzies, Paul Keating, Gough Whitlam, Andrew Fisher, John Howard and Edmund Barton rounding out the top 10.

Former Liberal prime minister



Scott Morrison takes down a chair and plays a ukulele, which is a Hawaiian instrument. Photo: Jason Fitzcald, GC Images



William McMahon, who served for the final two years of the 28-year period of Coalition government from 1949-1972, was last.

Nick Scovva, the author of a series of best-selling political books, *Ancient and a former Liberal staffer at Peter Costello and John Howard, was frequently scathing of Morrison's time in office.*

In her book on the Morrison government, *Unfollowed*, Scovva wrote that he "was the worst prime minister I have covered, and

"His government's relatively successful early management of the COVID pandemic made the legacy of AUKUS might spare him from falling below McMahon and Abbott at the bottom of the prime-ministerial list - but avoiding that ignominy will probably be a close-run thing."

"We don't know much about how to run cabinet," that ran often be a black book until the cabinet papers were released (after 20 years). Having said that, in terms of cabinet management, clearly what he's trying to do against him is the secret commissioning of those perfumes."

"I have been writing about all of them since Gough Whitlam. He simply wasn't up to the job."

*"I stand by every word I wrote in *Unfollowed*."*

*"At the launch of *Unfollowed*, former *Mix* political editor Louie Oakes said Morrison was worse than McMahon, while University*

of Canberra politics professor and *Saturday Paper* columnist, Chris Wallace says he was "possibly the worst prime minister since Federation" in 1901.

But Dyrenfurth argues Morrison has done more than Tony Abbott or Malcolm Turnbull. "It's pretty clear that Morrison, Deakin and Howard are the three outstanding non-Labor PMs. And then you have a whole lot of second-order PMs like Fraser, Brennan and Lyons."

Dyrenfurth argues Morrison is in a third category, along with Abbott and Turnbull, but says: "I think Morrison is above both of them, because of how he handled the initial response to COVID, the AUKUS defence agreement and for winning the 2019 election."

"Credit to him and Josh Frydenberg for unapologetically increasing JobKeeper payments. But his weak points included gender - he did not deal well with women - and climate change."

But understanding the debate over Morrison's legacy, *Sky News* commentator and former ABC chief of staff Peter Costello argues "in the sovereignty, the values that we're holding in 2024 is still there. I would also say that within the Liberal family his legacy remains mixed, but that will change over time."

"The debt he took from COVID, as well as intended as it was, this heavily with Liberals and I think the government overreach (the secret ministerial) and the level of arrogance, like I don't hold a hose", that has coloured the view of Liberals. He is certainly better thought of than his immediate predecessor (Turnbull) but not the gas (Abbott) who brought them into government," she says.

Wallace argues "there was a kind of national PTSD among many voters by the time his government drew to a close", that the AUKUS program made it "more expiring cigar than legacy".

Monash University emerita politics professor Paul Stringer, who helped assess the prime ministerial rankings project, says the fate of the AUKUS deal would help determine where Morrison stood.

"The government's relatively successful early management of the COVID pandemic made the legacy of AUKUS might spare him from falling below McMahon and Abbott at the bottom of the prime-ministerial list - but avoiding that ignominy will probably be a close-run thing."

"We don't know much about how to run cabinet," that ran often be a black book until the cabinet papers were released (after 20 years). Having said that, in terms of cabinet management, clearly what he's trying to do against him is the secret commissioning of those perfumes."

Labor must hush leadership talk

Federal politics
The government should respond to narrowing polls by taking the economic reform debate up to the opposition.



Nick Dyrenfurth

The famed Australian historian Manning Clark fancied himself as the nation's self-appointed fortune-teller, rather than a mere chronicler of the past. As a rule, historians should avoid making predictions about the future. Nonetheless, this column has peered into 2024's crystal ball to make five predictions about Australian politics in the year ahead.

National security and geopolitical tensions will continue to feature strongly. Israel's war upon the fascist Hamas will draw to a close and its profound implications for the region and the West, including our nation, will echo loudly in the corridors of power and on the streets of suburban Australia - where elections are won - for years to come. Ditto Russia's reinvigorated war upon Ukraine and the Chinese Communist Party's bellicosity.

Rising support for left and right-wing populism will grow apace. Australia's electorate is more fractured and more volatile, angry at both left and right-wing elites and the institutions that they control - political, economic, and cultural - and looking for alternatives.

The Greens will continue to assault Labor's left flank with their pitch to young people for more drastic action on climate change. Likewise, we can expect more appeals to "generation rent" and intergenerational inequality more generally.

We can also expect a further drift of non-university educated, working-class young people - and remember that this is 70 per cent of the adult population - towards the anti-establishment populist

right. Most young people are not xenophobic, but they are angry at an economic system which they feel is geared against them, stuck in a loop of poorer educational outcomes, fewer training and job opportunities, unemployment or precarious employment, and with no hope of becoming homeowners or renting on fair terms.

In Europe, they shocked the continent by throwing in their lot with Geert Wilders' far-right populist Party for Freedom (PVV) at last month's Dutch election. The PVV surged to become the largest party among 18- to 34-year-olds. In Argentina, Javier Milei, a far-right libertarian trumpeting culture wars issues and radical economic policies, won the presidency of South America's second-largest economy. Almost 70 per cent of young voters backed Milei in the November election. The common denominator was economic insecurity.

Cost-of-living pressures and economic gloom will persist in Australia. The

lower approval ratings for its leader and few obvious levers to pull economically, it's no surprise that whispers are beginning to be heard about Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's tenure. They should be ignored.

There are legitimate criticisms of Albanese's first 19 months in office. The decision to prioritise the Voice debate during a time of sharp economic pain was, in hindsight, a poor use of the government's political capital.

Team Albo was caught flat-footed by the High Court's ruling on releasing illegal immigrants, including hardened criminals and sex offenders.

The PM, however, is not the one who should be taking the blame. It's been the prime minister who has been a calming and moderate voice on the Middle East conflict, while other ministers have freedened or neglected major industrial relations reforms and achievements in their own portfolios to stick their ours into foreign affairs.

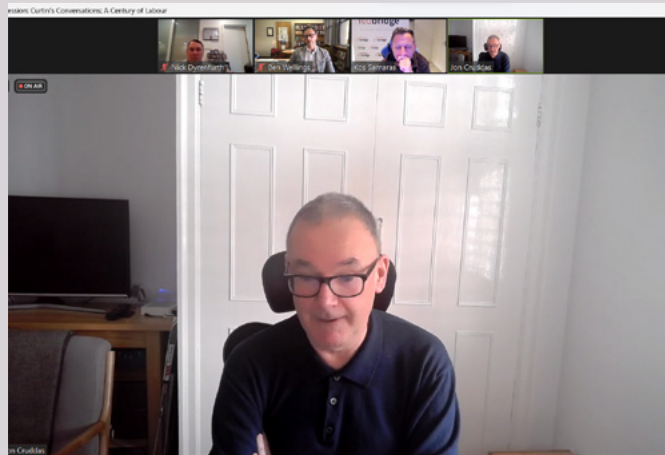
There's also the transaction cost of a leadership change for the whisperers to consider. The Australian people have a habit of making down governments that think they can achieve a change of fortune with a change of leader; while Turnbull did see a polling bounce when he took over from Abbott, and Morrison did win in 2019, they ultimately met a sticky end.

Most of Albanese's ministers previously served in the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd ministries and were traumatised by its leadership ructions. Not so with many of the largely quiescent, greenhorn MPs who graduated from the 2022, 2019 and 2016 classes. If polls worsen - and if Labor's primary vote dips into the 20s, as it did during the Gillard years - they might be tempted to consider a new leader.

They must resist this rookie temptation. The frontbencher's wisest heads will likely prevail, especially if the seat of Dunkley is tragically lost.

So, in the midst of the holiday break, Labor people would be wise to stop any leadership chatter. Rather, this new year should see the government give itself the gift of stability. A resurgent Prime Minister Albanese may just be the best present Labor could wish for in 2024.

Nick Dyrenfurth is executive director of the John Curtin Research Centre.



Israel has Friends in the fight for liberal democracy

Nick Dyrenfurth

Now is not an easy time to be Jewish or a Zionist. Antisemitism is surging in Australia and globally. Now is not an easy time to believe in Jewish self-determination and the innate right of the Jewish people to a nation-state of their own in their historic homeland, nor is it always popular to defend Israel in its

I have thought a great deal about my forefathers these past few months. I suspect these witnesses to violent, deadly pogroms, and of the Holocaust, would be immensely proud of the establishment of Israel in 1948. They would be proud, too, of the plucky little Jewish state's battle against its enemies in 2024.

Granted, they would have their disappointments. After all they co-founded Poalei Zion, the Socialist Jewish Workers Party, which became the Israeli Labor Party, which believed that the Jewish proletariat's renewed life in Israel would help usher in an age of global working-

proud of their grandson in co-convening the new Australian Labor Friends of Israel. Our mission is to promote a vision of peace founded on coexistence, cooperation and mutual respect and recognition between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

We support political, economic and civic initiatives to further the cause of peace and to bring a two-state solution to reality. We advocate for peacebuilders in both Israel and Palestine in their work to achieve these vital goals. We support the dismantling of settler outposts.

We call for the renunciation of terrorism, violence and incitement.

bring peace between Israel and its regional neighbours. We stand with all those campaigning for liberal democratic values, human rights and labour and trade union rights across the Middle East.

Labor Friends of Israel is immensely proud of Australian Labor's long-standing commitment to, and support for, the Jewish people's right to self-determination in their historic homeland and the State of Israel.

We seek to engage with all ALP members and supporters across Australia to ensure Labor maintains this long friendship. We are

In 2024 the liberal, democratic rule-based global order is under severe challenge. It is under challenge by Putin invading Ukraine, by Xi Jinping's incarceration of a million Muslim Uighurs and his weaponising of trade and trade routes against Australia, by Iran's violent exploitation of fragile Middle East states, and by their attacks on global shipping in the Red Sea, and by the butchery, burnings and beheadings of Hamas against citizens of a fellow democracy.

It is any surprise that so many of the apologists for these threats are now seeking to undermine Labor's

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