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‘More than empty words?’:

Prime Ministerial rhetoric and Australian nationalism, 1972-1996

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This work is concerned with the way in which Australian Prime Ministers gave expression to an idea of ‘national community’ in the post 1972 era. The intellectual contribution of Prime Ministers to national life and the relationship between prime ministerial rhetoric and the changing nature of Australian nationalism have not yet been addressed in the existing historical literature. With the demise of British race patriotism as the cornerstone of Australian political culture, these leaders were faced with a crisis of national self-definition. The intensity of the British race myth was quickly and without trauma replaced by the official definition of ‘multiculturalism’. The question in these new times was whether or not Australian Prime Ministers would replace the once powerful British story with a distinctively Australian story of their own, and whether nationalism itself was viable once the need for an intense social bonding and cultural conformity had passed. In their speeches and writings, Prime Ministers Gough Whitlam, Malcolm Fraser, Bob Hawke and Paul Keating addressed themselves to this question. But their ideas of Australia were not simply manufactured overnight to sway smoothly with the prevailing political breeze. By exploring the distinctive features of each Prime Minister’s intellectual history, especially in so far as it shaped their idea of Australia and their understanding of nationalism itself, a much fuller picture emerges of how these figures have managed Australia’s transformation from being a country professing an affection for ‘kith and kin’ to a community defining itself as a ‘nation of immigrants’. Far from asserting an old-style, exclusive Australian nationalism, it will be shown that in most cases, the Prime Ministers in this period expressed great caution and hesitation towards the very idea of nationalism.

Front-cover photo: Prime Minister Paul Keating opens the Manning Clark Centre at the Australian National University, Canberra, 22 February 1994. (Source, The Canberra Times, 23 February 1994)
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James Curran
Introduction

I was told I did not learn respect at school. I learned one thing: I learned about self-respect and self-regard for Australia – not about some cultural cringe to a country which decided not to defend the Malayan peninsula, not to worry about Singapore and not to give us our troops back to keep ourselves free from Japanese domination. This was the country that you people wedded yourselves to, and even as it walked out on you and joined the Common Market, you were still looking for your MBEs and your knighthoods and all the rest of the regalia that comes with it.

Paul Keating

The fall of Singapore occurred in February 1942. Fifty years later, in February 1992, Labor leader and Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating unleashed this blistering verbal broadside on the conservative opposition. Three days before, during a visit by the Queen, his wife Annita had chosen not to curtsey and Keating himself had touched the royal person. The British press cried foul. Liberal leader John Hewson fulminated that Keating had lacked “respect” for Her Majesty and Australia’s British heritage by using a formal speech of welcome to the Queen to “give a tilt in favour of republicanism”. For Keating, it was time to set the record straight and to put his critics in their place. In the heat of parliamentary question time, he delivered a prepared response to a ‘Dorothy Dix’ question which cast the Liberal party as mired in the Menzian mindset of empire. He likened Liberal front-benchers John Howard and John Hewson to the cultural icons of the 1950s such as the ‘Morphy Richards toaster’ and the ‘Qualcast mower’. But when Keating reached his peroration, concerning the question of ‘respect’, the atmosphere in the chamber changed from one of jocular hilarity to a hushed silence. Keating put aside his prepared text and spoke from within. His voice, initially softened, gradually rose in a crescendo of aggression. This was Keating the tribal Labor leader, drawing on a deeply held view of the past, not the polished statesman enunciating his grand ‘vision’ for the nation.

The dramatic nature of his rhetoric and the passions it stirred, all relating to an event which happened half a century before, serve to illustrate the direct relationship between history and politics, especially as it affects the problem of nationalism. Paul Keating’s nationalism reflected an anti-British version of Australian history which he had acquired in his formative years. What mattered most in this outburst was that Britain, having promised to defend a vulnerable nation against Japanese invasion, had in the end failed to do so and therefore ‘betrayed’ Australia. For Keating, it was the conservatives who had frustrated the emergence of a distinctively Australian national identity through their continual fawning on the ‘mother-country’. By implication, only Labor had understood the Australian people’s ‘real’ self, only Labor could lead the people to the promised land of national ‘independence’.

The reaction to this speech was so widespread that one headmaster of a distinguished Victorian secondary school even called a special assembly to lecture his students on “Mr Keating’s Ignorance of History”. If not treating Keating’s rhetoric as a calculated ‘diversion’ from the economic debate,³ much of the Opposition and media reaction questioned the historical accuracy of his comments – whether or not British assurances about Singapore had been given; whether the British had sufficiently come to Australia’s aid in the dark days of 1942.⁴ But these critics were themselves no sticklers for the historical truth. Nationalism has never been overly concerned with the veracity of its myths. This sudden preoccupation with accuracy was in fact a defence of a different national myth, a reflection of the residual respect for Australia’s British connection. Though this Britishness lacked the strength and appeal of yore, there was a reluctance to allow Keating’s anti-Menzies, anti-British myth to go unchallenged. The nobility and value of the British heritage had to be upheld against this Labor populist. As National Party leader Tim Fischer put it, the Constitutional Monarchy was worth defending for

“practical reasons, rather than sentimental reasons”, since it had “served us well in the past and the present and helps provide a great deal of stability and continuity”.

But the clash of these two myths, each vying for supremacy, also underlined the power of rhetoric and its ability to give form and substance to ideas of national community. Keating had given expression to his idea of Australia and had invoked a version of the past to give it substance. As significant exponents of how the ‘nation’ is defined, Prime Ministers play a pivotal role in the process of articulating what holds the nation together, as well as how the nation understands its place in the wider world. From the mid 1960s, Australian Prime Ministers had to face a crisis of national meaning. One of the most fundamental ideas in Australian cultural and political life, the belief that Australians were part of an ‘organic’ worldwide community of British peoples, united by blood, history, language and tradition, had to be significantly revised at this time. A people who had identified themselves so intensely with the British race, who saw themselves as a bastion of this race in the southern seas, now had to shelve their race consciousness and embrace the notion of being a ‘multicultural’ community. Since Britishness had given such powerful meaning and cohesion to the people, what would replace it? As the old, monolithic British story lost its vitality, these leaders had to make sense of a new era, characterised by a diversity of cultures, especially those of Asia.

This work will examine how the idea of an Australian ‘national community’ was developed and adapted to these new circumstances by the post 1960s Australian Prime Ministers. This raises an important historical question concerning Australian political culture in the post 1972 period: what happened to the need for nationalism? The thesis will also analyse how Prime Ministers have used history to give substance to these ideas, and how their view of history affected the way they performed as leaders. It is intended that each of the four Prime Ministers who are the main subjects of this thesis – Gough Whitlam (1972-75), Malcolm Fraser (1975-83), Bob Hawke (1983-91) and Paul Keating (1991-96) – will be examined as representative of a distinct response to the question of Australian nationalism in the post 1972 period. The idea of nationalism – and its expression in Prime Ministers’ speeches and writings – is thus at the core of this inquiry. Lyn Spillman has argued that “a commonsense rhetoric of nationality makes an unnoticed

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backdrop to public life. We hardly question the grounding of common appeals to national identity...". The prime objective of this research is not only to make the rhetoric of nationalism noticeable but also to explicate more fully the substance behind it, to 'question the grounding'. Therefore, this work will also explore the Prime Ministers' intellectual history, in so far as it has shaped their understanding of Australia's past and the extent to which it has influenced their response to an ever-changing international environment. The intellectual contribution of Prime Ministers to national life presents a significant and as yet unexplored dimension of the debate over the different ideas of Australia and how those ideas have been affected by Australia's changing circumstances. This will lead to a fuller understanding of how national leaders have conceptualised the mytho-historical context of what it means to be 'Australian' and Australia's position on the world stage.

The title for this study is taken from R.J. Hawke's Bachelor of Letters thesis at Oxford University. In establishing a historical framework for his study of the Australian Arbitration system, Hawke had argued that "Australian nationalism was more than empty words because it involved the assumptions that the social and economic inequalities of the old world were not sacrosanct". For Hawke though - and this is a crucial distinction - this was a liberal progressive nationalism which, originating in Europe, had adapted with greater success to the new land. It was not an incipient or separatist anti-British Australian nationalism. 'More than empty words?' therefore does not assume the prior existence of a self-sufficient Australian nationalism, of a national myth which over time had cultivated in Australians an idea of themselves as a 'unique' people with a special mission or destiny. Rather it is intended to ask precisely whether prime ministerial definitions of nation are 'more than empty words'; that is, are they merely fashioned to adorn the altar of political pragmatism, or do they derive from a richer intellectual context, the process whereby political leaders form, express and modify their views over time? The point to note about Hawke is that at a formative stage of his intellectual

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development, well before he attained the office of Prime Minister, he had articulated an idea of Australia and an understanding of Australian nationalism.

This question of nationalism as manifested in prime ministerial rhetoric is not one that has been systematically addressed in Australian historical scholarship. Biographies of political leaders have been inevitably drawn to a description of the times. Seduced by the drama of leadership contests, backroom party intrigue and the endless tactical and situational pressures facing a Prime Minister, these works have not turned their attention to their subject's idea of Australia or to the intellectual origins of any such idea. Where they have addressed themselves specifically to the content of a leader's 'world-view', there has been a noticeable confusion about the nature of what constitutes nationalism. Of Robert Menzies, Allan Martin has argued that "Britain was at the core of his being" and yet his "makeup was indeed almost aggressively Australian, its expressions ranging from his long-standing determination to keep Australia as his home, especially after retirement, to his active care about the success of Australian Test cricket teams".8 Putting aside Menzies' desire to call Australia home and his affection for the 'baggy green' - which are not, in any case, the litmus tests of nationalism - Martin might well have added that this 'aggressive Australianism' was not one which ever pushed Menzies to the point of openly repudiating the British connection, or one which challenged the core precepts and practices of British race patriotism. David Day, on the other hand, has argued that John Curtin's prime ministerial "protestations of loyalty to the empire" helped him avoid "the charges of disloyalty that had almost destroyed the Labor party during and after the First World War...".9 Curtin's British race patriot 'world-view' was thus interpreted as an exhibition of political pragmatism rather than as a portrayal of the pervasive Britishness of Australian political culture at that time.

Alternatively, psychoanalytical treatments of Australian leaders have sought to connect politicians' rhetoric to their inner selves. In Robert Menzies' Forgotten People Judith Brett argued that "The importance Menzies attached to his speechmaking helps to explain why he became such a powerful political and cultural symbol" in the post-war era. Brett proposed that political language "faces two ways: outwards to the audience

being addressed and the supporters being wooed; inwards to the politician's own emotions and biographical experience". However, in their obsession with theories of narcissism, oedipal complexes, or with what Graham Little defined as the 'grammar of the emotions', these studies have not explored the relationship between rhetoric and an idea of the nation. The psychoanalytical attempt to reveal a continuum of 'character', as historian Michael Bentley has explained, reflects a remnant of Whig typology in which the historian is "hacking away at a mature statesman in order to discover some quintessential acorn that once contained his future". Judith Brett in her edited collection Political Lives emphasised the value in reading "the public political life for what it reveals about the distinctiveness of the person whose life it is", but her subsequent statement that psychoanalysis "begins from suspicion" and that "people do not always say or even know what they mean" testify to the inherent shortcomings of this genre.

Similarly James Walter, in his treatment of Gough Whitlam's political language, identified his primary focus as "not the message, but the means of communication". Walter's emphasis therefore lay predominantly with Whitlam's oratorical style — and what it revealed about his personality — rather than with the origins and development of his political ideas. Graham Little dismissed Malcolm Fraser's attempts to articulate a philosophy of liberalism as "anxious brooding" rather than genuine intellectual endeavour, while Stan Anson interpreted Bob Hawke's rhetoric as reflective of his supposed narcissism rather than as an insight into the nature of Australian political culture. This thesis will be more concerned with what Erik Erikson has termed the "historical perspective" of identity. In arguing for greater attention to be given to historical circumstances in the development of the individual's ego, Erikson claimed that individuals who comprise a society are "destined to absorb the historical changes in their lifetimes".

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Other works have maintained an institutional, rather than historical focus on the role of the Prime Minister. For example, Patrick Weller’s edited collection *Menzies to Keating – The Development of the Australian Prime Ministership*, examined the various relationships of the Prime Minister to parliament, political party, cabinet, personal staff, the electorate and the media in the post-war period. But there was no specific attention given to the rhetorical demands of national leadership. Michelle Grattan in her introduction to *Australian Prime Ministers*, a series of short biographies on each of the twenty-five leaders since Federation, noted that “each...reflects in some significant way the Australia of his times”. But not all contributors addressed this point. The entries on Whitlam, Fraser, Hawke and Keating dealt largely with the vast economic transformations in the Australian political landscape over that period, and the efforts of each leader to develop closer ties with the Asia-Pacific region: yet there was no consideration given to the intellectual genesis of these policy changes, or to each Prime Minister’s attempt to articulate what it was which held the nation together in a post-British, ‘multicultural’ era. How is this lack of focus on the question of nationalism to be explained? One explanation may be that nationalism is now considered an anachronism, given the declining relevance of Britishness and the end of White Australia, but such reasons in themselves make even more imperative a consideration of how national leaders have endeavoured to craft a new language of social cohesion.

The most obvious place to examine this language and the content of their ideas about Australia and its place in the world is, of course, in their rhetoric. Prime Ministers are more likely to use richer historical imagery in their definition of the ‘nation’ when they speak at moments of national celebration or commemoration. These have been described by one Australian political speechwriter as ‘*parens patriae*’ specials, when the Prime Minister is called upon to deliver a speech in his capacity as symbolic head of the nation. Not surprisingly, Australian Prime Ministers have emphasised their role as spokesmen for the ‘nation’. Paul Keating argued that “…in the prime ministership is

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invested, in some respects, the ideal of the nation and its aspirations”. Bob Hawke in a keynote speech to the National Press Club in January 1988, before the major Bicentennial events were underway, alluded to the significance of his position: “I count it as an inestimable privilege to have been elected leader of our nation and Prime Minister of Australia in this year of the Bicentenary...the duty does fall, in part, to me, to articulate on behalf of the Australian people, the meaning and purpose of the Bicentenary: and, in particular, to seek its true meaning for Australia’s future”.18 Yet, as will be demonstrated subsequently in this work, the content of Keating’s ‘ideal’ of the nation and Hawke’s ‘meaning’ of the Bicentenary contained two very different ideas of Australia.

It is acknowledged that prime ministerial ideas of ‘nation’ are also reflected in speeches on economic policy, but these lie outside the boundaries of this thesis. And although feminism and indigenous rights have rightly become subjects for discussion and historical inquiry in the post 1960s era, the ‘world-views’ of the four Prime Ministers under consideration in this thesis were shaped at a time when such issues were not explicitly related to a concept of Australian nationalism. This thesis will examine prime ministerial ideas of Australian nationalism as they appear in speeches on the changing nature of Anglo-Australian relations, Australia’s place in the world, ‘multiculturalism’, as well as on more formal occasions such as Australia Day and Anzac Day. The study of rhetoric, in particular its function in giving form and substance to political ideas, constitutes much of the originality claimed for this work.

There has been a tendency to dismiss rhetoric as inconsequential in the analysis of political culture. Such an argument claims that it is only in private correspondence, diplomatic cables or top-secret cabinet submissions that the true substance of politics can be discerned. ‘Political’ rhetoric, often dismissed as a platitudinous ‘grab-bag’ by which the people are manipulated, or as a symptom of the chronic ‘ad hoc’ nature of modern politics, is nevertheless a vital nexus between a government and its people. Moreover, the tension between a Prime Minister’s twin roles as party leader and national leader, between his ideas and the inevitable pragmatism needed to survive the daily ruck of domestic politics, is most authoritatively revealed in his rhetoric. British historian Phillip

Williamson, in an incisive analysis of Stanley Baldwin’s speeches, has stated that “...politicians are what they speak and publish. What they say may often be the collective party line, but leaders are normally such because they add something distinctive and persuasive, causing particular importance to be attached to themselves not just by their own party and supporters but by opposing parties and other bodies too”.19

Much of the following is directly concerned with locating this prime ministerial difference. This is not to suggest that Prime Ministers alone shape a community’s values or that they alone determine the direction of national debate, but as the executive head of government in a Westminster-style parliamentary democracy, the Prime Ministers, more than at any other time in their political careers, are compelled to give their message a broader national perspective and significance. It is axiomatic, therefore, that a political leader will attempt to use a language which reflects the prevailing social attitudes and cultural mores of the times.

The study of rhetoric, however, must also take account of its limits. Rhetoric will neither illustrate the whole picture behind a politician’s decision or policy, nor will it allow leaders in the modern era sufficient time to elaborate on their idea of ‘nation’ or the precise parameters of their political ideology. As one speechwriter observed, the Prime Minister “is not sitting in a library carefully writing and referring” to sources.20 Williamson has rightly stressed that the function of political rhetoric is “not to satisfy academic tests as theory”, but to “attract and hold the support of diverse audiences possessing a range of conventional beliefs and present interests”.21 Rhetoric is therefore useful as a means of identifying the underlying themes and values which sustain a political culture, as well as the coherent patterns of thought in a leader’s ‘world-view’.

The inevitable question which arises in the study of modern political rhetoric is that of authorship. Who is speaking? The political leaders or their speechwriters? Melbourne historian Stuart Macintyre has given expression to this conundrum when introducing a recent study of Australian historiography, arguing that “In speeches written by Don Watson, Paul Keating had reached back to familiar episodes...to rework and

19 Phillip Williamson, Stanley Baldwin – Conservative leadership and national values (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 15.
20 Don Watson, personal interview, Melbourne, 21 November 2000, transcript.
21 Phillip Williamson, Stanley Baldwin, 15.
enlarge an older national legend".22 But was Keating merely the mouthpiece for his speechwriter? By necessity, speechwriters to Whitlam, Fraser, Hawke and Keating have all defended the maxim that ‘ownership resides with the speaker’.23 In this thesis, the influence of the speechwriter and the extent to which their own intellectual traditions have influenced a Prime Minister’s ‘world-view’ will be noted where relevant. It is recognised that a substantial number of prime ministerial speeches are written either to gain public approval for causes of contemporary political importance or to accommodate the vagaries of daily political maneuvering. The concern here, though, is with those speeches which illustrate the core ideas that have shaped leaders’ essential selves and in particular, their idea of Australia.

In the second volume of his memoirs, Robert Menzies despaired at the introduction of speechwriters to Australian politics. Regarding the use of a speechwriter as an insult to the audience, especially since it placed an anonymous figure between the leader and the led, Menzies also feared for future historical scholarship:

...we must spare a morsel of pity for the future historian. He will sit down to write of a long dead statesman whom he neither knew nor heard. He turns to the statesman’s recorded speeches, hoping to perceive the man through his words. But if the words are those of the anonymous John Smith and not the statesman, the historian’s light on the statesman becomes a little dim. True, the ideas, the policies, may be there, but those sudden phrases and flashing turns of speech, those uncontrived expressions of emotion, which tell us so much about a speaker, will be lacking.24

Historians need not despair. Menzies’ lament was for the disappearance of style rather than substance, but it was precisely those “sudden phrases”, “flashing turns of speech” and “uncontrived expressions of emotion” which were captured by Paul Keating’s

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23 Don Watson, foreword to Mark Ryan (ed.) Advancing Australia – The Speeches of Paul Keating Prime Minister (Sydney: Big Picture Publications, 1995), xvi. Stephen Mills, speechwriter to Bob Hawke, claimed “no significant Australian politician of recent years has been a mouthpiece for a speechwriter”. Cliff Walsh, a speechwriter to Malcolm Fraser, maintained “I never felt I was writing something for Malcolm Fraser; you were writing something by Malcolm Fraser”. When interviewed on his time writing speeches for Gough Whitlam, Graham Freudenberg categorically refused any claims on authorship: “Whoever put down the words, there is no question who is ‘the only true begetter’...Whitlam”. See Stephen Mills, ‘The Making of a Prime Minister’s Speeches’, 170; Patrick Weller, Malcolm Fraser PM (Ringwood: Penguin, 1989), 32; Freudenberg quoted in James Walter, The Leader, 102.
rhetoric when he spoke in the Parliament about Singapore. These sentiments reflected the same, intense frustration at the lingering Britishness in Australian political culture which Keating had expressed in his maiden speech to parliament in 1970, and which he had imbibed from his political mentor, former NSW Premier Jack Lang. Though Keating’s bruising speech may not have reached the heights of Menzies’ oratory, it was no less powerful in its political effect. Further, given it was of an extemporaneous nature, and not carefully scripted beforehand, it illustrated in emphatic fashion the essence of the Keating ‘world-view’.

The study of political rhetoric and its ability to reflect those ideas which sustain a political culture have had a stronger tradition in American historical scholarship. Given that an American President – as opposed to a Prime Minister in a Westminster system – is the head of state, the symbolic representative of the nation and also the chief executive officer of government, this is not surprising. Much of the emphasis in these American works has been on the significance of rhetoric for the study of ideas. Jeffrey K Tulis’ *The Rhetorical Presidency* argued that political rhetoric reflected the “idea or set of ideas that legitimizes political practice”. Michael H. Hunt implored students of American foreign policy to take rhetoric seriously for “both the deep seated attitudes it reveals and the action it may portend”. Katherine Jamieson in her study of political speechmaking in the United States has emphasised the importance of epideictic rhetoric – speeches whose prime function is to sustain a sense of political community and vivify “the deeds of those of the past” in order to give them “contemporary relevance”, thus justifying and legitimising a government and its policies. Jamieson identified Pericles’ Funeral Oration and Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address as two examples of epideictic rhetoric. Garry Wills, in his discussion of the latter speech, claimed that “Without Lincoln’s knowing it

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25 Bob Hawke’s speechwriter Stephen Mills also drew attention to the importance of the *ex tempore* performance, noting that “One of the marks of the complete politician, even in this TV-dominated era, is the quality of his or her off-the-cuff ‘story’ – the easily understood, endlessly flexible, constantly updated speech that explains the present in the light of the achievements of the past and the promise of the future...The real politician is to be discovered in the ‘off-the-cuff’ speech to a party fundraiser, a community gathering, a business meeting”. Stephen Mills, *The Hawke Years - The Story from the Inside* (Ringwood: Penguin/Viking 1993), 44.


himself, all his prior literary, intellectual and political labors had prepared him for the intellectual revolution contained in those fateful 272 words".29 This basic principle can be applied to the Australian context, in that Whitlam’s liberal internationalism, Fraser’s realism, Hawke’s consensus view of community and Keating’s ‘radical nationalism’ were by no means fabricated overnight to suit the exigencies of prime ministerial office. They had been tested by experience and adjusted to Australia’s changing circumstances.

Australians, however, are not greatly enamoured of official orations. John La Nauze characterised Alfred Deakin’s eloquence as “surprisingly rare in Australia”. Writing in the 1960s, La Nauze lamented that Australians “are inclined to associate sophisticated speaking with insincerity or condescension”.30 Australian political speechwriters have been quick to distance the local style and flavour from the lofty rhetoric of American Presidents. Don Watson claimed that Australians are “suspicious of people who try to weave spells around them”, while Alexander Downer, who wrote for Malcolm Fraser and Andrew Peacock, believed the natural scepticism of Australians would not allow them to accept the purple prose often delivered by US politicians.31 Indeed the adjectives which often accompany the very word ‘rhetoric’ – ‘windy’, ‘hollow’ or ‘empty’ – are themselves indicative of the sometimes unthinking dismissal of a politician’s speech-making as ostentatious or artificial. But if the public remain wary of rhetoric, the media and politicians continue to stress its significance.

The criticism following Prime Minister John Howard’s Address to the Nation in November 1997, which concerned the passage of controversial Wik native title legislation through the Commonwealth Parliament, re-affirmed the core responsibility of modern leaders not only to communicate clearly the government’s policies but also to represent the nation unto itself. Most of the analysis agreed that the art of political leadership resides in set-piece addresses, and that the challenge for national leaders is as much to tell “stories” about the country’s past, present and future as it is to provide sound

economic management. Political commentators, it seems, want the ‘great leader’ as saviour – at the same time reserving the right to scoff at oratorical pretensions and to dismiss ideas as mere political posturing. Speaking at the National Library in 1993, Paul Keating articulated a need common to all Prime Ministers:

...politicians who believe in their cause are always conscious that they have a story to tell. Indeed the telling of it is an essential ingredient of success. When a government cannot convey a story, a consistent story, the people lose faith in the government...The other meaning of the story in politics is that same vision thing, one’s ambition for the country and a notion of how it might be realised.  

The direct relationship Keating established here between a government’s ‘story’ and its political success, between a vision of Australia and its realisation, would suggest that even in the modern era, with the insistence of the electronic media for the seven second ‘soundbite’ and with public cynicism finely tuned to the pragmatic nature of politics, the significance attached to the communication of ideas remains paramount. It is through their rhetoric, both in the formal speech and in more extemporaneous situations such as parliamentary question time, that national leaders give expression to their ‘cause’, their ‘consistent story’ and their ‘ambition for the country’.

The structure of this thesis will be as follows. The following chapter examines the general problem of nationalism in Australian intellectual life, with particular focus on the nature of Britishness and ‘radical nationalism’, two central ideas of ‘national community’ in Australian political culture. Chapter Two establishes a context for the post 1972 period by assessing the rhetoric of leaders from John Curtin through to Gough Whitlam. Only by exploring how leaders such as Chifley, Menzies, Holt and Gorton defined a sense of Australian ‘national community’ can the successive era be properly understood. Chapter Three is concerned with the Whitlam period of “new nationalism”. It asks whether in Whitlam’s speeches there can be found the great moment of national self-awakening, when Australia finally broke free from the apron-strings of its ‘great and powerful friends’ and achieved ‘independence’, or whether he merely enunciated in a more

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dramatic way the need for Australia to stand on her own two feet. It further explores how Whitlam’s liberal nationalism qualified any temptation to assert a new, distinctively Australian form of nationalism. Chapter Four examines Malcolm Fraser’s response to Whitlam’s “new nationalism” as well as his own distinctive ‘world-view’, over which loomed the spectre of the 1930s and the appeasement of Hitler. Chapter Five discusses the origins of Bob Hawke’s ‘consensus’ view of community and the problems of its application to Australian political culture in the light of the evolution of ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘enmeshment’ with Asia. Chapter Six analyses the influences which shaped Paul Keating’s ‘radical nationalism’ and contrasts this with his subsequent efforts to cultivate a prime ministerial gravitas. This stance was one which required a more inclusive view of Australia’s past, which would respect the place of the Aboriginal people, the multicultural nature of the post-war migration boom and the imperative of shaping Australia’s future in Asia.
Chapter One

Australia and the problem of 'national community'

In 1894 Charles Henry Pearson published *National Life and Character*. In its own time and context his observations were indeed prescient – the idea of being a unique people and of maintaining a homogeneous white race constituted the main ingredients of an intense social bonding which late nineteenth and early twentieth century nationalism prescribed. Defining patriotism as "the filial feeling to a mother country" Pearson claimed that Australia and England were "united in a manner that gratifies sentiment and interest".\(^1\) Similarly for Keith Hancock in 1930, the very possibility of Australians being "in love with two soils" spoke to the essential harmony he depicted between a distinctive Australian national sentiment and a broader British imperial identity.\(^2\) Even in March 1942, that is after the supposed 'great betrayal' of Australia by Britain at Singapore, KH Bailey, Dean of the Faculty of Law at Melbourne University and a prominent commentator on international affairs, could declare that "Australian life is like the Australian penny. It has the King's head on the one side, and the Kangaroo on the other". He described Australia's overwhelming pro-British sentiment as "one of the most precious things in a world made anarchical by the spirit of nationalism. For it is a nationalism combined with a real sense of loyalty to a wider community".\(^3\) Thus Australia's need for a nationalism at this time was not to be found in an inexorable linear development towards being 'a nation at last', but in the form of British race patriotism, the belief in a worldwide 'organic' community of British peoples, united by the common ties of blood, history, language and tradition. The nature of the Anglo-Australian relationship is therefore the key to understanding the paradoxical and idiosyncratic nature of Australian nationalism.

For much of last century then Australians stressed the Britishness of their society and saw themselves primarily as the guardian of British civilisation in the southern seas.

\(^2\) WK, Hancock, *Australia* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1930), 58.
\(^3\) KH, Bailey, 'Australia and the Empire', *The Australian Quarterly*, vol. xiv, no 1 (March 1942), 5-18.
Australia's kinship to the 'mother country' afforded her a privileged place in the imperial community. Prime Ministers were at the forefront in determining those characteristics which shaped Australia's view of itself and its place in the world, as well as adapting that view to Australia's changing circumstances. Since prime ministerial rhetoric is used in this work as a means of exploring and explaining the general problem of nationalism in Australian intellectual life, the historiographical problems associated with the study of nationalism itself, and the way in which ideas of 'national community' have been understood in Australia are considered. Writing in 1965, Hans Kohn argued that "the twentieth century since 1945 has become the first period in history in which the whole of mankind has accepted one and the same political attitude, that of nationalism".\(^4\) It should be remembered therefore that the 'world-views' of Whitlam, Fraser, Hawke and Keating were being shaped in an era where the idea of nationalism was universal and hence the primary means of understanding political community. Recognition of this is essential in answering the question of how each of these Prime Ministers understood the concept of nationalism itself and whether or not, as leaders in the post 1972 period, they gave voice to a rhetoric of nationalism for Australia as it sought to adjust to a new and different world.

Given that nationalism is a socially constructed and historically contingent phenomenon, and hence that countries at various stages produce various responses to the question of 'community', two Australian responses are examined here. First, how and why for much of the twentieth century the idea of Britishness provided the most powerful racial, cultural, moral, emotional, and intellectual foundations of Australian 'national community'. Second, how in the 1940s and 1950s a 'radical nationalist' interpretation of 'national community' emerged, one which defined itself primarily against Britishness. According to the 'radical nationalist' myth, 'true' Australians had been involved in a constant struggle with the more Anglophile elements of Australian society in an effort to realise Australian 'independence'. This 'radical nationalist' myth invoked the bush legend of the 1890s, the birth of the trade union movement and the foundation of the Australian Labor Party for its inspiration and faith in national progress. Yet like nationalism itself, neither 'Britishness' nor 'radical nationalism' can be neatly defined.

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Both ideas contained different emphases and drew on different contexts to articulate their concept of 'national community'. Finally, the impact of these two ideas of ‘national community’ on the historiography of the Anzac legend is assessed.

In the twentieth century the ugly face of nationalism has fuelled revolutions, sparked the rise of powerful nation-states and ignited two world wars. Its turbulent past derived from a prescription for cultural and racial homogeneity, an absolute need to differentiate the unique qualities of a ‘people’ from those of their neighbours and an intrinsic capacity for oppression of the outsider. In a survey of the scholarship of the subject, Anthony D Smith compared the classical modernist critiques of nationalism, closely associated with the work of Ernst Gellner and Hans Kohn – who were primarily concerned with explaining the origins, effects and spread of nations and nationalism – to the more recent ‘modernist’ concepts of Eric Hobsbawm and Benedict Anderson, who have argued that nations are “invented” or “imagined”.

“It is imagined”, argued Anderson, “because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them or ever hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion”. Yet Anderson’s concept of nationalism as constituting an ‘imagined community’ was in its most basic form an extension of Hans Kohn’s 1944 definition of nationalism as “a state of mind”. Anderson’s argument for how this ‘image of their communion’ becomes so pervasive stressed the nation as a cultural artefact, and elevated the importance of language, rather than blood, religion, myths, traditions and institutions as the principal determinant of modern nationalism. One test for Anderson’s thesis would be to ask how national leaders have attempted to foster a sense of national ‘communion’, that is, how have they articulated those elements which hold the nation together? On this point Walker Connor has discussed national leaders’ appeal to blood and kinship, concluding that: “It is not chronological or factual history that is the key to the nation, but sentient or felt

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history...an intuitive conviction of the group’s separate origin and evolution". By ‘intuitive conviction’, Connor thus essentially agreed with the Kohn view that nationalism is an idea or myth about a ‘people’. Further, his emphasis on the irrelevance of historical accuracy in the construction of national myths, particularly as it related to the rhetoric of leaders, is equally significant. Keating’s Singapore rhetoric conclusively demonstrated that where the cultures of history and politics collide on the nationalism question, the past becomes inevitably hostage to obfuscation rather than objectivity.

Though no one theory of nations and nationalism has gained general approval, there are some points on which nearly all contemporary analyses agree. It is agreed that nationalism is itself a modern concept, emerging in the late eighteenth century and predominantly associated with Western Europe and the United States. Scholarly agreement exists also on the fundamental relationship between nationalism and history. This connection is found in the ‘myth’ of the nation, which tells the story of a people becoming progressively aware of their distinctiveness and of the gradual awakening of a national spirit which will ultimately lead them to their ‘destiny’. Within this ‘myth’, those who released these forces are accorded a heroic status in the nation’s pantheon, while those who contrived to frustrate the ‘natural’ course of this development are banished to the dark recesses of the nation’s past.

Thus nationalism, as Ernest Gellner argued, presents itself as “natural and self-evident and self-generating”, an expression of continuity with the past. Crucially, however, a scholarly consensus is emerging on Gellner’s conclusion that “nations as a natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent though long delayed political

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8 It is useful to consider briefly modern nationalism and to what extent the idea of ‘nationalism’ existed in the consciousness of the ancient world. In a study of the ancient Greeks and their concept of ‘nation’, Moses Finley has concluded that the primacy of the city-state in fifth century Athens transcended any conception or ideological commitment to a sense of Greek ‘naticnhood’. And despite the intellectual, spiritual and moral importance Herodotus placed on being Greek, this attachment lacked a specific political content. It was not until the Persian Wars that the Greeks united against what they called barbaroi – a term used to describe any peoples who did not speak Greek. Thus whilst there was a wide cultural network and broad ethnic identity among the Hellenes, there was no sense of a Greek political ‘nation’, since the prime loyalty of the citizen was to the individual city-state or polis; see Moses Finley, ‘The Ancient Greeks and their nation’, in The Use and Abuse of History (London: Hogarth Press, 1986),120-133.
9 Gellner, Nations and Nationalism, 129.
destiny, are a myth". Thus nationalism, which on this point is not what it claims, has zealously promoted a complimentary self-image of itself as an innate, latent force in human affairs. As Anthony Smith observed — "...everything that is popular, authentic and emancipatory contributes to the renaissance of the nation, while all that is sectional, cosmopolitan and oppressive must retard its birth". It is from the past therefore that nationalism has drawn its key determinants of communal authenticity, memories of 'golden ages' as well as the 'distinctive' values and traditions which sustained the 'nation'.

One of the fundamental problems in dealing with the phenomenon of nationalism is the differentiation between a cultural nationalism as opposed to a political nationalism, between the nation as a cultural community and the nation as a political community. These arguments have ranged between those who conceive of the 'nation' as having evolved naturally and as having existed since time immemorial, and those who argue the 'nation' has been a systematic construction, a product of the discontents of modernity. Similarly, where a cultural nationalism is based around an ethno-cultural identity sustained by common kinship ties, a common history and shared language, a political nationalism is based around a social-political community founded on common territory, rights, laws, institutions and interests. Eugene Kamenka has asserted that "true political nationalism" is to be found when the focus is on the basis and organisation of the polity rather than on the development of national consciousness or nationalistic xenophobia. The American historian David M. Potter has argued that scholars of nationalism have too often stressed the community of culture as the core determinant in modern nationalism, that the simple equation between nationality and culture in making a people conscious of their distinctiveness has been overstated at the expense of other equally important factors, such as the community of interest — "the broad sense of welfare and security through membership in society". In considering the specific problem of

10 Ibid., 48-9.
11 Anthony Smith, Nationalism and Modernism: 43, 115.
13 DM Potter, 'The Historian's Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa', American Historical Review LXVII (July 1962); 935.
Australian 'national community' this distinction between the roles of sentiment and self-interest needs to be kept in mind.

Yet in order to maintain the necessary distance from nationalism's own romantic self-image, it should be emphasised that Australia does not fulfill one of nationalism's core demands. When J.A. La Nauze observed in his survey of Australian historiography in 1959, that Australia "lacked direct experience of some of those times of trouble which have deeply impressed most national histories – war on our soil, civil war, revolution, tyranny, the experience of conquest", it was not to decry the absence of a unifying myth of 'national community', but simply to make the point that in other countries such episodes "have affected a people's understanding of itself...". That is, such turbulence has had a lasting impact on the idea of nation. Australia, La Nauze added, had for most of its history been a "notably derivative and dependent society in its culture and institutions". And this is precisely the point; nationalism, if it remains true to its own self-image, demands the existence of a 'myth' or legend created out of the memories of pre-modern times - a myth which speaks to a shared experience or to a unique national past - such as the South African Voortrekker or the American Pilgrim Fathers. It is Australia's lack of a unique national myth dating from the end of the nineteenth century which makes imperative a consideration of the way in which British race patriotism answered Australia's need for a nationalism - and thus defined Australia's 'nationalist' experience.

**Britishness in Australian political culture and Australian historiography**

...it is impossible to make sense of this country today without recognising its Britishness. We took the pattern of Federation from the United States, but the governments within all still ran on British lines. So did the law, industry, trade unions and political parties. We still have the Queen. Despite waves of immigration that have so changed life in Australia, and despite Britain's own retreat to the British Isles, Australia is very British still. The transplant is flourishing.14

Even one hundred years after Federation, and at the dawn of a new century, the *Sydney Morning Herald* was unequivocal in acknowledging the continuing resonance of

Britishness in Australian political and cultural life. Though recognising that the nostrums of race and empire were no longer viable in 2001, it maintained that the recognition of a British heritage was a necessary precondition for coming to terms with the nature of modern Australia.\textsuperscript{16}

Even a cursory glance at the rhetoric of Britishness reveals that the common bonds of blood, heritage, history, language and literature tied Australia firmly to the ‘mother country’ for much of the twentieth century. Both sides of Australian politics embraced this myth of ‘British Race patriotism’. Some of the most renowned public comments of national leaders earlier this century spoke to the essential Britishness enshrined in the national consciousness. Alfred Deakin, in his 1905 Imperial Federation address, articulated the kindred nature of the relationship between Australians and Britons and the mystic ties of Empire: “The same ties of blood, sympathy, and tradition which make us one Commonwealth here make the British of to-day one people everywhere”.\textsuperscript{17} Whilst Deakin used the word ‘nation’ seven times in this address, only once did it refer to Australia. He mostly implied a British ‘nation’ – which included Australians.\textsuperscript{18} Andrew Fisher’s 1914 pledge to fight “to the last man and the last shilling” and WM Hughes’ 1921 declaration that Australia was “a nation by the grace of God and the British Empire” were the types of statements which led the Australian historian WK Hancock to express in the late 1920s the classic assessment of Australia’s dual loyalties, that “among Australians pride of race counted for more than love of country”.\textsuperscript{19} In 1947, when only 9% of the Australian population were listed as having been born overseas, a Gallup poll found that “an overwhelming majority of Australians prefer their legal nationality to be British” rather than Australian.\textsuperscript{20} The continuing

\textsuperscript{16} Thus John Hirst, though emphasising the importance of a distinctive national sentiment as a driving force for those involved in the movement towards Australian Federation, nevertheless conceded: “Normally nationalism implies complete independence. But when Australian nationalism burgeoned there was the prospect that the imperial power would reorganise its empire so that its self-governing colonies would have the same status as itself. The desire for recognition and the ending of colonial status could be assuaged both by the forming of the nation and by its remaining in the empire”. John Hirst, \textit{The Sentimental Nation} (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2000), 79-80.

\textsuperscript{17} Alfred Deakin, \textit{Imperial Federation} (Melbourne: Echo Publishing, 1905)

\textsuperscript{18} As Douglas Cole noted in “The Problem of "Nationalism" and "imperialism" in British Settlement Colonies”, \textit{Journal of British Studies}, vol. x (1971), 176.

\textsuperscript{19} WK Hancock, \textit{Australia}, 56-57.

\textsuperscript{20} Australian Gallup Polls, Nos. 470-477 (November-December 1947) in Neville Meaney, \textit{Australia and the World – A Documentary History from the 1870s to the 1970s} (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1985),549.
pervasiveness of Britishness in Australian society and culture had its most fervent, quasi-religious manifestation in the Royal Tour of 1954. On this occasion, the *Sydney Morning Herald* affirmed that "To Australians the Queen especially represents the tradition they have inherited from England....Australia is still and always will be a British nation whose greatest strength lies in the tradition she has inherited from England". Or as *The Bulletin* even more decisively declared, "the Royal visit completes the nationhood of Australia".  

Thus for Australians, the idea of "kith and kin", of a distinct cultural homeland which nurtured identity, instilled in them a sense of belonging and membership of a wider community derived from their identification with Britain and the British empire. But Australia's Britishness should not be simply equated with subservience or dependence – with 'forelock tugging' or obsequious genuflection to imperial 'betters'. Whilst some saw London as the imperial metropolis directing the empire's affairs, others defined an 'organic' concept of Empire in which all dominions were equal and all contributed to the discussions and direction of empire policy. If 'colony' implied 'dependence', then 'dominion' carried the much cherished implication of 'equality', and equality within the empire remained the goal of many Australian Prime Ministers. Furthermore, while Australians thought of themselves primarily as Britons, and therefore as the unique inheritors of liberty, there was also a sense in which Australians believed their Britishness to be a purer form than that found at 'home'. There was the chance to build a new British society free from the inadequacies and shortcomings of the 'Old World'. As John Hirst has argued, the differing roles of monarchy in Australia and Britain had important consequences for this idea of Australia as a better branch of Britishness. In Australia, the monarchy had shed its associations with aristocracy and

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22 The observance of Empire Day in Australia from 1905, a move given greater significance following the victory of Japan in the Russo-Japanese war, intensified the insistence on Australia's Anglo-Saxonism and provided a further symbolic guarantee of White Australia; see Maurice French, 'The Ambiguity of Empire Day in New South Wales 1901-21: Imperial Consensus or National Division', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. xxiv, no. 1 (April 1978), 61-74; The set of public values as presented in the *Commonwealth School Paper* from 1904-1915 introduced young Australians to the world of "certainty about the British Empire, British military might, pride of race, honour, duty, self-sacrifice, Queen Victoria, God, General Gordon, hard work, the flag, wattle, the poor savages, Shakespeare, noble deeds, adventure, exploration, heroes and, in the end, World War I". Thus, even after Federation, a dual loyalty to Britain and Australia continued to be at the centre of public school values. &dqu;Firth, 'Social Values in the New...
government and become a symbol of unity for colonists of different backgrounds, "...it was a human and reassuring link to home, to a great civilisation, and the power which was needed to protect them. All this was perfectly compatible with democracy".23

The treatment of Britishness in Australian historiography ranged from those who placed Australia in the wider, triumphal history of the British race, to those who professed an interest in the inheritance of classic English liberalism and institutions, without displaying any emotional attachment to or pride in British imperialism. WK Hancock, for example, evinced a liberal imperialist view. This was most cogently expressed in the distinction he made between those who conceived of the Empire as being "British with a large B", that is an empire which was "the peculiar glory and the peculiar possession of 'the British race'", as opposed to those who were committed to an idea of the Commonwealth as "british – with a small b", that is a "family of diverse kindreds and languages".24 Though Hancock had argued in Australia (1930) that the British racial dimension of Australian identity took precedence over 'love of country', he did acknowledge that the taming of an unknown land and the task of making a harsh and alienating frontier profitable nurtured a distinctive cultural consciousness which defined itself against Britain. Yet this was not a nascent, separatist nationalism, for, as Hancock subsequently explained: "it is quite possible to be pro-British without being anti-English, and even the more radical Australian nationalists drifted towards this desirable anchorage".25 This was testament to the implicit Britishness in the Australian identity which all 'radical nationalists' shared. In Argument for Empire, (1943) Hancock articulated a fervent Britishness as justification for an Empire which had dispensed with the need for a "snarling nationalism" through the free cooperation of peoples in a rational, mystical political union, one which had continued irrespective of the sovereign status of some of its members.26


25 WK Hancock, Australia, 57.

26 WK Hancock, Argument of Empire (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1943), 7. See also TM Bader, 'The Historian and the Cheshire Cat: A study of the views of Sir Keith Hancock towards the Empire
The editors of the Australasian section of the *Cambridge History of the British Empire* (1933) were more inclined to situate the Australian experience within the broader narrative of the British imperial experience, and declared that "The history of both dominions [Australia and New Zealand] takes a special character from this comparatively free development of English life transplanted to coasts and islands on the other side of the world". In this view Australia had matured to nationhood as a member of the British Empire. Similarly for John Manning Ward, Australia in the period 1840-1860 personified a predominantly British character and outlook – in its political inheritance, laws and institutions, in its trade, investment and migration, Australia's development and economic survival had been utterly dependent on British imperial policy. Aiming directly at Russel Ward's thesis in *The Australian Legend*, John Ward also diminished the impact of local ballads, folksongs and popular tales on an emergent, distinctive national culture - they had so lacked "literary merit other than vigour" as to have "won no lasting acceptance". Even with the recognition that by 1860 "the double attachment to mother country and to the new homeland could be very strong", John Ward maintained it was a combination, rather than a conflict of ties. Furthermore, he added "cultural preferences remained firmly British". Prior to 1945, as Brian Fletcher has noted, "Australian history was presented largely as an extension of that of Britain and was seen as providing yet another example of the dynamic qualities, the fortitude and humanity of the British race".

In the early 1970s Douglas Cole emphasised the semantic and ideological confusion which had beset those attempting to explain the concepts of "nationalism" and "imperialism" in British settlement colonies. The essential problem, according to Cole, was that "The historians of Dominion nationalism have usually been believers in the

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28 J.M. Ward, *Empire in the Antipodes – The British in Australasia* (London: Edward Arnold, 1965), 101, 102, 110. "Common origins in the British Isles, common use of the English language and, within limits set by education, common inheritance of English literature helped to unite the English, Scots, Irish and Welsh in Australia. In the first stirrings of colonial culture, it was not distinctive national origins that were important but, rather attitudes to homelands and these depended significantly on education and social status".
nationalist legend”, and that the “study of the ideology has been infected by the ideology”.30 Hence Cole asserted that “An Australian nationalism, based on a consciousness of ethnic differentiation, would have been incompatible with an imperial ideology based upon the unity of blood, language, ancestry and tradition”.31 This emphasis on ethnocentric ideas as informing the Australian ‘world-view’ maintained there was no need to distinguish between Australian national sentiment, British Race Patriotism and the ideal of ‘White Australia’, since “all three blurred and blended rather easily with each other”.32 But this was perhaps too easy a solution to the problem of nationalism. Cole did not point out the contradictions within this paradigm of Britishness. In particular, as will be shown below, the capacity for Australian leaders to distinguish between sentiment and self-interest.

Writing at the same time as Cole, but from a more radical perspective, Humphrey McQueen expressed a similar frustration at the simplistic interpretation of Australian ‘nationalism’ and Australian ‘independence’, in particular those who resorted to the “analogy in which Britain is the mother-country and Australia is the child who reaches maturity, flexes its muscles and engages in several other pleasing metaphors”. McQueen, whose ‘New–Left’ perspective was essentially antagonistic towards nationalism, seeing it as an enemy of the socialist vision, argued that the roots of nineteenth century Australian nationalism were not to be found in radical socialism or anti-imperialism, but instead stressed racism, militarism and the ascendancy of bourgeois values. “Anti-British feeling”, posited McQueen, “was not the mainstay of Australian nationalism...never did Australian nationalists shed their race patriotism and reject the British people”. Australians, McQueen added, were suspicious of the genuineness of Britain’s loyalty to the empire, and more often than not the “peculiar nature of Australian anti-imperialism” was self-evident in “the acceptance of British domination of the world as a precondition for Australian independence”.33

33 Humphrey McQueen, A New Britannia – An argument concerning the social origins of Australian radicalism and nationalism (Ringwood: Penguin 1970), 21-22, 34.
Also writing in the 1970s, Neville Meaney adopted a critical stance outside nationalism’s teleology and furthermore contended that the “riddle of Australian nationalism” could be solved if it were appreciated that whilst “Australia’s first response in terms of sentiment was to British race patriotism” rather than a distinctive national culture, Australians insisted they should maintain exclusive control over the direction of their political affairs.\textsuperscript{34} Drawing on David M. Potter’s distinction between the community of ‘culture’ and the community of ‘interest’ as the twin determinants of nationalism, Meaney pointed to examples of where these worlds of culture and interest clashed in Australia’s relationship with Britain. When the sentiments of British race patriotism conflicted with the logic of Australian self-interest, Australians more often “opted for the nation of interest over the nation of culture”.\textsuperscript{35} The Australian Colonists willingness to unite in an Australian Federation, whilst simultaneously rejecting the idea of an Imperial Federation, is one of the clearest and most obvious examples of this proposition.\textsuperscript{36} Australians therefore possessed a “nationalism within a nationalism”. But of equal significance for Meaney are the failures represented by such a view. Australian leaders, despite their abiding faith in Britain’s willingness to take account of their own concerns for Australian security in the Pacific, were sometimes forced to acknowledge that an enlightened concept of the British Empire in international affairs at times burned brightest at the periphery, and not in the imperial centre. Meaney has concluded from this that the “history of nationalism in Australia was not one of thwarted Australianness but rather of thwarted Britishness”.\textsuperscript{37}

Yet the arguments of those scholars who preferred to operate within the more conventional framework of a European derived concept of nations and nationalism still need to be closely examined. Not only does their work present a different interpretation of ‘national community’, it reflects the difficulty some scholars have in resisting the lure of nationalism’s own romantic mythology.


\textsuperscript{36} Neville Meaney, ‘Australia’s Foreign Policy: History or Myth’, \textit{Australian Outlook} 23 (August 1969), 173-80.
The 'radical nationalist' tradition

The idea of Australia as a "New Britannia in another world" was not left unchallenged. In the post-war period, an Australian equivalent to what Herbert Butterfield defined as the 'Whig interpretation of history' placed the story of a distinctively Australian national community on an inevitable course of progress towards political democracy and social advance. Australian history under this guise was also infused with a linear determinism which told the triumphant story of the progression from 'dependent' colony to 'independent' nationhood. In 1962 Allan Martin identified the major assumptions in the 'Whig view of Australian history' in so far as it impacted on the party political question in Australia.38 This 'Whiggish' view, according to Martin, had discerned a crucial line of progress in a society's history, claimed that only a particular group, body or movement acted as agents of this progress, and defined other groups as "temporary obstacles whose resistance or blindness has to be overcome". As Martin noted, this tradition hailed the period 1890-1910 as the "halcyon period" in Australian history, "the norm by which to assess what came before and after". This period saw the birth of the Trade Union movement and the Labor party, the movement towards Federation and the 'flowering' of Australian social democracy. Much of this, according to the "Whiggish" account, arose out of a 'distinctively Australian' culture.

The most pervasive and dominant exponents of this 'Whig' view of Australian history were those historians who came to typify a 'radical nationalist' tradition in Australian historiography. Built upon the work of Brian Fitzpatrick, the "spiritual father of all the radical nationalist historians in Australia",39 and the literary nationalists of the 1890s such as Henry Lawson and Banjo Paterson, the 'radical nationalist' tradition was predominantly associated in the 1950s with the work of 'old-left' historians Russel Ward, Robin Gollan, Geoffrey Serle and Ian Turner. Thus it was manifest predominantly in cultural history, in which folk songs and bush ballads pointed to its popular origins, and

37 Neville Meaney, 'Britishness and Australian Identity', 12.
39 As described by Russel Ward, in A Radical Life – The Autobiography of Russel Ward (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1988), 222; Brian Fitzpatrick's British Imperialism and Australia 1783-1833 (1939); and The British Empire in Australia (1941) contain the origins of a 'radical nationalist' tradition, in so much as the key determinant in Australian history is the innate struggle and antagonism between British capital and Australian labour.
in labour movement history, where the labour movement was its political custodian. The ‘radical nationalists’ claimed to locate a distinctive Australian national tradition which distinguished Australia from the ‘old world’. This too was an ‘organic’ concept of national community – one which sprang not from the ‘crimson thread of kinship’, but from the connection with and response to the Australian landscape and a distinctive Australian ‘bush’ experience. It can be argued in broad terms that the ‘radical nationalist’ school constructed an exclusive, self-sufficient national myth which ascribed to the Australian people a unique set of values such as egalitarianism, mateship, and distrust of authority, which derived from a commonly shared past. The inevitable movement of the Australian people was thus a teleological one towards self-realisation.

This was the ‘intellectual nationalism’ of the post-war period, which combined aspirations for human progress with an assertive, grass roots national sentiment. As Robin Golland put it, ‘radical nationalism’ was both a reaction against imperialism and “the belief in the possibility of creating the good society”.

40 Golland saw this “ideal future” being threatened by English and Australian “upper class” imperialists. In 1942 Vance Palmer discerned an Australian spirit that was “quite different from these bubbles of old world imperialism”, and argued that Australia’s great contribution to the world lay “in ideas for the creation of that egalitarian democracy that will have to be the basis of all civilised societies in the future”. Palmer had been influenced by A.R. Orage, the editor of London’s New Age journal before the First World War. Orage espoused the principles of social reconstruction and in particular ‘guild socialism’, which stressed the importance of national traditions and warned of the power of the modern state to destroy community spirit. Moreover, its emphasis on English virtues inspired Palmer with the hope that Australia might also develop a robust national culture.

43 Ian Turner argued that the ‘world-view’ of these historians (Ward, Turner and Golland were all members of the Australian Communist Party) had been shaped by three central events which fuelled their...

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commitment to the idea of Australian ‘independence’ as the prerequisite for social advance – the 1930s depression, which highlighted the powerlessness of the Australian worker against British capital; the rise of fascism, which necessitated a popular front in defence of democracy; and the fear of foreign invasion during World War Two. These were the historical forces which, in Turner’s view, had underpinned the emergence of a ‘radical nationalist’ interpretation of Australian history. Thus the line between “radical nationalism” and socialism dissolved, as Turner mused: “it seemed...that ‘comrade’ had much in common with ‘mate’”. “Radical nationalism” was indeed a potent intellectual brew which mixed love of country with ideas of human progress.

With its emphasis on a progressive nationalism and the need for Australian independence, the ‘radical nationalist’ view often portrayed the Anglo-Australian relationship as one of deep-seated antagonism. Moments of supposed Australian defiance of the ‘mother-country’, rather than being treated from the perspective of a particular conception of empire in which occasional disagreement and difference of opinion were accommodated, became elevated as symbolic of Australia’s inevitable progression to independent nationhood. If Australia was to be ‘distinctive’ it had to continually be placed in contrast to an “other” – in this case the “other” being Britain. Much of the ‘radical national’ treatment of Australian history therefore adopted an anti-British tone. Rather than celebrate Australia’s growth within the empire, events such as the Eureka ‘rebellion’ in 1854, the landings at Gallipoli and more generally the Bush legend of the 1890s became focal points for a tradition which eulogised those heroes or events which had released these ‘nationalist’ forces and demonised those who had ‘thwarted’ it.

This ‘radical nationalist’ attachment to the 1890s as the fount of a distinctive Australian nationalism, as well as its depiction of the Labor party, Communist party or other ‘radical forces’ as sole bearers of a uniquely Australian form of political democracy and social justice did attract critical attention. Manning Clark’s 1954 lecture ‘Rewriting

Australian History” was hailed as the birth of a ‘Counter-Revolution in Australian historiography’.

Clark implored Australian historians to drop “the idea that the past is a mirror of Australia’s radical tradition”. Clark saw this tradition and its view of the Labor movement as having distorted the understanding of Australian history and given the illusion that in the 1890s Labor was “…pure, untainted by the world, the flesh and the devil”. Ironically, Clark was later to embrace this very same ‘radical tradition’ he had so passionately exhorted others to avoid. In the later volumes of A History of Australia the inherent struggle Clark saw at the core of Australian life, encapsulated by the juxtaposition of the “Old Dead Tree” with the “Young Tree Green”, was that between British philistinism and a burgeoning national sentiment.

Vance Palmer also initially maintained a critical distance from the 1890s mythology in The Legend of the Nineties. Palmer argued that “it would be too much to pretend that this dream affected the whole country” and that Australians, in their search for a literary tradition as the basis for a national culture, had perhaps “made too much of one narrow period”. However, this was a temporary qualification. Palmer’s “Australian dream” adopted a nationalist teleology and this distinctive Australian nationalism could be found “during the whole period from Eureka to the First World War, helping to turn a mixed and scattered population into a people and bring them into harmony with their background”. The most coherent expression of a self-consciously constructed national myth, however, was Russel Ward’s The Australian Legend(1958)

For Ward this Legend had the potential to be a ‘true’ imagined national myth, complete with values which emanated from the Australian ‘bush’ and which therefore had set Australians apart from all other peoples. Invoking the frontier thesis of Frederick Jackson Turner, Ward examined the growth of an ‘Australian national mystique’ and traced its origins to the convicts, Irish, itinerant bush workers, gold diggers and bushrangers of the nineteenth century. The qualities and values that they were seen to embody – mateship, collectivism, improvisation and anti-authoritarianism – had been conditioned in response to the harsh Australian frontier environment. Furthermore,

following the "Apotheosis of the nomad tribe" between 1830 and 1900, these values were "largely adopted by the whole nation". At the time of Federation, Ward argued, the "noble bushman" was enshrined in both the popular and literary imagination.

Ward's intellectual history helps to explain the origins of his fanfare for the bushman. Whilst he considered the early radical inclinations inspired by his Methodist lay preacher father to be significant, for Ward the critical influences were more clearly felt at University in the early 1930s, where he claims the transition from being a "young imperialist devotee of Rudyard Kipling" to being a "pacificist, a radical and an Australian nationalist" had occurred. Yet how is this change to be explained? When he joined the New Theatre, a Communist party popular front established in the mid 1930s to attract a younger generation of urban progressives, Ward found "The ideas...were radical or revolutionary...with large dashes of pacifist and Australian, as opposed to British imperial, patriotic fervour". The New Theatre fused Australian nationalism and Australian literature with socialism and the desire for social change. The 'radical nationalists' at the New Theatre looked to the spirit of the early pioneers for inspiration and constructed their own teleological view of Australian history as one of working class struggle and social progress. Ward's passionate commitment to socialism and the belief that only collective ownership of the means of production would end all war propelled him to join the Communist Party in 1941. He would subsequently liken the "collectivist mateship" nurtured on the Australian frontier to a "primitive Communism".

It is within this Cold-War intellectual framework that Russel Ward's work can be more accurately assessed. This was an intellectual tradition in which the orthodox Marxist line welcomed nationalism as a positive, progressive force in society, so long as it sprang from the working class and not a privileged, bourgeois elite.

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54 Joseph Stalin's speech to industrial managers in Moscow on 4 February 1931 invoked Russian nationalism in order to spur the workers towards the achievement of the complete social and economic transformation of Russia: "In the past we had no fatherland, nor could we have one. But now that we have overthrown capitalism and power is in our hands, in the hands of our people, we have a fatherland, and we
has argued that the "new nationalism" of the post-war era "displayed a characteristic tendency to become socialist" and that governments across the world were "forced to admit their obligation to promote the welfare of the masses".\textsuperscript{55} In his autobiography Russel Ward reflected upon the "exhilarations of victory and expectations of progress [which] inspired bounding optimism in the breasts of most, but particularly of radically inclined people" in Australia following World War Two. This "great wave of exuberant nationalism", as Ward described it, had a special significance for the folk revival in Australia during the mid-fifties, when "a fast growing band of devotees spread the news that Australia had after all an ethos and history of its own, something quite distinct from and more than a mere appendage to British imperial history".\textsuperscript{56} And whilst Ward was unable to recall any specific catalyst for the folk revival at this time, the New Theatre's staging of the play 'Reedy River' stimulated a renewed emphasis on the spirit of the 1890s. Using Australian ballads and folk-songs, the play linked the revolutionary spirit of Eureka to the shearers strike of 1891. At the time it was welcomed by New Theatre enthusiasts as a "re-affirmation of Australian identity and national consciousness". 'Reedy River' had used bush folklore to evoke the dusk of a pre-industrial Australia.\textsuperscript{57}

Ward's \textit{Australian Legend} subsequently stimulated a widespread historiographical debate over the origins and influence of an Australian bush 'myth'. Michael Roe and Sean Glynn stressed that more emphasis needed to be placed on the urban character of nineteenth century Australia, while Graeme Davison argued that the legend as a literary force had strong urban sources and moreover that it had been the projection onto the outback of values cherished by an alienated urban intelligentsia.\textsuperscript{58} John Hirst's emphasis on the individualistic and conservative values of the 'pioneer legend' contrasted with Ward's enshrining of a collectivist and egalitarian ethos. Hirst


\textsuperscript{56} Russel Ward, \textit{A Radical Life}; 246, 242-3.


claimed 'the pioneer legend' to be "a nationalist legend which deals in a heroic way with the central experience of European settlement in Australia: the taming of a new environment to man's use". 59 From a feminist perspective Marilyn Lake contended that the aggressive masculinity of the bush myth was a direct response to the feminising ideologies of 'respectability'. 60 Certainly Ward under valued the ugliness in the "radical nationalist" tradition and its obsession with maintaining a racially pure society. Neville Meaney has argued that during the 1890s fear of Asian invasion linked purity of race to an idea of 'the good community', and that this was perhaps the most enduring and widely accepted legacy of the 'legend of the nineties'. 61

There was an added complication for Russel Ward's argument. Less comfortable with the mutation of the 'legend' from bushman into Australian soldier of the First World War, it would seem that Ward's 'cabbage tree-hat' of the nomad tribe did not automatically become a slouch hat turned up at the side. Once the bitterness of the conscription crises of 1916-17 had "faded into the background of consciousness" Ward asserted "that Australian patriotism does not usually or necessarily involve weakening of attachment to Britain, but rather the reverse". 62 But this question was outside Ward's period and largely incidental to his main argument. In his later work, Australia Since the Coming of Man, Ward gave fuller expression to the lost dream of the 1890's. With the outbreak of war in 1914, he accepted that:

The utopian dreaming of the past two or three decades was fractured, and with it the illusion that the young nation might forever escape involvement in Old World sins and quarrels....Fourteen years of national independence and advancement seemed to have liquidated the small but vociferous republican minority of the nineties. Almost


everyone seemed to feel their Britishness as the extension and guarantee of their Australianness rather than as any kind of limitation on it.63

Whilst Ward had thus accepted the validity of a British-Australian identity, his comments anticipated the later “radical nationalist” frustration at the implications of the First World War for an independent Australian nationalism. Indeed Australian participation in imperial conflicts overseas would seem to indicate that this “radical nationalism” was not what it appeared to be, that the idea of a distinctly Australian national community with its own heroic past in fact masked the superior loyalty of Australians to British race patriotism. When Australia agreed to support Britain in the Boer War, Vance Palmer pointed to the “contagious elan [of] Kipling’s new gospel of Empire” as a significant factor in the loss of impetus towards the construction of an ideal society.64 Similarly Barbara Penny argued the “nationalist imperialism” of the late 1890s time was constructed around a fierce race consciousness, with the Boer War itself seen as a chance for the Australian colony to measure its strength as part of the British empire.65 Some of those most closely identified with a belief in an independent Australian nationalism, such as William Lane and Kenneth Mackay, could fervently embrace British race patriotism when the bugles of Empire beckoned them to the battlefield.66 This perhaps revealed the true nature of the “radical nationalist” protest against Britain: the desire for “independence” could be quickly subsumed by the call of British ‘blood’ and the prestige afforded Australia within the imperial community.

The Anzac Legend and ‘radical nationalist’ disillusionment

The Australian historiography of the First World War illustrates clearly the divergence in these two different concepts of ‘national community’. Whilst the Anzac landings at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915 have long been associated with the ‘birth’ of Australian nationhood and the eagerly awaited national ‘baptism of fire’, the blood sacrifice of young Australians on foreign battlefields confirmed the nation’s pride in its

66 Neville Meaney, ‘“The Yellow Peril”’, 250.
essential Britishness and gave a powerful moral authority to the imperial idea in the Australian consciousness. CEW Bean added an Homeric aura to the Australian legend, as his beloved bushman, the archetypal Australian awaiting the supreme test of war and already occupying an important place in imperial ideology as guardian of the fringes of Empire, was thrust to the centre of world events in Europe and ‘not found wanting’. The bushman, already ‘half a soldier’ when he had entered the war in 1914, departed it as the ‘digger’ in 1918, now even more entrenched within an imperial pantheon of heroes as loyal servant of empire. For Bean, the Anzac had proved Australians were “better Britons”.  

The First World War proved problematic for the ‘radical national’ tradition. Eager to prune imperialist ideology from the Australian war experience, and fervent in the quest for a unifying national myth which could define a distinctive Australianness, some historians constructed an Anzac legend sustained by intense antagonism towards Britain. In this view, ‘forelock-tugging’ governments, fawning politicians and incompetent imperial officers betrayed dutiful Australian sons and treated them as expendable colonials, to be sacrificed amidst the futility of Gallipoli and the horrors of the Western Front. Bill Gammage deduced from his study of A.I.F. war diaries that Gallipoli had “radically amended the former balance in Australian minds between nation and empire, a change which endured...in the history of their country”, and the war in general had “dealt the affections of empire a mortal blow”. For Gavin Souter the conflict had “hardened the sense of Australian identity” and weakened the “British/Australian duality”, while Eric Andrews claimed that Australian soldiers after the war looked upon their country with “new eyes” and considered her “apart from Britain”.  

The most powerful and far-reaching example of this sentiment however was to be found in the representation of Australia’s war experience in popular culture, especially Peter Weir’s 1981 film Gallipoli.

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(to which Gammage was historical consultant), which reinforced the perception of an emergent Australian nationalism stifled by callous, cold-blooded imperial exploitation.

At the same time however, the ‘radical nationalists’ had to explain why, if this Australian disenchantment with Britain and Empire had occurred, a distinctive and separatist nationalism did not emerge in the post-war era under the auspices of the Anzac legend. Therefore, in their efforts to tackle this troublesome non-phenomenon, they argued that conservative forces were more successful in their appropriation of Anzac following the First World War. That is, the Anzac legend was somehow stolen by this abstract they called ‘conservatism’ which then attained a mass electoral support base as a result of the war. How is this betrayal of the ‘true’ nature of Anzac to be explained? It would seem that one section in society was able to ‘hijack’ the Anzac legend for their own political purposes. In this argument can be found one of the paradoxes of Australian “radical nationalism”. If the First World War had reinforced the difference between “imperialists” and “nationalists”, “dealt the affections of Empire a mortal blow” and given a new nation its glorious Thermopylae, how then could conservative, imperialist and loyalist values be ascendant in the post-war years? How could this ‘independent’ Australian nationalism, born on the battlefield, be subdued so suddenly after the war?

One of the earliest arguments over political control of the Anzac legend is to be found in W.K. Hancock’s Australia (1930), though Hancock offered a more measured perspective which encompassed a broader spectrum of Australian political culture. In his overview of Labour movement history Hancock traced the alienation of the Labor party from national office to the 1916 split: “The strain of the war broke the old radical nationalist party of Fisher and Hughes. After the conscription referenda, the practical Australian nationalism of the old leaders, which was always reconcilable with a strong imperial sentiment, became for a time the exclusive political property of Labour’s opponents”. The wider truth, Hancock explained, was that “the leaders of labour” did not forget “their country was part of a larger unity in whose strength...alone, Australia was free to be herself”, and indeed these Labor leaders had been at the forefront of the

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69 Two clear examples of this view are to be found in Geoffrey Serle, ‘The Digger Tradition and Australian nationalism’, Meanjin, vol. 24, no. 2 (June 1965), 149-158; Alistair Thomson, Anzac Memories – Living with the Legend. (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994),128.
passionate imperialism that typified the consensus with which Australia joined the war.\textsuperscript{70} However, what is to be made of Hancock’s explicit identification of the pre-1914 Labor party with “old radical nationalism”? Such connections assume that Labor embodied a more progressive, reformist ideal of domestic politics, which was driven by a distinctively nationalist sentiment. The Labor party between 1901-1914 needs to be viewed not as “socialist” in an ideological sense, or “nationalist” in a cultural sense, but one which espoused a liberalism based around ideas of human progress and the brotherhood of man, and which was protective of Australian community of interest where they differed from those of the ‘mother-country’. To be sure, the Labor party’s imperial rhetoric at this time did not overflow with the sentiment of ‘race patriotism’ or the ‘instinct of blood’ – it looked instead to shared ideals and the inheritance of British institutions.\textsuperscript{71} It would seem that the Labor party’s “radical nationalism” at this time, then, was more of an internal party tradition.

In the 1960s a new generation of historians began to consider the politicisation of the Anzac ‘legend’, but there was a noticeable discomfort in doing so. As Ken Inglis noted, the leftist interpretation of the First World War as a squalid trade war ensured for them that the experience became a “subject for angry tears rather than investigation”.\textsuperscript{72} Geoffrey Serle claimed that between the wars “the digger legend was largely taken over by the conservative classes”. He argued that the new “right-wing” nationalism had prospered mainly through commemorative ceremonies which fused imperial ideals with conservative social and racial values. Along with the general leftward trend of the Labor movement where pacifist, internationalist and isolationist sentiments dominated Labor rhetoric, it seemed the conservative appropriation of Anzac was complete and irreversible.\textsuperscript{73} The implication was that Labor had abandoned an identification with the Anzac tradition.

In the 1970’s Bill Gammage added his voice to what was fast becoming a “radical nationalist” lament: “Before the war radical nationalists had led the drive for a social paradise in Australia, but ultimately they were least at ease with the Imperial and martial

\textsuperscript{70} WK.Hancock, \textit{Australia}, 178.
\textsuperscript{71} Neville Meaney, \textit{The Search for Security in the Pacific 1901-1914}, 228
\textsuperscript{72} Ken Inglis, ‘The Anzac Tradition’, \textit{Meanjin}, vol. 24, no. 1 (March 1965), 34.
\textsuperscript{73} Geoffrey Serle, ‘The Digger Tradition and Australian Nationalism’, 149-158.
implications of the Anzac tradition...In 1916 their political representatives, the Labor party, split, and so surrendered political and social control into the hands of the conservatives...[who] came best to represent the new nationalism of Anzac". But this "new nationalism" was not an unqualified Australian nationalism, since it fused blood sacrifice for the cause of Empire with the 'birth' of a new nation. Furthermore, neither Gammage nor Serle could articulate how a Labor or 'radical' Anzac tradition would be expressed. Likewise they could not show evidence that Labor leaders themselves had felt that Anzac had been 'stolen' by the conservatives. Humphrey McQueen, directly countering a 'radical nationalist' paradigm, contended that Australian "radical nationalists" relinquished the Anzac legend after the First World War because they had become more interested in class warfare. This view discounted Anzac as a wellspring for Australian national sentiment altogether, but it at least had the virtue of plausibility.

Only Ken Inglis has offered a possible explanation in this regard, pointing out that Federal Labor was out of office between 1917 and 1929 — when most Anzac memorials were inaugurated — and furthermore that "The division over conscription had removed from the party most of the people who could speak comfortably the words required at a war memorial". Whilst a more credible explanation, Inglis himself subsequently slips into a 'radical national' vein with his claim that the return of a Labor government in 1941

74 Bill Gammage, The Broken Years, 278.
75 Humphrey McQueen, Gallipoli to Petrov — Arguing with Australien History (Sydney: Allen&Unwin, 1984), 5.
76 Yet it would be misleading to assume that this "radical nationalist" dissatisfaction at the supposed politicisation of the Anzac legend remained the exclusive preserve of Labor politics and 'left' historians. In the 1930s for instance, the Communist Party of Australia self-consciously connected its ideology to a set of Australian 'national traditions'. As the Workers Weekly claimed in 1936, the Eureka rebellion and the conscription struggles of the First World War were "true expressions" of "real Australian traditions". In the same year a procession through Sydney to mark the twentieth anniversary of the 1916 conscription referendum was organised, and speaking in anticipation of the event, Communist leader Lance Sharkey decried the prevailing "ruling class" interpretation of Australian 'nationhood', which invoked Gallipoli as the birth of the nation, as malicious and false — "it is hard to see what Gallipoli...a battle in an imperialist war for markets, profits and colonies, had to do with Australian nationhood". The Anzacs, he said, had been "deceived and betrayed". L.P. Fox, in setting out The Truth About Anzac, called on young Australians to emulate the "tradition of Anzac...the struggle against militarism". Thus by celebrating those who didn't fight, and praising those who did as having been cynically manipulated by the malevolent forces of imperialism and capitalism, the Communists could welcome the Anzacs into what Stuart Macintyre has called "their enlarged radical nationalist pantheon". This more 'radical' view, then, discounted the Anzac legend altogether, and put the conscription crisis and opposition to support for Britain's 'capitalist' war at the forefront of the teleological development leading to Australian national 'independence'.

“restored the party to its place it had enjoyed before 1916 as a carrier of national values”. The implication was that Labor leaders would finally be able to make the Anzac tradition their own. Whilst not detracting from the undeniable merits of Inglis’ work, this comment illustrates an ongoing tendency among scholars to associate the Curtin administration with the re-assertion of a distinctive Australian nationalism which had been ‘thwarted’ by the First World War and the conservative political dominance which followed. Thus David Day in his biography of John Curtin ultimately concluded that Curtin would perhaps have seen his greatest prime ministerial achievement as “retrieving the mantle of nationalism that the Labor party had lost during the First World War”.  

Richard White has noted that such an argument concerning the capture of the ‘Australian legend’ by the conservatives after the war has been exaggerated, and moreover that it has all too often played down the continuities between the 1890s ‘bush’ nationalism and the supposed post-WW1 ‘conservative’ nationalism – both shared the common elements of racism, egalitarianism, larrkinism and exclusiveness. Yet the pervasiveness of this argument is demonstrated in Alistair Thomson’s Anzac Memories – Living with the Legend (1994). Thomson illustrated the frequent coalescence of RSSILA (Returned Sailors’ and Soldiers’ Imperial League of Australia) and conservative government policies during the 1920’s, concluding that “…by bringing the politics of returned servicemen within the embrace of loyalist ideology, the RSSILA…gained symbolic control over the definition of the ‘digger’ and shaped the way in which ex-servicemen could remember the war and identify themselves as Anzacs”. This view places the digger in an unfortunate position; his ability to be easily manipulated to serve whatever these conservative ends were, is accepted almost without question. How ex-


servicemen might otherwise have imagined Anzac was not considered. In Thompson’s eyes, they had simply been “duped patriots”.81

Perhaps the deeper significances of the argument that conservatives were more successful in their identification with Anzac is that such language implies Labor had a more reformist and distinctively Australian concept of democracy and society between the years 1890 and 1914. This ‘march to progress’ is then halted by the bugles of King and Country, a Labor party torn over conscription, and the electoral success of conservatives in the post-war period. Whilst the Labor party expressed a basic acceptance of Anzac, the historiography would suggest a lingering resentment that the First World War had not proved to be the pinnacle of Labor’s cultivation of ‘national sentiment’ in the pre-war years. Australians had not declared for independence from Britain, and had therefore been ‘deceived’ into fighting an unjust imperialist war by their sentimental attachment to the ideal of an organic Anglo-Australian community. The endurance of this ‘radical nationalist’ disappointment at the post-war fate of the Anzac legend in shaping an understanding of Australia’s First World War experience will be subsequently illustrated in the prime ministerial rhetoric of Paul Keating.

Britishness was therefore the dominant social and cultural idea in Australian life and political culture for most of last century, an idea which equated progress and liberty with creation of a new British community in the antipodes. In the era of mass nationalism beginning in the late nineteenth century it was the rhetoric of British race patriotism which characterised Australia’s nationalist experience. Though Australian leaders could, when necessary, place Australian self-interest above British race patriot sentiment, no leader invoked the ‘radical national’ myth in doing so. This myth, born out of the unique experience of the bush, and which tied a distinctively nationalist sentiment to the labour movement and ideals of social progress, did not develop the same intensity nor the same unifying force as Britishness. It was only natural therefore that Prime Ministers John Curtin, Ben Chifley and Robert Menzies should give voice to the British race myth. Their Britishness, as reflected in major prime ministerial speeches, forms the initial focus of the following chapter. In the post-war world an idea of ‘organic’ British racial community

resonated across both sides of the political spectrum. But the question of why the 'radical national' myth failed to attract the same emotional intensity as Britishness is also addressed.
Chapter Two

Prime Ministers and the British Myth in a changing world: 1941-1972

"There is no part of the Empire more steadfast in loyalty to the British way of living and British institutions than Australia. Our loyalty to his majesty the King goes to the very core of our national life. It is part of our being...I do not consider Australia a segment of the British Empire. It is an organic part of the whole structure. But I do not put Australia in the position of a colony. Australia is a Dominion".¹

These were the sentiments of Labor Prime Minister John Curtin at a specially convened press conference in Canberra on 29 December 1941, just two days after his New Year's message to the nation in which he had declared "Without any inhibitions of any kind, I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom". The speed with which Curtin sought to assuage those who saw in this statement an open repudiation of Australian links with Britain demonstrated conclusively the extent to which the rhetoric of Britishness was the dominant discourse in Australian political culture at this time. Curtin's emphatic reaffirmation of Australia's British ties had no doubt been prompted partly by the protests of his political opponents. Robert Menzies labelled Curtin's New Year's message "a great blunder", Percy Spender thought it "deplorable", and Billy Hughes, with his characteristic absolutism, declared it to be "suicidal and a false and dangerous policy" for Australia to regard Britain's support as being of less importance than that of "other great nations with which we are associated".² But it also gave expression to a deeply ingrained Australian view of its place in the British world. Curtin's reference to an "organic" concept of Empire necessarily dismissed the status of 'colony' as a mark of

¹ Sydney Morning Herald, 30 December 1941. Thanks to Stuart Ward, who provided the reference to an article by K.H. Bailey in which Curtin's qualification was quoted. K.H. Bailey, "Attitude to Britain" in The Round Table: A Quarterly Review of the Politics of the British Commonwealth, vol. 32, no.127 (June 1942), 419-21; Bailey also quoted Curtin in 'Australia in the Empire', The Australian Quarterly, vol. xiv, no. 1 (March 1942), 5-18.

² For these reactions see Sydney Morning Herald, 29 December 1941 and 30 December 1941; As David Horner notes, Frederick Shedden commented to Curtin on the Monday after his New Year's statement that he might have said 'without any lessening of the bonds with the United Kingdom', instead of 'free of any pangs'. Shedden believed such a form of words might well have saved Curtin from the protests of Englishmen resident in Australia as well as those "few Australians who had not outgrown their colonial sentiments". David Horner, Defence Supremo: Sir Frederick Shedden and the making of Australian Defence Policy (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2000), 131.
inferiority. His concern to stress Australia’s position as a ‘Dominion’ was predicated on the view that all British peoples were equal and that all should contribute to the direction of imperial affairs.

Yet Curtin’s ‘call to America’ has been readily woven into a legendary tale of defiant Australian leadership, asserting an independent Australian ‘nationhood’ over British ties. Noel MacLachlan claimed “Probably only an Irish-Australian Prime Minister grappling with the most terrible emergency in our history could have written off the entire British connection in a single no-nonsense sentence”. Geoffrey Serle portrayed Curtin as “a natural Australian, impervious to imperial ideology”. 3 Gareth Evans and Bruce Grant, in explaining the evolution of an ‘independent’ Australian foreign policy, depicted Curtin’s war leadership as having awoken a slumbering national spirit: “The Australian nationalism of the 1890s was still awaiting its expression in the Australian nation-state when war brought home to all Australians how precarious our dependence on British power had become”. 4 These responses typify the simplistic framework within which notions of Australian ‘independence’ have been interpreted. Curtin has thus been credited with providing the crucial ‘turning point’ which re-oriented the direction of Australian foreign policy away from Britain and towards the United States. 5 As PG Edwards has argued, it is perhaps pertinent to consider that the ‘call to America’ was not so much a permanent shift in foreign alliances as an “immediate and temporary reaction to the moment of extreme danger”. 6

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4 Gareth Evans and Bruce Grant, Australia’s Foreign Relations in the World of the 1990s (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1995), 21.

5 TB,Millar, for instance, judged the Australian realisation than only America could protect her from hostile powers at this time to be the “conviction [which] has determined the bases of Australia’s foreign and defence policies in all the succeeding years”. TB Millar, Australia in Peace and War – External Relations 1788-1977 (Canberra: ANU Press, 1978), 161.

6 PG,Edwards, ‘1941: A Turning Point in Foreign Policy’?, Teaching History (August 1975), 2. This view is corroborated by the observations of Paul Hasluck, then serving as a senior officer in the D.E.A. – the Curtin government were “in a state of jitters when bad news came” in 1942 and were “lacking in fortitude”. Owen Dixon is reported to have told Hasluck in private conversation that the government were a “pusillanimous crew”. Hasluck confirmed that the “Curtin government was itself scared”; Paul Hasluck, Diplomatic Witness – Australian Foreign Affairs 1940-1947 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press,
This chapter examines the way in which previous Prime Ministers, in particular John Curtin, Ben Chifley and Robert Menzies gave expression to an idea of Australian ‘national community’. Further it examines the added complications for Prime Ministers such as Harold Holt and John Gorton in the late 1960s when they faced the first signs of a changing domestic and foreign environment which challenged the core ideas of Australian self-definition and called for a new way of understanding ‘national community’. Following Britain’s application for entry into the European Common Market in 1961-63, the withdrawal of Australia’s ‘great and powerful’ friends from Asia and the gradual relaxation of Australia’s once racially exclusive immigration policy, new questions arose about the received ideas of national identity. In exploring this topic, the focus will be primarily on those speeches delivered on national days – Australia Day, Empire Day, Anzac Day – which highlight the role of the Prime Minister as a significant exponent of how the ‘nation’ is defined. On these occasions national leaders were more inclined to give their view of the nation a broader historical context and mythological meaning. An analysis of these speeches will help to establish the ideas against which the post 1972 Prime Ministers had to develop their own response to Australia’s new circumstances.

"...trustees for the British way of life...": Curtin, Chifley, Menzies

In a recently published biography, John Curtin-A Life, David Day has portrayed Curtin as a leader who forsook his attachment to the ideal of a socialist utopia and instead wholeheartedly embraced the cause of nationalism. Day has dated this transition from Curtin’s “insistence on beating the defence drum during the 1937 election”. Curtin, fearing a renewed threat from Japan and concerned that Britain would sacrifice its interests in the Pacific on account of more pressing military threats in Europe, had argued 1980), 43-44. Even David Day has admitted Curtin’s 1941 message had been overrated, and “the experience of war did not propel Australia from the protective bosom into the arms of America”. David Day, Reluctant Nation: Australia and the Allied Defeat of Japan, 1942-45 (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992), 314-316. Neville Meaney, however, asserts that Curtin’s refusal to accept the Pacific as a ‘subordinate segment of the general conflict’, and his announcement that ‘the Australian government therefore regards the Pacific struggle as primarily one in which the United States and Australia must have the fullest say in the direction of the democracies’ fighting plan’ was merely the “most extreme application of what had become for policymakers the orthodox Australian doctrine” of searching for security in the Pacific. Meaney, ‘Australia’s Foreign Policy: History or Myth’, Australian Outlook 23 (August 1969), 173-80.
for a greater concentration on local, rather than imperial defence. According to Day, Curtin had apparently “sensed there might be a new crusade worth pursuing in place of the socialist crusade. If the Australian people could not be roused to join the socialist crusade, they surely could be roused to join the nationalist crusade that would defend them from outside attack and keep their society pristine and pure”. This view again highlights the problem of nationalism as it has been understood in Australian history. Whilst Curtin’s ‘nationalism’ is expressed in terms of local defence and an appeal to White Australia, Day assumes firstly that the insistence on providing for Australia’s own defence was a rejection of a British identity, and secondly that the people would readily acknowledge Labor’s leadership role in shaping an exclusive Australian nationalism which separated Australia from the ‘mother-country’. Day was forced to admit however, that “most Australians declined to fall in behind” Curtin, and that “they would require much more convincing before they would be willing to give up their traditional dependence on Britain for their defence”. Nevertheless Day maintained that “Leading the nation in wartime allowed Curtin to give greater vent to his nationalism”. This claim needs to be tested against Curtin’s prime ministerial rhetoric.

One of Curtin’s first official duties after becoming Prime Minister in October 1941 was to deliver a speech at the opening of the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. “The memorial”, said Curtin, “would give continuity to the Anzac tradition and the basic impulses of the nation…the symbolism of this structure is associated with the very basic ways of life of the people of Australia and of the whole British race”. It directly faced the Parliament and enshrined the “story…of the deeds that helped to make the nation”. On that day Curtin drew a mystic chord between Australia’s inheritance of parliamentary democracy and those who had spilt blood for both nation and empire. Ironically, of course, it was a memorial to the fallen of a war for which Curtin had refused to enlist. Though Ken Inglis contended that “It is unlikely that any returned soldier present…thought this anti-conscriptionist, gaol’d briefly in 1916, the ideal embodiment

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8 Ibid., 358-9.
9 Ibid., 426.
10 Address By The Honourable The Prime Minister (The Hon John Curtin MP) at the opening of the Australian War Memorial, 11 November 1941, Australian War Memorial, AWM 93 File #2/5/23/4.
of the nation on this platform"¹¹, this speech nonetheless sanctified the broader connection between Anzac sacrifice and Australia’s identification with the British race myth.

Curtin’s Australia Day broadcast of 1942 was delivered amidst a climate of increasing Australian angst that its leaders were being excluded from high level discussions among the Great Powers over the direction of the Pacific War, and a more widespread anxiety at the fear of Japanese invasion. Accordingly, Curtin endeavoured to capture the historical essence of an Australian “nationhood”:

On this Australia Day with a full realization of what this day means to us, we give regard to our nationhood. Our men have shown the stuff of which we are made on many a death-charged battlefield; in many a spine-chilling battle; on the storm-tossed seven seas. These deeds are our salute to our nationhood...The flame of freedom lit in this land by our first settlers, and kept aglow by the generations which followed, is not extinguishable by any enemy. We are the youngest civilisation in the oldest continent. On this, our anniversary natal day, I pay tribute to intrepid explorers, hardy pioneers, great statesmen, industrialists, men and women of the land, heroic warriors...That is the call I sound to you tonight. We carry on the purpose of Captain James Cook; we maintain the tradition of Captain Arthur Phillip. This Australia is for Australians; it is a White Australia, with God’s blessing we shall keep it so.¹²

The content of this “nationhood” consists of blood, race and military sacrifice. Curtin’s emotive rendition of a ‘national story’ spoke to a glorious and heroic past which he called upon Australians to emulate in wartime. Seeking to reassure an anxious nation fearful of the Japanese advance, Curtin depicted an Australia which had come of age in combat against both the ‘enemy’ and, throughout her history, against the land itself. There is a distinctive Australian experience being identified here, as Curtin’s emphasis is on Australia’s very youth and the “nation-building spirits”, embodied in the figures of the explorer, the pioneer and the warrior, who have epitomised this “nationhood”. Yet it is also the final call to arms, to perpetuate the purpose of Cook and the tradition of Phillip, which evoked a deeper historical continuity with the British foundations of the Australian settlement. Australian “nationhood” here acquired a teleology which followed the “flame

¹² Digest of Decisions and Announcements and Important Speeches by the Prime Minister, (hereafter DDA). (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1942) no.16, 24 January 1942.
of freedom” lit by the first settlers to the contemporary Australians who were heirs to Cook and Phillip.

The subsequent cable conflicts with Churchill over the return of Australian troops from the Middle East in no way diminished Curtin’s commitment to imperial kinship. His Empire Day speeches in 1944 and 1945 were illustrative of his intellectual embrace of British race patriotism. Whilst Australians were “completely free to govern themselves”, it was Australia’s British heritage which had conferred such a privilege:

The free institutions of Australia – its Parliament, its bodies of association, trades unions, political parties and the like – are British institutions. Numerically – because Australians are over 90 per cent British stock - and in every other aspect, the Australian people are a replica of Britain and the way of life in Britain. In the southern hemisphere, 7 000 000 Australians carry on a British community as trustees for the British way of life in a part of the world where it is of the utmost significance to the British-speaking race that such a vast continent should have as its population a people and a form of government corresponding in outlook and in purpose to Britain”.

Here Curtin combined the political and cultural heritage from Britain to argue that Australia had grown from the same seed. A common institutional heritage, language, ancestry and way of life were not, as nationalism frequently demands, pointing to the emergence of an exclusive Australian national identity, but to the essential Britishness of Australia. Curtin’s use of the word ‘replica’ here is worth noting, since it implied nothing new had been added to the ‘old world’ British heritage – Australia was identical to Britain. In a previous speech delivered to the Empire Parliamentary Association in the House of Commons, Curtin argued his case from a common history: “...the Australian nation is, numerically at any rate, and in every other aspect, a microcosm of this country and its way of life. We regard your history as part of the legacy that we ourselves claim. It is incorporated in our own story; that is to say, the forbears of the present generation of Australians are your forbears”. This was the classic expression of the belief in an extended kinship, in ‘kith and kin’. The ‘Australian nation’ here is really a British nation, united principally by a common ancestry and shared historical memories. In Curtin’s

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13 Broadcast from London by the Prime Minister (Mr Curtin) on 24 May 1944, DDA, no 81, 20 April – 26 June 1944.
14 John Curtin, Speech to the Empire Parliamentary Association, The Hon John Curtin, DDA, no 81, 20 April – 26 June 1944.
view, Australian history is not remarkable for a distinctive Australian experience, but for its immemorial continuity with the people and history of the British Isles.

It was during this trip to London in 1944 for the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference that Curtin proposed the establishment of a permanent Imperial Secretariat which would give more coherence and substance to the Empire in between such gatherings.\(^\text{15}\) Curtin, wanting the Empire to be a more effective voice in the post-war world, had discussed the possibility of creating an Empire council during the 1943 Election campaign, and in December of the same year had won endorsement from the Federal Labor conference to pursue this objective. It is not surprising however that Curtin’s open embrace of Empire, which also included the appointment of the Duke of Gloucester as Governor General and the playing of God Save the Queen rather than Advance Australia Fair in cinemas, has somewhat tarnished the idealised ‘radical national’ image of Curtin. For Geoffrey Serle it was merely a “gesture of Empire solidarity” which might encourage greater British participation in the Pacific War\(^\text{16}\), thereby serving an immediate Australian political purpose. For David Day, it meant that Curtin was now “hosing down the nationalism that some of his colleagues wished to foster”.\(^\text{17}\) Day initially rejected the view that Curtin’s imperial patriotism as Prime Minister derived purely from political pragmatism, and furthermore that it was by no means some “new found attachment”. Nevertheless Day concludes he had “little to lose from posing as an imperial convert”, that he had “wrapped the party in the Union Jack to

\(^{15}\) Curtin’s briefing to his personal staff underlines his commitment to the concept of imperial defence, as well as his desire to re-establish the pre-eminence of British power in the Pacific. See Lloyd and Hall, (eds.) Backroom Briefings – John Curtin’s War (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 1997), 167-8; the entry for 7 September 1943 records that “Talking about his proposed Empire council, Curtin said: ‘British prestige suffered a bad knock in the Far East. I not only regret that but I want to retrieve it… the British Commonwealth of Nations has got to have more economic strength as well as the unity which the thone symbolises. We have got to keep in mind all the time the sovereign symbol with autonomous rights. What I have in mind is the development of common ideas so that these sovereignties will understandably promote joint welfare without sacrificing their own interests and position. I want to develop a practical fraternity among constituted members of the Empire for dealing with the world at large and with themselves. Perhaps that sounds a loose sort of show, but the fact that is that the ties which unite the British Commonwealth are of that nature and are no less weak because that is the case’. Curtin went on to say that there were times when it was inevitable that one or other members of the Commonwealth should say things which appeared to be selfish, but if we had this full understanding it would not be so considered and would not evoke that immediate misunderstanding which left a certain amount of unpleasant criticism because it was unjustified”.


\(^{17}\) Day, John Curtin, 523.
win the 1943 election”, and so “the negative impact of his 1941 ‘looks to America’ statement was gone”. Curtin’s Britishness is such anathema to the prevailing image of Curtin as an assertive Australian ‘nationalist’ that Day sees it as self-conscious political posturing driven purely by electoral concerns – a mask which concealed the ‘true’ Curtin, the ‘radical nationalist’ Curtin.

In confirming this determination for Australia to maintain its traditional position within the sphere of British influence Curtin in 1945 asserted that Australia’s foreign policy “must always be in harmony with that of the British Commonwealth as a whole”, and in looking to London, Australia’s role was to “give advice, to state its view, now and again to criticise, and to make suggestions which, in its view, would strengthen the family relationship”. This was a clear, coherent exposition of the concept of Empire in which occasional disagreement and difference of opinion were accommodated within a wider assumption of a common destiny for the British speaking peoples. David Day however has constructed a balance sheet of Curtin’s ‘contradictions’, in which the two worlds of Britishness and Australian nationalism are seen not as mutually reinforcing, but inherently conflictual: “He heightened Australia’s sense of nationalism by standing up to Churchill in 1942 and yet he later went against Labor party policy to approve the appointment of a British-born Governor General. He looked to America free of any pangs as to Australia’s traditional relationship with Britain and yet was soon holding America at bay and seeking to resuscitate the discredited system of imperial defence”. Yet these stances were not contradictory. They were in keeping with the British-Australian identity which shaped the ‘world-view’ of this generation of leaders. Day’s ‘contradictions’ are more the consequences of a ‘radical nationalist’ teleology which cannot accept actions or decisions which seem to obstruct the ‘natural’ progression towards ‘independent’ nationhood.

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18 Ibid., 544-45. Day ultimately therefore cannot resist stressing the “political calculation” behind Curtin’s vision for a closer imperial network. More curiously, Day argues “there was an element of psychological need that was being satisfied in Curtin’s comparison of the empire with the concept of the family”. Day suggested Curtin’s prolonged absence from his family led him to idealise family life itself, that his lack of a family life in fact contributed to his prime ministerial leading of Australia “back into the embrace of the mother country”. 564-65.

19 Curtin, quoted in David Day, Reluctant Nation, 310.

20 David Day, John Curtin, 585.
These definitive expressions of British race patriotism, within which ideas of Australian ‘nationhood’ were comfortably incorporated, continued under Labor Prime Minister Ben Chifley. After surveying Chifley’s foreign policy record as Prime Minister, L.F. Crisp concluded that Chifley’s feet were firmly “on the solid, tried ground of the British connection” and that it was through this prism he viewed the development of the United Nations and an awakening Asia as the key determinants for Australia’s future. In his 1946 election policy speech Chifley defined Australia as “the great bastion of the British speaking race south of the Equator”. He claimed the previous Labor government under Curtin had given the Commonwealth a “distinctive foreign policy” which was to “act as a guardian of British interests in the Pacific area”. Here the word “distinctive” again spoke to a distinctiveness acquired within, not against the imperial community. Labor’s record over the previous five years, Chifley claimed, was “really the story of Australia, of a young country exalted to nationhood in the testing fire of war by its people’s own magnificent efforts”. Again this conception of ‘nationhood’ was similar in outlook to that of John Curtin. It celebrated the heroism of the Australian people in the face of adversity rather than the gradual self-realisation that they were a unique people with their own separate destiny.

However the Chifley period too has been interpreted as a pivotal ‘turning-point’ in Australia’s gradual loosening of imperial ties. Christopher Waters has argued that the Chifley era in particular marked a “decisive break” in Anglo-Australian relations, suggesting that during this time “radical nationalism was the most powerful oppositional way of life to that of the conservative Anglo-Australian elite”. Yet the post-war liberal internationalist policies of the Chifley government, far from ‘fracturing’ imperial relations, actually went hand in hand with Australia’s membership of the British Empire. In the same 1946 policy speech Chifley gave expression to this core aspect of Labor’s foreign policy: “The world has praised Australia in war and gives her respect in peace in the international councils where her voice is ringing evidence of the sustained virility of

the British Commonwealth". Chifley later identified an Australian Prime Ministerial tradition, from Hughes to Curtin, of maintaining Imperial ties: the "evolution of the British Commonwealth to meet the needs of the times has been a continuous, all-party affair". Chifley's insistence that the newly styled 'Commonwealth of Nations' of 1949, adopted to accommodate the sensibilities of the new Asian dominions, should retain the title British in its Australian usage indicated the depth of his British race patriot 'world-view'.

In his 1949 Australia Day address, Chifley celebrated the passage of the government's Nationality and Citizenship Act. He then quoted his Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell, who had declared: "The aim of the government will be to make the word 'Australian' mean all that it truly stands for to every member of our community. We will try to teach the children that they are fortunate to be British, and additionally fortunate to be Australian". The notion of being an 'Independent Australian Briton' had become official government policy. In the same Australia Day speech, Chifley reflected on Australian post-federation history: "As a country we are young, compared with the Old World. But we have been through the testing times of two world wars and a major Depression. With pride, justified by our record, we can say that we have won our spurs. To-day Australia is not only an accepted partner of the British Commonwealth of Nations, but a very valuable member of the family". Again the message was clear – these "spurs" had not been won for Australian 'independence' in defiance of Britain, but to confirm Australia's privileged place within the British Commonwealth of Nations.

24 Prime Minister's Election Policy Speech, 2 September 1946.
25 Farewelling the British people after his visit to London for the 1946 Prime Minister's conference, Chifley again defined Australia as "the strongest bastion for the English-speaking race south of the Equator". Broadcast by the Prime Minister, J.B. Chifley, BBC London, 5 May 1946, "To the People of Britain – Thanks for her example", in A.W. Stargardt (ed.) Things Worth Fighting For – Speeches by J.B. Chifley (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1952), 132.
27 J.F. Crisp, Ben Chifley, 282.
Yet while Chifley could underline the bi-partisan nature of the Imperial connection, there was still the inherent tension between the two major political parties over who best represented the aspirations and hopes of the Australian people. This is a necessary part of the struggle between parties in a representative democracy – the question of ‘loyalty’ to ‘nation’ and the ‘national interest’. This historical struggle between the two major parties for legitimacy and who best represents ideas of ‘allegiance’ to Australia has been central to the major national debates last century – over conscription during the First World War, communism, the American alliance, the commitment of Australian forces to Vietnam war, the dismantling of White Australia, and more broadly, as to which party or leader laid the foundation stones for the edifice of modern Australia. The issue was again apparent in the late 1940’s as the Leader of the newly formed Liberal Party of Australia, Robert Menzies, attacked Chifley and his government over the spectre of Communism within Labor party ranks. Chifley instantly repudiated the charge of communist influence, but then summoned forth what was to become a familiar mantra for future Labor leaders:

When this country was confronted by the gravest peril in its history – and I ask members of the opposition to turn this one over in their minds – the people of Australia entrusted the administration of the country’s affairs, not to a conservative party, but to the Australian Labor Party, which represented the people. If any political party was ever condemned at the throne of judgement in its country’s hour of trial it was the conservative parties opposite. Members of the political party to which I belong have as much love for this country and the safety of its people as the members of any other political party. Opposition members should not think that they possess a monopoly of love of country...

These comments reflected the extent to which Labor leaders viewed their successful prosecution of the Australian war effort as a vindication of their claim to be the party which best represented the Australian people’s ‘real’ self. This view was to become a standard rhetorical device for future Labor Prime Ministers, especially Bob Hawke and Paul Keating. Yet whilst Hawke and Keating would use this myth to deride the

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29 CPD, H of R (7 April 1948) quoted in A.W Stargardt (ed.) Things Worth Fighting For, 46. Just over twenty years later the newly elected Member for Blaxland, Paul Keating, would use exactly the same sentiments in his maiden speech to Parliament. Prime Minister Bob Hawke would refer to this same theme when taunted over the legacy of John Curtin by Andrew Peacock in the House of Representatives in 1985, see Keating, CPD, H of R, vol. 66 (17 March 1970), 516; and Hawke, CPD, H of R, vol. 140 (22 February
Liberal/National parties as captive of an outdated Anglo-Centric past, Chifley in this instance was at pains to ensure Labor was not ostracised from concepts of national loyalty. For Chifley, Labor's 'love of country' had been best expressed through its leadership at a time when the survival of the nation, and the Empire of which it was an integral part, had been gravely threatened.

Thus Chifley and Curtin as Prime Ministers in the 1940s both defined an Australian nationhood which had been achieved within, rather than against a common assumption of British racial unity. Certainly Chifley and Curtin did not express an intensely personalised sense of being 'British', nor did they profess passionately any identification with Britain as 'home', but the imperial connection and the 'crimson thread of kinship' found as much fertile ground in the Curtin-Chifley period as it would find during the subsequent Menzies ascendancy.

It is well established that for Robert Menzies the idea of being 'British' was the foundation of his intellectual, cultural and moral outlook. As he put it in the mid 1930s: "the thing which sticks firmly in the mind of the average Australian is that he is entirely British". 30 Menzies' political imagination and ideology were sustained by a historical vision of the Empire and its great men, a vision confirmed when he first visited England in 1935. This was both 'mecca' and 'home'. As Allan Martin has argued, "Menzies' Britishness was no garment consciously put on. Education and environment made it part of his very fibre". 31 When Menzies announced in September 1939 that Australia was at war with Germany 'as a result' of Britain's earlier, formal declaration of war, Martin notes that "the latter day idea that Australia was fighting 'other peoples' wars' did not occur to anyone", and further that Menzies' appeal for support on the basis that "we are

1985), 46-51. The content and context of these speeches will be addressed in subsequent chapters on Hawke and Keating.
31 Allan Martin, Robert Menzies – A Life, Volume 1, 1894-1943 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press 1993),429. Martin's observations on Menzies' attraction to Baldwin's oratory during his first visit to England in 1935 are worth noting. Of Baldwin's speeches, Martin makes the point that their identification of constitutionalism with conservatism would have been "irresistible for Menzies", and that the emphasis on the historical legitimacy of English institutions, and their strength in the face of "contrived" systems such as Bolshevism and Fascism was similar to the argument Menzies had been using in Australia. Furthermore, Martin argues, "With their constant images of harmony and continuity as the core of Englishness these invocations of nature's rhythms, with family and state almost mystically attuned to them, constituted at the time a powerful conservative ideology"; 163.
all Australians and British citizens” was not contested. During his second term as Prime Minister Menzies more fully combined this intellectual commitment to Britishness with a view of Australian history and Australian nationalism — both of which were accommodated within a wider history of British expansion and British imperial identity.

Menzies’ first Australia Day Address to the people in 1950 claimed the country had reached “adult and lusty nationhood”. This “nationhood” was defined in reference to the “earliest settlements, to the gallant explorers by land and sea, to the first pioneers, to the great waves of immigration, to the colonial days, to self-government, to the establishment of the Commonwealth of Australia”. As with Curtin and Chifley, Menzies identified ‘nationhood’ in a specific Australian context, but he did not call upon an exclusive Australian nationalism — that is, he did not aggressively differentiate Australia from Britain. Whilst it was with “no sense of arrogance” that Australians be proud of their nationality, Menzies proclaimed, it was “not enough”. For the members of the ‘nation’ he addressed were not only “citizens of Australia” but “members of the British Commonwealth...our ancient family association, unique in history, the love of which is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh”. The two crucial words here are “ancient” and “unique”. As with Curtin, so Menzies located the historical continuity and distinctiveness of the Australian ‘nation’ within a common British heritage:

The world needs the British Empire, by whatever name it may be called. We need it. Let us recapture the old pride. Let us re-state the old faith. You and I are Australians. We are also British. We do not and cannot think of the people of the other British nations as foreign people. They are all within the great British tradition — a tradition which has given to the world the spirit and machinery of self-government, free institutions, justice within the law....Allegiance to a family does not mean the abandonment of independence. The proud recognition of a common King does not mean subservience. The old Empire has become a confederation of Nations each with its rights of self-government...But it will make its best contribution to the rest of the 20th century only if we seek closer collaboration, unity of policy on great matters, a renewed sense of common task.

This was the archetypal expression of belief in an indissoluble world-wide British community, and Menzies’ passionate belief in the capacity of that community to deliver a

32 Ibid., 286.
new *Pax Britannica* in the uncertainty of the Cold-War. More importantly, it illustrated that Menzies' empathy with Britishness was not simply about 'forelock-tugging' or being excessively deferential to London. Subservience and dependence were anathema to a concept of Empire based around equality of status and contribution. The British ideal, in his eyes, was still right for the times. If an essential Britishness continued to be at the forefront of Australians' sense of self then their identity was secure; if the idea of Empire – consisting of equal members contributing equally to the overall whole – remained at the heart of international life then the peace of the world was guaranteed. Implicit in this speech is a familiar Menzies' criticism of the previous Labor government's approach to international affairs. In calling for Australians to "recapture the old pride" and "re-state the old faith" Menzies depicted the Curtin/Chifley era as an 'un-British' aberration. But this was also a further example of the domestic political struggle over loyalty which had dominated Australian political culture since the 1916-17 conscription debates. Menzies' view as expressed in this speech emanated more from a desire for political point-scoring rather than from a considered judgement of his predecessors. For Curtin and Chifley, as shown above, had been most 'British'. Menzies also hinted at his strong view that Labor had not understood the international order in the post-war world, that it had sacrificed the 'organic ideal' of Britain’s pre-eminent role in world affairs for what conservatives believed to be the sceptical forum of the United Nations. Labor, according to the conservatives, had sacrificed the familiar for the contractual, and had thus challenged the empire as a way of international life.³⁴

In his broadcast to the people of England on the occasion of Australia's Jubilee celebrations in 1951, Menzies gave fuller expression to the concept of a community of Australian-Britons: "First, we are Australians", he said, "not remote or scattered colonists but a closely-knit nation, building our traditions for the future upon the noble traditions of the past, adding to them...the products of our own character, conflicts and achievements...Second, we are British. We are the King's men. We spring from an ancient race...". These words contained a dual significance. Menzies had not only used a

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distinctly Australian occasion to stress its British character, but his emphasis on how Australia had added its own particular virtues to the British heritage was in striking contrast to Curtin’s idea of the Australian nation as a “replica” or “microcosm” of Britain. If the ‘closely-knit nation’ identified by Menzies here was that which embodied the achievement of Federation in 1901, he nevertheless maintained that Australians, “fifty years young as we are...are still the offspring of an ancient kingdom, the votaries of an ancient faith, the servants of an enduring cause...”. That faith was Britishness and the cause was the cause of Empire. Indeed, his more general point in this speech concerned the concept of ‘nationhood’ as achieved within the British Commonwealth:

Those who are either unable or unwilling to understand the true nature and quality of the British Commonwealth have not yet realised that the great new nations of the Commonwealth have not yet grown to their nationhood against British will. On the contrary, they have BY BRITISH PRECEPT, EXAMPLE and ENCOURAGEMENT come to know and practise the arts of self-government, the magnificent self-discipline of the rule of law, the brotherly humanities of social and industrial justice.35 (Menzies’ emphasis)

A ‘nationhood’ expressed through political and constitutional means thus represented the true genius of the British peoples. This was also the classic expression of a liberal nationalism as had been articulated by John Milton, in which the idea of nationalism was not defined by a struggle for collective independence from an ‘alien yoke’, but rather by the achievement of self-government.36 Nationalism was thus an affirmation of a British tradition of individual liberty and social justice rather than a denial of it. On Empire Day in 1955 Menzies again reaffirmed the meaning of empire for Australians, and in so doing argued his case from history:

Should we just mouth words about colonialism or something of that kind as if the mere existence of a colony at any stage is something disreputable? I do not believe it. Colonialism, if it means a mere material exploitation of some country by a more powerful country with no development of self-government, with no vision of the future for the people of that country, is a bad thing, but I take leave

35 R.G. Menzies, Broadcast to the BBC on the occasion of Australia’s Jubilee Celebrations, 9 May 1951, MS 4936, Series 6, Box 155, Folder 49.
to say that the history of British colonialism has been a proud history for which nobody ought ever to feel called upon to apologise.\textsuperscript{37}

Such sentiments underlined the important fact that while Australia’s relationship to Britain in the post-war period underwent significant change, in particular within the spheres of trade and defence, Australians still maintained the emotional link to the United Kingdom, recognised it as the foundation of their values and traditions, and saw in the halcyon days of British colonialism the birth of their own story. For Menzies, there was simply no need to apologise for the British empire and its legacy. Australia was a proud part of that story.

Yet the defence of colonialism also spoke to the deep fears and concerns in Menzies at the prospect of decolonisation in Asia, where from the 1940s the diminishing imperial presence in the Asia-Pacific threatened to bring Australia uncomfortably face to face with the alien and unknown. With the onset of the Cold War these fears were exacerbated by mixing the prospect of decolonisation with the spectre of Asian communism and Asian nationalism. The need to combat communism, to maintain British influence in the region and to keep the threat from Asia as far away as possible helps to explain Menzies’ commitment of Australian troops to Korea and Malaya in the 1950s. As the British Empire transformed itself into the Commonwealth of Nations, the increasing number of African and Asian republics and the general loss of familial intimacy drove Menzies to despair.\textsuperscript{38} More importantly, Menzies’ initial reaction towards Britain’s application for entry to the EEC, whilst one of “grave doubts”, nevertheless welcomed the prospect of “conflicts of opinion” and “intense argument”, as well as the need to modify “long-accepted ideas”, since such methods were central to the “British tradition”.\textsuperscript{39}

Curtin, Chifley and Menzies drew on the British myth to define Australia. Whilst they could speak to a distinct Australian experience, of pioneers battling the land and

\textsuperscript{37} R.G. Menzies, Speech to the Royal Victorian Empire Society, 24 May 1955, (also published in The Royal Empire Society News, June 1955) in MS 4936, Series 6, Box 261, Folder 67


soldiers facing the common foe – this was a use of ‘nation’ which maintained Britishness at its core. Whilst Australian involvement in two world conflicts pointed to a “nationhood” gained by the supreme test of war, more significantly in the eyes of Australian Prime Ministers at this time it proved Australian worthiness as a member of the British Empire. Their story of the ‘nation’ projected no ‘Whig’ teleology or monolithic myth of independence. It was not a ‘nationalism’ in the European-derived sense – the needs for a myth about a common language, past, culture and destiny were answered by a wider British history and identity.

The perplexing question remains why these leaders clung to the hope that sentiment would produce the desired ‘unity through equality’ within the empire? Australian leaders in the immediate post-war period, ever mindful of Australia’s ongoing vulnerability in the Asia-Pacific region, a fear exacerbated by Cold-war concerns, did not seek to invent a new rhetoric of Australian ‘independence’ to serve the changing circumstances. Instead they hoped that London would reinvigorate the concept of Empire and help safeguard their security in the Pacific. Curtin, Chifley and Menzies were thus “creatures of their time”,\(^{40}\) certainly of the time which had shaped the beliefs and loyalties of their generation. They were British Australians fighting for Australian interests within the Empire. Whilst it was the racial and cultural links afforded by British race patriotism which assumed pride of place in these speeches, Curtin, Chifley and Menzies nevertheless stressed also the British institutional heritage represented in Australia’s system of government and the rule of law. In the decades to come the ease with which Prime Ministers could fuse these cultural and political aspects of the British heritage would disappear, as the old certainties about Britishness and Empire themselves began to dissolve.

*Gum trees, kangaroos, and a ‘new nationalism’: 1966-1972*

This British race patriot rhetoric employed by Australian political leaders in this era ignored the enormous demographic changes occurring in Australian society as a result of the immigration program begun by Chifley and continued under Menzies. Between

1947 and 1964 the number of migrants added to the population was greater than those who arrived in the eighty years after 1860, and a significant proportion of these migrants were non-British.\textsuperscript{41} The idea that Australia could remain homogeneous as an essentially 'British' nation continued to be the \textit{sine qua non} of government policy. The Holt government, following its predecessors, embraced the policy of assimilation, whereby non-Europeans would be considered for entry according to their capacity to integrate into Australian society, and whether or not they possessed qualifications "positively useful to Australia". Prime Minister Holt told parliament that these changes were in no way a rejection of past immigration policies, because "Australia's basic policy has been firmly established since the beginning of Federation".\textsuperscript{42} Hubert Opperman, Minister for Immigration, reassured the House in March 1966 that "the basic aim of preserving our homogeneous population will be maintained".\textsuperscript{43} Thus new non-European migrants were to be absorbed into a pre-defined space, where the British heritage would remain the essential feature of Australian political culture. However this shift still relied on a significant Western presence in the Asian region – Britain, the United States and France – which provided not only security but the moral authority for Australia to continue in the defence of her long established Western tradition.

Thus whilst the departure of Menzies from prime ministerial office did not weaken the attachment to the idea of a British White Australia, it was becoming clearer that the powerful sentiments of British race patriotism could no longer stir the passions of old. Only with the withdrawal of Australia's 'great and powerful friends' from Asia in the late 1960s and early 1970s would Australian governments realise that the nation's interests lay in developing close and lasting relationships with her Asian neighbours. This reaffirmed the need, identified first at the time of Britain's application to join the EEC, to reassess the core idea of Britishness, but this was to prove awkward and uneasy.

Harold Holt's Australia Day message of 1967 sought to highlight the new geopolitical realities: "...increasingly Australians of today are finding their thoughts dwelling on the challenges, opportunities and the obligations which derive from our

\textsuperscript{41} Cited in Richard White, \textit{Inventing Australia} (Sydney: Allen & Unwin 1981),159.
proximity to the teeming countries of Asia...". But his use of the word "teeming" spoke to more traditional fears of descending Asian 'hordes' and Asian communism. Holt celebrated the development of Australia's "distinctive national identity and character", which had been assisted by "...our heritage of British democracy and the cultures of European civilisation". This was a new emphasis, where the idea of 'kith and kin' was conspicuous by its absence, but where a "distinctive national identity" was still defined as having evolved within the sphere of British/European influence.

Nevertheless, Holt is credited by Gough Whitlam with making Australia "better known in Asia" and making Australians "more aware of Asia than ever before". Following this 1967 Australia Day message, the Sydney Morning Herald welcomed the fact that under Holt's leadership "our Asian policy has thrown off a number of shackles and has been increasingly characterised by a new intimacy of approach". Yet this confidence in engaging with a new Asia-Pacific world was also mixed with caution. As Holt himself told the parliament following his visit to Cambodia, Laos, China and Korea in March/April 1967: "Our greatest dangers and our highest hopes are centred in Asia's tomorrows". Holt had maintained whilst in Asia, though, that London and Washington remained the "principal centres of diplomatic interest for my country". He subsequently defended his extemporaneous remark to US President Lyndon Johnson – that Australia would go "all the way with LBJ" in Vietnam – as a reflection of Australia's real interests rather than a simple switch of subservience from Britain to the United States: "...when I say that we are all the way with America in Vietnam, that doesn't imply that we don't have an independent mind and judgement on some of these great international questions". This qualification masked the undeniable fact that Australia still looked to

42 CPD, H of R, vol. 50 (9 March 1966), 69; cited in Meaney, 'The End of White Australia'.
48 See Holt's speech at the opening of the Moral Rearmament Conference, Monash University, 6 January 1967, CNIA vol.38, no.1 (January 1967), 3. Speaking on the topic of Australia's international relations, Holt said: "In the earliest period we looked to the United Kingdom. The people who quip me because they say I am all the way with America, at that time were quipping the government of the day because they said we were clinging to the skirts of Downing Street...I don't think when Andrew Fisher said 'to the last man
her ‘great and powerful friends’ to guarantee her security in Asia. The prospect of a British withdrawal from South East Asia was described by Holt in July 1966 as “like turning one’s back on life”.\textsuperscript{50} When Britain did the ‘unthinkable’ and forecast their military withdrawal east of Suez in the Defence White Paper of July 1967, Holt responded not with the language of ‘betrayal’, or proud independence, but with an appeal to British pride in its world role: “The British people have made a notable and indeed historic contribution to the establishment of stability and security in the Malaysia/Singapore region since the Second World War, and, in our view Britain can still play a role no other country is so well qualified to play”.\textsuperscript{51}

But with his emphasis on cultivating a “special relationship with Asia” Holt was forced to reassess the content of Australian ‘national community’, especially its previously pivotal racial dimension. In his 1967 Alfred Deakin Memorial Lecture he declared that the “imperialism of Deakin’s time has gone… and the ‘White Australia’ cry from his first platforms does not have the same relevance, and happily the term is no longer used by us”. Once the ideological pillars of Australian life, imperialism and White Australia, Holt said, had simply faded “away into the mists”. Whilst the nation’s immigration policy was still restrictive, Holt affirmed that it was “humanely shaped” and took “special note of our geographical position in Asia”.\textsuperscript{52} Thus faced with a diminishing Western presence in the region and the imperative of dealing with Asian cultures, the ideals of a ‘British Australia’ and a ‘White Australia’ rapidly disappeared from prime ministerial rhetoric. The policy which had been a necessary precondition for Australia’s status as a homogeneous British nation and a founding principle of national life was no longer at the heart of national self-definition. The problem, of course, was how to locate a ‘distinctive’ Australian identity for the new times? When he spoke on Australia’s National Day at the 1967 World Expo in Montreal, Canada, Holt provided an example of just how difficult this task would prove to be:

\textsuperscript{51} Harold Holt, in CNIA, vol. 38, no. 7 (July 1967), 295.
...on this, the day you have kindly set aside for our national identification...we illustrate to you some of the things which we feel mark ourselves for special recognition around the world, some of the features of Australian life and scenery which are unique to us...our corals, our apples, our gum trees and our kangaroos.53

This speech was symptomatic of the difficulty Australian leaders had, once the British identity had lost its vitality, in locating an Australian “distinctiveness” which transcended superficial postcard stereotypes. Undoubtedly, Holt on this occasion pandered more to the tourist gaze. There is no evocation of a shared Australian experience here, as the images used by Holt speak to a unique land but not to a unique people. Thus with Britishness no longer at the core of Australian national identity, no intense, exclusive national myth was instantly called forth to take its place. The deeper significance perhaps was that Holt had proclaimed neither an aggressive Australianism nor any sense of Australian superiority. Ian Hancock has argued that “Holt was very much an Australian Prime Minister”, but to illustrate this claim he noted that Holt, having seen a performance of Ray Lawler’s *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* in London in 1957, confessed how he was “proud of the Australian author...and proud of the country which had produced the types in the play and the types who played them”54. Yet such a view only confirms the lack of depth to Holt’s Australianness. A touch of nostalgia for Australia whilst in London does not a national identity make. Furthermore, the Holt government’s decision in May 1967 to abolish appeals to the Privy Council in federal jurisdiction matters and the dropping of the word ‘British’ from the cover of Australian passports55 were essentially negative actions which symbolised more the gradual breaking down of the intense Britishness rather than a new found sense of ‘independence’.

This declining resonance of Britishness and the question of whether a new rhetoric of Australian nationalism might be found converged in the late 1960s with the prime ministership of John Gorton. Self-consciously mocking Menzies’ Britishness,

54 Ian Hancock, ‘Harold Edward Holt’, in Michelle Grattan (ed.) *Australian Prime Ministers*, 283.
55 Ibid., 283.
Gorton proclaimed "I'm Australian to my bootheels." Again, it must be stressed that such a boast constituted more a flippancy reaction against Menzies than a meaningful statement of a distinct Australian identity. Menzies, in turn, confided to Alexander Downer that he had never found Gorton "conspicuously pro-British" and moreover was genuinely hurt by Gorton's decision in 1968 to disallow him the use of a car and driver whilst in England performing his duties as Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, convinced that "Gorton has been advised that to build himself up it is essential that he should suppress all reference to, or traces of, Menzies". In one sense, such a view of Gorton, coming as it did from the archetypal British race patriot, was a mark of how quickly Australian leaders in the late 1960s had realised that the sentiments of old no longer carried the same force in Australian political culture. Yet Gorton, whilst credited with inspiring the first era of supposed "new nationalism" in Australia, was caught between two worlds:

For so long we stood not really as a nation in our own right...the people [who] spoke of 'home'...meant another nation, meant Great Britain...I daresay there are some people in this room who used to do that, or whose parents used to do that. And it was taken as a natural thing that that was home, and Australia was a different place away from home – small, distinct, colonial. Again the Second World War made some erosions in this approach, but just recently there has been – not a gradual rate of change – but a sudden explosion in this nation, an explosion which has not yet reached its height, and the end results of which we can only dream about. Who would have thought that suddenly at this point in our nation's history, all the old conceptions would have to be taken out, have to be re-examined, to be re-assessed because the world had changed and we had changed...no longer, as was the case until a short time ago, do we live under the protection of Great Britain and the British Navy. That has gone.

In the light of this speech, and following Gorton's decision to prevent foreign ownership of the MLC insurance company, Donald Horne suggested that the Prime Minister had ushered in an era of "new nationalism". The first point to note about Gorton's rhetoric is its acknowledgement of the prior lack of an innate, distinctively Australian sense of

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58 John Gorton, Speech to Henty Electorate Council, 14 September 1968, transcript. My thanks to Ainsley Gotto Carson for providing me with a copy of this speech.
nationhood. Australia may well have been “different” and “distinct”, but its indissoluble link with Britain as ‘home’ had been a “natural” ordering of priorities for Australia as an integral member of the wider British world. Yet Gorton was noticeably ambivalent about when precisely the erosion of this Anglocentric outlook had begun – his vague reference to the Second World War (presumably he was implying the fall of Singapore) and his expression of a “sudden explosion” was accompanied by a noticeable surprise that at this point in time, that is the late 1960s, the “old” order would have to be revised in the light of changing circumstances. Gorton did elaborate on this point – the withdrawal of British military presence east of Suez, the departure of European powers from the region and the growing number of new nations in Asia had made imperative that Australia be “more prepared to stand on our own feet in matters of defence”. This need for a ‘re-assessment’ and a ‘re-examination’ of Australian identity illustrates how important this issue was at the time, but it should be noted that Gorton’s ‘sudden explosion’ referred not to an instantaneous eruption of national self-awareness, but to the economic promise of Australia’s mining and resources boom.\(^6\)

Donald Horne labelled this as Gorton’s “First I am an Australian speech”. The call of ‘Australia first’, however, was by no means a novel cry in Australian politics. Archbishop Daniel Mannix had invoked similar sentiments in his arguments against conscription during the First World War, and condemned ‘disloyal’ as a result. Yet Horne saw Gorton’s views on foreign ownership and his rhetoric as “the most coherent and determined attempt of an Australian Prime Minister to identify himself with a nationalist spirit since the Welsh-born W.M. Hughes articulated the Anzac aspirations of Australians in World War One”. This was typical of the ‘radical nationalist’ tendency for placing the statements of Australian leaders, who were supposedly defiant of the ‘mother country’, into the tale of an independent, distinctive Australian outlook being strutted on the world stage. Hughes’ ‘Anzac aspirations’, expressed most fervently at the Paris peace conference in 1919, were expressed in his arguments for the Australian annexation of

\(^6\) Gorton illustrated this point by recounting his impressions from a recent visit to regional and rural Australia, to areas such as Mt.Isa, Weipa, Gladstone, Mt. Newman and Mt Tom Price. He consistently referred to the new discoveries in natural resources and the benefits which would flow to Australia as a whole from these developments, making her “materially significant”. In a speech to the Australia Club in London in January 1969 Gorton again referred to this ‘explosion’ in the discovery of oil fields, natural gas, iron ore mountains and bauxite. See CNA 40, no 1 (January 1969), 25-28.
New Guinea and in his opposition to Japanese moves to insert a racial equality clause into the League of Nations covenant. He saw his defiance of British leaders as being for the good of the British peoples and their Empire. Hughes’s absolutism thus contrasts sharply with Gorton’s ambivalence.

Yet the seemingly innate confidence with which the ‘new nationalism’ was presented as a unifying concept of national community seemed to sit uncomfortably alongside the unease and uncertainty with which Australians viewed ‘nationalism’ itself. Gorton himself gave expression to this hesitancy later in his speech, when he said:

...as we meet these challenges, it is essential, and I hope I don’t offend anybody by saying this, and if I do, I don’t much care, it is essential that we should develop a feeling of nationhood. Everybody wherever they live in Australia should say first “I am an Australian, and I am proud to be an Australian, and I am working for the Australian nation”, and this, too, is in a sense a change from what would have been the situation ten years ago....I hope you will all help me in the years ahead to foster this feeling of real nationalism. I believe the Australian people want it...

Gorton, whilst expressing an initial concern that the very idea of nationalism may ‘offend’, was nevertheless unashamed in proclaiming it. But by “real”, he simply meant that the driving force for this nationalism should be its non-British content. Gorton did not articulate any precise nationalist content or context, nor did he articulate any notion of a shared experience which had led to this ‘nationhood’. As Alan Reid noted, Gorton wanted to “deepen the sense of Australian nationalism, the type of emotional nationalism that caused him to advocate adoption of ‘Waltzing Matilda’ as Australia’s national song, but he clearly had not thought how to achieve rather than exhort”.

Donald Horne was especially mindful of the problems inherent in the very nature of the term ‘nationalism’ around this time: “To certain kinds of Australians” said Horne, “to speak of a possible Australian nationalism is to speak of something that they distrust or even despise”. This view seemed almost to dismiss the very viability of an Australian nationalism altogether. Politicians, argued Horne, had increasingly retreated from appealing to

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63 See also Donald Horne *The Lucky Country: Australia in the Sixties* (Penguin, Ringwood, 1966), 46: “The very lack of any definite nationalism, of statements on who Australians are and where they stand in history,
nationalism because of their inability to grasp what it was which held the nation together: "...if they were going to speak to an Australian nation, what would they have talked about? The rhetoric of the old rural and mateship nationalism collapsed: the idea of ourselves as a nation of bushwhackers became demographically unbearable and no one convincingly retranslated the rhetoric of mateship into new terms. But nothing new took its place". This points to the fundamental inability of the ‘radical nationalist’ bush myth to fill the void left by the collapse of the British idea.

In response to the ‘anti-nationalism’ of some intellectuals who had memories of European nationalistic excess, Horne argued that “There is nothing intrinsically good or intrinsically bad in building up an idea of one’s nation of which one is proud, and which seems to provide some characteristic and familiar framework for aspiration and action”. Thus for Horne, the nature of nationalism, be it good or bad, depended on “The nature of the idea that one has of the nation”. There was the hint here that nationalism, correctly defined, could be a positive force which could give both meaning to the people and a sense of direction for the future. Here was the belief that there could be a milder, more restrained nationalism, a ‘good’ nationalism which expressed itself not in aggressive but progressive terms. But in seeking to articulate what character this ‘new nationalism’ could take, Horne simply lamented the disappearance of the concept of Australia as the “land of the fair go” and called for the restoration of the “rhetoric of comradeship”. The rapid evaporation of the old bush legend, symbolising the ‘old nationalism’, seemed to perplex Horne. Thus, like Gorton, he could not address the issue of ‘new nationalism’ as a nationalism, that is as a story of the people in which specifically Australian values were defined and given increasingly full expression.

On the cusp of the 1970s historian Geoffrey Serle seemed to announce the death-knell of a British centred Australian outlook on the world. “The young Australian” he wrote, “now has no sense of conflict in his loyalties [and] sees himself naturally as an independent Australian”. In essaying to give the reasons for this change, Serle asserted:

\[^{64}\] Horne, ‘The New Nationalism?’ 36.
\[^{65}\] Ibid.
The knocking away of the props of the imperial association between Britain and Australia – defence and the economic nexus – have seemingly led to a swift withering away of sentiment. It appears that the blood relationship, habit and tradition count for little against hard realities in altering sentiment.

Whilst Serle believed that Australia’s British “tradition may have more lasting appeal than appears at the moment”, the country’s inevitable path, he declared, was towards “separation and independence” following a “half-century’s holdup of the normal progression”.66 Thus Serle kept faith, essentially, with a ‘radical nationalist’ vision of an incipient, distinctively Australian concept of national identity being the driving force towards ‘independence’.

The monolithic British myth was thus a casualty of changing times and new circumstances. In 1972 Prime Minister McMahon transferred responsibility for the administration of Australia House – Australia’s oldest overseas mission and the oldest diplomatic mission building in London – from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to the Department of Foreign Affairs. He cited Britain’s impending entry into Europe as the main reason for the change: “The resulting interaction between Britain’s policies and those of her European partners will impose new demands for a detailed understanding by Australia in areas which are in large part the concern of the Minister and Department of Foreign Affairs”.67 McMahon maintained it did not “in any way change the special relationship” still “symbolised and exemplified by the link with the Crown”, but the decision marked another important stage in Australia’s steady drift away from its old imperial moorings. Here was the final prime ministerial resignation that British EEC membership had irrevocably altered the traditional concept of mutual self-identification and self-interest. The Australian hearth at the heart of empire, once symbolic of the emotional and economic intimacy attached to the Anglo-Australian connection, had become simply another embassy.

The demise of the British myth had thus been aided by the protracted process of Britain’s entry to the EEC and the realisation amongst Australian leaders that the country would have to build its future in the Asian region, which for so long had been its

psychological nemesis. The "one of us" mentality which defined Australians as 'white' and 'British', was simply neither no longer desired by Australians nor appropriate as they attempted to make sense of the modern world and in particular the geographical region in which they lived. Moreover, there was a general acceptance among Australian leaders, expressed as much in what they did not say as in what they did, that this Britishness could no longer serve as a unifying national myth. However, no new, exclusive Australian national myth was invoked. Once British race patriotism no longer answered Australia's need for a nationalism, there was a marked hesitancy in determining whether nationalism itself was viable in a distinctively Australian context. Certainly there were few who tried to invoke the bush legend as that which might unify Australians and give them the notion of being 'one people'.

Though Gorton and McMahon in their Australia Day speeches in the early 1970s appealed to the spirit of the pioneer and connected it to ideas of social progress as well as the promise of a prosperous future, their 'pioneer legend' was given no specific historical context or nationalist content. There was thus a noticeable void in prime ministerial definitions of 'national community'. As Serle remarked in 1967: "there has been such a vacuum since the decline of standard imperial rhetoric, that it is difficult to make any sure statement". Where Prime Ministers Curtin, Chifley and Menzies had seen no fault line between Australian nationalism and British race patriotism, and gave it a story which explained its roots in British history and British institutions, the period 1966-72 witnessed Australia's national leaders expressing both excitement and tentativeness at adjusting their ideas of community to a new world. Yet if the need for nationalism in Australian political culture was still strong, which myth or myths could fulfill the same emotional and cultural needs as Britishness? What in the Australian historical experience could speak to a sense of unified 'national community'? If a 'nationalist' era requires a certain set of social and historical circumstances, did they exist in Australia at this time? In the 1972 election, the Whitlam government campaigned on the slogan "It's Time". Was it 'time', therefore, for a new, distinctive Australian nationalism as well? For some, as will be seen in the following chapter, the answer was unequivocally yes. Among those

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68 See for example McMahon, Sydney Morning Herald, 26 January 1972: "As a nation where pioneering is part of the present as well as the past, we are strong, vigorous and growing".

69 Geoffrey Serle, 'Austerica Unlimited', Godzone 6, Meanjin, vol. 26, no. 3 (September 1967), 244.
who thought so was the historian Manning Clark. In a letter published in *The Canberra Times* in late November 1972 calling on the Australian people to elect the Whitlam government – other signatories to the letter included W.K. Hancock, McMahon Ball, Hedley Bull, Patrick White and Judith Wright – Clark argued that Labor represented "aspirations in our society which cannot be ignored".70 This sense of expectation and of an unstoppable momentum would ultimately lead some commentators to conclude that Whitlam had inaugurated the second era of "new nationalism".

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Chapter Three

“...benign and constructive...”¹: EG Whitlam and the “new nationalism”

In 1974 the Head of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Alan Renouf, proposed that Australian diplomats should wear a new uniform for official engagements. The so-called “Renouf rig” was a Mao/Nehru style suit which sported embroidered sprigs of golden wattle on high choker collars. Instantly ridiculed by the press, Renouf explained his foray into matters sartorial with the claim that Australian diplomats on the world stage had become “pale imitations” of the British and Americans. One mischievous commentator asked whether, if the new diplomatic rig did not eventuate, Australian ambassadors might instead be asked to greet arriving guests with cries of “Cooee”, serve fried witchety grubs as hors d’oeuvres at receptions, or arrange didgeridoo recitals as embassy entertainment. The Sydney Morning Herald did not know “whether to laugh or weep at the latest genuflection to the vogue of nationalism”, but declared Australian representatives abroad should be neither “ugly” nor “synthetic”. The “Renouf Rig” was dismissed as “phony, unnatural and thoroughly un-Australian fancy dress”.² While this proposal was laughed out of court, such an attempt to cultivate diplomatic distinction did reveal one of the more identifiable ambitions of the era of “new nationalism”, which reappeared with the election of Gough Whitlam as Prime Minister in 1972. The desire to project an Australia free from the ‘apron-strings’ of its ‘great and powerful friends’, or at least to be treated with equal respect on the world stage, had called for the nationalist message as well as new symbols and expressions to define Australia’s relationships with Britain and the United States.

The Whitlam era is of crucial significance in understanding Australia’s changing attitude to nationalism. As Australians faced up to the British abandonment of its Empire, looked more towards Asia and gradually shed the idea of being a homogeneous British

² Sydney Morning Herald, 29 July 1974; 30 July 1974; The commentator was David McNicoll in The Bulletin, 10 August 1974, 24.
nation, they began to positively identify with the country's ethnic diversity. But in doing so, the question of what bound the nation together had never been more relevant. What would replace the ties of 'kith and kin', the idea of being 'white and British'? Holt, in his references to "our gum trees and our kangaroos", had perhaps momentarily shown an awareness of the problem, but he had not made any progress in resolving it. John Gorton's "real nationalism" spoke in one breath of a "sudden explosion" in the nation and in another of concern that his audience might be offended by the very term "nationhood". Where once Australian Prime Ministers such as John Curtin, Ben Chifley and Robert Menzies could point to a past derived from the wider history of British civilisation, one which embraced and explained the nation's cultural inheritance, Australian leaders were now more inclined to place the British institutional heritage above the 'crimson thread of kinship'. The legacy of the British connection was no longer clear - was it an anachronism which had 'thwarted' Australia's 'march to nationhood', the bequest of a genial political culture in which the classic British liberal ideals of freedom and tolerance had fostered an acceptance of diversity, or was it irrelevant in a post-nationalist, 'multicultural' society?

For some, Gough Whitlam's style and policies provided the answer to this question. For these Australians the Whitlam era constituted a revival of 'radical nationalist' hopes and visions. Geoffrey Serle in his cultural history of Australia published in 1973 announced that "The sense of national independence and self-reliance has perhaps increased in recent years after a long period when fear and the long habit of dependence on a great power held Australia back from full nationhood and inhibited development of an identity".3 Australia in this view encapsulated Ernest Gellner's concept of a "sleeping beauty"4 nation, with Whitlam as its Prince Charming, giving the kiss of life to a dormant, distinctive national spirit, the assertion of Australian 'independence' in foreign policy and the fulfilment of the socialist vision for a more progressive society. Into the void left by the decline of Anglo-Saxon race patriotism some commentators placed the vague, loosely defined concept of "new nationalism". And as Stephen Alomes declared, "Gough Whitlam successfully rode the waves of the new

nationalism” into government. Yet a constant theme of Whitlam’s speeches as Prime Minister was that Australia’s relationships with traditional friends and allies, which he maintained were the “essential foundations” of Australian foreign policy, were to remain basically unaltered. Was the “new nationalism” thus the great moment of national self-awakening or a more moderate adjustment to the Australian self-image, one which spoke with greater self-confidence and self-assertion but nevertheless maintained a careful, critical distance from a European derived concept of nations and nationalism?

The aim of this chapter is to address this question. To achieve this objective, it will identify the distinctive features in Whitlam’s intellectual history which were instrumental in shaping his idea of nationalism. Firstly, it is argued that the seeds of the Whitlam ‘world-view’ were sown by his father, H F E (Fred) Whitlam. A senior Canberra public servant and Australian representative at United Nations conventions, Fred Whitlam transmitted to his son a lasting appreciation for the classical tradition, as well as a commitment to the promotion of international understanding, the pursuit of excellence in the public arena and a contempt for racial prejudice. Secondly, Gough Whitlam’s emerging idea of Australia is considered, especially in the light of his desire to modernise the Australian Constitution and its implications for his philosophy of democratic socialism. Thirdly, his contribution to foreign policy debates in the 1950s and 1960s is examined. Amidst a changing international environment, Whitlam maintained Australia’s best chance of playing a constructive and meaningful role in world affairs could be achieved by a commitment to the United Nations. In these debates it will also be seen that a consideration of Whitlam’s Britishness and his support for Asian nationalism are essential in reaching a fuller understanding of his expression of a “new nationalism” as Prime Minister in the 1970s.

The majority of historical works on Gough Whitlam have focused on the events leading to his dismissal from office on 11 November 1975, but there has not yet been a detailed assessment of his prime ministerial rhetoric and what it reveals about the nature

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6 There are a number of works which deal exclusively with the process leading to the dismissal of the Whitlam government. See Paul Kelly, *The Unmaking of Gough* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1976) and Paul Kelly, *November 1975* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1995). Whitlam’s own account is contained in *The Truth*
and content of Australian nationalism in the 1970s. James Walter in his psychoanalytical work, The Leader, used theories of personality – in particular Kohut’s theory of narcissism – to explain Whitlam’s career. Walter was more concerned with studying Whitlam’s “personal working style” and his various “personality dynamics” to reach conclusions on the nature of political leadership. When he did examine Whitlam’s political philosophy, Walter referred to the “new nationalism” only in passing and moreover accepted it without question as reflective of Australia’s “new sense of self and independence” in the post-1972 period.

Graham Freudenberg’s A Certain Grandeur is a narrative political history written by a Whitlam insider. His focus was more on Whitlam’s renovation of the Labor Party in the late 1960s and his gradual ascent to the prime ministership. Henry Albinski’s treatment of Whitlam’s foreign policy is a comprehensive account of decisions taken and statements made between 1972 and 1975, and as such provides a useful reference text for scholars wishing to gain an appreciation of the general political climate of the times. Yet Albinski’s emphasis was as much on the actual process of policy formulation as it was on the direction of national debate. More recently Robert Manne, in discussing the nature of the ‘The Whitlam Revolution’, has argued that the 1972 election slogan of ‘It’s Time’ conveyed “the sense of national promise unfulfilled” after Australia had been “asleep” during the Menzies era. Whitlam, argued Manne, was “our first unambiguously nationalist Prime Minister”. But such an interpretation results from a failure to think carefully and critically about the problem of nationalism in Australian political culture. As will be demonstrated below, Whitlam would prove to be decidedly ambiguous about the viability of nationalism in an Australian context.


Several journalistic biographies provide a useful starting point in studying Whitlam. See Laurie Oakes, Whitlam PM (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1973); Laurie Oakes & David Solomon, The Making of an Australian Prime Minister (Melbourne; Cheshire, 1976); Alan Reid, The Whitlam Venture (Melbourne: Hill of Content, 1976)


Aspects of Whitlam’s intellectual history: “the verdant vista of the new”

‘DEO, ECCLESIAE, PATRIAE’

The promised time is drawing near
The everlasting reign of peace;
The aspirations men hold dear
Will make their ancient discords cease.
The lessons learned of lands grown old
Will blossom in an age of Gold.

Our country scorns the tyrant state
In which the ancient empires stood;
Free nations must cooperate
And aim to serve the common good:
A foreign clime or coloured skin
Will not disguise that men are kin. 12

These were the first and fifth stanzas of a poem written by Gough Whitlam as a nineteen year old in 1935, his final year at Canberra Grammar School. Whitlam structured the poem around the trinity of ‘God, Church and Fatherland’, the school’s motto; God “personified The hopes of better worlds to be”, the Church welcomed “all idealists in whatso age and country found”, and the country scorned “the tyrant state in which the ancient empires stood”. This six verse poem contained the essence of Whitlam’s ‘world-view’ – a classical humanism which decreed that all men were equal regardless of race, colour or creed, a liberal internationalism which saw in the cooperation of nations the best means for the preservation of peace, and a contempt for the legacy of imperialism. The themes of equality and interdependence, intolerance of racism and contempt for colonialism would form the core of Whitlam’s approach to international affairs. The idealism and unbridled optimism which sustained the poem’s message, while no doubt soon tempered by the relentless march of totalitarian regimes across Europe – regimes which stood for the absolute devotion and submission to the fatherland, as well as an exclusive racial homogeneity – nevertheless must have reinforced his belief in ‘free nations’ and his commitment to cooperation for the ‘common good’.

When Whitlam left Canberra Grammar school in 1935 a valedictory note in the School’s magazine, *The Canberran*, remarked that “His verse translations of the Greek and Roman poets are remarkable for their accuracy of rendering and facility of expression, and have gained high praise from competent critics”. Whitlam’s translations of various passages from Horace, Lucretius, Catullus and Homer displayed a passion and interest beyond the call of rudimentary learning. When he defended an epic poem he had written for the college magazine, Whitlam made a point of encouraging his readers not to be swayed by passing literary fashions or trends. Instead, in a clear statement of the high regard in which he held English literature, he urged “greater attention to Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley and Keats, poets in whom poetry and the poetic mingle in the most pleasing way”. Whitlam then declared: “Above all, I would hope for a greater observance in criticism, as in life, of the Golden Mean of Greek Philosophy, the *aurea mediocritas* of Horace, which avoids excess either way, and which, without dullness on the one hand or eccentricity on the other, affords the greatest satisfaction to the greatest number”. These comments illustrated a highly developed sense in the young Whitlam of the need for a life philosophy and the importance of the great works of literature in finding the keys to cultural refinement and contentment. This enthusiasm for history, the classics and English literature caused one of his contemporaries at Canberra Grammar to observe that Whitlam “was a particularly good example of the traditional pedagogue, who, by some strange caprice of Fate happened to be attending school as a pupil instead of a master”.

Yet though Whitlam’s poem on ‘God, Church and Fatherland’ may well have captured the essence of his ‘world-view’ and shown him to be captivated by the classical, English and European heritage, nevertheless it did not overwhelm him. In pondering how Australia and his identity connected to this Old World heritage he embraced the promise of the “verdant vista of the new”:

**YOUTH AND TRADITION**

Within Australia’s shores, where men are cold
To learning’s quickening influence as yet,
The man of arts is likely to regret
The benefits our solitudes withhold:

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14 Author unknown, ‘Valete 5th Year’, *The Canberran*, no 5 (1935), 27.
He yearns for countries where traditions old
Of music, letters, art are proudly set,
Where Florence, Paris, Weimar still beget
A recollection of the Age of Gold.

Yet times there are, though culture's rays endue
Those peoples with a charm that men revere,
When spite the heritage of great and true
The soul must crave our younger atmosphere:
We have the verdant vista of the New
-New skies to scale, new paths to pioneer.  

For one who had invested so much of his youth in reading the classics and learning about the cultures and histories of Europe, the sentiments expressed in the first stanza are perhaps not surprising. Australian indifference to intellectual endeavour is disconcerting for Whitlam as a young 'man of arts' and as one who was deeply attracted to the Old World heritage. There is a noticeable frustration at being so far removed from the civilisations that have shaped his 'world-view'. Yet Whitlam is by no means dejected at such a cultural and spiritual distance between 'youth' and 'tradition'. His lament for Australia's isolation, her inexperience and unsophisticated nature, are overtaken by his enthusiasm for a new land unburdened by the weight of tradition. Whitlam relishes the chance for Australian youth to forge a new history. Whilst his intellectual world craved the centres of European culture and their 'Age of Gold', the chance for new boundaries and possibilities to be explored in a 'younger atmosphere' fuelled his optimism. Whitlam wrote this poem when he was eighteen years old. Its embrace of an Australian 'new world' vision contrasted with that of R.G. Menzies, who in a schoolboy poem dedicated to the Animi Patrum — the spirits of our fathers — paid homage to British heroes, saints and martyrs as eulogised in the Reverend W.H. Fitchett's Deeds That Won the Empire. As Menzies put it, "Well for the might and glory of our Empire That their surpassing

15 EGW, The Canberra, no. 4 (September 1934), 11.
16 It would not be until June 1962, at the age of forty-six, that Whitlam would first travel to Europe. As John Menadue has noted, Whitlam "agreed with Samuel Johnson that the grand object of travelling is to see the shores of the Mediterranean". Standing in the Roman Forum, Whitlam told Menadue: "Comrade, this is the most important place on earth, much more so than Jerusalem". It can only be surmised from such a remark that Whitlam held the Classical tradition to mean more to him than Christianity. John Menadue, Things You Learn Along The Way (Melbourne: David Lovell, 1999), 51.
deeds should stir our own. It was an Old World heritage which forever sustained Menzies’ British race patriot ‘world-view’.

From where had Whitlam derived his ‘world-view’ in which he had to set his idea of Australia? Whilst not diminishing or dismissing the influence of his mother, Gough Whitlam himself has confirmed his father as the dominant intellectual influence in his early years: “...he created an environment in which I could follow up or gain ideas”. It is clear from biographical accounts that the Whitlam household was one in which the discussion of current affairs and political ideas was encouraged. Though leading a somewhat puritanical lifestyle – with no radio and few social activities – the one extravagance Whitlam senior showered on his children was books. Fred Whitlam maintained a huge library in which the predominant subjects were history, theology, sociology, English literature and the Greek and Roman classics. Graham Freudenberg has attempted to capture the prevailing atmosphere of Whitlam’s domestic environment: “...words and concepts like peace, honour, efficiency, skills, creativity and excellence were used with some meaning and without embarrassment”. Whitlam’s father along with the experience of living in Canberra thus helped focus his mind on the idea of Australia. His sister Freda has recalled her father’s “idealism” and that he “made us very conscious of his hopes for the nation...we knew we were living in the national capital, it was very important for us...we were creating a national capital for Australia”. In his memoirs Whitlam traced his concern for urban and regional development to his childhood in Canberra: “I was able to absorb the great advantages of a planned city, especially one built by a single authority under the control of national government”. It was ironic that Australia’s ‘bush capital’ of the 1930s in fact sowed the seeds of Whitlam’s subsequent definition of Australia as an “urban nation”.

Appointed to the position of Commonwealth Crown Solicitor in 1936, Fred Whitlam was also Secretary of the Association which founded Canberra University College and later the Australian National University. Along with Sir Robert Garran, he

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20 Freda Whitlam, quoted in *Whitlam*, ABC TV Documentary, 1993.
promoted cultural affairs in the new federal capital. He was President of the Canberra Branch of the Institute of International Affairs, and accompanied Dr. H.V. Evatt, Australian External Affairs Minister, to the Paris Peace conference in 1946. In Paris he contributed to the development of Article 18 of the subsequent 1948 Declaration of Human Rights, which stipulated that all people should possess the freedom to change religion or belief as well as the freedom to express and teach these. Between 1950 and 1954 he was the Australian representative on the United Nations Human Rights Commission, where he helped develop the principles of the Universal Declaration into the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.\textsuperscript{22} Impressions of the man suggest he was a highly respected figure in the fledgling Canberra community\textsuperscript{23}. In introducing Fred Whitlam's 1959 \textit{Sir Robert Garran Oration}, the political scientist Fin Crisp saw a meeting of minds between Garran and Whitlam senior:

Mr Whitlam enjoyed long years of close friendship with Sir Robert Garran...He shared with him a deep concern for the strengthening of international understanding, institutions and law and the promotion of world peace. They had in common an abiding, scholarly love of humane letters and a high sense of social responsibility and community service. They shared also a very great deal of the secret of life-long youth and of sympathy for the young in years.

Fred Whitlam's Garran oration is not only a clear and coherent expression of his 'world-view', it gives an insight into some of the influences which most likely would


\textsuperscript{22} These details are taken from LE Crisp's introduction to HEE Whitlam's 1959 \textit{Sir Robert Garran Oration, 'Sir Robert Garran and Leadership in Public Service} (Canberra: Australian Institute of International Affairs, 1960)

\textsuperscript{23} Whitlam senior was highly respected in the Canberra community. Paul Hasluck, whose main association with Fred Whitlam was through membership of the University Association of Canberra and the Australian Institute of International Affairs, recalled: "Any educational or cultural activity in those days in Canberra depended a good deal on Fred Whitlam. I came to know him as a public spirited, meticulous and dutiful man with an inquiring but cautious mind, who was always very concerned to make sure that whatever was done was right, both in the sense of being legally unexceptionable and soundly based on principle. He was a good churchman. He was certainly not intolerant or censorious, but his meticulous concern about what was right, though it would lead him often to differ from the accepted views, sometimes made it seem that he was rigidly orthodox. He was held in very high regard and respect. He was kindly and modest". Paul Hasluck, \textit{The Chance of Politics} (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 1997), 298. John McEwen, who worked for HEE Whitlam as a clerk in the Crown Solicitors Office when he came to Canberra in 1915, recalled affectionately in his valedictory speech to parliament that "Fred Whitlam was a man who enjoyed enormous respect"; McEwen, \textit{CPD}. H of R, vol. 70 (30 October 1970), 3151.
have come to bear on the making of Gough Whitlam's ideas. The theme of the oration revolved around the classical Greek concept of arete – the pursuit of excellence – and the Roman ideal of humanitas, which Whitlam senior translated as 'international fellowship'. Arete constituted the ideal of supreme achievement pursued by Greek athletes and warriors. But it also had the connotation of excellence in the public arena, of being the best citizen who gave a life of service to the state. The concept of humanitas, literally that which binds humanity together, or more succinctly, civilisation, was reliant upon two Greek words – paedogogia and philanthropia – meaning the obligation to educate and to love mankind. In this oration Whitlam senior connected these values of arete and humanitas to the character of leadership and the desired role for Australia in world affairs.

His three key themes were the origins of an Australian national identity, the belief in international fellowship, and the proposition that the nation's 'destiny' lay in Asia. Whitlam senior argued that Australian identity had been sustained by "...the Imperial systems which are part of our heritage, those of Britain and Rome". Where the predominant feature of British imperialism had been the development of the rule of law, Whitlam agreed with former British Prime Minister Herbert Asquith and his assertion that Rome "founded, developed and systematized the jurisprudence of the world". Yet "behind Rome was Greece", and Whitlam drew authority for his classical approach from Gilbert Murray, former Professor of Greek at Oxford University. Drawing on Murray's 1921 article "The value of Greece to the Future of the World", Whitlam reminded his audience that the ancient Greeks were "our spiritual ancestors", who had founded the idea of an individual life based around the concepts of "Freedom, Reason, Beauty, Excellence and the pursuit of Truth, and an international life aiming at the fellowship between man and man". (emphasis added) The ability of the Greeks to foster these values, according to Whitlam, came from a strong sense of self:

25 Murray traced this idea to the period in Ancient Greek history when "small City States with exclusive rights of citizenship had been merged in a larger whole: the conception of the universal fellowship between man and man. Greece realized soon after the Persian war that she had a mission to the world, that Hellenism stood for the higher life of man as against barbarism, for Arete, or Excellence, as against the mere effortless average. First came the crude patriotism which regarded every Greek as superior to every barbarian; then came reflection, showing that not all Greeks were true bearers of the light, nor all barbarians its enemies; that Hellenism was a thing of the spirit and not dependent on the race to which a
The Greeks of Athens of the fifth century BC were very conscious of what they stood for and they were confident and justly proud that what they stood for had, as they said, been ‘woven into the stuff of other men’s lives’. The empires of Athens and Rome have passed and the British Empire is merging into a Commonwealth of Nations. Imperialism is no longer the language of civilisation, but the dominion that was exercised in each has left some legacy of good, a good that, despite memories of the colonial past, has been woven into the stuff of other men’s lives.

Here Whitlam senior invoked the sentiments of Pericles’ Funeral Oration, a speech which was as much an enumeration of the civic virtues of Athens as it was a lament for Athenian war dead, to lend authority to his belief in the need for societies to know themselves. Australia’s imperial heritage, since it derived from a classical Western tradition, had outweighed any negative legacy of colonialism. Whitlam senior thus did not lament the passing of the age of imperialism, especially British imperialism. As a man self-consciously “of the British tradition”, who believed that “parliamentary democracy provides the best political system for the ordering of a humane organized community life” and who preferred to use the classification of “peoples or societies” rather than “nations”, he welcomed the post-imperial era when the pursuit of peace would become the pre-eminent goal of mankind. Australia, he said, stood for “international cooperation through the United Nations” and had to aspire to take a “growing share in the building of a newer world”. This commitment to fostering international understanding, and its infusion with Greco-Roman concepts of excellence and universal fellowship were viewed by Fred Whitlam as the ideal foundation for the development of a new regional consciousness in Australia, and he passionately advocated closer ties with the nations of South-East Asia: “...for it is there that Australia’s encounter with destiny is at its most sharpest, its most critical, its most challenging”. Australia, he argued, needed to display greater sensitivity to the Asian mind.

man belonged or the place where he was born: then came the new word and conception humanitas, which to the Stoics made the world as one brotherhood”. Gilbert Murray, “The Value of Greece”, 22.

26 HEF, Whitlam, Garran Oration, 16.

27 Whereas Gilbert Murray had provided authority for Fred Whitlam’s argument on the legacy of ancient Greece; for a contemporary perspective on Asian-Australian relations he looked to Charles Gamba, a lecturer in Economics at the University of Malaya and Singapore. Whitlam commended Gamba’s 1958 Australian Quarterly article – ‘Some thoughts on Australian-Asian Understanding’ for the “most serious attention” of his audience. Gamba too saw questions of identity at the centre of a new relationship. There was a need for the West to indicate to Asia that “the colonial past is now history”. Australia’s racially
When Gough Whitlam left Sydney University in 1942 to join the RAAF, the valediction in St Paul's College magazine was adamant that it had captured the essence of Whitlam's 'world-view': "He was above all else a classical scholar and he ordered his life according to this conception of values".\textsuperscript{28} From the above analysis of Fred Whitlam's 'world-view' it would not be inaccurate to suggest that the core values intensified in Whitlam by his classical education were those of *arete* and *humanitas*, and that Whitlam's socialism was fashioned in relation to these classical values - a commitment to a common humanity, the equal dignity of all peoples and the brotherhood of man. Education rather than experience had compelled him to ponder and reflect upon the great problems in human affairs.

*Whitlam the parliamentarian: socialism, liberal internationalism and the rise of Asian nationalism*

In his early political speeches Whitlam did not invoke the thoughts or writings of the great socialist thinkers, nor did he even explicitly appeal to a British Labour socialist tradition. The promotion of equality and the provision of opportunity were the abiding themes which informed his response to national and international questions. In Whitlam's 'world-view' the great tradition which linked the modern parties of social reform to the American and French Revolutionaries was their shared "tradition of optimism about the possibility of human reason".\textsuperscript{29} The major challenge to this sense of optimism, however, was the achievement of Labor reforms within the Australian Constitution. Whitlam in his 1957 Chifley Memorial Lecture expressed his frustration at the limits inherent in the Constitution: "The way of the reformer is hard in Australia. Our parliaments work within a constitutional framework which enshrines Liberal policy and bans Labor policy".\textsuperscript{30}

This frustration at impediments to reform, and his resulting desire to modernise the Australian Constitution, explains much of Whitlam's motivation in entering political life. As a young RAAF airman stationed at Gove in the Northern Territory during the

\textsuperscript{28} The Pauline, no 40 (1942)
\textsuperscript{30} EGW, Chifley Memorial Lecture 1957, 44.
Second World War, Whitlam had campaigned passionately within his squadron to advocate a ‘yes’ vote to the 1944 referendum. The pedagogue of the classics had become the pedagogue of the Australian Constitution. This referendum sought to continue the enlarged wartime powers of the Commonwealth government into the period of post-war reconstruction, and would have allowed it to make laws concerning employment, organised marketing, companies, monopolies, prices, overseas investment, national health and aboriginal affairs. For Whitlam, reflecting his father’s belief in the unrivalled capacity of a strong, federal government to solve national problems, the argument was simple: Commonwealth efficiency should prevail over States rights. In his 1961 Curtin Memorial Lecture Whitlam equated the loss of the 1944 referendum with igniting his own desire to overcome the limitations of the Australian constitution:

My interest in constitutional matters stems from the time when John Curtin was Prime Minister. The Commonwealth Parliament’s powers were then at their most ample and it was constitutionally, if not always politically, more open to a Labor government to carry out its policies than it is in peacetime. John Curtin, however, saw that he was presiding over a passing phase. He was not content with the paradox that the Labor party was free to enact its policies in times of war alone. Accordingly, in 1944, he sponsored a referendum to give the Federal parliament post-war powers. His motives for holding the referendum were based on patriotism and experience. He argued the case with his full eloquence. The opposition to the referendum was spurious and selfish. The arguments were false. My hopes were dashed by the outcome, and from that moment I determined to do all I could to modernise the Australian Constitution. 31

Although the referendum failed, Whitlam himself was successful in convincing a majority of his RAAF squadron to vote ‘yes’: “We had a remarkable vote of support for it. Imagine my distress on listening to the result and finding the civilian population was not as enlightened as the service population”. 32 The loss of that referendum, Whitlam later reflected as Prime Minister, was “thirty lost years in building a better Australia”. Nevertheless it was significant that Whitlam saw Curtin’s patriotism as expressed in his desire for overcoming constitutional restraints. This inspired in Whitlam a vision of Curtin as a “noble failure”, a man of peace compelled to lead the nation in war. Whitlam’s Curtin was neither the icon of consensus politics, as he became for Bob

31 EGW, ‘Socialism within the Australian Constitution’, Curtin Memorial Lecture, University of Western Australia, 1961, in EGW, On Australia’s Constitution, 47.
Hawke, nor the 'radical national' hero defying Churchill over the return of Australian troops, as he was for Paul Keating, but a leader "born to lead this nation in peace and in the paths of peace".\textsuperscript{33} For Whitlam a Labor government should ultimately be concerned with social and constitutional reform.

Whitlam had joined the ALP whilst still in military uniform in 1945, at a time when both the Labor platform and its Prime Minister, Ben Chifley, were still committed to the policy of nationalisation as the best means of achieving Labor's socialist objective. For Whitlam, Chifley's failure to nationalise the banks meant "Nationalisation became more a symbol of ideological purity for the radicals of the Party than a positive commitment to practical social reform".\textsuperscript{34} In 1961, he declared the challenge for democratic socialism to be "the creation of opportunities rather than the imposition of restraints. Within our own nation we do not have to ration scarcity but to plan abundance". This confidence derived largely from a conviction that the sustained period of post-war economic growth would continue largely unabated into the future. In these circumstances Whitlam defined the Labor party's objective as "limited, negative, and apologetic" and one which made "little allowance for the creative scope of socialist measures". Furthermore, nationalisation had by this time become "the most difficult and least important aspect of socialism for an Australian government to achieve".\textsuperscript{35} Accordingly, Whitlam argued for a more practical alternative to nationalisation, which involved a strong national government initiating public enterprise. Having observed Menzies' use of Section 96 of the Australian Constitution, which allowed the parliament to make financial grants to the states 'on such terms and conditions as the parliament thinks fit', Whitlam argued that "The Australian government is as constitutionally free as any other national government to initiate public enterprise internally or internationally".\textsuperscript{36} For Whitlam, an Australian government's financial hegemony was interpreted as the best means of achieving Labor's social democratic reforms.

\textsuperscript{32} EGW, \textit{Australian Financial Review}, 30 May 1972.
\textsuperscript{33} EGW, Speech at the laying of the foundation stone for John Curtin House, Canberra, 28 April 1974, in Whitlam papers, NAA, M163.
\textsuperscript{34} EGW, \textit{The Whitlam Government}, 335.
\textsuperscript{35} EGW, "Socialism within the Australian Constitution", 70, 62.
\textsuperscript{36} EGW, Ibid., 62.
Whitlam's socialism was to be achieved through parliamentary democracy. In 1955, at the twenty-first Summer School of the Australian Institute of Political Science on *Liberty in Australia*, Whitlam responded vigorously to the views expressed by Liberal MHR Professor F.A. Bland. Bland had equated socialism with political instability and argued that its identification of politics with economics allowed it to demand loyalty to its dictums over and above the electorate and parliament. Taking issue with Bland's claim that governments were responsible for the abridgement of liberty, Whitlam attacked the "crimes committed in the name of liberty by private enterprise" such as price-fixing, rationing and regimentation imposed by private companies, and continued that "the essential of parliamentary government is that governments are responsible to parliament and parliament is responsible to the people". Whitlam then looked to history:

British history shows that Parliament has been our great liberating force. Parliament has conferred political freedom on those represented in it, first of all the barons and squires and then the merchants and now all adults. There is no freedom without equality. Parliament alone can give equality of opportunity and thereby increase liberty for all. If we are to have economic equality of opportunity, which is the next stage in the advance of liberty, we must have effective parliamentary government and, accordingly, dispense with fetters on parliament rather than contrive them.37

By history and convention then, the British parliamentary system had come to symbolise the chief instrument of equality and liberty. The evolution of this system constituted part of the genius of the British peoples, and the achievement of reform under the Crown therefore represented the proper use of political power. Addressing the 1969 ALP Conference, Whitlam gave further expression to the foundation of his democratic socialism: "the belief that in a modern society the common purposes and needs of a community will only be served fairly and fully through the action of their elected governments".38 This "underlying philosophy" held that it was the community, through the parliament, which could provide better access to and improved standards for housing, health and education, thereby improving quality of life and increasing the sense of security in people's everyday lives.

38 EGW, address at Wesley Church, Melbourne, 27 July 1969, in Whitlam papers, NAA, M170/T1.
Thus as the “proper extension of political democracy”, a “philosophy about the value of man”, and “an international concept concerned with the happiness of man everywhere”, Whitlam’s socialist faith reinforced his hopes for a better, more peaceful world. In the mid 1960s this led to his trenchant opposition to the White Australia Policy. In asserting the equality of all peoples he declared that: “no socialist party should have in its platform a policy, however qualified, that is, or could be, a racist one. A migrant who could contribute to our community should not be barred on the ground that he is not white”. It was thus “ideologically intolerable and morally indefensible” that a socialist party maintain adherence to a policy of racial discrimination. Such a stance inevitably brought Whitlam into conflict with his party leader Arthur Calwell. Whitlam has reflected that “During the time of Menzies and Calwell it would have been impossible for either of our parties to change the policy”, since the very subject of White Australia was “taboo...we were always discouraged from raising it”. It was not until the Citizenship Convention of 1966 that Whitlam first discussed the abhorrence of the White Australia Policy in public. In his view, the change was driven not only by morality, but by the need to forge a new image of Australia in Asia. As Whitlam remarked in 1966, Australia’s “effective political involvement in Asia” will depend on “removing exclusive attitudes to wealth and race from our community”. Foreign policy debates in the Australian parliament during the 1950s and 60s gave Whitlam the opportunity to apply his ‘world-view’ in the Cold-War era. The two main political parties in Australia at this time brought different perspectives and different assumptions to their understanding of how best to respond to this global crisis. The Labor party, whilst maintaining a bi-partisan commitment to close association with Britain and the United States, nevertheless evinced a profound faith in the capacity of the United Nations, displayed sympathy for the colonial independence movements in Asia and Africa, and looked to pragmatic compromise and realism as the best way to deal with the Soviet Union and Communist China. The Liberal and Country parties, on the other hand,

40 Ibid.
41 EGW, interview with Paul Kelly, ABC TV Federation series, 100 Years: The Australian Story, transcript.
42 EGW, ‘A Political Role in Asia’, Speech to Public Meeting in Young, 30 May 1966, in Whitlam papers, NAA, M170/T1.
believed the United Nations to be, in the words of one its members, a "broken reed". They feared the collapse of the European empires and the process of decolonisation which threatened to leave Australia vulnerable in Asia. Over and above these concerns they saw the spectre of international communism, which made it difficult for the conservatives to differentiate between Asian nationalism and Asian communism. Along with the Irish-Catholic based Democratic Labor party they considered international communism a grave challenge to both western ideals and security. The different responses, therefore, to the Cold War and the rise of Asian nationalism, added new complexities to Australia's understanding of its role in world affairs.

Whitlam's 'world-view' during this time was first and foremost expressed in terms of a progressive realism. It was 'progressive' for two reasons. Firstly, it rejected the strategies of containment, forward defence and ideological confrontation. Secondly, it repudiated the view that power was the decisive factor in international relations. Much like his father, Whitlam saw the need to foster international understanding and to promote the cooperation of nations. He accepted the irreversible facts of great-power politics and saw in the United Nations the principal means by which smaller powers, such as Australia, could best hope to influence the great powers and to lessen the chance of further military conflict between them. In his Roy Milne Lecture of 1963 Whitlam considered Australia's changing international position. Noting that the "spirit of nationalism which swept Europe between Napoleon and Hitler is now sweeping Africa and Asia", Whitlam saw no security in remoteness: "The captains and kings of Europe have departed from our area....Forces beyond our control are forcing us into a fundamental re-examination of our position as an isolated and European community". Australia had moved from being part of a "familiar European world" to being in an "unfamiliar Afro-Asian world". Denying the world situation could be explained by a simple dichotomy between freedom and slavery, communism and democracy, Whitlam asserted that Australian interests were not served well by "moralistic affirmations of our solidarity with the Western powers and ritualistic denunciations of the communist powers". Whilst he maintained the importance of the ANZUS alliance, Whitlam gave

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44 As Neville Meaney has argued in *Australia and the World - A Documentary History from the 1870s to the 1970s* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1985), 26.
great importance to the United Nations as "the world legislature and executive which it could and should become":

Australia must strive above all things and more than most nations for the Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World. The ultimate security of our nation and the ultimate survival of civilisation alike demand it".45

As for his father, so for Whitlam himself had the United Nations become the institutional embodiment of humanitas. "Australia is a peripheral nation", he told the parliament in 1965, "The strength of such nations lies in international bodies".46 Thus the United Nations, for Whitlam as it had been for Evatt, lay at the centre of a liberal internationalist ‘world-view’. In his 1966 Evatt Memorial lecture Whitlam proclaimed the former Labor leader and External Affairs minister as the “champion of the small powers” and praised his vision of the United Nations “as the only means of restraining and employing the power of large nations”.47 For Whitlam, the world was not one where ‘red menaces’ or ‘yellow perils’ were coiled springs waiting to pounce on a vulnerable Australia. Nowhere was this progressive realism more apparent than in his approach to China. The inescapable fact of world politics was that Russia and China, regardless of their communism, were both great powers: "Chinese power and influence must be accepted...It is a fact of life which we have to accept, and we have to learn to live with it in Asia as we have learned to live with Russia in Europe. Peace in the area will depend on an accommodation between China and the West."48

For Whitlam, one of the prime examples of the United Nations’ ability to prevent aggression and war, and thus achieve such accommodation between East and West, was its handling of the Cuban crisis in 1962. Pointing to the fact that Barbara Tuchman’s book August 1914 had been required reading for President John F. Kennedy’s cabinet, Whitlam mused: "There is no question that President Kennedy and all Americans in a position to determine these matters were aware of the fatal momentum which can come from mobilisation, and which did come in August 1914. If there had been United Nations

47 EGW, ‘Australia: Base or Bridge?’, 1966 Evatt Memorial Lecture, Sydney University, 16 September 1966 (Sydney: Fabian Society, 1966)
machinery at that time we would have been spared the First World War.\textsuperscript{49} Whilst this argument as applied to the Cuban crisis derived more from political expediency and idealism rather than an objective assessment, it did point to Whitlam's preference in invoking the lessons of 1914 as an argument against military aggression rather than, as he put it, "the Munich syndrome". Munich, he believed, had been used to distort the conduct of international affairs in the post-war period.\textsuperscript{50} For Whitlam then, the Cuban crisis had significant implications for Australia's view of the world and the great powers: "It is quite plain that the United Nations in the future...is the great hope for countries of our size to ensure that the colossi do not become embroiled with each other and involve all the rest of us with them".\textsuperscript{51} Whilst the escalation of conflict in Vietnam punctured Whitlam's view of the United Nations as the arbiter of world peace, the belief that the great powers should not use the South East Asian region as a testing ground for their rivalry became a central theme of the Whitlam foreign policy doctrine when he was Prime Minister. The Cuban episode had also given Whitlam the chance to express more fully his progressive realist view of international affairs. Criticising the Menzies' government's intention to maintain the economic boycott on Cuba, regardless of whether the threat of Soviet nuclear weapons was removed, he said:

We have to accept the fact that there will be countries in the world with different political systems, and that some such countries will be living next door to each other...But we must try to see that they live at least in peace and respect one with the other. It is not right that we should worry about another country's different regime only when it becomes a rival to us. We must try to ensure that all regimes

\textsuperscript{48} EGW, CPD, H of R, vol. 45 (25 March 1965), 384
\textsuperscript{49} EGW, CPD, H of R, vol. 37 (28 November 1962), 2636.
\textsuperscript{50} In 1969 Whitlam outlined his opposition to what he called the "Munich generated fear of appeasement", which he blamed for the "major errors of Western foreign policy since the war" -- in particular the 1956 Suez crisis and the Vietnam war: "Historical parallels may sometimes be useful, but all are more or less misleading. History never repeats itself exactly. If we are to draw some sort of a European parallel with Indo-China it would not be with Central Europe before World War II, but the Balkans before World War I, with similar elements of emergent nationalism, indeterminate borders, the collapse of the ruling alien power and the competitive involvement of the great powers". EGW, 'The practical meaning and promotion of peace', 1969 National Convention of Apex Clubs, Darwin, 4 April 1969, in Whitlam papers, NAA, M170/T1. Tuchman's book, also titled The Guns of August was again referred to by Whitlam when he argued against Australia's involvement in the Vietnam war. Tuchman had convinced Whitlam "how easily and quickly the world can rush to war where communications fail or are neglected". EGW, CPD, H of R, vol. 46 (6 May 1965),1252.
understand each other and respect each other, and are encouraged through international agencies, if possible, to improve their administrations.\textsuperscript{52}

Here again was the essence of \textit{humanitas} and its prescription for an international life devoted to nurturing fellowship between all peoples. The ‘improvement of administrations’ advocated by Whitlam here implied the extension of democracy and the provision of self-government. This is crucial for understanding the substance of Whitlam’s attitude towards nationalism. For him, the ultimate destiny of the new African and Asian nations was the attainment of national independence and the achievement of responsible self-government. ‘Independence’ in the Whitlam ‘world-view’ was not the means by which a country aggressively asserted its interests over those of another nation, it was the path to greater development and improvement in its national affairs and international relations. This had been a consistent stance adopted by Whitlam since his first speech to parliament on international affairs in September 1953, in which he had argued that “The best way to deal with any red menace, as we so glibly term it, is to give them self-government. There is no virtue...in substituting a Chinese imperialism for a French, Dutch, Portuguese or British imperialism. They are entitled to self-government within the world community of nations, the United Nations, of which Australia is one”.\textsuperscript{53}

In this speech Whitlam had also defended the exclusion of France and Britain, among others, from the ANZUS pact. This speech was delivered between the cease fire in Korea and the Geneva conference of 1954, which ended the French phase of the Thirty Years War of intervention in Indo-China. In common with the standard liberal intellectual view of the time, Whitlam believed that the struggle in Indo-China was inspired by Victminh nationalism against French colonialism, rather than being a communist controlled or inspired movement:

The significant feature of the Pacific area at the moment is that we European countries are witnessing the assertion by Asian countries of their political and cultural independence and self-respect. It would be an affront to peoples in the Pacific Area who are not yet self-governing if we were to include in the ANZUS pact countries that control them, and very often control them against their will. It is

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{CPD}, H of R, vol. 1 (15 September 1953), 212.
to be regretted that the French, who virtually bestowed liberty on the United States of America and Italy, should have for so long denied liberty to Indo-China.\textsuperscript{54}

This belief that the Vietminh forces constituted an independent nationalist movement differed from both the American and Australian government’s official position that Indo-China had become a focal point for the struggle between communism and the free world. In April 1954 a group of Australian academics and clergymen expressed the liberal intellectual view of Indo-China, with an open letter published on the front page of the \textit{Canberra Times} and the Melbourne \textit{Age}. It read in part – “It is often forgotten that the Vietminh movement, led by Ho Chi Min, arose in Indo-China long before the Communist government had come to power in China and was in its original form, not a Communist but a nationalist movement aiming at the total independence of Vietnam from French rule”\textsuperscript{55}. Whitlam defended the publication of this letter in parliament on the same day, not only in the name of freedom of speech, but primarily because he agreed with the substance of the argument. The automatic equation of independent nationalist movements with communism was an “over-simplification”, and whilst Whitlam acknowledged “that the Communists have been manoeuvred into the vanguard of all these movements”, such infiltration was a damning indictment on the West – “that is largely our fault in allowing the only feasible alternative to appear to be...European tutelage and American protection...”\textsuperscript{56}. The 1955 ALP conference in Hobart endorsed this view of the Indo-Chinese question.\textsuperscript{57}

Whitlam provided the most coherent expression of this view again in 1965, following the decision of the Menzies government to commit Australian combat troops to Vietnam.

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{CPD}, H of R, vol. 1 (15 September 1953), 211.
\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Canberra Times}, 8 April 1954, in Meaney, \textit{Australia and the World} (Doc. 325), 606-7.
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{CPD}, H of R, vol 3 (8 April 1954), 244.
\textsuperscript{57} Divested of its anti-Communist faction, the Labor party gave special prominence to Indo-China as an example of the mistake in viewing all conflicts and threats through the prism of Chinese communism: “Indo-China is typical of those cases where inexcusable delay in recognising a genuine Nationalist anti-colonial movement in Asia resulted in Communism gradually capturing the Nationalist movement. The result was that democratic nationalism suffered a severe setback”. \textit{Official Report of the Proceedings of the 21\textsuperscript{st} Conference of the Australian Labor Party} (Hobart, 1955), 52-3, in Neville Meaney, \textit{Australia and the World} (Doc. 330), 617-19.
The only ideological counter to Communism in Asia is nationalism. The West has too often frustrated nationalism and forced it into the arms of China and the communists. Is this not what happened in Vietnam? Genuine nationalists have often been faced with the choice of joining the communists or going into exile or going to prison. A real nationalism will be neither pro nor anti-Western; it will be principally concerned with its own nationals. Events have shown that a country on the border of China which is aligned with the West is courting subversion. We must therefore accept the fact that such governments can survive only if they are genuinely nationalistic and progressive and are not tied to the East or West. The independence of these countries must be primarily a matter for their own governments.58

No doubt such comments helped soften any potential antagonism towards Whitlam from Labor's left-wing over Australia's involvement in Vietnam. Whitlam, a member of Labor's right faction, never strayed from expressing basic support for the American Alliance in the conflict: "It is not the American alliance itself which has reduced Australia to a status of diplomatic and defence dependence. It is the Government's interpretation of the Alliance".59 This "interpretation", essentially, implied Australia under the conservatives had been reduced to the undignified position of being a mere vassal of its 'great and powerful' friends. The above comments also illustrate the view that the end of colonialism and the assertion of nationalism in Asia constituted the way forward in developing harmonious relations between old imperial powers and their former colonial subjects. In Whitlam's view, the Asians needed 'democratic nationalism' to defeat communism as well as to achieve liberation and national independence. Prime Minister Menzies had not been quite so enthusiastic about decolonisation and the collapse of European empires, for it seemed to portend the gradual removal of Australia's sense of security in the Asia-Pacific region. There was no room in the Menzies 'world-view' for differentiation between Asian nationalism and Asian communism, nor the possibility that colonialism might in fact be a catalyst for the spread of communist influence. The changing nature of the British Commonwealth left Menzies aghast, and as noted in the previous chapter, he simply saw no need to apologise for British colonialism.

In Whitlam's eyes, however, the dissolution of the British Empire was not a cause for despair but for optimism - a chance to further spread the liberal parliamentary genius of Britain to the newly independent nations in Africa and Asia. His stance on Asian

nationalism thus also revealed the nature and content of Whitlam’s Britishness. If his recognition of Asian nationalism represented a liberal intellectual belief in the benefits of national self-determination, his Britishness was indicative of a traditional Labor party rhetoric which celebrated shared institutions and the ideal of human liberty rather than the ties of blood or kinship. British institutions and the ideal of liberty were to be extended to all peoples regardless of blood. When Whitlam advocated the recognition of China in 1954, he noted that communism was weakest in those countries which had a British parliamentary system of government – India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon, or a congressional system as in the Philippines. Accordingly, peace in South East Asia was contingent upon ensuring that these countries “enjoy self-government”. In 1960 Whitlam welcomed the emergence of the new African and Asian states, particularly those who adopted British parliamentary institutions. Because these new nations thus formed the largest power bloc in the United Nations, he argued that: “Australia is in a very good position to influence them, because it was born with the British heritage which many of them had thrust upon them and which they have chosen to continue...Australia has a greater opportunity to and obligation than any Western country to make the aspirations and heritage of the West understood in Asia and particularly in countries around the Indian Ocean”.

Thus Australia’s Britishness and its Western tradition were interpreted by Whitlam as a force for ongoing influence in the developing world. In particular, the British heritage – in its political and institutional terms – remained at the centre of Whitlam’s world-view’. The Commonwealth of Nations, he declared, could “play a better part than any other organisation in retaining British ideals in the newly emergent countries of Asia and Africa” and form an “organic” bridge between the industrialised world and the new African and Asian nations. This was a new application of the ‘organic’ metaphor to define Australia’s place in the world. Where once it had signified an indissoluble worldwide community of British peoples unified by blood, ancestry, language and tradition, the ‘organic’ Commonwealth represented the extension of a British institutional, rather than racial or cultural, heritage. It was the epitome of W.K.

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Hancock’s notion of the Commonwealth being “British – with a small b”. That is, Whitlam’s Commonwealth ideal was motivated neither by a belief in the superiority of the British race nor driven by thoughts of British glory, but by the vision of a diverse family comprising many kindreds and languages.\textsuperscript{63} South Africa, therefore, incurred Whitlam’s wrath. He described its maintenance of racial discrimination as a “reproach to all people who believe in the British way of life, with its tenets of freedom of expression, movement and franchise for all, and the equal opportunity for every man to participate in the administrative, legislative and judicial processes of his own country”\textsuperscript{64}. South Africa had betrayed the core British ideal of liberty.

On the domestic front, this ideal of liberty and equality as embodied in the system of parliamentary democracy found expression in Whitlam’s consistent emphasis on the role of government in providing for the well-being of the community as a whole. For Whitlam, the character of the Australian ‘community’ was overwhelmingly urban.\textsuperscript{65} Delivering the Curtin memorial lecture in 1972 on the subject of \textit{Urbanised Australia 1972-1975}, he directly challenged the bush myth as anathema to his view of Australia as “the most urbanised national community in world history”. That so many basic problems experienced in Australian cities had been ignored, he claimed, was due partly to the fact that: “…we have become beguiled by our own image, our own traditions and indeed our own myths. The skies, the seas, the sunburnt spaces make up the preferred background to our national identity. The archetype of the pioneer unionist is the shearer, not the stonemason”.\textsuperscript{66} However, this was the only time Whitlam explicitly contrasted his vision of improved urban conditions with a bush legend. In any case, it was by no means a novel interpretation of the Australian paradox. Donald Horne had similarly noted in his

\textsuperscript{63} ‘British with a small ‘B’’, in W.K. Hancock, \textit{The Modern Map} (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), 47-8.

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{CPD}, H of R, vol. 26 (31 March 1960), 793.

\textsuperscript{65} In 1965 Whitlam had argued that the intervention of the Federal government was needed to arrest the decline in inner-city living standards and inadequate planning for community services in the outer suburbs. By equating cities with civilisations, thus again giving voice to his \textit{humanitas}, Whitlam had argued: “By derivation, civilised men are those who live in cities, pagans are those who live in the country”. Only governments and public planning, he added, could manage Australia’s “urban explosion” and promote the virtues of a “civilised life in cities”. EGW, ‘Cities in a Federation’, Address to Australian Planning Institute, Sydney, 20 September 1965, Whitlam papers, NAA, M170/2.

enunciation of the "new nationalism" in 1968 that "The idea of ourselves as a nation of bushwhackers" had become "demographically unbearable".67

Furthermore, this view does not necessarily account for the fact that Australian political leaders at this time did not give expression to the bush myth, nor that they seemed so hesitant and tentative in their approach to nationalism itself. That Whitlam himself did not give expression to a 'radical national' myth is not simply explained by his definition of Australia as an 'urban nation'. Rather, it needs to be asked how Whitlam, who had expressed strong support for Asian nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s, subsequently expressed an idea of Australian nationalism as Prime Minister in the 1970s.

Whitlam and the "new nationalism": 1972-75

I don't suppose there is anyone in Australia, certainly no-one else who is still in public life, who has a greater love for Britain than I have... Not many of my countrymen have a greater respect for Britain's institutions and traditions than I do - a greater knowledge of your history, a greater affection for your language, your laws, your literature, your unique intellectual traditions of moderation, detachment, tolerance and liberty.68

Speaking at the Mansion House in London during a prime ministerial visit in December 1974, Gough Whitlam claimed the mantle of principal Australian Anglophile. Admitting he had been stung by criticism that the direction of Australian foreign policy under his leadership had been "an insult to the mother country", Whitlam offered himself as the personal embodiment of Australia's enduring commitment to the British connection. In the heart of the British world he paid homage to the legacy of Britishness and its influence in shaping his own 'world-view'. Whilst there was nothing particularly novel about an Australian Prime Minister expressing affection for Britain and the British in London, there were significant omissions in Whitlam's rhetoric which did illustrate Australia's changing attitude to its British heritage. From Whitlam's comments it was evident that the language of British race patriotism was no longer appropriate. When his

67 Donald Horne, 'The New Nationalism?'; see Chapter Two, p.64ff.
Labor predecessors, John Curtin and Ben Chifley, had visited London in the 1940s, both had identified with the racial dimension of imperial kinship and defined Australia primarily as a ‘British community in the south seas’. Yet Chifley and Curtin had never boasted so openly of their affection for Britain. Certainly Whitlam was as sincere and wholehearted as Menzies in his admiration for British institutions, culture and mores, but there was not the proud proclamation of ‘coming home’ or of being ‘British to the bootheels’. Whitlam did add, though, that “For an Australian Prime Minister, London can never be just another city or Britain just another country – however much a proud and self-assertive people would like them to think so”. This reaffirmation of Britain’s significance was all the more remarkable given its expression in the midst of an era of supposed “new nationalism”, when in the eyes of some Australia was finally casting off the shackles of its imperial past, discovering its ‘real’ self and grasping the nettle of ‘independence’.

The aim of this section is to examine this conundrum. If the term “new nationalism” was first associated with the Prime Ministership of John Gorton in the late 1960s, why did it reappear under Whitlam? Further, why did some historians and commentators give it a ‘radical nationalist’ content, as if this was the long-delayed release of a ‘thwarted’ Australian nationalism? Whilst Whitlam conceded he could not claim authorship of the phrase “new nationalism”, he was nevertheless “happy to adopt and affirm” it as Prime Minister. Indeed, it became what he called the “modus vivendi” for his approach to government. As Donald Horne later said, Whitlam was the “most distinguished political articulator” of the “new nationalism”. But Whitlam’s idea of nationalism itself, as expressed in his prime ministerial rhetoric, requires closer inspection. The following analyses firstly the nature of the ‘radical national’ reaction to

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69 Donald Horne, ‘National Identity in the Period of the “New Nationalism”’, *Nationalism and Class in Australia, 1920-1980* (Brisbane: Australian Studies Centre, 1981), 61-67. Whitlam was not the first Western political leader to use this term. In 1910 Theodore Roosevelt had begun his campaign for a return to the White House with a speech in Kansas, where he spoke of a “New Nationalism” which put “the national need before sectional or personal advantage” and which regarded “the executive power as the steward of the public welfare”. Whilst Roosevelt’s prescription for a strong central government to confront the concentrated power of modern capital corresponded closely to Whitlam’s own view, there was no explicit public rhetorical connection made with the Rooseveltian version. Furthermore, Roosevelt was not aiming his definition against a British ‘nationalist’ alternative. Theodore Roosevelt, “The New Nationalism” in Mario DiNunzio (ed.) *Theodore Roosevelt – An American Mind: Selected Writings* (New York: Penguin, 1994), 139-150.
the "new nationalism". Secondly it compares this response with Whitlam’s own view, in particular as it related to the British heritage and the direction of Australian foreign, economic and cultural policies at this time. Finally it explores the way in which Whitlam, during a major speech at Ballarat in December 1973 to commemorate the Eureka stockade incident, set out coherently the meaning of the "new nationalism" for the Whitlam doctrine. In this speech can be found not only his liberal sensitivity to the idea of nationalism but also the enduring influence of internationalism on his 'world-view'. And therein lies the distinctiveness of Whitlam’s view of the "new nationalism".

There are significant contextual and conceptual problems associated with explaining the emergence and promotion of a "new nationalism" in Australian political culture in the early 1970s. What precisely was the character of this "new nationalism" as nationalism? Whilst the "new nationalism" was often invoked, rarely was it adequately explained. It is thus difficult to locate the precise content of this phrase. Robert Drewe in a series of articles for The Australian in 1973 tried to equate Australia's "new spirit of purpose" with "New Nationalism". Rather nonchalantly, he declared: "If you want to put a label on it, the New Nationalism does as well as any". Writing in the 1980s, Stephen Alomes suggested that "Australian nationalism's traditional amalgam of British loyalty and the male 'digger' tradition was increasingly challenged in the conflict-ridden 1960s", but the nature of this challenge was simply accounted for by his claim that "indoctrination" in racism and empire was "on the wane". In Alomes' view, therefore, the re-emergence of a distinctive Australian cultural nationalism was a fait accompli once the foundations of a "fawning, provincial Australia" had been removed.

The tone of Whitlam's speeches before the 1972 election provides one indication as to why some expected a Labor victory to bring to fruition a distinctive Australian nationalism. Speaking in Griffith in November 1972 following a recital of Australian poetry by Leonard Teale, Whitlam proclaimed: "It's time for truly national thinking. In the great issues facing this nation it's time for a national approach. And it's time we had our own symbols of our own nationhood. It's time...that we had our own national

70 Robert Drewe, 'The New Nationalism – How far are we going?', The Australian, 9 April 1973. The Australian carried the following three parts to Drewe's series on The New Nationalism on the 10,11 and 12 April 1973.
71 Stephen Alomes, A Nation at Last, 187, 193, 195.
anthem...The choice of the Australian people, not the musical taste of George II, should determine Australia’s national anthem". Whittam’s policy speech later that month, which gave expression to his political ‘program’, promised to “revive in this nation the spirit of national cooperation and national self-respect”, to “take Australia forward to her rightful, proud, secure and independent place in the future of our region” and to “liberate the talents and uplift the horizons of the Australian people”. It was also ‘time’, he announced, to “start buying Australia back” from foreign investors.

Such rhetoric thus helps partly explain why ‘radical nationalists’ so readily equated Whittam’s ‘program’ and the prospect of his election with the resurgence of an innate Australian cultural nationalism. In addition to the abolition of appeals from the Supreme Courts of the States to London’s Privy Council, and his own refusal to accept a Privy Councillorship, the changes made by Whittam to some of the key symbols of Australian nationhood during his term in office – the introduction of a new Royal Styles and Titles Act, the replacement of the British honours system with the Order of Australia, and the change of the national anthem from God Save the Queen to Advance Australia Fair, were generally regarded as the most obvious and overt political expressions of this ‘new nationalism’. It was easy to portray such changes as a decisive break in Australia’s relations with Britain. Whittam, it seemed to some, was finally cutting the ‘apron-strings’ to the ‘mother-country.’

Whittam’s foreign policy initiatives were also readily placed within this paradigm of “new nationalism”. This was largely due to the constant emphasis, in Whittam’s speeches on foreign affairs, on the theme of Australian ‘independence’. At this level, and in its basic assertion of Australianness, the “new nationalism” did represent an attempt by Australians to find a distinctive and self-assertive response to their changing circumstances. As Cold War polarities eased in the 1970s, the ideological assumptions which had sustained Australia’s identity and her outlook on the world throughout the 50s and 60s had become obsolete. The final British withdrawal east of Suez in 1971 was followed by her formal entry into the European Economic Community in 1973. American President Richard Nixon's 1969 Guam Doctrine forecast the military retreat of the United

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72 EGW, quoted in The Australian, 20 November 1972.
States from Asia, leading to détente with the Soviet Union and an accommodation with China. Australia, as a European derived nation in the Asia-Pacific, was now alone, forced to come to terms with her role and place in the region.

On the day he was sworn in as Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Whitlam announced his view of Australia's role in the world: "...the general direction of my thinking" he said, "is towards a more independent Australian stance in international affairs and towards an Australia which will be less militarily oriented and not open to suggestions of racism." Without consulting 'great and powerful' friends, the remaining Australian military advisers were promptly withdrawn from Vietnam and communist regimes in China, North Vietnam, North Korea and East Germany were officially recognised. Whilst those on both sides of Australian politics in the late 1960s and early 1970s realised that the changes in international politics meant the country was on the verge of a new era in foreign affairs, there is little doubt that as Labor leader and then Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam did not view these shifting spheres of influence or dissolving power blocs with the same anxiety as conservative politicians. The basis of the Australian Labor Party's foreign and defence policy was to be that the nation faced no direct threat of external attack for the next ten to fifteen years.

As in the cases of W.M. Hughes and H.V. Evatt, however, Whitlam has been celebrated as a nationalist on account of his audible 'defiance' of Britain and America. His condemnation of the American decision to bomb North Vietnam in late December 1972 had introduced a new diplomatic style to Australian-American relations. Whilst Whitlam continually reaffirmed the importance of the US alliance, the Head of the Defence Department, Arthur Tange, was appalled at the public criticism of American actions in Vietnam. He did not think it in the best interests of small powers such as Australia "if they kicked great powers in the shins, simply for the pleasure it gave them and for no material objective". Yet it was because of this very perception, albeit an exaggerated one, that Whitlam in the eyes of some had passed the superficial 'radical nationalist' test of 'independence' and distanced Australia from the previous conservative

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75 EGW, CPD, II of R, vol. 84 (24 May 1973), 2642-44.
governments’ ‘old’ nationalism, which defined Australia as a subordinate part of the British or American world. Manning Clark typified this response. Not only had Whitlam “lifted Australia out of the doldrums of dependence” on the United States and Britain, he had led the nation from the “The Years of Unleavened Bread” into a blissful era of plentitude. Whitlam had ushered in the return of the “larrikin nationalist”. As Clark enthused: “Now we’ve got the situation of the 1890s once more where people are cheeky or indifferent about the royals and reacting against the snob or English values”. It was an enthusiastic embrace of the same ‘radical national’ tradition he had earlier deplored. Writing during the 1974 election campaign, Clark advocated a Labor vote, for in his eyes Whitlam had “dreamed a great dream”, was “moving with the great river of life”, and “had given us the pride and confidence to go it alone in the world: Mr Snedden wants to tie us again to the apron-strings”.

Continuing in this ‘radical nationalist’ vein, Russel Ward greeted Whitlam’s 1972 election victory as “The End of the Ice Age”. Drawing on W.K. Hancock’s initiative-resistance model of Australian political culture, Ward concluded that the defining difference between Labor and Liberal was much more than Hancock’s dichotomy, it was “that Labor is an Australian party while anti-Labor is the party of great and powerful overseas friends”. Ward saw the Labor party as the political custodians of The Australian Legend. The responses of Clark and Ward were no doubt in Humphrey McQueen’s sights when he pondered the importance of nationalism in Labor’s 1972 election victory. McQueen, whose commitment to Marxism was not compromised by the lure of Australian nationalism, identified a phalanx of left-wing Labor nationalists who “merely

77 Clark, ‘History will be kinder to Labor than the people’, The Australian, 7 January 1976.
82 In this article Ward called upon familiar tenets of the ‘radical nationalist’ myth – the period 1890-1914 when Australia displayed to the world the “possible shapes of the future” and the fallacy of Australia’s reliance on imperial defence, particularly as evidenced by the fall of Singapore in 1942. There was a noticeable tinge of bitterness in Ward’s observations. Britain’s decision to withdraw east of Suez and her entry to the European common market had “vividly demonstrated the fallacy of the Liberal and Country parties’ belief – that ties of kinship, culture, tradition and gratitude ensure the support of a great patron”. For Ward the requirement of work and residence permits for Australians in Britain smacked of hypocrisy:
accepted Whitlam as the inheritor of the radical nationalist tradition-cum-legend" and whose "nationalism was formed between 1935 and 1945 when popular fronts tried to use nationalism as a shield against fascism".\textsuperscript{83} Gareth Evans and Bruce Grant, in explaining the evolution of an independent Australian foreign policy, believed the Whitlam era to be a "watershed", since "It divided the prolonged obeisance of Menzies to the idea of Imperial unity...from the emergence of the kind of Australian foreign policy that we now take for granted".\textsuperscript{84} The assumption therefore that Whitlam was revealing Australia's 'true' self and expressing the voice of a distinctively Australian concept of political community has thus formed a strong current in interpretations of this era.

But what, therefore, of the pre-Whitlam era? Had not the successive changes in the nature of the Anglo-Australian relationship, and the reaction of Australian leaders to those changes, contributed to an authentic spirit of Australian nationalism? "Gough Whitlam", argued Robert Drewe, "...has been responsible for reviving the frustrated and almost impotent Australian nationalism...".\textsuperscript{85} Donald Horne, reassessing the nature of the "new nationalism" in the light of Labor's 1972 election victory, argued Whitlam had been "releasing and dramatising all sorts of things that had been developing before".\textsuperscript{86} Neither Drewe nor Horne, however, could adequately explain how Australian nationalism had been "frustrated" or what exactly these "things that had been developing before" actually were. This illustrates again the fundamental difficulty in locating the origins and defining the nature of the "new nationalism". Whitlam was simultaneously reviving a previously "frustrated" nationalism as well as "releasing and dramatising" "things that had been developing before". How can this be? This seemed to imply that the changes in the idea of nation which Whitlam introduced merely gave formal expression to existing forces in the Australian understanding of its place in the world. Such comments and metaphors further highlight the simplistic dichotomy within which historians of the 'radical nationalist' persuasion incorporated Whitlam's rise to power, and the way in

\textsuperscript{83}Her majesty's government was not so fussy about admitting more than half a million volunteers during two world wars". Ward, 'The End of the Ice Age', 11.

\textsuperscript{84}Humphrey McQueen, 'Nationalism and the Labor vote', in Henry Mayer (ed.), Labor to Power: Australia's 1972 Election (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1973), 17.

\textsuperscript{85}Gareth Evans and Bruce Grant, Australia's Foreign Relations in the World of the 1990s (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1991), 26.


which they have accommodated his government into an exclusive Australian nationalist teleology. It ignores the quite different emphasis emanating from Whitlam’s prime ministerial speeches.

Whitlam himself concurred with the view that by the time he became Prime Minister the British connection no longer tapped the same emotional chords in the Australian political and cultural consciousness. In May 1973 he assured the parliament that changes involving the powers of the Governor-General, the national anthem, appeals to the Privy Council, the Queen’s Style and Titles, and the Oath of Allegiance were “in no way directed against Britain”:

They are solely intended to put our relationship on a more mature and contemporary basis and to reflect the development of a more independent Australian identity in the world. Indeed what the Australian government is seeking to achieve in its relations not only with Britain but also with a number of other countries...is to give formal recognition to what has already happened, as the necessary foundation for a realistic, more independent, more mature foreign policy.

For Whitlam such changes constituted “no artificial convulsion of contrived nationalism”.87 One observer at the time, Professor Hedley Bull, agreed. He saw no emotion or sentimentality in the removal of such symbols, it was simply that “the imperial order which these symbols express had long been illusory”. Of far more immediate concern, according to Bull, was the need to “find new symbols around which the groups which now compose our population can find a basis for living together”.88 It is frustrating that Whitlam, like Horne, did not give expression to what was supposed to have “already happened”, but it is highly likely that in Whitlam’s view the fundamental changes in ideas of Australian nationhood, as made necessary by all the practical changes that had taken place, had already occurred before he came to office. On this point a recent study by Stuart Ward has concluded that Britain’s application to join the EEC between 1961 and 1963 was the pivotal moment in Anglo-Australian relations, that it “performed the function of extracting British race patriot ideology from deeply embedded roots in

Australian political culture”.89 Not long before Britain’s formal entry into the EEC in January 1973, *The Australian* argued that “Most Australians have been aware for over a decade that their country had moved outside British hegemony and was oriented more to the Pacific and to the United States than London”.90 By 1972, it seemed, there was no need to see such changes as leading inevitably to the realisation of a long-held ‘radical national’ dream.

Though this old imperial order for some had long been ‘illusory’, there were others outraged by Whitlam’s symbolic changes to the idea of Australian nationhood, seeing in them an abrupt and unwelcome rupture in the nation’s relationship with Britain and the first moves towards the creation of an Australian republic. One Opposition member claimed the Whitlam government would “cut Australia’s ties with England so quickly that the Queen will not even know that it has happened”.91 Shadow treasurer Phillip Lynch interpreted the clause in the *Australian Citizenship Bill* which sought to establish a uniform qualifying period for citizenship – applicable to all migrants – as a “particular disincentive to British migration”. He pointed to the falling number of applicants for assisted passage from Britain and concluded that “a feeling is already developed in Britain that the present administration in Australia is anti-British”.92 On Anzac Day 1974 Malcolm Fraser expressed his “great concern” at the “erosion of our links to the Crown” under Whitlam. Citing the attempt to delete the oath of allegiance to the Crown from the naturalisation ceremony for new migrants, and the move to stop *God Save the Queen* from being played on Anzac Day, Fraser argued: “Mr Whitlam may want a republic in Australia complete with President, but to what purpose? Our system of government provides better guarantees for freedom with a greater degree of stability and

90 *The Australian*, 2 November 1972. This editorial was reacting to new British immigration laws (to come into effect when Britain formally entered the EEC on 1 January 1973) which put Australians into an ‘alien’ category. Later that month, *The Australian* described this action as “morally indefensible”, asserting that those from the “old Commonwealth” who had retained the monarchy as head of state and who had “lost a significant portion of their population fighting on Britain’s behalf in two world wars” should be given exemption from such a classification. See *The Australian*, 23 November 1973.
91 The speaker was Donald Cameron MHR (Liberal –Qld) *CPD*, H of R, vol. 86 (24 October 1973), 2626.
more opportunity for individual people than any other form I know”. 93 As Mark McKenna has noted, “whether the Whitlam government was republican or not, it was in the interests of opposition parties to portray it as republican”. But as McKenna accurately notes, the reverse was true. Whitlam, in naturalising the Queen, in fact did more to stifle republicanism than further it.94

Thus in designating Elizabeth II as ‘Queen of Australia’, Whitlam maintained that the change had taken account of “popular feeling” and made the monarchy a “closer and more relevant institution” for Australians. In concluding his statement on The Queen and the Privy Council to parliament in May 1973 Whitlam spoke in near Churchillian tones:

I emphasise that these matters represent no disruptive departure from the past. In the great tradition of British constitutional monarchy, we march still from precedent to precedent – albeit with a firmer, more self-confident, more purposeful tread than ever before.95

Yet was this ‘more purposeful tread’ leading Australia completely out of the orbit of the British constitutional monarchy? More than most Whitlam possessed a deep reverence for the symbolic sovereignty of the Crown, both in his capacity as a member of parliament – as a minister of the crown, and as a Queen’s Counsel – as one who upheld the Queen’s justice and prosecuted offenders in the name of the Crown. Whitlam’s father, it is to be remembered, considered himself “of the British tradition” in relation to the rule of law and a commitment to parliamentary democracy. For Whitlam the position of the Crown as the formal source of authority in the Australian Constitution was unquestioned. The nature of Whitlam’s Britishness assumed a more pungent tone on the day he was dismissed from office – perhaps a day when he would least be expected to enunciate any identification with British tradition. Though Whitlam asserted in his Memoirs that his government “was not republican...until the manipulation of the monarchy on 11 November 1975”96, in the immediate aftermath of the crisis he cried foul at the violation

[93] Malcolm Fraser, radio broadcast, in Fraser papers, NAA, M 1229/1. See also Daniel McVeigh, MHR, (Liberal – Qld) CPD, H of R, vol. 83 (9 May 1973), 1899-1900: “the Labor government is aiming deliberately at isolationist republicanism”.
of British constitutional practice. When asked on 11 November how it felt to be a Prime Minister sacked by the crown, Whitlam replied: “I’m the first for 200 years since George III sacked Lord North”.

Despite the heavy emphasis on ‘independence’ in his pronouncements on international affairs, Whitlam went out of his way to re-affirm the “essential foundations” of Australian foreign policy and the continuity of his government’s approach with that of its predecessors. It was not that Australia’s national interests and international obligations, or its alliances and friendships, had changed, but that the “perception and interpretation of those interests, obligations and friendships” signified a change that was “real and deep”. This emphasis on ‘perception and interpretation’ may well have implied a more distinctively ‘nationalist’ approach to foreign relations, but it was not a stance which automatically placed Australia outside the sphere of its traditional relationships. An example of this attitude can be seen in Whitlam’s rhetoric concerning the alliance with the United States. He maintained that Australia was still an “aligned” country and that the ANZUS alliance was the most vital plank of Australia’s security. A more ‘independent’ foreign policy implied, in essence, relative independence for Australia within the US alliance.

During his US visit in July 1973, Whitlam defined a new Australian-American relationship. Australia was “not a satellite of any country. We are a friend and partner of the United States, particularly in the Pacific, but with independent interests of our own”.

In his view the relationship had reached a “new maturity” – but with what purpose? Australia wanted the United States to realise that under the ANZUS agreement it should give consideration to the different needs and interests of its junior allies. During Whitlam’s second visit to the US as Prime Minister in 1975 he gave further expression to his American sympathies. Discussing the possibilities and hopes for world peace, Whitlam again gave his unequivocal support to détente, which he had previously

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97 The Australian, 12 November 1975.
described as the “most hopeful development in post-war history”.\textsuperscript{100} He exhorted the United States to continue to promote détente among the superpowers and to assume again its rightful place as the “true leader of the world” and, indeed, as the “last, best hope of the world.”\textsuperscript{101} Such language was not purely the product of political opportunism. Whitlam himself had expressed admiration for FD Roosevelt’s New Deal, and between 1969 and 1972, the Labor leadership claimed that Liberal-Country party policy towards Vietnam and China had delayed the return of America to its rightful position as leader of the free world.\textsuperscript{102}

Whitlam’s foreign policy was most notable for its policies of internationalism. In his Roy Milne Lecture of November 1973, Whitlam expressed what he believed to be best international practice for Australia: “The United Nations, despite its imperfections, still represents for us our best hope of producing through international goodwill and collaboration a more peaceful and secure world in which all mankind can live and prosper”.\textsuperscript{103} The ratification of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, adhesion to the covenants on Human Rights and the Convention on Elimination of Racial Discrimination, as well as the decision to take France to the International Court of Justice over its nuclear testing in the Pacific, were all examples of the Whitlam government’s preference for working through international instrumentalities. As Whitlam told the UN general assembly in September 1974, “No country needs more than Australia the fulfillment of the international objectives of the United Nations to reach the fulfillment of her own national objectives. There are few countries in which the paradox is demonstrated with such force that true national independence depends upon international interdependence...in seeking a better international order, we give primacy to the United Nations”.\textsuperscript{104} Along with interdependence then, Whitlam adhered to the view that a community of nations in which its members lived in harmony with one another was the

\textsuperscript{100} EGW, ‘Czechoslovakia’, Statement by the Leader of the Opposition, Canberra, 21 August 1968, in Whitlam papers, NAA, M170/T1.

\textsuperscript{101} EGW, Speech to the National Press Club, 8 May 1975, in Neville Meaney, Australia and the World, 770-772.


best means of solving what he saw as the "complex and daunting" problems which faced the world.

The United Nations was also the principal forum in which Whitlam expressed his long-held view that conflict in the Asian region was a direct result of the great powers use of it as their "field for destructive rivalry".105 Shortly after his election in 1972, Whitlam advised the Australian delegation to the United Nations in New York to vote in favour of a resolution for neutrality in the Indian Ocean, and to emphasise Australia's identity with Asian and Pacific States.106 In June 1973, Whitlam noted that in the past, Australia in the United Nations had "paid excessive regard to the voting intentions of the United Kingdom and the United States and had found itself frequently in a different voting position from that of its neighbours".107 He said Australia would, in future, take more notice of countries such as Canada, Japan, India and the African countries. Whitlam also envisaged a new Asia-Pacific regional organisation "without ideological overtones, conceived as an initiative to help free the region of great power rivalries" and to "insulate the region against ideological interference from the great powers".108 It would be a "zone of peace, freedom and neutrality".109 He gave further expression to this idealism during a prime ministerial visit to South East Asia - "fundamentally I am an optimist...about the future of our region. Diplomacy must be based on realistic hopes rather than resignation and despair".110 It was a realist 'world-view' which would contrast sharply with his successor as Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser. Where Whitlam counseled optimism about the prospect of peace, Fraser would see the constant threat of Soviet hegemony.

But the "new nationalism" was not only used to express the desire for a more independent Australian role in world affairs, it was also identified with renewed creative endeavour in the arts, with increased control of Australian industries and resources, and with the preservation of the nation's heritage and environment. Thus from its inception the 'new nationalism' had significant implications for economic and cultural policy.

107 EGW, quoted in Clark, Ibid., 129.
110 EGW, Australia and South East Asia - Principal Speeches (Canberra: AGPS, 1974), 15.
In the economic sphere, the "new nationalism" became associated with what Robert Drew called the "emotionally charged vortex of buying back the farm".\textsuperscript{111} It was clear that the constant emphasis on 'independence' at this time could be diminished or impaired if Australian natural resources were controlled by foreign companies. In his 1972 policy speech, Whitlam had promised to establish a Secretariat to monitor the flow of foreign investment into Australia and to determine whether foreign takeovers or mergers were in the 'national interest'. He also pledged to expand the activities of the Australian Industry Development Corporation (AIDC) so that it might assist both Australia and foreign companies in the exploration, development and processing of Australian natural resources. The 'economic nationalism' of the Gorton, Whitlam and Fraser governments would be superceded by the policies of globalisation and unrestricted foreign ownership advocated in the subsequent Hawke-Keating era. In explaining the emergence of Whitlam's 'economic nationalism' in the early 1970s, H.S. Albinski has pointed to the suspicion of capitalism inherent in Labor's social democratic ethos. When the face of capitalism appeared in Australia in the form of foreign ownership of Australian companies and multi-national activity, it "had to be reined in".\textsuperscript{112} Albinski however did not clarify whether it was socialism or nationalism which motivated Labor.

The Whitlam government sought a more prominent role for Australians in the senior management of American-owned companies in Australia. Whitlam himself criticised the decision by General Motors Holden to appoint another American to fill the position of managing director for their Australian operations. American companies such as Chrysler and Mobil displayed some sensitivity to this new mood.\textsuperscript{113} During the federal election campaign of 1974, Whitlam unleashed a stinging attack on multi-national companies in Australia, and again promised to restrict future foreign investment. He declared the basic question of the campaign to be: "...will Australians continue to control their own economic destiny or are we to become tenants in our own land?...We have fought for our independence in several wars. What arms could not conquer, money must

\textsuperscript{112} H.S. Albinski, \textit{Australian External Policy Under Labor – Content, Process and the National Debate} (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1977), 64.
\textsuperscript{113} Meany, 'The United States'; 204.
not buy”.¹¹⁴ In the emotive language of an election campaign the fusion of ‘destiny’, ‘independence’ and the Anzac spirit illustrated the extent to which excessive foreign investment was depicted as anathema to the spirit of the ‘new nationalism’.

The ‘new nationalism’ was also clearly manifest in government support for the arts. Whitlam, as the self-confessed “man of arts”, whose ‘world-view’ had been nourished by an appreciation for civilisation – *humanitas* – and the pursuit of excellence, was lauded as the patron of an Australian cultural renaissance. In his 1972 policy speech Whitlam had promised his government would strive to promote a “standard of excellence” in the arts, to “widen access to, and the understanding and application of, the arts in the community, generally”, as well as to use the arts in the establishment and expression of Australian identity both at home and abroad.¹¹⁵ Speaking on the *Australia Council Bill* in 1974 Whitlam claimed it impossible to “imagine a mature civilisation” without the contribution of Australian artists. The Bill would ensure “the emotional, spiritual and intellectual rewards which the Arts alone can provide”.¹¹⁶ Whitlam’s respect for the Arts was duly reciprocated. An ‘artists for Whitlam’ committee had been formed before the 1972 poll, and during an election rally held at the Sydney Opera House in 1974, Nobel prize winning novelist Patrick White derided the conservatives as “rustic clowns”, praised Whitlam’s modernity and welcomed his recognition of the need to “cure ourselves of mentally constipated attitudes”.¹¹⁷ Ironically the most publicised cultural act of the Whitlam government was its purchase of an American abstract painting – Jackson Pollock’s *Blue Poles* – though there was also an emphasis on the acquisition of Australia art as well as artistic treasures of foreign countries. In any case, Whitlam was driven by

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¹¹⁴ *Canberra Times*, 3 May 1974. On his visit to Japan in October 1973, when asked as to the possible impact of what Japanese journalists called an “expanded nationalism on resources” and the new restrictions on foreign capital, Whitlam replied: “...Now, why Australia has become more nationalistic, as you would phrase it, is that in the 15 years or less that Australia has discovered these very large natural resources which other countries, particularly Japan, want to draw upon, these resources have been overwhelmingly in overseas hands. The Australian minerals industry, for instance, is 62 per cent controlled overseas. Australians are worried at that degree of control and they don’t want that percentage of control to grow bigger...I would think that the nationalism in Australia...is a feeling which the Japanese people would understand and support.” EGW, interview at NHK Tokyo, 28 October 1973, transcript, Whitlam papers, NAA, M163.


¹¹⁷ ‘Patrick White’s tribute to the Whitlam Government’, *Meanjin*, vol. 33, no. 2 (June 1974), 220-1. See also EGW, Speech at Sydney Opera House, 13 May 1974, Whitlam papers, NAA, M163; and Jim Davidson, ‘Mr Whitlam’s Cultural Revolution’, *Journal of Australian Studies* 20 (May 1987)
the view that all artistic endeavour, including sculptures from ancient Greece, were "as valid a part of Australia's heritage as a Magna Carta of Edward I".118 It was in keeping with the internationalist flavour of the "new nationalism" as well as the deep respect Whitlam had retained from young adulthood for the "countries where traditions old of music, letters, art are proudly set".

The speech Whitlam delivered at Ballarat on 3 December 1973 – the one hundred and nineteenth anniversary of the Eureka stockade incident of 1854 when, according to the 'radical national' myth, miners rose up against British authority and raised the flag of Australian rebellion – was the only speech during his prime ministership which dealt extensively with the "new nationalism" and its meaning for the Whitlam doctrine. The Department of Foreign Affairs decided to circulate this speech to all overseas posts, with an accompanying memorandum which announced the "new nationalism" to Australian diplomats as a "mainspring of the Government's political philosophy and hence a motivating force in its actions and reactions on foreign affairs."119 Whitlam's Eureka speech was thus tethered to Australia's diplomatic world. The appropriation of Eureka for political purposes, however, had a history of its own. Those with radical inclinations had seen in their augury of Eureka the portents of future national greatness. William Lane120, the Communist party of Australia,121 H.V. Evatt122 Ben Chifley and Robert Menzies all at various times invoked the memory of Eureka – either as the seeds of Australian republicanism, the birth of Australian democracy, or as Menzies put it, "an earnest

120 William Lane used the image of the Eureka flag towards the end of his 1888 invasion scare novel "White or Yellow". Because Britain had rejected the Australian colonists anti-Chinese legislation, Australia had to become a republic. To dramatise the point, Lane had his rebels fight under the Eureka flag. When it was hoisted "Men grasped each other's hands and turned aside to hide their moistened eyes". And as Meaney further noted "Even a survivor of the Eureka stockade was present to add his blessing to the undertaking". See Neville Meaney, "'The Yellow Peril', Invasion Scare Novels and Australian Political Culture", in Ken Stewart (ed.) The 1890s - Australian Literature and Literary Culture (St Lucia: Queensland University Press, 1996), 238.
121 The constitutional preamble of the Australian Communist party written in 1938 contained reference to Eureka as one of "the best traditions of Australian democracy" and in the "fight for social reforms"; cited in Stuart Macintyre, The Reds (Sydney: Allen &Unwin, 1998), 314-317.
attempt at democratic government". Labor Prime Minister Ben Chifley’s interpretation is worth noting on this point. He considered Lesley Haylen’s 1948 Eureka play *Blood on the Wattle* to be “Australian without being nationalist”. In other words, a distinctive Australianness was not necessarily reliant upon the projection of a strident nationalism. However, in a variation on the ‘radical nationalist’ theme, Chifley designated Eureka as “the first real affirmation of our determination to be master of our own political destiny”.

Whilst Whitlam in his Eureka speech accepted and re-affirmed Evatt’s declaration that “Australian democracy was born at Eureka”, the first Labor Prime Minister for twenty three years had a different political philosophy into which Eureka was to be placed. Whitlam’s appropriation of Eureka’s symbolism for the Labor party differed from Chifley’s and Evatt’s in that he recognised the fundamental insignificance of the actual events of December 1854. In Whitlam’s eyes Eureka had “little to do” with the formation of the ALP or the movement towards Federation, but his accuracy in these comments was overtaken by contemporary party political concerns. Though the events of Eureka were “sad and remote and isolated”, Whitlam nevertheless saw in them “a symbol of the pride, the independence of spirit, the democratic traditions and the strong nationalist aspirations for which Labor has always stood and with which the new government is especially identified”. Whitlam was unique in making this explicit connection between independence, democracy and an Australian nationalism, since neither the Communist party, Evatt, Chifley nor Menzies had mentioned Australian nationalism as such.

In this speech Whitlam connected the “new nationalism” to his ‘Australianising’ of the Federal government:

Anyone reading the [ALP] platform will be struck by the emphasis on ‘Australia’, the ‘Australian nation’, on *national* goals and aspirations. Alone among the parties, we affirm the supremacy of Australian sovereignty over the whole nation and its Territories. Anyone who has studied the record of the Government’s achievements since coming to office will recognise this nationalist sentiment as the great binding theme of all our major decisions and initiatives.

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This was not merely rhetorical flourish. The Acts Interpretation Bill passed in 1973 provided for the use of the term ‘Australia’ to signify the Australian nation and to take the place of ‘Commonwealth’ in legislation.\textsuperscript{126} The most important connection to be made, however, was between Eureka and the “new nationalism”.

If a “nationalist sentiment” was the “great binding theme” for Whitlam Labor, it was to be a heavily qualified one. In a clear signal to those either fearful of the very idea of nationalism, or those not yet ready to embrace Australia’s changing circumstances, Whitlam first reassured his audience that there was nothing “sinister or threatening” about the “new nationalism” and that it did not mean the “overturning of received ideas and settled traditions, the breaking off of old friendships”. This consciousness of nationalism’s sins and the importance of maintaining continuities with the past required a careful modification of the term itself. Through its concern with reinvigorating and enshrining “true Australian values” such as fair play, independence and egalitarianism – an egalitarianism which was “at the heart of the Australian tradition” – the “new nationalism” brought together “a great number of diverse strands and attitudes”, encompassing economic, social, cultural, aboriginal, and foreign policy. The notion that it could cut across such a wide range of government initiatives would suggest that in one sense, the “new nationalism” was Whitlam’s attempt to forge a national consensus. It was certainly an attempt to provide a focus of meaning and attachment for the people.

In drawing broader conclusions about the nature of this “new nationalism” Whitlam expressed the substance of what he interpreted Australia’s changing attitude to nationalism to be:

There is nothing coarse or intolerant or xenophobic about this kind of nationalism. It does not mean closing our society to beneficial ideas from abroad. An authentic Australianism can readily accommodate foreign influences and foreign cultures, just as we have prospered from the post-war program of immigration. They were migrants, after all – Irish, European, American – who provided the backbone of the Eureka rising. Nor do I care for the argument that a ‘new nationalism’ is outmoded or even dangerous in a world that has suffered too much from nationalistic hatreds

\textsuperscript{126} Acts Interpretation Bill 1973 Second Reading, CPD H of R, vol. 84 (24 May 1973), 2642; W.K. Hancock, who argued that “Supreme among the verbal symbols of Australian nationhood is the word Commonwealth”, was most disappointed by this development: “Casually, the word Commonwealth was sent to Coventry. Some glorious chapters of our history were sent at the same time to the same place”. Professing History (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1976), 154-55.
and passions and strives only for peace and security based on international understanding. No government is more committed than mine to internationalism in this highest sense. Yet if we look at the nations, excluding the major powers, that have advanced international co-operation the most – India, Canada, the Scandinavian countries – we find they are nations with a secure and distinctive national identity of their own. Echoes and shadows, satellites and vassals are not forces for peace and co-operation: they are more likely to be the first victims when peace and co-operation are overthrown.\textsuperscript{127}

These comments illustrated clearly the tension between Whitlam’s prime ministerial need to galvanise a feeling of national unity and the recognition that nationalism was associated with malevolent forces in human affairs. Thus one of the distinguishing features for prime ministers in this period, in treating the subject of nationalism, was now to state what it was not, rather than what it actually was. What precisely therefore was the character of Whitlam’s “new nationalism” as nationalism?

The “new nationalism” as defined by Whitlam had sacrificed nationalism’s own prescription for cultural and racial homogeneity, since it could “readily accommodate foreign influences and foreign cultures”. But in taking from nationalism some of its strongest, most traditional qualities, a new problem emerged. If Australian nationalism no longer had a demand for homogeneity at its core, what was it that did the accommodating? Whilst a homogenous, predominantly white British society had been the goal of successive Australian governments since Federation, the granting of citizenship rights to Aborigines in 1967 and the ending of racial discrimination in immigration policy in the early 1970s meant that the monolithic myth required by nationalism was no longer viable. In Robert Drewe’s analysis of the “new nationalism”, Manning Clark had shown an awareness of this problem when he redefined Australian nationalism to remove its racism. In the ‘old’ nationalism, he said, “...the Chinese, Jews, [and] Negroes could all go to hell. That is breaking down at last. There’s much more universalism in it today”. But the unease with which newly arrived migrants approached the idea of ‘nationalism’ was well summarised by Solon Baltinos, then general secretary of the New Settlers Federation: “…To me nationalism has connotations of racism and militarism. The Nazis were supernationalists”.\textsuperscript{128} Whilst perhaps an extreme view, Baltinos reflected the


* The Aborigines didn’t get citizenship rights in 1967, they already had them; rather the federal government was voted rights to legislate in Aboriginal affairs.
potential awkwardness of introducing nationalist discourse into Australian politics. Whitlam’s rhetoric at Eureka reflected a sensitivity to these new migrants. By highlighting the contribution of foreigners “... who provided the backbone of the Eureka rising...” Whitlam presented them with a privileged niche in the tradition of Australian ‘egalitarianism’. Victoria’s Good Neighbour society bussed 120 new migrants from Melbourne to Ballarat so that they might witness the ceremonies.129 Speeches on the same day by the Minister for Immigration, Al Grassby, further developed this theme of Eureka as confirmation that Australia had become “a nation of immigrants”.130

Whitlam, reflecting his deepest beliefs formed since childhood, also made it clear that nationalism was acceptable if it was primarily concerned with the welfare of the members of the nation, and if it directed its energies towards “international cooperation” and peace rather than intolerance, xenophobia or hostility. The “new nationalism”, despite those who readily assumed the term had radical implications, was not concerned with the aggressive assertion of Australianness towards others. The Liberal-Country party opposition were quick to exacerbate such fears however, and pounced on the “new nationalism” as symbolic of the government’s immaturity in dealing with the world. Shadow foreign affairs spokesman Andrew Peacock declared in the parliament, before Whitlam’s Eureka speech, that the government’s ‘new nationalism’ was “not in Australia’s interest. It is not new nationalism but old-style aggressive nationalism, a petulant self-assertiveness...” which was harming Australia’s standing with Britain, the United States and neighbouring Asia-Pacific countries.131 Malcolm Fraser described the ‘new nationalism’ as “a perversity, and an archaic approach to domestic and world affairs”.132 Such criticisms and political point-scoring, whilst ascribing to Whitlam the very form of classic, European style, oppressive nationalism he was trying so carefully to avoid, nonetheless showed that there was a political consensus which in dealing with

Australia’s new circumstances eschewed the adoption of an ‘old-style’ exclusive Australian nationalism.

In the conclusion to his Eureka speech, in perhaps the most realistic and intellectually sophisticated assessment of the historical context of Australian nationalism articulated by a Prime Minister, Whitlam declared:

Our past is deficient in turbulent events, in the civil convulsions and upheavals that provide for older civilisations a focus for nationalistic fervour and popular emotion. Those symbols and rituals we have, like our parliamentary and constitutional system itself, derive from a quiescent colonial past. I am not one to argue, as some romantics do, that true nationalism must spring from the agony and suffering endured by former generations. Yet it is in the nature of things that an event like Eureka with all its associations, with all its potent symbolism, will acquire an aura of excitement and romance and stir the imagination of the Australian people. Dr Johnson remarked that patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel. He was well aware that patriotism can be carried to extremes and that nationalism can be carried to excess. There is, nevertheless, a kind of nationalism that every country needs. It is a benign and constructive nationalism. It has to do with self-confidence, with maturity, with originality, with independence of mind.

Whitlam had recognised that Australian nationalism could not match nationalism’s European model for blood or civil strife, and he would not wish it to do so even if it could. As one who had lived through the second great European war of nationalism, Whitlam valued the Australian difference, just as, when an eighteen year old, he had penned his preference for the “verdant vista of the New” over the “heritage of great and true”. His weaving of values such as ‘self-confidence’ and ‘maturity’ into the threads of the national fabric were intended to curb the extreme expressions of nationalism. For Whitlam, Australia’s institutional heritage emanated from a “quiescent colonial past” and in defying the “romantics” who argued that “true nationalism must spring from the agony and suffering endured by former generations”, he gave expression to an idea of Australian nationalism very different from his Labor predecessors.

For John Curtin Australian nationhood had been achieved on “death-charged” battlefields, in “spine chilling” battles and on “storm-tossed” oceans. For Ben Chifley, Australia had “won her spurs” through “the testing times of two world wars and a major depression”.133 For Curtin and Chifley, the achievement of Australian nationhood, even

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133 See Chapter Two, pp 46, 51.
though it was a British-Australian nationhood, was by no means ‘quiescent’. It had been gained through great adversity, in fighting for the British empire and amidst the hardship of national crisis. In the 1970s, however, Whitlam embodied the tension between the rhetorical demands of prime ministerial office – and the need to articulate what held the nation together – with his liberal sensitivity towards a hostile, aggressive nationalism.

The relationship between Whitlam’s use of nationalism and Eureka remained dubious. Why choose an event such as Eureka to communicate the idea of a “benign and constructive nationalism”? One possible explanation is because the celebration of a seeming national event enabled him to lift Eureka to a higher plane. As Whitlam conceded: “...it is in the nature of things that an event like Eureka with all its associations, with all its potent symbolism, will acquire an aura of excitement and romance and stir the imagination of the Australian people”. In this way his understanding of nationalism doubled back on itself. Whilst Eureka did not lead directly to a bloody nationalist revolution, its symbolism and “romance” – contrasted with the “nationalist fervour” of “older civilisations” – ensured that it could become the Australian equivalent. Thus even though Whitlam himself did not see Eureka this way, he understood why it might be given such a nationalist justification. In parliament following this speech Whitlam again claimed to have “celebrated and revived” the “independence” which Eureka signified, but as noted above, this was very much a limited form of “independence”.

Lest it be thought that this concept of ‘new nationalism’ was pragmatically associated with the anniversary of Eureka, it is the case that Whitlam gave further voice to his government’s philosophy on Australia Day 1974. On this occasion Whitlam again declared he was “happy and proud to proclaim” the “new nationalism” and that a “healthy nationalism” was the “essential preparation for a true internationalism”. He argued not for “truculent or flag-waving ambitions” but for improvements to quality of life, increased control over Australia’s natural resources and the national estate. He called

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135 In summarising the achievements of his first year in office, Whitlam told the parliament - “Above all my government believes in those abiding virtues in Australian society which have given us a distinctive nationhood, the belief in fraternity and independence, the instinct for fair play, justice and freedom that Eureka signifies. It is those virtues which Australia’s foreign policies have sought to embody over the last
on the people to commit themselves to a “greater Australia – not in any bombastic or chauvinistic sense, but generously, humanely, out of regard for the welfare of our fellow man and our neighbours”. Thus the “new nationalism” was equivalent to the welfare state at home and internationalism abroad. But again the tension in Whitlam’s language was palpable. The “new nationalism”, in order to acquire legitimacy, required constant juxtaposition with what he believed to be the conventional image of ‘nationalism’ held by the people, be it “coarse...intolerant...xenophobic”, or “bombastic” and “chauvinistic”. And to emphasise the continuity of his interpretation of an Australian identity derived from the Western tradition, Whitlam in this same Australia Day speech expressed his admiration for the “optimism and sheer zest for accomplishment in the American way of life” and the “qualities of liberalism and intellectual detachment in the British tradition”. Australia would remain open to these influences and continue to emulate them. As Geoffrey Serle explained, somewhat modifying his earlier, more ‘radical nationalist’ claim: “mature nationhood” was a combination of a “relaxed sense of nationality” and an “openness to international influences”. The more Whitlam defined the basis of this “new nationalism”, the more it became clear that it was not a jingoistic exercise of national chest-thumping, or even the creation of a unique and exclusive identity. Nationalism was not something to be worn on the sleeve or expressed by frantically waving the national flag.

Whitlam’s obvious restraint in defining the ‘new nationalism’ represented the traditional liberal intellectual response to nationalism. On the one hand this liberalism had an inherent suspicion of nationalism – as a regressive force which constituted a basic threat to liberal aspirations for human progress. Yet the ‘world-view’ of British liberals in

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year, it is that independence which my government has celebrated and revived”. EGW CPD, H of R, vol.87 (13 December 1973), 4733.

[136] Serle, From Deserts the Prophets Come, 229.

[137] EGW, Speech for Australia Day celebrations, Regatta Point, Canberra, 26 January 1974, transcript, Whitlam papers, NAA, M 163. Whitlam was not the first Labor leader however to express caution with regards to ‘nationalism’. In his 1963 ‘Declaration of An Australian Nationalist’, Arthur Calwell argued: “We have seen what havoc nationalism gone wrong has wrought in our time; therefore we have no excuse for failing to be aware of its dangers”. Accordingly, Calwell envisaged a “healthy”, “generous” and “friendly” nationalism for Australia, one which would nourish “the desire for international cooperation” and which was “conceived in no spirit of arrogance or superiority”. AA.Calwell, Labor’s Role in Modern Society (Melbourne: Landsdowne Press, 1963), 15-16. Though Graham Freudenberg has acknowledged a substantial role in the writing of this work, he was not responsible for writing Whitlam’s Eureka speech.
the first half of the nineteenth century suggested that nationalism and liberalism were not entirely incompatible. In the liberal nationalist’s ‘world-view’ the dissolution of old empires and a respect for national self-determination constituted the prerequisites for a stable and balanced international order. In displaying their support for national independence movements in Greece, Italy and South America, British liberals saw personal and national freedom as indivisible, since both combined in the struggle for liberty. By the middle of the nineteenth century liberalism was strongly attached to international support for national self-determination. A ‘liberal nationalism’ therefore was opposed to both domestic oppression and an aggressive, expansionist foreign policy. The aim was autonomy rather than domination over others. In the liberal nationalist ‘world-view’, a peaceful world was one comprised of independent self-governing, liberal and constitutional states which respected each other’s sovereignty and culture. Whittam had given expression to this liberal nationalism more forcefully when he spoke in support of Asian nationalism as the only ideological bulwark against communism. But there had not, however, been the corresponding demand, as in his Eureka speech, that Asian nationalism be ‘benign’. Asian nationalism, though it should principally be concerned with the achievement of self-government, needed to be sufficiently strong so as to withstand the threat of communist infiltration.

The tension involved in Whittam’s treatment of the “new nationalism” question was also manifest in foreign policy, and it was not a phenomenon he proclaimed with any conviction or passion when overseas. Careful to nullify any perception of nationalistic excess, Whittam’s “new nationalism” was thus even more restrained and modified abroad than it was at home. Defining the new Australian-American relationship in Washington in July 1973, he expressed the view that the “…new nationalism, for which the election of this government is seen as a catalyst, is, I hope, really the beginning of self-confidence…”, one which was based around a growing awareness of Australia’s unique

Notes from a conversation with Graham Freudenberg, 4 August 2000. The Speech was written by another of Whittam’s press secretaries, Evan Williams. Interview with Evan Williams, Sydney, 6 March 2001.

139 DI Manning, Liberalism (London: JM Dent & Sons, 1976), 93
140 Arblaster, The Rise and Decline of Western Liberalism, 262.
place in the world, her obligations and a new "creative maturity". It was the Australian community of interest – and the coalescence of these interests with those of other nations - rather than a community of culture, which was more often emphasised in foreign policy speeches at this time. Whitlam’s speeches during a prime ministerial visit to Asia in early 1974 continued in this vein of qualifying the “new nationalism”. In Manila, he compared the new-found self respect of both countries: “In the Philippines, President Marcos has referred to this new spirit as “National Self Reliance”. It has been called in Australia the ‘New Nationalism’, though it is not a term I use. Essentially what we are both saying is that we must stand more on our own feet”.

Thus within the space of two months Whitlam had moved from being “happy to adopt and affirm” the “new nationalism” in Australia to not even acknowledging the term abroad. Different audiences no doubt required different messages, but it was clear that the “new nationalism” was reserved for domestic consumption only. Whitlam’s acute sensitivity to nationalism’s dangers, in addition to his broader commitment to Australia as a model of international best practice, meant that it was simply inappropriate and unnecessary to be on the world stage extolling a loud-mouthed, stridently nationalist line. These sentiments were again clearly expressed in his speech to the Singapore Press Club:

Much is written about Australia’s ‘new nationalism’, I would rather put it in terms of Australia’s new internationalism. Of course there is a national spirit awake and abroad in Australia. But Australia wants....what all the nations in this region are seeking — a national identity within the international community, reasonable control over our own resources in a world where all nations are increasingly interdependent.

Thus the “new nationalism” was not interpreted by Whitlam to mark a radical or dramatic shift in Australia’s concept of nationhood, one which would assert her rights and differences against other nations. This was not only true of his rhetoric in Asian countries, but also in Britain. As argued above, the “new nationalism”, despite its frequent invocations of Australian ‘independence’, was in no way anti-British. Not

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142 EGW, Address at the University of the Philippines, 11 February 1974, AFAR, vol 45, no 2 (February 1974), 85.
143 EGW, Address to the Singapore Press Club, 8 February 1974, Ibid., 93.
withstanding all the formal changes in the Australia-Britain relationship, journalist Robert Duffield argued that “identification with what we might call the British myth has been increasing rather than decreasing” in the 1970s. Cheap air fares to Europe had given more Australians the chance to “see where their ancestors came from”.144 These pilgrimages along the Thames to “hear...the chimes of Big Ben”, perhaps counterbalanced the ‘radical nationalists’ imaginary triumphal processions to ‘true’ nationhood. Whitlam himself acknowledged that though the Anglo-Australian relationship was less intense than in the past, “Australians still feel more readily at home in England than in any other country...”145

In his 1974 Mansion House speech in London Whitlam continued in his emphatic denial of an anti-British content for the “new nationalism”:

Those who see in some of our recent actions concerning Britain a manifestation of some strident new nationalism or anti-British feeling have completely misread our intentions and mistaken the mood of our people. What Australia is trying to do is establish an independent identity in the world and especially in our own region. We have grown up. Our actions are in no way anti-British. They are simply pro-Australian....there can never be any questions about the enduring strength of Australia’s ties with the British people. The vast majority of our people are of British stock. We wish to build on British institutions. I believe that our understanding will deepen, rather than diminish, as Australia assumes her rightful place as a proud and independent nation...146

Whitlam’s comments indicate here that despite the renunciation of formal British ties, despite the new emphasis on an Asia-Pacific consciousness, and despite the formal abolition of the White Australia Policy and the integration of new migrants into Australian society, the nation’s political culture maintained at its core the British heritage as it had been modified by Australian experience. These comments also suggest that it was Australia’s changing relationship with Britain, rather than the re-appearance of an innate, self-sufficient nationalism, which was responsible for the new ‘pro-Australian’ stance.

Conclusion

The comparison between Whitlam’s projection of a “new nationalism” as Prime Minister between 1973-75 and his support for Asian nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s thus highlighted the fundamental tension in his ‘world-view’. Nationalism had two different purposes in two different worlds. Within the context of Australia’s changed circumstances in the early 1970s, Prime Minister Whitlam was no doubt conscious of his duty as national leader to express a belief in what held the nation together – to give expression to an ideal of national unity. With its emphasis on egalitarianism, Eureka, a new national anthem, a new honours system, and a renewed emphasis on Australian arts and culture, the “new nationalism” was certainly a basic assertion of Australianness. Whitlam was at pains to explain, however, that if Australia was to have a ‘new nationalism’, it should be given carefully prescribed limits. If it was a new Australian nationalism, it was also a new kind of nationalism, one which stripped from the old, classic idea of nationalism its oppressive and aggressive qualities, one which lacked conforming intensity and welcomed ethnic diversity. In the Whitlam view, Australia did not need the romantic nationalist model derived from Europe which demanded racial exclusiveness or blood-soaked revolutions for legitimacy. Yet Asian peoples, who in the 1950s and 1960s had struggled for national independence, had needed nationalism, and not necessarily one which was ‘benign’. It remains a great irony that Whitlam, himself seen by some of the ‘radical nationalist’ school as the political figure who had released a previously ‘thwarted’ Australian nationalism, in fact used this same thesis of ‘thwarted’ nationalism to support nationalist independence movements in South East Asia, in this case a ‘thwarted’ Asian nationalism which had resulted in the spread of communist influence.

The mildness and tentativeness of Whitlam’s ‘new nationalism’ becomes even more conspicuous when compared to the way in which Australians had so passionately and wholeheartedly identified with the British race myth from the 1880s through to the post World War Two era. As British race patriotism fulfilled Australia’s need for a mass nationalism, these were times when the Australian people rejoiced openly in the grandeur of British civilisation and the superiority of Anglo-Saxon stock. There was no official prime ministerial proclamation that Australians had to be cautious in expressing their
pride in being British. As Menzies put it in 1951: "...fifty years young as we are, we are still the offspring of an ancient kingdom, the votaries of an ancient faith, the servants of an enduring cause". In 1973 however Whitlam pointed to Australia's "quiescent, colonial past" and distanced himself from any identification with a fervent nationalism. The acceptance of ethnic diversity and the emphasis on international cooperation which underpinned the "new nationalism" were thus critical — they nullified any possibility of it being expressed in 'jingoistic' or exclusively nationalist terms. The conformity of 'kith and kin' had been replaced by 'nation of immigrants'.

When his government passed the Racial Discrimination Act in 1975 Whitlam pronounced that "The new Act writes it firmly into our laws that Australia is in reality a multicultural nation", but it would be for Malcolm Fraser to give a more substantial content to the concept of 'multiculturalism'. In the following chapter it will be seen that Whitlam's successor as Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, also evinced this liberal suspicion of nationalism, yet it led him not to espouse a liberal internationalist 'world-view' but to emphasise the 'national interest', not to an optimism about the potential for peace but to a fear for Australia's very survival and an enduring antagonism towards Russian aggression.

Ultimately, however, the 'radical national' myth proved not quite so 'quiescent'. A substantial increase in funding for the Australian film industry both before and after the Whitlam period meant that a box office 'radical nationalism' burst onto Australian cinema screens in the early 1980s. Transported back to the South African veldt in Breaker Morant (1980) and to the trenches of the Nek in Gallipoli (1981), Australian audiences watched as a race of independent, laconic bushmen were treated as expendable colonials to be sacrificed amidst the futility of imperial conflicts. In these films an incipient Australian nationalism was portrayed not so much as 'benign' as 'betrayed'. Today, visitors to the Sovereign Hill outdoor museum at Ballarat can watch a sound and light spectacular evocatively titled 'Blood on the Southern Cross'. A pamphlet promoting the extravaganza proclaims: "France's storming of the Bastille. Gettysburg of the American Civil War. And in Australia, the Battle of the Eureka Stockade. Each of these

history-making events was a turning point. Out of each one a new nation grew". Thus Whitlam’s relief at the lack of “upheavals that provide for older civilisations a focus for nationalistic fervour and popular emotion” as well as the deliberate distance he placed between Australian nationalism and its violent European counterpart, had fallen on barren ground. Modern myth-makers would have none of it.

148 Blood on the Southern Cross, Sovereign Hill Ballarat, A night-time sound and light spectacular: tourist brochure.
Chapter Four

‘Challenge and Response’: Malcolm Fraser, Australia and the world, 1948-1983

...these philosophical questions are not peripheral ones, not, as parts of the press have sought to present them, a matter of public relations. They are central and we will ignore them at our peril.

(Malcolm Fraser)¹

He at least is a man who believes in something and works at his beliefs.

(Paul Hashuck on Fraser, 1973)²

For Malcolm Fraser, ideas were the principal currency of politics and policies. In perhaps the most important philosophical speech of his prime ministership, he expressed his fundamental agreement with the sentiments of economist, political philosopher and Nobel Prize Winner FA Hayek, who argued that unless mankind made “the philosophical foundations of a free society once more a living intellectual issue...the prospects of freedom are indeed dark”.³ That darkness, most often associated with the hegemonic tendencies of the Soviet Union, or with the absolute forms of collectivism as seen in nationalism, fascism or communism, was the constant ‘other’ in Fraser’s understanding of liberalism. Armed with a Toynbean rhetoric of ‘challenge and response’, he endeavoured to convince Australians that in an unstable world democracy itself was by no means guaranteed. For Fraser, it was imperative that individuals, as well as nations, maintain their will in the face of aggression to ensure world peace. If necessary, military force was required to prevent a repetition of the aggressive nationalism of the 1930s which had catapulted the world into war. It will be seen that while Fraser evinced a strong commitment to the importance of ideas, he was equally well aware that in the final analysis the realist school of power politics prevailed in the course of international relations. Resolving this tension between his liberalism and his realism would prove difficult indeed.

³ EA. Hayek, quoted by Fraser, Speech to South Australian Liberal Party State Council, 5 December 1980.
There are three major periods in the evolution and application of Fraser’s ‘world-view’. In the first period, between 1948 and 1970, his understanding of international relations was dominated by the East/West ideological divide, in which the spectre of Russian and Chinese communism was a pernicious threat not only to his deeply ingrained concept of individual liberty but to the security of Australia’s region and the wider western world. Central themes in this period include the significance of Fraser’s Oxford education, his early enunciation of a liberal philosophy, as well as his contribution to foreign policy debates in the Australian parliament in the 1950s and 60s. In the second period, the impact on Fraser’s ‘world-view’ of Australia’s new circumstances in the changing world of the 1970s is explored. During this period, growing isolationist attitudes in the United States following defeat in Vietnam and Russian ambitions in the Indian Ocean added a new and troublesome dimension to his understanding of the Cold War. In this ‘new era’, relative stability had given way to a dangerous instability. Further, the election of the Whitlam Labor government in 1972 prompted Fraser not only to reinvigorate the philosophy of liberalism in Australia, but to respond directly to Whitlam’s expression of a “new nationalism”. This debate shows clearly the importance of the nationalism question in Australian political culture at this time. Finally, the rhetoric of Fraser’s prime ministership is assessed – his embrace of multiculturalism, his commitment to the Commonwealth of Nations and his support for Third World nationalism will help shed further light on the Australian response to nationalism in this period.

Previous scholarly attempts to characterise and contextualise the political career of Malcolm Fraser have differed in their aims and approaches. Patrick Weller, whilst acknowledging the importance of ideas to Fraser, was more concerned with studying him as a prism through which the operation of prime ministerial power in cabinet government could be observed.4 Graham Little, employing psychoanalysis, dismissed Fraser’s interest in ideas and philosophy as “anxious brooding” rather than “intellectual openness”, and contended further that “there was nothing in Fraser’s background...which prepared him for philosophical leadership”. Little cast Fraser as the epitome of “Strong Leadership”,

which entailed "getting on with the job, not sitting around talking about it...".\(^5\) This study, of course, takes Fraser’s ideas and intellectual history much more seriously. The most incisive analysis of Fraser to this time has been that by his official biographer, Philip Ayres. Ayres has addressed the primacy Fraser attached to ideas, in particular his enduring commitment to the freedom of the individual, as well as the consistency with which these ideas were expressed. Moreover, in contrast to Little, Ayres has implied that Fraser’s rhetoric, despite its lack of “ease, grace and charm”, exuded the Roman ideal of auctoritas, connoting a sense of moral weight, dignity and influence.\(^6\)

However, Ayres was not specifically concerned with the development of Fraser’s ideas of Australia, nor with how Fraser used history to give substance to these ideas and the extent to which they affected his interpretation of Australia’s role in a changing international environment. Consequently, Fraser’s deep suspicion of nationalism, his changing attitude towards the British connection and his policies on ‘multiculturalism’ were not covered in any detail. Understanding both the continuity and change in Fraser’s attitudes towards Australian ‘independence’, the American alliance, détente, Russian aggression, China and the Commonwealth of Nations is the key to Fraser’s distinctive prime ministerial style.

Before examining the first period, some brief consideration of Fraser’s early life is required. Though this period has been dealt with in substantial detail by Ayres, it is worth noting that Fraser came from a rich family tradition of public service – in both the political and military spheres. His father, Neville Fraser, an Oxford law graduate, had served with the Royal Field Artillery on the Western Front during World War One and later with the RAAF during World War Two. His Scots Presbyterian grandfather, Simon Fraser, who had arrived in Australia from Nova Scotia in the 1850s, had been a member of the Victorian Legislative Assembly from 1874, a participant in the Australasian Federal Convention of 1897-98 and a senator in the first Commonwealth parliament,


\(^6\) Philip Ayres, Malcolm Fraser – A Biography (Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1987), 125. This point on Fraser’s rhetorical style has been echoed by two of Fraser’s prime ministerial advisers and speechwriters, DM, White and DA, Kemp; Kemp and White have acknowledged Fraser was “no silky orator in the conventional sense” but that he “emphasised substance and was impatient of flowery rhetoric”. See their
where he expounded liberal economic policies as well as anti-Irish Catholic and anti-socialist views.\textsuperscript{7}

If Malcolm Fraser’s rhetoric as Prime Minister espoused the need for a rugged individualism, his early life experience as the son of a Victorian grazier encapsulated the essence of a ‘Boy’s Own’ adventure, with its emphasis on wide open spaces, initiative, practicality, and independence.\textsuperscript{8} It was a very different upbringing compared to Gough Whitlam. Fraser, captivated by the stories of George Henty, Arthur Ransome and John Masefield, set his own experiences against the backdrop of a rural idyll. His deep connection to and affection for the landscape of his youth were expressed in a poem he wrote as an eleven year old, entitled ‘These I have loved’.\textsuperscript{9} In the poem, Fraser evoked memories of “The smell of the eucalyptus tree as I work under its shadow”, “The firm kick of a gun as I go shooting along a river...” and “...the sway of a horse as I canter over the plains”. It was an early expression of his attachment to the Australian landscape.

One episode from Fraser’s childhood captures the essence of his subsequent ‘world-view’. Riding with his father on the outskirts of the family property, the young Fraser was warned never to venture alone into such remote areas, the parental rationale being, of course, that should he become injured or lost, he would be miles away from assistance. But Fraser recalled his boyish pride in just how fearless and intrepid he had been for several years prior to this stern paternal warning. This occasion stands as a metaphor for much of his later political rhetoric. In a harsh and unforgiving world, Fraser argued consistently that Australians needed to face squarely the threat of potential dangers and uncertainties, to put aside comfort and luxury and recognise the inherent rigours and hardship of life.\textsuperscript{10} For Fraser, being ‘alone’ in unfamiliar territory constituted a challenge: whether individuals, nations or indeed civilisations survived, as he would later put it, ‘depended on the manner and character of their response’.

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\textsuperscript{8} Richard White, \textit{Inventing Australia} (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1980), 82-84.

\textsuperscript{9} Ayres, \textit{Malcolm Fraser}, 22-3.
'the things that I want to fight for': Oxford...Wannon...Canberra, 1949-1970

When Fraser followed his father to Oxford University in 1949 to read for an undergraduate degree in Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE), he was exposed not only to a wide range of moral and political philosophical works, theories of knowledge and history, but also, of course, to the intellectual and political climate of the times. For liberals, the immediate post-war environment heralded not so much despair or disillusionment at the threat of communism, but relish that it constituted the ultimate struggle between the forces of tyranny and the forces of freedom. The formation of the Congress for Cultural Freedom – their first conference was held in West Berlin in 1950 – gave formal expression to the mobilisation of western intellectuals against communism and the Soviet Union.\(^{11}\) As far as the atmosphere of living and working in Oxford at this time was concerned, Geoffrey Serle, a postgraduate student there in the late 1940s, has written, "It would be a rigid and impenetrable young man who was not affected".\(^{12}\) For Malcolm Fraser, the appreciation he gained for the history of ideas, as well as his first hand experience of the socialist policies of the Attlee Labour government, were a powerful force in shaping his intellectual world.

Fraser has told Philip Ayres that he recalled AJP Taylor’s “freedom from dogma”, his criticism of communism and Marxist leftists, and the prevalence of Keynesian economic theories at Oxford during this time.\(^{13}\) Whilst it is not possible to discern a coherent, consistent Fraser ‘world-view’ emanating from the multitude of essays Fraser wrote during these years, such an intense immersion in the humanities at Oxford had convinced him of their absolute necessity for the peaceful progress of mankind.\(^{14}\) This

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\(^{10}\) MF, personal interview, Melbourne, 22 November 2000, transcript. This story was also related by Fraser during an interview with Robin Hughes, Australian Biography, Film Australia, 1994; see also Paul Kelly, The Hawke Ascendancy (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1984), 50.


\(^{13}\) MF, quoted in Ayres, Malcolm Fraser, 36.

\(^{14}\) The Fraser papers at the National Archives in Canberra contain a substantial collection of Fraser’s notes and essays from his lectures and tutorials at Oxford. The depth and breadth of his reading underlined the range of ideas and theories to which he was introduced. In his study of moral and political philosophy, Fraser read and studiously noted Rousseau’s Social Contract, Hobbes Leviathan, Machiavelli’s The Prince, Locke’s Civil Government, Ross’ Foundations of Ethics, Gilbert Ryle’s Concept of Mind, as well as Bertrand Russell’s Analysis of Mind and Problems of Philosophy. In History he encountered Eyck Rosenberg’s Bismarck and the German Empire, Headlam Morley’s Studies in Diplomatic History, Langer’s Diplomacy of Imperialism and Gooch’s Studies in Diplomacy and Statecraft. The topics on
point is best illustrated by the enthusiasm he voiced in response to the 1958 Murray Report into Australian Universities and its recommendation that the study of humanities should be a high priority in a world beset by “moral problems” and “problems of human relationships”. Fraser feared excessive funding had been directed towards the sciences, on account of the competition between East and West for the development of satellites and missiles, at the expense of “the study of the art of learning to live together”. He then implored his fellow members to recognise that “the studies of the philosophies and ways of living...can add richness to our lives...The only real purpose of life is human happiness”. Fraser’s philosophy tutors at Oxford were Gilbert Ryle and Harry Weldon. Ryle in particular is credited with having been responsible for the re-emergence of Oxford as a distinguished centre of philosophy in the western world in the post-war period. Fraser, it would seem, profited greatly from this intellectual environment. In a further parliamentary debate on the States Grants (Universities) Bill he rejected the common assumption that philosophers were impractical: “Looking through the pages of the greatest philosophers that Britain has seen, one finds that when emergencies have arisen they have proved themselves to be the most practical of all men”. And in searching for examples he went no further that his former philosophy tutors. He saw Ryle and Weldon as the embodiment of such practicality, noting that Weldon had been the personal liaison officer to the Air Vice Marshal of Bomber Command and Ryle the head of an important section of British intelligence. Fraser further lamented that in the twentieth century “The romantic search for ultimate truths” had been “replaced by a cold study of the definition of words and phrases”. He felt this boded ill for democracies faced with “urgent and grave moral and political problems”.

Whilst at Oxford Fraser also read the abridged version of Arnold Toynbee’s A Study of History. This was a view of history which would profoundly affect the way in which he understood the world and also how he would come to perform as a political

which he wrote for history covered a wide spectrum of the European and American experience, especially European history from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the end of the First World War, British political history in the nineteenth century, British foreign policy, as well as studies of British political leaders, including Robert Peel, William Gladstone, Benjamin Disraeli, Stanley Baldwin, Ramsay McDonald and Neville Chamberlain.

leader. In his analysis of civilisations, Toynbee had used the formula of ‘challenge and response’, which held that challenges presented to communities by various external forces demanded a particular response: if the response was successful, the community would be faced by successive challenges, demanding new responses. But if the response failed, the inevitable breakdown of that civilisation would follow. He warned specifically against those forces which over time made the possibility of failure more likely, including the tendency to “rest on one’s oars” or to “idolize” a past self or technique.\(^\text{18}\) Toynbee’s popularity had reached its peak in the late 1940s and early 1950s – precisely the time Fraser was studying at Oxford. Appearing on the front cover of *Time* magazine in March 1947, Toynbee argued that though Western civilisation was “breathing heavily” and passing through a “time of troubles”, there was reason for hope. Since the capacity for response to the challenges of life was so varied, no civilisation was inexorably doomed.\(^\text{19}\) For Malcolm Fraser the post-war world would increasingly come to be seen through this prism of ‘challenge and response’. But if the popularity of Toynbee was at its peak, so too was the conviction of the Attlee Labour government that nationalisation of industries was the much needed panacea for an ailing British economy still suffering from the burdens of wartime. Placing his faith in the benefits of a centrally planned economy, Attlee nationalised coal, transport and hospitals.\(^\text{20}\) Whilst Fraser remembered Attlee for establishing a “fairer society”, he felt such controls imposed by government seemed to be “holding the country back”.\(^\text{21}\)

Shortly after his return to Australia, when Fraser sought preselection for the Federal Liberal Party seat of Wannon in south-western Victoria, it was clear that his experience of Attlee socialism and the Toynbean formula of ‘challenge and response’ had fired his political ambition. In his preselection speech in November 1953, the first public occasion on which he articulated his ‘world-view’, Fraser combined his fresh memories of post-war England and the dangers of unrestrained socialism with a rallying cry for liberals – to

\(^{17}\) *MF, CPD, H of R*, vol. 19 (8 May 1958), 1657.


\(^{19}\) *Time*, 17 March 1947, 29-32.


\(^{21}\) *MF*, quoted in Ayres, *Malcolm Fraser*, 34.
join him in the "liberal crusade" and to lay "positive foundations for their own philosophy":

...these post war years will be marked by our success or failure. I say "ours" because it is the testing time of Liberalism. Socialism has reached a certain point and if it goes any further or turns to bloody Communism you will find it impossible to preserve those things for which the very words English and Australian stand. These years are a challenge.22

Aside from the clear influence of Toynbee, and his obvious relish at the struggle between the forces of tyranny and the forces of freedom, Fraser's depiction of socialism as a dangerous progenitor of Communism and as a threat to the idea of a British Australia was not far removed from the strains of Menzies' 1949 election policy speech, in which the Liberal leader had proclaimed that "Socialism and Empire go ill together".23 Fraser's discontent had been fuelled also by what he perceived as the English and Australian Labour parties' shattering of a nineteenth century consensus of Gladstonian liberalism, "a tradition of social reform, fair rents, factory laws and pensions, rather than one of socialism".24 In the post-war environment, however, the Labour parties had turned to nationalisation as the embodiment of socialist ideals. Fraser particularised his attack on socialism not by reference to Chifley - who had not nationalised industries25 - but to Clement Attlee. Conceding a limited success for socialism following the havoc wreaked on the British economy by the Second World War, Fraser nevertheless believed that Attlee had failed because his policies had decreased human happiness: "Ever since I can remember I have thought the S[socialist] theory an unhappy one and in these last few years we have all been given cogent arguments against S[socialism]. It is the universality of the theory which leads to its application in inappropriate cases that does the harm. The chaos and disillusion the Attlee government left in post-war England is hard to believe. Not only were efficient industries broken up but both...owners and employees were left dissatisfied". Yet Fraser, like Menzies, realised that "hatred of a doctrine" was simply not

22 MF, preselection speech, 11 November 1953, Fraser papers, NAA, M1405.
24 MF, preselection speech.
25 Chifley had tried to nationalise the banks but was thwarted by the Constitution and the High Court.
enough. For Fraser, both love of country and commitment to the primacy of the individual fed his motivation:

I could not enter this fight versus Socialism if I did not love Australia, if I did not think she had a great industrial as well as agricultural future...It is not the greatness of this country in terms of power, productivity and population, but in terms of individual people...Each man from the street cleaner to the industrialist behind a rich desk has an equal right to a full and happy life. Each one has an equal right to go his own way, unhampered so long as he does not harm our precious social framework. The wish that men may continue to enjoy this right is the real reason that urges me to enter a lifelong fight versus Socialism, and I feel that this fight is worthwhile because of the unique and individual characteristics that I find in every person. 26

Fraser's Australianness was thus expressed in terms of the country's economic potential, respect for the individual, and the obligation of all to respect a 'precious social framework'. Whilst Fraser would come to have very different views on the importance of 'power, productivity and population' in the years to come, his liberalism here balanced the rights of the individual with a respect for the role of the state, and he intensified this conviction with traditional anti-socialist rhetoric. He later told his electorate that Australia was 'the New World of the 20th century'. Thus while Gough Whitlam's 'verdant vista of the new' represented an Australia freed from the burden of an 'old world' cultural and artistic heritage, Fraser's 'New World' vision offered an escape from the 'black markets, restrictions, shortages and inflation' which he associated predominantly with the socialism of the British Labour government. Chifley's 'attack on the banks' in 1949 had convinced Fraser that 'Labour people in Australia' were no 'different from their English brothers'. 27

In determining the tradition of liberalism from which Fraser drew his political ideas, it should be remembered that in common with nationalism, liberalism has suffered from attempts to neatly compartmentalise its wide range of influences and concepts. Fraser's frustration in his preselection speech was also directed at liberalism's tendency to define itself as simply anti-socialism. He believed that "true philosophies" such as liberalism could never be reduced to a "catchword or basic formula". 28 This has been one

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26 MF, preselection speech.
28 MF, preselection speech.
of the central conundrums for liberalism. In his study of *The Rise and Decline of Western Liberalism* Anthony Arblaster pointed to liberalism’s “unspoken consensus”, noting that the virtues underpinning liberalism are so deeply inscribed in traditional western social, political and economic attitudes that an innate complacency among Western liberals has become pervasive.29 Before attempting to identify from which tradition of liberalism Malcolm Fraser drew his political ideas, it is necessary to explore briefly the extent to which it has resonated in Australian national life.

As a philosophy closely identified with the doctrine of freedom, liberalism has historically had a broad appeal across the Australian political spectrum. Evidence of this consensus can be found firstly in John Quick and Robert Garran’s claim that the Australian Constitution embodied “the best achievements of political progress and realizes the latest attainable ideals of liberty”.30 A further example of this consensus is to be found in HV Evatt’s 1918 prize-winning essay *Liberalism in Australia*, in which he celebrated liberalism’s early triumph “over the evils of irresponsible government and the early convictism”. Though it had been “inspiring the progressives” in Australia up until 1880, having been “enriched” in its “give and take with the labour movement”, Evatt’s conclusion was that liberalism could not be identified “with any one political party”.31 Evatt at this time had been a student of Francis Anderson, Professor of Logic and Mental Philosophy at Sydney University between 1887 and 1921. Anderson was a disciple of TH Green, an Hegelian liberal who rejected the classic individualism of Locke, Hobbes and Mill, and argued for the mutual dependence of society and the individual. Along with LT Hobhouse, Green had articulated a theory which “gave a positive rather than merely ‘nightwatchman’ role to the state”.32 In this redefinition of the core of liberalism, more state intervention was required to guarantee the freedom of the individual.

In the Australian historiographical context this tradition of liberalism was most closely identified with the liberal intellectual WK Hancock. “Australian democracy”, he argued in his seminal work *Australia* (1930), “has come to look upon the State as a vast public duty, whose duty it is to provide the greatest happiness for the greatest number”. It

might equally be said that Hancock was giving expression to a Benthamite utilitarianism.\textsuperscript{33} Hancock thus appeared to resolve the potential conflict between individualism and collectivism in the Australian context with his conclusion that \textquotedblleft To the Australian the state means collective power at the service of individualistic rights. Therefore he sees no opposition between his individualism and his reliance on government\textquotedblright.\textsuperscript{34} This tradition of liberalism in Australian party politics was embodied firstly by Alfred Deakin and later by Robert Menzies. Deakin\textquotesingle s New Protection epitomised the movement from nineteenth century rugged individualism to a more interventionist liberalism, thus enabling a political harmony between the Labor parties and progressive liberals in the early years of the new Commonwealth. As Stuart Macintyre has demonstrated, Deakin\textquotesingle s protectionist policies drew on the tradition of George Higinbotham, David Syme and Charles Pearson, being a \textquotedblleft rigorous doctrine, balancing the rights of the individual with stern duty\textquotedblright.\textsuperscript{35} Robert Menzies in opening the critical 1944 Canberra conference, which ultimately unified the previously fragmented non-Labor parties in Australia, had called for a \textquotedblleft true revival of liberal thought which will work for social justice and security, for national power and national progress, and for the full development of the individual citizen, though not through the dull and deadening process of Socialism\textquotedblright. In short, he added, \textquoteleft\textquoteleft\textquoteleft\textquoteleft...the State and private enterprise are regarded as partners in the common purpose of improving the material conditions of the community\textquoteright\textquoteright\textquoteright\textquoteright.\textsuperscript{36}

Malcolm Fraser\textquotesingle s maiden speech to parliament drew both on this reformist tradition of liberalism which reconciled public and private enterprise, as well as a more classic liberalism which defended the sanctity of the individual. Fraser acknowledged that \textquoteleft\textquoteleft\textquoteleft\textquoteleftPublic bodies have an important part to play in our national development because many things are too big in scope or too important for private people...to undertake alone\textquoteright\textquoteright\textquoteright\textquoteright. He supported this statement with reference to the Snowy River Scheme and also cited the Guthega irrigation project as one of the \textquoteleft\textquoteleft\textquoteleft\textquoteleftbest examples of government action because it is

\textsuperscript{32} Arblerster, \textit{The Rise and Decline of Western Liberalism}, 51.
\textsuperscript{34} W.K. Hancock, \textit{Australia} (London: Ernest Benn, 1930), 55-6.
\textsuperscript{35} Stuart Macintyre, \textit{A Colonial Liberalism – The Lost World of Three Victorian Visionaries} (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1991)
providing new spheres of enterprise and activity for private people”. The “debt of
gratitude” he offered at the end of his speech “to those who had fought in World War I
and World War II” illustrated more than just respect for the ANZAC tradition and his
awareness of entering a parliament dominated by those who had seen some form of war
service. It enabled the young Fraser to again declare his resolve in the face of a new, and
in his eyes more critical, post-war ideological struggle: “I was too young to fight in the
last war...but I am not too young to fight for my faith and belief in the future of this great
nation, in which the individual is, and always shall remain, supreme...the individual
happiness of each citizen is, and must remain forever, the first thought of our national
leaders”. Fraser in this speech had also advocated an increase in the immigration intake, a
point which best expressed his growing recognition of the relationship between
population size and power politics, as well as his continuing adherence to the Toynbean
dialectic of ‘challenge and response’:

The challenge that faces us is the challenge to develop Australia. If we accept the
challenge, the challenge of what we are going to do with this country, we must be
determined...to increase our population to 25,000,000....If we are to obtain those
objectives, any sacrifice in the present would be well worth while...if we tackle
these problems, not as six independent states, not as different groups of people
pulling in different directions, but as one nation, as the one people that we are, we
cannot fail.37

By ‘one people’, of course, he meant Australians in the 1950s as one British people. It
was a sign that Fraser realised the importance of national unity and pulling together for
the collective good. This appeal to ‘sacrifice’ for the sake of a more populous Australia
by no means implied a rejection of ‘White Australia’, however. But it was a much more
moderately expressed view compared to the sentiments contained in his very first
Australia Day speech of 1954. In language which reflected the fear of Asian nationalism
being harnessed to the Communist cause, Fraser had warned of the “teeming millions in
these Asian lands” – the “peril” to Australia’s north: “A thousand million living on a
pannikin of rice a day – how much better some of them could do with Australia in their
hands!” On that occasion he had implored Australians not to let their country “be

36 RG, Menzies, speech, Canberra, 13 October 1944, in Starr, The Liberal Party of Australia, 76.
37 MF, CPD, H of R, vol. 9 (22 February 1956), 152.
changed by other races in a way that will make it impossible for our own traditions and way of life to survive”, thus implying the threat which Asia posed to British traditions as expressed in an Australian way of life.\textsuperscript{38} Yet speaking at a local Citizenship ceremony in March 1956, Fraser welcomed new European migrants as genuine nation-builders: “you are no longer “New” or “Old” Australians but are Australians as we who were born here...The realisation that 7 500 000 people could not develop or hold this country resulted in the move to bring people from Europe to build up our country”.\textsuperscript{39} In speeches to the parliament on international affairs in the 1950s and 1960s, Fraser would exercise himself more directly on this question of Australia’s place in the world in the Cold-War environment.

Fraser’s first parliamentary speech on international affairs in 1956 dealt primarily with his attitudes towards the British connection and the nature of the struggle between East and West. Unlike those members of Parliament who had grown up with a British-centred concept of international affairs, and who saw in their own aging a simultaneous process of “growing old with Britain”,\textsuperscript{40} Fraser greeted with confidence the transformation of the British Empire into the British Commonwealth. This was a generational change: “Although our fathers may not like it”, he said, “the British Empire is passing out of existence, and in its place is coming something which will be far more enduring and beneficial to world peace – the British Commonwealth of Nations”.\textsuperscript{41} In Fraser’s view the emergence of the British Commonwealth of Nations had been stimulated not only by the “growth of nationalism” in the new dominions such as India, Pakistan and Ceylon, but also through “a very sincere recognition by Britain itself that the greatest gift it can give to the world is the gift of self-government, as it has been evolved over the years through the British parliament”. Thus Fraser, like Whitlam, saw the British institutional heritage as the great, enduring legacy of the British peoples, one which was to be extended to all regardless of blood. Unlike Whitlam, however, Fraser saw the Commonwealth, and not the United Nations, as the epitome of his liberal ideals.

\textsuperscript{38} MF, The Hamilton Spectator, 26 January 1954.
\textsuperscript{39} MF, The Hamilton Spectator, 10 March 1956.
\textsuperscript{40} David Lowe, ‘Growing Old with Britain: International Affairs and Britain in Federal Parliament in the 1950s’, paper delivered at AHA Regional Conference, Hobart 1999, Sentiment and Self-Interest in Anglo-Australian Relations.
\textsuperscript{41} MF, CPD, H of R, vol. 9 (15 March 1956), 860.
Liberal internationalism and the ideal of collective security did not influence Fraser’s ‘world-view’ at this time.

Fraser continued to devote considerable intellectual effort to promoting the virtues of the new Commonwealth. Though he recognised it to be a “looser” political union than the Empire and one which needed to cultivate strong economic links to guard against the “sort of internal situation of which Russia and Communism could take full advantage”, he welcomed its inclusion of “people of all colours and all races...and of almost every religion”. In a somewhat idealistic tone, he asserted that in the new Commonwealth “all the dominions are equal” and that Commonwealth conferences need not present a “unified central view” at their conclusion. He supported the right of India to remain in the Commonwealth as a Republic as symbolic of its diversity of membership and tolerance of alternate views. Such diversity and tolerance, Fraser claimed, clearly distinguished it from the United Nations: “Respect is the important thing. In the United Nations, all too often we see countries putting their views, with one country having no respect for the views of others. By promoting respect for the views of others, the British Commonwealth, with its greatly diverse membership, sets the United Nations a good example”. Such criticism of the United Nations was indicative of a more general suspicion among Liberals that the UN lacked the intimacy and cohesion associated with the more traditional ideal of an ‘organic’ world-wide community of British peoples. Fraser nevertheless showed a willingness, rare among Liberals of that era, to accept this transition from Empire to Commonwealth. His ready reception of such change stood in stark contrast to Menzies’ reluctance and distinct discomfort at the disintegration of the Empire and the process of decolonisation which accompanied it.

Fraser’s strong emphasis on the benefits of a multi-racial Commonwealth and its value as an example to the world was tested in the parliamentary debate over the viability

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42 MF, CPD, H of R, vol. 9 (15 March 1956), 862.
44 David Goldsworthy, ‘Menzies, Britain and the Commonwealth: The Old Order Changeth’, in Frank Cain (ed.) Menzies in War and Peace (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1997), 99-115; see also AW Martin, Robert Menzies – A Life, Volume 2 1944-1978 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1999), 415-16. Menzies’ May 1960 Smuts Memorial Lecture took as its title ‘The Changing Commonwealth’ and similarly compared the Commonwealth to the United Nations. Menzies in particular compared the large number of delegates in the UN, often strangers to each other, and its more formal proceedings with the intimacy of Commonwealth Prime Ministers conferences: “We are not a court. We are brothers in a special international family”.

of South Africa’s membership following the escalation of racial violence there in 1961. Whilst he acknowledged that continued membership of the Commonwealth might have a “moderating influence” on South Africa’s apartheid policy, he argued more convincingly for its expulsion. This would make the Commonwealth “a stronger moral force”. For Fraser, South Africa’s crime was worse because it was as if it had been “committed by a member of one’s own family”. Though apartheid was an internal policy which the South African government did not endeavour to export to other countries, Fraser saw it as anathema to the contemporary political climate: “The spirit and emotion of our times are represented in the emancipation, freedom, and self-government of coloured people. Anything that flies in the face of this spirit cannot stand and will be pushed aside in this present age” In so designating apartheid as an international issue, Fraser recognised that other free African and Asian countries could not be expected to “take a detached legal view” of it: that is, free African nations could not be expected to simply tolerate it. But conscious of his own country’s racially based immigration policy, Fraser added: ‘I do not think that there are many Australians who can take a detached view of the white Australia policy’. The contradiction in his liberal stance was revealed when he maintained Australia’s immigration policies could be “well defended”.45

Fraser’s perspective on the changing nature of Anglo-Australian relations was most clearly demonstrated in his response to Britain’s application for membership of the European Economic Community (EEC) between 1961 and 1963. Seeing European unity as historically inevitable and as a “much stronger bulwark against the spread of Communism”, Fraser did not express a sense of moral grievance at what many considered to be an ‘unthinkable’ act of abandonment by Britain. Rather he emphasised the benefits to Australia’s general security of a strong and stable Europe capable of withstanding Soviet pressure to a maximum degree.46 Further, Fraser exhorted members of parliament uncomfortable with the British decision to place power politics, the cause of the free world and a potentially stronger Commonwealth above the sentiments of British race patriotism. Fraser would seem to have taken a more positive view than most of Britain’s proposed move into Europe, for as Stuart Ward has argued, Australia’s

general response to this question was “founded on the British race patriot ideal; that there ought to be some means of reconciling the interests of Australia and the ‘mother country’”.47 In response to those concerned at the loss of English “Sovereignty”, Fraser redefined the very word “Sovereignty” to mean “power”, which he claimed would take “most of the emotion and magic” out of the term. This was indicative of his incredulity at those who retained an emotionally charged view of Britain and her ‘moral’ responsibility to ‘kith and kin’:

The real division of opinion on this point is between people who seek to advance what may be a full nationalist point of view and those who, for want of a better word -- I do not like the word -- believe in some kind of wider internationalist outlook. The day has gone when we could have a completely nationalist point of view. Europe, a continent which has been disturbed by world wars more than any other part of the world, has come to realize that, and I believe we could profit from her example.48

If Fraser seemed to imply nationalism was no longer a credible way in which to approach problems of world community, he certainly dismissed any notions of ‘internationalism’. As if to stress the need for Australia to break free of its imperial imagination, Fraser pointed to increasing Australian trade with Pacific countries as well as its defence reliance on the United States, a stance adopted “for reasons of power and of geography”. Such changes in Fraser’s view were indicative of Australia “beginning to grow up as a nation...The entry of the United Kingdom to the Common Market would give new impetus to the weakening of these traditional ties”.49

Whilst this was by no means a strident declaration of Australian ‘independence’, these comments did distinguish Fraser from other participants in the debate. Labor member Clyde Cameron referred to Fraser’s contribution as “an anti-British speech...the kind of speech that would never have been made five years ago”. Though Cameron welcomed this “changing pattern in world affairs”, his assessment of Fraser’s speech as essentially “unpatriotic”, and Fraser’s swift response to such a rebuke, illustrated the residual sensitivity to questions of ‘loyalty’ in Australian political culture at this time. This was indeed a parliament where, as Stuart Ward concludes, both sides were still

47Ibid., 149.
49 Ibid., 274.
“entangled in the Anglo-Australian web of culture”. Fraser, aggrieved at such a charge, expressly repudiated Cameron’s suggestion and added “It is only because of my very keen regard for the United Kingdom that I offered some gentle criticism of her actions regarding the Common Market”. By emphasising “gentle criticism” – Fraser had described the United Kingdom as being “dilatory” and generally “off-handed in dealing with Europe” – he sought to nullify Cameron’s criticism. This was a more Menzian view, in which, as Menzies himself had told parliament on this question, the prospect for “conflicts of opinion” or “intense argument” over Britain’s application for membership of the EEC were not expressions of Anglo-Australian discord but simply inherent in “the British tradition”. Thus Fraser, like Menzies, rationalised the sense of conflict in the Anglo-Australian relationship within the wider paradigm of British race patriotism.

Speaking on this same question of Britain’s application to join the Common Market a year later, Fraser continued to question those who were still troubled at the potential loss of British sovereignty: “they refuse to recognise that times have changed”. Further, he deplored those unable to shake off the historical image of Britain as Australia’s ‘mother country’ and protector: “we seem to have a yearning, perhaps, for the past, historic desire to be sheltered by the United Kingdom, despite the fact that we cannot be”. When questioned further on precisely when he recognised that this British race patriot ‘world-view’ ceased to resonate in Australian political culture, Fraser’s response was to emphasise a “certain inevitability” about Britain’s disengagement from South East Asia: “it’s not one of those things that happens...like a guillotine coming down. You become aware of certain moods, certain changes and you suddenly realise, well, yes it is a different world”. Despite his impatience with those longing for the return of the British navy, Fraser was emphatic that the best way for Australia to meet this ‘different world’ was as part of a US alliance. Like many Liberals at this time, Fraser was concerned that Trade Minister John McEwen’s increasingly vocal protests in London

50 Stuart Ward, Discordant Communities, 147.
51 For Cameron, CPD, H of R, vol. 32 (17 August 1961) 280; and Fraser’s personal explanation, 283. Jim Killen was similarly quick to respond to Cameron’s suggestion that he had voiced “some anti-British sentiment”: “If there is any syllable, let alone one word, in my remarks this afternoon that could be construed as anti-British by the honourable gentleman, I can only conclude that he is either stupid or mischievous, or a combination of the two”; 283.
and Washington at British moves to join the EEC might seriously affect Australia’s relationship with the United States:

If moves to enlarge the Common Market fail, if the United Kingdom and Australia remain, to some degree heavy-footed in these great movements, and if Europe, France or Germany reverted to disorder, might not our great friends feel disillusioned that their efforts...have been rebuffed? Would it not be possible, perhaps, for them to turn their backs on their present philosophy and create a “fortress America”? ....if there is the slightest chance of this happening, our future survival is involved. The effects that this withdrawal by America would have on our own vital interests would be completely and absolutely overwhelming.55

For Fraser, the prospect of alienating the Americans was inconceivable. Accordingly the primacy of the ANZUS alliance and Australia’s broader strategic interests took precedence over the question of the nation’s external economic viability. It was a standard Fraser response. Both sentiment and fear had to be sacrificed for the sake of national ‘survival’.

Fraser in the 1960s was a committed exponent of Menzies’ foreign policy doctrine, which demanded that in an increasingly unstable South-East Asian environment, Australia needed ‘great and powerful friends’ to shield herself from the downward thrust of Asian communism. Following the decision of the Menzies government in early 1963 to allow the construction of an American communications station on the North West Cape, Fraser criticised Labor opposition to the plan and declared “Our survival depends upon the United States”. Savaging Labor’s “limited cooperation”, Fraser declared they had not “the strength of will to stand for Australia in this matter”. 56 In March 1964, Fraser argued Australia’s “powerful friends” were “more necessary to us now than they have ever been”. 57 It was a significant change from his previous rhetoric on a qualified Australian independence. Even though he included Britain in this framework of ‘great-power’ protectors, Fraser, in common with the Australian government, recognised the reality that only with American aid could Australia be truly secure. The conundrum for Fraser, however, was whether the United States would maintain the necessary will to

54 MF, personal interview, Melbourne, 22 November 2000, transcript.
55 MF, CPD, H of R, vol. 36 (9 August 1962), 254. My thanks to Stuart Ward for pointing out this strategic dimension in Fraser’s attitude to Britain’s EEC application.
remain engaged in the South East Asian region. With a communist-inspired Viet-Cong insurgency in South Vietnam and the Indonesian policy of konfrontasi against the Malaysian Federation, he feared that the United States’ withdrawal from conflicts to Australia’s north would leave Australia “vulnerable” and “very much alone in this part of the world”. By drawing attention to the potential of “loss of United States’ prestige” in South Vietnam, Fraser was contributing to the standard conservative tactic of encouraging America to remain engaged in the conflict. For Fraser, the pattern of Communist aggression and subversion in South East Asia meant that Australia now lay besieged at the centre of the “struggle between Communists and the free world”. Fraser’s Toynbean view of civilisation’s innate fragility only added to his angst:

In the past, civilisations have been destroyed and peoples have disappeared from the earth because they could not withstand the dangers that beset them. I cannot assume that Australia’s survival is inevitable any more than was the survival of past civilisations that did not and would not accept the challenge that confronted them. Our survival requires courage, a sense of duty and direction, and some greater sacrifice from every one of us.

Whilst this was in one sense the classic invocation of Toynbee’s ‘challenge and response’ thesis – that the survival of civilisation demanded sacrifice in the face of adversity – it was also indicative of the extent to which the defence of Western civilisation and democracy against communist imperialism had become a catchcry in Australian politics during the Cold War. On another level, Fraser’s rhetoric was reminiscent of the Hobbesian view of international relations as expressed by WM Hughes in debates over defence earlier last century, in which those who were weak could not survive in a dangerous, unstable world.

58 Ibid.
59 MF, CPD, H of R, vol. 43 (13 August 1964), 196. Fraser employed similar rhetoric in his speech of 5 March 1964: “Australia will have to strain every nerve to build and develop. We will have to drive ourselves with the whip of survival...Sacrifice will be necessary if we are to provide adequate defences and to develop our country at the rate which is necessary. We must, as a nation, learn to put luxury aside, to forget the satisfaction of high personal consumption and to replace it with a concerted drive to build and use our resources even more dramatically than we have in the past, for construction, development and for defence. This may be the price of survival, but what man is there among us who will not pay it?”; CPD, H of R, vol. 41 (5 March 1964), 301.
Fraser’s growing doubts concerning the reliability of American commitment to containing communism in South East Asia were partly assuaged by his visit to the United States in May 1964, as one of the first Australian recipients (the other being EG Whitlam) of Leader Grants, funded by the US government to provide access to the systems of American policy formation.\textsuperscript{61} Whilst he feared ongoing Chinese and Russian subversion in South East Asia, what gave him the “greatest encouragement”, he told parliament some months later, was the “complete and absolute determination” he found amongst influential politicians and administrators “that the United States would remain in this theatre of the world...”.\textsuperscript{62} With the commitment of an Australian battalion to Vietnam in May 1965 and the belief that the conflict was part of a “thrust by Communist China”, Fraser explained the “wider reason” for overcoming this threat as follows. In the Fraser ‘world-view’, force, or the threat of force, was the only language aggressors understood. To substantiate his point he looked to the episodes of West Berlin and Cuba, where Russia had learnt that “the West is prepared to use force to protect its vital interests”. Fraser pointed out that “China has not yet learnt this lesson and if she wins in South Vietnam, she will never accept the possibility of some kind of co-existence between her communist regime and the West”. Not only was this a clear example of the view that China was an imperialist power seeking to extend her communist hegemony downwards through the Indian and Pacific Oceans; the added danger for Fraser was that Russia may be encouraged by China’s success to “assert herself in the same manner and in the same aggressive and subversive fashion”. His greatest fear was that “the lessons of Berlin and of Cuba would have been in vain”.\textsuperscript{63}

Fraser continued to utilise such lessons as Minister for the Army between 1966 and 1968. Aggression, particularly aggression which threatened Australia’s interests and security, had to be stopped. In defending the Australian presence in Vietnam, he cited the British Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart, who, he said, had “made it clear that this is not just or mainly a civil war, it is basically a war of aggression by North Vietnam, supported and supplied by China, against South Vietnam”. Yet the very nature of this war was beginning to trouble Fraser deeply. The subversive tactics which he believed were

\textsuperscript{61} Ayres, \textit{Malcolm Fraser}, 96.
\textsuperscript{63} MF, \textit{CPD}, H of R, vol. 46 (6 May 1965), 1248.
being employed by the Chinese had removed the "easy divisions between peace and war that were prevalent before 1939. Nobody can say that we or the world exist in a state of peace, but we are not at war in the full and complete sense as we were from 1939 to 1945. There are states between war and peace. This seems to be the normal circumstance for the world at present". Yet this analysis itself betrayed how distinctly uncomfortable Fraser was beginning to feel with such a state of affairs. The calls for sacrifice and the maintenance of individual and collective will were more easily made and received amidst the climate of clearly perceived threats. The suggestion is not that Fraser wanted total war, but it does help explain why again and again in subsequent speeches he expressed the view that only when there was a "clearly seen and present danger" could the people be roused to oppose aggression. For Fraser, aggression, even subversive aggression, demanded a forceful response.

Fraser's liberalism as enunciated in the late 1960s continued to draw upon traditional anti-socialist, anti-Labor rhetoric. What he reviled the most was not collectivism per se, but rather the absolute, extremist forms of collectivism as represented in communism, fascism and aggressive nationalism. Writing in 1967 on 'Liberalism: As a Liberal MHR sees it today', Fraser attacked Rousseau for his espousal of the view that the State had "a will and being of its own", as well as Marx and Hegel for their idea of the State as representing "the end of the struggle, the end of reform, perhaps even the end of conflict between nations". These political philosophers, he wrote, had "sought an illusion – the illusion of a perfect State in which all the evils and difficulties of their own experience could never have occurred". Drawing a clear line from Hegelian philosophy and Communism to the "mystique of Nazism", Fraser declared that these "absolute philosophies" had been abused by dictators to destroy "the essence of Liberal beliefs". As has been shown, Fraser's definition of liberalism revolved around respect for the individual and a set of "human values", such as "freedom of thought and action, tolerance and respect for the rights of our fellow man, pride in achievement and in attainment of self-sufficiency". He argued that socialism was a relic of the "hardship and exploitation

65 See for example, MF, Remembrance Day Address, 11 November 1970, NAA, M1229/1; Address to Liberal Speaker's Group Conference, Melbourne, 9 April 1972, NAA M1229/1.
66 Ad Lib '67, vol. 1., no. 2 (July 1967).
of the early industrial age of the 19th Century" and was now left as a "barren philosophy whose absolutes have been proven wrong". Nevertheless Fraser went to great lengths to refute the charge that national service for Vietnam was a denial of individual freedom. In this view, the task of defending Australia could not simply be left to those "with a particularly highly developed sense of patriotism". The lesson was that in free and egalitarian societies "some sacrifices, great and small, must be demanded of individuals for the benefit of all citizens". The notion of sacrifice for the common good would prove to be an increasingly difficult message to convey, as Australia headed into the 1970s.

Fraser's intellectual preparation to this point had prepared him to meet the challenges of the new era better than most in the Federal parliament. That Fraser had impressed his Liberal Party colleagues in these earlier years cannot be doubted. According to Paul Hasluck, writing in the early 1970s, Fraser had clearly demonstrated that he "had studied politics more seriously and was better qualified academically than any of his age group in the Liberal Party in Canberra". Hasluck considered Fraser to be "intellectually better equipped than Snedden, Lynch, Peacock, Chipp, Killen, Gorton, or any of the others to comprehend national issues". Though Hasluck did not venture any precise examples of Fraser's intellectual strengths, there is little doubt that his consistency on Vietnam, his resolute commitment to an idea of Australia closely allied with its 'great and powerful' friends, his identification with Menzies' paternal liberalism, as well as his deep regard for the life of the mind would have contributed in no small part to Hasluck's conclusion. Such views and intellectual depth would be fully tested in the 1970s.

A new era of "formidable uncertainties": Fraser and Australia, 1970-1975

Nobody can tell what will happen as a result of the changing power movements between the great world powers. In the cold war period, there was a certain stability. Lines were defined. There might have been a stalemate between the two sides, but each knew where not to walk...However, I believe the world today is much more unsettled.

From his time at Oxford University through to the 1970s, Malcolm Fraser understood the Cold War in conventional terms. Australia, as part of a Western alliance committed to democracy and individual freedom, was locked in a life or death struggle with the tyrannical ideology of Communism and the threat of worldwide Soviet hegemony. Fraser’s Toynbee ‘world-view’ at times infused this struggle with an overly melodramatic edge. Only the ability of Australia’s ‘great and powerful friend’, the United States, to maintain its will in the face of the Communist threat, particularly in South Vietnam, could temper Fraser’s deep concern for Australia’s vulnerability in South East Asia. In this “new era” of the 1970s, the increasing Soviet activity in the Indian Ocean, the American loss of self-confidence following defeat in Vietnam and President Nixon’s resignation over Watergate served to heighten Fraser’s sense of anxiety. The clearly defined lines of the previous period had blurred. Australia, and more particularly the West, were drifting dangerously towards a repetition of 1930s Europe, a period epitomised for him by the appeasement of Hitler at Munich. In addition, Gough Whitlam’s rise to power at this time directly confronted Fraser’s idea of Australia as a country which balanced respect for the individual with limited government intervention. Whitlam’s faith in the capacity of centralised government to provide for the community and his espousal of a “new nationalism” for Australia were anathema to the Fraser ‘world-view’, and it was in response to Whitlam that Fraser voiced his essential mistrust of the very idea of nationalism.

Thus the circumstances of the 1970s added a new and troublesome dimension to Fraser’s understanding of the Cold War. As Minister for Defence from November 1969 to March 1971 Fraser tried to come to terms with these “formidable uncertainties”. In his first ministerial statement to the parliament, although recognising that “The familiar forces which have influenced international events for the past 20 years are changing in directions which we cannot fully foresee”, he maintained that Russian activities in the Indian Ocean and China’s unpredictability were a clear warning against isolationism. This speech was an implicit endorsement of the doctrine of “Forward Defence”, in which Australia, rather than withdrawing from its region, moved to increase its partnership with other regional countries.\(^\text{70}\)

In his 1970 Remembrance Day speech, Fraser more fully addressed himself to the "growing mood of isolation" and of "withdrawal" around the world. J.D.B. Miller, Professor of International Relations at the Australian National University, commended the speech as "a genuine view of the world" and for its "sincerity and freshness of mind". In the climate of a vocal anti-war movement in Australia, Fraser argued his case from history to demonstrate the imperative of maintaining individual, community and political will. The fragility of freedom and the lessons of Munich were those he sought to inculcate in a nation increasingly weary of the Vietnam commitment. What happened at Munich, in Fraser's view, had fuelled the "voracious appetite of a militarist Germany" and proved the "weakness of the West". The 1930's, he said, provided "the fullest possible condemnation of the integrity, the capacity, the realism of European democracies of the day". The lesson he drew from appeasement was that aggression, at all costs, had to be crushed. But Fraser's greatest fear concerned those in Europe, the United States and Australia who believed that "aggression is no longer aggression, that because a war has endured for a considerable period, involvement in it begins to be wrong". He dismissed those who believed the Soviet Union harboured "good intentions" as promoting the "great illusion of this decade". This was a clear illustration of the view that 'if only' the lessons of Munich could be applied, the Soviet Union would be effectively contained. The "constant thread" he identified from the Great War to Vietnam was the "need for democracies to maintain their will, to recognise that the world is not an easy place in which to live and probably wasn't meant to be". Fraser recalled not only Munich as representative of the catastrophic effects of a people losing their will, but in true Toynbee tradition, the "classic examples in past civilisations". In Fraser's view, the Roman empire had fallen "not because of the strength of external attack, but because of internal weakness and division". This rhetoric was again distinctly reminiscent of Billy Hughes. Both Fraser and Hughes saw international relations as a contest for survival in which war was an ever-present possibility. It followed therefore that neither democracy

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71 MF, Speech to Rotary Club of Melbourne, 11 November 1970, M1229/1, Fraser papers, NAA.
72 Personal Correspondence, JDB- Miller to Malcolm Fraser, 23 November 1970, Fraser papers, NAA, M1376/1. These initial complimentary comments, however, were probably the sweeteners before the medicine. They did not prevent Miller from challenging Fraser on the parallel he made between the failure of the western democracies in the 1930s to crush Hitler and the corresponding failure in the 1970s to curtail Russian ambitions.
nor order were guaranteed. Hughes in 1906 had asserted there was no form of
government “so unstable...so evanescent as democracy”. Among the great enemies of
democracy were decadence and self-indulgence. There was a similar
compulsion in Fraser, as in Hughes, to defend freedom. 73

But how could Fraser convince Australians to maintain their will in the early
1970s? Philip Ayres has suggested that at this time Fraser’s was a “lone conservative
voice drowned out in the noisy flood-tide of the permissive society”, the implication
being that calls for sacrifice and a resolute will were at odds with the prevailing national
mood. 74 But this “new era” of the 1970s had also raised the question of what held
Australians together in a post-British, multi-cultural society. Fraser certainly recognised
that the ideal of national unity and of “marshalling a nation to a common purpose” was a
harder task in Australia than in countries such as Germany, Japan and Russia; for he saw
these countries drew on a longer, more established tradition of ensuring their peoples
adhered to a strict code of discipline for the sake of national security. Yet Fraser wanted
the best of both worlds here. On the one hand such countries exemplified the dangers of
absolute collectivism and aggressive nationalism; on the other hand, he bemoaned the
fact that Australians did not possess a similar discipline. “We are a people who dislike
discipline, who will not accept discipline of the State unless there is a clearly defined and
present need”. 75 Here Fraser’s liberalism clashed with his realism. For Fraser, it seemed
that only in the face of great danger, when “a knife is aimed at the heart of a nation”
could democracies like Australia be relied upon to fight for their survival. The problem
was how to transfer this sense of urgency to the 1970s, in order to make people realise the
similarity of the dangers to the 1930s:

...if in 1970 you talk of more abstract qualities, the love of country, an obligation to
do things for your country, not merely to expect your country to do things for you,
then I wonder how much force these motives have, without the stimulus of danger.
Nationalism can unite a people, but it is not always a force for good. In times past
the unity of religion and the state bound some countries tightly. But this is not the
sort of catalyst that would or should move countries such as Australia or the United
Kingdom. You are unlikely to find a catalyst in our political philosophy alone, in

73 For a study of WM.Hughes’ ‘world-view’ on which this comparison is based, see Neville Meaney, The
74 Ayres, Malcolm Fraser, 189.
75 MF, Speech to Rotary Club of Melbourne, 11 November 1970.
the broadest sense, because our political philosophy is postulated in a large measure on being allowed to go our own way, to lead a quiet life. And this is perhaps the way it ought to be. True democracy is so diversifed in its constituent parts that it is difficult to find in it the catalyst which will set alight the hearts of men except at times when that democracy is threatened. Thus the difficulty remains unless there is a clearly seen and present danger. This is the great weakness of democracies and will perhaps remain so; it is a weakness that places great and particular responsibilities on those who aspire to leadership.76

The message was clear – nationalism was outmoded. With the idealism of Kennedyesque mutual obligation between a country and its citizens no longer viable in the 1970s, Fraser was suggesting that the positive features of nationalism, such as its capacity to unite a people, had always had to struggle with its more dangerous, excessive tendencies. Nationalism's potential for abuse was too great. Like Whitlam, Fraser would not wish for the intense, exclusive unity which nationalism demands, since it conflicted with his deeper attachment to the freedom of the individual, the freedom of 'being allowed to go our own way'. Despite being so adamant that nationalism was anathema to an Anglo-Australian 'world-view', there was an underlying sense of disillusionment in Fraser that its more positive qualities, such as a sense of social bonding, were no longer felt by the people. The greater threat, however, was the diversity, and thus the inherent weakness, of democracy itself. Only by a heavy dose of realism in the form of a 'clearly seen and present danger' could Australians be roused to defend the nation. Much of Fraser's subsequent political effort was directed towards this end, particularly in his attempts to convince Australians of the perpetual dangers posed by Russian aggression, the perils of nationalism, and more immediately the threat of a Whitlam Labor government to this notion of a "quiet life".

Fraser's Deakin Lecture of July 1971, Towards 2000 – Challenge to Australia highlighted his continued intellectual drive in coming to terms with Australia's new circumstances. This necessitated a reassessment of old attitudes and approaches to Australia's relations with the outside world. He claimed that "Strong ties to Britain prevented the full assumption of independence until the century had nearly half gone". This was not, however, the rhetoric of 'thwarted' nationalism speaking here. Whilst he did not precisely pin down when this 'independence' came, Fraser did refer to "the late

76 MF, Speech to Rotary Club of Melbourne, 11 November 1970.
understanding in the Second World War that it was the United States and not the United Kingdom, that could save Australia from invasion". Despite this, Fraser acknowledged that the “policies of parent and child remained close” in the post-war world. Thus Fraser could still revert to the standard familial metaphors to describe the Anglo-Australian relationship. He asserted that Australia’s reliance on ‘great and powerful’ friends in the Cold War period had grown from an “understanding of great power politics...the tides then flowing, and...the Australian interest”. But in these new, more uncertain times he did redefine them as the “years of comfort”. Such “luxury” of great power protection could not be so readily assumed in the new era. The ensuing lack of Australian self-confidence – “we are not yet used to walking alone” – had created an environment ready made for Fraser’s Toynbean ‘world-view’:

Arnold Toynbee once wrote twelve volumes to demonstrate and analyse the cause of the rise and fall of nations. His thesis can be condensed to a single sentence, and is simply stated: That through history nations are confronted by a series of challenges and whether they survive or whether they fall to the wayside, depends on the manner and character of their response. Simple, and perhaps one of the few things that is self-evident. It involves a conclusion about the past that life has not been easy for people or for nations, and an assumption that that condition will not alter. There is within me some part of the metaphysic, and thus I would add that life is not meant to be easy”.

It was the clearest and most coherent statement yet of Fraser’s identification with the Toynbean view of history, to the extent that this notion of ‘challenge and response’ had become part of Fraser’s essential self. In particular it related directly to his idea of the ‘nation’. The phrase “life is not meant to be easy”, though sometimes interpreted as a mark of Fraser’s arrogance towards the people, in fact spoke to his genuine fear that Australians were slipping into a dangerous complacency. In his view, Australia would fail in this new world if it were “bemused by a soft life without sacrifice at home” – hence, as he subsequently put it, “we need a rugged society”. Again he recalled the lessons of the 1930s, to warn of committing the “same sins of neglect, of misunderstanding”. This Deakin Lecture was also significant for Fraser’s advocacy of an interventionist liberalism, with his recognition of the role of government in welfare

policy, the alleviation of rural poverty and research and development. The election of a
Whitlam Labor government in December 1972 would not only herald a new intensity in
Fraser’s efforts to convince Australians of the need for vigilance and sacrifice, it would
ultimately carry him to the leadership of the Liberal party.

Writing in the wake of the Liberal party’s defeat in 1972, David Kemp, then a
political science lecturer at the University of Melbourne, endeavoured to account for the
failure of the Gorton and McMahon leadership styles and to consider the prospects of a
future Liberal revival. In an influential article circulated throughout Liberal party circles
at the time – ‘A Leader and a Philosophy’ – Kemp argued that the strong emphasis on a
leader’s ‘image’ had obscured the “most important relationship” in a modern political
party. This was not the bond between the leader and the public, but that “between the
leader and followers...The ultimate support of a leader’s authority is his role as
expounder of a philosophy or ideology which commands common consent and adherence
in the party”. 78 Sir Robert Menzies’ philosophical direction of the Liberal party from its
inception in 1944 guaranteed that “the philosophy and platform of Liberalism and the
authority of the Liberal leader of the opposition were closely linked”. But whereas the
essence of Liberalism as a “counter to socialism” had been a significant factor in
inspiring the party members during the 1940s, “fear of socialism” was “less compelling
as a force drawing members together in cooperative action” in the 1970s. Kemp began
working as a speechwriter and adviser to Fraser in 1975. As James Walter has shown,
Kemp himself felt that Fraser was the embodiment of those ideals for political and
philosophical leadership he articulated in his article of 1973. 79

This philosophical revival of liberalism included an assault on Whitlam’s idea of
a “new nationalism”. As previously demonstrated, the “new nationalism” was an attempt
to express a new-found confidence in being Australian, as well as the desire to be seen to
be free from the ‘apron-strings’ of its ‘great and powerful’ friends. In his Eureka speech
of December 1973, Whitlam had established the “new nationalism” as “a philosophy, a

78 David Kemp, ‘A Leader and a Philosophy’, Checkpoint, no 13 (January 1973), 3-13; reprinted in Henry
Mayer (ed.), Labor to Power – Australia’s 1972 Election (Sydney: Angus & Robertson on behalf of the
Australasian Political Studies Association, 1973)
modus vivendi for the new government". This philosophy was not only related to an Australian cultural renaissance, but to a specific view of the role of government. At Eureka Whitlam claimed that “Alone among the parties, we affirm the supremacy of Australian sovereignty over the whole nation and its territories”. This view, which argued for the primacy of the Federal government in legislating for the benefit of the community as a whole, directly challenged the classic liberal idea of the freedom of the individual from unjustified government intervention. It was no surprise therefore that Fraser and Kemp saw in Whitlam’s policies the familiar bogey of unrestrained socialism, in addition to what they believed to be the dangers of excessive, vainglorious nationalism.

Both Kemp and Fraser engaged Whitlam on this question of whether nationalism was viable in the new circumstances. Kemp had expressed a fundamentalist liberalism in his critique of nationalism: not only had it committed many “crimes” in the past, it was not, he contended, “obviously linked with any of the broad objectives which have moved liberals in politics”. For Kemp, nationalism implied the “strong use of symbols”, which diverted attention away from the “substance” of politics. Furthermore it rang “strangely in the ears of liberals for it seems to imply the elevation of the national good over the good of individuals”. This was not the reformist liberalism of Green, Bosanquet or Hobhouse. Nationalism for Kemp was a collectivist threat to liberty and freedom, for behind this notion of the collective good lay mischievous ‘special interests’.

Fraser added his own distinctive touch to the question of nationalism in a series of newspaper articles in 1973 and 1974. These contributions were aimed more generally at establishing Fraser as the philosophical voice of liberalism in Australia. He reaffirmed the basic beliefs of liberals, that government existed to serve the people, that the creation of opportunities for men and women to make their own decisions concerning personal welfare was essential for their dignity and that a “full compassion” was to be extended to the weaker members of society. At this time Fraser also publicly defended the public policy record of the Menzies era, in particular its legacy of respect for the Rule of Law, sustained economic growth, increased home ownership, the expansion in tertiary education, and the “friendship with Britain and America”. Fraser attacked those in his

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80 See Chapter 3, pp. 109ff.
own party who had allowed "the achievements of many years of government” to be
denigrated and belittled: “How often since the retirement of Menzies have the
achievements of those years been proclaimed by Liberals? We have put them too much
aside and allowed our virtues to be seen as a liability”.

Fraser believed the essence of
the Menzies liberal tradition had been encapsulated in the 1941 ‘Forgotten people’
speech: “Menzies was saying that the Liberal party is not a voice for the unions, they
have their own voice. Not for corporations, they can look after themselves. It’s for people
who aren’t organised into any specific organisation and in his view the Liberal Party’s
primary task was to speak for people without a voice and establish a fair society”.

But Fraser’s articles also included a direct response to Whitlam’s “new
nationalism”. Mindful of the party’s failure in broader philosophical terms at the 1972
elections, Fraser lamented that the Liberal party “did not respond adequately to the
increasing nationalism of a growing Australia. That does not mean to say that our
response would have been in terms of Kipling, but rather in terms of well ordered and
reasoned argument that would analyse and emphasise the difference that often exists
between a strident nationalism and the national interest”. In his view, Labor’s mining
policy had betrayed this ‘national interest’ because “it would seem that they have
forgotten that some overseas involvement is necessary if we are to establish and maintain
outlets for our products”. Fraser believed this “increasing nationalism” had been
“wrongly” associated with Labor rather than his own party, since “it was past Liberal
governments that gave Australia a national and international standing of real worth”. Two
points are worth noting here. Firstly, Fraser could not explain why the people had
“wrongly” equated the ALP with Australian nationalism – such an abstract view of ‘the
people’ simply assumed they would equate the Liberal party with it. Secondly, Fraser’s
rejection of a ‘Kipling’ style response was an acknowledgement that neither an
imperialistic jingoism nor an intense Britishness carried any emotional force in
Australian political culture at this time.

But it was in dealing with Whitlam’s ideological faith in the capacity of the
Commonwealth government to provide for the well-being of the community that Fraser

82 MF, ‘We Stand as Liberals’, The Herald (Melbourne), 1 August 1974.
83 MF, interview with Paul Kelly, 2000; for the ABC TV Federation series; transcript.
particularised his attack on the ‘new nationalism’: “Our pride in Australia is deep, innate and permanently enshrined in a short but proud history upon which a generation better than our own will build with confidence. Neither we, nor they, need an all-powerful Canberra to emphasise some new nationalism”.$^{85}$ Seeing the “growth of Canberra based power” as “frightening”, Fraser invoked Acton’s dictum of the division of power to support his commitment to Federalism. Fraser had thus narrowed the parameters of the “new nationalism”. Whereas Whitlam had defined it as a broadly based concept which could encompass a wide range of policy initiatives, including social, cultural, immigration and foreign policy, Fraser reduced it to a malevolent manifestation of ‘big government’. This suspicion of “big government” continued to form the core of Fraser’s attack on Whitlam’s “new nationalism”. He interpreted the rejection of the 1973 powers referendum, which had sought to give the Commonwealth government the ability to control prices and incomes, as “a demonstration of Australian independence” – from government interference. By invoking what he saw as the extreme examples of ‘big government’ – Nazi Germany, pre-war Japan, and Soviet communism – Fraser concluded that such centralisation “espouses the cause of nationalism, knowing full well that nationalism is one of the most potent political forces in any country, but forgetting that most of the sins and most of the wars of past times have been caused by nationalism gone wrong”:

Nationalism is a good force if it unites a people in a proper purpose, giving them a sense of pride, a sense of achievement, and of belonging. It is quite a wrong force when it is used for selfish ends or predatory purposes...Nationalism is so often a dangerous force. Nations rightly suspect it but when they come up against the country that wants to make its influence felt in an unreasonable and unhappy manner, they can either do nothing and accept the consequences, however painful they might be, or they can react, and competitive nationalism will spread around the world...$^{86}$

Despite the acknowledgement of nationalism’s positive qualities, which were substantial, its capacity for oppression of the outsider, for suppression of the individual, for exclusion and aggression far outweighed its redeeming features. This was the essence of Fraser’s

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$^{85}$ MF, 'A Liberal Advocate', Age, 21/22 May 1973.
$^{86}$ JM Fraser, 'A National View', in Ray Atchison, (ed.), Looking at the Liberals (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1974), 137.
liberal nationalism, and it is significant that like Whitlam, Fraser at this time argued more for a sense of “internationalism” and “inter-dependence”, though one that was expressed in terms of Australia’s reliance on overseas trade rather than a commitment to the United Nations. In place of inter-dependence, he claimed that in the Whitlam government, “.... we find a new and dangerous nationalism, a perversity, and an archaic approach to domestic and world affairs”. 87 Thus Whitlam’s “new nationalism” had not only revived his long held fears of ‘big government’ and socialism, it had harmed Australia’s relations with the outside world, especially with its traditional allies. Whitlam, according to Fraser, was “driving us further apart from the United Kingdom and the United States”. 88 Whereas Whitlam saw détente as one of the most hopeful developments in the post-war period, Fraser viewed it as a term “too loosely used...There is in fact no lessening of tension”. 89 The simple fact for Fraser was that détente was no way to treat aggression.

For Fraser, the Whitlam era had witnessed his deep attachment to the virtues of ‘sacrifice’, ‘discipline’ and the need for ‘maintaining individual and collective will’ fall hopelessly by the wayside. Whitlam’s expression of a ‘new nationalism’ and the view that Australia faced no external threat for the next ten to fifteen years only exacerbated his fears about the dangers, both internal and external, that threatened the very survival of nations. Fraser’s rhetoric in the 1975 election campaign, following the dismissal of the Whitlam government on 11 November 1975, addressed Australia’s economic plight and adopted an extreme anti-socialist tone. Whitlam was “the man who took Australia the first significant step on the road to dictatorship” and had presided over “three dark years” when the “freedom...prosperity...[and]self-respect” of Australians had been “eroded”. 90 Moreover, in a clear criticism of Whitlam’s penchant for overseas tours, which included several highly publicised visits to Ancient Greek and Roman ruins, Fraser taunted the Labor leader with the claim that: “Australia does not need a tourist as Prime Minister”. If the Whitlam years were the ultimate ‘challenge’ to Fraser’s idea of Australia, what would be his ‘prime ministerial’ response?

88 Ibid.
90 MF, Policy Speech, 27 November 1975, Fraser papers, NAA, M1263.
"Govern a great nation as you would cook a small fish – don’t overdo it": Prime Minister Fraser, Australia and the world 1975-83

Philosophically speaking, it may not have been quite so profound, but as Fraser acknowledged, this metaphor expressed his point “very neatly”. The Whitlam years had been an indulgence and an aberration which Australia could ill afford in such uncertain times. In power from 1975 to 1983, Fraser concentrated much of his economic policy on reining in government expenditure and controlling rampant inflation after the excesses of the Whitlam years. His was a regulatory, protectionist regime. At the same time Fraser pursued an interventionist liberalism, most clearly demonstrated in his 1976 Family Allowances legislation, which redistributed funds to low income families and children in need. As Paul Kelly has noted, Fraser’s economic policy was “falsely hailed as Thatcherite or Reaganite, when he was really a disciplinarian upholding the Australian tradition against the rising tide of pro-market reformers…”. In the early 1980s the emergence of a new intellectual force in the Liberal party, led by John Hyde and collectively known as the “dries”, directly challenged Fraser’s economic policy. They criticised the doctrine of government intervention and regulation and instead pushed for an embrace of financial and industry deregulation and the lowering of tariffs. Fraser’s subsequent hesitation in allowing full financial deregulation and the entry of foreign banks (as proposed by the 1981 Campbell Commission) ensured, as Kelly writes, that Fraser became “the last prime minister before the age of globalisation forced Australia to break from its introspective economic past”.

But of more direct concern for this study is the rhetoric of the Fraser prime ministership which relates to Australia’s changing attitude to nationalism. Since Fraser’s response to Whitlam’s “new nationalism” had been so distrustful and dismissive, how did he himself give expression to an ideal of national unity? With this question in mind, the following section examines Fraser’s Australia Day speeches, his response to the concept of ‘multiculturalism’ as outlined in the 1978 Galbally report, and his major foreign policy statements, through which may be explored the continuities and changes in his

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91 MF, Speech to Melbourne Scots, 27 November 1976, Fraser papers, NAA, M 1263.
93 Ibid.
understanding of Australia and its place in the world. How did Fraser balance his liberalism with a realist’s approach to international affairs, in which the ‘national interest’ and power politics prevailed over ideology? How can his support for Third World nationalism be reconciled with his deep suspicion of nationalism in the Australian context?

As noted in the previous chapter, Whitlam’s changes to some of the key symbols of Australian nationhood, including the implementation of a new Australian honours system and the adoption of Advance Australia Fair as the national anthem, were generally interpreted as the most direct political expressions of the “new nationalism”. Yet nationalism’s “reliance on symbols”, as David Kemp had argued, diverted attention away from “the substance of politics”. Upon becoming Prime Minister Fraser himself gave expression to this view. In his first Australia Day speech in 1976, he rejected the need for an aggressive Australian nationalism:

The constant need to be aggressive about one’s national identity, to vociferously reaffirm it usually indicates a sense of inferiority towards other nations. Being able to regard oneself as an Australian, being able to contribute to Australia does not depend on outward symbols.\(^4\)

This was not so much a philosophical point of difference with the Whitlam idea of “new nationalism”, as it was a reflection of Fraser’s need to attack his political adversary as the exponent of a loud-mouthed and superficial nationalism. Fraser’s decision in 1976 to reintroduce a Commonwealth list for Imperial Honours, co-existent with the Australian Honours system, illustrated his awareness of the need to appease the more Anglophile members within the Liberal party, who resented Whitlam’s change to the Honours system as an open repudiation of British ties. In contrast to Menzies in 1950, who felt a pressing need to “restate the old faith” of Britishness after the supposedly ‘un-British’ years of Curtin and Chifley, Fraser’s reasoning for such a decision was much weaker – he felt the return of Imperial Honours would restore a “pattern that used to prevail before an unfortunate interregnum occurred”.\(^5\)

Because Fraser himself was at this time more willing to accept the changing nature of the Anglo-Australian relationship, he did not feel

\(^4\) J.M. Fraser, Australian of the Year speech, 23 January 1976, in Fraser Papers, NAA, M1263.

\(^5\) MF, CPD, H of R, vol. 99 (1 June 1976), 2702. See also MF, radio broadcast, 28 April 1974, Fraser papers, NAA, M 1229/1, as quoted in Chapter Three, p 102-3.
compelled to cast the Whitlam era as a betrayal of the British connection. He has since explained his belief that ordinary Australians being rewarded for community service ascribed more kudos to an MBE than to a distinctly Australian award. These imperial honours were what he perceived to be the “traditional things which help to give continuity” to society. Fraser’s decision therefore was perhaps more a mark of his sensitivity towards those who simply had not moved with the times, rather than an express desire to again place the British connection at the heart of Australian national self-definition. As a backbencher in the 1960s, Fraser had expressed his frustration at those unwilling to divest themselves of a British race patriot ‘world-view’ when Britain sought to join the EEC. As Prime Minister in the mid 1970s, however, he was more willing to accommodate those who retained a lingering affection for the imperial trappings of old.

Fraser’s arguments for Waltzing Matilda to be Australia’s national song for the 1976 Montreal Olympics are particularly apposite to this question of symbols and changing Australian attitudes towards Britishness in the 1970s. Fraser thought the words of Waltzing Matilda to be “not all that inappropriate...having in mind Australia’s origins”. Though he himself did not expand more fully on this point, he agreed with an editorial in The Age which dismissed public concern over the words of the song: “Are the words really so surprising, considering that Australian history was largely built around convicts, squatters, billabongs and millions of fly-blown sheep?”. Certainly Fraser felt the words more appropriate than Advance Australia Fair, as he explained to the parliament:

In the second verse of Advance Australia Fair we find these brave words: ‘Britannia rules the waves’. I tend to have some doubt as to whether that is an appropriate line for Australia’s national song. It would seem to me a little outdated and not entirely in keeping with the national sentiments which I hope are held by most Australians. In the light of Fraser’s readiness to accept a sun setting on the British Empire, as articulated in his first speech to the House on international affairs in March 1956, that he would find British race patriot sentiment incompatible with Australia’s circumstances in

96 MF, personal interview, 22 November 2000, Melbourne.
the mid 1970s is not surprising. These comments help further explain his instinctive rejection of a ‘Kipling’ style response to Whitlam’s “new nationalism”. In continuing to defend the Government’s choice of *Waltzing Matilda* against Whitlam – who countered that Fraser had arrogantly ignored a 1974 opinion poll which declared *Advance Australia Fair* as the official national anthem – Fraser painted the Whitlam period as a betrayal of the Australian legend: “the circumstances in which it [*Waltzing Matilda*] is often played arouse a feeling of comradeship and mateship which, before the honourable gentleman became Prime Minister, were so much part of the Australian scene”. *Advance Australia Fair*, Fraser added, contained a verse which “harks back to the days in the past he [Whitlam] would wish to forget – when Britannia did rule the waves”.99 The sad irony, of course, remains that no Australian athlete won Olympic gold at Montreal. The legacy of this 1976 parliamentary debate over appropriate national songs and anthems was not a world-wide audience for *Waltzing Matilda*, but the creation of the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra. It had been the lack of gold medals, rather than the swagman’s lament, which ultimately swung public opinion and attracted government funding. And despite this prime ministerial expression of affection for the whimsical ballad, the Australian people voted overwhelmingly in favour of *Advance Australia Fair* as the Australian national anthem in a national song poll held in 1977.100

Fraser’s support for *Waltzing Matilda* did not derive from a conviction that Australia needed a revival of the bush legend, or for that matter, of any monolithic national myth which might assert Australia’s greatness or superiority. Indeed, in his 1977 Australia Day speech Fraser said: “Fortunately the days of Anglo-Saxon conformity are over, and I believe we are all better off as a nation and as individuals because of this.” The new realities of Australian political culture were defined thus: “Ethnic cultures have added a new dimension of diversity and richness to the traditions of those other migrants, the English, Scots and Irish. What is emerging from this is a distinctive Australian

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100 After the distribution of preferences for ‘Song of Australia’ and ‘God Save the Queen’, the final results were: Advance Australia Fair – 4 415 642; Waltzing Matilda – 2 353 617. Results taken from CR (13-19 June 1977), 743.
culture...". This was the first time an Australian Prime Minister had so enthusiastically welcomed an end to Australia’s once coveted racial homogeneity. The very word ‘conformity’ carried a negative connotation, and the idea of Britishness was fragmented into its constituent parts: the English, Scots and Irish were merely “those other migrants” who were therefore incorporated into a continuum of migration. It should be noted that on this occasion Fraser was addressing an Australia Day Fair organised by the Good Neighbour society, and used the occasion to offer Australian financial assistance towards UNESCO’s restoration of the Athenian acropolis, which he said was a “demonstration of our recognition that Australia is a multi-cultural country”. But the question remained, how precisely had this “distinctive Australian culture” emerged and what was its content? When precisely had he realised this ‘Anglo-Saxon conformity’ was no longer a founding ideological pillar of Australian political culture and when had it become so oppressive? Fraser’s embrace of the concept of ‘multiculturalism’ gave him the opportunity to try to define the basis of Australia’s coalescence.

The 1978 Report of the Review of Post-arrival Programs and Services for Migrants, commissioned by Fraser and chaired by Frank Galbally, declared that “Australia is at a critical stage in the development of a cohesive, united, multicultural nation”. This judgement had been prompted by the decline in British/European migration and the rise in migrant numbers from Asia and the Middle East. The report’s guiding principles urged that “all members of our society must have equal opportunity to realise their full potential and must have equal access to programs and services” and that “every person should be able to maintain his or her culture without prejudice or disadvantage and should be encouraged to understand and embrace other cultures”.

Writing in the late 1980s, David Kemp observed that the issue of whether the authority of the state could be used to actively encourage cultural diversity was one which “thoroughly confused liberals” during this period. Whilst some feared that multiculturalism would engender social fragmentation and ethnic conflict, Malcolm Fraser used it as a concept to define a new acceptance of diversity and an opportunity for migrants to be integrated into

the Australian political community and culture. The establishment of a multicultural television station and the Institute of Multicultural Affairs were the more obvious expressions of the Fraser government's overwhelmingly positive response to the Galbally report, but its recommendations were accepted in full.

Malcolm Fraser would subsequently describe the publication of this report as the moment when "multiculturalism became more than just an aspiration". Ken Inglis, however, has pointed out that the word 'multiculturalism' was "proclaimed in Canberra before it had any general usage", and so "a word unknown in 1972 had come to describe an orthodoxy ten years later". The problem remained, then, of how to explain the process by which 'multiculturalism' became an 'orthodoxy'. In a major speech entitled Multiculturalism: Australia's Unique Achievement, Fraser gave the term both a content and a context. In his view, what held Australians together in a multicultural society was "a framework of shared fundamental values", including the rule of law and Australia's democratic institutions and processes. But it was against the background of Australia's once fervent identification with Britishness that Fraser established a historical context for the emergence of Australian multiculturalism. In this view the intensity and uniformity of the British myth had made the multicultural 'achievement' all the more remarkable. Fraser argued that Australia's desire at the end of World War Two to remain "overwhelmingly Anglo-Celtic in character" had been demanded by public and political opinion as well as by "the Australian tradition". Recalling conflict between white settlers and the Aborigines, between Europeans and the Chinese, between English and Irish,

106 MF, Multiculturalism: Australia's Unique Achievement, 30 November 1981.
Protestant and Catholic, \(^{107}\) Fraser argued that “The lessons of Australian history appeared to support the view that the diversity our society would tolerate was strictly limited”. \(^{108}\)

Yet the dilution of this Britishness had been accomplished with “relative speed”, a speed deriving not from any sense of Australian and British interests beginning to diverge, or as a result of any emotive ‘turning points’ such as the Eureka stockade, Gallipoli, the fall of Singapore, or Britain’s decision to enter Europe, but primarily on account of the more practical realisation that British migrant numbers would not be sufficient for Australia’s population requirements. Whilst Fraser argued that “We have not simply grafted an ethnic dimension on to an otherwise unchanged conception of ourselves” and that there had been a “fundamental reappraisal of the established way of seeing ourselves”, he could not identify precisely, other than the new tolerance of diversity, what this new way of seeing Australia might involve. The residual uncertainty beneath the confidence and optimism of this rhetoric was illustrated in the conclusion to his speech when Fraser acknowledged that Australia, “small in size and insular in outlook” had more or less “stumbled into the multicultural epoch”.

The extent to which the word ‘multiculturalism’ actually reflected the relations existing between different ethnic and racial groups in Australia at the time was more problematic. Right-wing critics such as Lauchlan Chipman believed multiculturalism preserved social and ethnic divisions and therefore hindered the integration of migrants into mainstream Australian life. \(^{109}\) Nevertheless Fraser’s revival of the immigration program – migrant numbers had been dramatically reduced under Whitlam – in particular his readiness to welcome large numbers of Indo-Chinese refugees following the fall of Saigon in 1975, demonstrated his genuine commitment to turning the rhetoric of ethnic diversity and tolerance of difference into reality.

The more Fraser spoke about Australian patriotism or national pride, the closer he came to the Whitlam view, in which Australia should aspire to a “benign and

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\(^{107}\) It is worth noting Fraser’s view on the 1916-17 conscription debates here. In addition to the bitter division these debates caused, Fraser argues it represented Australia’s inability to stand up to Britain at this time. Referring to WM.Hughes, Fraser believed “it wasn’t in his psyche to argue against Britain” when the request for reinforcements was made in 1916. Fraser was making this more general point in relation to the changing nature of the Anglo-Australian relationship. Fraser did not, however, give expression to these sentiments as Prime Minister. MF, interview with Paul Kelly, ABC TV Federation series, transcript.

\(^{108}\) MF, Multiculturalism: Australia’s Unique Achievement, 30 November 1981.
constructive” national self-image. On Australia Day 1978, Fraser proclaimed that “it is not part of our normal character to display ardent public patriotism...”\(^{110}\) Addressing a National Youth Conference the following year, he implored his audience to develop a spirit of national pride, but with qualifications: “We need to have pride in what we can achieve and in what we have done....I don’t mean that we should do it in a way that is chauvinistic or bombastic – wearing the Australian flag on both arms all the time – but this is a great nation, and it is up to us to build it for the future”.\(^{111}\) The parallels here with Whitlam’s rhetoric on Australia Day 1974 are striking and suggest that Fraser and Whitlam were perhaps much closer in their sensitivity to nationalism than previously thought. Whitlam had rejected the need for “truculent or flag-waving ambitions” in the “new nationalism” and called for a commitment to “a greater Australia”. He qualified this call with the view that such sentiments were not to be expressed “in any bombastic or chauvinistic sense”. No doubt in the early 1970s, when Fraser responded to the “new nationalism”, the cut and thrust of political debate demanded he focus on the philosophical challenge that ‘big government’ posed to his idea of liberalism as the guardian of individual freedom. But in their suspicion of nationalism, in their recognition that an intense, conformist, monolithic national myth was no longer sustainable in Australian political culture, Fraser and Whitlam were as one.

Nevertheless, the Fraser government did become associated with the so-called “new patriotism” of the late 1970s and early 1980s. This “new patriotism” took the form of an ‘Advance Australia’ media campaign, which emphasised the themes of productivity, individual enterprise and pride in Australia. Launched by the Project Australia Committee in 1979, it was backed by Federal government funding of $4.1 million.\(^{112}\) The aims of this campaign, according to its official newsletter, was to help people “think Australia, think positively, and accept greater personal responsibility for the advancement of Australia”.\(^{113}\) Like the “new nationalism”, the “new patriotism” was so vague and amorphous that its actual substance was difficult to identify. The Fraser


\(^{111}\) MF, Speech to National Youth Conference, Canberra, 3 October 1979, Kemp & White, Malcolm Fraser on Australia, 110.

\(^{112}\) Stephen Alomes, A Nation at Last?, 274-5.
government published a booklet encouraging greater use of and respect for the Australian flag, and a special section had to be established in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to accommodate the steady influx of letters asking for "more flags, patriotic jingles, more get up and go for Australia". The television jingle accompanying the campaign exhorted Australians to "have a go", to "pull together with all our weight", to "help head off the crunch" and "make Australia great". The message was essentially that Australians needed to work even harder to overcome the economic difficulties of the time. But being the creation of business and advertising gurus, the 'Advance Australia' project served more the interests of multi-national corporations and their desire to associate themselves with an image of 'Australianness'. It was not related to an idea of Australians as a unique people.

Fraser's idea of Australia and the impact of his liberal philosophy on this idea are more accurately reflected in his Australia Day speeches as Prime Minister. From 1976 to 1983 the core themes in these speeches reflected an Australian identity based upon respect for the individual, the obligation which fell upon all to ensure a prosperous future, and a faith in smaller government. As noted above, Fraser, like Whitlam, specifically rejected an exaggerated, pretentious sense of national pride. In 1978 he acknowledged that "More public fervour by far is displayed at the VFL Grand Final than at all Australia Day celebrations combined", but he could still point to an "underlying...great strong current of pride in our country, and a belief in the future destiny of our country". Yet this notion of "destiny" did not involve the projection of a unique national myth by which Australia could aggressively differentiate itself from others. When Fraser talked of Australians as a "people", as the "product of the experiences we have had together", he referred to their experiences of "wars, depressions, bushfires, floods". In 1979 his rhetoric did indicate a sensitivity to the climate of "new patriotism" – he praised early Australian settlers for their "courage, tenacity, independence and enterprise", as well as "their eagerness to give it a go". Fraser concluded that "Australia's greatness springs from its people":

Some nations are often regarded as important because of their power; because of their victories in war, because of the cities they have built; because of their influence on world affairs, in trade and commerce. Without discounting the importance of some of these things, I much prefer to measure the greatness of the country by the quality of its people...Australia is not something remote. Australia is not just an idea. It is the 14 million people that make up this nation. Each action by every one of us is part of Australia.\textsuperscript{116}

Fraser's idea of Australia had thus essentially remained the same since 1953, when, in his preselection speech, he had committed himself to a political career by defining Australia's "greatness" not "in terms of power, productivity and population...but in terms of individual people". In Fraser's view, Australia was not just an 'imagined community', for though he implicitly accepted the legitimacy of Australia as an "idea", he did not wish such an abstraction to obscure the role of the individual - the capacity of "every one of us" to contribute to the overall whole. As he put it on Australia Day 1981: "One of the most valued ideals in Australia throughout our history, has been that each individual matters".\textsuperscript{117}

Fraser also related this idea of Australia built upon respect for the individual directly to government policy. When he spoke of forthcoming "changes in the role of government and a growing acceptance that individuals are the best judges of how they should order their own lives" in this same 1981 speech, Fraser previewed the release of the \textit{Review of Commonwealth Functions}, which formalised his advocacy of smaller government. This \textit{Review} sought to boost the activity of private enterprise, increase the fiscal responsibility of the States and decrease the size of the Commonwealth bureaucracy.\textsuperscript{118} In his 1982 Edmund Barton Lecture Fraser tried to place his government's objectives within a liberal tradition, in which a belief in Australia comprised an adherence to economic restraint, commitment to the freedom of the individual and faith in the capacity of decentralised power. Modern liberalism for Fraser was also expressed by respect for individual cultural and ethnic traditions in all their diversity: "This ideal", he said, "has led us to try and change attitudes and perceptions of

\textsuperscript{116} MF, Australia Day Broadcast, \textit{CR} (22-28 January 1979), 71.
Australia born in the days of Anglo-Saxon dominance, and to put in their place the ideal of a multicultural Australia". Liberal tenets were also firmly connected to the defence of Australia, its place within the Western alliance, and its membership of the Commonwealth of Nations, through which Australia endeavoured to come to terms with the Third World.

Fraser's continued antagonism towards the Soviet Union was not related to the nationalism question but to a wider concern for Australia's security in the world. As Prime Minister, Fraser was distinctly more anti-Soviet than anti-Communist. In his first major foreign policy statement he proposed a new realism for dealing with threats to the regional balance of power. The principal guiding force in a "deeply disturbing world environment" where "power in a broad sense remains the major factor in international politics" was the protection and promotion of Australia's 'national interest'. To this end, Fraser argued that "In our relations with other countries, the ideology of regimes is not irrelevant but it cannot be the guiding principle of our policy". This realism, in which the 'national interest' prevailed over ideology - thus softening his antipathy to communism - can be seen most clearly during his visit to China in June 1976. That his first overseas trip as Prime Minister was to China and Japan illustrated the increasing awareness among Australian leaders that the departure of 'great and powerful' friends from the region imposed a new urgency on Australia's ability to learn to live with its Asian neighbours. To this end, and without prior consultation with the United States, Fraser proposed the formation of a quadrilateral alliance between China, Australia, the United States and Japan to contain Russian ambitions in the Indian Ocean. When Fraser told the Chinese Premier Hua Kuo-Feng that "the Russians remain Russians and over the years their actions have not altered very much", he merely voiced one of the enduring themes of his 'world-view' - that Russian aggression was a constant danger to world

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121 But as Neville Meaney has noted, there was an important distinction between the Whitlam and Fraser approaches to rapprochement with China. The first act of the Whitlam government after its election in December 1972 had been to officially recognise the People's Republic of China - a move which symbolised the passing of the Cold War suspicion of China as the 'red peril' intent on establishing a communist hegemony in Asia. While Whitlam celebrated the new relationship, Fraser saw it mostly in strategic and realpolitik terms. China was a potential ally to keep Soviet ambitions in the Indian and Pacific Oceans at bay; Neville Meaney, 'Australia and the World', in Neville Meaney (ed.) Under New Heavens: Cultural Transmission and the Making of Australia (Sydney: Heinemann, 1989), 441.
peace. In this case however, it was also aggression which had the potential to harm Australia's interests, namely her security in the Indian Ocean region. Fraser's support for independence movements in South East Asia was also seen in the perspective of containing Russian aggression.

As far as the Australian-American alliance was concerned, Fraser essentially kept faith with the Whitlam doctrine, maintaining that "the interests of the United States and the interests of Australia are not necessarily identical. In our relations with the United States...our first responsibility is independently to assess our own interests. The United States will unquestionably do the same". This concept of Australia possessing relative independence within existing traditional partnerships was given further expression in Fraser's speech to the National Press Club in Washington during his official visit in 1976, when he dismissed the notion that "concurrence and common action means subordination to the larger nation". Fraser dismissed Whitlam's vision of a "zone of peace" in the Indian Ocean as a "noble idea" and invited the Americans to extend their military facilities at Diego Garcia. While Whitlam had seen détente as one of the "most hopeful developments in post-war history" Fraser was not so optimistic: détente had not led to a reduction of political and military tension. On this same 1976 visit Fraser pressed the message that more than ever America needed to commit itself with even greater persistence to the support of liberty. It was only with the inauguration of Ronald Reagan as US President in 1980 that Fraser could feel that the free world had a leader who embodied the "remobilisation of will in the United States".

This constant fear of Soviet aggression along with a continuing Australian emphasis on establishing links with regional partners, led Fraser to commission a major report on Australia's relations with the Third World. Chaired by Owen Harries, a former adviser and speechwriter to Fraser, the report addressed both the salient features of the Third World as a factor in international affairs and proposed practical reasons for Australia's closer engagement with Third World countries. The committee noted that the

125 MF, Speech at University of South Carolina, 8 July 1981, CR (6-12 July 1981), 802.
Third World still retained the same strategic significance as it had during the height of the Cold War, being "a primary battleground for global competition between the United States and the Soviet Union". In its recommendation that Australia maintain "in clear and unequivocal terms our opposition to aggression across international borders in our region...regardless of the ideology of the country involved", it clearly had the strategic ambitions of the Soviet Union and its "influence in third-world trouble spots" in mind.\footnote{126} The report thus urged Australia to act with other western countries in order to prevent the further spread of Soviet strategic influence. With regard to Third World participation in the United Nations, it advised that Australia "should seek to avoid provocative or conspicuous attitudes towards the Third World" and further that it "should avoid becoming the spokesman for general Western interests". Perhaps the most significant recommendation was that Australia "should by her own actions strive to promote a realistic appreciation of the inherent limitations" of the United Nations. At the same time, however, in promoting the Commonwealth of Nations as a major arm of Australian diplomacy, the report advised an "effort to dispel misconceptions derived from its British imperialist origins".\footnote{127} On both these questions – scepticism towards the United Nations and faith in a multi-racial Commonwealth, Fraser had been consistent since his earliest foreign policy speeches to the parliament in the mid 1950s.

Fraser's subsequent foreign policy rhetoric demonstrated his basic acceptance of the Harries report. His enthusiastic and effective use of the Commonwealth of Nations as a forum in which Australia could promote its partnership with the Third World constituted one of the most distinctive aspects of his foreign policy as Prime Minister. From his very first speech on international affairs to the parliament in 1956 Fraser had expressed his acceptance of and commitment to a multi-racial Commonwealth. When Prime Minister, Fraser had no difficulty in accepting the change in the Commonwealth from homogeneity to diversity, from the dominance of Britain to a more "egalitarian relationship". For Fraser it meant that the Commonwealth possessed "greater intimacy and equality" than the United Nations. At the Commonwealth Heads Of Government Meeting in London in June 1977, his support for a New International Economic Order,
majority rule in Zimbabwe as well as his strident criticism of apartheid in South Africa, constituted the most visible expressions of this continuing Commonwealth embrace. On apartheid Fraser was unequivocal: “Policies based on the false and pernicious premise of one race’s superiority over another, one race’s right to subjugate another, are the most flagrant violations of fundamental decency”.128

There were also significant strategic dimensions to Fraser’s support for nationalism in the Third World. As Ayres has rightly noted, the coalescence of Western strategic interests and Third World economic interests figured prominently in the Fraser approach. Improved access for Third World countries to Western markets was seen as the guarantor of strong economic growth, considered essential for the resistance of any potential Soviet intervention.129 Fraser was acutely conscious, furthermore, that Western countries had taken freedom and independence for granted for so long that many forgot the willingness of some Third World countries to “sacrifice their own immediate economic interests for reasons of status, independence and what they believe is justice”.130 Where the Harries report had stressed Australia as being “Western with a difference” because of its geographical isolation from the Western centres of power in Europe and North America, so Fraser gave voice to this reality: “While we are thoroughly Western in our values and institutions, all our neighbours are Third World countries. They belong to the ‘south’ in terms of the ‘north-south’ dichotomy that is now widely used, while by almost every test except geography we belong to the ‘north’.” Treatment of the Third World was to rest upon a combination of Western sensitivity to “any significant gains made by the Soviet Union in the Third World”, a consideration of “direct political and economic self-interest” as well as the more “altruistic, humanitarian concerns”.131

Fraser’s fear of Soviet infiltration in the Third World climaxed with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in early 1980. This response again clearly showed that his anti-Soviet stance was related not to his suspicion of communist ideology, but to a more deep-seated fear of Russian hegemony and Russian aggression. The essence of Fraser’s

129 Ayres, Malcolm Fraser, 343.
130 MF, Speech at University of South Carolina, 8 July 1981, CR (6-12 July 1981), 801-806.
131 MF, Ibid.
‘world-view’ as it had been developing since the 1950s was condensed in his response to the crisis: the weakness of the West in the face of German aggression in the 1930s, the inherent threat of Soviet foreign policy, the failure of détente, the need for the West (in particular the United States) to maintain its will and the Toynbee theme of ‘challenge and response’. These had been the abiding themes of Fraser’s perspective on world affairs and he brought them to bear in his reaction to the Soviet invasion, an invasion he believed had incited the “most dangerous international crisis since World War II”.

The strategic importance of Afghanistan as the gateway to the Indian subcontinent and its proximity to Middle Eastern oil supplies added to the crisis. For Fraser, it had confirmed all his worst fears. In a major parliamentary speech responding to the invasion, Fraser depicted the Soviet actions in Afghanistan as evidence of its “policy of unbridled competition and opportunism” in the Third World. In terms of a wider Cold War context, he recalled terms such as ‘relaxation of tension’, ‘disengagement’, ‘coexistence’ and ‘détente’ as indicative of the West’s lack of realism in dealing with the Soviet Union. For Fraser these “represented less a realistic appraisal of what was possible than the wish to be free of the harsh logic of the Cold War and the burden of responsibility which it imposed”. If only the West had heeded his frequent calls to meet aggression with force, if only they had remembered Munich. In true Toynbean fashion, Fraser declared that “The first thing which must be done is to demonstrate in convincing fashion, and beyond any doubt, that the will and resolve to meet the new challenge exist”. In his conclusion to this speech, Fraser turned to that moment in history which had exercised such a commanding control over his understanding of international affairs. The ghosts of Munich threatened to once again haunt the Western democracies and undermine their will:

Forty years ago the world was just embarking on the terrible conflict of the Second World War, which Churchill rightly called ‘the unnecessary war’. It was unnecessary because, in the early days of Nazi aggression, comparatively modest steps would have been sufficient to deter it. In the name of peace and business-as-usual, those steps were not taken. Those who advocated them, including Churchill himself, were denounced as warmongers. The sense of reality, the connection between cause and event, were lost in a sequence of compromises, appeasement and the self-deluding hope that unopposed aggression would not feed on itself...it would

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be disastrous for the human race — if that mistake were to be repeated only a few decades later.\footnote{MF, CPD, H of R, vol. 117 (19 February 1980), 17-28.}

This was the classic invocation of the Munich myth. Fraser never essentially deviated from this view that Munich constituted the ultimate lesson in power politics. Whitlam, in expressing a liberal internationalist ‘world-view’, had argued that the United Nations, had it existed in 1914, would have averted the First World War. In 1990 Bob Hawke portrayed Saddam Hussein’s “unpunished aggression” as the first test of the United Nations in a new post Cold War international order. Whilst Hawke also drew on the lessons of the 1930s — the failure of the League of Nations in Manchuria and Abyssinia, as well as the appeasement of fascism in Europe — to justify military action against Iraq, he saw the United Nations, rather than the West led by the United States, as the international policeman. But Fraser wanted the full force of the West used against the Soviet Union.

\textit{Conclusion}

In his study of the changing character of Australian nationalism Stephen Alomes has suggested that Malcolm Fraser and his adviser/speechwriter David Kemp “discovered the power of nationalism. The decline of old loyalties to Britain and the qualification of loyalties to America had left a vacuum in Australian self-definition which one form of nationalism or another was likely to fill”.\footnote{Stephen Alomes, \textit{A Nation at Last}, 273.} Alomes was certainly correct in identifying a ‘vacuum’, but Fraser by no means filled it with nationalism. For much of his political career Fraser had maintained a deep suspicion of nationalism, and it was not a suspicion he overcame once he became Australia’s Prime Minister. Though some form of nationalism had legitimacy for Fraser, as for Whitlam, as a force of unity and in its capacity to inspire a sense of belonging, by the late 1970s and early 1980s he had recognised that Australia’s changing circumstances no longer required such a unilateral national myth. Apart from his emphasis on liberal values such as respect for the individual and a commitment to smaller government, much of his prime ministerial rhetoric on this question of what held Australia together stressed that the old Anglo-
Saxon hegemony was no longer tenable in a ‘multicultural’ Australia. And Fraser offered no alternative Australian myth to replace it.

Like Whitlam, who supported Asian nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s as a bulwark against communism, Fraser’s support for Third World nationalism derived from the same conviction that national independence was the surest means by which vulnerable Asian and African countries could resist communism. Further, in the Fraser ‘world-view’, the lessons of Munich and Toynbee’s ‘challenge and response’ theory had imposed such urgency and fear on his foreign policy pronouncements that Australians, and the West in general, had to be made to see the dangers of aggression and the fragility of world peace. This argument was repeatedly reflected in the pervasive use of threat in his rhetoric. Yet the tension in Fraser’s ‘world view’, between his liberalism and his realism, was never quite fully resolved. His liberalism, which saw respect for the individual as the very cradle of liberty, was based on the notion of allowing each person to go their own way, unhampered by unnecessary or unjustified government intervention. Its catchphrase was the right of all to ‘lead a quiet life’. Fraser’s realism, on the other hand, demanded the world be seen for what it really was – an unstable and dangerous place. The golden rule here was the need to ‘maintain the will’. History had told him that Japan, Germany and Russia had all at some time epitomised the worst in collectivism – but their redeeming feature was the recognition and acceptance of the need for a disciplined population, willing to accept hardship and sacrifice for the national good. Fraser, it seemed, longed for an Australia possessed of the same stringency. This tension was given its clearest expression in Fraser’s 1976 assessment of the world situation, but it remained the enduring touchstone of his ‘world-view’:

One of the great tests for the character and stamina of democracies is whether we can combine individual freedom with the capacity to acknowledge our responsibility to the common interest, whether we are prepared to sacrifice some of our apparent short-term interests in the long-term interests of the Australian people. If we cannot work together except under threat of clear and present military danger to our national integrity, it is certain we will not be able to advance, effectively pressing national interests in the world which faces us.135

A heritage of great and true': Whitlam visits the ruins of Ancient Olympia, 1969. (Source: NAA, M151.)

Whitlam at Eureka: a 'benign and constructive nationalism'.
(Source: The Australian, 5 January 1974)
Paying tribute to a leader “born to lead this nation in peace and in the paths of peace”: Whitlam lays the foundation stone for John Curtin House, Canberra, 1974. (Source: Fairfax photo library)

‘...we have become beguiled by... our own myths... the archetype of the pioneer unionist is the shearer, not the stonemason’:
Whitlam gets to grips with the bush legend at a property near Adaminaby, 1974. (Source: Fairfax photo library)
Sweatshirt nationalism: Fraser tries on an ‘Advance Australia’ jumper in 1982. (Source: Fairfax photo library)

"...the sway of a horse as I canter over the plains...": Fraser at the launch of the 1982 film The Man from Snowy River. (Source: Fairfax photo library).
'emotional and cerebral' was how Hawke defined his affection for Labor Prime Minister, John Curtin. Here Hawke talks with actor Michael Blakemore, who played Curtin in the Network Ten Mini Series *The Last Bastion* in 1984. (Source: Fairfax photo library)

Hawke and the coming of 'consensus': Labor's election campaign poster of 1983. (Source: Fairfax photo library)
"...he would look at you with a stern face so as to burn his view into you": Keating with his mentor, Jack Lang (left) and (above) Echoing the master's cadences: Keating and Lang were absolute in their judgement that Menzies had "failed Australia". (Sources: Fairfax Photo library; Century, 6 September 1940, SMH, 28 October 1994)
"the place where the depth and soul of the Australian nation was confirmed": Prime Minister Paul Keating kisses the foot of the memorial honouring Australian dead at Kokoda, April 1992 (Source: NAA, CRS A8746/8, Item # KN 11/5/92/361)

Former Prime Ministers join Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth during a visit to London in June 2000 to mark the centenary of the act of British parliament which established the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia. Keating absented himself from the trip, attacking it as "pomp encrusted celebrations". (Source: Fairfax photo library)
Chapter Five

“...a desire for harmony rather than conflict...”1: R.J.L. Hawke and ‘Consensus’

*Journalist:* Mr Hawke, how do you want to be remembered by the people?

*Hawke:* I guess as a bloke who loved his country, and still does, and loves Australians, and who was not essentially changed by high office. I hope they will still think of me as the Bob Hawke that they got to know, the larrikin trade union leader who perhaps had sufficient commonsense and intelligence to tone down his larrikinism and behave in a way that a Prime Minister should if he’s going to be a proper representative of his people, but who in the end is essentially a dinky-di Australian. I hope that’s the way they’ll think of me. 2

In his final press conference as Prime Minister, Bob Hawke called on the people to remember him above all else as the supreme patriot, the quintessential man of the people who had managed to combine the common touch with prime ministerial gravitas. But was this final appeal to ‘the people’ reflective of Hawke’s patriotism or more symbolic of a folksy populism? Since Hawke’s only sacrifice for his country had been to ‘tone down’ his ‘larrikinism’, this was more of a passive patriotism, but it did help explain why his father had once said he saw in Bob Hawke the embodiment of Rudyard Kipling’s poem “If”.3 Certainly Hawke, unlike Gough Whitlam, Malcolm Fraser and Paul Keating, placed more emphasis on his “genuine affection for Australians” and his “bonding with ordinary people”.4 But he was nevertheless careful to distance his Prime Ministerial image from “larrikinism”. For Hawke, it was neither how Australia as a nation should be depicted nor how Australia would expect to be depicted. He did not wish the people to see his leadership as a flippant defiance of authority or convention. Yet both Hawke’s intellectual history and his prime ministerial rhetoric do provide a more substantial insight into his idea of Australia. Hawke’s ‘commonsense and

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intelligence' had not only softened his larrikinism, they had from a very early age conditioned a genuine commitment to the pursuit of social harmony.

The distinguishing feature in Bob Hawke's 'world-view' was his philosophical commitment to 'consensus' politics. Conflict between trade unions and governments, employers and employees, party factions and, of course, between nations, could ultimately be resolved through the twin processes of negotiation and cooperation. Bringing people together to heal differences and disputes lay at the core of Hawke's fundamental optimism about human nature. Whilst it is a truism that 'consensus' politics constitutes the highest form of 'national' politics, in that the objective of most national leaders is to unite the nation in support of their policies - it will be seen that Bob Hawke was much more committed to achieving 'consensus' in government, party and nation than Whitlam, Fraser or Keating. How is this to be explained, and how did Hawke draw on an understanding of Australian history to justify it? By accounting for the origins of 'consensus' in Hawke's 'world-view' it will be possible to provide a fuller appreciation of Australian political culture in the 1980s.

Elected to prime ministerial office in 1983, Bob Hawke promised an era of "reconciliation, recovery and reconstruction" after the supposed division of the Fraser years. Hugh Collins has argued that the rhetoric of consensus employed by Hawke during the 1983 election campaign was further proof that Australian political ideology was essentially Benthamite in character. In this view the ideal of 'consensus' translated readily into the 'greatest happiness of the greatest number'. Collins found the idea of a televised National Economic Summit and an Economic Planning Advisory Council, bringing together government, business and trade union representatives, to be "perfectly consistent with the utilitarian ideology". Moreover, Collins pushed this analysis further by contending that Australia lent this Benthamite ideology its own distinctiveness, by connecting it to "that myth of national character" which defines Australians as practical and egalitarian, a people proud of their pragmatism and 'common-sense'. Yet Collins himself recognised the limits in this argument, especially with regards to the intolerance of minorities and the treatment of Aborigines. That Hawke himself did not invoke the

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philosophy of Jeremy Bentham in his rhetoric of 'consensus' is not to suggest ideas were unimportant to him. It was merely that his upbringing on a Congregationalist manse in rural South Australia, his undergraduate career at the University of Western Australia and his thesis at Oxford as a Rhodes scholar, reflected more a mind engaged on the achievement of practical outcomes. It was a practicality continued during his career as Research Officer, Industrial advocate and later President of the Australia Council of Trade Unions. The impact of these experiences on the shaping of Hawke's intellectual history are discussed below.

Thus far, much of the previous scholarly discussion on Hawke's career has been psychoanalytical, and in most cases the treatment of his political rhetoric has been guided more by cynicism than sustained critical analysis. There has not yet been a serious academic inquiry into his 'world-view' and the intellectual traditions which shaped and informed it. In a study of the Hawke government's commitment to traditional Labor policies, Graham Maddox argued that the canons of Labor faith had been abandoned in favour of 'consensus' politics, which he dismissed as a surrogate for Australianism. 7 For Maddox, Hawke's "incessant Australianisms" were "empty substitute for statesmanship". 8 There was neither consideration of the fact that it is in the nature of democratic politics for leaders to use rhetoric in the creation of new constituencies; nor an attempt to explain why Hawke used this type of language, or thought it would prove electorally attractive. Stan Anson's Hawke: An Emotional Life (1992) was more concerned with how Hawke's language reflected his supposed narcissism rather than with the public significance of that language. 9 Graham Little is another to have applied the

6 Hawke was the subject of no less than three biographies before he became Prime Minister in 1983. By far the most complete of these works was by Blanche D'Alpuget, which offered a detailed examination of Hawke's career to 1982. See Blanche D'Alpuget, Robert J. Hawke - A Biography (Melbourne: Schwartz/Penguin, 1982). See also Robert Pullan, Bob Hawke - A Portrait (Sydney: Methuen, 1980); John Hurst, Hawke: The Definitive Biography (Sydney; Angus & Robertson, 1980)

7 This point has been a common theme in the literature on Hawke's administration. For example see Paul Kelly, The End of Certainty (Sydney: Allen & Unwin 1994), 15: "The irony for the Labor party was that in addressing the issue of international competitiveness it was destroying the ethos and institutional pillars on which Labor's support had always been based. This was the cruel historical paradox for Labor in the 1980's. The more successful it was the more it destroyed the basis of Laborism"; see also Stan Anson, Hawke: An Emotional Life (Melbourne: Penguin, 1992), xiv; Peter Beilharz, Transforming Labor: Labor tradition and the Labor Decade in Australia (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 8; Graham Maddox, The Hawke Government and Labor Tradition, (Ringwood: Penguin, 1989), 4.


9 Stan Anson, Hawke - An Emotional Life.
psychoanalytic approach to Hawke’s career, arguing that “narcissism was defined for Australians by Bob Hawke”, and that “he made no memorable speeches”.10 More recently, Neal Blewett has argued Hawke’s experience at Oxford “left little imprint on him...intellectually”.
11 The following analysis takes seriously Hawke’s intellectual endeavour at Oxford as well as his political rhetoric in so far as they elucidate his idea of Australia and his concept of consensus politics.

‘The brotherhood of man’ – an intellectual history of R.J.L. Hawke

Born in rural South Australia in 1929, Hawke’s earliest childhood memories were conditioned by response to both environment and experience. Recalling the first ten years of his life in the country, Hawke believed they gave him an early appreciation of the importance of the bush in the Australian psyche. This was not, however, made manifest in a subsequent embrace of any bush lore or legend as Prime Minister, but it did cultivate an “acute sense”, as Hawke himself recalls, “of the difference between the bush and the city and the town”.12 As the son of a Congregationalist minister, the predominant influence on Bob Hawke from an early age was the way in which his parents lived by this creed. Congregationalism, a child of the Protestant Reformation in sixteenth century Europe and cradled in Calvinism, had been introduced into Australia by members of the London Missionary Society in the early nineteenth century. Galvanised by the evangelical revival which had also given rise to the Methodist Church, these missionaries placed the bringing of the Gospel to the heathen above the concerns of denominational difference. Once Congregationalism had taken root in the Australian colonies, it still retained a strong affiliation to its English origins and ethos, being more successful in founding churches amongst the urban middle class, particularly in New South Wales. Whilst there were some Congregational churches in the Victorian gold-mining towns, one study has suggested there were few in rural Australia. A significant exception, however, was rural South Australia, where the establishment of churches in larger numbers was

taken as proof that Congregationalism appealed to "the more independently minded farmers and graziers". An address delivered to the Congregational Union of South Australia in April 1928 – a year before Hawke’s birth – provides a valuable insight into the theological and philosophical approach of Congregational ministers in South Australia at this time.

In declaring the "Distinctive Witness" of Congregationalism, Reverend JD Northey of Port Victor claimed it possessed the "highest conception of the Church", provided the "best opportunity for the exercise of spiritual freedom, and the best means for growth in faith and fellowship". Whilst faith was individual, he decreed, "all religion was social". Northey affirmed that Congregationalists viewed the church as a "priesthood of believers...a school for prophets, for missionaries and for martyrs. There is a world to be won for Jesus Christ, as well as a Church to be trained for the service of his kingdom". This constituted the essence of what he believed to be the national and international mission of the Congregational creed, a mission derived from "a great and glorious spiritual ancestry", forged by the union of puritans, separatists and independents of the seventeenth century English Civil War. In asserting that Congregationalism stood "for an informed Christian conscience on all social questions", Northey cited the example of the early puritans in New England, who had used the Congregational church as their model for "town government, and the means by which the people were given instruction and training in vocational ethics and in social activity." Yet for Northey, the most "Distinctive Witness" of Congregationalism was not that it was a form of Church government, "but a principle of life, a spiritual temper, a way of service". Northey had given expression not only to the basically informal and democratic nature of Congregationalism – with its emphasis on the laity rather than the clerical hierarchy – but also to the practicality of the creed:

Because the world is a unity, created in love to serve a righteous end, the same principles which underlie our relationship to God ought to govern our actions

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14 Rev ID. Northey, ‘The Distinctive Witness of Congregationalism in the World of To-day’, address delivered before the Congregational Union of South Australia, April 1928, transcript. (copy held at the NLA)
towards our fellowmen. Congregationalists are practical idealists, and every day mystics. Their contact with the living Christ, their spiritual and catholic conception of the Church, their social passion for the Kingdom of God, have led them to see that, by the Grace of God, they must save the world, and not merely men and women from the world. The whole creation is divine; therefore, all human activity must cooperate with God in producing a growing universe.”

Northey had also enshrined liberty and tolerance at the heart of their creed — “The methods of blind prejudice are unworthy of the disciples of Christ”. That Hawke’s parents instilled in their son the essence of this optimism and almost missionary zeal is undoubted. In particular the enduring intellectual influence transmitted from father to son was to be found in Clem Hawke’s dictum that “Belief in the fatherhood of God necessarily involves belief in the brotherhood of man”. Rather than any strict doctrinal or theological aspect, it was this practical application of Congregationalism, what Clem Hawke referred to as the “human side of Christ’s ministry” and the enunciation of a “social programme for the betterment of the world”, which provided the foundation on which Hawke’s early ‘world-view’ was formed.16

Born amidst the crisis of the Great Depression, the “son of the manse”17 had his sensitivity to this practical application of Christian principles heightened by the generosity of his parents to the seemingly endless lines of poverty stricken ‘tramps’, who queued at the door of the family home. These images had made a powerful impression on the young Hawke — “No-one ever went away without food, shelter, or some form of assistance”. That his parents had made the home a “haven for others” led to Hawke’s reflection in his Memoirs that this familial environment had bred in him the understanding that “love and a sense of bonding with others were something which went beyond the bounds of immediate family, everyone, all humans, were kin”.18 Hawke saw his family upbringing as an idealistic microcosm of all humanity, and would himself, later, give political content to this early Christian upbringing with his view that, whilst his father’s faith rarely expressed itself in political terms, he nevertheless interpreted it “as only being capable of being reflected through a social democratic party”.19 The

15 Ibid., 11.
16 Clem Hawke, cited in Blanche D’Alpuget, Robert J Hawke, 10-11.
17 This is the title Hawke himself gives to the first section of his Memoirs.
18 RJLH, Memoirs, 4.
continuing relevance of this philosophy can be seen in Hawke’s reverence for this idea of the ‘brotherhood of man’, long after he had ceased to have any formal connection with organised religion:

I felt a deep gratitude to them for having instilled in me the basic Christian principles of brotherhood and compassion, which I knew would stay with me for the rest of my life. More than this, Ellie and Clem, on the basis of these principles, had fostered in me beliefs and precepts which were to guide me in my future career. They had an idealistic sense that the world can and should be made a better place, that one should always try to see the good in people, and that the healing of divisions was an important part of life’s work. These convictions had become my own.\(^{20}\)

Thus Hawke as a young man had been enveloped by his parents’ essential optimism about humanity. His idealism and strong social conscience were informed by Congregationalism’s emphasis on religion as a practical and social vocation. The ‘healing of divisions’ to achieve consensus became synonymous with his political style. From his early upbringing therefore, Hawke derived a sound faith in human progress and a belief in the possibility of a Christian kingdom on earth.

These were convictions he carried to the University of Western Australia in 1947, where he studied for a Bachelor of Laws. They were also convictions noted at the time by those who taught him. In addition to his studies, Hawke was an active participant in campus life. In 1952 he was elected President of the Guild of Undergraduates, and was subsequently appointed to the position of Vice-President of the National Union of Australian University Students’ Council. Described at the time as a “keen young Congregationalist”\(^{21}\), Hawke represented Western Australia at the Congregational Youth Fellowship of Australia and New Zealand in 1949, 1950 and 1951, and in 1952 was selected by the Australian Council for the World Council of Churches as one of eight Australian delegates to attend the World Conference of Christian Youth. He was also a member of the Australian Student Christian Movement (ASCM), and Chairman of the

\(^{20}\) R JLH, Memoirs, 22-3.
\(^{21}\) Notes on Hawke by Charles Gairdner, Chairman, WA Rhodes Scholarship Selection Committee, in The Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Library, University of South Australia, (hereafter BHPML) Oxford files.
Associated Youth Committee of the National Fitness Council (NFC) of Western Australia.\textsuperscript{22}

Through his membership of these organisations, together with the ‘world-view’ imbibed from his parents Congregationalist creed, Hawke as a young university student evinced a muscular Christianity, one which prompted serious reflection about the problems facing society and a set of values and teachings through which these problems could be understood and approached.\textsuperscript{23} The ASCM was prominent on the University of Western Australia campus – addressing such questions as the compatibility of individual freedom and social justice, or engaging in more formal discussions such as “On what Basis is world order possible?”, “Is man a slave to his inventions” and on what one speaker called the “substitute religions” of nationalism and humanism.\textsuperscript{24} In the post-war period, the NFC sought to continue to equate leisure activities with a model of responsible citizenship, as well as a means of connecting Australian youth to other international youth organisations.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{22} The National Fitness Council, which drew on an imperial tradition (the Physical Training and Recreation Act passed in Britain in 1937) of emphasising the importance of health and individual fitness for national defence, was established in Australia in 1939. This organisation saw Australia’s universities as a crucial forum in which its chief objective of promoting the value of physical, moral and mental fitness could be espoused. As with the ASCM, the NFC was not immune to the implications of the wider world, and indeed was formed in response to the worsening tensions in Europe in the late 1930s. As well as its emphasis on physical fitness, members were trained in leadership skills. Robin K-Gray, \textit{The First Forty Years: The National Fitness and Community Recreation Councils of Western Australia 1939-1978} (Perth: Department for Youth, Sport and Recreation, 1982).

\textsuperscript{23} The Australian Student Christian Movement, also influenced by the suffering of the Great Depression and the international crises of the 1930s, had decided to concentrate their energies on “student evangelism” at universities across the country in the inter-war period. They sought to promote the idea of a Christian social order which might foster an understanding of the relationship of Christianity to the wider world. Students were encouraged to ponder the differences between Christianity and various political ideologies. The Student Christian Movement also exhibited a liberal tolerance of difference, welcoming to its conferences “all sorts of people – agnostics, communists, perplexed undergraduates” in the hope that society would be remodeled, so “that its basic assumptions might be more nearly in accord with the mind of Christ”. See \textit{Other Men Laboured: Fifty Years with the Student Christian Movement in Australia, 1896-1946; An Informal Story by some of its Leaders} (Melbourne: Australian Student Christian Movement, 1947).

\textsuperscript{24} ‘ASCM Discussions’, \textit{The Pelican – WA University Guild Journal}, 23 May 1952 and 5 June 1952 for report of talk given by Father Wilfred Shelley: ‘Man must worship something and the tendency is to worship himself either as an individual, a tribe or the race as a whole. Both Nationalism and Humanism provide for this tendency. Father Shelley considered that worship of the nation or of man is idolatry in that it is not worship of God’.

Hawke greatly valued the opportunities for discussion and reflection provided within these forums. As Guild President in 1952, he encouraged new students not only to “lead a full life” but to “keep an open mind on all things”:

Rid yourself of bias or preconceived prejudices and accept the intellectual responsibility of thinking clearly. If you do this you will find that at the end of your University career its main purpose will have been achieved – you will be equipped for worth-while citizenship and to give a lead to those who may be less fortunate than yourselves. I apologise for the fact that the above sounds most sermon like. I feel sure, however, that you will accept it in the spirit in which it is intended. That is, to sincerely point out the way of putting the most into and thereby getting the most out of your university life.26

Hawke’s call for tolerance and informed, reasoned thought was a response to the intellectual climate of the times, especially concerns over academic and political freedom, the latter seen in Prime Minister Menzies’ Communist Party Dissolution Bill. Whilst Hawke accepted the right of communists to express their view, a view which he has recalled as “the remarkably innocent perception of communism based upon the view that the Soviet was creating heaven on earth”,27 he would not tolerate communist domination of the University Labor club, and so himself established the first branch of the Australian Labor Party on the UWA campus in 1947. Whilst he studied enough of the Marxist communist literature to be “academically equipped to deal with the argument”, Hawke maintained that works such as the Communist Manifesto were “never for me the sine qua non literature”. The excesses of Stalinism and the total subjugation of the individual to the state did not gel with his beliefs.28 For Hawke, the purpose of university life was to produce citizens with a social conscience willing to use their talents for the benefit of others less fortunate than themselves. The substance of the above message, delivered in a self-consciously Christian way, as if Hawke were preaching himself, illustrates the value he placed on freedom of expression and liberal tolerance. This is a serious message which sought to inculcate the virtues of self-development and social responsibility. Previously unseen material relating to his university career supports this view, and gives an accurate indication of Hawke’s moral seriousness at university. This

26 RJJH, ‘A word of advice from one who knows’, The Pelican, 4 April 1952.
27 RJJH, personal interview, Sydney, 14 December 2000, transcript.
28 RJJH, personal interview, Sydney, 14 December 2000, transcript.
material relates directly to Hawke's candidature for the Rhodes scholarship. His personal
statement of application in late 1952 illustrated this undergraduate altruism:

My particular interest this year has been the assimilation of Overseas students into
the University and the International House project. I was able to get established the
Australian-Overseas club which is now probably the strongest social club in the
University and which is achieving the desired purpose of making Australian and
overseas students really part of the same community. Most of my time has been
devoted to the International House project as Chairman of the Central
Committee...29

It is worth noting Hawke's use of the word 'assimilation' here. Though more commonly
identified with the official Commonwealth government policy from the 1950s to the
1970s of absorbing Aboriginals into the white Australian population, it was also an
objective of immigration policy after the Second World War. Although Hawke would
subsequently reflect that his motivation in joining the ALP in 194730 was the excitement
he felt at the Chifley government's immigration program, and his abhorrence of the
White Australia policy, there can be little doubt that his compassion for the plight of
foreign students on campus was also fuelled by his Congregationalism: firstly, in its
rejection of blind intolerance, and secondly by the widespread Christian disenchantment
at the havoc and misery wreaked by racially exclusive policies in the rise of fascist and
totalitarian regimes across Europe during the 1930s. Having become friendly with these
students from Malaya, Ceylon and India, Hawke translated his contempt for
discrimination into a practical solution of bringing Australian and overseas students
together in a spirit of mutual tolerance and acceptance -- to make them "really part of the
same community". It was during the year of 1952, Hawke claimed, that he had been able
to "broaden [his] outlook and interests considerably".31 It was not surprising that his
efforts in this regard were well noted by those with whom he had the closest association
on campus -- his lecturers and tutors.

29 RJLH, Personal Statement (application for 1953 Rhodes Scholarship) in BHPML, Oxford files.
30 Referring to Chifley's attempt at nationalisation of the banks as "crazy", Hawke has claimed that when
he joined the ALP in 1947 "the socialist clause was there but it was ignored basically...and the fact that
you had that in the platform was not something that I regarded as significant". RJLH, personal interview,
Sydney, 14 December 2000, transcript.
31 RJLH, Personal Statement, 1953 Rhodes Scholarship Application.
The references which were written to support Hawke’s application for the Rhodes Scholarship in both 1951 and 1952 contain a critical assessment of Hawke’s impact on university life, as well as an indication of his intellectual capacities. One of those who knew Hawke from this time was Dr Jeffrey Rossiter, Warden of Wesley College and a member of the University Senate. In late 1952, having closely observed Hawke’s progress through university, Rossiter defined him as a “quietly dynamic and inspiring young man, possessing withal some of the intriguing characteristics of the mystic”. It is impossible to substantiate Rossiter’s use of the term ‘mystic’ here, but it is worth recalling Reverend Northerly’s 1928 description of Congregationalists as “every-day mystics”. Rossiter, though, did point to Hawke’s “sympathy for and protection of the weak” and he noticed that Hawke tended “at times to miss some of the real joys of adventurous living through an almost excessive devotion to certain aspects of what he regards as his duty”. Rossiter believed Hawke’s success in sporting endeavours could have been greater “had life for him not been quite so tense, as I feel it has”.32 This tension, perhaps, indicated the powerful legacy of his family’s religious beliefs, and the challenge of applying them in new circumstances. The Congregationalist prescription for practical idealism, a ‘social passion’ and its faith in human progress was thus the dominant force in Hawke’s ‘world-view’ at this time.

Rossiter was not alone in these observations, although others did not ascribe to Hawke the same spiritual dimension. The Professor of Economics, F.R.E.(Fred) Mauldon, also a discussion leader in the Australian Student Christian Movement, observed that Hawke was “possessed of a strong sense of responsibility for service to his fellows”,33 a statement backed by Professor M.N. Austin, Professor of Classics and Ancient History. Austin believed that Hawke’s bluntness concealed “a really human sensitivity”, exemplified in “…his public efforts on behalf of the overseas students. He quite early brought to my notice the plight of a member of the University gardening staff – a New Australian who in his own country had been a Classical scholar of some standing and to whom he thought I might be of some assistance. This apparently trifling

32 JH, Rossiter to JH Reynolds, Secretary of Rhodes Scholarship Selection Committee, 14 November 1952, BHPML, Oxford Files.
33 F.R.E. Mauldon to JH Reynolds, 10 November 1952, BHPML, Oxford files.
act of disinterested kindness made no small impression on me”. The Selection Committee made special mention that Hawke was “very kind and thoughtful about New Australians”. Austin provided the most detailed assessment of Hawke’s intellectual capacities at this time:

I do not think Mr Hawke has the outlook or the equipment of the scholar in the strict sense. He has, I believe, a genuine interest in Economics and Philosophy, but in a selective practical way rather than as the call of pure speculation. My impression was that he has a strong, if not subtle, mind that has not yet been seriously engaged on academic work of any rigour, and that if subjected to such a discipline might well display powers so far latent. I do not think that this would result in any outstanding academic progress, but that it would give the needed intellectual stiffening to a mind and character already considerably exercised on more practical affairs. For I think that the circumstances of his undergraduate life and the focus of his energies as determined by his official position this year have brought to maturity his general qualities of character sooner than his intellectual powers.

Again the emphasis here was on Hawke’s practical application of his ‘world-view’. Austin’s remarks had not only accorded with Hawke’s own view as expressed to new students, that the purpose of university life was to prepare for “worth-while citizenship”, but with Hawke’s own raison d’etre: the carrying out of good deeds took precedence over lofty intellectual pursuits. Hawke’s philosophy tutor, Selwyn Graves, similarly noted that “it is his promise that seems to me the most significant thing about him, not his present intellectual attainment”. Vice Chancellor George Currie spoke of Hawke’s membership of the Student Christian Movement, in which he observed Hawke had “showed a good deal of sympathy for the less gifted and weaker students and gave to many...overseas students, fellowship which they much needed to assist them in their course of studies in a country, to them, foreign”. Others paid tribute to “his moral force of character”, “his strong convictions and his firm faith”, “his sense of social responsibility” and a “sincere open-mindedness”. These were the same qualities he had exhorted new students to strive towards. The report on Hawke’s interview with the Rhodes Selection Committee ultimately dismissed M.N. Austin’s description of Hawke as “an average lad” by asserting that it did no justice to his “remarkable drive, vision,
sense of moral purpose and integrity of character". Hawke was awarded the scholarship and departed for Oxford in 1953.

Before he left for Oxford, however, Hawke visited India in late 1952 as one of eight Australian delegates to the World Conference of Christian Youth held at Kottyam in the southern Indian state of Travancore-Cochin (Kerala). The juxtaposition of ostentatious opulence and appalling poverty, as well as the seeming irrelevance of Christianity to the deprived, shattered Hawke's faith in organised religion. In the diary he kept of this trip, he noted the "plight of a large number of Christians in that small doses of Christianity have made them immune to its power". On train trips across the countryside, he engaged in frequent conversations with locals, and it is clear that this was a highly valuable learning experience for an inquisitive mind. Hawke learnt that "socialists were a dying force" in India, that "to everyone in India Nehru is a God on earth. Even enemies say he is a selfless man...Every child in field knows who Pandit Nehru is". What alarmed him the most, in addition to the "terrible poverty" - a mother cleaning her children in the streets, or hungry children peering through the walls of the palace in which the young Christian delegates were openly feasting - was the ease with which communism was gaining an ascendency over Christianity in Kerala, a "centre of Christian influence and influence unique in India". As Hawke further noted: "The communists were stronger here than anywhere else in India because, paradoxically, the Christian schools had helped to create the highest level of literacy in the country. Communist party literature was everywhere and it was cheap; in addition to propaganda, beautifully bound Russian classics were available at one twentieth of the price of a Bible". Hawke would later reflect that this experience confirmed him as an agnostic. The apparent powerlessness of Christianity in India sensitised Hawke to the fragility of its message in the face of communism. Hawke had attended a communist rally against the edict of the conference organisers, and recalled "Their appeal to the people was so relevant". Hawke's growing antagonism towards the environment of intolerance, as embodied by McCarthyism,
would soon be mollified by his experiences at Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar between 1953 and 1955.

Perhaps one of the most perceptive observations made by Hawke’s referees in support of his application for the Rhodes Scholarship was that, free of co-curricular activities and student political duties, he would have a greater opportunity to mature intellectually. Fred Mauldon believed that in the areas of economic and political science, Hawke had “a mind suited and trained for their further study”. M.N. Austin asserted that only with academic rigour would Hawke acquire the “needed intellectual stiffening”. Without doubt Hawke relished his academic pursuits at Oxford – he recalled that it was the first time he had “passed over that exquisite line in academic endeavour where study becomes pure joy, free of drudgery and duty”42. But as Neal Blewett has noted, Hawke, in choosing to write a thesis on aspects of the Australian Arbitration System, had turned his back on the “intellectual challenge of that ancient university” and thus “missed out on Oxford’s distinctive teaching”.43 Whilst a valid observation, the significance of Hawke’s B.Litt. thesis in the shaping of his ‘world-view’ and his evolving commitment to consensus is no less significant for this fact. As Blewett also recognises, it was typical of the pragmatic Hawke – “learning was for practical purposes”. It is first necessary though to appreciate the general intellectual climate which Hawke had entered.

In subsequent reflections on his Rhodes scholarship, Hawke described Oxford as not only a “place of happy memories” for him, but more importantly, as “a breath of fresh air” and “an island in a mad world”.44 Despite the British government’s Cold War antagonism to Communism, Oxford University at this time accommodated Communist party members holding academic positions. Hawke warmed to what he termed the general climate of intellectual liberalism, where “people and their arguments were treated on their merits” and where one was simultaneously also “free to question and argue against what often seemed the mindless acceptance of the Soviet propaganda line...without attracting the empty epithets of the Left – capitalist stooge etc”. This intellectual environment Hawke later styled as one of “contingent liberalism”, in which

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42 Ibid., 26-7.
44 RLH, Speech to Oxford Union, 26 October 1993, in Hawke papers, BHPMI, Oxford files; see also Blanche D’Alpuget, Robert J Hawke, 59.
there existed "not a soft tolerance, but a framework of determined and consistent obligation that issues should be discussed on merit". He also recalled that Oxford was "colour blind...it was totally refreshing to see that in this place, the colour of a person's skin was as irrelevant as his or her creed". If Malcolm Fraser's time at Oxford had convinced him of the fine line between unrestrained socialism and 'bloody' communism, for Hawke it was an oasis of intellectual freedom and liberal tolerance in which his mind became intensely focused on the political culture of 1890s Australia as central for an understanding of Australia's distinctive Labour tradition.

According to Hedley Bull, a friend of Hawke's at University College at this time, Hawke "advertised the fact that he was a socialist", though this did not necessarily imply he adhered to any kind of Marxist line. Hawke's socialism at this time derived from the belief that concern for the welfare of one's fellow man was above all to be expressed in practical action rather than a cogent philosophical or theoretical doctrine. Bull also noted of Hawke: "He was an Australian first. It was the first thing he told people". In his Memoirs Hawke recalled feeling like "just another bloody colonial" upon his arrival at Oxford, the most conspicuous English difference for him being the "class consciousness and class division...something that was just absolutely amazing to me as an Australian". Opinions vary on the nature of Hawke's Australianness at Oxford. Hawke himself believes his contemporaries at Oxford thought of him as "quintessentially Australian", but he acknowledged that "they probably didn't quite understand the essential differences and the independence of Australians". The unknown author of a confidential Rhodes Scholarship report (written at the end of each term) on Hawke in 1955 declared: "...I suspect him of being a bit more brassy than I think is ideal even for an Australian", suggesting Hawke's upfront, brazen demeanour was seen as excessively Australian. The Report did add, however, that Hawke's supervisor, the Australian

45 RJLH, Oxford Union speech.
47 RJLH, Memoirs, 23.
48 RJLH, personal interview, Sydney, 25 June 1999, transcript. Geoffrey Serle, who was completing his studies at Oxford just as Hawke arrived, observed Australians in England "talked to all kinds and classes of people" – by no means a distinctively Australian ability, though Serle added: "...the peculiar advantage of being an Australian in England is that, with one's neutral accent and lack of inhibition, one can mix freely with all classes". See Geoffrey Serle, 'Reflections of being an Australian in England', Oxford, vol xii, no 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1952)
academic K.C. Wheare, “wouldn’t be worried by this point”. Yet the final report written on Hawke at Oxford would seem to suggest his Australianness had been somewhat toned down over time: “The stricken fact is that his being here has done him a great deal of good...when he came to see me to say goodbye at the end of this term, I thought how nice he was and how much less aggressively Australian and self confident than he had been”. 50 Was Hawke’s brash, assertive Australianism therefore somewhat suppressed amidst Oxford’s dreaming spires? Or did it merely reflect Hawke’s seriousness, much like the self-conscious ‘toning-down’ of his larrikinism upon becoming Prime Minister?

Hawke’s thesis at Oxford naturally demanded that academic rigour thought necessary by his previous lecturers at the University of Western Australia, and in this context it is significant that his study drew him again to the themes of practicality and consensus. His thesis – An appraisal of the role of the Australian Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration with special reference to the development of the concept of the Basic Wage 51 – studied the evolution of this court from an industrial tribunal to an institution that later came to possess wide legislative powers and functions, which had exceeded the intentions of those who had argued for its inclusion in the Australian Constitution. In particular, he argued, the concept of the Basic Wage had been the creation of the Court. It was Hawke’s belief that the metamorphosis of the Court from legal tribunal to virtual economic legislature constituted a “major event in the constitutional and economic history of Australia” in the twentieth century, though from his conclusions it was clear he believed the Court was ill-equipped to fulfill such a pre-eminent role in Australian economic affairs. In establishing the historical context of his subject, Hawke sought the rationale for the creation of the court. Assessing this historical background, in particular its nationalist and socialist fabric, is essential in outlining Hawke’s perception of Australian history and its impact on his ‘world-view’.

In exploring this historical framework Hawke turned initially to W.K. Hancock’s Australia, a work to which he referred in his bibliography as “particularly stimulating”.

50 Author unknown, Report on R.JL Hawke (University), Michaelmas Term 1955, Confidential, in Oxford files, BHPML.
51 RJLH, submitted for the degree of Bachelor of Letters in the University of Oxford, December 1955, copy held by R.J. Hawke. A condensed version of Hawke’s thesis was later published as ‘The Commonwealth Arbitration Court – Legal Tribunal or Economic Legislature?’, University of Western Australia Annual Law Review, vol. 3, no. 3 (1956), 422-478.
In accepting Hancock's contextualisation of early Australian history between the French and Industrial revolutions, Hawke was concerned to explain that the development of Australian society and its institutions was not simply a reaction to external influences: "The truth is that in a century when the rights of man were being proclaimed in protest against the fetters of the past and the iniquities of a developing industrialism, conditions and events in the colonies were making the protests of the old countries the common assumptions of the new". He saw the discovery of gold in 1851 as the "outstanding event in the history of an Australian egalitarianism", and concluded that the tendency of some to divide Australian social history by this date erred only in its "reluctance to recognise the pre-existing elements of democracy". Protests against squatters' autocracy, the beginnings of a trade union movement, demands for self-government and disrespect for the political influence of the wealthy before the gold rush had provided the atmosphere into which "there poured diggers in their tens of thousands, the independent men, the assisted immigrants, the disillusioned Chartists, the revolutionaries of Europe". The ideas they brought with them, Hawke argued, confirmed these "existing democratic elements" of Australian society. This teleological view of history assumed that Australia was in essence democratic from the beginning. These ideas in Hawke's view also explained the development of Australian egalitarianism:

There was a conviction that this land was new not only in terms of settlement but in respect of its relation to the social and economic structures of Europe. Australian nationalism was more than empty words because it involved the assumptions that the social and economic inequalities of the old world were not sacrosanct.

This was a liberal progressive Australian nationalism rather than a strident 'radical nationalism' concerned with Australian 'independence'. Hawke was defining Australia not against Britain but against old European ideas such as the basic rights of man, ideas which had been applied with greater success in a new country. In emphasising the pre-existing democratic elements in Australian society Hawke effectively ignored the spurious connection between Eureka and the birth of Australian democracy. Hawke's endorsement of Frenchman Albert Metin's "socialisme sans doctrines" also gave

52 RJLH, B.Litt thesis, 1.
53 Ibid., 2.
expression to the way in which he believed Australia – especially the Labour movement – differed from the old. The expansion of Australian industrial and social legislation had not been accompanied by the development of rigorous socialist doctrine. Having visited Australia in 1899, Metin concluded that whilst “Australasia has not contributed much to social philosophy...she has gone infinitely further than any other country in the practical field”.\(^{55}\) Hawke declared “Metin was right...in so far as he drew attention to the essentially empirical basis of the underlying assumption that all men were entitled to fair and reasonable conditions of life”.\(^{56}\) The creation of the Australian Arbitration system, therefore, lay squarely within the notion of ‘le socialisme sans doctrines’ rather than any new theory about the reconstruction of society. Hawke had thus emphatically identified himself with a central tradition of Australian socialism.

Hawke’s thorough immersion in the history of industrial and political conflict of the 1890s had confirmed for him what he believed to be the “noble birth springs of the Labor party”.\(^{57}\) The tumultuous maritime, shearing and mining strikes of 1890-94 had not only witnessed “the defeat of organised labour in direct industrial action”, but produced a “liberal reaction to the unnecessary sufferings of industrial warfare and a public opinion receptive to suggested experiments that would avoid a repetition of these disasters”. These strikes, argued Hawke, had offended the “social ethos” of the community and thus “the provision of legislation whereby the State would intervene to secure the just settlement of industrial disputes was therefore regarded as a logical extension of the functions of government”.\(^{58}\) These were significant points. A “liberal reaction” implied a political consensus between Labor and the conservatives on this question. Moreover, public indignation at the strikes, as well as the forceful nature of their suppression, indicated the community as a whole was essentially ‘fair-minded’ and had a sense of itself independent of class divisions. As Hawke said, there “was a widespread conviction that unlimited recourse to force for the settlement of disputes in industry should not be tolerated again – that freedom should not be euphemistically equated with licence for either side to impose its will upon the other without regard for

\(^{54}\) As HV, Evatt and GJ, Whitlam had done – see Chapter Three, p 110.
\(^{56}\) RJLH, B. Litt.thesis, 5.
\(^{57}\) RJLH, personal interview, Sydney, 25 June 1999, transcript.
the public interest”. For Hawke’s purposes then, the 1890s were more remarkable for the Australian people’s growing acceptance of government intervention in the affairs of the state than for any flowering of distinctive cultural nationalism.

The realisation amongst Labour that its traditional reliance upon industrial action was no longer adequate forced it to embrace the system of parliamentary government. Hawke made two assumptions in explaining why it was “natural enough for the unions to have recourse to the parliamentary system at this time”. Firstly, he noted, “…the population was almost 100 per cent British stock. The parliamentary tradition was strong in these people…”. Secondly, he pointed to the lack of access of the majority of Australian people to the land. Here he drew a comparison with American development, in which the expectation of social mobility from working class to the ranks of capital was the “likely reward” of the “diligent labourer”: “A propensity for political action arises more easily amongst workers who do not regard themselves as likely landowners or potential capitalists”. Thus the creation of the system of compulsory arbitration in Australia, Hawke argued, was in harmony with the “basic egalitarian assumptions” of Australian society, a growing acceptance and expectation of government intervention and the growing conviction in the labour movement that industrial strife was no longer the principal agent through which to pursue reform.

Whilst Hawke praised the “reforming zeal” of liberal reformers such as C.C. Kingston and H.B. Higgins in the creation of the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration, he was also at pains to stress the role of labour in the creation of this system. In pointing to trade union support of the arbitration system even before the 1890 strike, he rejected the ‘old-left’ Marxist historiographical interpretation of Australian arbitration, particularly that of Brian Fitzpatrick, who had argued that the “arbitration system was of the masters’ making, not the men’s”. Hawke labelled Fitzpatrick’s The British Empire in Australia and A Short History of the Australian Labour movement as “quite misleading” in their interpretation of the circumstances in which the Court was created. In response Hawke argued: “The unions were not motivated by a conception of

the class war but by the determination to achieve justice for Labour within the existing system".\(^{62}\) In his conclusions to the thesis Hawke was clearly uncomfortable with the expansion of the Court’s jurisdiction, citing the 1947 Standard Hours judgement, in which the Court emphasised its legislative function over the Australian economy – in particular its setting of the basic wage – as evidence that it was no longer adequate for its role as an economic sub-legislator. Whilst advocating the retention of the Commonwealth Arbitration court system, Hawke believed it should be limited to conciliation only: “other matters such as the principles of fixing margins for skill, standard hours, and particularly the determination of the basic wage, which are fundamental both to the problem of industrial relations and the welfare of the national economy, should be entrusted to a bureau independent of the Court”. In his final remarks Hawke again turned to W.K. Hancock:

Hancock has said that the prevailing ideology of Australian democracy is the ‘sentiment of justice, the conception of equality, and the appeal to Government as the instrument of self-realization. The ideology is simple; but the instrument is not’. The instrument is not simple nor is it immutable. At the time when it was becoming a nation Australia made a bold experiment to give effect to this ideology. If the experiment made in a particular set of conditions has become an inadequate instrument of self-realisation, Australia should recognize the fact and equally boldly seek to improve the instrument.\(^{63}\)

In this conclusion, Hawke, whilst concurring with Hancock, called on those in the parliament to reassess the functions of the court in order to make it fit more precisely Australian democratic ideals. In so far as this influenced Hawke’s emerging idea of consensus, it pointed to his frustration at the seemingly ubiquitous tension between the dispute settling function of arbitration and its economic regulating function. His view that the Court should be restricted to settling industrial disputes, whilst rejecting the claims of employers and the Commonwealth that it should concern itself with economic matters, would be a theme to which he would return as the industrial advocate for the ACTU. Whilst his close analysis of the 1890s had confirmed him in his ideological commitment to the Labor party, which for him, at this time, reflected the “good aspirational elements

\(^{62}\) RJLH, B. Litt.thesis, 16.
\(^{63}\) RJLH, B. Litt.thesis, 283.
of society, triumphing over the forces of reaction", a comment which in itself displays the influence of Hancock's initiative-resistance model on his idea of Australia, more importantly it proved to Hawke that the creation of arbitration had not simply been concerned with a class war. It had also taken place within a liberal discourse of concern for justice, equality for all, and the collective benefit of society.

Upon his return from Oxford, Hawke commenced a Ph.D. in the Faculty of Law at the Australian National University (ANU). His doctoral thesis, supervised by Professor Geoffrey Sawer, was to be a more complete study of the Basic Wage concept. Opinions of Hawke at this stage, as far as his 'world-view' was concerned, were largely consistent with comments made by Hawke's tutors and lecturers at the University of Western Australia. Ron Hieser, a former communist party member - but by the mid 1950s on the left of the ALP - portrayed Hawke at the ANU as "completely uninterested in theory - he knew as much about Marx as the average journalist: Bob was a practical politician". Another close friend of Hawke's at this time, Sam Stoljar, a reader in Law, emphasised Hawke's "concern for the public good" and noted further that "To be a scholar in the ivory tower of your study required the kind of devotion Hawke did not have". Peter Coleman, then a reader in social philosophy recalled Hawke was "well informed on political matters, but in social philosophy he was a lightweight...Argument with Bob was not an intellectual excitement, for his intellect was limited, as were his interests". Citing Hawke's lack of interest in literature, theatre and music, Coleman had instead been amazed to watch Hawke "one day play Reedy River about twenty times". As mentioned previously, the New Theatre's production of Reedy River, in particular its maudlin rendition of Helen Palmer's poem 'Ballad of '91', had fused the spirit of Eureka with the shearers' strike of 1891. Coleman's elitist put-down perhaps missed the essence of Hawke's empathy with the strikers of the 1890s. But with a mind so acutely trained to achieving practical outcomes, Hawke was lured away from postgraduate research to the ACTU in 1958 as a Research Officer and Industrial advocate.

65 Quoted in D'Alpuget, Robert J. Hawke, 67.
66 Quoted in D'Alpuget, Robert J. Hawke, 71.
67 Quoted in D'Alpuget, Robert J. Hawke, 69.
68 See Chapter One, pp 31-32.
Hawke’s entry into the world of the ACTU at this time brought him face to face with men who had been Communists in the 1930s, and who were only now beginning to acknowledge the excesses of the system. Communism for these men was fast becoming, as Arthur Koestler had put it, “the God that failed”.69 For Hawke, Melbourne in the late 1950s was the “epicentre of the convulsions which had torn the Australian labour movement apart”.70 Where would Hawke’s concept of ‘consensus’ fit in this environment? Coming of age intellectually at this time, though as one who had seemingly lost faith in organised religion, the sectarian bitterness aroused by the Labor Party split seemed to affect him only marginally.

Yet Hawke was affected by Trade Union leaders such as Jim Healy, Alec McDonald and George Seelaf – all former communists. As Hawke listened to their recreations of life in the union movement in the 1930s, he was led to ponder what his own beliefs might have been had he been active in the union movement at that time: “...I can imagine that had I been a young man in the Depression I could have been a communist”.71 Hawke’s sympathy was not with communism as an ideology or communism in practice, but with the economic climate of the 1930s which had led these men to despise the capitalist system and therefore react against it: “in terms of their commitment to communism...at the time of their joining the Communist party I could totally understand it...particularly listening to Jim Healy [who] would tell you some of the awful stories about the wharves, literally fellows having to make their wives or womenfolk available to one of the bloody foremen if they were to get one of the jobs for a few hours and the conditions under which they worked...”.72 Thus the communism to which Hawke was exposed through these men had been primarily a reaction “to the bastardry and the evil they’d seen, and the human suffering”. For these men, communism was the answer to the exploitation of labour. Hawke recalled, however, how “devastating” an experience it was for these unionists when “the evil of what they’d

70 R.L.H., Memoirs, 33.
71 R.L.H., Memoirs, 37.
embraced" became more apparent to them, particularly after the brutal crushing of the Hungarian uprising in 1956. 73

Hawke's position as ACTU Research Officer and industrial advocate gave him the opportunity to combine academic expertise with political commitment. Initially attracting substantial support from the left-wing of the union movement, Blanche D'Alpuget has argued that Hawke's academic background was the target of right wing prejudice - education from three universities and the lack of a 'blue-collar' background confirmed their conviction that those of middle-class origins were incapable of representing the union movement. Yet for the left-wing, it was the ability of this tertiary educated young man to introduce logical and provable arguments into economic debate which first ensured that they saw him, as one left-winger put it, as "a good thing". In particular it was the Victorian Left, described by D'Alpuget as being at this time "radical and militant", which saw Hawke as a "positive, progressive force".74 D'Alpuget has pointed to Hawke's support of unity tickets - where Labor and Communist candidates stood together for election to union office - and his association with the Left's position of anti-Americanism and mistrust of the CIA, Santamaria, Archbishop Mannix and ASIO as evidence of Hawke's left-wing stance at this time. The right wing of the Trade Union movement, suggests D'Alpuget, "stretched from the National Civic Council (NCC) and the Democratic Labor Party to the centre of the ALP."75 Yet the successes Hawke enjoyed in both the Wages and Margins cases of 1959 made him something of a phenomenon in the Trade Union movement. It was the practicality of this work, what Hawke called its "concrete relevance to society"76 which appealed to him - as did the chance it offered for him to mix with those from different social backgrounds.

Since Hawke was so closely identified with the left, many in the Right of the Labour Movement feared increased Communist influence in the union movement, if he were to be elected leader following the retirement of Albert Monk in early 1970. In the campaign for the presidency, where he opposed Harold Souter, the DLP supported candidate, Hawke repeatedly stressed his concern for the plight of the ordinary Australian

73 RILH, personal interview, Sydney, 14 December 2000, transcript.
74 Blanche D'Alpuget, Robert J Hawke, 86-7.
75 Ibid.
76 RILH, in D'Alpuget, Robert J. Hawke, 95.
worker over and above international issues such as the Vietnam War.\textsuperscript{77} There is not sufficient space here to consider the full range of issues related to Hawke’s Presidency of the ACTU and his subsequent Presidency of the ALP. For example his passionate advocacy of what he called the “absolute right” of Israel to exist will not be covered in this study. This period of Hawke’s career has been substantially treated in Blanche D’Alpuget’s biography.\textsuperscript{78} When elected to the position of ACTU President, Hawke had typically called for consensus, and his efforts to ensure smooth relations between the Left and Right factions of the Union movement feature prominently in D’Alpuget’s account. Despite the continuing charge that he was a Communist, Hawke’s consensus view of community, his desire for political harmony, and his deep respect for the democratic processes of the union movement enabled him to accept Communist and NCC trade union officials.

By 1976 Hawke, as President of both the ACTU and the ALP, was being described by the Australian Information Service as a “socialist intellectual” who was also the “tough minded, often abrasive, infighter of the industrial world and a sociable ‘mixer’ in workers’ pubs and academic circles”.\textsuperscript{79} It was a reflection of the ease with which Hawke moved across different worlds. And when interviewed soon after he had been elected as President of the ACTU, Hawke gave substance to his self-definition as a “socialist”:

\begin{quote}
I can’t conceive within a society, an economy, that the interests of the whole are going to be best served by an uncoordinated and unregulated set of decisions made by people privately owning property...their set of decisions being made according to the maximisation of their private profit. Now, they have no concern basically for the community as a whole, and I therefore believe that if the community as a whole own the means of production, distribution and exchange, you’ve got much more chance of equating the interest of the whole with the decisions that are made about the utilisation of those means of production.\textsuperscript{80}
\end{quote}

In clarifying his brand of socialism, Hawke had duly recited the key plank from the Labor Party platform, but it is noteworthy that he did not revert to a vilification of capitalism,

\textsuperscript{77} D’Alpuget, \textit{Robert J. Hawke}, 165.
\textsuperscript{78} see also RJLH, \textit{Hawke on Israel – A collection of speeches and articles} (Melbourne: Australian Friends of Labour Israel, 1977).
\textsuperscript{79} John Louglin, ‘Bob Hawke: Australian Union Leader’ (Australian Personalities) \textit{Australian Information Service 1976} in NLA Biographical Files – RJ Hawke.
nor were employers characterised as wicked and evil exploiters of the worker. Hawke’s main concern was with the “interests of the whole”. Thus he was quick to distance himself from advocating a class war. The different interests of employers and workers were just that – differences – and ones which he sought to reconcile. The Trade Union movement, he continued, represented “in its cross section all the best of Australianism” – For Hawke, this “Australianism” had both a content and a context. It concerned Australia’s institutionalising of the ‘fair-go’ in the form of the Arbitration Commission. It also revolved around the labour movement’s decision in the 1890s to enter the political arena, thus giving further impetus to Australian socialism’s achievement of practical reform. The trade unions had been integral in shaping the ‘new world’ image of Australia escaping the errors of the ‘old’.

Before assessing the period of Hawke’s prime ministership, two speeches he delivered in 1976 concerning the nature of Australian democracy and Australia’s place in the world, as well as his 1979 Boyer Lectures, are critical to an understanding of his political philosophy and ‘world-view’.

‘Intelligent radicalism’ and ‘saving democracy’

After the dismissal of the Whitlam government in November 1975, Hawke feared for the future of democracy in Australia. Addressing the National Press Club in 1976, he advocated the concept of “intelligent radicalism”, which sought reform of Australia’s Westminster style of government and questioned its viability “as an institution for saving democracy”. Since democracy was not something to be taken for granted, its very future was uncertain: “What is certain is that in 1000 years from now the system which mankind, as reflected in Australia, chooses to run his affairs will not be what we know today. It will be different from today”. With this statement of historical relativism, Hawke endeavoured to anticipate such change.

There was nothing “sacrosanct”, he said, about a form of government founded by “that little island off the coast of Europe in the fourteenth century”. This was perhaps more an example of Hawke’s larrikin irreverence than any pre-meditated denunciation of

Australia’s British heritage. In his speech there was no appeal to a ‘radical nationalist’ tradition of Anglo-Australian antagonism. Hawke was questioning the future of democracy for social consensus rather than appealing to an Australian nationalism based around an ethnic or cultural identity. Hawke’s ‘intelligent radicalism’ no doubt also distanced him from what he saw as Whitlam’s embarrassment – since Whitlam’s radicalism, especially in its ignorance of economic fundamentals, had failed to produce a consensus. In common with many other Labor leaders of this time, Hawke looked to the United States as the model of social progress and liberal reform. Though the United States shared the “same heritage” derived from the “same loins”, they had conceived “a different way of nurturing and protecting democracy”, which had not restricted the choice of political representatives to the processes of party pre-selection. The substance of “intelligent radicalism”, however, went far deeper than the replication of American-style government in the Australian context. Hawke’s wider concern was directed towards “the eternal problem of evolution and change”, and how society might take into the future “all the best of our own experience and harness it to the best experience of other people”. This was the essence of Hawke’s ‘intelligent radicalism’ – which looked principally to the ideal of American liberty as the best means to safeguard the British inheritance of parliamentary democracy. There were problems with this view however. How would it solve democracy’s ‘consensus’ problem? Further, when Hawke invoked the mantra of American ‘liberty’ as inscribed on the Philadelphia Liberty Bell (“Proclaim liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof”) it was necessarily oblivious to an America which had silenced Communists and Marxists. In defining his alternative, Hawke looked to history, which had given him an abhorrence of “the medicine of the extremists”. History had shown him, he added, that “the totalitarianism of the Right and of the Left begins inevitably with the diminution of individual liberty and then finishes with its extinction”. Here Hawke approached Malcolm Fraser’s position, in which Russian aggression threatened to imperil the basic canons of Western liberalism.

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82 As Neville Meaney has shown, the Whitlam government was not anti-American. Whitlam had expressed his high regard for Roosevelt’s New Deal and Jim Cairns had nominated Thomas Jefferson as his inspiration. Hawke’s comments here are in this same tradition of Labor leaders of that time invoking, as Meaney puts it, the “America of social progress, liberal reform, civil rights and equal opportunity”. Neville Meaney, ‘The United States’, in W.J. Hudson, (ed.) Australia in World Affairs 1971-75 (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1980), 181.
In his 1976 HV Evatt memorial lecture, *Australia’s place in World Affairs*, Hawke placed himself squarely within the liberal internationalist tradition of Australian foreign policy as embodied by Labor leaders H.V. Evatt and E.G. Whitlam. As Hawke defined it, this was “an internationalist outlook concerned to represent Australia as a humane and socially just society at home, equally interested to promote social justice abroad, combat racism, and play a progressive independent and positive role in our own region of the world”. When Hawke quoted from the work of Dr Claire Clark, who had argued that the Labor governments under Curtin and Chifley had “fostered an image of ardent nationalism combined with international idealism”, he was clearly not conscious of the fundamental contradiction in such a definition of the Labor governments of the 1940s. This claim that since World War Two Labor governments fused an assertive nationalism with a liberal internationalism has been commonplace in ‘radical national’ interpretations of Australian history, and misrepresents the insistence by Curtin and Chifley that Australia’s post-war security could be best provided for by her continuing membership of the British Empire. Hawke had also expressed his support for détente, which he characterised as “an essentially modern and civilised process which challenges nations to the cool subtleties of the negotiating table”. He attacked what he termed as the “disastrously simplistic Fraser line” on détente, for in Hawke’s view Fraser was “committed to an early 50s black and white view of the world and is incapable of comprehending the variety of greys with which détente is designed to deal”. Hawke was essentially correct in this assessment of Fraser – détente for the latter being not the way to deal with aggression, since it represented the general weakness of the West in failing to stand up to Soviet ambitions. Where Fraser feared détente as a “term too loosely used”, for Hawke it offered the hope of consensus writ large on the international stage.

The title of Hawke’s 1979 ABC Boyer lectures – *The Resolution of Conflict* – aptly captured the abiding theme of his ‘world-view’ and provided him with the public forum in which he could develop more fully the concept of “intelligent radicalism”. These lectures constituted a coherent exposition of Hawke’s analysis of Australian political culture and society at that time, as well as his own strong consciousness that the
title he had chosen for the lectures sprang from long personal experience: “I have been extremely fortunate to have had the opportunity of experience and thought in a number of areas which I regard as extremely relevant to my theme.”. 85 It is notable Hawke emphasised again this practicality born of experience, one which partly explained his rejection at the beginning of the lectures of academic “elitism”. He instead argued that the debate over social and political change must emanate primarily from a “broad spectrum of the people”. 86 It was not surprising, then, that the lectures did not look to any grand theories of society or of social reconstruction. The simple theoretical point was that turmoil and change, unless properly understood and handled, could “diminish or destroy the environment within which the freedom of the human spirit may flourish”. Only if provided with employment and security could individuals be expected to adhere to the values of a free society. One review, which claimed Hawke’s lectures suffered from “inadequate research and reflection”, believed this to be compensated for by “their embracing humanism and detachment”. 87

But the central theme of the lectures was premised on the assumption of a political and social crisis. Not only was Australia in the midst of “dangerous times” and “more divided within itself, more uncertain of the future, more prone to internal conflict, than at any other period in its history”, but the “fundamental values of a free society” and the “survival of civilisation” itself were at stake. The gap between employed and unemployed had produced “something akin to Disraeli’s two nations”. What Hawke sought to uncover, was “the desire for harmony amongst most people”. 88 This was to be done by encouraging people to undertake the “greatest adventure of all – to think new thoughts...”. In order to create the need for consensus and cooperation, however, Hawke had first to establish the precise nature of this conflict and crisis facing the nation. Much like Fraser, Hawke saw an innate difficulty in this task, since the preference of many was to associate a state of “crisis” only with war or the threat of external aggression. “The crisis created by war...is easy to perceive”, he said, but the challenge for the Australian

86 RJLH, The Resolution of Conflict, 10.
88 RJLH, The Resolution of Conflict, 33, 38, 49.
population, in his view, was to look for the crisis which had arisen from within.\textsuperscript{89} For Fraser the answer to this problem had been the need for vigilance against the hegemonic tendencies of the Soviet Union, and to constantly maintain discipline and will in the face of such aggression. Hawke however quoted from the 1959 Report of the Joint Committee on Constitutional Review which argued that economic depressions were, along with wars, “national catastrophes”. The loss of full employment, which for Hawke had been the chief symbol of Australian economic decline, had meant the loss of the “cement which bound our society together”, though he welcomed the influx of new migrants into Australian society because it had allowed the country to “slough off with surprising equanimity” the White Australia policy.\textsuperscript{90}

Hawke had deeper concerns, however, about the very nature of how conflict was to be resolved. He asserted that the ultimate institution for this purpose was parliamentary government, yet he was clearly disillusioned with its capacity to achieve that objective. Frustrated by constraints in the Constitution and in particular “States rights”, he advocated the abolition of state parliaments and the recruitment to Cabinet of talented individuals from outside the normal processes of popular election. Australia, in Hawke’s view, was a captive not only of its colonial history, which had entrenched “States rights”, but, in respect of Australia’s system of government, a more “ancient history” – Australia’s British heritage. Following on from his National Press Club speech of 1976 Hawke again questioned whether the Westminster system, the “form of government which originated more than seven hundred years ago in an island off the coast of Europe”, was “necessarily the best form of government for Australia as it moves towards the twenty-first century”:

Before good souls of British stock consume themselves in rage, let me make it clear that this is not said in disparagement of the achievements of the Westminster system...Those achievements are unquestionable. What is questionable is whether a system which originated as a device to allow early kings of England to receive advice from, and resolve conflicts with, their barons and boroughs, and which has through time been adapted to meet changing circumstances, should not now be further adapted to make it a more effective instrument for the resolution of conflict within an increasingly complex society.\textsuperscript{91}

\textsuperscript{89} RJLH, The Resolution of Conflict, 17.
\textsuperscript{90} RJLH, The Resolution of Conflict, 38.
\textsuperscript{91} RJLH, The Resolution of Conflict, 21.
Again the message was not one of anti-Britishness, but of whether or not Westminster style parliamentary democracy was still adequate for the achievement of ‘consensus’. Hawke did, however, advocate the creation of an Australian republic “for reasons of national identity”\(^2\), but he gave these reasons no historical or nationalist context. In contrast to Keating, Hawke did not invest the question of an Australian republic with a sense of urgency. The realisation of an Australian republic for Hawke had to be a natural evolution arising out of a national consensus.

In addressing the international context, Hawke acknowledged the “minimal” influence Australia could exert in global affairs, considering that international councils were the medium through which Australia could best hope to make its presence felt. Hawke drew attention initially to Owen Harries’ report on *Australia and the Third World*. Whilst united on questions of colonialism, racism and the new international economic order, disparities in economic growth and poverty levels made the Third World ripe for future conflict. He devoted special attention to the Arab-Israeli conflict, where he hoped the “the crucible of war can be replaced by the councils of peace”, but devoted most of his time to promoting “an understanding of the fact that we are part of a surging, unparalleled torrent of change in the world’s history”.\(^3\) In such a climate, it was even more imperative, in Hawke’s view, that Australians be brought together.

Thus on the manse in rural South Australia, in the Rhodes House library at Oxford, and as an industrial and political leader in the 1970s, Bob Hawke was committed to the achievement of practical outcomes in the pursuit of social progress and social consensus. For Hawke it was this *practical* application of his understanding of human relations which was infinitely more significant than any religious, philosophical or theoretical doctrine. His belief in the “brotherhood of man”, originating directly out of his Congregationalist upbringing, was a moral code for positive action, but action subject to the need for social agreement. When Hawke entered Federal politics in 1980, it was clear his intellectual history – his consensus view of community – had influenced his perspective on the role of government. Like the labour movement of the 1890s, for

Hawke the time had come to embrace the parliamentary arena. This constituted the best forum for the achievement of reform and progress:

I have become increasingly conscious that in such a democracy ultimately it is only in and through the parliament that decisions can be made which will fashion for all our people the opportunities...to be well-rounded constructive human beings, the opportunities for happiness for themselves and in relation to others, which seems to me what government should be about. 94

It was not unlike the decision of the labour movement in the 1890s to embrace the parliamentary arena, and comparable to John Curtin, who, having experienced the close cooperation between the industrial and political wings of the Western Australian labour movement, put aside his previous hostility to the parliamentary process and embraced it in the 1920s as the best means of achieving incremental reform. 95 In this, his maiden speech, Hawke naturally focused on Fraser as the antithesis of ‘consensus’, for the Liberal Prime Minister had “set Australian against Australian” at a time “when the crying need is to create cohesion”. Yet like Fraser, Hawke’s ‘world-view’ at this time continued to reflect a palpable fear of totalitarianism and the fragility of Western liberal values: “...no society founded on the concept of the liberty of the individual can proceed on the assumption that it has some automatic or divine right of survival”. It was significant too that when Hawke spoke directly of the Australian people, it was in the context of a population which had been enriched since World War Two by “one of the great migration waves in history”. They were now a “population to whom the path of political resolution recommends itself and to who the tactic of terror is still alien”. In this view, the people were simply waiting to be brought together.

In January 1983, not long before he became Labor leader, Hawke had advised the ALP’s national election campaign committee to add the word “Reconciliation” to the themes of “Recovery and Reconstruction”. Hawke quoted from Anthony Sampson’s recently published The Changing Anatomy of Britain, which argued that Britain in the post-imperial phase had lacked “the sense of national purpose or unity, which had been so evident in wartime”, thus threatening its ability to weather the industrial conflict of the

94 R JLH, CPD, H of R, vol. 120 (26 November 1980), 98.
Thatcher years. Hawke believed this to be equally apposite to Australia's circumstances. Labor was not only the party which had provided that "unity" in war, it had done so by virtue of its "special relations with the Trade Unions".96 But these observations also had the aim of staking Labor's claims to be the guardians of national unity. It would be this ideal of national cohesion, symbolised by John Curtin's prime ministership during World War Two, to which Hawke would most frequently appeal as Prime Minister.

**Hawke and 'Australia' – Prime Minister 1983-1991**

During the 1983 Federal election Hawke campaigned under the slogan of "Bringing Australians Together". With the chorus of national "reconciliation, recovery and reconstruction", the rhetoric of consensus occupied centre stage in Australian politics. Coming to office with a promise of healing and renewal after the divisive or destructive administration of one's political opponents was by no means unique to Hawke or Australian politics at this time. In the 1980s, American President Ronald Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had both presented inspiring renditions of the halcyon days of their respective national pasts in order to assuage popular concern at widespread social malaise. Both Thatcher and Reagan aimed at the unification of disparate elements of the New Right and at the creation of a post social-democratic consensus.97 In Hawke's case, as evidenced from his intellectual history discussed above, it was almost axiomatic that this commitment to consensus, born of both experience and reflection, should become the foundation of his approach as Prime Minister. Hawke's consensus was not merely a folksy populism driven by political expedience. It derived from a genuine belief that Australia was afflicted by a serious crisis which required a 'saviour' – who above all would put the nation above party politics – to renew a sense of national cohesion and purpose.

In the climate of landmark economic decisions, such as the float of the Australian dollar, financial deregulation and the abolition of tariffs, decisions which broke down 'national' barriers and made Australia part of a global economic market, how could a national 'consensus' be created? To what degree did an Australian nationalism fit with

96 This document, written by Hawke, is quoted in Paul Kelly, *The Hawke Ascendancy*. 329-31.
economic rationalism and globalisation? During debates over immigration policy, multiculturalism and the 1988 Bicentenary, the question of how to define Australian ‘national community’ became central. Drawing on Hawke’s established views of politics and his consensus view of community, this section examines the myths and traditions to which he appealed in giving expression to his idea of Australia. These include his rhetorical relationship with John Curtin, his speeches during the centenary of the Australian Labor Party in which he offered his perspective on the legacy of the 1890s, his speech at Gallipoli on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Anzac landing in 1990, as well as significant foreign affairs statements which reflected his understanding of Australia’s place in the world.

It was significant that Hawke’s first major speech as Prime Minister in the Federal Parliament was not to a sitting of its elected representatives, but to the handpicked participants of a National Economic Summit – government, business, community and trade union leaders – whom Hawke called to Canberra in April 1983 to discuss possible solutions to Australia’s economic ‘crisis’. It was an idea he had first raised in his 1979 Boyer Lectures. As Stephen Mills, a Hawke speechwriter, noted, “Unlike Whitlam and Fraser…unlike Keating, Hawke needed parliament neither as a power base nor as a forum for his ideas. Nor did it suit his style or purpose”. 98 Hawke called it a “frenzied, artificial environment”. 99 The traditionally adversarial nature of parliamentary politics was at odds with Hawke’s deeper commitment to the processes of negotiation and cooperation. In his opening speech to conference delegates, Hawke was careful to defend his ‘consensus’ view. It did not mean “the barest minimum of agreement on an approach to a solution of the current crisis”, but, with a massive budget deficit, the “recognition and acceptance of restraint by all sections of the community”. Comparing the “crisis” of 1942 with the “crisis” of 1983, Hawke said:

Of course, the two are very different in nature and scale, Survival itself was at stake in 1942...Then the challenge was clear, identifiable and external. Today the chief challenge comes from within. But now as then – every bit as much as in 1942 – the

98 Stephen Mills, The Hawke Years, 39.
99 RILJH, Memoirs, 97.
The lesson Hawke drew from 1942 in this instance was not the radical reorientation of Australian loyalties from Britain to America, but the need for the nation to pull together. Quoting from Curtin’s speech to the Australian people on 16 December 1941, in which Curtin had spoken of the “qualitative capacity of our population” as Australia’s supreme safeguard against the threat of Japanese invasion, Hawke too praised the “quality of our people” as those who would respond with a “united effort... to beat this crisis”. As Joanne Pemberton and Glyn Davis have shown, Hawke’s rhetoric of consensus in 1983 shared liberalism’s hostility to privilege and monopoly, as well as defending the public good against sectional interests.\textsuperscript{101} The emphasis on the human, rather than class or group dimension, was epitomised by Hawke’s desire that governments create the environment in which the people through time could maintain “a decent standard of living”. Whilst there was no appeal to a political tradition in this speech, the National Economic Summit witnessed the emergence of the most significant manifestation of ‘consensus’ in Hawke’s style of government. This was the Prices and Incomes Accord between the Australian Government and the Trade Unions, whereby the unions agreed to limit their demands for wage increases in return for greater social wage and job creation initiatives. When Hawke concluded this speech at the Summit, he argued that the quality of the Australian people essentially had not declined since 1941, but that they had been “enriched and strengthened” by the arrival of post-war migrants. But debates over immigration and multiculturalism during his Prime Ministership presented a significant challenge to consensus and the idea of being ‘one people’.

The idea that cultural and ethnic pluralism had eroded the idea of an Australian ‘nation’ was encapsulated by historian Geoffrey Blainey, who asserted at the end of 1988 that Hawke was “the leader of a nation of tribes”; he had “no sense of what a nation is” and – unlike previous Prime Ministers, had aroused ethnic loyalties in the minority of

people whilst “shunning the national pride of the great majority”. Blainey’s remarks reflected the essential problem for national leaders at this time in reconciling ethnic diversity with national unity. In trying to find a history which might communicate and clarify this new language Hawke looked self-consciously to his own past. In his first major speech on multiculturalism, he recalled his efforts at the University of Western Australia in the late 1940s in bringing “closer together those from diverse national backgrounds” to form the Overseas Student Club. During the parliamentary debate over immigration policy in 1988, following comments from then Opposition leader John Howard suggesting Australia’s rate of Asian immigration should be “slowed down a little, so that the capacity of the community to absorb was greater”, Hawke’s response invoked the core dictum of his Congregational upbringing. In seeking to highlight the moral dimension of the debate, Hawke attracted the attention of his parliamentary colleagues to “the Christian position”:

“If there is one fundamental aspect of the Christian position, it is the belief and faith in the fatherhood of God. There is one thing which follows as a matter of logic and faith from that position, that is the belief in the brotherhood of man. Any suggestion of antagonism or discrimination on the grounds of race repudiates and is repugnant to that fundamental position. Let me say, for those who do not in any formal sense embrace the Christian position but who are driven by the compulsion of compassionate humanism, that belief in the brotherhood of man is just as essential”.

This creed formed the essence of Hawke’s ‘world-view’ – its use here in the national parliament as the moral basis for Hawke’s approach to immigration policy illustrates the consistency with which he used this philosophy to deal with challenges to the cohesiveness of Australian ‘national community’. This ‘compulsion of compassionate humanism’ essentially derived from the experiences of his formative years in a Congregationalist household, and his desire to make New Australians at the University of Western Australia feel part of a unified campus community. But Hawke, like Whitlam and Fraser, also felt compelled to give multiculturalism a past, in the sense that this definition of the nation was not describing a new national phenomenon: “There is nothing

102 Hawke the leader of a nation of tribes’, Weekend Australian, 3 December 1988.
'high falletin' or 'new fangled' about the idea of a multicultural Australia”, he said, “Australia has been developing towards a multicultural society for nearly 200 years…”. This teleological view of multiculturalism also involved a reassessment of what it meant to be Australian:

The old stereotype of the ‘typical Aussie’ can give us all some reason for historical pride because it embodied many desirable qualities, but if social justice and equity, which are amongst those qualities, are to remain meaningful concepts in today’s and tomorrow’s Australia, then the vision of ourselves as Australians must reflect the changing realities of our demographic and cultural composition.

But what did Hawke mean by this ‘old stereotype’? Was he referring to the image of the ‘typical Australian’ as defined by Russel Ward? It would seem that the ‘typical Aussie’ by 1983 had been shorn of any historical context and reduced to certain values such as “social justice and equity” – there was no mention of the bush or Anzac legends, or even Whitlam’s Eureka. Though Graeme Turner has argued that Australian nationalism in the 1980s was moulded around an image of the ‘typical Australian’, the “cheeky, resourceful larrkin who populates Henry Lawson’s stories and who was enshrined as the ‘national type’ in the work of Russel Ward”, Hawke himself was careful to distance his definition of the ‘typical Australian’ from such influences. Those who spoke of Hawke as embodying a kind of larrkin populism did not connect it to any historical tradition or context. Richard White claims Hawke was “the first to really use the myth of the ‘typical Australian’”, yet he did not consistently use the term as Prime Minister. Speechwriter

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105 RJLH, Ethnic Communities Council speech.
106 RJLH, Ethnic Communities Council speech.
108 Richard White, ‘Australian identity post 1980: Whatever happened to the typical Australian?’ in Peters, P.H. (ed.) Proceedings of Style Council ’95 (Sydney: Macquarie University Dictionaries Dictionary Research Centre, 1995), 3-19. As White notes, Hawke’s invocation of the ‘typical Australian’ image is more obvious in his Memoirs. In addition to the examples already provided by White, it seems Hawke surpassed all his various political opponents in the ‘common man’ stakes. In his contest for the ACTU Presidency in the late 1960s, his opponent Harold Souter was a respected administrator but “was a non-drinker”. In Hawke’s eyes “This was undoubtedly a handicap for him in the protracted leadership fight”. In challenging Bill Hayden for the leadership of the Labor party in 1983, Hawke cited Hayden’s “distrust of people” as a “serious disadvantage”, whilst Malcolm Fraser was seen as “aloof” and “…ill at ease with Australians”. And in the bitter leadership feud with Paul Keating, Hawke believed his deputy was “still unable to come to terms with or to understand the rapport I enjoyed with the Australian public”. See RJLH, Memoirs, 46,126, 85, 498.
Stephen Mills recalled Hawke being consistently told by ALP campaign officials to tone down his aggression. For Mills it was clear that Hawke could “not afford to indulge this larrkinism; he had to act like a Prime Minister, with dignity”. Hawke had learnt, as the cynosure of the nation, that “being a larrkin is almost self-defeating as a leader...you had to have substance and vision and principles”.\textsuperscript{109} Hawke continues to maintain, however, that a large part of his electoral success emanated from his special identification with the people.

The occasion of the Australian Bicentenary in 1988 necessarily invited a celebration of national unity. The theme which the Hawke government had chosen to capture this sense of unity was that of Australians “Living Together”. However the most difficult question for Hawke as national leader was how to deal with the inherent tensions masked by this theme - how to reconcile a pervasive sense of Aboriginal alienation from the events of January 26 with a celebration of Australia's foundation as a British colony, the British heritage with a distinctive Australianness and ethnic diversity, the bush legend with Australia’s urban way of life? As Peter Cochrane and David Goodman noted – “The Bicentenary would have been far less trying had it come at a high point in the Menzies era: then we would have had a solid statement of good government, cultural homogeneity and consensus. The idea of ‘nation’, then, was ontologically secure”.\textsuperscript{110} Certainly when compared to the celebration of the 1938 Sesquicentenary, which was based around the “visionary” figure of Arthur Phillip and his contentious statement that Australia was the “most valuable acquisition Britain ever made”\textsuperscript{111}, or the 1954 Royal visit, in which Australia’s enthusiasm and affection for its British heritage overflowed,\textsuperscript{112} the emotions aroused by the 1988 Bicentenary were subdued. The consequences of this mildness and what it can tell us about Australian nationalism are worth noting. Hawke, in common with Whitlam and Fraser, was unequivocal in distancing himself from any association with nationalistic excess – he declared the events of 1988 were not to be about “vain glory or empty boasting”, or “meaningless flag-waving or drum-thumping”. Australians,

\textsuperscript{109} Stephen Mills, \textit{The Hawke Years}, 126; RJLH, personal interview, 14 December 2000.


\textsuperscript{111} Julian Thomas, ‘1938: Past and Present in an Elaborate Anniversary’, \textit{Australian Historical Studies}, vol. 22, no. 91 (October 1988), 77-89.
he believed, had reached a “new maturity”, the purpose of which was to indicate that Australians acknowledged the detrimental impact of European civilisation on the Aboriginal population and appreciated the role of diverse immigration in national life and growth.\textsuperscript{113}

As demonstrated in Chapter Two, it is on these national occasions that Prime Ministers are more likely to give their view of the nation a deeper historical perspective or mythological meaning. On 26 January 1988 Hawke defined Australia as a “nation of immigrants”. This was by no means a new national self-definition. In 1958 John F. Kennedy had defined the United States in precisely the same way, arguing that immigrants should be given full credit for transforming America from a colony to a leader of the free world.\textsuperscript{114} For Hawke, Australians were united by the “common bond of institutions, standards, language and culture”, though he did not give a precise content to this ‘culture’. Australia’s “very diversity”, he said, was an “ever growing source of the richness, vitality and strength of our community”. To be a “true Australian” was to have “a commitment to Australia”, for there was “no hierarchy of descent…no privilege of origin”.\textsuperscript{115} As Hawke had said previously, “None of us is entitled to claim real “Australian-ness” on the basis of ancestry alone”.\textsuperscript{116} Hawke’s Australia Day speech was thus more notable for what it did not say rather than for what it said. The Australian ‘nation’ was given no glorious founding moment, for the first arrival of the Europeans was submerged within the commonly shared past of immigration. Lyn Spilman has suggested that though Hawke’s speech was a rare appeal to Australian political values, in that he spoke of “the Australian cause, the cause of freedom, fairness, justice and peace”, the blandness of the speech and its direct connection to multiculturalism effectively nullified any claim the speech might have had to being a clear enunciation of those values.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{113} RJLH, Speech to the National Press Club, Canberra, 22 January 1988, Hawke papers, NAA, M3641.
\textsuperscript{114} John F. Kennedy, \textit{A Nation of Immigrants} (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1964) 1\textsuperscript{st} edition 1958.
\textsuperscript{115} RJLH, Australia Day Speech, Sydney, 26 January 1988, in Hawke papers, NAA, M3851/1.
\textsuperscript{116} RJLH, Speech to the National Press Club, 22 January 1988.
\textsuperscript{117} Lyn Spilman, \textit{Nation and Commemoration – Creating National Identities in the United States and Australia} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 126, 208. It was in stark contrast to Prince Charles, who in his speech had mentioned explicitly Australia’s British origins, the convicts, and the “original people” of Australia.
It should be noted however – and here again is seen the capacity of national leaders to use different histories for different audiences – that in an article written for *The Australian* on the very same day, 26 January 1988, Hawke spoke of the “vast changes” which had occurred in Australians’ attitudes to their history, culture, and relations with the rest of the world and in particular the Asia-Pacific. This process of change, he claimed, “may be said to have begun with the fall of Singapore in 1942”.118 The nationalist content of this remark was left implicit – Hawke, it would seem, simply assumed that readers would automatically see this event as a crucial turning point in the evolution of Australian ‘independence’. Yet there was no anti-British flavour in this claim. There had been no ‘betrayal’. At a citizenship ceremony later that year Hawke was much more assertive in establishing what it meant to be an Australian: “In pinpointing what makes us distinctively Australian”, he said, “we acknowledge the enormous debt we owe to Britain. Britain has given us the basis of many of the institutions of our free society: our system of parliamentary democracy, the principles of rule by law and the protection of the rights of the individual under the law, our system of liberal education”.119 Hawke formalised this view when he provided the foreword to the 1989 *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia*. Australia’s British inheritance was placed at the centre of Australian multiculturalism: “Immigrants and refugees, selected from more than 140 countries, have been attracted by our British heritage and institutions”.120

In stressing the importance of this British institutional heritage, Hawke distanced himself from the substance of his 1976 comments which advocated ‘intelligent radicalism’, namely that Australians should consider whether the system of parliamentary democracy was necessarily the best form of government to take into the future. Indeed, Hawke’s prime ministerial rhetoric relating to the British connection was drawn straight from the emphasis in his Oxford thesis on the strength of the British parliamentary tradition and its impact on the labour movement’s decision to embrace the political arena

119 RJLH, Citizenship Ceremony, Preston, 19 July 1988, in Hawke papers, NAA M3851/1.
120 RJLH, foreword, *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* (Canberra: AGPS, 1989) As James Jupp has shown, the *National Agenda* went beyond the Gubbany report by introducing several caveats into its more general endorsement of multiculturalism. All Australians had to have “an over-riding commitment to Australia…first and foremost”; and further that all Australians had to “accept the basic structures and principles of Australian society”, such as the “Constitution and the rule of law, parliamentary democracy,
in the 1890s. When the Australia Act was passed in 1986, removing the residual constitutional links between Australia and the United Kingdom government, Hawke did not speak of Australia breaking free from its colonial shackles and achieving true 'independence'. As he told an audience in London in 1989, the passing of the Australia Act may have meant that "after 200 years the formal connection came to an end", but he nevertheless saw the "really important links, the true bonds" as represented in the Westminster parliamentary tradition - Hawke labeled it the "source" of Australian democracy.\(^{121}\) When he spoke at the Mansion House, Hawke defined the Australia-Britain relationship as "too close, too valuable, too mutually beneficial, to be easily put aside".\(^{122}\) Reflecting upon the 1988 Bicentenary, he rejected the claims of Vinegar Hill, the Rum Rebellion and Eureka as declarations of Australian 'independence', for "there was never going to be a revolution of the Australian colonies". Instead, he spoke of Australia's "evolution" from its British origins, and whilst there had been "an irresistible emergence of an independent, self-confident Australia from beneath the cloak of our British founders", Hawke defined it not in terms of an innate cultural dynamic, nor as a triumphant 'radical nationalist' march to nationhood, but as an "ungrudging and peaceful disengagement characterised by a shared commitment to democratic and constitutional government".\(^{123}\) It was significant that in this speech Hawke expressed his awareness of these two contradictory stories of the Australian experience: the first being the more heroic account of Australian 'independence' with its romantic vision of bloody revolution against Britain, the second being the gradual separation of the once intimate Anglo-Australian relationship. But it is significant that in the final analysis, his prevailing view was that the British heritage had preserved the consensus.

Whilst Whitlam had used Eureka as the backdrop for the "new nationalism", he was nevertheless forced to admit it had "little or nothing" to do with the formation of the Labor party. In any event, the events of Eureka bore no clear relation to Whitlam's 'world-view'. For Hawke however, a prime ministerial visit to Barcaldine in 1991, as part

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\(^{121}\) RJLH, Address at a meeting of the Anzac Parliamentary group, Westminster, London, 22 June 1989, AFAR, vol. 60, no. 6 (June 1989), 255.


\(^{123}\) Ibid.
of the celebrations for the Australian Labor Party’s centenary, was a chance to revisit what he considered to be the fount of Labor’s “noble birth-springs”. Whilst such speeches generally underline the ‘ad hoc’ nature of political rhetoric, in Hawke’s case the circumstances surrounding the strikes of the 1890s and Labor’s entry into the political arena were more directly related to his own intellectual history, in particular his Oxford thesis on the origins of the Australian Arbitration system. As Hawke put it in 1991, the lesson of Barcaldine, coming after the defeat of the Shearers Union strike in 1891, was the realisation that “the only way to protect their rights, to advance their cause, to get better working conditions, to raise living standards of their families, was through action in Parliament – not through the weapon of the strike but through the challenge of the ballot box”.

Hawke spoke again of this fundamental lesson emanating from the industrial conflicts of the 1890s in opening an exhibition at the National Library: Freedom’s on the Wallaby: Facets of the Australian Labor Party 1891-1991. When he quoted from Lawson’s poem of the same name, he interpreted the lines “She’s goin to light another fire, And Boil another billy”, as heralding a “new beginning” for Australia, since the strikes of the 1890s had given birth to the ALP “and a commitment to the freedoms and responsibilities of parliamentary democracy”. When Hawke referred to William Lane’s disillusionment at the failure of the strikes, his vision of an impending “class fight” and his belief that it was “useless…ever to think of working together, capitalist and labourer for the settlement of our social troubles”, it was clearly in conflict with his own ‘consensus’ view. Accordingly, he depicted Lane as the one who “gave up on Australia and went to Paraguay to try and fail at the utopian communist alternative”. The labour movement, on the other hand, “chose parliamentary democracy”, thereby giving them a greater chance of improving social conditions, and a greater chance of achieving political consensus.

If the Trade Unions had represented the best of “Australianism” in their attachment to the idea of a ‘fair-go’, Hawke’s visit to Gallipoli for the seventy-fifth

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125 RJLH, Speech at Australian Workers Heritage Centre, Barcaldine, 4 May 1991, Hawke papers, NAA, M3851.
anniversary in 1990 necessarily gave the Anzac legend pride of place in his definition of “Australianness”. In his address at Lone Pine, Hawke quoted from CEW Bean to argue that the “genesis of the Anzac tradition” lay in the “special meaning of Australian mateship, the self-recognition of their dependence upon one another”. Hawke did not invest the term with the same quasi-religious dimension as Bean, nor did he trace its origins to gold-miners or bushmen, as Bean had done. Certainly this appeal to the “mateship” of the diggers contrasted with the corrupt and conspiratorial tone that the words “mate” and “mateship” had acquired in the political and corporate culture of the 1980s. But it did give a more distinctively Australian flavour to Hawke’s rather limited Bicentennial rhetoric, which identified the essence of ‘being Australian’ as having a “commitment to Australia”. Though Hawke repeated these same words at Gallipoli, the idea of this ‘commitment’ constituting the “enduring meaning of Anzac” gave it a more identifiably Australian content. Addressing the parliament upon his return from Gallipoli, Hawke singled out the “sense of mateship – in a word, [the] sheer Australianness” of the diggers. Members of the House of Representatives subsequently passed a motion affirming that “from the deeds and sacrifices at Gallipoli there emerged a powerful sense of an Australian national identity”.

Yet Hawke’s idea of Australia was more deeply rooted in the experience of the Second World War. In particular, his vision of ‘consensus’ politics as national leader relied principally upon a close identification with the wartime leadership of Labor Prime Minister John Curtin. Soon after his 1983 election victory, Hawke lamented in a foreword to Norman E. Lee’s John Curtin – Saviour of Australia that “For many years after the end of World War II the memory of John Curtin was dimmed and his reputation suffered a partial eclipse”. Hawke was optimistic, however, that the “gap is gradually being filled”. Judged purely by the frequency of his speeches on Curtin, Hawke did much

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126 RJLH, Speech at the National Library of Australia, Canberra, 8 October 1991, in Hawke papers, NAA, M 3851.
128 Fia Cumming titled her biographical portraits of five NSW ALP right wing heavyweights Mates, in which, as Richard White points out, “the new worst sense of the word was foregrounded as she unravelled NSW machine politics”. See White, ‘Whatever happened to the Typical Australian?’, 11.
130 Ibid.
to illuminate both Curtin’s memory and reputation. In this way ‘consensus’ was given further historical content and context, and attributed a significance in both national and party terms. In Hawke’s view, Curtin the Australian leader had united the country behind the war effort, initiated the US alliance, and established the basis for post-war reconstruction; Curtin the Labor leader had overturned party opposition to conscription in order to provide for the defence of Australia in the face of the Japanese advance through South East Asia. Hawke saw himself as Curtin’s “privileged successor” and described his “profound admiration” for Curtin not in terms of hero worship – this would put the leader above the people and the ‘consensus’ – but as “emotional and cerebral”. Curtin’s place in the nation’s past was of central significance for Hawke’s idea of Australia.

The substantive basis of Hawke’s admiration for Curtin, though, is difficult to discern. Certainly he had read the parliamentary speeches made by Curtin in the 1930s, speeches which in Hawke’s view proved Curtin’s economic views pre-dated Keynesian economics, since they showed him to be “Six years before the general theory... light years ahead of his contemporaries in understanding the nature of the economic challenge”. In the political culture of the Hawke family, Curtin was held in high regard, but as a young teenager during the final years of the Second World War, Hawke had no distinct memories of Curtin. Nevertheless Hawke does have a precise view of Curtin in history

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135 Hawke was referring to the speech which Curtin delivered during debate over the establishment of the Reserve Bank, in which Curtin, arguing in favour of the move, proclaimed “I submit that the credit power of the community belongs to the people as a whole, and should not be restricted by any private individuals or groups whatever. I put that statement forward as a kind of declaration of national independence. It seems to be the very pivot on which the trade of a country rests”. Curtin’s biographer Lloyd Ross described these words as a mixture of “Marxism and Douglas social credit ideas...perhaps early Keynesianism”. CPD, H of R, vol. 124 (10 June 1930), 2593-4, and Lloyd Ross, John Curtin – A Biography (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1977)

136 Though in a speech to a Perth Modern school reunion in 1989 Hawke said: “We were the children of the war...Because of our geography, I think we shared a heightened awareness of the war. Our first year of 1942 was a time of maximum danger for this part of Australia. I think the fact that our greatest Prime
– and it is this view which is worth scrutiny in so much as it reflects Hawke’s understanding of national history and, in part, his response to the question of Australian nationalism.

The principal lesson which Hawke drew from Curtin’s life was his ability to unite the party during the Second World War and to put the nation first. In this view, national crises demanded national leadership, and in Hawke’s reading of Australian history, the external crisis of 1942, resolved through consensus by Curtin, had become the internal crisis of 1983, ready for Hawke to assume the mantle of national saviour. This epitomised his selective, frozen view of national history, which excised the period 1949 to 1983 (thus including the Whitlam years) as an ignoble period of squandered opportunities. Curtin was the ultimate consensus Prime Minister, and though Hawke at times invoked Curtin’s ‘call to America’, it was by no means an uncritical reflection of the ‘radical nationalist’ myth, which claimed Curtin’s New Year’s message of December 1941 was a calculated, confident, dismissal of the imperial connection in preference for the United States. Hawke did, at times, express this view, but more often it was to defend Labor’s record on the US relationship – to “explode[d] the myth…that a Labor government is somehow not able to maintain stable and productive relations with the United States”\textsuperscript{137} – rather than to rebuke Britain for any sort of ‘betrayal’. This was mild language compared to Paul Keating’s aggressive rhetoric in 1992 over the fall of Singapore. Put quite simply, Hawke’s abiding image of Curtin as a consensus Prime Minister had little room for a ‘radical nationalism’ based on an aggressive rejection of the British connection. Hawke’s Curtin was necessarily a figure of national unity against internal party divisions.

In launching the Garnaut report, \textit{Australia and the Northeast Asian Ascendancy}, in 1989, Hawke responded to a claim that, if implemented, the report’s recommendations would constitute the most significant reorientation of Australian foreign policy since Curtin looked towards the United States in 1941. Whilst Hawke agreed with this claim, his subsequent qualification demonstrated an appreciation that Curtin’s New Year’s address was not the pivotal moment of Australian ‘independence’: “In 1941, Australia’s

new relationship with the United States did not mean the end of our traditional British links expressed in our demography, political traditions and practices and culture”.¹³⁸ That is, despite Singapore, Australia under Curtin continued to express its fundamental Britishness and saw in the British connection the best means of preserving Australian interests and security in the post-war world. Or as Hawke has rather more directly put it: Curtin in reaffirming the importance of the British connection “wanted people to understand that this wasn’t meant to put a boot up the British bum”.¹³⁹ Unlike Paul Keating, Hawke accepted Curtin’s status as an Independent Australian-Briton. It was thus more in Curtin’s defence of Australia, rather than his supposed defiance of Britain, that we can most easily identify Hawke’s nationalism. His most public identification with Curtin was in the 1983 election policy speech:

“Just forty years ago this year, in a time of Australia’s gravest crisis, when our very existence as a nation was at stake, the people of Australia gave the Australian Labor government, under John Curtin, their overwhelming support to take Australia through to final victory. John Curtin led Australia through the crisis to triumph, by bringing Australia together. In very different times, in a very different kind of crisis, the task and the challenge remain the same – to bring Australians together in a united effort until victory is won”.

Whilst there was little substance to the analogy, it was a use of the past for personal and party purposes, with the clear aim of establishing Hawke, and Labor, as the guarantors of national consensus. The speech itself was heavily infused with the rhetoric of battle – the election was to be a “fight for Australia” since the “politics of division, the politics of confrontation” under Fraser had ‘poisoned’ the “very wellsprings of national life”.¹⁴⁰ At other significant moments, too, in his Prime Ministership, Hawke invoked Curtin to the support his idea of consensus politics.

In the leadership struggle with Paul Keating in 1990, Hawke privately and publicly criticised Keating for comments made in his infamous “Placido Domingo” speech, in which Keating had claimed Australia, unlike the United States, had never had a great leader and that John Curtin had been merely a “trier”. In his Memoirs, Hawke

¹³⁹ RJLH, personal interview, Sydney, 14 December 2000, transcript.
talked of being "upset...deeply", and "furious at Keating's perversion of Labor history". Keating's words had been deeply offensive to Hawke's view of Curtin and his place in history. In particular, Hawke disliked what he saw as Keating's "disparagement of early Labor greats as he summarily surveyed Australian history through the distorting prism of his ambition". He was later to assert that "the mouth was the mouth of Keating but the words were the words of Jack Lang". Hawke had seen in Keating's comments a revival of the bitter feud between Curtin and Lang over the Premiers plan dispute in the early 1930's. At that time, Curtin had criticised the Scullin government's decision to implement the Premiers plan, and had struggled against the Langites' push for dominance of the Federal Labor party. It was Curtin who moved the resolution at the special ALP conference of 1931 that the NSW branch had "automatically placed itself outside" the ALP. The enmity between Curtin and Lang continued over the question of conscription during the Second World War. Lang's strident opposition to Curtin's plans to introduce conscription were so disruptive and divisive that in early 1943 he was expelled from the Labor party.

When Hawke briefed the Australian media following his conversation with Keating regarding the controversial speech, he defended not only Curtin, but, implicitly, himself. By defending Curtin – and therefore what he interpreted to be the more mainstream Labor tradition – Hawke legitimised his hold on prime ministerial power:

Let me briefly put it to you as I put it to Mr Keating as to why I thought that his analysis in regard to John Curtin was inadequate. I made a number of points. He came to office in probably Australia's darkest hour and committed himself and gave his life to saving the country. But as I said to Paul, he wasn't overwhelmed and absolutely dominated by the task currently in hand. He in fact set up at that very time the apparatus to make sure that Australia...in the post-war period was going to be a better and different Australia than those darkest hours of war. He set up the apparatus of post-war reconstruction...As I put to Paul, that sort of concept, inspiration, decision making and achievement in my judgement ranked at least with Roosevelt.144

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141 RJLH, Memoirs, 498.
142 These statements were uttered in the ABC television series, Labor in Power, (1994), episode 4, 'The Recession we had to have'.
Hawke also pointed to Curtin's reversal of the Labor party's stance on conscription, his call to America and his relationship with Douglas Macarthur. It was a categorical defence of the former Labor Prime Minister which combined personal, partisan and national themes. Though Hawke acknowledged that the Second World War — "the direst moment of peril" — had been a "unique period for Curtin", he nevertheless saw some comparisons between himself and Curtin because of their similar "preparedness to have a view about the necessity for Australia to change, to be a different Australia and to have the courage to tell my fellow Australians that they had to face up to that, that the world they were now living in was fundamentally different from the world in which they'd shaped their assumptions and attitudes of the past".  

As has been argued above, however, Hawke never embraced the 'radical nationalist' view of Curtin. One way of showing Hawke's special admiration for Curtin is through a brief comparison with the way in which other Labor Prime Ministers interpreted the Curtin legacy. Gough Whitlam, who dated his interest in politics from Curtin's 1944 attempt to continue the enlarged wartime controls of the Commonwealth government into the peace, essentially viewed Curtin as a man of peace whose tragedy was that he had to lead the nation in wartime. Curtin's story was thus one of "noble failure", since a Labor government and Curtin for Whitlam's purposes should have been primarily about social reform. For Paul Keating, Curtin was the leader who, in his 'call to America', had interpreted the Anzac legend "to mean that Australia came first, that whatever the claims of Empire on the loyalty of those who died in the Great War, the pre-eminent claim had been Australia's...". Keating's view was ultimately the "radical nationalist" Curtin who had defied Churchill.

For Hawke however, Curtin was the epitome of leadership in a time of crisis, when national survival itself was threatened. But, as has been argued in Chapter Two, Curtin's Australia was a British Australia, and the language of British race patriotism was the dominant discourse of Australian political culture at the time. It could be argued that

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145 Ibid.
146 EG Whitlam, Speech at the laying of the foundation stone for John Curtin House, Canberra, 28 April 1974, Whitlam papers, NAA, M 163.
the very idea of Australians as "sons of Britishers", as frequently voiced by Curtin, was in fact the most significant foundation on which a consensus concerning Australian national identity and an Australian outlook on the world had been defined at this time. As HC Coombs noted in a response to Hawke's use of the Curtin myth, "there was nothing in Curtin's war-time statements which suggested that he contemplated a continuing relationship in which the United States would dominate Australian policy or have special privileges".148 Australia under Curtin continued to define itself as a homogeneous, white, British nation. In the 1980's however, Hawke could by no means revert to this definition of Australia as it was embodied in Curtin's leadership. The consensus surrounding Australia's monolithic Britishness had long since passed.

If Hawke celebrated Curtin more as the architect of the Australia-US alliance, he himself dedicated enormous energy as Prime Minister to the cultivation of this relationship. Whilst ascribing highest priority to an "independent and self-respecting foreign policy" which looked first and foremost to the development of relations with countries in the Asia-Pacific region, Hawke maintained Australia was still an aligned country which attached great importance to its alliance with the United States.149 Neal Blewett has described Hawke as "the most pro-American Labor leader" since Curtin. Whilst this comment in itself represents a misrepresentation of Curtin, ignoring his vision of stronger post-war imperial cooperation, it is nonetheless accurate that Hawke, unlike Whitlam or Keating, was much more amenable to the American connection. Where Whitlam had begun his prime ministership with a description of American actions in Vietnam as "morally monstrous", Hawke was especially keen to exorcise the demons of Labor's alleged anti-Americanism, declaring during his first official visit there in 1983 that Australia and the US would be "together forever".150 Though Hawke accommodated US bases on Australian soil as a necessary contribution to the alliance, it did not stop him from defending foreign minister Bill Hayden's pursuit of peace in IndoChina nor his criticism of the US invasion of Grenada. It did not prevent Hawke himself from attacking

US protectionism in agricultural policy, nor pursuing a more independent stance in the United Nations over questions of peace and disarmament. Hawke's original conception of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) was a forum which did not involve the United States out of consideration for Asian sensitivities.\textsuperscript{151} Further, Hawke was under no illusion that the ANZUS alliance was an infallible protector of Australian security. When the Dibb Defence White Paper forecast no "identifiable direct military threat" to Australia, the Hawke government shifted to a more self-reliant policy based on the defence of continental Australia.\textsuperscript{152}

Yet Hawke's identification of Curtin as the progenitor of the ANZUS alliance was such that it became a target of Opposition ridicule. In 1985, after Hawke had retracted a promise to the United States that their planes would be allowed to refuel in Australia as part of the MX missile monitoring system, Liberal leader Andrew Peacock moved a censure motion against Hawke for "undermining ANZUS and the defence relationship between Australia and the United States". For Peacock, Hawke had caved in to Labor party factionalism, thus endangering the national interest. Peacock finished his censure motion with a direct taunt to Hawke and his inability to live up to the Curtin ideal. Not only did Peacock quote the crucial lines from Curtin's 'call to America' message, he concluded that "Curtin fought for his beliefs and for Australia" and that "no such action has characterised this Prime Minister".\textsuperscript{153} Hawke's vituperative response – he labelled Peacock's a "pathetic speech" full of "emotional pietism" – betrayed a genuine hurt. The charge that he had put factional loyalties before those of the nation struck at the very heart of what Hawke believed to be the essence of Curtin's achievement. For Hawke, Curtin had invoked the relationship with the United States "because the conservative alliance in this country had failed Australia in its darkest hour". It was the same argument Chifley had used in 1949 to reject Menzies' charge of an ALP tainted by communists. Ian Sinclair rubbed salt into the wound when he added that "John Curtin would turn in his

\textsuperscript{151} Neal Blewett, 'Robert James Lee Hawke', in Michelle Grattan (ed.) Australian Prime Ministers, 395.
\textsuperscript{153} Andrew Peacock, CPD, H of R, vol. 140 (22 February 1985), 50.
grave if he heard this man’s duplicity”, and even more provocatively, suggested that Hawke wore the “mantle of Gough Whitlam” in his attitude to the ANZUS alliance.\textsuperscript{154}

In his first speech on international affairs to the parliament as Prime Minister Hawke maintained Australian foreign policy was to be “guided by considerations of realism and relevance”.\textsuperscript{155} These were code words for knitting international harmony and promoting mutual trust between states. In his respect for the United Nations as the “machinery whereby countries can pursue their national interests, or oppose the pursuit of the interests of others, by means short of the use of force” could be seen the essence of Hawke’s liberal internationalism. In contrast to Whitlam, Hawke did not seek “an exaggerated role” for Australia in the world.\textsuperscript{156} Yet in continuing the Whitlam/Fraser pattern of building a constructive relationship with China, Hawke proclaimed in 1983 that “More and more the Chinese system and its philosophy is becoming compatible with our sorts of values”. It was an optimism dashed by the massacre of Chinese pro-democracy students in Tiananmen Square in 1989.\textsuperscript{157}

But the most significant foreign policy episode in Hawke’s Prime Ministership was the commitment of Australian troops to a multinational effort to eject Iraqi President Saddam Hussein from Kuwait in 1990-91. Hawke’s rhetoric during the Gulf crisis was significant for what it revealed of his liberal internationalism, his interpretation of the Munich myth and his attitude towards naked military aggression. When he announced the Australian government’s implementation of UN sanctions against Iraq, and the sending of Australian ships to the Middle East, Hawke emphasised the liberal international motives: “We are not sending ships to the gulf region to serve our allies; we are going to protect the international rule of law which will be vital to our security however our alliances may develop in the future”. Where the East-West tensions of the Cold War, Hawke argued, had “often made the United Nations look impotent and irrelevant”, the passing of Cold War rigidities had seen the United Nations “moved back to the position its founders

\textsuperscript{154} Jan Sinclair, Ibid.
\textsuperscript{155} RJLH, CPD, H of R, vol. 134 (8 December 1983), 3531.
\textsuperscript{157} RJLH, Ibid: see also RJLH, CPD, H of R, vol. 167 (15 June 1989), 3523-25; Speech at Memorial for Chinese Dead, 6 June 1989, AFAR, vol. 60, no. 6 (June 1989), 265.
intended for it”.

Principal among these founders for Hawke was H.V. Evatt and Labor’s post-war liberal internationalist stance:

The Australian Labor party comes to this issue with a lot of history. For much of its 100 years the ALP has struggled to ensure that Australia’s armed forces are not used to fight other people’s wars. In the 1930s that led Labor to turn its back on aggression... But Labor learnt the lesson of that mistake, and did more than its share to correct it. Dr. Evatt recognised not only that aggression must be resisted... and by armed force if needs be, but also that all nations must be prepared to contribute to that task... Since its establishment, Labor has been committed to strengthening the United Nations as the arbiter of a better world order. That is our goal, more so than ever, as the passing of the Cold War brings the goal closer to our grasp.

Hawke’s reference to Labor’s struggle against commitment to “other people’s wars” was dubious, but it did confirm his belief that he led the party of liberal internationalism. Saddam Hussein’s “unpunished aggression” was thus conceived as the first test of the United Nations in the new international order. And by invoking the lessons of the 1930s—the failure of the League of Nations in Manchuria and Abyssinia, as well as the appeasement of fascism in Europe—to justify military action against Iraq, Hawke employed similar language to that of his Liberal predecessor, Malcolm Fraser. When defending the decision to commit Australian troops to fight “thousands of kilometres from our shores” in the UN effort, Hawke said:

If I may borrow from Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, ‘Why should we be concerned with a far away country of which we know little?’ They were the words of Neville Chamberlain, his description of Czechoslovakia as he consigned it to destruction in 1938. The answer, of course, lies in that very event: the fatal appeasement of Hitler.

And Hawke added, “each time aggression is appeased it becomes easier for the next”. Whilst this use of Munich was similar to Fraser, and to many Western leaders in the post-war world, there were differences. Hawke, though acknowledging the new post Cold War era as comparable to “those twilight years of optimism between the end of the

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160 For Fraser the appeasement at Munich had been the greatest failure of the Western democracies, and such a policy was anathema to his conception of world politics in which those who possessed power were to use it for the benefit of mankind. See Chapter Four.
Second World War and the fall of the Iron Curtain”, nevertheless could not break free of the Munich myth. As already noted, where Fraser wanted the West led by the United States as the international policeman – he wanted full force to be used against the USSR – Hawke saw the United Nations led by the United States as the enforcer of collective security and therefore the most likely to achieve consensus. In so far as dispute resolution was concerned, the UN and the Arbitration Court formed two sides of the same coin in Hawke’s ‘world-view’.

**Conclusion**

From the above study of Hawke’s intellectual history, it can be seen that from his earliest years in the manse in rural South Australia he had been imbued with the importance of serving society in a practical way. The political consequences of this belief meant that Hawke’s career had been dedicated to the idealistic notion of bringing people together in the pursuit of common objectives. It was this idea of ‘consensus’ which for Hawke constituted the basis of a passionate conviction that in the spirit of all people there lay a yearning for harmony. Seeing the greatest adventure of all as the ability to think new thoughts, Hawke nevertheless saw the essence of politics as being the practical application of one’s philosophy to achieve equality and social justice. As his speechwriter Stephen Mills noted: “In a lifetime of agreements in the industrial and political arenas, Hawke concentrated on achieving tangible material benefits rather than emotional ideological uplift”.

Whilst some saw in him the embodiment of the ‘typical Australian’, or the ‘larrikin’, rarely were these assertions given an explicit nationalist flavour.

Hawke did not himself place his relationship with the Australian people into a unique Australian historical tradition. Rather he tended to take the old British idea of identity, with which he had grown up and against which he had never rebelled, and adapted it to Australia’s new circumstances, removing its racial content and leaving the British tradition of parliamentary government as the cornerstone of the common values which Australians held. If he coveted the legacy of Curtin, he did not see in him a hero of

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'radical nationalism'. Instead, he saw a leader who had unselfishly placed the interests of the nation first. Hawke may have flirted with 'intelligent radicalism' as a trade union leader, but he was no 'radical nationalist' Prime Minister.

When Hawke declared at the ALP Centenary Conference in 1991 that he "never needed to be reminded that our party was formed by organised men and women", it might be said that such conviction was born not only by his experience of leading both the industrial and political wings of the party, but from his intellectual immersion in the origins of the Australian Arbitration system at Oxford. When in his Memoirs he surveyed the development of the Australian "national character" since the Second World War, he gave the "Anglo-Celtic predominance" pride of place, since it had provided "the institutions of parliamentary democracy and freedom under the law, and had adapted a class ridden tradition to produce in this vast continent a people with a cocky insouciance, a society where mateship and the concept of 'a fair-go' were more than myths". The distinctiveness of Australia for Hawke lay in its adaptation of the British heritage and its 'socialisme sans doctrines' – the idea of a 'fair-go' was 'more than a myth' because Australia had institutionalised it in the Arbitration system.

In his post prime ministerial career, Hawke has continued to ponder the legacy of John Curtin, to "study the man and think about him". Indeed, he is still dissatisfied at the treatment of Curtin in history, arguing that historian David Day's recent biography failed to appreciate the "torment" for Curtin when he chose to forsake the path of radical socialism and enter parliament. Hawke is convinced that Curtin never fully resolved the tension within himself brought on by this compromise, and remained a "melancholic man" as a result. As the classic consensus figure, though, Hawke maintained: "What was unequivocally commendable in John Curtin was that when it came to the crunch he set

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164 RJLH, Memoirs, 99.
165 RJLH, personal interview, 14 December 2000. That the historical context of his Oxford thesis remained essential to Hawke's understanding of Australia and Australian nationalism is proved by his near verbatim rendition of this very same context when delivering the inaugural Hawke lecture at the Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial library in South Australia. See RJLH, A Confident Australia (Adelaide: Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre, 1998), especially 2-6.
166 RJLH, personal interview, 14 December 2000.
his dream aside and put the interests of his country and its citizens first”. According to Hawke’s “emotional and cerebral” affection for Curtin has ensured an ongoing intellectual exploration of Curtin’s significance to Australia’s past. Not surprisingly, Hawke did not share the same high regard for his own prime ministerial successor, Paul Keating. For Hawke, the Keating era was one of a “protracted pattern of acrimonious confrontation” between the major parties. Keating himself, he noted, “did not pretend to embrace either the processes or the language of consensus”. If Hawke believed he had been successful in ‘toning down’ his larrikinism, would Keating ‘tone down’ his confrontational style? As the following chapter will show, Paul Keating became the first Australian Prime Minister to give voice to the ‘radical nationalist’ myth. The rhetoric of ‘consensus’ would be replaced by the rhetoric of ‘aggressive Australianism’.

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167 RJLH, John Curtin Oration, Creswick, 20 August 2000, transcript. It should be noted that whilst Hawke both in this speech, and in an interview with journalist Paul Kelly (ABC TV Federation series: 100 Years – The Australian Story) labels Curtin’s ‘call to America’ statement as “the most significant ever uttered by an Australian Prime Minister” it was still not given an explicit anti-British ‘radical nationalist’ content. For Hawke it was simple proof of Curtin’s heightened appreciation for the ‘national interest’ during a time of crisis.

168 RJLH, A Confident Australia, 11.
Chapter Six

“Aggressive Australianism”: Paul Keating, ‘radical nationalist’ Prime Minister

“He was always confidently defiant, and in conversation when he wanted to make a point he would look at you with a stern face with his eyes transfixed so as to burn his view into you”.

Paul Keating

These were the reflections of Paul Keating as he paid a late night “extemporaneous tribute” to the memory of his political mentor, Jack Lang. Speaking on the adjournment to a lonely House of Representatives chamber on 30 September 1975, Keating, then a backbencher in an ailing Whitlam government, recalled the intensely absorbing experience of his political education. The death of the former NSW Premier, for whom Keating expressed his “very great affection”, had prompted him to deliver a serious and emotionally charged speech which revealed the primary influence of Lang on his ‘world-view’. One of the dominant features of this “view” transmitted from Lang to Keating – the view which he himself expressed with the most passion and conviction as Prime Minister – was a version of the ‘radical nationalist’ myth in which working-class ‘true’ Australians had been involved in a constant struggle with an Anglophilic middle class to achieve Australian ‘independence’. This historical perspective was the enduring legacy of his twice weekly visits to Lang in the 1960s. Paul Keating was thus the first and only Australian Prime Minister to give expression to this myth, as an idea of political community which for him legitimised Labor’s claim to be the standard bearer of an aggressive, and therefore distinctive Australian nationalism. In this regard, Keating would prove to be more ‘nationalist’ than the ‘new nationalists’ of the Whitlam period.

Keating’s ‘radical nationalism’ was ascribed a precise historical context most dramatically in his comments over Britain’s supposed ‘betrayal’ of Australia at Singapore in 1942, but his speeches revived other elements of a ‘radical nationalist’ historiographical tradition. This tradition saw in the period 1890 to 1914 the ‘great flowering’ of Australian nationalism and social experimentation, lamented the supposed conservative appropriation of the Anzac legend after the First World War and argued that

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1 Paul John Keating (hereafter PJK) CPD, H of R, vol. 96 (30 September 1975),1452-3. The speech was delivered at 10:30pm.
the Liberal/Country party’s political ascendancy in the 1950s and 60s had been led by a Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, who was “not aggressively Australian” and who embodied a “compromised” nationalism. It was “compromised” since in Keating’s view Menzies’ imperial imagination, as well as his inability to separate his ‘Australianness’ from his ‘Britishness’, had delayed the emergence and projection of a distinctive Australian outlook on the world. It was this perceived ambivalence about Australia’s identity and its place in the world in the 1950s which fuelled Keating’s ‘radical nationalist’ rhetoric.

However, Keating’s latter-day projection of a ‘big picture’ – his grand vision for the nation – which prescribed reconciliation with Australia’s indigenes and the creation of a republic as pre-requisites for Australia’s embrace of its Asia-Pacific ‘destiny’, did not always draw on a ‘radical nationalist’ interpretation of Australian history. As with previous Prime Ministers, the friction between his intellectual history and the demands of national leadership on occasion called for a different, more moderately expressed view of the past. In speeches on the republic, cultural policy and civics education, Keating articulated a less intense, more sophisticated idea of the nation. This chapter seeks to account for this transition, but it must first be asked why Keating was attracted to the idea of nationalism itself in a globalised world, a world which as Treasurer in the 1980s he had fully embraced? Why did he think such forceful ‘radical nationalist’ language would appeal to the Australian people in the 1990s?

Given the recency of his prime ministership, there has not yet been a serious analysis of the forces which shaped Keating’s idea of Australia and his understanding of Australian nationalism. Previous biographical works on Keating, written by journalists or former staffers, have provided largely chronological accounts of the events of his life. Moreover, these accounts are irresistibly drawn into a description of the times, and in so far as the relationship between rhetoric and Keating’s public personality is concerned, the tendency has been to elevate his colourful parliamentary invective over and above those speeches which more accurately reflect his ‘world-view’ and its development over time.3

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2 For this reference to Menzies’ “compromised nationalism” see PJK, interview with Paul Murphy, SBS Dateline, 5 July 1994, transcript.
3 See Michael Gordon, A True Believer – Paul Keating (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1996); Edna Carew, Paul Keating (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988); Meaghan Morris, Ecstasy and Economics – A
Nevertheless these works are useful in so much as they provide a contemporary perspective of Keating as a major figure in Australian politics in the 1980s and 1990s. The most comprehensive biography of Keating, written by his former economics adviser, John Edwards, focused mainly on his period as Treasurer in the 1980s, and proposed that the major economic reforms over which he presided – such as the float of the Australian dollar and financial deregulation – constituted his most significant legacy to modern Australia.\(^4\) Since this chapter is primarily concerned with exploring the origins of Keating’s ‘radical nationalism’, which was expressed with greatest clarity in his prime ministerial rhetoric, the major focus here will be on the consequences of this for the broader question of Australian political culture in the 1990s.

Keating’s relationship with former NSW Premier Jack Lang is central to an understanding of his intellectual history and the origins of his ‘radical nationalism’. It was Lang who also helped shape Keating’s understanding of politics as the forum in which to pursue a better life for the working class. It is possible that there were undoubtedly other fundamental influences deriving from his family and the Labor party which helped shape Keating’s ‘world-view’, but given the lack of primary source material directly relating to his early education and experience they are dealt with here only briefly.

**Early influences: Keating and Lang’s language**

John Edwards has remarked that Keating’s early life was notable for the “complete absence of emotional trauma” and that “there was no spiritual or philosophical crisis to shatter his certainties”.\(^5\) Keating has described his early family environment as the embodiment of a “culture of Labor loyalty”.\(^6\) Loyalty to the Catholic church and its economic doctrine of distributive justice were the pillars around which Keating’s early ‘world-view’ was formed. His father, Matt Keating, had joined the ALP in 1938 and was active in the Boilermakers Union. In the years leading up to the Labor split of 1955 Matt Keating had supported Catholic opposition to the presence of Communists and left-

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\(^6\) PJK, personal interview, Sydney, 26 March 1998, transcript.
wingers in the unions and the Labor party, a stance formalised by his membership of the Industrial groups which were established specifically to combat that presence.7 One of Paul Keating’s earliest childhood memories was of “how glum we would all be when my father read the Sunday paper after each election confirming Menzies return to power”.8 He recalled his parents had maintained their “complete contempt” for Menzies as “the pathetic one who couldn’t lead the country when the test came in 1941”, and that “to have that sort of vagabond back in 1949 was just a spoof on everything we’d come to represent up to then and through the war…”9 Whilst these comments represent more of a family or local political tradition, their subtext is not difficult to decipher. Keating’s remembrance of times past has defined the Menzies era as the denial of a distinctive Australian nationalism.

Joining the Labor party as a fifteen year old in 1958, Keating’s political consciousness was first exercised in the aftermath of the tumultuous Labor split, and whilst he recalled the confusion amongst his contemporaries concerning communism – “how it ought to be responded to and what threat it really posed” – either the bitterness of these Cold War antagonisms has left few lasting impressions or they have been conveniently suppressed in the light of subsequent political developments and personal ambitions.10 The Sydney suburb of Bankstown, where Keating grew up during the 1950s and 1960s, was still then colloquially referred to as “Irishtown” on account of its large Irish-Catholic population. The extent to which the young Keating was inculcated with an

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7 John Edwards, Keating, 35.
8 PJK, letter to D. Whittington, 17 April 1975, in NLA Biographical files.
9 PJK, personal interview, 26 March 1998; Geoffrey Bolton’s statistical analysis of Bankstown during the period 1947-1966 attempted to determine how the Keating family fared under the economic and social policies of the Menzies’ government. Bolton characterised them as the “epitome of Menzies’ ‘forgotten people’”, who undoubtedly benefited from initiatives such as child endowment, access to hospital benefits, the expansion in tertiary education and tariff policies which provided the necessary protection under which the family business could prosper. Nevertheless, conscious of Keating’s depiction of the Menzies era as one of lost opportunities, Bolton identified conservative banking policies as having “stifled some of the aspirations and opportunities apparently fostered by the affluence of the Menzies era”. Yet Bolton’s conclusion, that “it remains indisputable that the standard of living and opportunities improved steadily and perceptibly for most Australians between 1949 and 1966” and that “it would be stretching the arm of coincidence too far to assert that the government which held office for the whole of that period had nothing to do with this improvement” are worth keeping in mind when placed alongside Keating’s concerted attempt as Prime Minister to paint the Menzies era as one of “torpor and neglect”. Geoffrey Bolton, ‘Two Pauline Versions’, in Nethercote & Prasser (eds) The Menzies Era: A Reappraisal of Government, Politics and Policy (Sydney: Hale & Ironmonger, 1995), 37-41.
10 A second personal interview was sought with Mr. Keating to discuss these and other related matters, but after viewing the proposed list of questions, he declined to be interviewed.
Irish-Australian ‘world-view’, with what SG Firth has defined as the Catholic sense of national identity as being “Irish Australian rather than English Australian”, awaits further inquiry.\textsuperscript{11} If Bankstown’s strongly Irish Catholic, Labor milieu nurtured Keating’s early loyalties, his first forays into political biography introduced him to the ‘great men’ of political life. The lives of Churchill, Roosevelt and Napoleon seized his imagination. Churchill in particular, said Keating, was “the reason I am in public life”. As a 13 or 14 year old, he is reported to have read Churchill’s account of the First World War – \textit{The World Crisis} – and according to one biographer, “even underscored the episodes he wanted to remember for future reference”.\textsuperscript{12} Though Keating did not elaborate on which precise events were stored for later recall, as Prime Minister in the 1990s his intellectual identification with Churchill – this Protestant upper-class Englishman – as the heroic wartime leader, the one “who stood up every week in the House of Commons and told those myopic equivocating cowards in his own party that Hitler was a criminal” and “the Churchill who inspired his people in World War Two”. It was this image of Churchill, the saviour of Britain, rather than the ‘radical nationalist’ anti-hero who had ‘betrayed’ Australia in “the abject disaster of Singapore and Malaya and in the attempt to prevent the return of Australian troops from the Middle East to defend this country” on which Keating based his admiration.\textsuperscript{13} But whilst these early literary pursuits into the patterns of great lives may well have been significant for him, the evidence points overwhelmingly to a much closer source of political inspiration.

The decisive influence on Keating from the early 1960s, during which time the prospect of a political career began to form in his mind, and his ideas about Australia began to take shape, was his relationship with the former NSW Premier Jack Lang. To this time, analysis of the Lang-Keating connection has preferred myth to substance. As Meaghan Morris has shown, biographers of Keating have routinely had him “anointed and announced by Labor patriarchs”.\textsuperscript{14} Paul Kelly depicted Keating in 1977 as being

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item SG Firth, 'Social Values in NSW Primary Schools', \textit{Melbourne Studies in Education} 1970, 126.
\item PJK, quoted in Michael Gordon, \textit{A True Believer – Paul Keating}, 30-31.
\item PJK, Speech to Asia-Australia Institute, Sydney, 7 April 1992, transcript.
\item Meaghan Morris, \textit{Ecstasy and Economics – A Portrait of Paul Keating} (Sydney: Empress, 1992), 30.
\end{enumerate}
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“steeped in Labor tradition personally handed to him by Jack Lang and Rex Connor”\(^{15}\); Fia Cumming asserted that Lang had opened up to Keating “a treasure trove of Labor lore and language”, and according to Edna Carew, Keating by the late 1970s had begun “to use what he had seen as Jack Lang’s great strength – a knowledge gained from being steeped in the past while being harnessed to a view of the future”.\(^{16}\) Yet there has been no serious attempt to explore the content of this ‘tradition’, ‘lore’, or ‘past’, nor the intellectual context from which they derived. Clearly these biographical treatments of Keating’s career have not been principally concerned with how his rhetoric concerning his relationship with Lang can illuminate the major themes informing his emerging ideas about politics and the historical perspective he attached to Australian political culture.

Two key speeches, surprisingly absent from previous studies of Keating, enlarge and enhance an appreciation of his relationship with Lang. At the 1971 NSW ALP Congress where he sought Lang’s readmission to the Australian Labor Party, and in the reflections he offered in the Federal parliament following Lang’s death in 1975, Keating placed on the public record his view of Lang’s significance for him personally, the party, and the nation. Upon becoming Prime Minister, however, Keating himself preferred to diminish the impact of Lang on his ‘world-view’ and on his understanding of Australian history. Keating’s noticeable sensitivity on this issue is evidenced by his claim, when Prime Minister, that Lang’s influence on him had been “very much overstated”.\(^{17}\) Clearly this was not the political icon he wished to have hanging over his prime ministership. Whilst it is entirely legitimate that as Australia’s national leader he should seek to distance himself from so divisive and controversial a historical figure – in contrast

\(^{15}\) Paul Kelly, *The Hawke Ascendancy – A Definitive Account of its Origins and Climax 1975-1983* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1984), 31; See also PJK, CPD, H of R, vol. 106 (23 August 1977), 511. In this parliamentary speech following the death of RFX Connor, Keating praised him as a “man of vision whose paramount aim was that Australia’s natural endowments should be developed for the benefit of Australians under the control of Australians, so that Australia itself could control its destiny...He was a pragmatist and he always put the Australian national interest first and foremost”.


\(^{17}\) PJK, Interview, *Talks with the Prime Ministers*, ABC ‘AM’ series (3 September 1992) transcript; this downplaying of Lang’s influence is also evident when comparing the draft and final version of Keating’s message to welcome secondary school students to 1994 History Week. Whilst the initial draft contained a specific reference to Lang - “He told me stories about everything and everybody. It took me a long time listening to Jack Lang’s stories before I realised that I was learning history” – in the final version this had been replaced by “I joined a political party with a long history of making history”. Thanks to John Miner (former press secretary to Keating) for copy of initial draft. For final version see *Agora* (2), 1994.
to his predecessor Bob Hawke, who frequently invoked the legacy of John Curtin’s wartime leadership as the historical incarnation of ‘consensus’ politics – Lang’s role in the development of Keating’s ‘world-view’ cannot be so easily qualified. His twice weekly visits to Lang, starting around 1963, had indeed ‘burnt’ deeply into his psyche.

Keating’s self-conscious identification with Lang dates from his first, formal entry into national politics. During the 1969 federal election campaign, as the pre-selected Labor candidate for the Blaxland electorate, Keating enthusiastically proclaimed: “My political mentor is Jack Lang...I have been visiting him twice a week for months to talk about Australian political history”. 18 This declaration indicates, firstly, how important Lang’s perspective on Australia’s past was for Keating at this time. Though he did not expand at that stage on the content of this history, it was clear he considered it to be the substance of the relationship. This is consistent with his much later reflection on his weekly visits to Lang, that “The policy was not useful...it was the history”. 19 As will be subsequently shown, it was primarily this history which Keating retained. Whilst his views on some of the Labor shibboleths to which Lang was committed, such as White Australia and protectionism, are not documented, it was clear he could not relinquish the Lang view of Australian political culture: “He’d push the views down your neck” – Keating recalled. 20 Or as he told the Bulletin in 1979, “What Lang did was accelerate things for me that I wouldn’t have put together until later in my life”. 21

Secondly, this declaration shows how self-consciously Keating identified himself with Lang during an election campaign. This sense of connection to the Lang Labor tradition – essentially a demagogic, populist tradition which frequently invoked vague or non-existent enemies alleged to be plotting their own advance at the expense of innocent and defenceless people 22 – was a defence against the charges of youth and inexperience levelled at Keating by his opponents, 23 as well as a reflection of the growing reinterpretation of the Lang legacy in Labor circles during the 1960s. The move to

18 Sydney Morning Herald, 9 October 1969.
19 PJK, quoted in John Edwards, Keating, 61.
20 PJK, quoted in Fia Cumming,  Mates, 15.
readmit Lang to the Labor party – he had been expelled in 1943 because of persistent and vicious attacks on Curtin and Chifley in his newspaper *Century* – had begun seriously in 1969 and was led by a younger generation of party members who saw Lang as ‘mainstream’ Labor. Led by Paul Keating and Tony Luchetti, both federal parliamentarians at the time, this group believed it was time to dispense with the bitterness of the past and instead praised the “pioneer socialist legislation” Lang had introduced, such as the 44 hour working week, child endowment, widows' pensions and workers’ compensation. For these younger ALP members Lang was not so much a nationalist hero as a socialist one. The first attempt at Lang’s readmission in 1970 failed, since older members in the party remained reluctant to forgive Lang for splitting the party and bringing down the Scullin government.\(^{24}\) Keating would subsequently play the commanding role in reconciling the party on this question at its State Conference the following year – a role which illustrated clearly the strength and depth of the relationship between the two men. Since Keating had nothing personal or political to gain from his support for Lang, it was his own admiration which drove him.

At the NSW ALP Branch Conference in 1971 Keating moved a resolution seeking to do away with any remaining restrictions on and impediments to Lang’s readmission to the Labor party. In the opening speech of this debate, Keating asked conference delegates to “extend the hand of friendship to one of the Labor party’s founding fathers”. Speaking of their “deep personal friendship over the last eight years”, Keating described Lang as “virtually living history” and as a “legend to a younger generation”. Lang, who at that stage had devoted considerable time in speaking to NSW high school students studying the 1930s Depression, was, according to Keating, one of the party’s “greatest ambassadors” speaking “on behalf of the cause of Labor” and thus promoting an understanding of “the historical position of the Australian Labor Party in Australian politics”. Keating’s mention of this Labor ‘cause’ and ‘historical position’ as espoused by Lang was not given specific content, though he did underline the fact that, having joined the Labor party in 1897, Lang had been associated with “those people whosalted the

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\(^{23}\) *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 October 1969. The Liberal candidate in this election, John Ghent, believed the “younger people in the electorate [were] tending to vote away from Labor…Mr Ghent…believes that Mr Keating’s youth and lack of experience will tell against him in the vote”.

\(^{24}\) *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 August 1969; also 16 June 1970.
Labor party with the radicalism it had right through its early period through Federation”. Yet Lang’s “radicalism” was never republican or revolutionary. As his biographer Bede Nairn has clearly shown, Lang fitted squarely into the tradition of ‘civilising capitalism’, albeit with a more populist tone. It will be seen, however, that this was the critical period – 1890 to 1914 – which Lang recreated for the young Keating, both in terms of his portraiture of the political figures striding the national stage at that time, and in terms of his view that the Labor party were the custodians of the ‘radical national’ tradition during those years. That Keating should laud Lang as one of Labor’s “founding fathers” clearly shows the extent to which he had accepted Lang’s somewhat grandiose account of his early involvement in NSW Labor politics. In commending the resolution to the conference Keating concluded:

Man can discharge his debt to society in gaol. Lang has discharged his debt to the Labor party in time. I ask you to support this resolution. Its rejection will indict this party as a party of hate and unyielding spite. My call is for this conference to be gracious and forgiving.  25

Here Keating attempted to heal the wounds of the past in order to promote what he called an “atmosphere of unity and compromise”, which he believed had begun to emerge at the conference. Keating thus sought consensus based on his interpretation of Lang as the epitome of mainstream Labor – yet this was consensus focused primarily on partisan and personal, rather than national, needs. For Keating, Lang was a very different symbol of consensus in comparison to Hawke’s idolisation of Curtin. When the resolution had been carried unanimously, Keating declared in his closing remarks: “I’ve repaid a debt of friendship and I’ve been loyal to him”. In his parliamentary eulogy for Lang in 1975, Keating recalled the success of the resolution, believing much of the past hatred and bigotry surrounding Lang had been forgotten. As Keating put it: “The prodigal son had returned”.  26 This analogy, to say the very least, was remarkable. The return of Lang to the Labor fold had assumed a significance of biblical proportions for Keating. The once despised outcast of Labor politics – a ‘rat’ in traditional party parlance – whose faction had spelt the end for Scullin’s prime ministership in the 1930s, who himself had

consistently destabilised the Curtin and Chifley governments in the 1940s, was, as Keating said, “one of us again”. It was rare forgiveness indeed for past recklessness.

In this parliamentary eulogy Keating outlined in broader terms the influence of Lang on his ‘world-view’. This was a mournful but reflective speech made by a young politician still in awe of the Lang ‘legend’. It provided the opportunity in which context and content could be attached to the relationship. Whereas at the State ALP Conference of 1971 he had been primarily concerned with gaining the necessary support for Lang’s readmission, this occasion provided greater scope for affectionate reminiscence.

Keating had been attracted to the former NSW premier primarily “because of the strength of his convictions”. These convictions in Keating’s eyes were Lang’s lifelong commitment to the fight against poverty and his compassion for the working class. Keating remembered Lang had told him: “If God has given you the capacity to handle and grapple with politics and to be articulate...you have a duty to serve your own class”. Thus when Keating recalled Lang’s celebrated remark – “Not a penny to the British bondholders while there is an empty belly in Balmain” – he interpreted it as indicative more of Lang’s empathy for the working class rather than as a declaration of anti-British sentiment. He remembered, too, the cultural dimension of Lang’s personality: “I also enjoyed his culture. During conversation he would use quotations from Demosthenes or Aristotle, or the Gospel of St Paul. They would just drip from his tongue. He had an enormously developed sense of history.” Thus Lang also nourished Keating’s appreciation for more sophisticated intellectual pursuits – it was an early indication that for Keating politics was about much more than acquiring the ‘numbers’. There was a wider world beyond the ‘bricks and mortar’ culture of NSW right-wing Labor politics. It was this ‘sense of history’, however, which remained the enduring influence upon Keating and his idea of Australia:

He was a very positive character. He gave me a greater sense of history – a different perspective of Australia.  

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27 Ibid. “He lived for as long as the Labor party is old. He started his association with the Labor movement with people like the Leigh House socialists and the McNamara’s of McNamara’s Bookshop in Sydney. He married one of McNamara’s daughters and Henry Lawson married the other. These people were the ideological spice of the political Labor movement of the 1890s and he was part of it from its inception until his death”.
The historical content of this "perspective of Australia" requires further exploration. Keating remembered: "He was as old at the time of Federation as I was when I entered this parliament...he was able to give personality sketches of people like Deakin or Watson, or Bruce or Hughes or Fisher, and was able to describe them and the settings in which he found them. He lived for as long as the Labor party is old". When questioned as to Lang's more expansive picture of this period, Keating maintained he agreed with the Lang view of Australian nationalism: "Australian nationalism and the great flowering started in the early 1890s, then with the Federation, and the Labor Party, and the rise of the union movement, then the new millenium, the adoption of the constitution – the whole flowering sense of nationalism was all really finished in August 1914 and when the Anzacs came home in 1918...conservative Australia essentially took it as their proprietary right and title, and they had charge of the mourning and the grieving and the remembrance and what it meant".28

With this view, Keating placed himself directly in the historiographical tradition which claimed the First World War had shattered Labor's utopian dreams of the 1890s, with "New World" ideals of social progress, egalitarianism and independence tragically lost in the trenches of Gallipoli and the Western front. Ian Turner, for instance, argued that those who enlisted in the First AIF had been "deluded by imperial or national sentiment to fight in an unjust imperialist war". The "common man" had been betrayed by the "irredeemably eurocentric" Australian middle class. Geoffrey Serle also defined this period as a "curious hesitation towards nationhood" in which the "idealistic impulse from the bush had died away", while for Manning Clark, the advent of war saw the dreams and ideals of 1890s visionaries "cast to the winds".29 Anzac is then supposedly taken over by the conservatives after the war, and the Labor party find themselves virtually excommunicated from official notions of 'loyalty'.30 Keating continued to express this 'radical nationalist' disillusionment as Prime Minister.

28 PJK, personal interview, Sydney (26 March 1998).
30 See Anthony Cooper, 'The Australian Historiography of the First World War: Who is Deluded?', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol 40, no 1 (1993), 22. Cooper has placed this view within a paradigm of 'Australian grovelling and Plutocratic conspiracies', suggesting convincingly that it also
That Lang was the dominant influence on Keating’s ‘radical nationalist’ interpretation of Australia’s past requires deeper assessment. One way of answering this question is to analyse Lang’s view of some of those events in Australian national history which had the propensity to elicit a ‘nationalist’ response, for example the fall of Singapore in 1942, Britain’s application to join the European Economic Community between 1961-63, as well as his attitude towards White Australia and conscription – the two seminal issues in Australian history which indicate how the concepts of ‘race’, ‘empire’ and ‘nation’ either coincided or collided.

In the first instalment of his autobiography, I Remember (1956), Lang sought to position the Labor party as chief agent in the prosecution of a strident Australian nationalism:

Aggressive Australianism has been the keystone of Labor’s real appeal to the people of this country. There may have been times when it leaned towards narrow nationalism, with all the bias of a small country trying to establish its own breathing space, but to me that will always be preferable to reckless internationalism or blind acceptance of some foreign ideology.  

These comments confirm the basic ‘radical nationalist’ stance Lang brought to his understanding of Australian political culture. In the context of the mid 1950s, Lang’s “Aggressive Australianism” targeted communism and advocated the policies of isolationism and neutrality. He saw the United Nations as a “positive menace to world security”. As John Iremonger has shown, Lang’s ‘world-view’ as a Cold War warrior was “based around xenophobia, conspiracy theory and siege mentality”. “Aggressive Australianism” also had significant implications for the British connection. Lang loathed those Anglo-Australians whom, he said, had been “duchessed” whilst in London. Hughes, Holman, Cook and Fisher had all been given “the treatment” by Whitehall, the implication being that British flattery and influence had mischievously prevailed over the pursuit of Australian self-interest. His reflections on the visit of the Prince of Wales in 1920 suggested a frustration at those in his own party, who on account of their zeal in getting close to the royal person, had given the impression that the Labor party were “just

interpreted Imperial loyalty as “inimical to genuine Australian nationalism…any form of dependency and subordination is unbecoming and shameful”.

a bunch of sycophants". Even the most ardent of socialists, he noticed with alarm, were
closet British race patriots, contradicting Lang's own belief about the "real appeal" of
Labor to the people being its "Aggressive Australianism". Yet Lang himself told the
Prince that "The future of the Empire is in the Dominions" and that "the monarchy is
stronger because it stands for the people". Thus the idea of a 'new Britannia' and the
achievement of political reform under the Crown were powerful forces in the Lang
'world-view'.

Despite this, it was the 'radical nationalist' dimension which constituted the
dominant strain in Lang's "Aggressive Australianism". Recalling his early political
education at McNamara's bookshop in Sydney during the 1890s, Lang remembered his
friendship with Henry Lawson, whom he defined as "the most aggressive
Australian...Lawson often told me that we would one day have to fight against
invaders...Like most of the bookshop fraternity he put Australia first". Lang had
addressed anti-conscription rallies during 1916 and 1917, and whilst he recalled being
called a "disloyalist", he placed more emphasis on conscription as a threat to Australian
workers and to the nation's racial homogeneity: "we raised the White Australia issue and
charged Hughes with trying to send young Australians overseas and fill their jobs in
Australia by bringing in coloured labour". As NSW Premier in the mid 1920s, Lang did
not reflect upon the Anzac experience as a moral confirmation of Australia’s Britishness.
His dedicatory speech at the unveiling of the Anzac Memorial in Martin Place in August
1926 hailed the First AIF as "crusaders in the cause of peace". Their legacy to surviving
generations was a responsibility to make "this world a peaceful brotherhood of man".
Lang's call was for an ongoing commitment to pacifism and the socialist ethic rather than
a nationalist or imperialist line. This points to his unwillingness to place the sacrifice of
young Australians within a glorious narrative of British race patriotism. Lang had thus
evined a noticeable unease with the Anzac tradition.

33 Lang, I Remember, 179-80.
34 Lang, I Remember, 8.
35 Lang, I Remember, 32.
36 The speaker who followed Lang, Sir Harry Chauvel, instead stressed the actions of the Australian soldiers
in France on that day in August 1918 and the "importance of this date to the British Empire", Sydney
Morning Herald, 9 August 1926.
This derision for political leaders who committed Australian troops abroad in aid of the mother-country, before they had provided adequately for the defence of Australia, was again evident following the outbreak of the Second World War. The editorial headline in Lang’s *Century* newspaper on 6 September 1940 was “Menzies fails Australia”. Since Australia had been “denuded of manpower to meet contingencies that may never eventuate in the Middle East”, Lang called Menzies’ patriotism into question. Patriotism, for Lang, “must be assessed in terms not of willingness but capacity to defend one’s own country”.37 This view, that Menzies had ‘failed Australia’ at the outset of the Second World War, proved a persistent theme in future editions of *Century*, including the period of the 1960s when Keating was in regular contact with him, even reading the proofs of Lang’s editorials before they went to print.38 This was the Lang that Keating knew. Keating himself was to write an article for the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1994 which questioned the depth of Menzies’ Australianness and which was headlined “How Menzies failed Australia”.39 The pupil had dutifully followed the master.

Following Curtin’s 1941 New Year’s message, in which he had ‘look[ed] to America’, Lang attacked the “jingoes” who had condemned the Labor leader for his supposed “disloyalty to Britain”. Yet in Lang’s view, Churchill, who in “our hour of greatest danger...informed us...that so far as he was concerned ‘we had been dumped’”, should have been the true target of such “disloyalty blather”. Lang defended Curtin: “What would these people have Mr Curtin do? Did they expect him to touch his forelock and say: ‘Thank you sir’. Or did they expect him to behave like a man and take advantage of every means at his hand to defend his native country?”. Those with “divided loyalties”, Lang seethed, were a “menace to the country”.40 This is a critical point – Keating was to use the same language as Prime Minister – the same resentment and bitterness at the supposed British indifference to Australian security, the same contempt

37 ‘Menzies fails Australia*, *Century*, 6 September 1940.
38 See for example ‘Menzies makes a mess of it again – Pity he ever left Jeparit’, *Century*, 31 March 1961: “He was a dismal and pathetic failure at the most critical period in his country’s affairs”; also ‘Menzies the Australian War Lord – A Rocking Horse Warrior’, *Century*, 17 July 1964: in which *Century* recalled Menzies first Prime Ministership and the “utter lack of preparedness in which this country was left”. Keating told Paul Kelly that “we’d read the text of *The Century*...the proofs...”. PJK, interview with Paul Kelly for ABC TV Federation series, 100 Years - *The Australian Story*, transcript.
40 ‘Disloyalty Blather’, *Century*, 31 December 1941.
for ‘Austral-Britons’ and their “compromised nationalism”, the same charge that conservatives were those who deferentially ‘tug the forelock’ to the British establishment.

Though Lang had affirmed “It’s no use crying about Singapore” after its fall in early 1942, he nevertheless vigorously attacked what he considered to be Britain’s disregard for Australia.  The lapse of time only intensified Lang’s belief that Australian interests had been callously disregarded during the Second World War. In his editorial pieces in the 1960s, during which time Keating was paying him regular visits, the fall of Singapore and in particular Churchill’s assurances for Australia’s defence were portrayed as the epitome of Australia’s misguided reliance on and sentimental attachment to Great Britain. He described Singapore as “the South Pacific crisis that really put the acid test on all the implied pledges of unlimited protection”. For Lang, Curtin’s decision to send the Australian troops returning from the Middle East straight onto the Kokoda trail “should have satisfied everyone that in future Australia would be on its own and could not rely on any aid from the British Commonwealth”. On other occasions he simply referred to it as the “Singapore debacle”, an episode reinforcing Lang’s message in the mid 1960s that “Australia must think only in terms of its own independence without relying on support it might receive from its avowed partners”.

Lang’s attitude to Britain subsequently lost some of its ‘radical nationalist’ dimension. His response to Britain’s application for membership of the European Economic Community between 1961 and 1963 displayed the extent to which Cold War concerns had outweighed any resentment at Britain’s decision to seek her economic future in Europe. A “Commonwealth of Europe”, Lang claimed, would be the “hope of democracy against Communism”. It was certainly consistent to see Britain entering the EEC as strengthening the West against Communism, but it was also seen as a move which would make it more difficult for Australians to maintain dependence on Britain. Lang dismissed the ties of sentiment and the “howls of outraged indignation from the Little Englanders” in favour of “economic self-interest”. The substantial moderation of Lang’s attitude towards the British connection was also apparent in his response to the

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44 ‘Commonwealth of Europe is inevitable’, Century, 12 October 1961.
incremental adjustments made to the White Australia Policy in the late 1960s. These were perceived as a pernicious attack on Australia’s racial homogeneity. By 1969, after the Gorton government had allowed the entry of skilled coloured migrants, Australia’s status as an “Anglo-Saxon community” was in dire peril. The answer, for Lang, was to continue the encouragement of British and American migration, for “the real attraction” of Australia for these people was that “we are an Anglo-Saxon community, with Anglo-Saxon ideas of government, laws and social justice”. And his emphasis here was on Anglo-Saxon as a bulwark of ethnic commonality. In these new times, to be ‘Anglo’ was to be ‘Australian’. For Lang it was imperative that Australia “be kept as a haven for the white people of the world”. It is worth noting that around this time Keating and other young Labor party members were seeking to bring Lang back into the Labor fold, thus perhaps trying to give him respectability.

The assertion of a “new nationalism” in the Whitlam era revealed further the extent to which Lang had tempered his ‘aggressive Australianism’. Far from satisfying his constant cries for Australian ‘independence’, Lang saw the changes in this period as an assault on the foundations of Australian political culture. He was thus defined as the stereotypical “old nationalist”. The end of White Australia had ‘thwarted’ a distinctive Australian nationalism: “Unfortunately our massive immigration policies temporarily weakened our nationalism”, he said. “What made it so strong was that we were all from the British Isles, our Mother Country”. That is, Lang could at this time acknowledge that a unifying sense of Britishness had defined Australia’s nationalist experience. Yet his response was indicative of the problem for ‘radical nationalism’ in accepting the breakdown of Australia’s racial homogeneity. The new ‘hyphenated’ Australians possessed the much despised “divided loyalties”. In giving further expression to his discomfort at the “new nationalism”, Lang was scornful of Whitlam’s symbolic changes to the concept of Australian nationhood. When told of proposed alterations to the Australian flag, he responded: “…leave the Union Jack alone. It’s part of our ancestry and we should all be proud of that. I hope and pray it’s never destroyed”. This was more an aggressive Britishness than an “aggressive Australianism”, and confirms the extent to

which the end of White Australia and the emerging idea of Australia as a ‘multicultural’ society had diluted Lang’s anti-British sentiment. It had also shown up the internalised nature of his ‘radical nationalism’. This was essentially a quarrel within the British ‘family’ which when placed against the rest of the world defined Australia. Yet Lang still maintained the need for nationalism:

I remember going out to Marrickville one Sunday morning with [Henry] Lawson. He told me: ‘I don’t care who he is, a man’s got a dead soul if he hasn’t got a country. If you haven’t got a good streak of nationalism in you you’re no asset to Australia or to any country.’

Without question Paul Keating carried more than a “streak of nationalism” with him to Federal Parliament following his election in 1969, one which had been primarily influenced by Jack Lang and his view of Australian history. As he told Herald journalist Margaret Jones shortly after winning the seat of Blaxland, he saw ‘nothing incongruous about adopting many of the ideas of a radical now approaching his ninetieth birthday’. Keating’s entry to parliament coincided with the end of the Vietnam war, Nixon’s Guam doctrine and Britain’s continued overtures to Europe. It was significant then – in an era when Australia sought to define itself independent of ‘great and powerful’ friends – that in his maiden speech, the occasion on which he attempted to define his political philosophy and to give a practical framework to his developing ideas about Australia, Keating drew on the language of ‘radical nationalism’. This was undoubtedly a speech to which he had devoted considerable time and attention. Almost certainly it was written without the assistance of staff or a speechwriter, and as such constitutes a true indication of his thinking at the time. When turning to the question of the Liberal/Country party’s defence record and in attacking Menzies’ 1963 purchase of F-III aircraft, he said:

The Labor Party’s defence record is solid gold. It has guided this country through 2 world wars....in the Second World War it was the Labor Party that dragged the Liberal Party out of the excesses it was indulging in then. At that stage it was all Britain and all the Empire. To the Liberal Party it was a terrible thing when John Curtin, Australia’s Labor Prime Minister, turned to the Americans to help get us out of the predicament we were in in South East Asia. Now the same Liberal party has

47 Lang, quoted in Robert Drew, Ibid.
48 Sydney Morning Herald, 29 October 1969.
switched to the Americans and is indulging in American excesses, and we cannot get it off that. Members opposite positively will not be and think Australian.\textsuperscript{49}

This was not only an endorsement of the ‘radical nationalist’ myth concerning Labor Prime Minister John Curtin’s ‘call to America’ in December 1941 — that it had been a strident assertion of an independent Australian nationhood in defiance of the British connection — but it illustrated Keating’s conviction that Australian political culture was historically split between a Labor party, distinctively Australian, and a Liberal party fawning obsequiously to ‘great and powerful friends’. To ‘be’ and to ‘think’ Australian, in Keating’s view, was essentially to be non-British or not slavish to American ‘excesses’, which at that time undoubtedly implied Australian military assistance to the United States in Vietnam. This language of ‘excess’ in his maiden speech decried Australian reliance on ‘great and powerful’ friends as a misplaced indulgence and an affront to national self-respect. The influence of Lang’s ‘aggressive Australianism’ could be seen in Keating’s conviction that the Labor party, by virtue of its record in defending Australia, were the bearers of a distinctive Australian nationalism.\textsuperscript{50} Keating also echoed his master’s cadences in refusing to accept that loyalty to the great powers could co-exist with loyalty to Australia. This was similar in tone to Lang’s description of those with ‘divided loyalties’ as a ‘menace’ to the country. So too was the omission of more problematic features which might puncture the accuracy of this ‘radical nationalism’. Though the question of ‘accuracy’ is irrelevant to the nationalist question, the 1916 Labor party split, the arguments presented by Curtin for closer imperial cooperation after the Second World War, and indeed the fact that Australian governments had been ‘looking to America’ well before Curtin’s December 1941 statement were necessarily absent from Keating’s maiden speech.

Keating’s entry to parliament also coincided with the period of so-called “new nationalism”. His parliamentary rhetoric during this period reflected this new mood of Australian self-assertiveness. In sympathy with Whitlam’s prescription for a “more independent stance in international affairs” and his government’s increased sensitivity to Australia’s Asian neighbours, Keating identified the Asia-Pacific as central to Australia’s

\textsuperscript{49} PJK, CPD, H of R, vol. 66 (17 March 1970), 516.
economic future. In a 1975 speech he targeted “our position in the world in the 1950s under Sir Robert Menzies…and under successive Liberal governments”. Liberal foreign policy had entrenched Australians as outsiders in the region: “We were fighting Asians in Asia – a white European continental nation in Asia and the only one fighting our neighbours”. Liberal governments, he said, had been the captives of British, Dutch, and French colonialism.  His was the one-eyed and unreflective history of the untutored but passionate partisan, much like Lang. Thus Menzies remained the arch-villain who had sacrificed Australian interests in order to curry favour with Britain and America. As Prime Minister Keating would subsequently interpret these conflicts of the 1950s, in particular Korea and Malaya, as evidence of Australian ‘engagement’ with Asia. During a debate over the Fraser government’s trade policies in 1977, Keating called for greater concentration on South East Asia and Japan. “Australia”, he said, “should have the complexion of an Asian country and not a European country”. This was the antithesis to Lang’s view of Asia as a perpetual threat to Australian homogeneity, but it was a common way of depicting Australia at this time, and defining it against the ‘great and powerful’ Anglo-Saxon friends who had compromised Australian nationalism. In a 1968 speech, Gough Whitlam had defined Australians as “Asians by an irrevocable act of geography”.  

Perhaps the most obvious manifestation of this “new nationalism”, however, was its argument for increased Australian control of local industries and resources, an argument which took place within the “emotionally charged vortex of ‘buying back the farm’”. In this view Australian “independence” could be compromised if its natural resources were controlled by foreign owned companies. Along with the Minister for Minerals and Energy, RFX Connor, Keating was a strong advocate of the Whitlam government’s economic nationalist policies. Keating’s language again demonstrated the influence of Lang in the portrayal of conservative politicians as “servants” or “complete lackey(s)” to foreign-owned multinational companies. The Leader of the Country Party,

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50 The subject of Australian defence continued to be an important theme for Keating in some of his early parliamentary speeches. See especially CPD, H of R, vol. 81 (19 October 1972), 2906; also CPD, H of R, vol. 82 (28 February 1973), 71.
51 PK, CPD, H of R, vol. 94 (10 April 1975), 1484.
Doug Anthony, became the reincarnation of "Sir Earle Page and Stanley Melbourne Bruce when they were defending importing interests against fledgling secondary industries in Australia". However, both John Gorton, "the only Liberal Prime Minister ever to try to curb...foreign domination of our industries" and John McEwen, "more of an Australian than the crew from the National Country party that sits in Guns Galley at the moment" escaped this condemnation.\footnote{Robert Drewe, \textit{The Australian}, 10 April 1973.}

In speaking on the \textit{Petroleum and Minerals Authority Bill}, Keating defended the inclusion of Australia's continental shelf as a legitimate site for oil exploration and as an example of Labor's aggressive Australianism: "In this Bill we are asserting our sovereignty and jurisdiction over that area. That is something which the Opposition would not dare do. It would not dare to be so Australian; that would be in for a dig. But the point is that we offer no apologies whatever".\footnote{PJK, \textit{CPD}, H of R, vol. 89 (11 July 1974), 145 – on Anthony, \textit{CPD}, H of R, vol. 83 (3 April 1973), 973 – on Gorton.; \textit{CPD}, H of R, vol. 96 (4 September 1975), 1088 – on McEwen. In his parliamentary eulogy for McEwen in 1977, Keating again praised him as "a great Australian nationalist...who was interested in preserving the ownership and control of our industries". Similarly, Keating when Prime Minister recalled Gorton's "more unqualified Australian demeanour" as illustrated in his resources policy; PJK, Speech to National Library, 13 August 1993, in Mark Ryan (ed.) \textit{Advancing Australia – The Speeches of Paul Keating, Prime Minister} (Sydney: Big Picture Publications, 1995), 49.} In the new times Keating had his revenge and thus turned the issue of loyalty against the conservatives. The threat of a double dissolution election on this issue, he warned, would ensure that the Opposition "find that the issue of economic nationalism is so strong that they will be put back where they are now – on the Opposition benches". But 'socialism' as well as 'nationalism' was driving these economic policies. Keating spoke of the Foreign Takeovers Bill as "a progressive measure", since "a lot of takeovers that have occurred in Australia have not been for the good of Australia".\footnote{PJK, \textit{CPD}, H of R, vol. 86 (12 December 1973), 4607.} The benefits of these economic nationalist policies were consistently defended as being "for the benefit of all Australians".\footnote{PJK, \textit{CPD}, H of R, vol. 96 (20 August 1975), 306.} The effect of Labor's economic rationalist policies of the 1980s, which advocated globalisation and unrestricted foreign investment, would question whether a similar collective benefit could be guaranteed.\footnote{PJK, \textit{CPD}, H of R, vol. 89 (23 July 1974), 496.}
Economic rationalism, the Labor tradition and 'leadership': Keating, 1983-1990

The major economic reforms instituted by the Hawke/Keating Labor government during the 1980s opened the Australian economy to the world, and thus stood in stark contrast to the economic nationalist policies of the Gorton, Whitlam and Fraser governments. The floating of the Australian dollar and financial deregulation were the principal policy expressions of this new emphasis on an open economy. In their defence of these policies, both Hawke and Keating were naturally inclined to depict such initiatives as consistent with the 'Labor tradition' – a tradition which in Keating's view was essentially "to improve the lot of the common people". Yet these policies were interpreted by many as alien to Labor philosophy, to the extent that this argument amongst some political scientists has been called the "discontinuity thesis" – to emphasise the fundamental departure from traditional Labor policies which the Hawke/Keating economic rationalist agenda represented.\(^5^9\) Paul Kelly typified this response when he argued: "The irony for the Labor party was that in addressing the issue of international competitiveness it was destroying the ethos and institutional pillars on which Labor's support had always been based. This was the cruel historical paradox for Labor in the 1980's. The more successful it was the more it destroyed the basis of Laborism".\(^6^0\) Three speeches delivered by Keating during his treasurership are essential in explaining the content of his 'world-view'. They illustrate Keating's response to the claim that Labor's policies were a betrayal of the Labor tradition, his concept of political leadership and his idea of Australia as expressed on the verge of his accession to the prime ministership.

In addressing the Whitlam conference of Labor historians in 1985 Keating was adamant that the Hawke government was "operating completely in concert with the


tradition of the Labor (sic) movement". For Keating Labor had "traditionally been a pragmatic party interested in economic progress and social reform" and "a progressive rather than radical force". As with Hawke, the essence of Labor’s socialism for Keating lay in its practicality. It was ‘socialisme sans doctrines’ rather than a strict theory of social reconstruction, since it was not "motivated by any rigid ideology" and owed "little or nothing to external influences, be they social democratic, Marxist or whatever...". In Keating’s view Whitlam’s importance to the Labor tradition was not only that he had restored the Labor party as a “party of reform”, but that he had “presided over Australia’s ‘coming out’ at the period of a long period of international and cultural seclusion”. Australia then emerged from a period of “conservative bankruptcy” which had become “an unbearable dead weight”. Ultimately however, Whitlam’s release of a ‘thwarted nationalism’ gave way to its economic failures. For Keating, Whitlam’s great flaw lay in his inability to recognise the limits of socialism at a time of economic crisis – the tension resulting from the belief he “could take abundance for granted” against the reality that the "economic sands had shifted beneath it”. Thus Australia’s economic competitiveness, rather than its projection of a distinctive national identity, was Keating’s main preoccupation during the 1980s.

Keating returned to these themes in a speech to the Victorian Fabian Society on Remembrance Day 1987. On this occasion however, his appraisal of the Whitlam legacy evinced a growing impatience at the argument that the Hawke-Keating economic agenda was a betrayal of Labor principles. Keating specifically targeted “the romantics who choose to regard the 1972 Whitlam program as a purist application of high minded Labor principle”. The Whitlam government’s program was in this case not so much about social reform, using public funds to do good deeds or awakening the nation from conservative-induced slumber, but “winning votes”. In this speech Keating again praised Whitlam for making Labor “relevant” by removing Labor’s nationalisation platform. For Keating, nationalisation had been the “talisman which reassured people they were in the right

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party” and which “comforted the Labor faithful through seven successive electoral defeats”. 62

In terms of what it revealed about his view of leadership and his emerging ideas about Australia’s future, the most significant speech delivered by Keating before he became Prime Minister was his 1990 Address to the National Press Club. Referred to as the ‘Placido Domingo’ speech, on account of Keating’s self-conscious comparison with the tenor, the content was far more significant for its illustration of his concept of political leadership. As opposed to Hawke, who believed national crises demanded the application of ‘consensus’ politics, Keating took a diametrically opposed position. He claimed that political leadership was “not about being popular; it’s about being right and about being strong...doing what you think the nation requires, making profound judgements about profound issues”. For Keating, Australia, unlike the United States, had not yet experienced such leadership:

Politicians change the world, and politics and politicians are about leadership. If you look at some of the great countries or the great societies, like the United States, our problem is we’ve never had one leader like they’ve had. The United States had three great leaders: Washington, Lincoln and Roosevelt. At key times in their history that leadership has pushed them on to become the great country that it is. Now Curtin was our wartime leader, and a trier, but we’ve never had that kind of leadership... 63

As has been discussed in the previous chapter, Bob Hawke had been “furious at Keating’s perversion of Labor history” in this speech. Resenting Keating’s dismissal of Curtin, and thus implicitly himself, Hawke was later to assert that “the mouth was the mouth of Keating but the words were the words of Jack Lang”. 64 Certainly Keating’s polemical put-down of Curtin may well have evoked memories for Hawke of the acrimonious feud between Lang and Curtin over conscription in the Second World War, but it is not entirely clear whether Lang transmitted this antagonism directly to Keating. However, there is little doubt it was calculated to hurt Hawke. 65

64 These statements were uttered in the ABC television series, Labor in Power, (1994), episode 4, ‘The Recession we had to have’.
65 Kim Beazley was another to challenge Keating on his view of Curtin; See Peter FitzSimons, Beazley (Sydney: Harper Collins, 1998), 326.
That Keating bemoaned the absence of such figures in Australian national life would suggest his adherence to the view that these great leaders were the embodiment of a country’s national self-image or myth. Perhaps his early literary endeavours had nourished this conviction in the politician as the ‘visionary’, who at the hour of crisis saved the nation. As with Churchill, the emphasis was exclusively on what these American leaders such had done as leaders to save their country. Keating’s appeal to the American political tradition rested upon his belief that the Jeffersonian dictum of “Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness” had shown that even when the American nation was in its infancy, they were forging a distinctive ethos, creating a unique architectural heritage and “rooting their values into the soil”. Two central points thus emerge from this rhetoric. Firstly, though Keating articulated the need for a people to be ‘rooted’ in the soil and to have a distinctive ethos of their own, they also had to be pragmatic and not held to a frozen ideology so as to fully grasp the opportunities of a globalised world. Secondly, his comments reflected the direct relationship of ‘leadership’ to this process. The intellectual content of ‘leadership’ for Keating was to provide the people with the ideas, ambition and direction needed to achieve this goal of national fulfillment. And with this speech, Keating positioned himself as the ‘coming man’ who would lead the nation to that ‘promised land’. In contemplating why Australia had never declared its independence, he lamented the presence of a lingering Britishness:

...when the party ended on the British Empire everybody went home. But they didn’t go home from Australia...and the result was we dominated our population in the continent. So we’re an accident, we’re in South East Asia. We occupy a continent and we’re one nation and we’re basically a European nation, changing now to adapt to the region.66

As Prime Minister Keating would, at times, infuse this tension between Australia’s European heritage and its Eurasian future with a ‘radical nationalist’ interpretation of Australian history. Keating’s speechwriter in that period, Don Watson, has labelled this ‘Placido Domingo’ speech as the “kernel of the expanded story he told in the course of

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66 PJK, ‘Doing the Placido Domingo’, cited in Michael Gordon, A True Believer, 7. NB – this particular part of the speech had been excised from the ‘official’ version as presented in Mark Ryan’s edited collection of Keating’s speeches, Advancing Australia, 3-9.
his prime ministership'. The content of this "story" is analysed below, but in examining it the following question must be kept in mind. Namely, since Jack Lang's need for an intense nationalism is more easily explained – he was living in an age where the demand for nationalism was much more understandable – how is Keating's need for nationalism in the 1990s to be accounted for? Given Whitlam, Fraser and Hawke had been troubled by the very concept, why did Keating feel it was required at this time? One influential interpretation of the post Cold War era, by Francis Fukuyama, claimed that with the triumph of liberal democracy the idea of nation-states had become anachronistic. There were to be no nations for nationalism – since the world would be indissoluble, united by a common commitment to liberalism. The economic, cultural and political forces of globalisation would supposedly make national boundaries and sentiments obsolete. It was a vision rejected by Keating.

Keating's need for nationalism derived partly from his conviction in an enduring, central role for government in a globalised world. The vast economic changes over which he had presided as Treasurer in the 1980s – floating the Australian dollar, deregulating financial markets, and the lowering of tariffs – had by no means weakened his attachment to a role for government. Where this role primarily concerned the provision of public infrastructure, such as railways, aircraft and electricity grids, Keating was also convinced that government "was also about summoning up what was the essence of the nation". Like Gough Whitlam's 'Australianising' of the federal government, Keating consistently invoked the mantra of nation-building in many of his government's major policy initiatives – One Nation, Working Nation, Creative Nation and Investing in the Nation. Aside from Creative Nation, a cultural policy statement, these other programs were concerned with public spending to increase investment, creating economic growth and alleviating unemployment. These may have been primarily concerned with striking a balance between economic competitiveness and social justice, but they were nevertheless overtly and assertively projecting an idea of Australia.

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69 PJK, ABC TV Labor in Power, interview transcript, 5 April 1993.
When Keating was accused by Hawke of referring to Australia as the ‘arse-end of the world’ and not understanding the Australian people, it cut deeply. The Bankstown boy with a love of the neo-classical also wanted to be seen as the quintessential Australian patriot. Keating’s response betrayed his sensitivity on this question: ‘...I’ll back my loyalty to this country and my patriotism against Bob Hawke’s any day’. As Prime Minister he kept faith with this pledge. Keating’s nationalism not only contrasted with Hawke’s ‘consensus’ view of community, it derided the conservative opposition for not being unambiguously ‘Australian’ throughout the nation’s history. Keating would prove to be very much the ‘aggressive Australian’.

"I understand Australian history with a capital A": Keating, Prime Minister 1991-96

In the 1990s, without the slightest disrespect to a country for which I have the greatest admiration, and to whose language and institutions I am a very grateful heir, I want to see us leave home. Of course, we do not remain there in any substantial material way – but we are there emblematically and to a degree psychologically, and it would be much better for us in the real world that we now inhabit if we removed the emblems and excised the doubts. We need very badly that spirit of independence and faith in ourselves which will enable us to shape a role for ourselves in the region and the world....

This was not just about ‘leadership’ as such, but ‘leadership’ for the sake of national self-realisation. In the 1990s Paul Keating self-consciously propelled the question of Australian ‘independence’ to the centre of political debate. This had inevitable consequences for the content of Australian nationalism, the national ‘story’, and the idea of Australian political community. The ‘capital A’ in his understanding of Australian history meant he became the first Prime Minister to give expression to a version of the ‘radical national’ myth, the only myth which from its origins could give Australians a distinctive nationalism of their own. For this, Keating drew on both the ‘Aggressive Australianism’ of Jack Lang and on the more romantic nationalism of Manning Clark. In the speech quoted above, Keating seemed to stress the limits of the

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70 RJLH, Memoirs, 501.
71 PJK, ABC TV Labor in Power, interview with Phil Chubb, 13 March 1993, transcript.
72 PJK, CPD, H of R, vol. 196 (2 June 1994), 1319. This was Keating’s response to Alexander Downer’s claim that he did not understand the significance and history of the Australian flag.
symbolic changes to Australian nationhood associated with the "new nationalism" of the Whitlam period, the confidence with which Malcolm Fraser had greeted the end of "Anglo-Saxon conformity" in the late 1970s, and the passing of the Australia Act in 1986 under Hawke. For him, such measures had not yet clinched Australia's independent nationhood, Australia could not yet pronounce itself to be 'a nation at last'. Australians in the 1990s, he argued, needed not only a new flag and a new oath of citizenship, but also to be "independent in ways that we've never been". Essentially this entailed the creation of an Australian republic and engagement with Asia. Yet the constraints on this 'independence' were both old and new. Not only had "...old imperial supports contrived to make the matter of our independence a secondary concern", Australia's ethnic diversity had added new complications to the problem of defining 'national community':

In the age of multicultural Australia we have not by any means entirely replaced the old sentiments with unequivocally new ones. Indeed, in a sense, multiculturalism has combined with the lingering Britishness of the place to circumvent the emergence of a singularly Australian identity to replace the old imperial one.

Keating, although a consistent supporter of multiculturalism, nevertheless seemed frustrated at its implications for the emergence of a uniquely Australian cultural identity. The tendency of new migrants to maintain their own cultural traditions and loyalties had delayed the development of a single loyalty to Australia. This "singularly Australian identity" thus eschewed the British connection as well as ethnic diversity, since both challenged the notion of an unambivalent, all encompassing Australian nationalism. Certainly Keating's disenchntment, in this instance at least, was in contrast to the rhetoric of Whitlam, Fraser and Hawke, who had each attempted to reconcile diversity

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73 Keating's impatience to rid Australia of any symbolic link to the British connection was given practical expression in his desire to change the Australian flag and to introduce a new preamble to the Citizenship Act, in order, he said, "to better reflect the contemporary reality of Australia and our national aspirations". The new preamble removed the Queen from the oath and sought to define Citizenship "as a common bond involving reciprocal rights and obligations uniting all Australians". It read 'From this time forward, (under God) I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people, Whose democratic beliefs I share, whose rights and liberties I respect, and whose laws I will uphold and obey'. Sydney Morning Herald, 18 December 1992.
74 PJK, 'Projecting our Identity'.
75 PJK, Ibid., 42.
with a distinctive Australianness, thus accepting that the need for an intense nationalism
was no longer viable.77

In this speech Keating had balanced the conspiratorial tone of ‘radical
nationalism’, in which the British heritage and multiculturalism had mischievously
‘thwarted’ the realisation of Australian ‘independence’, with a more moderate statement
of his “admiration” for the language and institutions which Australia had derived from
Britain. This points to the central conundrum of the Keating prime ministership: his
sometimes vigorous ‘radical nationalist’ language in combination with Churchillian
overtures of respect for Britain and Australia’s British heritage. How is this to be
explained? The simple differentiation between Keating speaking as Labor party leader
and his position as Australia’s leader, with the corresponding necessity to alter his
message for different audiences, offers one possible explanation. But this ability to curb
his ‘aggressive Australianism’ also reflected the same problem which Lang had faced in
the early 1970s. That is, when the British heritage was challenged by non-British from
within, both Lang and Keating came to its defence. It was testament to the implicit
Britishness in the Australian identity which all ‘radical nationalists’ acknowledged. Don
Watson believes Keating’s “emotional sense” lies in London, in his appreciation for the
music of Elgar and in his identification with Churchill’s wartime leadership.78 Before
addressing more closely these tensions, it is imperative to consider briefly the other,
significant intellectual influence which came to bear on Keating’s ‘world-view’ as Prime
Minister.

If the Lang influence had been decisive in the development of Keating’s
“perspective of Australia” and in particular his understanding of Australian nationalism,

77 This point is strengthened by brief reference to some of the major speeches in which the three Prime
Ministers before Keating addressed the same problem of reconciling ethnic diversity with a concept of
national unity. Whitlam in his Eureka speech had defined the “new nationalism” as an “authentic
Australianism which could accommodate foreign influences and foreign cultures”. Fraser in his Australia
Day speech of 1977 welcomed the end of Anglo-Saxon conformity: “Ethnic cultures have added a new
dimension of diversity and richness to the traditions of those other migrants, the English, the Scots and
Irish. What is emerging from this is a distinctive Australian culture…”; Hawke on Australia Day 1988
affirmed there was “no hierarchy of descent...no privilege of origin” in what it meant to be a “true
Australian”. See Chapters Three, Four and Five.

78 Don Watson, personal interview, Melbourne, 21 November 2000; see also PJK, CPD, H of R, vol. 189
(12 May 1993), 638: “Last Saturday I was reading a book on Churchill...[by] Violet Bonham Carter – and I
had Elgar’s Enigma Variations running at the same time. I was really very excited about it and I thought, ‘I
am sure if John Howard were here, my emotions would redeem me and I would be forgiven for my views”.
it was given an extra dimension by his speechwriter Don Watson. Describing Keating as "a man with a sad fixation about what had been lost", Watson found Keating's sense of "melancholy" a "constant encouragement" for him as a historian. For Watson, Keating's 'melancholy' derived from fears about the fragility of the world around him. Thus he sees the essence of Keating's 'world-view' as being an intellectual identification with a sense of the "eternal", as represented for him in "the Catholic church, the Labor party and the idea of the nation...". When asked to explain further Keating's "idea of nation", Watson contends that "his insistent notion of nation-building was that if we do not make it into something organic and whole it will fall apart". Keating’s emphasis as Prime Minister on building 'One Nation' may be partly explained by this view, but the notion of national 'wholeness' also carried with it a criticism of those who had detracted from the 'nation' by aligning their loyalty with Britain, such as R.G. Menzies. On that score it is worth noting that Watson has also defined the Keating prime ministership as the process of replacing the "sacred Menzies story" – the "story of regulation and protection and reliance on commodities" – with the story of Australia opening itself to the world and thereby giving Labor a new legitimacy as the party of renewal and change.

Watson had written the biography of the historian, civil libertarian and political maverick Brian Fitzpatrick, whom Russel Ward had described as the 'spiritual father of all radical nationalists' in Australia. Watson defined his subject's nationalism as "loathing Australian economic, cultural and political subservience to Britain, and later, the US", and moreover placed him within the "tradition" associated with Vance Palmer and the Melbourne intellectual milieu of the 1930s and 40s. This "tradition", argued Watson, had its "roots in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and it also found justification in the 'Australian legend'". Whilst it is useful to keep these intellectual influences in mind, it is not suggested here that Keating simply reproduced Fitzpatrick's nationalism. One profile of Watson suggested he and Keating "shared a counter-theory about Australian history", which emphasised the collectivism nurtured by the Australian response to the frontier – essentially an endorsement of Fitzpatrick's argument in The

79 Don Watson, 'The History of Politics or the Politics of History', 36.
80 Don Watson, personal interview, Melbourne, 21 November 2000.
81 Don Watson, 'The History of Politics or the Politics of History', 20-21.
82 See Chapter One, p 27.
Australian People, and later, of course, Russel Ward’s *The Australian Legend*. Though they did discuss Ward’s bush myth, Watson conceded Keating would probably not have read the work himself and that it was not “really a major issue” in Keating’s mind. It was significant though, that Watson recalled a “strange sort of business having had no Jack Lang in my life that our ideas about Australia tended to coincide on many, many things”. Indeed one of the points of collision between Keating’s Langite inheritance and his speechwriter’s idea of Australia came when Watson introduced Keating to the more romanticised ‘radical nationalism’ of Manning Clark.

Clark’s embrace of the ‘radical nationalist’ myth essentially connected with Keating’s own deep conviction that Australian life was split between genuine Australian nationalists and disingenuous Australian Britons. The conflict Clark saw at the core of the Australian experience was encapsulated in the title of the sixth volume of *A History of Australia* – ‘The Old Dead Tree and the Young Tree Green’, in which British philistinism clashed with a burgeoning national sentiment. The tone for this volume was announced by the title of the first chapter, ‘Two Australias’, which juxtaposed Robert Menzies as the “tragic figure of the Australian Britons”, who “served “alien gods”, with John Curtin, the dreamer of a “nation that would be an example to all others...death cheated him of the glory of teaching Australians how to cultivate the ‘young tree green’”. As John Hirst noted of Clark, “The puzzle is that he accepts the antithesis, Europe or Australia, and endorses the nationalists’ position...in the end Clark became the sort of historian he had set out to supersede – a barracker for the ‘progressive’ side who accepted uncritically its view of the world”.

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83 Tony Stephens, ‘Fowlyard Orator’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 May 1993. As Watson noted of Fitzpatrick’s *The Australian People* – “…he found that where the big man’s frontier, facilitated by the Australian climate and terrain, had lent itself to the transplanting of a class system, it had also created a collectivist ethos as opposed to the individualist tenor emergent on the American small man’s frontier”. See Don Watson, *Brian Fitzpatrick – A Radical Life* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1979), 194.
84 Don Watson, personal interview, Melbourne, 21 November 2000.
85 Watson was a former student of Manning Clark. See his obituary for Clark: Don Watson, ‘Manning Clark 1915-1991’, *Scripta*, vol 7, no 3 (March 1992), 11-16.
86 CMH Clark, *A History of Australia*, vol vi, 8, 41, 496.
Keating not only adopted Clark’s rhetoric of the “enlargers” of national life locked in perpetual struggle with the “straiteners and punishers”, 88 he defended Clark’s contribution to Australian historiography 89, and even credited “the Manning Clarks of the world – the historians who work on a big canvas” as helping politicians such as himself “hold on to the long view – the ‘vision thing’”. 90 The identification was more with Clark’s hopes and optimism than with his despair or his ‘jeremiah’. Opening the Manning Clark Centre at the Australian National University in 1994, Keating preferred to stress Clark’s “deep awareness of opportunities lost...” rather than his “reputation as a pessimist”. In Keating’s view, Clark’s Dostoyevskian gloom – his melancholy – would perhaps have been assuaged had he still been alive “to see some of the things which are happening in Australia now...in part the initiatives we have taken on issues broadly related to our national identity”. 91 Yet Keating’s sensitivity to the question of Manning Clark’s influence on his perspective of Australia, as well as his later admission that he had “only ever read bits and pieces of Manning’s histories, literally scraps”, 92 highlights an important distinction between the Langite and Clarkian streams of ‘radical nationalism’ as found in his rhetoric. When Keating used Clark’s language it was not with the same conviction, passion or pungency with which he expressed Lang’s “aggressive Australianism”. The latter had tapped a much deeper spring in his ‘world-view’ and was much more a part of his essential self. It should therefore now be considered precisely how Keating gave expression to the ‘radical national’ myth as Prime Minister.

88 In launching Labor’s cultural policy during the 1993 election campaign, entitled Distinctly Australian, Keating argued voters had a choice between the Labor party – “the party of enlargers in Australia” who “dream the big dreams” and the Liberal/National party Coalition, who were the “punishers...the narrow hard people who never want people to lift their gaze, who preach that there’s no gain without pain”, The Australian, 1 March 1993.
89 Following Peter Ryan’s attack on Clark in Quadrant (September 1993) Keating joined the debate and defined Clark’s “great achievement” as his capacity to “imagine Australia”, and added that “conservative Australians” feared his imagination more than his politics. PJK, Speech at opening of Colin Lanceley Exhibitions, Sydney, 27 August 1993, transcript.
90 PJK, Speech to the National Library of Australia Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Dinner, Canberra, 13 August 1993, in Ryan, Advancing Australia, 53.
91 PJK, Speech at opening of the Manning Clark Centre, ANU, 22 February 1994, transcript.
92 PJK, personal interview, Sydney, 26 March 1998, transcript.
Conceding that "It is not easy in the course of politics to put a detailed view of history, or a view that is accurate in every respect", Paul Keating's rhetoric concerning Australian 'independence' incorporated key features of the 'radical nationalist' myth. This Whiggish interpretation of Australian history thus incorporated a 'thwarted' nationalism thesis, complete with heroes who had struggled in the name of a distinctive national sentiment and villains who subverted it. Keating identified the First World War and Communism as the "two forces which play against the Labor party", having prevented it from becoming the dominant party since Federation and fulfilling its nationalist mission. Australia was thus depicted not as a representative democracy where the will of the people elects or removes governments – which have equal legitimacy – but as a historical battlefield of struggle between the conservatives and the labour movement, in which the ALP represent a distinctive Australian nationalism and the conservatives an older, un-Australian loyalty. For Keating, the Australian people have simply been mistaken to equate Labor with 'disloyalty', because 'loyalty' should be to Australia as against Britain and the British empire which the Australian people have failed to understand. Keating had given expression to a problem inherent in nationalism's teleology – how to account for the will of 'the people'. His abstract view of the people could not accept their decision and claimed they had been misled into voting Liberal governments into power. It was a vision of the past not as it was, but as it ought to have been, with Labor alone knowing the Australian people's real self, irrespective of the election results. The empirical view of the 'people', which would accept the people's will as expressed at the ballot box, was incompatible with Keating's nationalism.

Keating endorsed a version of the 'radical nationalist' myth and gave it a prime ministerial imprimatur when he provided the foreword to David Day's *Reluctant Nation* in June 1992. Keating's agreed with Day's conclusion that Australia had been unwilling to embrace a "possible independent destiny" after the Second World War:

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93 PK, personal correspondence to Brigadier AB Garland, 5 June 1992. I would like to thank both Brigadier Garland and journalist Michael Gordon of *The Australian* for providing me with a copy of this letter.

94 PJ Keating, interview with Maxine McKew, *Talking to the Prime Ministers*, ABC AM series, 3 September 1992, transcript; see also PJ, Speech at the National Library, 13/8/93, in Ryan (ed.) *Advancing Australia*, 49-57; and in a personal interview Keating claimed: "...the conservatives never really embraced the history of Australian involvement in World War Two as they did World War One, World War Two was passed over, and as Prime Minister I tried to revive it".
Much of the radical nationalist sentiment which had been so strong at the turn of the century, died with the diggers in the First World War. The Labor Party, the bearer of the radical nationalist position, was torn apart...The new nationalism, based on the heroic sacrifice of the First AIF, was a conservative amalgam of pride in Australia and devotion to the British Empire.95

This "new nationalism" of Anzac, which was not an unqualified Australian nationalism, was the complete antithesis to the subsequent "new nationalism" associated with the Whitlam era. The former wove Australian sacrifice into the crimson thread of kinship and thus invested the British myth with a powerful moral authority, the latter sought to encapsulate a new-found Australian confidence independent of its 'great and powerful' friends. Keating's frustration was essentially with the "conservative amalgam" of Anglo-Australianism which had intensified after the war, thus proving that this 'radical nationalism' was not what it first appeared to be. This "conservative amalgam" is comparable to Lang's September 1940 fulmination against those 'menaces' in Australia who possessed 'divided loyalties'. Keating also used this 'radical nationalist' language in launching the "Waltzing Matilda" centenary in 1994,96 during the 1996 election campaign,97 and as is evident from his intellectual history, it was the abiding theme of the "perspective of Australia" given to him by Lang.

This view, that the nationalism associated with the Anzac experience proved to be a misrepresentation of Australian loyalties, was essentially the same conclusion Bill Gammage had reached in his study of First AIF war diaries, The Broken Years. That is, despite the war having in his view "dealt the affections of empire a mortal blow", conservative politicians had been more successful in their appropriation of the Anzac

96 PJK, Launch of the 'Waltzing Matilda' centenary, National Art Gallery, 12 December 1994, transcript.
97 PJK, Speech at Macquarie Electorate, Woodforde, 4 February 1996, transcript. "...in these last ten years of this century, you can go back and think...about the other parallel period of a great sense of nationalism of Australia, of social experimentation. That was, of course, the 1890's when the Labor party was formed, when we were talking about federation as a nation, when we were starting to gather a sense of ourselves as we had never had it before...that was rubbed out by the First World War...And clarity about our identity sort of stopped and then we got into this conservative thing and that went on and on until really the Second World War, briefly, with Curtin and Chifley. Then more fully, of course, with Gough Whitlam from 1972 to 1975." Keating gave a similar account to Maxine McKew in an ABC 'AM' series Talking with the Prime Ministers, 3 September 1992, transcript.
legend during the 1920s and 30s. Gammage concluded with language strikingly echoed by Keating in his foreword to Day’s _Reluctant Nation_ above:

> Before the war radical nationalists had led the drive for a social paradise in Australia, but ultimately they were least at ease with the Imperial and martial implications of the Anzac tradition...In 1916 their political representatives, the Labor party, split, and so surrendered political power and social control into the hands of the conservatives...[who] came to best represent the new nationalism of Anzac.  

Thus Keating looked more to Gammage than to Russel Ward, who, despite his unease with the Anzac tradition, nevertheless concluded from the Australian response to the outbreak of World War One that “almost everyone seemed to feel their Britishness as an extension and guarantee of their Australianness rather than as any kind of limitation on it”. Don Watson also subscribed to the Gammage interpretation, though he was more precise about who these conservative ‘forces’ actually were. “The identification of this country was seized after the First World War by the RSL. Those who fought, those who went, tended to come back revivified in their Britishness and conservatism. Labor, of course, was associated with the Communist Party and the fear of Bolshevik revolution...all of which meant this conservatism got a hold and could be played upon for two or three generations. It’s still there in the RSL. Keating sees his role, in a way, as reclaiming it, the national story, from these people”. These sentiments carried a more conspiratorial tone. The question of why the RSL no longer retained such a hold on this ‘story’ was not explained, nor was it clear for whom was Keating “seizing” the ‘story’ – for the Labor party, for the people, or for history as nationalism understood it? If this ‘national story’ was to be ‘reclaimed’ for the people, it remains unclear why Keating asserted his view with such aggression and divisiveness, employing a rigid view of Australian nationalism which excluded all those who did not view the Anglo-Australian relationship during this period as one of irreconcilable conflict and antagonism. Keating was not so much reclaiming the story for the people in a literal sense, but rather in a metaphorical, nationalist sense.

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Keating's "aggressive Australianism" thus intersected with an 'old-left' historiographical lament concerning the post-war fate of the Anzac legend. Yet he also enlarged the 'radical nationalist' myth to include the service and sacrifice of Australian soldiers in the Asia-Pacific theatre during the Second World War. This was interpreted as Australia's first 'engagement' with Asia. Keating himself has claimed a powerful, personal motivation in using the Anzac myth to promote closer Australian-Asian relations: "My uncle did die on the Sandakan-Ranau march. Was the family engaged with Asia? Too right it was, one of us died up there defending it...How do you remove a thing like that from your head? So that always sort of informed my view".\(^{101}\) Here Keating's passion for a new regional relationship was focused on 'some corner of a foreign field' with the sacrifice of his uncle, who is remembered as having died not at the hands of Japanese brutality, but for the cause of future Australian engagement with Asia. It is not clear precisely how much Keating knew of his uncle's ordeal and torture, or what sort of emotional scar this left on the Keating household. Don Watson has suggested it was "a reservoir of feeling that he [Keating] didn't even know he had himself".\(^ {102}\) Yet it should be noted here that his Prime Ministership coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of some of the major battles in the Pacific theatre during World War Two, and whilst much of his rhetoric was commemorative in tone, on particular occasions his 'radical nationalism' informed the 'big-picture'. His rhetoric on the fall of Singapore, the legacy of Kokoda, and the experiences of Australian Prisoners of War on the Burma-Thailand railway at times constructed a different image of 'Asia' from his more formal, prime ministerial foreign policy pronouncements.

Keating's comments over Britain's supposed 'betrayal' of Australia at Singapore in 1942 displayed with dramatic clarity the influence of Jack Lang's 'Aggressive Australianism'. These comments are best understood in the context of the times. During a short speech at a parliamentary reception for the Queen in February 1992, Keating explained that "Just as Britain some time ago sought to make her future secure in the European Economic Community, so Australia now vigorously seeks partnerships with

\(^{100}\) Don Watson, quoted in W. Jamrozik, 'Labor leaves the Liberals speechless', *The Independent Monthly*, (October 1993), 48.

\(^{101}\) PJK, personal interview, Sydney, 26 March 1998.

\(^{102}\) Don Watson, personal interview, Melbourne, 21 November 2000.
countries in our own region”. He then declared Australia’s outlook on the world to be “necessarily independent”. The leader of the Opposition leader, Dr John Hewson, claimed such rhetoric proved Keating lacked “respect” for the Queen. Other Liberal/National party members responded with cries of “embarrassing”, “impolite”, “shocking” and “inappropriate”, thus seeing in Keating’s speech an appalling lack of obeisances and an ill-mannered attack on Australia’s British heritage. For Keating, such comments touched a raw nerve, a defensiveness dating back to older charges of Labor being supposedly ‘disloyal’ to the British connection. According to Don Watson, Hewson’s comments had “echoes of that Protestant superiority which any good Irish Catholic has extremely sensitive antennae for”. Keating’s response in parliamentary question time the following day was an impassioned assault on the Liberal hegemony of the 1950’s. Following scripted comments which defined the ‘world-view’ of John Hewson and John Howard as akin to the cultural icons of the Menzies era, Keating put aside his notes and summoned up from deep within an angry denunciation of the enemy. He turned feral:

I was told that I did not learn respect at school. I learned one thing: I learned about self-respect and self-regard for Australia – not about some cultural cringe to a country which decided not to defend the Malayan peninsula, not to worry about Singapore and not to give us our troops back to keep ourselves free from Japanese domination. This was the country that you people wedded yourself to, and even as it walked out on you and joined the Common Market, you were still looking for your MBE’s and your knighthoods, and all the rest of the regalia that comes with it... You can go back to the fifties to your nostalgia, your Menzies, the Caseys and the whole lot. They were not aggressively Australian, they were not aggressively proud of our culture....

Watching from Labor’s frontbench, Social Security Minister Neal Blewett described this succinctly as an “anti-English outburst” and as “a flight of exuberant nationalism, with some of us trying to restrain him”. Blewett had reminded Keating between questions that

103 PJK, Speech at Parliamentary Reception for Her Majesty the Queen, 24 February 1992, in Ryan (ed.) Advancing Australia, 151-2.
105 Don Watson, personal interview, 21 November 2000.
106 CPD, H of R, vol. 182 (27 February 1992), 374. In contrast to John Curtin, who following his ‘look to America’ statement in December 1941 issued an immediate qualification in order to assuage those who saw in his comments an affront to British ties, saying “There is no part of the Empire more steadfast in loyalty to the British way of living and British institutions than Australia...”. Keating’s response was not to placate those who had supposedly been ‘shocked’ or ‘embarrassed’, but to inflame the situation by reverting to deep streams of Labor sentiment.
Britain had lost an army in Malaya and two major battleships of the Malayan coast, but maintained Keating was "unrepentant". Leaving aside the technicality of whether Keating was factually correct about the circumstances surrounding the fall of Singapore, this brutal broadside at Coalition members in the parliamentary chamber was replete with emotion, resentment, and a feeling of betrayal. This rhetoric drew on one of the central themes of "radical nationalism", that while Britain had been willing to use Australian forces in Imperial conflicts on the other side of the world, she displayed a callous indifference to Australian security in South East Asia when under the direct threat of Japanese attack. Australia's 'independence' here was defined only in opposition to Britain. Furthermore, this was an 'independence' which had to be declared "aggressively". That Menzies and Casey had, in Keating's eyes, not been "aggressively Australian" illustrated conclusively his assimilation of Lang's view of Australian nationalism. This language also placed Keating within the tradition of those Australian leaders - W.M. Hughes and H.V. Evatt for example - whose definition of Australian "independence" required them to adopt bombastic rhetoric in order for them to appear defiant towards Australia's "great and powerful friends". Indeed speechwriter Don Watson saw glimpses of "Billy Hughes politics" in Keating, particularly when "some strange tribal instinct took over him...it was characteristically old-fashioned politics, it was Versailles". This "tribal instinct" though, was the essential Keating.

How is this use of language to be explained? Whilst there was nothing essentially novel in Keating's irritation over Singapore, it was novel for an Australian Prime

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108 However, in personal correspondence to the National President of the RSL, Brigadier Alf Garland, Keating cited numerous historians, including EM Andrews, Coral Bell, David Day, and David Horner, as well as the words of RG Menzies and Churchill, to support the accuracy of his view. Much of the press comment focuses on this aspect of the issue. Keating in his subsequent foreign policy memoirs continued to stand by his comments as "historically incontrovertible" and remained incredulous that his "criticism of Churchill and the British Government for placing British national interests before Australia's during the Second World War was transformed into a Fenian assault on British courage and an affront to the whole British legacy to Australia". PJK, Engagement – Australia Faces the Asia-Pacific (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2000), 257.
109 The irony for Keating is that his remarks betrayed a lingering Australian frustration at the middle-power status she has historically occupied in world affairs. What had really betrayed Australia, of course, was 'the depth and seduction of the imperial idea'. John McCarthy, 'The 'Great Betrayal' Reconsidered: An Australian Perspective', Australian Journal of International Affairs, vol. 48, no.1 (May 1994), 53-60.
110 Don Watson, personal interview. Bob Hawke also noted the similarity of Keating to Hughes in terms of a "a sometimes bizarre dimension to his character" and concluded that both Hughes and Keating "saw themselves as producers of great national designs", The Hawke Memoirs, 306.
Minister to give voice to it. Don Watson maintains he had “no idea” Keating was about to unleash such an attack on Britain: “…maybe Paul didn’t even know it was going to come”. Reflecting on Keating’s initial period as Prime Minister, Watson said: “…there were certain things, I think in the first 3 months which got slightly out of control. I mean if you’d had a choice, if you were devising a political strategy, you wouldn’t have included the Singapore outburst”. Keating though, asked on national radio the day after this parliamentary speech whether he had lost “control”, maintained his performance was the “very essence of control. [I was] quite clear about what I wanted to say”.

Carl Bridge has drawn attention to the popular acceptance of Britain’s ‘inexcusable betrayal’ of Australia at Singapore in textbooks and television. Growing up in Sydney during the 1950s and 1960s, Bridge recalled “few Australians were not told the moral tale” of the fall of Singapore as well as the wider implication this event signified – that Australia had learnt once and for all the fallacy of imperial protection and thus turned irrevocably to the United States. The Singapore myth had achieved considerable prominence in the “radical nationalist” pantheon, as its proponents combed the national past in search of the precise date or event which symbolised Australia’s separation from Britain. Both Russel Ward and Gregory Pemberton identified with the Singapore myth, but its most coherent expression is to be found in David Day’s The Great Betrayal, which concluded that the events surrounding the fall of Singapore proved “the persistence of Australia’s colonial mentality” and that “Australian leaders were unable to delineate in their own minds where their own ‘Britishness’ ended and their ‘Australianness’ began”. Day seemed noticeably aggrieved that Australia had “refused to acknowledge the fact of

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112 Carl Bridge, ‘Look to America, look to the myths’, Australian, 7 December 1991, Special edition, 2. See also Carl Bridge (ed.) Munich to Vietnam – Australia’s Relations with Britain and the United States since the 1930s (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1991), 2, 38-9; In terms of popular expression of this myth, Bridge points to Kirsten Williamson’s The Last Bastion (Sydney: Lansdowne, 1984) which dramatised these distinctions between ‘empire loyalists’ – RG Menzies – and innocent ‘nationalist’ heroes such as John Curtin. The series was promoted with such slogans as “January 1942 – we were under siege. Thanks for the deceit England! Thanks for nothing America!”. See ‘The Last Bastion – History or Drama?’, Cinema Papers (February-March 1985), 38-41, 87. Thanks to Stuart Ward for this reference.
113 “It has often been said that the Australian nation was born at Gallipoli. It is perhaps no less true to say that Australia came of age at Singapore”, Russel Ward, Concise History of Australia (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press 1992), 270. In a more unequivocal tone, Gregory Pemberton proclaimed that “The fall of Singapore, and not the blood-soaked battlefields of Gallipoli, may well mark the birthplace of Australian
her abandonment by the mother country". Day's work, as explained above, found favour with the Keating interpretation of Anglo-Australian relations during this period.

Geoffrey Blainey claimed Keating's invocation of the 'great betrayal' myth derived from a "pro-Irish" position. Whilst it is worth noting the correlation between Keating's "aggressive Australianism", which demanded a single loyalty to Australia, and Archbishop Daniel Mannix's equally unapologetic stance of 'putting Australia first' in the 1916-17 conscription debates, it is more likely that Keating's view of the events surrounding the fall of Singapore were shaped by Lang as opposed to his Irish background. Keating did identify with his Irish heritage in a much more personal, emotional sense than previous Labor prime ministers of Irish background, such as Scullin, Curtin or Chifley. In a speech on St Patrick's Day in 1992 he praised the Irish as "the fount of Australian nationalism" and lauded their history as one of "never-ending resistance to England". In a Kennedy-like pilgrimage to Ireland in 1993 to pay homage to his family roots, Keating spoke of "the warmth between us as peoples", a mutual "deep affection" and "tribal emotions". Yet Keating's Irishness, and his spasmodic identification with it, does not explain his aggressive nationalism as exhibited in his Singapore speech. There were other, more pragmatic concerns which help explain his appeal to this myth in early 1992.

In the political context of the time this parliamentary outburst of nationalism was seen as a means of galvanising Labor behind the newly released government policy statement of One Nation. As one observer put it, Keating was "rewarded with one of the most visceral roars from the Government benches heard in recent memory". Yet how

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115 Sunday Herald Sun, 1 March 1992. Greg Pemberton similarly explained Keating's remarks by crediting Irish-Australians as having "forged an anti-British identity that led towards Australian nationalism". Weekend Australian, 18-19 April 1992. Patrick O'Farrell has given this myth its ultimate embellishment when he argued: "The distinctive Australian identity was not born in the bush, nor at Anzac Cove...it was born in Irishness protesting against the extremes of Englishness". B J O'Farrell, *The Irish in Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1987), 12.
117 PJK, Speech to the Tynagh community, Ireland, 21 September 1993, transcript.
118 Watson was adamant on this point: "I don't think Keating ever argued from an Irish position at all. I honestly don't"; Don Watson, personal interview, 21 November 2000.
did Keating’s forceful speech, which split Australian political culture between ‘true’ Labor nationalists and conservatives depicted as forever mired in the Menzian mindset of Empire, accord with the predominant theme of inclusiveness as defined in his *One Nation* speech — that “all our efforts should go towards uniting the country, not dividing it”? It also appeared to contradict Keating’s later definition of history as “the story in which we all play a part” and his belief that “there will never be one true story of Australia”. The implication of course, was that Keating was just one more voice in the debate over the national past, yet his view of history was not expressed mildly or tolerantly. It did not allow for any other story. The more likely explanation, which gathered momentum as Keating gave further speeches on Anzac, was his conviction that Australian engagement with Asia had begun with the fall of Singapore — that this was its “very explosive and pungent beginning”. This was not only an enlargement of the ‘radical nationalist’ myth, it also had significant implications for Labor’s view of Anzac and therefore Australian nationalism.

Keating’s speeches commemorating Australian service and sacrifice in the Asia-Pacific deliberately stressed the defence of Australian self-interest over the call of British sentiment. The epicentre of Australian nationalism was shifted from Europe to the Asia-Pacific, from Gallipoli to Kokoda. Immediately preceding Keating’s visit to Papua New Guinea for Anzac Day commemorations in April 1992, historian Greg Pemberton commented that “the collective Australian memory of war is dominated by the distant disaster at Gallipoli” and called on Australians, Prime Minister Keating in particular, to focus more on Australian sacrifice in the New Guinea campaigns and so “dispense with the imperial baggage that has hindered the development of our sense of identity and direction”. Pemberton’s argument was set firmly within a ‘radical nationalist’

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120 PJK, ‘One Nation’, 26 February 1992, in *Paul Keating Prime Minister – Major Speeches of the First Year* (Canberra: Australian Labor Party, 1993), 17. The editorial in the *Sydney Morning Herald* which followed Keating’s Singapore comments observed: “In his first important policy statement since becoming Prime Minister, Mr Keating has expressed a concern to build ‘one nation’. It is surprising, therefore, that he does not see the dangers of dividing rather than uniting the nation by his aggressive stance of wrapping himself in the cloak of nationalism and, by implication, branding all who oppose him as lacking in patriotism”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 February 1992.


122 PJK, personal interview, Sydney, 26 March 1998.

paradigm of 'thwarted' independence. Keating responded in kind. In his Anzac Day speech at Port Moresby he praised John Curtin's "defiance" of both Churchill and conservative Anglo-Australians in insisting that Australian troops be diverted from Burma in order to defend Australia. "John Curtin was right", Keating declared, and his subsequent 'look to America' was hailed as a re-definition of the Anzac legend "to mean that Australia came first - that whatever the claims of Empire on the loyalty of those who died in the Great War, the pre-eminent claim had been Australia's".124 The Australians in New Guinea, he said, had died "not in defence of the old world, but the new world". Yet this "new world" nationalism did not evoke the Australia of 1942 seeking desperately to halt the Japanese advance so that it might remain a white, British nation, but the multicultural Australia of the 1990s seeking greater engagement with Asia. As opposed to Whitlam, Fraser and Hawke, Keating's "new world" vision of Australia carried a more stridently anti-British tone.

At Kokoda, Keating's actions more than matched his words. In a papal-like gesture, he kissed the ground at the foot of the memorial honouring fallen Australian soldiers, and proclaimed it had been different to "imperial conflicts where we felt the pangs of loyalty to...the mother country". Australian soldiers at Kokoda had instead fought for the "Australian way of life". As this had been the first time Australians had repelled a foreign invader, Keating anointed Kokoda as Australia's new foundational myth:

...there can be no deeper spiritual basis to the meaning of the Australian nation than the blood that was spilled on this very knoll, this very plateau, in defence of the liberty of Australia...This was the place where the depth and soul of the Australian nation was confirmed. If it was founded at Gallipoli it was certainly confirmed in the defence of our homeland here.125

The "meaning of the Australian nation" and the "Australian way of life" remained undefined, but in connecting them to the defence of the Australian mainland, Keating differentiated this battle from more distant conflicts in Europe and the Middle East, in which Australians were engaged in defending Britain and the empire.126 This also

124 PJK, Speech at Ela Beach, Port Moresby, 25 April 1992, transcript.
126 In further speeches relating to Australia's Second World War experience, Keating continued to articulate his concern that the battlefields of the Asia-Pacific become as "sacred" as those in the Middle
maintained his consistency with the Lang view that only those who provided for Australia's defence were 'true' nationalists. Keating was not the first to promote Kokoda as the birth of a distinctive Australian nationalism. Humphrey McQueen, who had previously discounted Anzac altogether as a wellspring for Australian national sentiment, asserted that the Australian nation was born on the Kokoda trail, "or at least that Kokoda was a focal point in a decade of rebirth". Keating's rhetoric was not left unchallenged. The national Vice-President of the RSL, Bruce Ruxton, claimed Keating was using the Anzacs as a background for republicanism and developing closer ties with Asian countries, and even resurrected the war dead to punish Keating: "Those thousands of Australians buried in the Bomana War cemetery would have got up and pushed him down one of the holes". Such an evocative response perhaps illustrated the reluctance of the RSL to concede possession of its 'national story'. For Ruxton, the mythical digger would never accept Keating's assessment of their sacrifice, and, figuratively speaking, rise again and entomb Labor's Anzac tradition.

In the parliament following these speeches, Liberal opposition leader John Hewson, in criticising Keating's Kokoda comments, and in particular his remarks suggesting that the Union Jack be removed from the Australian Flag, chose specifically to target Keating's intellectual history. This was an acrimonious and bitter debate, which began with Hewson's ad hominem attack: "This man is a product of the Jack Lang of the 1930s. He knew nothing before he met Jack Lang - his formal education was particularly limited - and he learnt nothing after he left Jack Lang. We get Jack Lang every day in all forms." Hewson further attacked Keating for possessing a "twisted Jack Lang version of history" and for being a "wrecker - in true Jack Lang style this man is a wrecker". Keating's

East and Europe. See for example PJK, Speech to launch The Burma Thailand Railway, 23 April 1993, transcript: "...the battlefields of the Pacific War are also sacred. In the next few years I hope the battlefields of New Guinea, Borneo, Singapore and Malaya, and Burma and Thailand, will become as important to our historical understanding as the battlefields of the Middle East and Europe were to earlier generations of Australians".


129 John Hewson, CPD, H of R, vol. 183 (28 April 1992), 1842. "If honourable members want any evidence of that they should go back and look at some of the statements Lang made about grovelling to the British -
initial response was to invoke his ‘radical nationalism’. Asked by Hewson if he was “embarrassed” by Australia’s British heritage, Keating responded:

No. I am proud of Australia. It is not Britain. We are not British. We are Australians. That is the point. Honourable members opposite do not understand that this is the Australian nation; this is not the British nation. They can never grasp it. They could not grasp it in the Second World War. Menzies, their founder, tried to separate and distinguish Britain’s interests from those of Australia and, in the end, could not. Curtin, free of any pangs of loyalty to Britain, brought the troops home. This the Liberal party’s founder called a great blunder... The Liberal party has always been a lickspittle to these interests – always. It has always been confused. It has never been proud to be Australian.130

This language highlighted the continuity from his maiden speech of March 1970, in which Keating had denounced Liberal-National Party members as those who “positively will not be and think Australian”. But its significance here is heightened by the fact that this was Keating’s spontaneous response during a parliamentary debate. This was not a planned or rehearsed speech, but one in which he instinctively gave voice to the view of the past he had internalised over time, displaying conclusively the extent to which this view had maintained its grip on his understanding of Australian political culture. As a party of “lickspittles”,131 and by virtue of their inability to “grasp” the nettle of independence, the Liberal party had abdicated their claims to identify with Australian nationalism. In this view ‘Australianness’ and ‘Britishness’ are not mutually reinforcing, but inherently conflictual. The split was absolute. Keating simply could not accept the notion of dual loyalty, of previous Australian leaders as ‘British Australians’ fighting for Australian interests within the Empire – thus ‘independence’ within the empire was not ‘independence’ in its fullest meaning. The parliamentary debate over Keating’s speech at Kokoda continued. When John Howard interjected that “Jack Lang had a thicker skin than you do”, Keating leapt to the defence of his political mentor:

Jack Lang had all the weights of all the conservatives at that time. He knew what they were – snivellers to forces abroad, crawlers to forces abroad, lickspittlers to

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131 The word ‘lickspittle’, according to the Oxford Dictionary, means ‘contemptible parasite’.
forces abroad — and they have never changed. They do not understand Australia, they do not understand Australian nationalism.\textsuperscript{132}

Keating’s acute sensitivity to the Lang influence was again clearly evident here. Whilst he might have self-consciously distanced himself from this influence upon becoming Prime Minister, such a provocation in the heat of parliamentary debate was not allowed to pass. In defending Lang with such passion and intensity Keating expressed his deep conviction that “forces abroad” had prevented the emergence of the true Australian nationalism which only Labor could represent. RG Menzies repeatedly appears in Keating’s rhetoric as the arch-villain susceptible to these “forces abroad”.

Writing for The Sydney Morning Herald in 1994, around the time of the Liberal Party’s fiftieth anniversary celebrations, Keating asked: “...why was Menzies a ‘British Australian’? Wasn’t ‘Australian’ enough?”. Echoing Lang, Menzies had “failed Australia” because he had been unable to “separate our destiny from Britain’s”.\textsuperscript{133} But the emphatic distinction Keating made between an Australian ‘nation’ and a British ‘nation’ is heightened when compared to the language of his predecessors. Menzies, for instance, in his first Australia Day speech as Prime Minister in 1950, had called on Australians to “re-state the old-faith. You and I are Australians. We are also British”. Both Curtin and Chifley, whilst not expressing their affection for the British in terms of blood or ‘bootstraps’, nevertheless also gave voice to this notion of being a “the great bastion of the British speaking race south of Equator”.\textsuperscript{134} Neither Whitlam, Fraser nor Hawke felt compelled to make such strident differentiations or use anti-British rhetoric. Whilst his intellectual history, in particular the political tradition of his family, helps explain this antagonism to Menzies, Don Watson maintains such attacks were motivated more by political pragmatism than deep bitterness: “I don’t think he ever changed his view that Menzies’ only use was the same as a bit of rag with a cat fur on it thrown to a pack of

\textsuperscript{132} PJK, CPD, H of R, vol. 183 (28 April 1992), 1850.

\textsuperscript{133} PJK, ‘How Menzies failed Australia’, Sydney Morning Herald, 28 October 1994. In response, Liberal leader Alexander Downer charged that “Keating was taught to hate Menzies from the time he learnt his history from Jack Lang”. Downer did not defend Menzies’ Britishness, but his economic record. Rejecting the Keating view that the Australian people had been “duped by Menzies” at successive elections, Downer revived Labor’s attempt to nationalise banking, petrol rationing, “the strangulation of free investment...opposition to trade with Japan, a benign view of communism, and the socialisation of anything it could get its hands on”. See Alexander Downer, ‘Paul Keating has twisted history to match his politics’, Sydney Morning Herald, 29 October 1994.

\textsuperscript{134} The expression was Chifley’s, see Chapter Two, p 49.
dogs". Thus Watson defined Keating's persistent attacks on the Menzies' legacy as a self-conscious "tribal game", conceived to divert the Liberal party from policy debate. He believed Keating was not "as passionately anti-Menzies as he sometimes pretended", but such a qualification clearly cannot be accepted. The abiding theme in Keating's view of Australian nationalism was that Menzies had suppressed it. As Keating himself explained:

In terms of nationhood, which goes beyond constitutional things, which goes to attitudes, Menzies cost us twenty years, from 1950 to 1972.136

This revealed the essence of Keating - nationalism had little to do with the ratification of the Statute of Westminster, the abolition of appeals to the Privy Council or the passing of the Australia Act, even though Labor governments had presided over such measures. For him nationalism was only ever about sentiment. This nationalism of identity and interest, of race and culture, consistently portrayed the Liberal Party as representing a 'subordinate' and 'derivative' view of Australian nationalism, while Labor had by implication projected Australia's 'true' self - in this case an anti-British version of Australian nationalism.

Keating's unwillingness to acknowledge the existence of dual loyalties was again apparent in a speech which dealt with the legacy of Australian Prisoners Of War. Following historians Hank Nelson and Gavan McCormack, who had argued that the POWs in World War Two were "the first Australians to go en masse into South East Asia", Keating hailed those who had worked and died on the Burma-Thailand railway as the "...first pioneers of Australia in Asia. The frontiersmen". The ambiguity of the term 'frontiersmen', in the light of Aboriginal-European contact history, made the comparison awkward. These Australian POWs, according to Keating, "saw the British Empire as few Australians had ever seen it - and it led a lot of them to conclude that we Australians had evolved into a different race. It raised their sense of an independent

135 Don Watson, personal interview, Melbourne, 21 November 2000.
Australian identity". Keating was thus the only Prime Minister in the post 1972 period to use the term 'race' as a positive equivalent to 'nation' – even though 'race', with its biological determinants of 'blood' and 'stock', as well as its unwavering devotion to a 'historical mission' or national 'destiny', had fallen into disrepute following the excesses and evils of fascism and Nazism. In Keating's view, the Second World War had thus given Australians a sense of their racial distinctiveness, which meant that it had been in the Asia-Pacific, at this time, that Australians exited the orbit of British race patriotism. But there is little to suggest Australian soldiers fighting in the Pacific saw themselves as the creators of a new national myth which would come to replace ideas of Empire with Asian engagement. It was not that these "pioneers" suddenly found themselves embracing Asia – it was ultimately, according to Keating, their conclusion that Australians and British were different. Thus the soldier's Asian gaze was not on a burgeoning sense of regionalism but on a decaying imperialism.

There are several initial conclusions which can be drawn from the above. Firstly Keating's speeches again ratified the enduring connection between war and ideas of Australian 'nationhood'. In his arguments for an increased recognition of Australian service and sacrifice in the Asia-Pacific he merely confirmed that ideas of 'nation' were most dramatically represented in times of war and crisis. Shifting the focus of the Anzac legend from Gallipoli to Kokoda accentuated for Keating a more contemporary expression of Australian geo-political reality. It was therefore assumed that if Australian engagement with Asia began in the crucible of war it lent a powerful moral authority to Australia-Asia relations. But this was not a re-working of the Anzac legend in terms of its basic values or traditions, such as 'egalitarianism' or 'mateship', but in the motives of the soldiers and the locations in which they fought. Thus this 'Asia' in Keating's rhetoric was more useful for him as a tool to be used in the nationalist struggle against the British.

139 Bob Hawke gave an indication towards the end of his prime ministership in 1991 that he, too, would have used the anniversaries of 1942 to promote a new history of Australian efforts in the Pacific War: "The Pacific War was the greatest crisis in our nation's history, and we emerged from it much changed. In its way it was a rite of passage as fundamental as Gallipoli. For if Gallipoli gave Australians a sense of identity as a nation, the Pacific War brought us to understand our location as a nation, and our destiny as a part of the Asia-Pacific region" (Hawke's emphasis) Speech by the Prime Minister, RJL Hawke AC MP, Opening of the Telecom Australia Theatre, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 11 November 1991, transcript.
Keating’s “pioneers” had simply furthered his anti-British myth of Australian nationalism.

This image of Australian engagement with ‘Asia’ however should not conceal Keating’s positive impact on Australia’s relations with countries in the Asia-Pacific region and his vision of closer regional cooperation. This was the ‘Asia’ with which Australia conducted two-thirds of its trade and within which it sought its security. Keating consistently spoke affirmatively about Australia’s future in Asia and developed closer ties with Asian leaders in a way that distinguished him from Whitlam, Fraser and Hawke. Former Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew praised Keating for his “strong grasp of economics and geopolitical sense”. Whilst he had seen Hawke’s Asia policy as perhaps “yet another public relations effort”, Keating’s continued emphasis on the region confirmed for Lee Kuan Yew that it was a “major policy shift...They might have been an offshoot of Britain and Europe, but their future was more with Asia”.140

Keating again and again maintained that in the post Cold war era it was a question of Australia finding its “security in Asia, not from Asia”. Though Hawke had originally conceived the idea of APEC, it was Keating who suggested regular leaders forums at APEC meetings, thus further institutionalising Australia’s relationships with Asian countries; where Hawke had initially left the US out of APEC in deference to Asian sensitivities, Keating enthusiastically promoted US involvement in East Asia as being “central to the region’s security”; where Hawke’s concept of ‘mateship’ had been derived from the adaptation of an ‘Anglo-Celtic predominance’ to Australian institutions and culture, for Keating, ‘mateship’ was something indelibly Australian which could also be an Asian virtue:

...the word most Australians would very likely choose to describe as the core Australian value is ‘mateship’ – and ‘mateship’ expresses an ethic of communitarianism and mutual obligation which in other contexts is called “Asian”.141

Such rhetoric had clearly defined limits, however. Australia failed to gain access to ASEAN, and Malaysian Prime Minister Mahatir continually frustrated Australian

140 Lee Kuan Yew, From Third World to First (Harper Collins, 2000), 388.
attempts to enlarge APEC into a larger regional bloc. In any case, it was unlikely that the "recalcitrant" could ever be a "mate". For Keating however, it was APEC, not the United Nations or the Commonwealth, which could enshrine Australia's role in an interdependent world, embody its commitment to global trade liberalisation, and give smaller to middle powers a "very direct say" in shaping the future of the region. Keating's desire to enhance Australia's standing in the region became the logical extension of the major reforms which opened up the Australian economy in the 1980s. For Keating however, Australian relations with Asia came increasingly to be seen through the prism of the relationship with Indonesia. That his first visit overseas as Prime Minister was to Indonesia signalled Keating's determination to give the relationship a renewed, elevated status in Australian foreign policy. In March 1994 he told an audience in Sydney: "No country is more important to Australia than Indonesia". 142 The signing of a defence cooperation agreement with Indonesia in December 1995 gave substance to the close relationship between Prime Minister Keating and President Suharto, and was the first security treaty Australia had signed since the Five-Power Defence Arrangements over twenty years previously. However, the degree of secrecy in which the negotiations were conducted, and the more symbolic significance of the agreement, qualified the more grandiose claim that such a treaty illustrated Australia had overcome old fears about her neighbours and now enjoyed a new intimacy with the region. 143

These more sophisticated policy pronouncements revealed the flipside of Keating's nationalism. It was as if he had gradually learnt from being at the centre of the nation that it was not always appropriate to express a strident nationalism. Following his 1993 election victory, Keating reportedly told his economics adviser John Edwards: "I should be Menzian", the implication being that he needed to lift himself above the daily ruck of domestic politics. 144 How is this moderation of Keating's nationalism to be explained? On occasions when he was speaking as the Australian Prime Minister, as the national leader rather than the partisan pugilist, Paul Keating did not give voice to his

142 PJK, Speech to 'Australia Today Indonesia 94' promotion, Sydney, 16 March 1994, in Mark Ryan (ed.) Advancing Australia, 201.
144 PJK, quoted in John Edwards, Keating, 515.
'Aggressive Australianism'. In speeches relating to the Anzac legend, the republic, cultural policy and Civics education, Keating expressed a more inclusive, tolerant view of Australian nationalism.

Perhaps the first, ironic example of this was in Keating's acceptance of the First World War as the central, defining experience in the creation of the Anzac legend. When delivering the eulogy for the Unknown Australian Soldier on Remembrance Day 1993, Keating pondered the various reasons for that soldier's enlistment with the First AIF. He concluded, "the chances are that he went for no other reason than he believed it was his duty - the duty he owed his country and his King". On solemn, commemorative occasions such as this, Keating could acknowledge that for Australians of that generation, the concepts of 'nation' and 'empire' were complementary, that Australian interests necessarily corresponded with British interests - there was no sense here that Australia had fought unnecessarily in 'other people's wars'. This speech, which was widely applauded, contrasted sharply with his more deeply held belief that World War One had "snuffed out" Australian nationalism, but it demonstrated, too, the friction between Keating's deeper sense of history, which endorsed the 'radical nationalist' myth, and his responsibilities as national leader, requiring a more consensus view of Australian political culture. The two meanings of 'one nation' in Keating's rhetoric are clearly evident here. The 'one nation' of his intellectual history demanded a single loyalty to Australia and was contemptuous of those who had maintained a British-centred 'worldview', whereas the official One Nation policy of his prime ministership was not only concerned with stimulating an economic revival, but giving form and substance to the idea of national unity, as well as legitimacy to a past which he had previously rejected.

At the Air Forces Memorial on Runnymede island in 1994, Keating spoke in very different terms concerning Britain's wartime legacy and Anglo-Australian relations:

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145 It must be stressed that despite Keating's emphasis on the AIF's exploits in Asia, in June 1994 a bipartisan motion was passed in the House of Representatives declaring Anzac Day as Australia's National Day of Commemoration. The petition, in part, read: "The Anzacs at the Gallipoli landing on 25 April 1915 were instrumental in forging a new identity for Australia". CPD, H of R, vol. (6 June 1994), 1392-1401.

146 PJK, Funeral Service for the Unknown Australian Soldier, Canberra, 11 November 1993, in Mark Ryan (ed.) Advancing Australia, 287.

147 According to the Sydney Morning Herald (12 November 1993) for example, the speech contained "words as simple and as powerful as a Prime Minister has spoken for a long time".
For Britain embodied the courage democracy needed. Britain inspired the free world and those whose freedom had been taken from them...But whatever different paths we take the history we share – the story we share – goes with us. The battles we fought together will be remembered...And Britain’s heroic defence of freedom will never be forgotten.148

Here Keating spoke Churchillian sentiments about Britain as the hero of freedom, and whilst there were no references to ‘empire’, on this occasion he employed respectful language. Compared to his parliamentary outburst over Singapore, the Anglo-Australian relationship was depicted in an idyllic, complementary state. Presumably these “battles...fought together” and this ‘shared history’ which Keating embraced included Gallipoli, the Western Front, Singapore and Malaya. But this contrast, between Keating’s ‘radical nationalism’ and his more measured, almost acquiescent view of the British connection, also highlighted the emotional dilemma and cultural tensions which faced Australian national leaders in the post 1972 period. For Keating in particular, having pushed for the creation of an Australian Republic and closer engagement with Asia, the question of how to accommodate the British heritage within the parameters of national community assumed an increased significance. Despite his conviction that only through a republic could the destinies of Australia and Britain be finally disentangled in the 1990s, the demands of being national leader necessitated that the relationship not always be framed by the rhetoric of ‘betrayal’ or within the paradigm of ‘radical nationalist’ ‘aggressive Australianism’.

If the basic impulse sustaining Keating’s nationalism was its intolerance of those Australians who, in his opinion, had been unable to distinguish between loyalty to Great Britain and loyalty to Australia only, his speeches on the question of an Australian republic for the twenty-first century invoked a different perspective on the British heritage and the Anglo-Australian relationship. This was consistent with the Lang tradition – just as the period of ‘new nationalism’ provoked in Lang a defence of Australia’s British heritage, so Keating was forced to concede an authenticity to the once powerful, pervasive British myth. Keating’s arguments for constitutional change therefore evinced an appreciation of the need for national unity. An Australian republic, he argued, would “deliver a heightened sense of unity...and, in our own minds and those

148 PJK, Air Forces Memorial, Runnymede, 4 June 1994, transcript.
of our neighbours, answer beyond doubt the question of who we are and what we stand for”.

It was on the Republic issue, then, that Keating addressed himself to the question of what held Australians together in a multicultural Australia.

Whilst there was little scope for ‘Aggressive Australianism’ in his speeches on the republic, there existed the same unease and tension in how to balance Australia’s British heritage with an emphasis on engagement with Asia. It was significant that in directing his attention to the need for national unity, Keating turned not to the legacy of Labor leaders John Curtin or Ben Chifley, but to Liberal founder Robert Menzies. Suddenly, the political figure who for Keating had embodied a “compromised nationalism”, who had “failed Australia” and “sunk a generation of Australians in Anglophilia and torpor”

became the archetypal national leader who had voiced the need for national unity. According to Watson, “The very fact he could utter the name [of Menzies] and show it any respect was even more annoying than showing it no respect at all”. Whilst Keating acknowledged that Menzies’ focus for national unity had been firmly fixed on the Queen and Australia’s Britishness, he nevertheless endorsed Menzies’ assessment of the effect of the Royal Visit on Australians in 1954 — that it “was one of the most powerful elements converting them from a mass of individuals to a great cohesive nation”. Keating continued in his acknowledgement of the once powerful British myth:

I agree that there is such a thing as national sentiment and that it is a powerful force in the shaping of a nation, in the cohesion of a nation, in the success of a nation. I agree that in the 1950s and for a surprisingly long time afterwards Australia’s unity with Britain was built on something more than friendship — it was built on an implicit sense of unity, on an instinct. And I agree that in 1954 the Throne of England, and in particular the new Queen, constituted a considerable element of Australia’s national sentiment. I agree with all this. I think more national sentiment is what we need now, and more unity and cohesion. (Keating’s emphasis)

In these comments Keating was willing to accept the predominantly British centred outlook Australians had of the world in the 1950s, as well as the need for myths which legitimise ideas of national community. It was a different picture of the past to his more

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150 For references to Menzies’ anglophilia, see PJK, Asia-Australia Institute Address, Sydney, 7 April 1992 in Ryan (ed.) Advancing Australia. 189.

151 Don Watson, personal interview, Melbourne, 21 November 2000.
orthodox view of Australian history, in which ‘unity’ had been part of a continuing struggle between ‘true’ Australians and ‘wicked’ Anglo-Australians over time. In this speech Keating allowed for a ‘sense of unity’ deriving from Britishness. There is, notably, no specific date given for when this Anglo-Australian “instinct” ceased to resonate, since it was Keating’s view that only a republic would finally cut Australia’s cord to the ‘mother country’. The challenge for Keating, in his subsequent assertion that “many of the things which bound together the Australians of Menzies’ era” were “either irrelevant or no longer on offer”,153 was how to replicate this same sense of unity and cohesion in Australia’s changing circumstances – in particular the geo-political demands for closer engagement with her Asian neighbours. In calling for “a new sense of unity – a new kind of national sentiment” so that Australia might “grasp” her opportunities in the Asia-Pacific, he replaced the British monarchy with Australian “democracy…shared values, shared aspirations, [and] the necessities we face”. Mark McKenna has argued that Keating’s republicanism originated more from a traditional Labor republican position, which explicitly associated the issue with the achievement of a distinctive Australian national identity rather than with the pursuit of parliamentary reform. But McKenna has perhaps overstated the extent to which Keating’s push for a republic was solely reliant upon the assertion of a singular Australian identity, finally divorced from loyalty to Britain, rather than upon democratic resistance to inherited privilege.154 These two had become one and the same for Keating – as was evident when he mocked Liberals John Hewson and John Howard for “trying to be more blue-blooded than the blue-bloods…Although never born to the purple, they wave the flag more vigorously than most, flaunt more flamboyantly their British connections, and try to suggest that in some way they better understand the Australian psyche and the Australian culture”.155

In a nationally televised parliamentary speech to the Australian people which set out the Government’s position on a republican model, Keating’s rhetoric brought to the surface this tension between Australia’s British past and a distinctively Australian future.

152 PJK, National Press Club Address, Canberra, 22 July 1993, transcript.
153 Ibid.
which in his view only a Republic could deliver. Keating’s ‘aggressive Australianism’ was, again, necessarily absent from this speech, but the distinction between what was ‘Australian’ and what was ‘British’ remained. Stripped of its forceful ‘radical nationalist’ dimension, however, Keating’s rhetoric sent a conflicting message. Australians in the 1990s, he contended, did not lack “respect for the British monarchy, or the British people, or our British heritage, or the British institutions we have made our own, or our long friendship with the British in peace and war. On the contrary, Australians everywhere respect them...But they are not Australian”. This rhetoric was testament to the idiosyncratic nature of Australian nationalism. Despite the British heritage being “ours”, and British institutions “our own”, they were still not, in Keating’s view, unequivocally “Australian”. Whilst a Republic, he argued, could express that the people’s “deepest respect is for our Australian heritage” (Keating’s emphasis), he gave no substance, content or context to what this might mean – it was simply non-British. This confusion had thus allowed another concession to Britishness.

In this speech Keating also seemed hesitant in expressing republicanism in purely nationalist terms. When he proposed that an Australian head of state would be more representative of Australia’s “values and traditions...experience and aspirations”, he added: “We need not apologise for the nationalism in these sentiments...but in truth they contain as much common sense as patriotism...this republican initiative is not an exercise in jingoism; it is not accompanied by the beat of drums – or chests. It asserts nothing more than our unique identity”. There are similarities in this language to Whitlam’s “new nationalism”. Whitlam had expressly excised “bombastic” or “chauvinistic” elements from the “new nationalism”, yet maintained that some form of nationalism was still required to hold the nation together. Keating, too, in the qualification he placed on the “nationalism in these sentiments” spoke to a corresponding tentativeness towards an exclusive or jingoistic nationalism – a tentativeness which sat uncomfortably alongside his ‘aggressive Australianism’.  


\[157\] Whilst it is tempting to suggest Keating had been warned about the dangers and limits of nationalism per se, Don Watson has maintained that it wasn’t “that mechanical”. Watson suggests Keating’s words derived more from his own ideas as expressed in a 1993 speech ‘A toast to the Postmodern Republic’. Watson had explicitly rejected the need for “schmalz” or “false sentiment”. Don Watson, ‘A toast to the Postmodern
Yet it was not only in dealing with the republic question that Keating revealed a more sophisticated, less intense view of Australian nationalism. His response to a government sponsored inquiry into civics education, *Whereas the People*, focused on its capacity to revive “that old value of egalitarianism” and to invest it with “new meaning, with women and new migrants and Aboriginal Australians included in the ethos that used to keep them out”.

In his Redfern park speech, in which he acknowledged the responsibility of white Australians for past injustices to the nation’s indigenous population, Keating remarked that Aborigines had not only “shaped our identity” but were “there in the Australian legend”. It should be noted though that this was the first and only time Keating incorporated Aborigines into an Australian national myth. It did not relate to a view he had consistently expressed over time, but to the need for a more inclusive concept of ‘national community’. In marking the twentieth anniversary of the passing of the *Racial Discrimination Act*, Keating hailed the legislation as a “bulwark against the old prejudices” such as the “malaise of xenophobia” as embodied in the White Australia policy. It was the passing of this Act in 1975 which had made the “cultural pluralism” of the 1990s “one of our great national successes”. There was none of Keating’s ‘melancholy’ about the lack of a “singularly Australian identity” in such rhetoric.

This prime ministerial difference in Keating was also apparent in *Creative Nation*, the first national cultural policy to be delivered by an Australian government. “To speak of Australian culture is to recognise our common heritage”, he said, but the identification of what this “common heritage” might contain necessitated a more careful balance between Britishness and Australianness. The cultural debate in Australia, Keating noted, had vacillated between WC Wentworth’s “a new Britannia in another world” and the ‘radical national’ writers and artists of the 1890s – Lawson, Furphy, Roberts, Strecton – who had presented a “...a distinct set of values and views reflecting a distinctly

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Republic*, *Island Magazine* (Sandy Bay, Tasmania) 5 (Winter 1993), 3-5. The idea of a “postmodern republic”, Watson added in a personal interview, was “one where you don’t need the beat of drums or the sound of cannon fire...all you need to do is confirm through a republic all those qualities of a highly civilised, sophisticated democracy, with its multiculturalism”.


Australian perspective." Keating rejected both the "cultural cringe" and its "excruciating opposite, the cultural strut". In his view the new Australian cultural landscape in the 1990s reached well beyond the horizons of Henry Lawson to embrace a vibrant multicultural Australia and an acknowledgement of the country's rich indigenous heritage. But Keating's dismissal of the "cultural swagger" was significant. It was much closer to the Whitlam/Fraser view which explicitly rejected the need for Australian cultural aggression. Again it pointed to the tension in Keating's rhetoric concerning how an Australian identity should be expressed. He had previously attacked conservative politicians as not being "aggressively Australian" and for not being "aggressively proud of our culture" - the message of course being that only Labor could prosecute a genuine, independent Australian identity. Here he was equally emphatic in dismissing the need to be culturally aggressive. Further, his assertion that the debate over the "cringe" or the "strut" had proved "A polarised debate is always debilitating", contrasted sharply to his frequent bisection of Australian political culture. It was a classic illustration of Keating's slowly emerging sense that the old style nationalism of Lang and his earlier beliefs was no longer needed, and indeed contained evils which needed to be guarded against whether it took a British or Australian form.

Conclusion

As the first Australian Prime Minster to identify so emphatically with the 'radical national' myth, Paul Keating was indeed more nationalist than the 'new nationalists' of the Whitlam period. In a globalised world, he remained strongly attached to the idea that a core responsibility of government was to represent the nation unto itself. When asked early in his term how he saw the role of Prime Minister, Keating replied: "in the Prime Ministership is invested...the ideal of the nation and its aspirations". In the initial period of his leadership, the content of this 'nation' and the nature of these 'aspirations' essentially concerned a desire to rid Australian political culture of a 'lingering Britishness'. Whilst Keating had begun his parliamentary career in 1970 with an attack on the conservatives for their "excesses" - code for fawning to 'great and powerful

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161 PJK, 'Culture part of our common heritage', Edited extract from the Prime Minister's cultural statement, Sydney Morning Herald, 19 October 1994.
friends’ – he himself as Prime Minister was much more excessive in his nationalist rhetoric than Whitlam, Fraser or Hawke. The economic nationalist of the 1970s, who became the economic rationalist of the 1980s, was the excessive nationalist of the 1990s. Alone among these Prime Ministers, Keating retained a bitter demonology about those who had betrayed the emergence of an ‘unambiguously’ Australian identity. This resentment helped explain why he felt under siege about identity, and why he felt an intense nationalism was required to condemn Britishness as an unfaithful representation of Australia’s ‘true’ self.

Over time, however, Keating tempered this aggressive nationalism. His gestures to the new Australia were more in tune with previous prime ministerial accommodations of ethnic diversity within a broader concept of national unity. His need for national cohesion on the question of an Australian republic forced him to concede authenticity and legitimacy to both the Menzies era and the British myth. That such qualifications were at odds with his deeper self illustrated the extent to which the demands of prime ministerial office required him to articulate a more inclusive version of the past.

The two traditions of Australian nationalism in Keating’s rhetoric, those of Jack Lang and Manning Clark had converged. The populist, strident nationalism of Lang was eventually combined with Clark’s embrace of the ‘radical nationalist’ myth. The spark, which both ignited and fused these two traditions, was the resentment towards those ‘un-Australians’, who in their apparently myopic attachment to Britain, had suppressed an incipient, distinctively Australian nationalism. In 1995 Opposition Leader John Howard suggested Keating had engaged in a “heist of Australian nationalism”, which included “the sneering attempt to paint the Coalition as more British than the British”, to “paint republicanism as a higher form of Australian nationalism” and the “broader attempt to depict the Australian Labor Party as the only true party of Australian nationalism”. This, Howard declared, was a “chip-on-the-shoulder nationalism”. 162

Keating’s “radical nationalism”, though, did not translate into increased popularity for him or his government – there was no evidence to suggest it had won for Labor a new constituency. This is a critical point, indicating that this was his history, to

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which he held firm, rather than a history cynically manufactured overnight to suit political needs. His concessional speech following Labor’s electoral defeat in 1996, however, was by no means an admission of the shortcomings of his grand vision, but a paean for the ‘big picture’, since, as he put it, “in the end it’s the big picture which changes nations”.\textsuperscript{163} For Keating the Australian people had again failed to embrace Labor at the ballot box.

Keating has not essentially altered his ‘radical national’ views since his departure from public life. In establishing the historical context for his recently published foreign policy memoirs – *Engagement: Australia Faces the Asia-Pacific* – Keating explained that the Labor party’s isolationism in the 1920s was a direct result of its view of the First World War: “Labor saw our international involvements in Belgium, in France, and at Gallipoli as the events which snuffed out the flame of Australia’s rising nationalism: the movement to Federation, the ethos of equality, the formation of unions and, in the 1890s, the creation of the Labor party itself”.\textsuperscript{164} He also maintained that Australian engagement with Asia had started in 1942, and that the ‘conservatives’ had “commandeered” the Anglo-Australian relationship after the First World War. In launching the book amongst Labor faithful, Keating professed his hope that it would become a text for secondary school students and university undergraduates. But above all, he declared with excited gesticulation, it was to be “another nail for the Menzian history of Australia”\textsuperscript{165}

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\textsuperscript{164} PJK, *Engagement*, 7.
\textsuperscript{165} PJK, quoted in *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 March 2000.
Conclusion

The primary purpose of this work has been to use prime ministerial rhetoric as a means of exploring and explaining the general problem of nationalism in Australian intellectual life, especially the way it has affected the post 1960s Prime Ministers’ attempts to adapt to the changing circumstances of ‘national community’. Faced with the declining relevance of the British connection, the departure of ‘great and powerful friends’ from the region, the imperative of engagement with Asia, and the concept of Australia as a ‘multicultural’ society, the central challenge for the four major prime ministers in the post Menzies period has been whether or not they could offer an alternative myth of community which would preserve social cohesion in the new era. Each of these leaders has brought his unique ‘world-view’ to this question, but there is nevertheless a discernible pattern in their rhetoric.

The task has been to define a new idea of society, one fundamentally at odds with nationalism’s romantic view of itself and one divorced from its own teleological view of history. Gough Whitlam’s “new nationalism” was to be above all “benign and constructive”, emerging as it did from Australia’s “quiescent and colonial past” and rejecting the need for cultural and racial homogeneity. For Whitlam, the lack of “focus for nationalistic fervour and popular emotion” in Australia was cause for optimism rather than despair. Malcolm Fraser welcomed the end of “Anglo-Saxon conformity” in national life and similarly dismissed the need for a boisterous Australian nationalism, declaring that “The constant need to be aggressive about one’s national identity, to vociferously reaffirm it, usually indicates a sense of inferiority towards other nations”. Bob Hawke was also adamant that the Australian Bicentenary in 1988 was no time for “vain glory or empty boasting”. So in expressing their intellectual sensibilities to nationalism, these prime ministers revealed more in saying what it was not, rather than what it actually was. Whitlam, Fraser and Hawke had all recognised that the need for an intense nationalism had long since passed. Their response to the world and to history had convinced them that a conformist, race-based nationalism was a danger to freedom.
However, Paul Keating could not so easily let the idea of nationalism fade from the Australian political spectrum. Unlike his prime ministerial predecessors, he had not received a broad international education and experience in his formative years, and therefore was not as sensitised to global ideas and movements. His was a concept of nationhood which "went beyond constitutional things" to the question of "attitudes"—primarily those Anglo-centric attitudes which he believed had "cost" Australia a more independent voice in world affairs in the post-war era. Keating's 'aggressive Australianism' again sought for Australia a romantic nationalism. He wanted Australians to have a racial identity separate from the British race patriot tradition, since British imperialism had denied them a 'true' nationalist experience of their own. Keating's idea of nationalism thus juxtaposed Whitlam's "new nationalism", Fraser's liberal suspicion of nationalistic excess and Hawke's 'consensus' view of community. Yet Keating also came to express an awareness of nationalism's limits. Forced by the demands of national leadership to periodically relinquish his deeply internalised view of Australian nationalism, in which 'Britishness' and 'Australianness' were irreconcilable, Keating came to express a more moderate, inclusive concept of 'nation'. The question remains, of course, whether Keating ever came to fully understand nationalism's dangers.

Such comparisons may be extended by examining the different political styles each of these leaders brought to prime ministerial office, particularly as they were reflected in their views on the British connection and in their stance on the question of an Australian republic. Whitlam, both in Australia and in Britain, was at pains to nullify the appearance of any anti-British content in the "new nationalism". By his own admission, his support for a republic emanated from the constitutional crisis of 1975, rather than from a long history of Australian confrontation with Britain. Yet even this view is perhaps too personal to his own prestige and ego. It should be noted that Whitlam was a member of the Constitutional Commission established to coincide with the 1988 Bicentenary and a signatory to its final report, which recommended "no change to Australia's status as a constitutional monarchy or to the position of the Queen as Australia's head of state". 1

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Malcolm Fraser, despite imploping his audience at the Mansion House in London in 1977 that they "not pay too much heed to stories about republicanism in Australia"\(^2\), nevertheless by the late 1990s was fully in favour of the move to a republic. Though admitting he was "emotionally" attached to the monarchy, Fraser could not locate precisely when he realised that a republic was "inevitable". He spoke of a "variety of reasons" which related "more to what has happened in Britain than what had happened in Australia", but he gave no indication of what these "reasons" might be.\(^3\) Thus his shift in outlook was simply part of a continuum. There had been no conclusive event "like the guillotine coming down";\(^4\) no jubilant moment of independence when Australia rejected Britain. To extrapolate from his own intellectual history, it is highly likely that Britain's application for membership of the EEC in the early 1960s and her decision to withdraw her military presence east of Suez were critical points at which he realised that the two worlds of sentiment and self-interest must necessarily diverge.

Bob Hawke did not invest the republic issue with any sense of urgency when he came to office in 1983. Despite advocating such a move in his 1979 *Boyer Lectures*, he saw the republic as an inherently divisive issue which was anathema to his election campaign rhetoric of nurturing 'national reconciliation' and 'bringing Australians together'. For Hawke, a republic would eventuate through a process of natural evolution arising from national consensus. Though he had somewhat irreverently questioned whether Westminster-style parliamentary government - which Australia had inherited from 'that little bloody island off the coast of Europe' - would solve democracy's consensus problem, as Prime Minister he defined the emergence of an 'independent' Australia as essentially the story of "an ungrudging and peaceful disengagement" from Britain. Like Whitlam, Hawke was conscious of an Australian radical tradition which celebrated events such as Eureka, the Rum Rebellion and Vinegar Hill as milestones along the road to Australian 'independence', but he nevertheless dismissed them as insignificant "local dramas". Above all, it had been the British heritage - as well as consensus style leadership which put the nation first - that had preserved national

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\(^3\) Malcolm Fraser, 'The republic: an idea whose time will come', *The Australian*, 30 August 1995.

\(^4\) Malcolm Fraser, personal interview, 21 December 2000, transcript.
cohesion. The self-styled 'intelligent radical' of the 1970s was no 'radical nationalist' Prime Minister.

Paul Keating's republican urge, however, derived from a saga of ongoing conflict with the British and a legacy of grievances which only a republic could rectify. Despising the "conservative amalgam" of loyalty to Australia and the British Empire which, in his view, had mistakenly arisen following the First World War, Keating argued instead that Australia's Second World War participation – particularly in South East Asia – constituted the more genuine representation of a distinctive Australian nationalism. But this enlargement of the 'radical national' myth was more concerned with separating Australia from Britain rather than affirming any distinctive Australian values. It did not seriously challenge the primacy of the First World War experience in popular representations of the Anzac legend. No new national myth which celebrates the Second AIF as the Australian 'pioneers' of engagement with Asia has since taken hold. Where Whitlam, Fraser and Hawke had been more sensitive to Fascism as the cause of World War Two, Keating saw the World Wars not so much on their own terms but as they affected domestic politics and Labor's understanding of the imperial relationship.

Thus each of these prime ministers had a view of history which affected the way they performed as national leaders. But if no new national myth could generate a self-sufficient Australian nationalism, what happened to the need for nationalism itself in the new times? If the emergence of nationalism is dependent upon particular social circumstances and historical contingencies, did these exist in Australia from 1972-1996? Firstly, as in Western Europe, the need for an exclusive racial identity and an intense social bonding had passed. From 1973 the concept of 'multiculturalism' was offered to the Australian people by their political leaders as the unifying definition of 'national community'. But in its embrace of a diverse cultural heritage, this was the very opposite to traditional ideas of national unity. The history of Australia became the story of a 'nation of immigrants'. Whilst it could be argued that this 'multiplicity' of identities has itself become an expression of 'Australiaanness', such a view does not explain how the nation remains cohesive. In its earliest forms, this new definition of national community

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5 For this argument relating to a 'multiplicity' of Australian identities, see Bolton, G & Hudson, W (eds.) Creating Australia – Changing Australian History (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1997), 3.
was due more to the changing nature of Australia’s relationship with Britain than to an incipient, philosophical embrace of a ‘multicultural’ Australia. The new idea of ‘nation’ was rhetorical rather than cerebral. Secondly, it was now the political legacy of Britishness – parliamentary democracy and the rule of law – which was celebrated as having created the environment for Australia’s tolerance of cultural diversity. A commitment to political values and institutions, rather than race or culture, is now asserted to be at the core of ‘national community’.

Does the lack of a unifying national myth imply that communities no longer need such myths? Anthony Smith has argued that despite the aftermath of the Cold War and the emergence of a multi-polar world, the twin forces of progressive modernity and mass communication have not so much diminished as intensified the prospect of nationalist-engendered conflict. Smith asserts that “the potential for nationalist movements is always with us”.6 But the concepts of ethnic and religious uniqueness, memories of golden ages and sacred territories which he sees as the basis for revived nationalist tension in Europe cannot be applied to the Australian context – precisely because they still speak to the intolerance and exclusiveness of nationalism rather than to the ‘unity within diversity’ and ‘inclusiveness’ as advocated by multiculturalism. While Australian prime ministers in the 1980s and 1990s did, on occasion, invoke images of the 1890s and 1940s to argue for a more ‘independent’ conception of nationhood, these were more mostly identifiable as party political myths, rather than as national myths which might legitimise a new idea of national community or instill a sense of political obligation. Their silences, therefore, have been equally as suggestive as their rhetoric.

Unlike American leaders, Australian Prime Ministers have not called forth a unique national myth. Throughout the twentieth century, American presidents, particularly in their inaugural addresses, have appealed to a myth which proclaims that American values are not only unique to themselves but are in fact universal values which constitute the very hope of humanity. Even after defeat in Vietnam and following the end of the Cold War, Presidents Reagan, Bush (sr) and Clinton continued to embrace this ideal of the American mission to redeem the world. George W. Bush in his recent

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inaugural address also continued in this vein, affirming that “our democratic faith is more than the creed of our country, it is the inborn hope of humanity” and that “to all nations, we will speak for the values that gave our nation birth”. This comparison, though, is not to bemoan the lack of a corresponding, coherent national myth in the Australian context. Australian leaders, wise in their suspicion of nationalism’s dangers and conscious of its sins in the past, have for the most part trod warily along the “thin dividing line”, as Bob Hawke described it, between a “genuine and decent nationalism” and an “aggressive jingoistic...my country right or wrong” sentiment. If the prime ministerial rhetoric of nationalism in Australia in this period was ‘more than empty words’, it was not because they had given voice to an all pervasive myth which made Australians one people; it was ‘more than empty words’ because their idea of Australia and their expressions of Australianness were more than pragmatic platitudes. In many instances they bore a direct relationship to their own experience.

Gough Whitlam’s view, for instance, was of Australia as an urbane and civilised nation, a model of international best practice. From an early age, Whitlam had enthusiastically embraced an idea of Australia as representing “the verdant vista of the new”. Though his early intellectual pursuits had been stimulated by European cultures and ancient civilisations, he relished the chance to participate in the shaping of a newer world. But there were limits to such enthusiasm and optimism. After returning from a prime ministerial visit to Europe in 1974/75, during which he made several visits to archaeological sites and museums, Whitlam insisted he need not apologise for his “interest in the culture and histories of the countries I visited....We are not a nation of philistines; we should not be content with an image abroad based mainly on Barry McKenzie”. Whitlam, seeking a more sophisticated and cosmopolitan image for Australia on the world stage, could find no place for the ugly ‘ocker’.

Fraser too, expressed his idea of Australia in the early 1950s as the “New World of the 20th Century”, one which first and foremost was an escape from the constraints of socialism which he had witnessed in post-war Britain. With his ‘world-view’ moulded by the memories of Munich and the failure of the Western democracies to halt Hitler in the

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8 R.J. Hawke, personal interview, 14 December 2000; transcript.
1930s, Fraser stressed the need for Australia and the West to maintain their will in the face of Soviet aggression. He longed for a nation which combined respect for the individual with a stringent discipline for the sake of national survival. His support for Waltzing Matilda derived not from any romantic bush mythology, but from an acceptance that in the 1970s Australia required a national song of her own, one which was distinctively Australian without being quasi-religious or blusteringly nationalistic. His identification with this ballad – above all with its tune – was in keeping with Fraser’s idea of Australia. There was simply no need to boast to the world with aggressive symbols. For Fraser, the greatness of Australia sprang not from power or visions of superiority, but from the actions of each and every one of its individuals.

Bob Hawke in his Oxford thesis had similarly noted the ‘old world/new world’ dichotomy between Australia and Europe: “There was a conviction that this land was new not only in terms of settlement but in respect of its relation to the social and economic structures of Europe”. For Hawke, the supreme manifestation of this difference was to be found in the achievement of the Australian Arbitration system – which had institutionalised the concept of the ‘fair-go’, making it ‘more than a myth’. It was this characteristic, originating in the decision by the Trade Unions in the 1890s to opt for parliament rather than the picket line, which Hawke saw as the essence of what it meant to be ‘Australian’.

Paul Keating’s Australianness was most succinctly captured in his claim to understand Australian history “with a capital A”. But this ‘capital A’ history, which claimed to be putting ‘Australia first’ or Advancing Australia, as the title of his collected speeches suggested, involved the expression of a sometimes aggressive anti-British myth of Australian nationalism. Keating’s prime ministerial ‘radical nationalism’ was thus fundamentally at odds with his emphasis on internationalising the economy, managing the transition to globalisation and the imperatives of Australia’s integration with the Asia-Pacific region. The old and the new warred within him. It was entirely symptomatic therefore, that when current and former Prime Ministers made their way to London in June 2000 to mark the centenary of the act of British Parliament which established the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia, Keating absented himself from the trip. Attacking the participation of his predecessors and successor in “pomp encrusted
celebrations”, he added that they were symbolically “out of kilter with the home-grown and nationalist drive that helped the movement to Federation”.\textsuperscript{10} To the very last, Keating refused to be ‘duchessed’.

It is worth noting that John Howard upon becoming Prime Minister rejected both the WK Hancock ‘initiative-resistance’ model and the Manning Clark ‘straiteners – enlargers’ theme which he felt Keating had wilfully and wrong-headedly applied to Australian political culture.\textsuperscript{11} But Howard himself has not sought to re-assert a rose-tinted view of Australia’s British heritage. In a major speech on his 1997 visit to London, he argued that the Anglo-Australian relationship was “becoming less and less amenable to false caricatures than it has ever been” and that the “old myths about the relationship [were] dying”.\textsuperscript{12} Precisely which “old myths” to which he referred were not mentioned, but the assumption was that the modern relationship had no requirement for the sentiments of old. There was no need for either the intense fawning or the intense antagonism.

In his 1997 Australia Day address, Howard expressed what he called his “deeply held belief...about Australian nationalism and Australian patriotism”:

> We should not find ourselves engaged in a frantic and constant search for a new or different identity...There is a very identifiable Australian character and Australian identity. It’s very different from what it was 40 or 50 years ago although there are some common threads that bind the Australian identity of today with the Australian identity of 40 or 50 years ago.\textsuperscript{13}

For Howard then, Australian ‘nationalism’ was both fixed and ever-changing. This idea of permanence and change, of continuity and discontinuity, represents the ongoing problematic nature of Australian nationalism. Howard sees two different types of national

\textsuperscript{10} *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 July 2000.
\textsuperscript{11} It should be noted here that Keating did not explicitly mention Hancock’s model in any of his speeches, but there was nevertheless, as demonstrated in Chapter Six, a continual emphasis on Labor as the party of national renewal and change, with the Liberal/National Party coalition perennially portrayed as those who have resisted such change. Howard’s assumption that Keating adhered to this model is itself an indication of the lingering power of Hancock’s work. See John Howard, 1996 Sir Robert Menzies Lecture – The Liberal Tradition: The Beliefs and Values which guide the Federal government’, 18 November 1996, transcript.
myths – those arising from “cataclysmic events” such as Gallipoli and those which “through long usage and custom” Australians had “come to love and to hold dear”, such as “our tradition of informal mateship and egalitarianism”.14 In his draft Preamble for the Australian Constitution, to be put to the people as part of the republican referendum in 1999, Howard included the word “mateship”, because he considered it to have been “hallowed by the Australian experience”.15 But his “personal passion”16 for the word resulted more from his empathy with the Anzac tradition than with Russel Ward’s bush legend. It was the mateship of the diggers, not the mateship of the shearers’ camps, which Howard cherished. Both his father and grandfather had fought with the First AIF on the Western Front. Yet there was certainly a paradox in the use of ‘mateship’ – a word traditionally associated with the ‘old-left’ radical nationalist historiography of the 1940s and 1950s – by a Liberal prime minister in the late 1990s. Hawke had also seen in the Gallipoli experience the “special meaning of Australian mateship”; Keating had thought ‘mateship’ comparable to the Asian virtue of communitarianism; but neither had sought to enshrine the word in such a formal statement of values which defined Australians as a people. Howard was forced to withdraw the word following a public backlash – ‘mateship’ was not only no longer seen as a meaningful touchstone in a ‘multicultural’ Australia, but, as one poll suggested, its ethic of egalitarianism and caring for others was at odds with the prevailing culture of ‘mate-eat-mate’ in the workplace.17

Nevertheless, Howard, in common with Whitlam, Fraser and Hawke, has continued to maintain a critical distance from a loud, bombastic assertion of Australian national identity. In his 1997 Remembrance Day Address he defined Australian patriotism as “quiet but deep”.18 However, versions of the ‘radical national’ myth continue to pervade both historical and popular accounts of Australia’s past. John Molony, a former student of Manning Clark’s, has recently argued that the attitudes and beliefs of Australia’s ‘native born’ were critical in the shaping of an Australian character. But true to the Russel Ward myth, these ‘native born’ were prevented by their social betters from

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13 John Howard, Address to Australia Day Council’s Australia Day Luncheon, Sydney, 24 January 1997, transcript.
14 John Howard, Ibid.
fulfilling their dreams of an independent Australian destiny through a “long tradition of enforced grovelling”. The ‘native-born’ were thus never accorded the responsibility to shape the nation’s affairs which apparently they had so richly deserved. Whilst there is thus no “true epilogue” for these Australians, Molony claims the “day is not far distant when the nation founded in their hearts and sinews will stand up and claim its independence”. This teleological view of nationalism reaches even greater heights when Molony situates the ‘native-born’ as the silent progenitors of republicanism:

The princes and the barons of the media, of power and finance, the apers of others’ ways, the mighty who fear any encroachment on the position and prerogatives they so jealously guard, but do not own, all these will fail. With them will perish their lack of trust in the sovereign people who are the nation. When that day comes the spirit of the native-born will emerge once more and Australia will claim its true independence in a republic of the free.19

In *Australia – Biography of a Nation*, expatriate Australian journalist Phillip Knightley has given further expression to the anti-British myth of Australian nationalism. The senseless slaughter of Australian troops in World War One, the Bodyline cricket series, the fall of Singapore, Britain’s testing of Atomic weapons at Maralinga and its decision to seek membership of the European Economic Community are the central events Knightley conscripts to stress his theme of British betrayal.20 It shows how powerful a force nationalism remains for historians and commentators in making sense of their country and its past.

Yet Australian Prime Ministers in the post 1972 period, for the most part, have rejected this ‘radical national’ myth and its teleological view of history. Though the idea of nationalism as expressed in the rhetoric of national leaders has been previously neglected in studies of Australian political culture in this period, this work has demonstrated that these Prime Ministers, while they were acutely conscious of the need

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18 John Howard, Address at Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 11 November 1997, transcript.
20 Phillip Knightley, *Australia: A Biography of a Nation* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2000) Knightley’s view of Gallipoli is a perfect example of ‘radical nationalist’ teleology: “Nothing stimulates nationalism like a blood icon and that is what Gallipoli became. The fact that it was a bungled defeat, probably unnecessary, a tragic waste of life and someone else’s fault did not matter, it made the icon even stronger. And the fact that it was Britain which had planned the fiasco was the beginning of the prolonged breaking of ties between Australia and the Mother-Country that accelerated during the Second World War and finally snapped when Britain joined the European Community in 1973”; 72-3.
for national cohesion, also realised that a European-derived concept of nations and nationalism was inappropriate for Australian circumstances. Though they were all shaped in an era when nationalism was sanguinary, oppressive and destructive, they have manifestly resisted its charms and indeed have rebelled against its consequences. In transcending this classical nationalism, they have instead expressed a new idea of ‘national community’, which emphasised a tolerance of diversity and a respect for the freedom of the individual rather than a unity deriving from the bonds of blood and culture. Their reaction has been decidedly against this chauvinistic, exclusive nationalism rather than in favour of it. It may be concluded, therefore, that in the post-British era, these leaders have been, to borrow Ben Chifley’s words, “Australian without being nationalistic”.
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