

LABOUR HISTORY NEWS Autumn 2022

Labour History Society (South Australia)



90th Anniversary of Sydney Harbour Bridge opening 19th March

Joining the centre top chord
3 September 1930
(photographer unknown)
Sydney Harbour Bridge Photographic
Albums 1923 –1933, vol 6, NSW State
Records

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President's Report Labour History Society SA (inc.)

Welcome to the Autumn issue of Labour History SA News. As we fade into the darker evenings, there have been bright light spots over the past month: a new direction for politics in South Australia with a Labor win and several new women into Parliament! Unfortunately Rick Sarre (who appears in this issue of the LHSSA news) will not be one of the new faces there.

One election down and two to come: the Federal election on 21 May and the Local Council elections in September. The Branch Executive are interested if any LHS members are nominating for either of these elections. While as a Society we are unaligned with any political party, we can choose to assist LHSSA members who are candidates - please let me know if you are planning to run.

Before the Federal election there will be a *Weekend of Protest, Solidarity and Celebration* on 30 April-1 May. SAUnions have organised a mass march for Saturday 30 April with the guest speaker being Sally McManus from the ACTU commencing at Elder Park at 11.00

This will be followed by our joint LHSSA/SEARCH Foundation SA release of Stuart Macintyre's book *The Party* at Adelaide University's Bar Smith Library commencing at 2 00 pm

The May Day celebrations will be held in Port Adelaide on the Sunday, and while there will not be another march the celebrations kick off at 1.00 pm in Nile Street - with food, drinks bands and fun for all. There will also be a ceremony at the Works Memorial with the placing of new names on the monument.

The LHSSA Newsletter goes out to about 150 members and supporters, including unions, community organisations, academia and individuals. The Executive asks members and supporters to consider writing the occasional article or relevant film/book/music review. When the spirit moves, send your contributions to Ken Bridge (kbridge38@gmail.com) or to me dougforblues@hotmail.com. We look forward to receiving your contributions.

Hoping see you soon at the *Weekend of Protest, Solidarity and Celebration* events.

Doug Melvin
President, Labour History Society SA (inc.)

LETTERS

Dear Editor,

I attended the ALHSSA The Uses of History Symposium in February as an interested member of the community. I too am outraged at the Morrison Government's attack upon the discipline of History and the Humanities, its ideological assault upon the Social Sciences in general and attendant demeaning of the teaching of critical thinking and analysis of national and global affairs.

Unfortunately the panel of distinguished scholars failed to impress me, even as (or perhaps because) I am an ex-history and philosophy student from Flinders University in the early 1970's. All three presentations on the importance of studying history I found neither enlightening nor motivating. When questioned re a more precise consideration of the study of history, the panel again failed to impress. In reply to a question, Professor Matt Fitzpatrick stated: "A functioning democracy should allow" for

critique, but when asked if an historian can be the voice of the working class if he has left his own class behind, replied: "Should they even try"? I found that very disempowering.

Histories such as *The Condition of the English Working Class* (F.Engels), *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (K. Marx), *The Making of the English Working Class* (E.P. Thompson), *A Peoples' History of the United States* (H. Zinn), *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (R. Dunbar-Ortiz), or any number of Eric Hobsbawm's tomes in the UK - or Henry Reynolds' works here in Australia - all certainly testify for the role of history writers in speaking for the 'unrepresented'.

To the dilemma of a 'functioning democracy' I'd say that liberal bourgeois democracy has long had its day. Capitalism is in chronic war-mongering decline. What exists here and in many other parts of the world are plutocracies with governments of all shades acting as their enforcers. History has not ended (*pace Fukuyama The End of History and the Last Man*), it merely awaits further social transformation - as Hobsbawm would have it.

That the panel failed to adequately consider any of these propositions is illustrative of an historical academia in retreat, ducking and weaving to avoid perhaps severe reprimand or termination by the tertiary apparatchiks: those overpaid vice chancellors, and endless bureaucrats posing as keepers of the academy for their political and economic masters.

I (and I am not alone) hunger for some radical critique - and for this critique to be not just an online, but out in the public forums like LHSSA and more. It does exist out there, but perhaps no longer in the universities?

Yours respectfully, Colin Ball

NOTICES



SPECIAL EVENT

Stuart Macintyre Tribute and Book Launch of *The Party*

Sat., 30/04/2022, 2:00 pm Barr Smith Library Adelaide Uni

[Come through the western entrance – via the Uni stairs]

Tickets free but please reserve your place with the link [here](#):

The late Professor Stuart Macintyre was one of Australia's most influential historians. He was for many years, President of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History. This event will commemorate Stuart's life as a historian, activist, and university leader, and will launch his last book, *The Party*. **Frank Bongiorno**, distinguished Professor of History at the ANU, and a close colleague of Stuart's will speak to his life and launch the book. A panel discussion will follow on the contribution of Stuart Macintyre to Australian labour history in general and the history of Communism in Australia in particular. Moderated by Dr Adrian Graves, historian and former coordinator of the SEARCH Foundation, the Panel will be:

- Judy Gillett, feminist activist, a former member of the CPA, who will speak to the role of women in the CPA.D
- Dr Susan Close, Deputy Premier, environmental activist, who is an admirer of Macintyre's, Australia's Boldest Experiment.
- Peter Duncan, notable as the reforming Attorney General in the Dunstan Government, who also held Ministries in the Hawke and Keating Governments will speak to aspects of the Party. Peter will join the meeting by Zoom from Indonesia.

RADICAL CURRENTS | LABOUR HISTORIES



RADICAL CURRENTS, LABOUR HISTORIES

On the 60th anniversary of the formation of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History we launch a new national magazine, *Radical Currents, Labour Histories*. The aim of the magazine is to share some of our research beyond the narrow confines of academic journals. It is also to showcase the rich and diverse histories being recorded across Australia and New Zealand in the many branches of the Society. Labour history is a field of historical study that writes about the lives of *ordinary* people, who are the engine drivers of change in our societies.

JULIE KIMBER & DIANE KIRKBY

FIGHTING FOR LIFE: CLASS, COMMUNITY AND CARE IN LABOUR HISTORY

The 17th biennial conference of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History 22-24 April 2022 - Bendigo, Victoria

The pandemic has illuminated vital links between coding labour, class and community history. In this moment, the ASSLH conference will bring together labour historians and activists to examine changes in the meaning and historical context of labour, class and community. See our website for the provisional program.

Full conference full fee \$250
Full conference concession* \$150
Single day full fee \$130
Single day concession* \$80

*The concession rate applies to those on low incomes, including students, academics, staff, and including government academics.

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Further info: Visit www.labourhistory.org.au/
2022-labour-history-conference-2
or email admin@labourhistory.org.au

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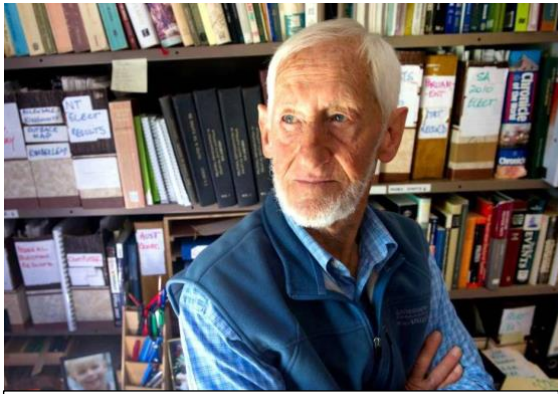


The 17th biennial conference of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History (ASSLH) will be now be held 22-24 April 2022 in Bendigo, Victoria (registrations open at 1pm on Friday 22, followed by a Welcome to Country, and book launch). Organised with the support of LaTrobe University. For details click [here](#).

The conference organisers, on behalf of the ASSLH, invited submissions for papers exploring this theme and on all aspects of labour experience, including:

- intersections of class, gender, ethnic and generational differences
- methodologies for studying labour's history
- economic and health crises in earlier periods or national histories
- illuminations of community in remembering and story-telling
- a rural, or regional focus
- health, safety and disability
- Indigenous labour and political protest
- moments and strategies of workers' resistance to health risks

The Dean Jaensch Scholarship



Emeritus Professor Dean Jaensch AO

A political analyst with expertise in electoral politics, political behaviour and political parties, Emeritus Professor Dean Jaensch AO was noted for his incisive observations on the workings of state and federal Australian governments, with an interest in political personalities in South Australia and the Northern Territory. Born in Kapunda in 1936, Professor Jaensch sadly passed away in Adelaide this January aged 85. He is survived by his wife Helen and three children.

An engaging and dynamic teacher, Professor Jaensch lectured in politics and international studies at Flinders University from the early 1970s until his retirement in 2001. He also distinguished himself as an academic, political historian, author, commentator and columnist, drawing on wit and wisdom to express his expertise. He was known and respected for his political columns in *The Advertiser* and appearances on radio and television.

The Dean Jaensch Scholarship is designed to encourage students to deepen their knowledge of politics and political systems by furthering their studies with honours in politics and public policy at Flinders University. For details click [here](#).

***Bob Hawke: Demons and Destiny.* Troy Bramston In-Conversation with Tory Shepherd: an online event with award winning and best-selling author and journalist, Troy Bramston, discussing his latest book, *Bob Hawke: Demons and Destiny*. [Streamed live on Mar 31, 2022](#)**
Presented by The Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre

Another short-term political firestorm driven by the assumed interests of swinging voters in marginal electorates. The annual budget undermines certainty and planning, and helps to keep everybody fixated on the short term. It is time to dump the annual budget and replace it with a three-year economic planning prospectus for the term of a new or continuing government. Sure, there will need to be regular adjustments and updates, but they should all be clearly framed by the objectives, target and financing of the overarching three-year plan.
Stewart Sweeney, Adelaide, SA

One of the letters from LHSSA member Stewart Sweeney frequently published in the Murdoch press – keep an eye open for them!

Why is it called the *Australian Labor Party* anyway?

There was no uniformity of party names until 1918, when the Federal party resolved that state branches should adopt the name "Australian Labor Party", now spelled without a *u*. Each state branch had previously used a different name, due to their different origins.^{[8][a]}

Although the ALP officially adopted the spelling without a *u*, it took decades for the official spelling to achieve widespread acceptance. According to McMullin, "the way the spelling of 'Labor Party' was consolidated had more to do with the chap who ended up being in charge of printing the federal conference report than any other reason". Some sources have attributed the official choice of "Labor" to influence from [King O'Malley](#), who was born in the United States and was reputedly an advocate of [spelling reform](#); the spelling without a *u* is the standard form in [American English](#). It has been suggested that the adoption of the spelling without a *u* "signified one of the ALP's earliest attempts at modernisation", and served the purpose of differentiating the party from the [Australian labour movement](#) as a whole and distinguishing it from other British Empire labour parties. The decision to include the word "Australian" in the party's name, rather than just "[Labour Party](#)" as in the United Kingdom, has been attributed to "the greater importance of nationalism for the founders of the colonial parties".

A Decade of The Dawn

Australia's first feminist journal turns 10 on Trove

Images: The Dawn: A Journal for Australian Women, 15 May 1888; and Louisa Lawson



A Decade of *The Dawn*

Australia's first feminist journal turns 10 on Trove. Published on 15 May 1888, the first edition of [The Dawn: A Journal for Australian Women](#) opens with a quote from Tennyson who said "women is not uncompleted man, but diverse". The article then goes on to say: 'being diverse why should she not have her journal in which her divergent hopes, aims, and opinions may have representation' - a fitting beginning for a journal that gave Australian women a voice for the first time and that went on to be recognised as Australia's first feminist journal.

This year, on International Women's Day (8 March), we celebrated the 10-year anniversary of the digitisation of *The Dawn*, which saw these words become publicly available online via Trove. Published between 1888-1905, *The Dawn* featured stories ranging from the evils of corsetry to the campaign for women's suffrage. Proprietress, printer and publisher, [Louisa Lawson](#) also exclusively employed women, from the typesetters to printers - something that was unheard of for the time.

[Read The Dawn: A Journal for Australian Women on Trove](#)

Australian
Midwifery History



District Midwives from Womens Hospital
Crown St., Sydney



Annie Hamilton [Granny
Annie] at Corranderrk

The history of midwifery has been described as an unrecognised one with "honourable traditions... replete with heroes, villains and uncomfortable truths... with narratives, awaiting investigation, of remarkable and invisible women who attended to others in the most difficult of circumstances in Australian settler society". But midwives are not often taught their history.

Although midwifery is currently reclaiming its unique professional identity and the Australian College of Midwives recently declared "...we stand on the shoulders of the giants and in awe of those who have gone before...", we often lack the evidence that should fully inform that statement. In midwifery, there is no Florence Nightingale iconic hero, but instead a Dickensian caricature of midwife Sairy Gamp - drunken, slovenly, rough, and incompetent. Historical context is usually couched in 'us & them' stories of subordination and domination by nursing and/or obstetrics, and the most conspicuous place to find midwifery history is often in corners reports. Women's work, domestic and home based work, unpaid work, caring work, vocational work, and midwifery work are often invisible in both the historical record and the living world: this website hopes to recognise our pioneers and them visible.

For further information click [here](#).



About 2,500 workers participated in two Icelandic trials that involved reducing the standard working week from 40 hours to 35 or 36 without reducing their pay

There's never been a better time for Australia to embrace the 4-day week

The Conversation Published: February 14, 2022

The disruption of the COVID pandemic has led many of us to reconsider our relationship to work, as well as our spending priorities. Some are eager to return to pre-pandemic 'normality'. Others have found working from home to be liberating and are keen to preserve their newfound autonomy. Still others, such as health workers, are simply exhausted after two years dealing with the ever-changing demands of the pandemic. One manifestation of this exhaustion has been the rise of the ['anti-work' movement](#), which rejects the whole idea of paid employment as a way to organise necessary labour.

A less radical response is increased interest in the idea of a four-day working week. A growing number of companies – typically in technology or professional services – are [embracing the idea](#). Unlike the end of paid work, a four-day week is well within the realm of economic feasibility. But how much, if anything, would it cost in terms of lost production and lower wages?

How did we get to a five-day work week?

In 1856, Melbourne stonemasons became the first workers in the world to achieve an eight-hour working day. It's a landmark we commemorate with a public holiday in most states and territories (called Eight Hours Day in Tasmania and Labour Day elsewhere). It took almost a century before the eight-hour day became the norm, and for the six-day week those stonemasons still worked to be reduced. But finally, in 1948, the Commonwealth Arbitration Court approved a 40-hour, five-day working week for all Australians.

A five-day week brought us that great boon, the weekend. Thanks to steady increases in productivity, all this was achieved even while living standards improved steadily. Increases in leisure continued over the next few decades. In 1945 Australian workers were granted two weeks' annual leave. This was extended to three weeks in 1963, and to [four weeks in 1974](#). Sick leave, long service leave and an increased number of public holidays all reduced the number of hours worked per year. But the standard work week remained fixed at five days.

In 1988, the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission cleared the way for the working week to be cut [from 40 to 38 hours](#). Unionised workers in industries such as construction were able to negotiate slightly shorter hours – 36 hours a week – that made a nine-day fortnight possible (by continuing to work eight hours a day). So while they were still doing the same daily hours as in the 19th century, they were working about one-third fewer days a year.

All this progress came to a halt with the era of microeconomic reform (often called neoliberalism) beginning in the 1980s. There has been no significant reduction in standard hours since. The actual number of hours worked has ebbed and flowed according to the state of the labour market, but without any clear trend. Employers have consistently favoured longer hours for their core full-time workforce, while workers and unions have pushed for better work-life balance.

Benefits and costs

Some Australian workers already work a nine-day fortnight. (There are no solid numbers on how many, but Australian Bureau of Statistics [data suggests](#) it is fewer than 10% of the workforce.) For these workers shifting to a four-day week would reduce their total hours worked by a little more than 10%. There is a lot of evidence to suggest that reducing working hours, if implemented correctly, can be partly offset by an increase in output per hour. Large-scale trials in Iceland reducing weekly hours from 40 to 36, for example, found [no drop in productivity](#).

However, despite some optimistic claims, there is insufficient evidence to show there will be no reduction in output in all circumstances. A plausible guess is that reducing hours by 10% will be associated with a 5% reduction in output. If this cost were shared equally between employer and employee, workers would have to forgo wage increases of 2.5%. This would correspond to somewhere between two and five years of real wage growth based on recent history in Australia. The cost to employers would reduce their profits. But over the past 20 to 30 years the share of national income going to the owners of capital [as profits](#) (instead to labour as wages and salaries) has increased considerably. This cost would be just a fraction of those gains.

Making the transition

For most Australians working a standard full-time job – a little more than seven hours a day, Monday to Friday – moving to a four-day work week could occur in two stages. The first stage would be to shift to a nine-day fortnight with no change in total weekly hours. So the average working day would increase by 50 minutes (from seven hours 36 minutes to eight hours 26 minutes). The second stage would be to shift to a four-day week with eight-hour working days (a 32-hour working week).

A lot of more detailed questions would still need to be resolved. Should we choose to extend the weekend to three days, or stick with a five-day week – having different workers taking different rostered days off? Should schools continue to operate five days a week? How will working from home fit in? Will there be even more pressure than there is already to deal with work-related demands on notional days off? These problems, and others, do complicate the shift to a four-day week. But they are not insurmountable.

The real question, 70 years after the arrival of the weekend, is whether we are ready to trade in some of our increased productivity for a life with more free time for family, friends and fun. Or we do we want to keep on working so we can consume more and live in bigger houses with room to store the stuff we buy to make ourselves feel better about working so much. There's a lot of evidence that [experiences give us more happiness](#) than material goods. But experiences require time as well as money. A four-day week would be one way to get that time.

Read more: [A life of long weekends is alluring, but the shorter working day may be more practical](#)

Media propaganda a scourge on democracy

[Victoria Fielding](#) *Independent Australia* 21 Feb 2022

Dr [Victoria Fielding](#) is an *Independent Australia* columnist

You can follow Victoria on Twitter [@Vic Rollison](#).



Scott and Jenny Morrison appeared on 60 minutes in a fluff piece that drew much criticism. What do news reports about [Grace Tame's bong](#), Jenny Morrison's [60 Minutes](#) fluff piece and Prime Minister Scott Morrison's [China scare campaign](#) have in common? They're all symptoms of a particular class of political journalism that is closer to propaganda than news. These examples show that some journalists would prefer to advocate for powerful interests instead of holding the powerful to account.

Australia has many quality journalists who rightly subscribe to the idea that their job is to speak truth to power and to represent the voices of the marginalised who don't have powerful platforms to speak on their own behalf. But these ideals seem quaint in much mainstream journalism, particularly at powerful outlets like the Murdoch media, Nine and the [Daily Mail](#). For these outlets, media power is a weapon to be wielded against those they oppose. This weapon is used by journalists, commentators, and editors, or by faceless political players who have friendly media in their corner.

In the case of the [bong photo](#), either the journalist scrolled back a decade through Tame's Instagram feed looking for something smear-worthy, or someone else did and the journalist gladly published. Either way, it is not a coincidence that this smear was published the day after the Prime Minister's wife accused Tame of lacking "[manners and respect](#)" for committing the supposed sin of – shock, horror – not smiling at the Prime Minister.

The bong photo, like most smears that emerge out of right-wing dirt units, did nothing but remind the public how dirty the Right wing is. Morrison has been thoroughly and rightfully shamed by Grace Tame and [Brittany Higgins](#) for failing to take any meaningful action to clean up the toxic, misogynistic, unsafe culture of sexual abuse and harassment in Australian Parliament and in turn, wider Australian society.

We all understand why Morrison and his supporters want to intimidate Tame into silence, but why would the *Daily Mail* fire shots in this war? The same goes for Channel 9's [60 Minutes](#) and [other outlets](#) who reported Jenny Morrison's foray into Scott's public relations campaign like it was legitimately newsworthy. When journalists actively partake in public relations for the Prime Minister, knowingly allowing Morrison to curate his own image, to insert his own ukulele, this is not news. It is political propaganda. The story should be "why is Morrison's Government so unpopular that he has to call in his wife to save him?" but instead, much of what we get served up is "Jenny says Scott is a nice guy and Grace Tame is rude".

When this same Prime Ministerial desperation leads Morrison's Government to dangerously try to wedge Labor on China, using national security Australia's crucial trading partner as a political plaything, journalists shouldn't be [playing along](#). Indeed, it's [those who call it out](#) who differentiate themselves from spin merchants. News media is not meant to actively assist the Prime Minister to smear his rivals and to oppose his political opposition. It is not meant to be [used vindictively to discredit voices](#) who challenge the Prime Minister. Journalists aren't meant to be playing the game. When the audience is only being served up one version of reality – the version the Prime Minister chooses – they are being served propaganda, not news.

This problem in Australian media is compounded by the intense concentrated power of Murdoch and Nine outlets, and their agenda-setting influence on all other outlets. Voters deserve a news media that will scrutinise power to help them make decisions in their own best interests at the polling booth. When they're being served politicised spin instead of objective scrutiny, they're being manipulated. This manipulation is worthy of news media scrutiny, too. It would be great if those journalists who do speak truth to power would turn their attention to their media colleagues and critique how media power is being used to undermine democracy.

More on propaganda:

**Putin exploits the lie machine but didn't invent it –
British history is also full of untruths**

George Monbiot, The Guardian (UK), Wed 30 Mar 2022



"During the *Holodomor* [the famine in Ukraine] the Kremlin line was that the peasants had plenty of food, but they were hiding it. Our own crisis of truth is responsible for some of the world's biggest problems."

To the Syrians who have suffered its attacks, the Kremlin's lies about Ukraine must sound horribly familiar. Insisting that the victims of bombings are ["crisis actors"](#), spreading falsehoods about [chemical weapons](#), justifying the mass murder of civilians by claiming that anyone who resists is a "Nazi" (in Ukraine) or a "head-chopper" (in Syria): its disinformation tactics have been tested and honed.

This organised lying has more or less destroyed the US left, and [severely damaged](#) the European left. As the activist Terry Burke [documented in 2019](#), effective leftwing opposition to Donald Trump collapsed amid furious [internal disputes about Syria](#) and Russian interference in US politics, triggered by prominent figures reciting Kremlin falsehoods. Some of them turned out to be paid by the Russian government.

Such lies are also familiar to Ukrainians. During the Holodomor (the famine in the 1930s [exacerbated by Joseph Stalin's policies](#)), in which between 3 and 5 million people are believed to have died, the

Kremlin line was that the peasants had plenty of food but [were hiding it](#). In some cases, they were deliberately starving themselves to death. I guess you could call it method crisis acting.

The current Russian disinformation machine has been widely blamed for what we [now see as an “epistemic crisis”](#) – the collapse of a shared acceptance of the means by which truth is discerned. We should contest and expose the Kremlin’s lying. But to suggest that the public assault on truth is new, or peculiarly Russian, is also disinformation. For generations, in countries such as the UK there was no epistemic crisis – but this was not because we shared a commitment to truth. It was because we shared a commitment to outrageous lies.

As I’ve mentioned the Holodomor, let’s take a look at another exacerbated famine: in Bengal in 1943-1944. About 3 million people died. As in Ukraine, natural and political events made people vulnerable to hunger. But here too, government policy transformed the crisis into a catastrophe. [Research](#) by the Indian economist Utsa Patnaik suggests the inflation that pushed food out of reach of the poor was deliberately engineered under a policy conceived by that hero of British liberalism, John Maynard Keynes. The colonial authorities used inflation, [as Keynes remarked](#), to “reduce the consumption of the poor” in order to extract wealth to support the war effort. Until Patnaik’s research was published in 2018, we were unaware of the extent to which Bengal’s famine was constructed. Britain’s cover-up was more effective than Stalin’s.

The famines [engineered by the viceroy of India](#), Lord Lytton, in the 1870s are even less well-known, though, according to Mike Davis’s book *Late Victorian Holocausts*, they killed between 12 and 29 million people. Only when Caroline Elkins’s book, [Britain’s Gulag](#), was published in 2005 did we discover that the UK had run a system of concentration camps and “enclosed villages” in Kenya in the 1950s into which almost the entire Kikuyu population was driven. [Many thousands were tortured and murdered](#) or died of hunger and disease. Almost all the documents recording these great crimes were [systematically burned](#) or dumped at sea in weighted crates by the British government, and replaced with fake files. The record of British colonial atrocities in Malaya, Yemen, Aden, Cyprus and the Chagos Islands was similarly purged.

Just as the Kremlin requires a campaign of disinformation to justify its imperial aggression in Ukraine, the [British empire](#) also needed a system of comprehensive lies. Not only were our imperial crimes deleted from the record, but an entire ideology – racism – was constructed to justify the killing, looting and enslavement of other people.

At the end of his excellent BBC podcast series about QAnon, [The Coming Storm](#), Gabriel Gatehouse lamented the loss of a “common frame of reference” and a “shared sense of reality”. I agree with him about the danger of conspiracy theories, but we should remember that when we last possessed a common frame of reference and a shared sense of reality, they were built on lies. Almost everyone in Britain believed that the empire was a force for good, and that we had a holy duty – the “white man’s burden” – to either crush or “civilise” those races we labelled “inferior” and “savage”. Almost everyone believed the lies of national heroism, the lies of the crown, the lies of the church and the lies of the social order.

But most of us have emerged from that era, haven’t we? We’re more sceptical, less trusting now. Most of us recognise nonsense when we see it. Really? So how do we account for the fact that almost everyone in public life subscribes to the same set of preposterous beliefs? Let’s set aside the wild conspiracy theories of the far right, even though they’re now starting to infect the mainstream right. Let’s focus on the “acceptable” range of political opinion.

Nearly everyone who appears in the media, across almost the entire political spectrum, seems to accept that economic growth can and should continue indefinitely on a finite planet. Almost all believe that we should take action to protect life on Earth only when it is cost-effective. Even then, we should

avoid compromising the profits of legacy industries. They appear to believe that something they call “the economy” takes priority over our life support systems.

They further believe that the unhindered acquisition of enormous wealth by a few people is somehow acceptable. They believe that taxes sufficient to break the cycle of accumulation and redistribute extreme wealth are unthinkable. They believe that permitting a handful of offshore billionaires to own the media, set the political agenda and tell us where our best interests lie is fine. They believe that we should pledge unquestioning allegiance to a system we call capitalism even though they are unable to define it, let alone predict where it might be heading.

No terror or torture is required to persuade people to fall into line with these crazy beliefs. Somehow our system of organised lying has created an entire class of politicians, officials, media commentators, cultural leaders, academics and intellectuals who nod along with them. Reading accounts of 20th-century terror, it sometimes seems to me that there was more dissent among intellectuals confronting totalitarian regimes than there is in our age of freedom and choice.

We have a truth crisis all right. But it is much deeper and wider than we care to admit. Perhaps the biggest lie of all is that the crisis is confined to the Kremlin’s falsehoods and the far right’s conspiracy theories. On the contrary, it is systemic and almost universal.



By spilling more and more Ukrainian blood, Putin is making sure his dream will never be realised. It won't be Mikhail Gorbachev's name written on the death certificate of the Russian empire: it will be Putin's. Gorbachev left Russians and Ukrainians feeling like siblings; Putin has turned them into enemies, and has ensured that the Ukrainian nation will henceforth define itself in opposition to [Russia](#).

Why Vladimir Putin has already lost this war
[Yuval Noah Harari](#) (author of *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*) *Guardian* 22 Feb 2022

Debatable: “This is a fossil fuel war” **Spencer Bokas-Lindell, *New York Times* 16 March**

At the end of February, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a body of experts convened by the United Nations, [released a scientific report](#) warning that the dangers of global warming are mounting so rapidly that adapting to them could soon become impossible. “Delay,” the U.N. secretary general [said](#) of the findings, “means death.”

The report came out just days after President Vladimir Putin of Russia began his assault on Ukraine, so the world’s attention was understandably trained elsewhere. But soon enough, commentators began pointing out the role that Russia’s fossil fuel trade has played in underwriting the invasion, thrusting climate change and its causes back into the spotlight. “The world is paying Russia \$700 million a day for oil and \$400 million for natural gas,” Oleg Ustenko, an economic adviser to the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelensky, [told](#) *The New Yorker* this month. “You are paying all this money to a murderous leader who is still killing people in my country.” How is the war in Ukraine shaping the politics of fossil fuel dependency, and how might the conflict advance or hobble the global effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

One of the largest producers of fossil fuels in the world, Russia is highly dependent on its energy trade, with fossil fuels accounting for almost half of its exports and [28 percent of its federal budget](#) in 2020. Unlike the United States, the European Union has not banned imports of Russian oil and gas, and it's no secret why: Europe relies on Russia for about [one-third of its oil](#) and [40 percent of its natural gas](#). (The United States, by contrast, [gets none of its natural gas](#) and [only about 3 percent of the oil it consumes from Russia](#).)

Germany is especially dependent on Russian fossil fuels; it is Europe's largest energy consumer and Russia's most important customer. That dependence deepened after the [Fukushima nuclear disaster](#), in 2011, when Angela Merkel committed to closing all of Germany's nuclear plants. (The [powerful earthquake that struck the same region of Japan on Wednesday](#) was [significantly less violent](#) than the one that caused the 2011 disaster and does not appear to have damaged the country's nuclear plants, even as it left two million homes without power.) Russia now supplies more than half of Germany's gas, half of its coal and about a third of its oil, [according](#) to Bloomberg. Until recently, German leaders didn't see this dependency as a problem. As Alec McGillis [explains](#) in The New Yorker, Germany actually *chose* to rely on Russia "because it saw the economic links created by fuel imports - physical links, in the form of pipelines through Eastern Europe and under the Baltic Sea - as integral to keeping peace and integrating Russia into the rest of Europe."

The big picture: In the view of Svitlana Krakovska, Ukraine's leading climate scientist, who helped finalize the I.P.C.C. report from Kyiv as Russia invaded, the war on her home country is inextricably linked to climate change. "Burning oil, gas and coal is causing warming and impacts we need to adapt to," she [told](#) The Guardian. "And Russia sells these resources and uses the money to buy weapons. Other countries are dependent upon these fossil fuels; they don't make themselves free of them. This is a fossil fuel war. It's clear we cannot continue to live this way. It will destroy our civilization."

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History & the Delphic Oracle

Dr David Faber College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, Flinders University



In the Western tradition, scientific history, characterized by faithfulness to the philosophical criterion of truth, emerged from the imagined epic tradition whose truth was poetic rather than factual. As classical Greek literature evolved, it became conventional to ascribe inspiration of the arts to the Muses, imaginary spirits fathered by the supreme god Zeus on Mnemosyne or Memory. The premier of these 9 goddesses, Clio or Renown, was the Muse of History, the mother of all the sciences. There is a clear connection between epic poetry, with its gods and heroes, and history's account of the actions of the great and good.

The father of European history, Herodotus, attributed his motivation in pursuing and publishing his *Researches* or *Histories* to the desire to record for posterity the deeds of the wars of the Greeks and Persians. Greek attempts to understand history always remained close to its mythopoetic roots. The Oracle of Apollo at Delphi was long consulted for her ambiguous, intoxicated prognostications. Woe betided however any suitor who misinterpreted the Oracle. Sophisticated interpretation was all. Blind reliance on literal misinterpretation paved the way to disaster.

We are not in a position to mock the Greeks for the superstitious accent of their desire for insight into historical time, which the Sirens offered Odysseus and his crew. At least they understood its importance, not always appreciated even today. As the Italian political philosopher Antonio Gramsci

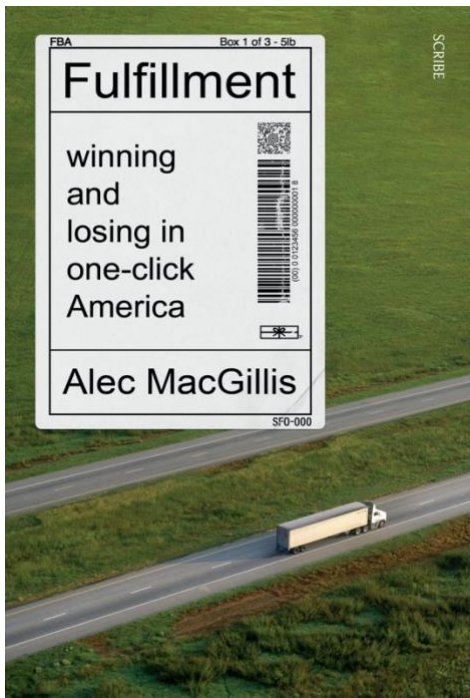
understood, 'history teaches, but it has no students.' Its lessons typically lie un-divined before our leaders. Take for instance the recent case of the 2003 Coalition of the Willful's invasion of Iraq. Anyone with an historical brain could tell that the enterprise, which involved military action against a nation whose history was disregarded, would end in tears. War as von Clausewitz taught is politics by other means. How can victory be obtained as opposed to merely declared when history is unknown and its conditions are accordingly obscured? The President of the Empire had no sense of history and the puppet leaders of the client States of the Coalition did not even think of consulting it, preferring to cite their own dependency as a motive for 'action'.

The resort to preferred historical prejudice inevitably leads to circular and fallacious reasoning. During the saber-rattling prelude of 2002, the Munich Fallacy was much cited. It was held that the foretold failure of the 1938 application of the policy of positive engagement of European Fascism by its anti-communist sympathisers, notoriously known as Appeasement, would be replicated if war was not waged on Ba'athist Iraq. This supposed case of twenty/20 hindsight was really a case of the fallacy known to the Latin rhetorical analysts as 'post hoc, ergo propter hoc'. Fascism did not follow Appeasement, it pandered to a phenomenon which had been in course over many years. So, it did not follow that a hairy chested approach to the foreign policy issues presented by tyranny, which is a domestic problem, was entailed. The reasoning involved was wrong for multiple reasons, moreover. First and foremost, it committed the fundamental historical sin of anachronism. The circumstances of any historical conjuncture, however much they may conform to general trends, are individual and unique. The war clouds of 1938 and 2002 were accordingly not comparable; particular when you remember that similar conservative forces of Anglophone political culture were behind the Appeasement and belligerence antimony. The juxtaposition was too crude to capture the analogies and disanalogies between Hitler and Saddam Hussein. Poking the Chinese dragon at the current juncture, an ancient culture little understood in the West, with secular reasons to feel antipathetic to the imperialist West, bodes ill, when the 2003 debacle is reconsidered. An unnecessary clash of civilizations is to be feared between a declining Empire and the ancient Middle Kingdom, reasserting itself and rising to resume its ancient dignity.

Two millennia after the precocious Greeks, the Oxford philosopher of history RG Collingwood, emphasized that history is the child of the imagination, arising from the attempt to imagine by inference from evidence the relations between the real processes of past, present and future. History as such is characterized by a depth and broad sweep of perspective. When we refer to faulty logics of theoretical abstraction, we engage in circular reasoning without a proper foundation in historical research. To be unhistorical and ignorant to the profound as opposed to superficial lessons of history, lost in apparent as opposed to hard-boiled, real world logic, is to be dangerously disorientated. A sense of history is vital orientation in the present to future challenges, indeed a necessary one. That is why British Public Schools educated the future administrators of the Empire in Roman history. It was an historical form of imperial civics. We may deplore the effects of the narrow instrumentalism of their approach, which begged so many questions. But like their classical forebears, at least they posed the problem. This is particularly so in today's philistine age, obsessed with STEM skill assumption at the expense of humanistic expertise. A tool kit after all is not a mind.

Another of Collingwood's theses is particularly important today. Collingwood served as an intelligence officer during the Great War. Meditating on the key man-made disaster of the 20th century, he supposed that the war grew out of the crisis of an advanced technological civilization which had outstripped the capacity for historical insight. This would certainly explain as a failure of ruling class culture the diplomatic July Crisis, which preceded the unleashing of the guns of August 1914.

The barren rhetorical arguments passing current as political and diplomatic discourse suggest that such issues may be recurrent in what passes for the 'Western Civilization' beloved of conservative extremists as they go their warmongering way. One thing is sure. There is no current world issue which can be resolved by unhistorical thinking and going to war. The prevention of unnecessary wars is among the uses of history.



**Fulfillment: winning and losing in one-click America
Alec MacGillis, Scribe Publications 2021**



Alec MacGillis appeared on-stream at Adelaide Writers Week in March.

He is a senior reporter for *ProPublica* and the recipient of honours such as the George Polk Award and the Robin Toner prize. He worked previously at *The Washington Post*, *Baltimore Sun*, and *The New Republic*, and his journalism has appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*, *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, and other publications. His *ProPublica* reporting on Dayton, Ohio was the basis of a PBS Frontline documentary about the city. He lives in Baltimore.

In 1937, the famed writer and activist Upton Sinclair published a novel bearing the subtitle *A Story of Ford-America*. He blasted the callousness of a company worth ‘a billion dollars’ that underpaid its workers while forcing them to engage in repetitive and sometimes dangerous assembly-line labour. Eighty-three years later, the market capitalisation of Amazon.com has exceeded one trillion dollars, while the value of the Ford Motor Company hovers around thirty billion. We have, it seems, entered the age of one-click America - and as the coronavirus makes Americans more dependent on online shopping, its sway will only intensify.

Alec MacGillis’s *Fulfillment* is not another inside account or exposé of our most conspicuously dominant company. Rather, it is a literary investigation of the America that falls within that company’s growing shadow. As MacGillis shows, Amazon’s sprawling network of delivery hubs, data centres, and corporate campuses epitomises a land where winner and loser cities and regions are drifting steadily apart, the civic fabric is unravelling, and work has become increasingly rudimentary and isolated.

Ranging across the country, MacGillis tells the stories of those who’ve thrived and struggled to thrive in this rapidly changing environment. In Seattle, high-paid workers in new office towers displace a historic black neighbourhood. In suburban Virginia, homeowners try to protect their neighbourhood from the environmental impact of a new data centre. Meanwhile, in El Paso, small office-supply firms seek to weather Amazon’s takeover of government procurement, and in Baltimore a warehouse supplants a fabled steel plant. *Fulfillment* also shows how Amazon has become a force in Washington, DC, ushering readers through a revolving door for lobbyists and government contractors and into CEO Jeff Bezos’s lavish Kalorama mansion.

With empathy and breadth, MacGillis demonstrates the hidden human costs of the other inequality - not just the growing gap between rich and poor, but the gap between the country’s winning and losing regions. The result is an intimate account of contemporary capitalism: its drive to innovate, its dark, pitiless magic, and its remaking of America with every click.

Post Script:

- Ironically, you can buy this book on the *Amazon* site!
- For some good news about Amazon workers click [here](#).

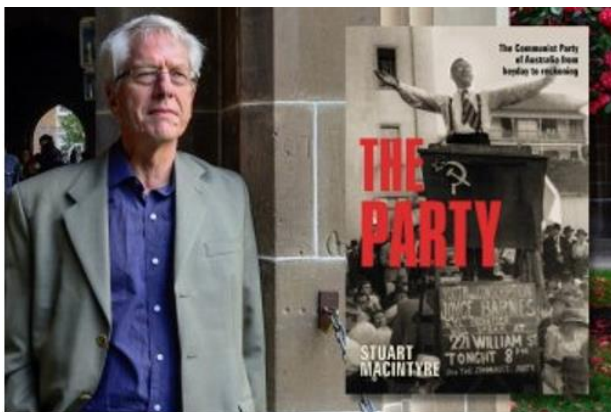
'Big Jim' Healy

Your name lingers long after you,
big fellow. Long after your dust
has settled on our waterfront
your name evokes enlightenment,
stalwart like the Rhodian titan,
glowing with the unforgettable
ethos of another age, when tribunes
gave counsel without losing
the common touch, leading
without atavism or dissimulation,
first among equals, guiding
the rank and file amongst
the historical fog of the future,
seeing life through.

David Faber



James "Big Jim" Healy (22 March 1898 – 13 July 1961) was an Australian trade unionist and communist activist. Healy served as General Secretary of the [Waterside Workers' Federation of Australia](#) from 1937 to his death in 1961, a period when the union recovered from its defeat in the 1928 waterfront strike to become one of the most powerful trade unions in Australia. Healy was one of the most prominent public representatives of the communist movement in Australia during the [Cold War](#). *Wikipedia*



A league of his own
Stuart Macintyre's final volume –
The Party

by [Sheila Fitzpatrick](#) • *Australian Book*

Stuart Macintyre was in a league of his own as a historian of communism. That's not just a comment on his status as a historian of the Communist Party of Australia, whose first volume, [The Reds](#) (1999), took the party from its origins in 1920 to brief illegality at the beginning of World War II, and whose second, *The Party*, covering the period from the 1940s to the end of the 1960s, now appears posthumously. It applies equally to his stature in the international field of the history of communism. There are plenty of Cold War histories of the communist movement, written from outside in severely judgemental mode. There are also laudatory histories, written from within. But when *The Reds* appeared, it was, to my knowledge, the first history of a communist party anywhere that succeeded in *normalising* it as a historical topic, that is, writing neither in a spirit of accusation or exculpation but with critical detachment and scrupulous regard for evidence and its contradictions.

Some might say this is an old-fashioned historical method. In the first place, they would say, advocacy (the alternative method) plays a moral role in exposing evil and helping to redress historic injustices. In the second place, historians always have their biases, so they might as well reveal them. Macintyre (who once edited a book called *The Historian's Conscience*, 2004) was a historian to whom the moral question mattered, but he thought that part of the historian's moral imperative was not to distort the evidence to support a one-sided picture. As for his own potential biases, he makes sure the reader knows about them by identifying himself up front as a youthful communist (of 1968 student revolution vintage) who, after a decade, left the party but remained a socialist. That done, he sets out to trace the party's postwar history in his historian's voice – detached, critical, but also empathetic.

The Reds was a story of success, of a marginal political group gathering a bit of traction during the Depression and then, after the brief period of illegality, experiencing a dramatic rise in popularity and influence during World War II. The connection with Moscow and its international arm, the Comintern, had previously caused problems as Moscow periodically reversed course on crucial issues such as whether communist parties could cooperate with other parties of the left. The Soviets' 1939 Non-Aggression Pact with the Nazis left communists in Australia, as elsewhere, particularly off balance. From 1940–42, the party was formally illegal in Australia, but its emergence from semi-underground seems only to have added momentum to its subsequent wartime success – tripling of membership to more than 20,000, high national visibility, considerable influence in the trade unions, and a surprising ability to keep on good terms with the governing Labor Party.



Marx House (National Archives of Australia, A705 171/94/413, from the book under review)

The Party, by contrast, is a story of decline and fall, starting with the high point at the end of the war, running through the successive setbacks and disasters of the Cold War, and ending with disillusionment with Moscow and a return to marginality at the end of the 1960s. By 1949, party membership was half what it had been at the beginning of the decade, and it had dropped further to four to five thousand by the mid-1960s. The glory days of the mid-1940s are eloquently evoked by Macintyre's prose, but for anyone who lived through the Cold War it is an image that has the most shock value: the plate between pages 242 and 243 showing a five-storey building on Sydney's George Street with a sign visible from afar that proudly reads 'AUSTRALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE'. That building, bought by the Communist Party for £30,000 in 1944 and named 'Marx House', had once housed a bookshop, a cafeteria, and lecture halls, as well as party offices. It was sold in 1949, after a raid by the Commonwealth Investigation Service, an event soon followed by the breaking of the miners' strike that marked the beginning of the end for the Communist Party.

As Macintyre points out, the Cold War – when anti-communism became a defining characteristic of Western democracy – arrived later in Australia than in the United States and the United Kingdom. But by 1949 its presence was pervasive: calls for a ban on the Communist Party were gaining traction, though still resisted by the Chifley government, and the Victorian state government launched a Royal Commission on communism. Labor's defeat in the 1949 federal election brought in the Menzies government, which, with the advent of the Korean War, declared Australia to be at war with international communism. The Australian Communist Party came under close surveillance by the new and tougher Commonwealth security service that had replaced CIS – the Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), headed by Colonel Spry. In April 1950, Menzies introduced the Communist Party Dissolution Bill, and the party prepared for a new period of illegality. Unexpectedly, the referendum on the bill failed, and the party remained legal – just. In 1954 came the defection of a Soviet diplomat and undercover intelligence agent, Vladimir Petrov, prompting a Commonwealth Royal Commission on Espionage in which a spy ring headed by Communist official Wally Clayton was named and the party's reputation hopelessly tarnished.

In the next phase of the party's story, mainly out of the public eye, internal problems come to the fore. Moscow's authority in the international communist movement was eroded in 1956, first by Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin's crimes and then by the sending of Soviet troops to Hungary to keep the satellite state in line. The Sino-Soviet split followed at the beginning of the 1960s, with Mao Zedong offering a challenge and alternative to Soviet ideological primacy. The sending of Soviet troops to Czechoslovakia in 1968 was the last straw for many Australian communists.

Drawing on Communist party records held by the Search Foundation, the records of ASIO's detailed surveillance held in the National Archives of Australia, and extensive interviews with former and

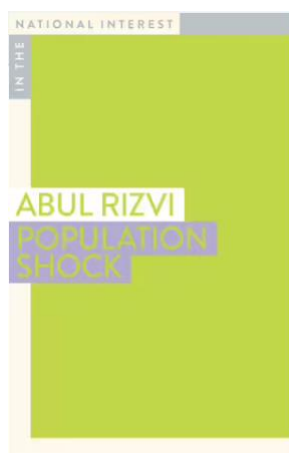
present party members, *The Party* gives a definitive account of the history of the Australian Communist Party from World War II to the beginning of the 1970s, encompassing its role in Australian politics, its relationship with the Soviet Union, and its internal factional struggles. But that is not all. One of Macintyre's central purposes in writing *The Party* was to capture the lived experience of being a party member. That experience included voluntary submission to a strict disciplinary regime – essentially self-discipline, as Macintyre points out, since Moscow had no real means of enforcing obedience – and a lot of ritual obeisance. It included idealistic willingness to make sacrifices for the cause, which, to its adherents, meant not only power to the workers but also defence of the rights of women, Aboriginal Australians, and other oppressed groups; support of colonial liberation and international peace movements; opposition to the White Australia policy; community plans for neighbourhood improvement; and a range of 'progressive' initiatives.

For working-class members, the party offered education and self-esteem; 'changed us from headbutting incompetents to thinking strategists', as one long-time member put it. Its members felt that their lives had meaning because history was on their side. In the 1950s, with the Soviet Union no longer either a Western ally or an unchallengeable moral authority, 'the correlation between history and communism began to come unstuck'. That was the product of external developments, but overall *The Party* is definitely an Australian story. Perhaps 100,000 Australians were party members at some time in their lives (dropping out was as much part of the typical experience as joining). In the last sentences of his book, Macintyre seems, uncharacteristically, to be striking a note of pathos: 'Now ageing, those who joined in the 1940s could still recall the mass rallies during the war against fascism, the spectacle of national congresses that filled the Sydney Town Hall, the hundreds of community plans distributed at the end of the war, the meaning and purpose they found in carrying out their duties.' But immediately there is a wry switch (or double switch) of tone: 'Sooner or later, the overwhelming majority [of party members] left, but not before leaving their mark on this country.'

Stuart Macintyre himself, one of the great Australian historians of his generation, certainly left such a mark. We can only be grateful that, refusing to bend to the cancer that killed him in late 2021, he managed to finish this book. Nobody else could have written it.

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The Onions of Wrath? The perversion of Australia's skills-based immigration program and the degradation of the social institution of employment – a review of *Population Shock* by Abul Rizvi (Monash University Publishing, in the National Interest series, 2021, 40pp



Long-term population directions, in terms of both size and age composition, drive the destiny of all nations. While for decades we have worried about global overpopulation, it is far more likely that the period 1950–2050 will be an extraordinary population growth shock, culminating in severe population ageing and then decline. This shock will have four stages aligned with the stages of the life cycle of the baby boomers: childhood, adulthood, old age and death.

Dr Abul Rizvi, former Deputy Secretary of the Department of Immigration, has been integral to the development and implementation of immigration policy, in particular Australia's focus on skilled migration. In this book he provides a startling warning of the disruption to Western economies caused by population decline corresponding to final the stages of the life cycle of the postwar baby boomers.

The underlying assumption of the book is that people - particularly workers - are essential to economic development. Rizvi's explanation of population shock is like the layers of an onion: economic growth depends on population demographics, which depends on the ageing and skills of the population, and that is complemented by a well-managed immigration program, which requires a sound visa system. As each layer of the immigration onion is peeled off, Rizvi provides ample data to back his analysis, and when the reader's interest in statistics flags it is refreshed with an ironic quip or witty story.

Rizvi traces the contribution of immigration policy to Australia's economic development over the last 100 years in four stages - the first three making a positive contribution, but the fourth stage, which coincided with the Tampa crisis and the persecution of asylum seekers via Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs), has begun to turn rotten. The nadir of this LNP corruption of immigration so far, is the rorting of asylum seeker visas by agribusiness labour-hire contractors who traffic cheap, low-skill labour, mostly (60%) from Malaysia and China, to work on farms and in meat-works for very low pay and in very poor conditions.

These trafficked people are not to be confused with the much earlier waves of genuine asylum seekers who came to Australia by boat - that is an entirely different story with contrary implications for economic development. Visa approval rates for the previous four waves of asylum seekers was eventually well over 90% - approval rates for the latest fifth wave are generally below 5%. This disparity is accentuated by the length of time involved in visa application. In 2020-21, the approval rate for "asylum seekers" from China and Malaysia was 2%, but the median waiting time for a decision at the AAT was 104 weeks, so half of the appellants had had two years or more in which to work on farms or in meat-works before their appeal was refused. This AAT waiting time occurs after some considerable DHA waiting time. In addition, some 11% withdrew their appeals before a decision was made.

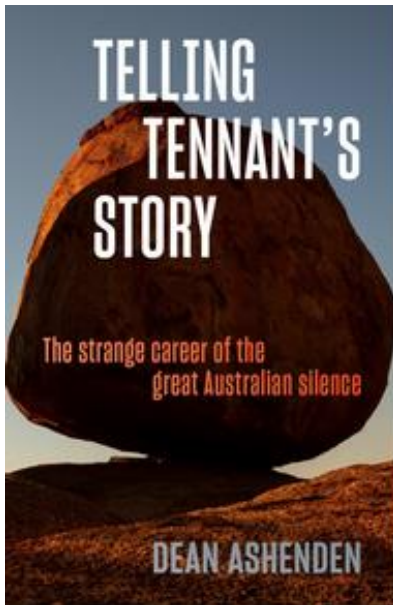
The trafficked workers are flown to Australia on Visitor visas, then coached to make sham applications for asylum visas to DHA and subsequent appeals to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. The backlog of sham applications and subsequent appeals ensures that they have many months of waiting for a decision, during which time they are over-worked and under-paid until the end of the picking or slaughtering season. Then they are abandoned in rural areas - destitute, homeless, jobless, stateless, with little or no English, few skills - and no vote. They become a reserve army of (seasonally) unemployed and part of the 1.7 million temporary residents (including overseas students) currently living in the Australian community with no ongoing attachment to Australian society.

In October 2020, Rizvi estimated that 62,000 people on Visitor visas had just let their visas expire in the past, and had become unlawful non-citizens or over-stayers; 37,000 "asylum seekers" were awaiting a DHA decision, 30,000 "asylum seekers" were awaiting an AAT decision: and upwards of 23,500 unsuccessful "asylum seekers" remained in Australia because the cost of deporting them is prohibitive and some countries, such as Iran, won't have them back. Many of these people are working in the informal economy or in the labour black-market, particularly on farms, in meat-works, in restaurants, and in massage parlours.

Many of the farmers who employ this trafficked indentured labour might wish to treat them more humanely, but cannot afford to because their contracts with the great Australian supermarket duopoly have no fair employment clauses, the trafficked workers have no bargaining power, and the agri-business labour-hire contractors grow fat on exploitation. In 2020, the farm lobby pressed Nats' Minister Littleproud to canvass the possibility of an amnesty for these trafficked workers (so that the employing farmers would no longer have to worry about being fined by the Fair Work Ombudsman for illegal hiring) but Liberal Ministers Cash and Dutton killed the proposal. No doubt Dutton did not want it revealed that while he was furiously searching the sea for boats, thousands of asylum seekers were breaching border security over his head in planes.

This dumping of the destitute, after using them up as sweated labour in dangerous workplaces, completely perverts the purpose of a skills-based immigration program and leads to the degradation of the social institution of employment in Australia. It is a modern Australian re-run of *The Grapes of Wrath* in thirties America.

Pat Wright



Telling Tennant's Story: The Strange Career of the Great Australian Silence, Dean Ashenden Black Inc. 2002

‘A graceful, unostentatiously scholarly, wise (and highly readable) book on a subject of overwhelming and enduring significance for all Australians.’ —Robert Manne



Dean Ashenden has worked as an academic and a political adviser, and in journalism. He has written for *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *The Australian*, *Guardian Australia*, *The Financial Review*, *Inside Story*, *Meanjin*, *Crikey* & *History Australia*

Tennant Creek and Australia's Unresolved Past

Returning after fifty years to the frontier town where he lived as a boy, Dean Ashenden finds Tennant Creek transformed, but its silence about the past still mostly intact. Provoked by a half-hidden account, Ashenden sets out to understand how the story of 'relations between two racial groups within a single field of life' (WEH Stanner) has been told and not told, in this town and across the nation.

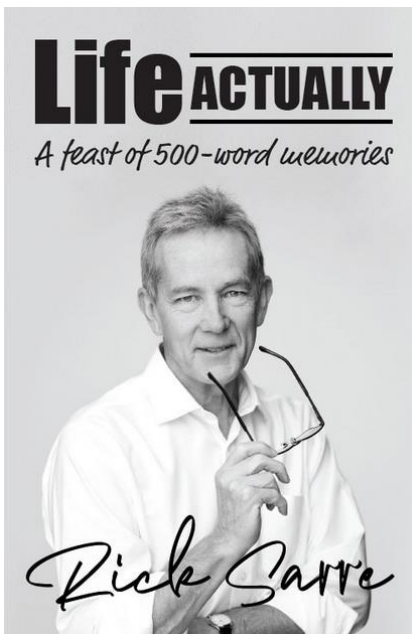
In a riveting combination of memoir, reportage and political and intellectual history, Ashenden traces the strange career of the great Australian silence – from its beginnings in the first encounters of black and white, through the work of the early anthropologists, the historians and the courts in landmark cases about land rights and the Stolen Generations, to still-continuing controversy.

In a moving finale, Ashenden goes back to Tennant Creek once more to meet for the first time some of his Aboriginal contemporaries from childhood, and to ask how the truths of Australia's story can best be told.

Dean Ashenden will be speaking at the June 19th meeting of LHSSA

See also: [Uncomfortable truths from a town to a nation](#) - the storytelling in Tennant Creek is a microcosm of Australia's struggle to come to terms with its past

Dean Ashenden, University of Melbourne



Life Actually: A feast of 500-word memories

Rick Sarre

Published by MOONGLOW Macclesfield 2021

An Emeritus Professor of Law at the University of South Australia, Rick Sarre has been the 'go to' legal commentator on ABC local radio for two decades, and a regular contributor on legal matters for *The Conversation* and *The Advertiser*. Now retired, he has written a series of personal reflections on education, politics, history, sport, religion, legal practice, academia, travel, and family life.

Rick admits that in many ways he has had a charmed life, but he has never lost the drive to help create a fairer and more just society for all, campaigning for human rights and victim support services, as well as being a seasoned campaigner for the ALP. In politics he has run for the seat of Sturt and most recently for the State seat of Bragg. We also learn that in the past Rick was a reasonable footballer but "could have been better if he worked a little more on his disposal". Rick is a member of the Labor History Society (SA).

A delightful and easy read, this book covers the adventures (and misadventures) of Rick's life - each vignette being told in 500 words. The book covers his first memories of childhood through to a very thought-provoking epilogue. There are many humorous stories, two of which I found very funny. Whilst running for the Federal seat of Sturt in 2010 and having door knocked very many doors, he had a one-on-one conversation with the (now late) Bob Hawke. Rick asked Bob whether he thought doorknocking was a good strategy Bob's reply was: "Don't ask me - I have never knocked on a door in my life!".

The other amusing tale was when Rick and family were living in Sweden and the day before the feast of Saint Lucia (a Christian ritual day held in December) one of his colleagues informed him that it was custom that new members of staff had a visit from the families of the faculty on Lucia Day, announcing: "We will visit about 6 tomorrow but do not tell your wife Debra as it should be a surprise". Rick decided it must be 6 in the evening - it was so dark and cold in the mornings. The following morning they were fast asleep when there was loud banging - it was 6 am and all the faculty families were there at the front door. Oh, what a surprise for Rick and Debra!

As the nights draw in, this is the ideal book to curl up with and learn a great deal about Rick Sarre and his life.

Reviewer: Doug Melvin

[A sad note: Rick Sarre's father died last month; his obituary appeared in *The Adelaide Advertiser* on April 16]



Jack Cross, AM
Educator and historian
Born: Dec 16, 1930 Stone Hut
Died: Jan 20 2022 Adelaide

Across a long, wide-ranging productive life, Jack Cross remained committed to his two passions “The noble art of face to face teaching and the study of history as a source of wisdom”. Jack attended a German Lutheran school near Appila and then Immanuel College, his fees subsidised by a kind neighbour. Jack went on to Adelaide Teachers College and the University of Adelaide. Jack taught in Darwin and Alice Springs and in his late 20s received a post graduate research scholarship to study the colonisation of the Northern Territory.

In 1969 Jack joined the staff of Western Teachers College and he became a member of the inaugural board which established *Tauondi*, the Aboriginal Community College now at Port Adelaide. He then served for 20 years as head of studies in education at the Underdale campus of Torrens College of Education, a precursor institution of the University of South Australia. Here he supported development of the *Anangu* Teachers Education Program for Indigenous teachers in the APY Lands.

Jack was a founding member of the National Tertiary Education Union and later of the Friends of SA Archives, serving more than 20 years as President (1999-2021). He also served on the SA Classification of Publications Board, the Nurses Registration Board and the board of the WEA for which he compiled a centenary history. A life member of the WEA, the University of the Third Age and the Friends of the State Library, Jack became a Member of the Order of Australia for his service to Further Education. Jacks passion for teaching inspired several generations across this state, and his contribution and passion lives on through his writing. His books include two family histories, *Schooling: the Conflict of Belief* 1975, *Great Central State: the foundation of the Northern Territory* 2011, and *Labour and Learning: 100 years of the WEA of SA* 2013.

Sue Marks

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Peter Laurie Burns (1930-2022):
Historian, teacher and academic entrepreneur

His colleagues comment:

The death of Peter Burns marks the passing of one the significant characters among South Australian academics. He was a great lecturer, mentor, promoter of causes, raconteur, sharp wit, academic entrepreneur, and often just a noted and positive *presence*.

Peter was a superb motivator with a formidable intellectual grasp. He was the driving force behind the team that taught *Old Societies and New States*, one of the most successful and long-lasting First Year introductory courses in the then closely aligned Departments of History and Politics at Adelaide University. Peter’s flair for academic entrepreneurship was highlighted through his interest in the

history of trade ceramics from South East Asia which - in close cooperation with the Art Gallery of South Australia - led to the establishment of the Research Centre for South East Asian Ceramics. The Thai ceramics project was notable for its cross disciplinary nature, with historians, archaeologists, physicists and others involved.

Peter also had an important input into the general administration of the University. He was a strong proponent of Women's Studies and helped support the establishment of the Research Centre for Women's Studies in 1982. Moreover, when Adelaide Uni experimented with Industrial Democracy in its governance during the 1980s, Peter Burns was Executive Member for University Staffing.

A student reminisces on Peter Burns as a teacher, mentor and friend:

I was greatly saddened by the news of Peter's death. I am very glad that I, and my close friend Andy Alcock who also knew Peter from days gone by, were able to spend several hours with him about six months before he died. Both Andy and I regret missing another chance to reminisce with Peter. We both had things we wanted to further discuss with him.

My wife Julie and I first encountered him when we were undergraduate students in the 1960s and 70s. We both remember him as a delightfully eccentric slightly bohemian lecturer and tutor. At that time he was living in Adelaide on a shoe string and we both recall his often ingenious and resourceful tips for living cheaply in line with the counter-cultural spirit of the times. Julie tells me that in one of her history tutorials with him in the late 1960s he had one of his babies with him and was every inch the proud father at that time. And I recall his affection for his mother far away in Canada. He mentioned her often to me and was greatly saddened when she died.

At that time in the 1960s and 70s Adelaide University history students were most fortunate to be taught by high quality academics I remember my undergraduate history studies then as being characterized by a bold and exciting intellectual ethos of which Peter was very much a part - an ethos which contrasted sharply with the stultifying regimented schooling I had endured in the early post war decades before that. During my history honours course in 1976 I got to know Peter more.

In the 1980s my MA history thesis on the Northern Malay States turned out to be very prolonged and I am indebted to Peter enormously for staying the course with me on that. When Peter undertook my MA supervision in the early to mid-1980s the decline of humanities in universities was gathering pace and Adelaide University's History Department was no exception. In all that time Peter never wavered in his support for me until I completed my thesis in 1997 despite the wider pressures on him and his teaching colleagues. It was very like him, I think, that he chose positive and constructive ways of advancing the fortunes of a fine university history department against a rising tide of neo liberal un-enlightenment in the closing decades of last century when I was working on my thesis with him.

For me he has remained something of a role model for historical writing. I greatly admired his scholarship - more recently in the book he contributed to with Roger Knight and others entitled, *Capitalism and Colonial Production*, and a related paper which he originally gave some years earlier in Mexico and which was to me a significant contribution to our understanding of fractious grassroots social relations in our region in the late 20C, and particularly for Malaya/Malaysia.

He was always urging me in the direction of rational, well expressed, lucid, prose with arguments based on historical evidence as much as possible as being the way towards true enlightenment in our shared academic area of study. To me he was a gentle thinker and mentor - rigorously academic and persuasive - especially on Malaysian history - and more generally with his other scholarly endeavours for which he will long be revered and remembered. I remember Peter with considerable affection - for his mischievous personality, fine mind and unstinting generosity with his time. So, farewell dear friend and mentor. As my History tutor and supervisor you made a big difference to my life. **Terry Hewton**

Barely a week ago the half-arsed Australian media gave way to their instinctive knee-jerk campaign-mode reaction.

At least 75% of the Australian media is owned by an informal gang of million/billionaires, not all of them Australian citizens or resident here, and almost all the rest dependent on government funding. So not surprisingly (though often against the evident choices of their staff) the media directors drove the debate over Australia's future - upon which rests the quality of our lives and of all who come after us - down to the level of suggesting the election could (and perhaps even should) be settled by who knew, when asked on the spot, the unemployment rate figure.

Promoting a focus on trivia is the daily bread of the overwhelming bulk of Australia's news media outlets, and so the clumsiness on the part of a lacklustre Leader of the Opposition became the key theme of the first week of the 2022 campaign. The Leader then obliged by continuing to be clumsy and spectacularly slow on his feet throughout the days that followed.

Albanese's silly error played straight into the hands of his opponent, the most-damaging PM from any Party in the half-century of my adult life. "He got it wrong not by *this* much ... but by thaaaat much", chants the smirking Chief Clown, a triumphal line repeated daily on TV and in the Press. A couple of sleeps later, the Chief Clown himself makes the matching blunder by wrongly naming dollars paid to the long-term unemployed population. The Carney Clown's error was to proudly boast of a payment equal to *one-seventh* of the actual starvation-level paid to those suffering destitution and disappointment day in and day out. The margin of the Clown's error is nearly 85%.

So what will happen tomorrow? Will we continue to see the Clown's boo-boo played again and again, with commentary highlighting it and casting a shadow over the perpetrator? Will we see a flood of media emanating from the Labor campaign team and picked up for its entertainment value, using the catchy and immediately-recognisable line, "Aahh, yes, but ScoMo got it wrong by thiiiiissss muuuuuuch", illustrated by arms spread a country mile apart, followed by the text "Underpaying our unemployed neighbours does more harm to this country and the quality of life of our fellow Australians than not quite knowing how many of them who can't get a job at all". Some smaller print might add: "Fact is fewer people are looking for work due to the banning of immigrants and the 120,000 Australian citizens who have left the country for a better life overseas, so of course the unemployment figure has fallen."

What do you think you'll see on your morning papers or breakfast TV tomorrow and the next day? Will the second man's blunder suddenly make such errors of little consequence and so beneath notice?

I'm ropeable. I just can't take any more of the incomprehensible laziness or clumsiness of the Labor campaign team. Looks to me like it is run by a bunch of Commerce graduates used to selling funeral insurance. So angry and so old-fashioned am I that I've just sent a 15-shilling postal note to campaign HQ with the suggestion that they sack all the PR wizards and get somebody on board who hasn't entirely left their working class upbringing, empathy and cheeky style behind.

The old Australia is dying, but not yet dead. The fight for something just a sliver better than what we've got - and that's what is on offer from Labor Lite at present - isn't a morale-boosting rallying cry. Toss in a bit of quick bare-knuckle stuff into the mix to reflate our spirits and our hopes. Mix it up a bit. There's more than one audience out there. Reduce the *Politeness*, Sharpen the *Purpose*. Put some *Love* and some *Fun* into the fight for chrissake.

Brian 19 April