Mrs Hawke pays tribute to Curtin

On the anniversary of John Curtin’s death, JCPML Patron, the Hon. Gough Whitlam, and Mrs Hazel Hawke paid tribute to this great Australian prime minister. In his introduction to Mrs Hawke, Mr Whitlam also talked about the contribution women had made to politics in Australia.

Then, taking as her theme In search of the light on the hill, Mrs Hawke spoke eloquently about how ‘the light on the hill’ has become a symbolic phrase representing the hope, idealism and equity which continue to inspire the labour movement. ‘I have come to identify the phrase “the light on the hill” with Curtin in my own mind, as much as with Chifley,’ she said, explaining that when Curtin was prime minister he chose to sleep in a small bedroom in the Lodge from which he could see the beacon of the light tower on top of the surrounding hills. ‘Some nights I used to sit in this room with [my] grandsons, and look out at the light. I would think of it as the light on the hill; and I would think of Curtin—alone in that room at night, carrying the burdens and responsibilities of a wartime leader that weighed so heavily on him—and I would imagine that perhaps he was thinking of his wife Elsie, and his children, in far away Perth.’

Speaking to a capacity crowd of more than 270 people, Mrs Hawke outlined her vision for the future and what that phrase should mean to Australia as the new millennium approaches. ‘We must look forward, we must seek, we must hope; but we must do this in a spirit of compassion, and with a sense of inclusion. It must be a journey not only for the bold and the brave, the healthy and the strong. The whole of this nation, in all its diversity, must be on board,’ she said.

The event was filmed by Curtin University for later broadcasting on the new community television station, Channel 31. Transcripts of both Mr Whitlam’s talk and Mrs Hawke’s speech are available on the JCPML website under ‘What’s New’.

Hawke Donation

A donation of research papers from Mrs Hazel Hawke has been significant in developing the JCPML collection in one of its focal areas, namely the prime ministership as an office. These papers document Mrs Hawke’s time at the prime minister’s Lodge and include a comprehensive set of speeches that she delivered during this time (1983-1991). Other papers in the collection include photographs and correspondence.

Mrs Hawke has chosen to donate these papers to the JCPML in order to keep the papers within Western Australia where she was born and raised.

As part of her strong interest and involvement with community and social issues, Mrs Hawke has also worked collaboratively with us to instigate the Hazel Hawke Scholarship. This initiative has been sponsored by BankWest, Curtin University and Mrs Hawke.
From the Director's Desk ...

The last three months have been extremely rewarding, culminating in a memorable Anniversary Lecture and the launch of the JCPML Electronic Research Archive and our online exhibition—John Curtin: Fairest and best—on the internet. The completion of these projects demonstrates how innovative use of information technology can extend access to JCPML programs and services.

It was wonderful to meet so many JCPML friends at our annual Anniversary event on 5 July—this very special time when we commemorate the death of John Curtin and reflect on the qualities of vision, leadership and community service that are so intimately linked with his name. We were privileged to have Mrs Hazel Hawke deliver such an inspiring lecture and delighted that our patron, the Hon. Gough Whitlam, was able to share this special day with us again this year.

In addition, July proved timely to announce two exciting new initiatives: firstly the donation to the JCPML of significant research papers relating to Mrs Hawke; and secondly the development by Curtin University, BankWest and Mrs Hawke of a scholarship designed to encourage a student from a disadvantaged background to undertake an undergraduate degree at Curtin.

Our schools program is proving to be very popular and our involvement in the Curtin academic program is gradually increasing. JCPML staff also played an active role in the Sir Charles Court Young Leaders' Program run by Curtin University in July.

Finally, it's a great pleasure to welcome Associate Professor David Black's appointment as the 1999 JCPML Scholar. He will be conducting a research project which he hopes will culminate in a future publication. We are also celebrating the good news that our application for a Centenary of Federation Community Project grant has been successful as this will provide vital funding to develop a new exhibition in 2000.

Sue White,
Acting JCPML Director

New ERA launched on the internet

In July, after successful data migration to new software, the JCPML's Electronic Research Archive (ERA) was launched on the internet. JCPML staff have spent considerable time developing the front pages to help users navigate the system and obtain the best results from their searches. More than 10,000 digitised documents, representing 97% of the JCPML collection and composed of images and textual information, are now available online.

Feedback and constructive comments from all users are welcomed. ERA can be accessed from the JCPML website at: http://john.curtin.edu.au.

JCPML Success with Grant

Months of intensive work by JCPML staff were rewarded in July with the news that the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library has been awarded a $20,000 grant from the Federation Community Projects program.

The purpose of the grant is to develop a new exhibition focusing on the debated issues of Federation and their influence on developing John Curtin's political idealism. The exhibition will be open to the community and will also provide an educational base for use with the JCPML education programs.

The exhibition is due to open next year.
History Challenge

This year the JCPML has again joined forces with the History Teachers’ Association of WA to participate in the National History Challenge. As well as hosting the judging and presentation processes, this year the JCPML is sponsoring a national prize for entries focusing on a significant Australian event connected with the life and times of John Curtin.

The theme for the 1999 History Challenge is ‘working together’ and this is particularly appropriate for a prime minister whose inspirational leadership and political courage unified Australians into ‘pulling together’ to weather the crisis of World War Two. The JCPML hopes that this special category will offer young students great scope to reflect on Australian history and politics during a span of sixty years covering Curtin’s life and times from 1885 to 1945. The JCPML has received many enquiries from teachers and students working on this category and it is hoped that students have found it an enjoyable and rewarding experience.

JCPML Scholar Appointed for 1999

Associate Professor David Black has been appointed the 1999 JCPML Scholar.

Associate Professor Black lectures in history and political studies at Curtin University and is currently acting as Historical Consultant for the JCPML. He is a well-known author and has previously written about Curtin’s speeches and editorials in his book, In his own words.

During the last half of 1999 Associate Professor Black will be spending time at the JCPML on a research project involving John Curtin which he hopes will result in the publication of a book.

JCPML Memorabilia Now Available

The JCPML has recently launched some items of JCPML memorabilia to help promote the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library around Australia. The articles for sale include postcards and mugs.

The mugs are decorated with Curtin’s handwritten comments—Yr affectionate friend, John Curtin P.S. Give me a cup of tea some time—and are sold individually for $10. They can be purchased by visiting the JCPML or the Cabinet giftshop in the John Curtin Building at Curtin University of Technology.

The postcards feature photographs from the JCPML collection in two different designs—one is a stylish sepia series and the other is an upbeat, colourful set of designs. The full set of six cards retails for only $7.50 including postage and handling.

Enquiries to purchase JCPML postcards should be directed to Raylene Houghton at (08) 9266 7235 or fax (08) 9266 3213. Alternatively you can simply complete and return the enclosed order form to order your postcards. Credit card facilities are available for purchases of two or more sets.
Online Exhibition Established

With sponsorship from Touchstone Colour and Insight Communication & Design, the exhibition situated in the JCPML Challenge Bank Researchers Lounge has been transformed into an online exhibition which can be visited by users around the world.

Entitled John Curtin: Fairest and best, the exhibition features photographs from the JCPML collection and looks behind the public persona to give a brief glimpse into the personal life of John Curtin.

Check out this new online exhibition under ‘What’s New’ on our website: http://john.curtin.edu.au.

New Computer Available for Visitors

Recent visitors to the JCPML exhibition will have noticed a new computer at the entrance to the exhibition.

The computer has been provided to enable visitors to check out new additions to the JCPML website, such as Mrs Hawke’s anniversary speech and the online exhibition, John Curtin: Fairest and best. As well, users can access the Electronic Research Archive (ERA) and browse through the JCPML collection online.

Contributions & Support since April 1999

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