

Anniversary Lecture 2005

A Confident and Distinctive Foreign Policy

On July 5 Dr Ashton Calvert, Secretary of the Dept. of Foreign Affairs and Trade 1998-2005, gave the 2005 Anniversary Lecture marking the 60th year since John Curtin's death. The lecture was delivered in the presence of the Hon. Gough Whitlam and a response was made by Prof. Peter Cook. Dr Calvert examined Curtin's legacy and the key features of Australia's foreign policy environment and advocated a confident pursuit of Australia's distinctive political and economic interests.

Dr Calvert began his lecture with a positive interpretation of Curtin's wartime leadership, arguing that 'Curtin succeeded in the main task facing his government from December 1941 onwards - that of steadying a very anxious nation and putting the national economy on a full war footing'.

Curtin's decision to bring the 7th Division AIF back to Australia in 1942 was used to illustrate the advantages of a clear understanding of Australia's own national interests and a willingness to forge alliances to further these interests. Curtin's decision 'reflected a considered view of how Australia's particular national interest differed from the wider imperial interest. In Curtin's time, as now, Australia had strategic and economic interests that were global in scale and far beyond the capacity of what Australia itself was single-handedly capable of defending. Then, as now, it made great sense for Australia to operate in collaboration with like-minded countries with which our interests were closely aligned'.

Dr Calvert argued that 'the main lesson to emerge from Curtin's experience as Prime Minister is the importance of Australia's having reliable international allies and partners, and the equal importance of maintaining a clear-sighted view of situations where Australia's particular national interests might differ from those of our allies and partners'.

In a foreign policy environment characterised by an increasingly globalised world economy, the continuing strategic and economic pre-eminence of the United States, the steady rise in China's economic weight and international

standing and a complex international security outlook, Dr Calvert counselled a similarly distinctive and confident approach.

Dr Calvert argued that a distinctive foreign policy is one that is premised on an understanding that Australia shares values and strategic and economic interests with many western countries of North America and Western Europe, but is located near Asia with many longstanding relationships with the countries of Asia. As he stated 'the interplay between the basic Western make-up of Australian society and its institutions and our wider associations, on the one hand, and the imperative of close engagement with Asia, on the other, lies at the very heart of Australian foreign policy'.

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Back, left to right: Curtin Deputy Vice-Chancellor Prof. Jeanette Hackett, Dr Ashton Calvert, Prof. Peter Cook and JCPML Director Imogen Garner. Front: the Hon. Gough Whitlam and Mrs Whitlam

John Curtin's death and funeral July 1945



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At 4 a.m. on 5 July 1945 at The Lodge in Canberra, Prime Minister John Curtin died from a heart attack. After leading Australia through the darkest hours of WWII, his death came only six weeks before the end of the war in the Pacific. The nation was stunned and mourned Curtin as a casualty of war, a man who gave his life for his country.

While Curtin's death shocked the nation it was not altogether unexpected. Curtin had shown signs of poor health since at least early 1944 and spent several weeks in a Melbourne hospital in November of that year. After he was admitted to hospital again on 29 April 1945 Curtin was aware that he had little time left. In late May, Curtin dictated his funeral arrangements to his private secretary Fred McLaughlin.

On the day following Curtin's death politicians and dignitaries crowded King's Hall in Canberra's Parliament House for a moving memorial service. Twelve fighter planes then escorted Curtin's body back to his home in Perth.

On 8 July Curtin was given a state funeral and was buried in the Karrakatta Cemetery in his own electorate of Fremantle. As his funeral procession slowly made its way to Karrakatta Cemetery, tens of thousands lined the streets to pay their respects.

On 18 July Curtin was honoured with a memorial service held in Westminster Abbey London - he is the only Australian ever to be honoured in this way.



Exhibitions at Old Parliament House

The John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library (JCPML) has been assisting Old Parliament House (OPH) staff with the development of two major exhibitions that feature material from the JCPML collection.

My Melancholy Duty: Menzies and Curtin in the Second World War is an exhibition that explores the role of Parliament and the leadership of the wartime prime ministers, Menzies and Curtin. Through a fascinating mix of a heritage setting, original objects, film and sound the exhibition gives an insight into the politics and personalities of this crucial time in Australia's history.

This exhibition features parts of the JCPML's *John Curtin's Legacy* exhibition which examine Curtin's leadership during World War Two and his achievements in international and domestic affairs. *My Melancholy Duty* will be on display at Old Parliament House from 2 August to 29 January 2006.

In addition, OPH is currently developing an exhibition focusing on the contribution made by the wives of Australian prime ministers. The exhibition will highlight the work prime ministers' wives do to support their husbands, satisfy media interest and assist various charities and social groups. The JCPML will contribute collection material on Elsie Curtin and on Hazel Hawke. The prime ministers' wives exhibition will be on display at OPH in early 2006.

JCPML's *The Art of the Possible* touring exhibition dates

Embassy of Australia, Washington
28 Mar - 22 Apr 2005

Center for Australian and New Zealand
Studies, Georgetown University
25 - 29 Apr 2005

Old Parliament House, Canberra
27 Jun - 29 Jul 2005

National Archives of Australia, Canberra
12 Aug - Sept 2005

Parliament House, Canberra
Oct - Nov 2005

Dept. of Foreign Affairs & Trade, Canberra
Dec 2005

Creswick Town Hall
Jan - Feb 2006

Alex McCallum

An extraordinary Western Australian

Alex McCallum, stalwart of the Western Australian labour movement, was an important mentor, colleague and long-time friend of John Curtin. The State of WA would have been the poorer without his contribution in the first four decades of the twentieth century - as a union leader, Cabinet Minister and head of the Agricultural Bank.

The McCallum papers, donated to the JCPML by the McCallum family in 2004, provide fascinating insights into this 'Yeoman of the Labor Guard'. Amongst the records are invitations and programs relating to official and social functions Alex McCallum attended, souvenirs of his travels abroad, political material including speeches, legislation and election flyers, items such as medallions, plaques, keys and trowels commemorating various events in his life, personal and political correspondence, family photographs and bound volumes of newspaper clippings mainly covering his time as Minister for Public Works, Labour, Water Supply and State Trading Concerns in the first and second Collier Governments. In addition, a diary and numerous photographs vividly portray the ambitious, and at times extremely arduous, 1926 North West and Kimberley tour he led as Minister for Works.

A new web resource

Alex McCallum: An extraordinary Western Australian showcases both the records and the life of this tireless worker for the labour cause. The publication draws on information collated by Carolyne McCallum (wife of Peter McCallum who is the grandson of Alex McCallum), the records themselves, published sources and other relevant material.

Born in South Australia in 1877, Alex McCallum moved to Perth in 1898 where he soon became involved in union organisation and the Labor

Party, becoming General Secretary of the WA labour movement in 1911 and entering State Parliament as the Member for South Fremantle in 1921. He served as a Cabinet Minister and later as Deputy Premier in two successive Collier Governments before resigning from Parliament to head the Agricultural Bank. His forceful character and diverse achievements are glimpsed in this excerpt from an article entitled 'Yeomen of the Labor Guard' published in the *Westralian Worker* of 30 April 1937:

'In the industrial sphere his achievements include the organising of many classes of previously unorganised workers, the conception and successful establishment of the Headquarters of the Labor Movement, the leadership and executive control of numerous industrial battles which laid the foundations of industrial unionism deep and lasting, the drafting and advocacy in the Arbitration Court of scores of industrial awards and agreements. Fearless in industrial fights, Mr McCallum was the best-hated man in the Movement by the employing class - but he was also the most feared man. In the political sphere he established a reputation as a logical and forceful debater...Two statutes are monuments to his capacity as a draftsman and his championship of Labor - the Arbitration Act and the Workers' Compensation Act, described by those best able to judge as the two best pieces of legislation of their kind in the world'.

Find out more about Alex McCallum by following the link under *What new on this site* on the JCPML website.

Right: Comemorative trowels given to Alex McCallum (JCPML00839/13 & JCPML00839/14). Insert: Alex McCallum 1928 (JCPML00830/75/12).



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A Confident and Distinctive Foreign Policy

A confident approach is one based on a positive outlook on our international interests, sure of the strengths of our institutions and secure in our strong domestic performance and international competitiveness. According to Dr Calvert, this confident approach has been facilitated by Australia's relatively strong economic growth, our leadership and professionalism in international policing and defence roles and our robust endurance of the East Asian financial crisis of 1997-8. He argued that policy makers and business have learned that 'Australia's international position is best advanced by being confident of Australia's ability to compete on its own merits in an era of globalisation' and that 'to succeed internationally, Australia needs to promote all its

significant relationships and interests at the same time, and not be deterred by thinking that advances in one area might have to be at the expense of others'.

Prof. Peter Cook provided a reply to Dr Calvert's lecture, praising his diplomacy and his subtle recasting of some of the key debates in Australian foreign policy, while challenging Dr Calvert's assessment of our Free Trade Agreement with the United States.

A video and full text version of the Anniversary Lecture is now available on the JCPML website under *What's new on this site*.

A new look for the JCPML website

with easier access to online educational activities

The JCPML website has a new look – you'll find it easier to navigate around the site and find the information you seek.

For teachers and students there's an additional bonus – the *Online Education Resources* are now easier to access. As well as a complete listing of all the web resources that offer online activities, educators can now readily find activities of particular types such as document interpretations, role plays, cartoon and picture interpretations, mathematics and time line activities and crosswords.

Two new educational resources are featured amongst these online activities.

Document studies: John Curtin's life and character is suitable for years 10-12 and features the ABC Radio National Hindsight documentary *Prime Minister John Curtin*, produced by Bill Bunbury in 2000. Background information for the document studies is based on a summary of the radio documentary and the final activity involves listening to the

radio program online. The document studies illuminate John Curtin's life and character using documents such as personal and political letters, parliamentary speeches, newspaper articles and oral histories.

Role play: An Extraordinary Allied Nations' Summit Meeting is suitable for years 10-12 and provides all the resources for a classroom role play. Primary and secondary source material enlivens the historical activities as students play the parts of members of the press gallery or delegates from Australia, Great Britain and the USA at an April 1942 summit meeting to discuss defence policy. In this enjoyable simulation game, students engage in research and role play, gaining insights into the events around Australia's decision in the 1940s to 'look to America'. The resource is available as a self contained freely downloadable pdf file.

Check out the new-look website. You'll find these online educational resources under *What's new on this site*.

Jacks or Better

The JCPML has recently had a new sculpture installed in one of its courtyards. The sculpture is by senior WA artist Lou Lambert and is titled *Jacks or Better*. The work was completed in 1994 and is composed of acacia xzophyllia, silky oak, steel, cast silicon and bronze wire mesh.

The work was installed by staff of the John Curtin Gallery and comes from Curtin University of Technology Art Collection. Curtin purchased many of Lou Lambert's works from the 1980's and 1990's.



Left to right: John Curtin Gallery Staff, Kate McMillan and Richie Kuhaupt and artist Lou Lambert

Contributions and Support since April 2005

Dr Ashton Calvert

Annette Cameron

Prof. Peter Cook

Joyce Jardine

JCPML Challenge Bank Reading Room Visitors

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