



Curtin University



JOHN CURTIN PRIME MINISTERIAL LIBRARY

# INFORMATION UPDATE

JULY 2011

Above: Hon Paul Keating speaking at the 2009 Anniversary Lecture

Below: Ambassador Jeffrey Bleich

## John Curtin's vision and leadership: Lessons for today

Jeffrey L. Bleich, Ambassador of the United States of America, will present the 13th JCPML Anniversary Lecture on Monday 8 August 2011. Ambassador Bleich will speak on the lessons that John Curtin's forward-looking vision holds for today's society and leaders, and the future challenges we should begin addressing now.

'One of the qualities that made John Curtin one of Australia's finest Prime Ministers was his visionary leadership. Curtin had an uncanny ability to see far beyond the immediate challenges, and the courage to prepare his country to meet future demands.'

Before taking up the post of Ambassador in November 2009, Mr Bleich had previously served as Special Counsel to the President at the White House. From 1995 to 2009, he was a litigation partner in the San Francisco office of Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP, where he was recognised as one of the nation's top lawyers.

Outside of his legal practice, Ambassador Bleich has a long-standing commitment to international law. He has taught international human rights at the University of California Berkeley's School of Law, and written and lectured extensively on the international criminal court.



Your invitation to hear Ambassador Bleich present the 2011 JCPML Anniversary Lecture is enclosed. Hon Paul Keating, JCPML Patron, will introduce Ambassador Bleich.

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## Reading between the lines

BY DAVID WYLIE, ARCHIVES TECHNICIAN

Do the books people buy and keep influence their thinking or does their thinking influence the books they buy?

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries a working man's discretionary spending power was not great and his education was mostly acquired by using the libraries of railway institutions and the like. A book bought with hard-earned pennies was a treasure to keep and to be read and re-read, not just displayed on a coffee table.

Abraham Needham is best known as John Curtin's father-in-law but his life was significant in its own right. Abraham was a sign writer during the week and a fire and brimstone Methodist preacher on Sundays, a published poet and an accomplished amateur artist, a journalist and a socialist rabble-rouser, a candidate for political office and a phrenologist — and most of all, a loving family man.

How do we know all this about someone who died almost 90 years ago? In part through his writings, but also by the books he bought and the books he gave as gifts — books that travelled the world with him and his family.

From Victoria to South Africa to Tasmania — these books formed part of the luggage and were never discarded. When Abraham and his wife Annie joined their daughter Elsie and her husband John in Cottesloe, the library came along too.

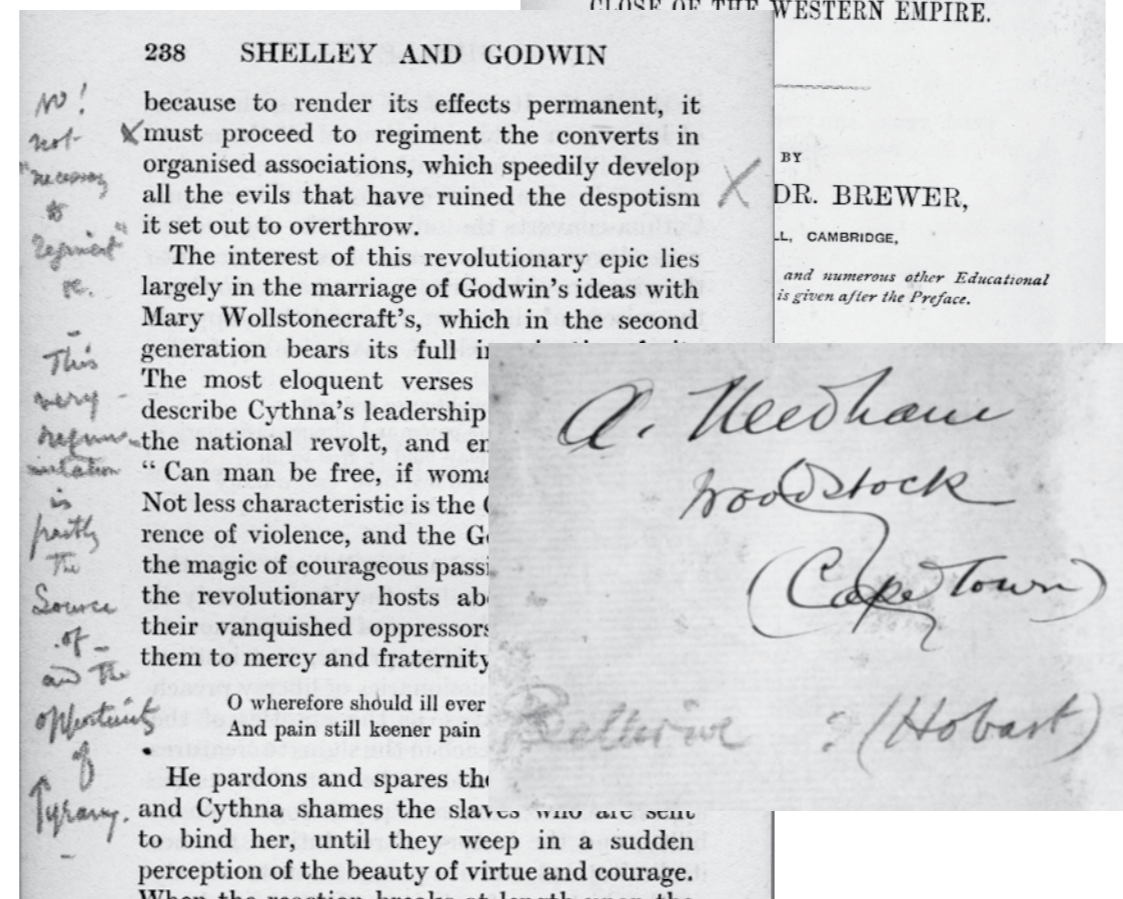
These books bear the inscriptions, annotations and dog-ears of use, and along with works belonging to John Curtin and his family, once lined three walls of the study in the Curtin's Jarrad Street home. Some 500 or so political and social tracts, scientific treatises, literary masterpieces and penny dreadfuls survive as the Curtin family library within the JCPML collection.

An ancient proverb says that every time an old man dies a library burns. Thankfully, through the generosity of the Curtin family, the libraries of John Curtin and Abraham Needham live on in the archives of the JCPML.

Abraham Needham's hand-made bookshelves live on too, in the care of the National Trust of WA.

*Ideals are the Polar Star towards which men steer their ships and speed their voyage through storm and darkness, through sun shine and fair weather until they reach their desired haven or overwhelming circumstances engulf them.*

— Abraham Needham 1906.  
JCPML00458/1



## Display focuses on Curtin's Empire

A small display in the Kandy-Jane Henderson Foyer of the JCPML until the end of July explores John Curtin's views on the British Empire.

Featured is the silver box presented to Prime Minister Curtin after he received the Freedom of the City of London on 11 May 1944.

The display opening coincided with the national launch of James Curran's book *Curtin's Empire* in May, presented by Stephen Smith, Minister for Defence.



## Art of the Possible exhibition at the Alfred Deakin Prime Ministerial Library

Developed to commemorate the 60th anniversary of John Curtin's death, this JCPML travelling exhibition explores the development of Australia's foreign policy between 1935 and 1950.

The displays include three bronze figurines of John Curtin and can be viewed at the Alfred Deakin Prime Ministerial Library at Deakin University in Geelong, Victoria, until the end of July.



# APM Fellows research John Curtin

Three 2010/2011 Australian Prime Minister Centre Fellows are undertaking research into different aspects of John Curtin's life.

Bob Wurth (the JCPML's 2009 Visiting Scholar) is writing a book on John Curtin's wartime legacy, seeking to assess and clarify Curtin's actions before and during the war with Japan.

Caryn Coatney, a Curtin University academic, is addressing the question 'How successful was John Curtin in developing innovative prime ministerial journalism strategies that made a lasting impact on successive Government-media relationships?'

Sam Malloy, Coordinator of the Chifley Home and Education Centre in Bathurst, New South Wales, is undertaking a comparative study of the homes of Prime Ministers Ben Chifley, John Curtin and Joseph Lyons. (The Lyons' family lived at Home Hill in Devonport, Tasmania.)

Sam visited Perth in May and spent time at the JCPML and the Cottesloe home where the Curtin family lived.

The Bathurst City Council purchased the Chifley house and its contents in 1972 as a memorial to Prime Minister Chifley. Opened by Prime Minister Whitlam in March 1973, the property has been maintained as a house museum since.

Ben Chifley was Treasurer in the Curtin Government and following John Curtin's death on 5 July 1945, Deputy Prime Minister Frank Forde acted as Prime Minister until the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party elected Chifley as its new leader. Chifley served as Prime Minister from 13 July 1945 to 19 December 1949.

Labor leaders - Prime Minister John Curtin and J.B. (Ben) Chifley, circa 1941. Records of the Curtin Family. JCPML00004/25.



Right to left:

Ben and Elizabeth Chifley's home at 10 Busby Street, Bathurst. Courtesy Chifley Home & Education Centre.

John and Elsie Curtin's home at 24 Jarrad St Cottesloe, 1988. JCPML000632/1.



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