



Curtin University

JOHN CURTIN PRIME MINISTERIAL LIBRARY

INFORMATION UPDATE

SEPTEMBER 2011

Curtin's battle for Australia: Relevant questions for 2011

When the British colony of Singapore, seen by many as the last bastion between Australia and the advancing enemy, fell to the Japanese in February 1942, it sent shock waves through the country. Within days, Darwin was bombed and a series of air raids on Broome and Wyndham in Western Australia followed. Australians, standing virtually unprotected in the face of the Japanese onslaught, feared outright invasion.

2011 Visiting Scholar Graham Freudenberg will present the results of his research into the dramatic events of early 1942 and examine the lessons they hold for us today in a public lecture on 27 October at the JCPML. 'Asking whether or not Australia was liable to invasion is considering the wrong question,' Mr Freudenberg said. 'It ignores what we should have learned in 1942 in the broader sense of the nature of our relations with the United States and our neighbours in Asia.'

**You are warmly invited to attend the
Visiting Scholar's Lecture by Graham
Freudenberg on Thursday 27 October 2011.**

Your invitation to the lecture is enclosed.

Graham Freudenberg (right) with Gough Whitlam, November 2010.

Image courtesy Sally Tsoutas: Whitlam Institute within the
University of Western Sydney.

Graham Freudenberg is one of Australia's greatest speechwriters and an influential political insider, both shaping and reporting political thought over more than forty years.

A journalist in Sydney and Melbourne, he was appointed press secretary to the Leader of the Australian Labor Party, Arthur Calwell, in 1961. He is best-known as speechwriter to a succession of Labor leaders, including Prime Ministers Gough Whitlam and Bob Hawke and NSW Premiers Neville Wran, Barrie Unsworth and Bob Carr.

Graham is the author of four books to date: *A certain grandeur: Gough Whitlam in politics* (1977), *Cause for power: The centenary history of the NSW Labor Party* (1991), *A figure of speech: A political memoir* (2005) and *Churchill and Australia* (2008).

He was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in 1990 in recognition of his service to journalism, to parliament and to politics and in 2005 he was inducted as a life member of the NSW ALP.

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JOHN CURTIN AND THE AJA: A UNION MAN TO THE END



Just five days after landing in Western Australia in February 1917 to take up the editorship of the Labor weekly newspaper, John Curtin applied for membership of the Australian Journalists' Association (AJA). He proudly wore his AJA membership badge on his suit lapel for the rest of his life. When he died on 5 July 1945, he was still a financial member of the Association.

The WA District of the AJA has donated John Curtin's original membership application to the JCPML, ensuring this significant historical document will be preserved for the future and made accessible to researchers.

The document is a printed and handwritten form on thin, pink paper measuring just 13cm by 20cm, probably reflecting the wartime paper shortages of the time. It reveals that John Curtin recorded his postal address as the Worker Office, Perth, and that R J (Roy) Curthoys, then a journalist at the West Australian newspaper, sponsored his application.

John Curtin's achievements as journalist and editor at the Westralian Worker were widely recognized outside as well as inside the labour movement. He wrote forceful, and at times emotive, weekly editorials and much of the content on the other pages came from his pen.

He was active in supporting the Journalists' Association, holding the post of president of the WA District from 1920 to 1925. John Curtin sought to improve journalists' education as well as their wages and working conditions.



Documents: Records of the Australian Journalists Association, John Curtin's application for membership, 22 February 1917. Records of the Curtin Family. Condolences from Roy L. Curthoys, 6 July 1945. JCPML00397/45. Records of the Curtin Family. Course of Study at UWA, Australian Journalists Association, 1922. JCPML00401/6

In association with the University of Western Australia, he arranged lecture programs, supplemented by informal discussions at nearby cafes. In the course booklet for 1922, he exhorted his colleagues to further their education: To associate for education is not less splendid, and is no less profitable, than to associate for wages.

John Curtin valued his connection with journalists and their union even after he entered parliament and rose to become prime minister. Tony Rafty, who worked as a cartoonist at The Sun Newspaper in Phillip Street, Sydney, recalls walking across the road to the Journalists' Club in November 1942 to listen to the prime minister speak at a club luncheon in his honour.

When John Curtin died on 5 July 1945, Roy Curthoys, who was then based in Melbourne as Chief Australian Correspondent for The Times, wrote to Elsie Curtin:

My memories of John Curtin go back about a quarter of a century when we were fellow journalists and workers in the AJA in Perth. From that time I watched him grow in stature and spend himself in devoted service to his country. To me personally he was ever inexpressibly kind and generous and helpful.

John Curtin's application for membership of the AJA is evocative of the strong ties he felt to both journalism and its union and is a valued addition to the JCPML collection.

Top left: Records of the Curtin Family. Australian Journalists' Association, Western Australian District Committee 1921-22. JCPML00376/4. Below: Records of Tony Rafty. John Curtin speaking at Journalists Club luncheon, November 1942. JCPML00548/1.



Curtin Rising: a new play on our wartime prime minister

Playwright Ingle Knight has completed the draft script of the play he researched and wrote as 2010 JCPML Visiting Scholar. Deckchair Theatre in Fremantle will workshop the play, tentatively titled 'Curtin Rising' later this year and it is expected to form part of the Company's 2012 season.



Curtin's life inspires students

JCPML Education Officer, Dr Jasmine Day, is presenting a customized version of the 'Australia at War' program to year eight students from ten schools participating in Curtin University's 'Link-Up' program this year. Inspired by John Curtin's passion for education and his achievements in the face of adversity, students are encouraged to continue their education to tertiary level.

The JCPML is again sponsoring a prize in this year's National History Challenge under the theme 'Defining moments in the life and times of John Curtin'. Check out the website for more details.

As part of the week-long Sir Charles Court Young Leaders Program, thirty year ten students visited the 'Pursuit of Knowledge' exhibition, undertook a tour of the Curtin family home, and developed skills in historical analysis and understanding of leadership through two sessions focusing on John Curtin's life.

A LIVING NATIONAL TREASURE



Asked whether she saw herself as a family woman or a career woman, Hazel Hawke, then wife of Bob Hawke, Australia's prime minister from 1983 to 1991, answered 'I don't classify myself'.

Indeed, Hazel Hawke shaped her own role during her years in The Lodge and after, as a strong and active leader in the community. She was a vigorous campaigner for many causes affecting the lives of Australians and served as patron to a wide range of agencies in welfare, education, arts, and the environment. In particular, she was an advocate for the rights of women, children and Indigenous Australians. Her speeches, interviews, books, papers and letters provide insight into her values and aspirations.



A small display in the Kandy-Jane Henderson Foyer until the end of October showcases a selection of items from the Hazel Hawke Collection held at the JCPML. Photographs provide glimpses of her public and private life while a framed certificate from 1998 recognizing Hazel as a 'Living National Treasure' is evidence of the strong regard and affection the Australian public felt for her. The Collection includes correspondence, speeches, photographs, diaries, scrapbooks, memorabilia, newspaper cuttings, books from the Hawke family library and more. Selected items, including the speeches, some memorabilia, book inscriptions and many of the photographs are being made available online via the JCPML Electronic Research Archive. Find out more at john.curtin.edu.au/hhawke/.

Top: Records of Hazel Hawke. Hazel Hawke opening Ronald McDonald House of Life, Subiaco, 1990. JCPML00425/314.

Bottom: Records of Hazel Hawke. Hazel Hawke meeting Nancy Reagan at the White House, 1988. JCPML00425/311.

National Trust commemorates 70th anniversary of Curtin becoming Prime Minister

When Arthur Fadden resigned as prime minister after two independent members voted down his government's budget, John Curtin sent his wife Elsie a telegram: 'This is your birthday gift ... They have announced their intention of voting for our amendment and the government will be defeated.' John Curtin was sworn in as the 14th Australian Prime Minister on 7 October 1941.

The National Trust is commemorating the 70th anniversary of this event with open days and activities at the

Curtin family home and a talk by eminent political historian and JCPML Historical Consultant, Professor David Black. David's speech on 6 October will explore how John Curtin became prime minister and his contribution to Australian society and the nation.

For more details and to RSVP please contact the Grove Library on 9286 8686 or library@thegrovelibrary.com.

The Curtin Family home will be open to the public on two Sundays in October. On 9 October from 11am to 4pm, visitors can listen to 'Elsie' guide them through the house and gardens with an audio tour. Talks on aspects of the landscaping and archaeological work undertaken during recent conservation works will also take place.

Sunday 16 October is Family Day at the home, especially for primary school aged children and their

parents. A small entry fee covers the tour, activities and games, as well as 'scones with lemonade just like Elsie used to make'.

Contact the National Trust on 9321 6088 (office hours), or trust@ntwa.com.au for more details or to make a booking.



The back yard of the Curtin house after landscaping was completed by the National Trust, 2011.

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A stylized, handwritten signature of John Curtin in black ink.