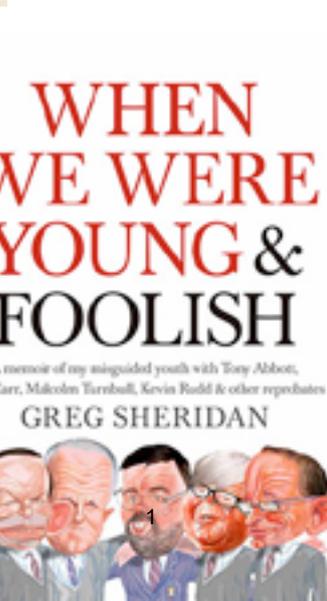
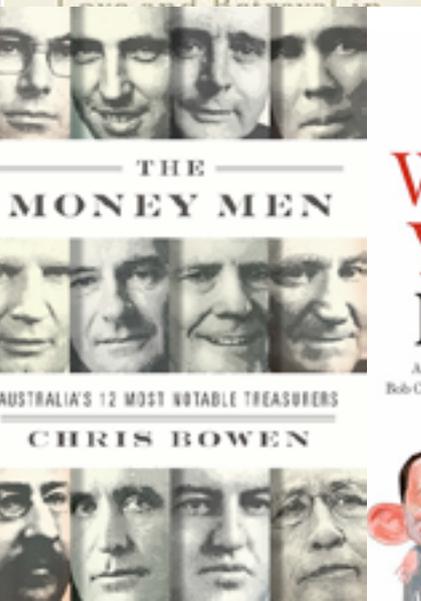
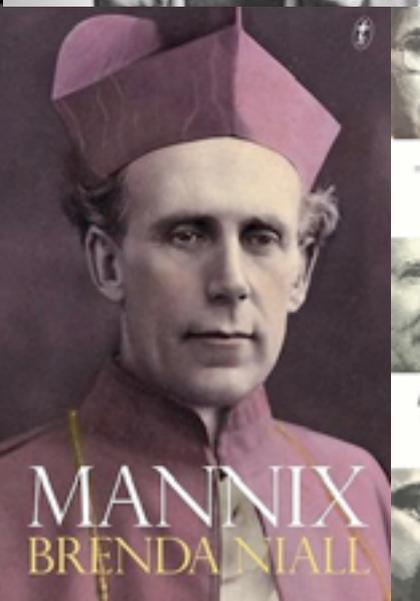
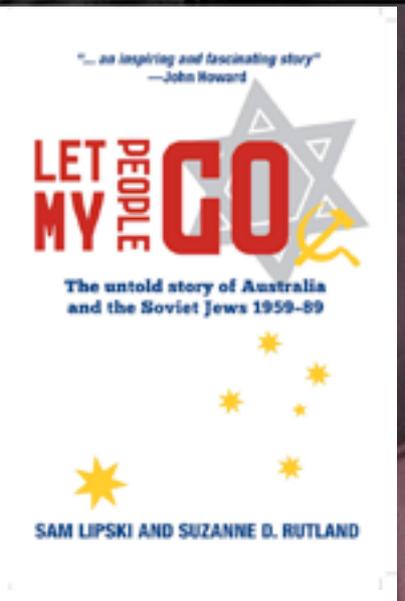
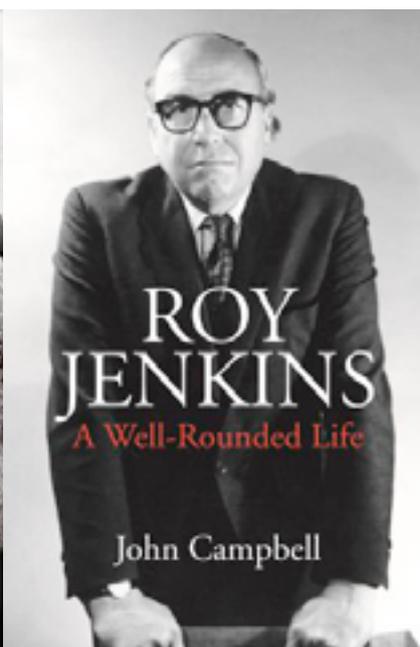




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Contents

HENRY’S BABY – AND HOW IT GREW	3
<i>Cradle of Australian Political Studies - Sydney’s Department of Government by Michael Hogan</i> <i>Reviewed by Ross Fitzgerald</i>	
THE BEST PRIME MINISTER BRITAIN NEVER HAD	6
<i>Roy Jenkins – A Well Rounded Life By John Campbell</i> <i>Reviewed by Anne Henderson</i>	
BARRIERS AND BARBARIANS	10
<i>Takeover: Foreign Investment and the Australian Psyche By David Uren</i> <i>Reviewed by Geoff Carmody</i>	
LET MY PEOPLE GO	13
<i>Let My People Go By Sam Lipski</i> <i>Reviewed by Gerard Henderson</i>	
THE MEN IN THE COUNTING HOUSE	16
<i>The Money Men - Australia’s Twelve Most Notable Treasurers By Chris Bowen</i> <i>Reviewed by Ed Shann</i>	
MEMORIES OF US	20
<i>When We Were Young and Foolish By Greg Sheridan</i> <i>Reviewed by Gerard Henderson</i>	
MAN OF THE PEOPLE IN TOP HAT AND FROCK COAT	25
<i>Mannix by Brenda Niall</i> <i>Reviewed by Ross Fitzgerald</i>	
PARTNERS IN HISTORY – WAR, LOVE AND SACRIFICE	28
<i>First Lady – The Life and Wars of Clementine Churchill By Sonia Purnell</i> <i>Margot at War – Love and Betrayal in Downing Street, 1912-1916 By Anne De Courcy</i> <i>Reviewed by Anne Henderson</i>	
TEXTBOOK EXAMPLE OF COMEDIC FARCE	33
<i>Arms and The Man by Bernard Shaw</i> <i>Reviewed by Nathan Lentern</i>	

HENRY'S BABY – AND HOW IT GREW

Cradle of Australian Political Studies - Sydney's Department of Government
by Michael Hogan
Connor Court
ISBN:1925138518
RRP - \$39.95.

Reviewed by Ross Fitzgerald

The origins of the Department of Government and International Relations at Sydney University - currently headed by Professor Colin Wight - extend back almost a century to 1917, when various public administration courses were taught within the economics faculty at Sydney University. This eventually led to a chair in Public Administration in 1934 - with the conservative Francis Bland becoming its first Professor in 1935.

As Michael Hogan points out in his useful historical and academic analysis, this was followed in 1947 by the establishment of the Department of Government and Public Administration, which Hogan states is “arguably Australia's oldest political science department and certainly one of its most successful”. Hence his book's catchy title *Cradle of Australian Political Studies*.

In terms of its areas of study, teaching and research, over time the Department of Government has moved from a primary focus on public administration and public policy to a broader range of interests, including political theory, comparative politics and international relations. But, in its early decades, the right wing Professor Francis Bland ruled the roost. Hence, it should have come as no surprise that, after he retired from Sydney University in June 1948, Bland was elected in 1951 to the safe federal Liberal seat of Warringah, which is currently held by the Hon Tony Abbott. An arch-Tory, Bland served in the House of Representatives for ten years until his retirement from federal parliament in 1961.

As well as Professor Bland, the two most influential figures of Sydney University's Department of Government were arguably the cultivated bachelor, Professor R.N. (Dick) Spann, who assumed the headship in 1954, and the irrepressible, irreverent and entrepreneurial Henry Mayer who, after becoming Professor of Political Theory in 1969/1970, briefly, and rather reluctantly, became head of department in the tumultuous years 1974 and 1975, when he was replaced as head by associate professor Ken Turner.

Seldom seen out of a grey suit, Dick Spann was a man of culture and considerable scholarship. A charming conversationalist, he was also, as Hogan puts it, “politically conservative, one of the earliest members of the Association for Cultural Freedom, and a regular contributor to the *Quadrant* journal that defended similar anti-communist views.”

Although he was happy to follow Spann in joining the Association for Cultural Freedom, and also in championing teaching by tutorials as a supplement to mass lectures, Henry Mayer was in many ways quite different. Loud, assertive, brilliant, extremely productive and sometimes sexist and confronting, Mayer was the driving force in the Australian Political Science Association. Indeed it was Mayer who helped transform the “APSA Newsletter” into the journal *Politics* (later *The Australian Journal of Political Science*).

Mayer also authored a path-breaking study *The Press in Australia* in 1964 - the year that for the first time witnessed the existence of a national newspaper, *The Australian*. Thereafter Mayer edited *Australian Politics: A Reader* which, as Hogan explains, “became a standard source for students of Australian politics in most Australian universities”. From its first publication in 1966 this key work went into five editions – the last in 1980. From the *Third Reader* onwards, it was co-edited by Helen Nelson and was generally referred to as “Mayer and Nelson”.

After Dick Spann died suddenly in July 1981, just as he was about to retire, and Henry Mayer retired unhappily from Sydney University at the end of 1984, staff demands for effective self-management, for non-professorial heads, for a culture of consensus decision making, and for an increased number of women in the department continued to take hold.

The latter included Anne Summers who, in 1975, had published the hugely influential *Damned Whores and God's Police: the colonisation of women in Australia*. With Mayer making a strong case on her behalf, the University adopted the highly unusual decision of accepting the published book as her thesis and awarding Summers a PhD. This occurred in 1980, five years after *Damned Whores and God's Police* had seen the light of day.

In her autobiography *Ducks on the Pond*, published in 1999, Summers writes of her introduction to the Department of Government:

Henry Mayer made me feel very welcome and immediately arranged for us to meet weekly. The other professor in the Department of Government was Dick Spann, a courtly man of about 60 who taught Public Administration and English Political Theory, and whose ineffable courtesy enabled him to conceal whatever distaste he may have felt for the new notions of women's liberation that I so enthusiastically espoused. Henry, on the other hand, had embraced them with an excitement that at first I found startling.

As *Cradle of Australian Political Studies* makes clear, 1990 was a turning point – both for the Department of Government and for the University of Sydney. That year witnessed the replacement, as Vice-Chancellor, of John M Ward - who embodied a more traditional consensus approach to administration – by Professor Don McNicol. From the moment of his appointment as VC, McNicol allegedly embraced the notion of a corporate university with considerable enthusiasm.

According to Hogan, this signaled the transformation of the university into a corporatised body adopting the principles of private enterprise and line management rather than collegial decision-making.

McNicol's appointment as VC occurred four years after the first personal computers were made available to staff – an “innovation” that fundamentally changed the work culture and therefore the general academic environment.

The discerning reader of this surprisingly informative and entertaining academic history might be forgiven for thinking that, after these two radical changes to academic life and standards, it was downhill all the way for Sydney University and for the Department of Government in particular. Certainly, while McNicol's successors as Vice-Chancellors may not have embraced the demands of managerial efficiency with utter delight, they have all continued on a similar and seeming inexorably path of regarding the university as primarily being a corporation.

Sadly from the 1990s onwards, one of the deleterious side effects of the new administrative environment was the disappearance of the tribe of full-time tutors - who had often made studying politics and government at Sydney University so personally and intellectually rewarding.

For the record, in the early 1980s, on secondment to Sydney University from the multidisciplinary, team-teaching Faculty of Humanities at Brisbane's Griffith University, I single-handedly taught a course in Political Theory in the Department of Government. All in all, it was a pleasant and fulfilling experience.

Things seem so different now. As Professor Raewin Connell wrote in July 2014 in the Sydney Alumni Magazine - under the heading of *The Corporate University*:

I'm winding up my career at a time when I don't think it's a happy time for universities. We've fallen into a culture of hyper-competitiveness where universities are regarded by their managers and governments essentially as competitive firms, competing against each other for resources, rather than what (should be) the reality, which is a knowledge system based on cooperation and sharing.

Two minor criticisms of this genuinely useful book. The photographs in *Cradle of Australian Political Studies* are of uniformly poor quality. And there are some typos. For example, Dennis Altman's first name is sometimes wrongly spelt as "Denis", while the NSW Labour Council is misspelt as "Labor".

Professor Fitzgerald, a columnist with *The Australian*, recently edited Alan Reid's unpublished Labor novel of the 1950s, *The Bandar-Log*, (Connor Court)

THE BEST PRIME MINISTER BRITAIN NEVER HAD

Roy Jenkins – A Well Rounded Life

By John Campbell

Vintage

ISBN: 9780224087506

RRP - \$80

Reviewed by Anne Henderson

As the British Labour Party campaigned for a new leader in 2015, favourite contender Jeremy Corbyn's position as leader presumptive provoked much comment. Comparisons with the election of Michael Foot as Labour leader abounded. Foot's election came at the end of two decades of Labour division between the left followers of Aneurin Bevan and those on the right supporting former Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell. Denis Healey's loss to Foot, aged 67 and frail in health, in the election of a new Labour leader in November 1980 was a victory for the left at a time when the new Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher was struggling with the inflationary economy it had inherited.

The election of Michael Foot had repercussions for Labour – none of them happy. Foot took Labour on a strong left wing policy lurch – anti-Europe, unilateral nuclear disarmament and power to the unions. This saw the emergence of the “Gang of Four” made up of former Cabinet ministers Roy Jenkins, Shirley Williams, David Owen and Bill Rodgers. Their break from Labour led to the establishment of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) after 28 more Labour MPs joined the “gang”. The Labour Party would forever blame these “traitors” for its further sixteen years in opposition.

Parliamentary and party politics is a crude game. Losers dot the history books – as do timely winners. In the second half of the twentieth century – in British politics – one clear winner was Roy Jenkins even though he never achieved his ambition to become Labour Party leader or prime minister. His life, as prolific author, as deputy Labour leader, as cabinet minister, as President of the European Commission, as founder of the SDP, and as Chancellor of Oxford University has been much reported and discussed in print. And now, in John Campbell's 749-page volume *Roy Jenkins – A Well Rounded Life*, the details, and highs and lows of that long and full life - both public and private – have been well and truly aired. It is a monumental work which befits its subject matter. Campbell's detail goes beyond the life of one highly achieving individual. His study also sheds much light on the British Labour Party and its machinations, an evolving political institution which in the post war period became more and more the product of highly educated professionals, far distant in character from the working poor their party had been created to represent.

With his trademark Labour background as the son of a Welsh coalminer, Roy Jenkins lived for almost his entire life as anything but. Jenkins' father Arthur had certainly followed his own father “down the pit” at age 13, but he had also swatted over twelve years after that at night school and discussion groups and won a miners' scholarship to Ruskin College at Oxford where exceptional working class lads might acquire higher learning. Another scholarship sent Arthur to study for ten months in Paris where he emerged fluent in French and with serious contacts among leading French socialists. Back in Wales, Arthur soon made his career as a unionist, serving also as a councillor and governor of school boards. In 1935, Arthur became the MP for Pontypool.

Roy, born in November 1920, was the only son of mature aged parents. While his mother Hattie was highly protective and he was seven before he attended school, Roy had quite an adventurous time with his father who took him on his political travels whenever he could. Young Roy, coalminer's son, recalled seeing the Empire Exhibition at Wembley at age three. He went to union meetings all over South Wales and beyond, enjoyed “semi-celebratory meals” in fine hotels, often enough in London, and went abroad to Brussels with both parents, aged eight, where his father attended a Socialist International meeting. At ten, Roy spent six days in Paris. His earliest education was thus amongst an adult world of public meetings and good hotel cuisine. That Roy Jenkins MP, of the moderate Labour faction, became notorious for never missing lunch, however busy,

with select friends, colleagues or contacts should not surprise. As the Labour Party struggled to maintain unity over its policy on Europe in 1971, Jenkins missed a vital vote in Shadow Cabinet because “he had gone out to dinner (with David Watt of the *Financial Times*)”. He could also drink copious amounts and not show it. The jokes abounded in cartoons – “Claret not red” was one catchcry.

Campbell’s exacting study of Jenkins’ life reveals not only a high achiever but a man who could both enjoy a rich life and an industrious one. Myths put about by rivals that he was lazy – deriving no doubt from his love of fine dining, travel and life among the establishment (his farewell dinner as a Labour MP with a group of his closest male friends included an Astor and a Rothschild) – are dealt with not only by Campbell’s arguments to the contrary but by his detailed examination of just how hard Jenkins worked.

After winning a place at Oxford’s Balliol College in 1938, Jenkins read philosophy, politics and economics – the “Modern Greats”. At Balliol, among bright scholarship students and old Etonians, he shrugged off much of his shyness and devoted a large part his time to the Oxford Union and its debates. His relationship, intellectual and sexual, with the precocious Tony Crosland dominated his early years at Oxford until, at a summer school, he met Jennifer Morris, daughter of the town clerk of Westminster and studying at Cambridge. Their relationship would lead to marriage in 1948 and be a lifetime partnership, outliving Roy’s numerous affairs as Jennifer turned a blind eye and even continued her friendships with some of the women he bedded.

It was not until 1948, after a number of attempts to gain a seat in parliament, alongside his active participation in the Labour Party and excellent Labour connections including his father’s friendship with Labour PM Clement Atlee, that Jenkins won the by-election for Central Southwalk, a seat that was to be merged with North Southwalk before the next general election. In late 1949, Jenkins secured the nomination for the seat of Birmingham Stechford which he held until his retirement as a Labour MP in 1976. But these were just select significant moments in his political career.

By 1948, Jenkins was also building a career from his writing, begun when his late father’s good friend PM Atlee offered Jenkins the job of editing a volume of his speeches to which Jenkins wrote a three-page introduction. Published in 1947 by Heinemann, it set Jenkins up. Atlee also offered Jenkins his papers to write his biography and Heinemann not only offered a good advance but the option on Jenkins’ next two books. Over a full political career, Jenkins would earn more from his writing – with the exception of his years as Cabinet minister – than from his day jobs. Jenkins was not only a fine writer, he was also prolific - producing four full length biographies, four shorter biographies, two biographical collections, and an autobiography, along with countless essays, speeches, book reviews and general commentary. Only Winston Churchill outdid him in this outpouring of journalism.

In an age that focuses so intensely on prime leader figures and star performers, Roy Jenkins’ influential life on the political stage during the second half of the twentieth century illustrates far more than the struggles of a dominant figure – it ranges vastly over the networks and make-up of our democratic systems. Jenkins came to politics, as many leading figures have done, with a sense of it, bred in it from his earliest days. But he would also move with his times and become a figure embodying changes that shaped both the politics and history of that era. And, while he appeared to Tony Benn to be “shattered” after failing to gain the Labour leadership following Harold Wilson’s retirement because he realised, as Benn put it, “he can’t ever be Leader of the Labour Party”, Jenkins seemed to others to not really have the qualities of organisation - the skill of drawing individuals to him that is required to lead.

As Harold Wilson struggled to unite the left and right divides of Labour over Europe and nationalisation of industry in 1972, and his leadership became tenuous, Campbell writes that Jenkins hesitated – “he did not want to risk splitting the party”. Colleagues such as Tony Benn and Barbara Castle felt that he was itching to break from Labour but Campbell believes they underestimated “the pull of his Labour roots”. What Jenkins wanted was a stronger and clearer leadership. The question was whether he had the qualities for that. As Campbell notes, deputy editor of the *Guardian*, John Cole, made a shrewd observation at the time, in a review of Jenkins’ slim volume of lectures published as *Afternoon on The Potomac*, that Jenkins was “more of

an architect than a builder". That is, Cole believed Jenkins could "see the vision" but questioned whether he could "shift the bricks".

Through the years he was a Labour MP, Jenkins' essential pragmatism about politics, heavily influenced by Labour's Hugh Dalton, ensured his moderate position as a Gaitskellite. In the turmoil surrounding the poisonous atmosphere of the Labour Party's 1952 conference, Jenkins often saw the aspirations of its leftist ideologues as delusional, especially in their pacifist leanings, and warned the party to have confidence in its democratic socialist ideals for a classless society. In opposition, he believed strongly that the party should always position itself as an "alternative" government and its policies had to match that challenge. This also meant Labour must "accept the need for defence expenditure commensurate with Britain's reduced but still significant weight as a middle-ranking power". Much of what Jenkins argued, over two decades, was ahead of its time for Labour. It should not surprise that, in policy terms, Jenkins was more than ready for the era of New Labour and Tony Blair when it arrived.

Jenkins' most influential time as a minister came in the mid 1960s when, as Home Secretary, he pushed through legislation for reform of UK laws against homosexuality and abortion. When Harold Wilson struggled with monetary jitters and ruinous strikes, Jenkins' name came forward as an alternative leader. His disdain for Wilson's muddled administration was always articulated as a criticism of a government that had no long term plan for anything. The financial crisis of July 1966 had meant postponement of the Labour's social welfare promises made at an election just four months earlier.

In November 1967, Jenkins was made Chancellor of the Exchequer – swapping jobs with a disappointing Jim Callaghan – as such, given his chance to put right much of what he saw going wrong. While his time as Chancellor of the Exchequer could be said to have been advantaged by coming in after the struggles over devaluation, Jenkins had a lot of ground to make up. In pushing for large spending cuts, Jenkins won points with the left by arguing successfully that Britain had to reassess its global commitments and contract its defence involvement to more current UK realities – i.e. withdrawal from east of Suez. There was also a need for a rapid increase in taxation, much of which he would achieve by more indirect taxes and a "special charge" on higher incomes. Jenkins' battle with Cabinet for his package lasted twelve days in an unprecedented eight meetings, or 32 hours in total. The outcome was a Jenkins victory – described best by Tony Benn who opined, "My opinion of Roy rose. I don't regard him as having any principles, but today in argument, getting all that he wanted from his colleagues, he was very impressive."

For all Jenkins' ease in High Tory company, and a feeling among many Labourites that he was not really a Labour man, it was the European question that finally put Jenkins at odds with the Labour leadership. In 1971, the Conservative government of Ted Heath sought to pass legislation in support of Britain joining the European Common Market. Jenkins was seen as the leader of a rebel group of Labour MPs who supported the Conservative legislation which Labour opposed. Campbell writes that on the day the legislation to join the Common Market passed, with the support of a significant group of pro-European Labour MPs, "this was the proudest moment of Jenkins' career. For fifteen years, second only to Heath, he had been the most prominent advocate of Britain belatedly joining the Community." The battle over the right to vote for a Tory bill would be long and bitter. It threatened Jenkins' deputy leadership and, no doubt, cruelled his chances of becoming leader. That, and his indifference to younger members of the parliamentary party or those who were not part of his elite lunching squad. As Campbell writes: "There were too many younger Labour Members whom he had never taken the trouble to get to know. One MP of moderate views was reported to have said that he would vote for Jenkins if he once said, 'Good evening' to him in the division lobby; but he didn't so he didn't."

The swings and roundabouts of British politics in the late 1960s and 1970s owed a lot to a troubled economy much as Australia sees itself facing in contemporary times – likewise an electorate which was not used to government cuts to spending. In Jenkins' Budget broadcast in March 1968, after handing down what Ted Heath called "a hard cold budget", Jenkins spoke of Britain "living in a fool's paradise" for years. As Australian voters watch a two-party seesaw today, it is timely to recall the hard yards required to bring a nation to its sense about what must be done in economic reform. Ultimately, Jenkins would leave UK politics to take up

the European presidency well before the inevitable and draconian economic medicine the Thatcher period would force on British voters.

Jenkins missed politics during his time in Brussels, but he did achieve more for his Britain in Europe campaign there than he had done at Westminster. He even found himself sitting between his former colleague, then British PM, Jim Callaghan and France and Germany, negotiating Britain's place in Europe. One prescient judgement Jenkins made at the time was feeling dubious about Greece being allowed to join Europe. Ironically, another of his judgements was not so prescient. After meeting opposition leader Margaret Thatcher in 1977 in Brussels he diarised of Thatcher that she, "wasn't tiresome, but left one with not the faintest sense of having been in the presence of anyone approaching the high quality of a great statesman or stateswoman, or even of someone who was likely to grow into this". How ironic that was. Perhaps the Jenkins' bar for statesmanship was simply too dependent on the blokey world of clubs (he belonged to quite a number) and old boy bonhomie. But then, his Tory friends - in particular the aristocratic Ian Gilmour - had advised him Thatcher would not last.

Jenkins walked the political stage with the confidence of a long time player, safe in his milieu of contacts and his broad experience of the globe – even spending a week or so Down Under during his travels as an MP. But his sense of Britain's interests was securely with Europe and the US where he had high-end contacts in the Democratic establishment, as well as Arthur Schlesinger and J K Galbraith who were to become lifelong friends. He was also close to Jackie Kennedy and her sister Lee Radziwill. As Jenkins argued that Britain should be part of Europe, to his Labour colleagues in 1971, he scorned any need to protect the Commonwealth as "mere sentimentality" saying that Australia was "the toughest, roughest, most self-interested government" he had ever had to deal with.

In a sense, John Campbell has captured – in one larger than life political figure – the political spirit of Western politics in the second half of the twentieth century. Jenkins lived his life to the fullest – much helped by a wife and partner who was his equal intellectually, tolerated his weaknesses, ran his households fully so he was never caught by domestic responsibilities and inspired his various ambitions. It was a life he recorded minutely, even every meeting - over meals or not - and the time each took. His writings, like Churchill's, also left much evidence of his personality and thinking. For all that, it is an irony that his last words were a request to his wife Jennifer for "two eggs lightly poached".

Anne Henderson is Deputy Director of The Sydney Institute and author of *Menzies at War*

BARRIERS AND BARBARIANS

Takeover: Foreign Investment and the Australian Psyche

By David Uren

Black Inc 2015

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ISBN-10:1863957545

RRP - \$29.99

Reviewed by Geoff Carmody

David Uren's book, *Takeover: Foreign Investment and the Australian Psyche*, is an interesting and easy to read historical account, ostensibly about foreign investment in Australia.

Directly or indirectly, foreign investment indeed is the subject of most of the book, but, appropriately, Uren has placed that topic within a more general historical account of Australian attitudes to controlling a variety of markets, how these attitudes have fluctuated, and have come in cycles. In my opinion, an alternative title that would also be accurate is: A brief history of Australian protectionism – a “policy” attracting strange bedfellows and pervading most markets, physical and financial.

The common thread running through Uren's historical account is a case study-specific summary of Australian attitudes to market protection over time, whether affected by discriminatory border pricing, quotas, subsidies or by discriminatory regulation between Australian residents and foreign interests.

The book starts by looking at the strange alliances between political opponents on the left and right, with both often opposing foreign investment from whatever source, and looking at similar attitudes to product market protectionism that have evolved from as far back as the nineteenth century.

Since then, attitudes to product market protectionism (usually discriminatory border pricing via tariffs, quotas, and, more recently, Budget-financed subsidies) have waxed and waned - although, to be fair, especially in relation to tariffs and quotas, there has been a trend to reducing reliance on them and relying on less transparent “behind the border” assistance. However, the political strength of protectionists in the foreign investment context was such in the early 1970s that a regulatory structure vetting foreign investment, including the advisory Foreign Investment Review Board (FIRB), was established.

As with product market protection, foreign investment regulation and restriction has tended to focus on particular foreign investment sources and/or particular product markets at particular times. This reflects political responses to pressure from different interests.

For example, Uren devotes specific chapters to investment from the United States, foreign investment buying interests in “Australian icons” (eg, Vegemite, Qantas), investment in mining and land (both agricultural land and residential real estate). Market protectionism for manufacturing (notably for motor vehicles, which are allocated two chapters, and have “benefited” in the past – at the expense of the Australian consumer – from high tariffs, quotas and Budget financed subsidies under the euphemism “co-investment”) gets plenty of attention as well.

In relation to foreign (but also Australian private) investment returns, Uren presents a flat historical account of the debate about resource “rent” taxes. This is couched in terms of the broad statement that the Australian community is entitled to a fair return from extraction and sale of its depletable resources (see Chapter 8: Money from rocks).

The Resource Super Profits Tax (RSPT) debacle is summarised in the book. Unlike other measures, the

RSPT (and, for that matter, the ill-fated carbon tax) constituted negative protection for Australia, because they were proposed as more or less unilateral policy measures in Australia, but not as cost imposts by our trade competitors. Uren does not make this point. He also does not dwell heavily on the merits of the case for or against “rent” taxes, but does conclude the chapter by observing:

Mining has driven the internationalisation of the Australian economy... China has now surpassed Japan as trading partner, but minerals into the Asia-Pacific region now account for 60% of Australia’s exports. Australians wondering about their share of this bounty should reflect on their standards of living, with average incomes and wealth among the highest in the world.

Indeed so.

David Uren’s own position on policy matters is gently presented, or allowed to unfold implicitly from his citing of particular case studies, throughout the book (and at the end – see below). However, on resource “rent” taxation, the RSPT (and the failed mining tax successor to the RSPT) he might have added that, in several critical respects, the notion of a resources “rent” tax, as embodied in the RSPT, is at best questionable and at worst deeply flawed. For example:

The very notion of “rent” in a competitive resource world where other national competitors do not impose such taxes is a practical impossibility. The current position with resource oversupply (or at least expectations thereof) and consequent large declines in commodity prices underline this point.

The need to do a deal with the States (the community’s onshore resource owners currently charging royalties for their extraction) was and is absolutely fundamental. No deal seems to have been done. Commonwealth financial threats, attempted bullying and bluster seemed to be the approach adopted by previous Labor governments to “negotiations” with the States.

The way-overblown assertion by the Labor proponents of the RSPT that the then government was a genuine risk sharer in resource extraction did not convince markets – and properly so. There was no full and immediate loss offset (as would be required by genuine risk sharing), but rather a promise of an IOU plus a bond interest rate at some future time. The mirage of risk-sharing (even in the future) was far outweighed by real and current business concerns, prompted by government behaviour, about increasing “sovereign risk”.

An implicit thread throughout the book is the protectionists’ denial of the fundamental notion of “comparative advantage” on which the case for international trade and investment rests. In my experience, people seem readily to grasp the notion of absolute advantage, but not comparative advantage. The essence of the latter is that, even if country X can produce all goods and services more cheaply than country Y, it is still better for country X to specialise in the products where its cost advantage is largest, and let country Y specialise in the others, and trade between them to maximise each country’s living standards. Similar arguments apply to foreign investment: allow scarce financial resources to flow to where they garner the best returns. Consistent with that, Australian investors, including superannuation funds, are increasingly chasing investment opportunities offshore.

The whole reason for supporting free (or more liberal) international trade and investment flows is that these flows maximise returns from use of scarce resources of all kinds and thereby growth in living standards. David notes that, until recently, international trade has grown faster than total growth, and in that sense has been a driver lifting many from poverty.

In my opinion, Chapter 10 is a very interesting look at the future, and a subject worthy of (and likely to receive) much further examination. In short, it provides an opening salvo about how technology is moving faster than regulators, tax authorities and governments can move. At present, it seems to be catching flat-footed those who want to regulate, protect and control markets, whether financial (eg, bitcoin), physical products (eg, on-line purchases of goods), or services (eg, Uber). Technology itself is facilitating more

efficient allocation of resources, possibly less transparent use of resources, and, in general, limiting governments' ability to control markets, the urging of protectionist interests notwithstanding.

A key policy question in relation to Chapter 10 is: can we define policy end-points where government control of markets, taxation revenue and living standards will be immune from the impacts of technological change? I suspect the answer is "no", but the more practical question in that case is: how can governments and regulators maximise the robustness of their policy regimes in the face of technical change? Uren does not get into this tricky area.

The concept of the "national interest" receives a chapter towards the end of the book. This is a slippery concept, apt to be defined in terms of preferred outcomes on specific market protection outcomes by lobbyists and politicians of all stripes. Naturally, interest groups with different agendas often have very different explicit or implicit definitions of the 'national interest'. Many, probably most, don't pay much attention to the interests of the Australian consumer, or even maximising Australia-wide living standards. Using specific examples, Uren covers this matter throughout the book, and especially in Chapter 12.

The book concludes with a last chapter called Political Voices – appropriately in my opinion – and the observations that:

... neither can any side of politics escape the circularity of argument in which the system of [foreign investment] vetting is there to satisfy the public that there is a system of vetting. The argument that no harm is done while the vast majority of deals are approved misses the deterrence that the system imposes to businesses and investors who simply decide not to look at Australia. But, more importantly, it gives a legitimate place to nationalists during the periods when there is an upsurge of direct investment, whether it is the Japanese in the 1970s, the Chinese in the 2000s, or indeed, the Americans in the 1950s and 1960s. During such peaks of foreign investment interest, governments become susceptible to nationalist pressure ...

... There is less Chinese investment in Australia's resource industry than there might have been. While we can look back and wonder at the folly of those who wished to curtail Japanese investment in building Australia's tourism industry in the 1980s, it is no different in character to the efforts now to restrict foreign investment in Australia's agricultural industry. That industry will be poorer and less productive as a result. While we maintain a system of vetting which gives legitimacy to these voices we'll never learn.

But there's the rub. Whether the issue is Japanese, Chinese, American or other investors in Australia, be it in mining, tourism, land or other areas, we cannot prove the benefits of fewer restrictions - the counterfactual case – directly. By definition, direct Australian evidence does not exist. We can cite evidence based on other countries' experiences, but the nationalists can always claim that, in Australia, "it's different", and find a constituency to support them – often very vocally.

For those interested in a summary account of the historical twists and turns of protectionist sentiment in Australia in general, and foreign investment in particular, heavily spiced with specific case studies, David Uren's book is well worth reading.

Geoff Carmody is Director of Geoff Carmody & Associates, co-founder of Access Economics. During his time as a senior officer in the Commonwealth Treasury, Geoff worked in the Foreign Investment Division.

Takeover: Foreign Investment and the Australian Psyche, David Uren, Black Inc., 2015, Printed in Australia by Griffin Press.

LET MY PEOPLE GO

Let My People Go: The untold story of Australia and the Soviet Jews 1959-1989

By Sam Lipski & Suzanne D. Rutland

Hybrid Publishers

ISBN: 1925000850

RRP - \$29.95

Reviewed by Gerard Henderson

Let My People Go is not only an untold story about Australia and the Soviet Jews in the four decades between 1959 (when the Cold War was at its height) and 1989 (when the Berlin Wall came down and European communism collapsed). It is also a big story from an Australian – and especially Melbourne – point of view.

Sam Lipski and Suzanne D. Rutland's book was reviewed favourably in *The Weekend Australian* on 4 April 2015. However, so far at least, it has not been chosen for review by Jason Steger – the Melbourne's *Age's* British-born literary editor. This could be due to the fact that Mr Steger has a limited understanding of Australian history in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Or it could reflect *The Age's* move to the Green/Left in recent decades and its failure to focus on the attainments of conservatives and social democrats alike. Even those from Melbourne, Victoria.

It is not often that Australia plays an important role in the events of the Northern Hemisphere, outside of military conflict. Yet in the period between 1959 and 1989 Australia helped to obtain the release of around one million Jews from the Soviet Union – many of whom settled in Israel, the most prominent being Natan Sharansky. Sharansky (born 1948) was a founder of the Soviet dissident movement referred to as Refuseniks.

Most of the Australians involved in this campaign were Melbourne based at the time – namely Liberal Party politician Malcolm Fraser, trade union leader and later Labor MP Bob Hawke, businessman and Jewish community leader Isi Leibler and journalist Sam Lipski. Other prominent Melburnians to make an appearance in *Let My People Go* are Robert Menzies, B.A. Santamaria, Arthur Calwell, Bernie Taft, Judah Waten and Sam Cohen. Menzies and Santamaria were supportive of Soviet Jewry. One time Labor leader Calwell and pro-communists Waten and Cohen were sympathetic to the communist leadership in Moscow.

Yet this was an Australian story as well. On 3 April 1962, William (Billy) Charles Wentworth, the Liberal MP for Mackellar in Sydney, directed a question in the House of Representatives to the Minister for External Affairs, Sir Garfield Barwick. Wentworth asked Barwick whether there had been an increase in anti-semitism in the Soviet Union inspired by Soviet authorities. Barwick responded that there were some indications that this was the case and that he would follow up the matter.

This exchange in the House of Representatives led to a chain of events whereby Australia became the first nation to raise the issue of Soviet Jewry in the United Nations. As the authors of *Let My People Go* point out, Australia took the lead in framing Soviet anti-Semitism “as a human rights issue”. They add: “Canberra may not have immediately grasped what it had done, but Moscow certainly did.”

The driver of this campaign was Isi Leibler – who was born in Antwerp in 1934, studied at Melbourne High School and the University of Melbourne and founded Jet Set Travel in 1965. Leibler found opponents among his fellow Jews. Sometimes because of turf wars for influence (with, for example, Marcus Einfield in Sydney) and sometimes because sections of the Jewish left admired the communist regime in Moscow (for example, the Labor senator Sam Cohen) and Communist Party members Bernie Taft and Judah Waten.

Yet, over the years, Leibler managed to stitch together a diverse political group in support of his cause. It included such Liberals as Barwick, Menzies, Fraser, Wentworth, George Hannan, plus such Catholic anti-communists as the National Civic Council's B.A. Santamaria and the Democratic Labor Party's Jack Kane and such Labor supporters as Hawke, Joan Child and John Wheeldon.

Labor's Gough Whitlam did not take up the cause. Indeed, when prime minister, Whitlam demonstrated a certain hostility to Israel and that nation's supporters in Australia. At a breakfast at the Chevron Hotel in May 1974 (organised by the Victorian Jewish Board of Deputies) Whitlam reacted to several questions critical of Australia's position on the Middle East by declaring with condescension aplenty: "You people are hard to please." As the authors comment, at this event Whitlam burnt "his political bridges with the Jews".

The campaign to free Soviet Jewry had three parts. First there were demonstrations and lobbying in Australia. This co-incided with similar activity in other nations, most notably the United States. Then there was diplomatic action – at the United Nations and through normal international channels. Ted Pocock, Australia's ambassador to the Soviet Union in the mid-1980s, was particularly effective in advancing Australia's case. Finally, there were trips to the Soviet Union by the likes of Leibler and Hawke.

Hawke's 1979 visit – when he was ACTU president, before he entered politics – was most notable. Hawke was led to believe – or led himself to believe – that he had achieved the emancipation of Soviet Jews. Leibler, who was not in Moscow at the time, doubted this. It soon became evident that Hawke, who was drinking heavily at the time, had been conned by the Soviet Union's communist leadership.

Leibler, who met Hawke at Rome Airport after he left Moscow, recorded the occasion as follows:

Hawke had blanks in his memory. He was unable to sit up in the car, and...the combination of alcohol, physical stress in both Australia and Israel combined with the emotional impact of meeting the refuseniks has made him fall apart. I am terribly concerned.

Hawke entered Parliament in 1980 and continued to support Soviet Jewry as prime minister. However, he used the occasion of a celebration at the Melbourne Arts Centre in May 1988 – which was attended by 15 former Refuseniks who Mikhail Gorbachev had allowed to leave the Soviet Union some months earlier – to criticise Israel. Liberal Party MP John Howard spoke first – he praised Hawke's role in supporting the Refuseniks' cause and also expressed pride at the Liberal Party's record on Soviet Jewry, Israel and the Jewish community.

Then it was the prime minister's turn. Initially Hawke celebrated the Refuseniks' release but then criticised Israel. In a surprising over-statement he linked "the Palestinian in the Occupied Territories" with "the Jew in the Soviet Union and the black in South Africa". All, Hawke declared, had aspirations to be truly free.

This was hardly the occasion for Hawke to qualify his long-term support for Israel. Leibler told Hawke after the event that he was obsessed with believing that he could make history and resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. A few years later, Hawke imagined that he might be a negotiator between Saddam Hussein's Iraq (following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait) and the Bush administration. Both stances were inherently naïve.

However, in an interview with Sam Lipski, Hawke looked back in happiness at his role as a supporter of Israel. In 2010 Hawke told Lipski:

The Cabinet knew my position [on Soviet Jewry] and they respected that. It was never an issue at the cabinet level. One interesting point was that [Paul] Keating came in one time and he said: "Alright for you, and your Jewish mates in Israel. But I've got a whole lot of Muslims in my electorate and it doesn't help me." And I said, "Well, Paul, I'm sorry about that, but that's the way it is, mate."

As the cliché goes, success has many fathers. Fortunately, Sam Lipski and Suzanne D. Rutland do not

exaggerate the influence of Australia on the fact that thousands of Jews were able to leave the Soviet Union before the collapse of Soviet communism.

Obviously the courageous Refuseniks played their part within the Soviet Union. In the United States, Democratic Party Senator Henry (“Scoop”) Jackson in the early 1970s put economic pressure on Moscow to release Jews from the Soviet Union. And the various US administrations played a role at times. Moreover, Jewish organisations in the US were in the forefront.

The point is not that Australia freed the Soviet Jews. But that Australians played a key role in the process. In particular, the Menzies government’s early support for Soviet Jewry encouraged the government of Israel to take up the cause – previously it had been reluctant to do so, thinking that such action might be counterproductive.

It’s not surprising that in Australia there was much disputation within the small Jewish community as alliances were formed and broken over strategy and tactics. At one time the anti-communist Melbourne University Frank Knopfelmacher rowed with the anti-communist Leibler, both had once been friends.

During a television debate, Leibler dismissed Knopfelmacher’s criticisms of his tactics with respect to the Soviet Union. The Melbourne University academic was not prepared to be lectured at by the chairman of Jet Set Travel and responded with reference to the Jewish born philosopher Baruch Spinoza who clashed with Jewish leaders:

Well, you see, at least Spinoza was excommunicated by learned rabbis. I’ve been excommunicated by a travel agent.

Let My People Go concludes with Sam Lipski’s accounts of two meetings – one in Moscow, the other in Melbourne.

In September 1987 Sam Lipski and his wife, the singer Aura Lipski, along with Isi and Naomi Leibler met up with a group of Refuseniks in Moscow – around the time of the Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashanah). It was an occasion of religious celebration along with some political activity. The Australian party met with Nobel Peace Prize winner Dr Andrei Sakharov and his wife Yelena Bonner – the former had just returned to Moscow after six years of “internal exile” in Gorky. A couple of years after this visit, over a million Soviet Jews were allowed to fly direct to Tel Aviv – one of the greatest mass migrations of the 20th Century.

In 1999 Sam Lipski met Mikhail Gorbachev during his visit to Australia. The meeting took place at *Raheen* in Melbourne, the home of Richard Pratt and Jeanne Pratt. Sam and Aura Lipski took the occasion to thank the former leader of the Soviet Union for allowing Jews to leave. Though an interpreter, Gorbachev replied as follows:

Thank you, I never wanted them to leave. They were our most educated people. We had invested so much in them. We needed them. I wanted them to stay. We lost so much when they left us. But I had no choice. The world wouldn’t let us keep them.

One of the reasons why the world would not let the Soviet Union continue to prevent its Jewish citizens from leaving turned on the role of a small number of Australian Jews, Christians and agnostics alike. At last, the story is documented in *Let My People Go*.

Gerard Henderson is the Executive Director of The Sydney Institute, a columnist with The Weekend Australian and author of the weekly blog Media Watch Dog. His most recent book is Santamaria – A Most Unusual Man, MUP, 2015

THE MEN IN THE COUNTING HOUSE

The Money Men - Australia's Twelve Most Notable Treasurers

By Chris Bowen

Melbourne University Press 2015

ISBN: 9780522866605

RRP - \$34.99

Reviewed by Ed Shann

Chris Bowen's new book *The Money Men* is refreshingly different in largely avoiding the usual politicians' peon of praise about their own track record and claimed triumphs. Still it is disappointing in not delivering as many insights as it should.

He discusses twelve Australian Federal Treasurers to see what lessons can be learnt that could make him a better Treasurer. The Treasurers chosen "are not the best, not the worst, but the most interesting". Each chapter covers a different Treasurer and Bowen rates Paul Keating the best, with honourable mentions to Earle Page, Ted Theodore, Artie Fadden, Bill Hayden, Peter Costello and Wayne Swan. Personally, I would rate Costello second best and delete Swan from the honourable mentions. Jim Cairns would get my prize for the worst Treasurer and, as I was in his office, I had a bird's eye view.

The book disappoints in failing to analyse how the Treasurer's role has changed over the last century and its claim that Keynesian budget fine tuning is vital to manage the economic cycle. The final chapter on Wayne Swan is disappointing because Bowen is a current player and so a balanced analysis is impossible. Bowen concludes that an effective Treasurer needs to be in partnership with his Prime Minister, but must also push a reform agenda, both internally and in public. Treasurers need wisdom rather than qualifications and must work closely with Treasury. A good Treasurer will neither be captive of Treasury, nor ignore it. That is all true as far as it goes, but is hardly earth shattering.

What the book ignores is that early Treasurers were really bean counters and it was only in the 1930s that federal Treasurers became involved in economic policy formulation and implementation. The role of the federal government and the Treasurer expanded markedly during and after the Second World War, helped by the growth of Keynesianism and the recruitment by Treasury of trained economists, rather than mere book keepers.

The role of the Treasurer has changed markedly again in the last 40 years. We now have a Minister of Finance. A good Minister of Finance, as Peter Walsh showed, can play an important role in spending restraint that frees up the Treasurer for broader policy decisions. A strong Finance Minister and Department make a Treasurer's life easier.

There is now an independent Reserve Bank running monetary policy and the floating exchange rate makes interest rate changes a powerful policy tool. This has reduced the ability of Treasury to attract top economists as the centre of short term demand management has shifted to the Reserve Bank, which is no longer subservient to Canberra. It means that except in a major crisis the prime responsibility for short term demand management no longer lies with the Treasurer. Bowen does not seem to understand that while a Treasurer controls budgetary policy, it can become ineffective or even perverse if in conflict with the monetary settings determined by an independent central bank. An expansionary budget policy offset by a tight monetary policy forces up the exchange rate.

Bowen also ignores that large Ministerial offices now play a major policy role. An effective Treasurer needs experienced advisors in the office, with a working relationship with the Department. John Howard had John Hewson and Keating had Tony Cole, Don Russell and Ken Henry from Treasury, who went on to be De-

partmental heads. Keating needed a lot of support when he started as Treasurer and he had it from an outstanding office. The Treasurer's (or Prime Minister's) office can isolate the minister if it is badly run, or has inexperienced staff with little knowledge of the public service, as recent experience underlines.

The Treasury itself is no longer a dominant institution attracting the nation's best economists. In fact it now lacks many of the skills needed to formulate policy successfully, particularly given the increased importance of supply side policies. This means independent public inquiries using outsiders, or the Productivity Commission, need to be used more often to formulate effective policies. It also underlines the importance of Treasurers consulting widely and listening to a wide range of advice.

The weakest part of the book is Bowen's emphasis on short term demand management using budgetary policy. He dismisses the use of interest rates as being too slow when acting in a crisis. In the normal course of events, gradual and flexible adjustments in interest rates is safer and more effective, particularly when run by an independent Reserve Bank free of political imperatives. Lower rates help reduce the exchange rate, while using budget deficits means a higher exchange rate and loss of competitiveness.

Even in a crisis, budget spending on useful infrastructure takes time to deliver and it can be hard to turn off. Ken Henry's desire to go hard, go early and go to households should have added, go temporary. One off welfare payments and temporary tax changes are automatically reversed. They do not linger on and persist when not needed and so blow out the deficit unnecessarily down the track as just occurred.

The discussion of Ted Theodore in the 1930s is controversial and while Bowen's view is supported by some economic historians it does not discuss alternative views. Bowen argues Theodore adopted the Premiers Plan, which he claims followed the recommendations of the Bank of England's Sir Otto Niemeyer and was a pre Keynesian austerity package that exacerbated the Depression. Bowen considers Theodore a Keynesian, who was ahead of his time, but forced to adopt austerity by conservative banks and the opposition.

As Alex Millmow's excellent "The power of economic ideas" outlines, implementation of the Premiers Plan was preceded by devaluation in early 1931 (which Niemeyer opposed) which allowed some loosening in monetary policy. The Plan involved cuts in internal interest payments on public loans and more gradual reductions in deficits financed by Treasury bills than Niemeyer supported. Of course it also included budget and wage cuts, though the 10 per cent cut in nominal wages probably did not cut real wages by much in practice given falling prices. Because of falling export prices, Australia was hit harder than either the UK or Canada in terms of lower national income. The options were limited given the terms of trade halved and Australian public debt reached 200 per cent of GDP in the early 1930s, so Australia could no longer borrow overseas.

The non-Treasury economists (including my great uncle Edward Shann) who formulated the Premiers Plan knew living standards needed to fall and were trying to spread the pain. They combined budget cuts, so the package could be sold as responsible, with some admittedly limited stimulatory measures, with devaluation central. The package helped restore conservative business confidence. The fall of 25 per cent in the \$A during 1931 saw a recovery in Australian GDP that was earlier than in most countries. Australian policy was a realistic response to the crisis given a swing into large debt financed budget deficits was probably not practical. The London capital market was closed to new Australian borrowing and Australia had a balance of payments constraint.

Similar to the Niemeyer package, recent Greek austerity relied on budget cuts with a fixed exchange rate. That is very different from the Premiers Plan which was preceded by a large \$A depreciation which allowed some (inadequate) relaxation of monetary policy. Theodore was unable to get through his original expansionary budget proposals, but the package he did get through did not exacerbate the economic downturn as some claim, as the recovery got underway in 1931. He therefore deserves credit for implementing a package that helped recovery, even if his original plan was never adopted. When unemployment persisted in the 1930s, the economists involved argued unsuccessfully for further expansionary measures including a larger devaluation and public investment, but by then Theodore was long gone.

Jim Cairns has to rank as Australia's worst Treasurer and as Bowen says despite his economic qualifications he was not interested in administration, chose his staff badly and cut himself off from alternative advice, including his own Department. Bowen accuses senior Treasury officials of leaking to the Opposition on the Loans Affair, but who did the leaking is unproven and Bowen offers nothing that justifies the claim. I can think of other possibilities. In contrast, Bill Hayden was a fine man who took advice and for me was a relief when acting Treasurer while Jim Cairns was overseas. Hayden inherited a mess and was Treasurer for too short a time to leave a real mark in that role.

The Whitlam government underlines the importance of the Prime Minister in determining how well a Treasurer can perform. Bowen claims the Whitlam government had a laudable record. While it left a lasting legacy, its economic impact was appalling. I doubt even Hayden, if he had been Treasurer earlier, could have prevented all of the excesses, given Whitlam's preoccupation with implementing the program on first getting office. Even a good Treasurer depends on having a supportive Prime Minister if he is to be effective. As Bowen correctly says, Bob Hawke and Paul Keating were an effective team with different skills in transforming Australia into a more outward looking economy. It is a tragedy that their outstanding track record is now marred by bickering over who did what. However, it is perhaps inherent in politics that tensions and differences will eventually mar even effective partnerships. The chapter on Keating has clearly relied heavily on Keating's view of events, but he is undoubtedly Australia's outstanding Treasurer.

Peter Costello is given credit by Bowen (along with Prime Minister John Howard) for delivering the GST when his predecessors failed. Bowen also approves of the changes to bank prudential supervision and the banning of major bank mergers, which helped greatly in the Australian banking system avoiding the financial fallout suffered elsewhere in the GFC. Australia's role in the Asian crisis in challenging IMF prescriptions for Indonesia is also rightly praised. Costello should be given more credit than Bowen gives him for formalising the independence of the Reserve Bank, as this provided a major ongoing improvement in the policy framework.

Bowen is also reluctant to give Costello much credit for paying off public debt (admittedly mainly by selling assets) and in setting up the Future Fund, while delivering tax cuts as well as a budget surplus. This allowed the federal government to run deficits and guarantee the banks when a shock came, while retaining a top credit rating. Of course, the times were good and Costello could surf the waves, but a worse result was certainly possible. Costello was not a policy path breaker like Keating and some consider him arrogant and lazy, but he was a safe pair of hands that left Australia in good shape. I would rank him second to Keating in the modern era.

The chapter on Wayne Swan is mainly a defence of the budget stimulus and dismisses the role of the China boom in helping rescue Australia. Australia did well to avoid recession, but the policy excesses need to be remembered. The stimulus was too large and lasted too long. Bowen skates over the implementation disasters of that stimulus, the mining tax and the carbon tax and the flawed policy processes involved. He ignores the inability subsequently to rein in spending and in fact the locking in by the Labor government of huge unfunded spending time bombs down the track in education, health, NDIS and the NBN.

Swan failed to focus on policies that would improve Australia's long run economic performance and gave too much emphasis to redistribution rather than stimulating growth. What he did do was often badly thought out and delivered. Swan should get credit for the first budget stimulus package which was largely temporary, but so should Hawke and Keating for creating a more flexible economy better able to respond to crisis and Costello for leaving the budget and debt levels in such good shape. The monetary response of the Reserve Bank helped stimulate activity as well. The China boom added icing to the cake. There were many fathers to Australia's good performance.

Bowen's emphasis on the importance of Keynesian budget demand management is wrong. In normal times, interest rate changes implemented by the independent Reserve Bank are better. Interest rate policy is more flexible and does not perversely distort the exchange rate. The role of the Treasurer in normal times should

be to focus on supply side reforms and achieve budget balance over the cycle. Supply side reforms can both boost productivity and living standards and make the economy more resilient in the event of shocks. The reforms of the Hawke/Keating years helped not only lift economic performance at the time, but they increased the flexibility of the economy in dealing with future shocks. There is still more to be done in reforming tax, the Federation and competition policy and winding back the budget deficit. We need to increase further the flexibility of the economy and the ability of people and resources to move into their most efficient uses. A good Treasurer needs to consult widely and listen to advice from a variety of sources. Like Keating, he needs to be able to put sound economic policies into a politically saleable package, both to persuade his colleagues and then the public.

If he is to be an effective Treasurer Chris Bowen needs to think more deeply about his role than this book does. This is still a readable and stimulating book, but it could have been so much better.

Dr Ed Shann is an economist who worked in Treasury and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet in the 1970s and early 1980s before moving to the private sector. He had some personal contact with half the Treasurers covered in this book.

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MEMORIES OF US

When We Were Young and Foolish

By Greg Sheridan

Allen & Unwin 2015

ISBN: 9781760113391

ISBN-10: 1760113395

RRP - \$32.99

Reviewed by Gerard Henderson

Greg Sheridan's biography, which commences around the time of his birth in 1956 and ends around the time he became the first China correspondent in the history of The Australian in 1985, is subtitled "A memoir of my misguided youth with Tony Abbott, Bob Carr, Malcolm Turnbull, Kevin Rudd and other reprobates". All four reprobates are sketched by Rocco Fazzari on the front cover – along with the reprobate author himself.

B A Santamaria (1915-1998) is not mentioned on the cover. Yet, his first major electronic media interview about When We Were Young and Foolish – with Ticky Fullerton on ABC's Lateline (24 July 2015) focused primarily on Santamaria.

Sheridan rose to the rank of foreign editor at The Australian – Australia's finest and most important newspaper. During some three decades at Australia's national newspaper, Sheridan has written important columns and articles and met significant figures at home and overseas. In view of the fact that this is primarily a book about personalities, it's worth judging it with respect to the author's dealings during what he describes, self-mockingly, as his misguided youth.

Greg Sheridan

Greg Sheridan grew up in what can probably be best described as a lower middle class Catholic family in the western Sydney suburb of Lewisham. A two-bedroom flat, in fact. When Anne Henderson and I moved to Sydney in late 1984, we were surprised that so few homes had what we Melburnians knew as fly-wire window screens and doors. This was the reality also when Sheridan was growing up. He reflects on life in the 1960s "when summer was filled with flies and mosquitoes which buzzed around your ears incessantly when you were trying to sleep".

Lewisham, at the time, was what the author describes as a "kind of Catholic ghetto". There was the church, St Thomas of Canterbury, plus two Christian Brothers schools (for boys) and the Sisters of Charity convent school (for girls). There were also two Catholic hospitals – Lewisham General Hospital and Lewisham Private Hospital. The author refers to the Catholic Church's "universality" – certainly young Greg grew up among an ethnically diverse group of friends in Lewisham.

In time, the Sheridan family became middle class and moved over the Sydney Harbour Bridge to Forestville. Greg's father (John) inherited a house from his aunt (Poppy) who may have been his mother and the family's finances improved. Greg kept attending the Christian Brothers in Lewisham. Until, at age 15, he convinced his parents to allow him to go to a seminary – the Redemptorist Fathers at Galong in southern New South Wales – to study to become a Catholic priest. He only lasted a year and finished his secondary schooling at St Pius X College – the Christian Brothers school at Chatswood.

Young Greg was – and remains – a traditional Catholic. He believes in God and is not afraid to write that – when a seminarian in the chapel at Galong – he "saw at the foot of the altar, a woman in radiant white robes kneeling in prayer" – the "most beautiful sight" he has ever seen. An apparition – in the Catholic parlance of the time. He quotes the Catholic born Kevin Rudd and the Baptist born Peter Costello as maintaining that, occasionally, miracles happen.

Sheridan has “had no trouble with religious belief” but, correctly, acknowledges “living up to the belief ... has been enormously difficult”. He acknowledges the existence of “some corporal punishment” at primary school but “never saw or heard of any sexual abuse”. Looking back, he sees that “those nuns and brothers dedicated their lives” to giving him a chance in life. Sheridan made the most of the opportunity.

B A Santamaria

Bob (BAS) Santamaria was one of young Greg’s early heroes. Along with United States president J F Kennedy. In 1963, he became interested in politics. Every Sunday, the family tuned into BAS’s Point of View commentary program on Channel 9. And 1963 was the year of the Kennedy assassination. Half a century later, Sheridan’s politics have not changed much. Like Kennedy and Santamaria, he is an anti-communist and a social democrat. Sheridan is also a social conservative and was slow to embrace free market economics

Sheridan, along with Abbott, was involved in the opposition to the left on university campuses in the 1970s. This usually took the form of involvement in the campus Democratic Club – which received support from Santamaria’s National Civic Council organisation.

Yet, as *When We Were Young and Foolish* documents, at times Sheridan and his colleagues disagreed with Santamaria. BAS did not even encourage the early success of the author and his best friend Tony Abbott in obtaining media coverage. Santamaria told both Sheridan and Abbott that they should not expect much success in the media and that, if they did succeed, the “every night after you’ve dealt with the media go down on your knees and pray for humility”. This from a high profile Australian who had a weekly television program and a newspaper column at the time.

What’s fresh about BAS in the memoir is the author’s account of the NCC president’s attitude to honours:

When I got to know Santa well personally, and visited him virtually whenever I was in Melbourne, one of the things I liked most about him was his sense of droll irony and lack of pretension. He often said that people only turned to him when there was absolutely no other alternative. He and his movement never adopted the airs of the big end of town or of the establishment. Malcolm Fraser as prime minister offered Santa a knighthood.

Santa told me about this, and of course he had not a nano-second’s hesitation about turning it down. “I’ve done a lot for the sake of politics,” he said. “But you’ve got to draw the line somewhere.” Accepting a knighthood would make him, and by inference anyone else, ridiculous.

To accept or reject an honour is perfectly okay. But to reject one and then talk about it is unprofessional.

Moreover, on 11 August 1976, BAS wrote to Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser urging that his friend Professor James McAuley “be considered for a knighthood on the grounds that he is Australia’s most outstanding intellectual and man of letters and has also rendered exceptional service to education in Australia” – see Patrick Morgan (ed) *B A Santamaria: Your Most Obedient Servant – Selected Letters: 1938-1936* MUP, 2007)

Sheridan’s reflections on Santamaria are of interest. But Sheridan lived in Sydney and rarely saw the Melbourne based Santamaria. What’s more, he never worked with him and, consequently, never got to understand that – at times – BAS was both untruthful and inconsistent.

For the record, I was told by a former government minister in October 1976 – in an RAAF plane on the way back from McAuley’s funeral in Hobart (my employer Kevin Newman had represented the prime minister at the occasion) that McAuley had been recommended for a “very high honour” in the 1977 Australia Day list. McAuley died before the award – presumably a knighthood – could be bestowed.

Tony Abbott

Tony Abbott, like Sheridan, neglected BAS's advice that he beware falling victim to the sin of pride. Like Sheridan, Abbott worked on *The Bulletin* and later *The Australian*.

When We Were Young and Foolish presents an important counter-argument to the unfavourable portrait of Abbott in David Marr's essay *Political Animal – The Making of Tony Abbott* (Quarterly Essay, 2012). Sheridan documents that "one of the biggest inaccuracies in David Marr's book about Tony is the idea that the NCC and the Democratic clubs were the key drivers behind campuses disaffiliating from the AUS [Australian Union of Students], which later became the main strategy to destroy the left's influence". He points out that, early in this campaign, the main drivers of the campaign were Peter Costello and Michael Danby – neither of whom had links to Santamaria. In fact, the NCC opposed the idea at the time.

Sheridan depicts Abbott as a young man with considerable physical courage in standing up to left-wing violence on campus. He also describes Abbott's courage, at the request of a mother, in rescuing her son at the dangerous Portsea Backbeach – not far from where Prime Minister Harold Holt drowned in December 1967. Abbott was assisted by another swimmer on a surfboard. Sheridan did not have the swimming capability to help out.

As to David Marr's allegation that, in 1977, Abbott slammed both fists into the wall behind a female political rival's head – well, he does not believe that the woman's memory is accurate:

There have been allegations that Tony punched the wall beside the head of Barbara Ramjan, the left's successful candidate for the SRC presidency, in order to intimidate her, on the night the election results were announced. Although I wasn't there that night, from my experience of Tony I am sure he did not do such a thing.

At the time I talked to all our people who were there. Everything, every moment of the evening, was relived in earnest conversation in the days and weeks that followed. Tony and I confided to each other almost every thought that passed through our heads.

Nothing like that happened or could have happened. For Tony to have attempted to physically intimidate a woman was just inconceivable. He would have chewed off his own arm in preference. There is no witness to it beyond the person making the allegation. And while the left used the pages of Honi [Soit] to accuse Tony of every sin imaginable, there was no mention of any such incident as this. Jeremy Jones, a Labor Party activist who later became a distinguished leader of the Australian Jewish community, and who was in no sense a political ally of Tony's, was one of the few people who was on good terms with both sides. He was there on the night and had countless discussions with all participants in the evening's events. He believes no such thing happened.

I am not accusing Barbara Ramjan of bad faith over this episode, much less of telling lies. Memory is very fallible, especially over thirty-five years or more. It is easy in good faith to confuse one incident with another, one night with another, one person with another.

When We Were Young and Foolish punctures the myth that "Santamaria dominated Tony's thinking". Sheridan states that in 1979 – at age 21 – Abbott was "quite prepared to oppose Santa on a policy Santa had previously determined".

Malcolm Turnbull

Malcolm Turnbull "hovered around the campus" at Sydney University during Abbott's time and they later worked together on *The Bulletin*. Sheridan regarded him as "an almost impossibly glamorous figure around campus". At *The Bulletin*, Abbott was "immensely impressed that Turnbull could do so many things so well

simultaneously”.

At Sydney University, Sheridan did not really click with “Malcolm’s social circle” – feeling that “there was a touch of *Brideshead Revisited* about some of these folks”. At *The Bulletin* he found Turnbull “a bit irritating in that a discussion with him that involved disagreement could become quite tough”.

When We Were Young and Foolish contains an insight into the Prime Minister’s Catholicism:

It is commonly written that Malcolm converted to Catholicism. This may not be strictly true. Malcolm had always believed he’d been christened as a baby and always put his religion down as Presbyterian. When he was a boarder at Sydney Grammar he attended a Presbyterian church.

But when he decided to become a Catholic it was impossible to locate any record, or any witness, of his christening. If he had not been baptised previously, then technically he was not converting to Catholicism but becoming, at least officially, a Christian for the first time. Malcolm’s embrace of Catholicism was sincere. His wife, Lucy, originally Lucy Hughes, comes from one of the most prominent Catholic families in Australia. Like all families, individual members vary in how devout they are but their identity as a Catholic family is very strong. So Malcolm was christened, confirmed and with his wife, re-solemnised his wedding vows, all in one day.

Bob Carr

Bob Carr was recruited to *The Bulletin*, at Turnbull’s suggestion, to provide greater political diversity. Carr had been a journalist at the ABC with obvious Labor leanings – of the NSW Labor Right genre. Unlike the ABC today, *The Bulletin* under Trevor Kennedy’s leadership employed journalists with a diversity of views and readily published criticism of them on its vigorous letters page. Carr was an obvious match for politically conservative Peter Samuel in the magazine.

When We Were Young and Foolish commences with Sheridan, Carr and Abbott doing lunch at Sydney’s New Hallas restaurant in 1984 – by which time Carr was a minister in Neville Wran’s NSW Labor government. It ends with an assessment of Carr’s brief time as foreign minister in Julia Gillard’s Labor government.

I thought Bob Carr was an effective foreign minister, a rare bright spot in a dismal government. But I came to disagree with him profoundly about the Middle East, especially with what I saw as his excessive hostility to Israel. We had some robust conversations about it. And I wrote columns laying out our disagreement. But it didn’t affect our friendship.

In time, Carr was to accept, as Sheridan describes it, that Santamaria and the breakaway anti-communist Democratic Labor Party “had been right to argue for a time Labor could not be trusted with government on national security grounds”.

Carr used his time at *The Bulletin* to campaign for Labor pre-selection in a winnable seat. He wrote some important reports on the Labor Party and the trade union movement in between acting as some kind of court-jester who feels that he’s paid to be funny. As Sheridan recalls:

Bob took to holding me personally responsible for any view that B.A. Santamaria argued. In one column Santa expressed the view that Europe had been in perpetual chaos since the fall of the old empires, especially the Hapsburg Empire. So Bob immediately translated this into the conceit that Santa, and therefore I, wanted to restore the Austro-Hungarian Hapsburgs, and were actively campaigning to bring this about.

Bob’s sense of fun, his innate ability to find the absurd in any situation, or rather to render an absurd version of any situation by exaggerating and caricaturing any foolishness, should really have pre-

vented him having such a big career in politics.

There was an office legend, which may even have had some basis in fact, that for a day Bob's phone was constantly ringing and through some insane oddity of telephone technology, all the calls were people trying to ring directory assistance and getting Bob's number instead. Some unfortunate caller asked for the number of a trade union: "I'm sorry, sir, the Fraser government has instructed that we no longer give out the telephone numbers of trade unions."

A personal reflection

Greg Sheridan's *When We Were Young and Foolish* is both important and fun. Just like the author himself. This reviewer was most intrigued by the following reference:

It was astonishing good fortune for me to know all these people at *The Bulletin*. Trevor Kennedy, Bob Carr, Alan Reid, Sam Lipski, Malcolm Turnbull and the rest. It was a scintillating magazine under Trevor Kennedy's editorship. Years later, Trevor for a time headed the Tourang consortium which, including [Kerry] Packer as a minority shareholder, as well as Conrad Black and others, bid for ownership of the Fairfax media empire.

If the bid had succeeded, and Trevor had remained its head, then Trevor would have been the boss of Fairfax. One of his plans, with appropriate consultation, was to offer Gerard Henderson the editorship of *The Sydney Morning Herald*. That would have been fun for everyone.

Yes – that would have been fun. Lotsa.

Gerard Henderson is the Executive Director of The Sydney Institute, a columnist with The Weekend Australian and author of the weekly blog Media Watch Dog. His most recent book is Santamaria – A Most Unusual Man, MUP, 2015

MAN OF THE PEOPLE IN TOP HAT AND FROCK COAT

Mannix

by Brenda Niall

Text Publishing

ISBN: 9781922182111

RRP - \$50

Reviewed by Ross Fitzgerald

As far as I can tell, Brenda Niall's new book is the ninth biography of the controversial Irish-born Daniel Mannix - who was the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne from 1917 to 1963.

A key theme of this well-written biography, repeated a number of times throughout the book, is that shortly after the 99-year old Mannix died about midday on 6 November 1963 – the day after Guy Fawkes Night and Gatum Gatum won the Melbourne Cup - there was an enormous three-day bonfire of the Archbishop's private papers.

Niall claims that this systematic burning of most of Mannix's papers took place at "Raheen" - the Archbishop's palatial mansion in Kew and was allegedly a deliberate move on Mannix's part to foil and frustrate any future biographers.

The main problem with Niall's controversial claim is that there is little evidence to support it. Certainly there was nothing in Dr Mannix's will about destroying any documents. Neither are there any written or direct instructions from Dr Mannix about his wishing to have eradicated any or all extant letters either by or to him, as a private person or as the Archbishop of Melbourne.

Niall worked as research assistant for Mannix's official biographer - B.A. (Bob) Santamaria from 1954 to about 1961. Niall also knows that, in fact, there were a large number of Mannix's personal papers and letters, which survived his death. Indeed, a number of these were used in, and quoted by, Santamaria in his book *Daniel Mannix: The Quality of Leadership*, published by Melbourne University Press in 1984.

Moreover, after Santamaria's death in 1998, all these 12 boxes of letters and papers were returned to Rachel Naughton at the Melbourne Diocesan Historical Commission of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne - where they remain.

In the mid 1980s, I accessed Mannix's papers at Maynooth's St Patrick's College seminary. Mannix had been president of Maynooth between 1903 and 1913, before coming to Australia at the age of 49. The priest/librarian at Maynooth told me that I was only the second Australian to ask for the Mannix papers. The other Aussie was Bob Santamaria. In fact, the archive contained very few of Mannix's letters, most of them - as was his wont - very brief and penned in his spindly hand.

All in all, I find it hard to believe that a three day bonfire of Mannix's personal papers ever happened. And because Niall's claim about the deliberate destruction of his papers, on the order of Mannix himself, is so central to her biography, it makes this reviewer somewhat sceptical about Niall's other key statements concerning the long-serving and often-controversial Archbishop of Melbourne. This includes Niall's claims about the radical, Irish-born Father W.P. (William) Hackett SJ - whose biography she published in 2009 and who was allegedly sent to Australia because of his support for the Irish revolutionary militant Eamon de Valera. This statement I regard as being dubious and unproven, to say the least.

Niall's "bonfire" claims also cast doubt, in particular, about Father Hackett's relationship with Dr Mannix. It is well worth recording that in *The Riddle of Father Hackett: A Life in Ireland and Australia*, Niall claimed

that all of the Archbishop's private papers were burnt on his say-so, whereas now in Mannix her claim has been changed and diluted to claiming that most of these papers were burnt. But, significantly, in her 2015 biography Niall's highly questionable statement about a three-day bonfire at Raheen still persists.

Some facts about Daniel Mannix and his life and times are incontestable. Born near Charleville in County Cork in March 1864, the son of a tenant farmer, Mannix was educated for the priesthood at St Patrick's College, Maynooth, the Irish national seminary. Further studies saw him awarded a doctorate of divinity in 1895 after which he took up a lectureship in philosophy and the chair of moral theology at Maynooth and was elected to the presidency of the college unanimously in 1903. By 1912, however, it was clear Mannix's stringent personality had alienated his superiors and he was not given a major see. In July 1912, he was appointed coadjutor archbishop of Melbourne and arrived at Melbourne's Spencer Street Railway Station just before Easter 1913.

Tall, thin, gaunt, ascetic and often remote and austere, with a strong searching gaze and a powerful presence, Mannix was unforgettable and like no other archbishop in Australia or elsewhere. Mannix first came to public prominence in this country as a charismatic leader of the national anti-conscription campaigns. He played a part in the first conscription referendum, which was narrowly defeated on 28 October 1916, and especially in the resounding NO Vote in the second referendum of 20 December 1917 - when he was by then Archbishop of Melbourne. It was in part because of Mannix that the anti-conscription forces won out against the conscription advocates, who were led by the gnomish, Welsh-born and fervently pro-war prime minister W.H. (Billy) Hughes - who was widely known as the "Little Digger."

It is clear that Mannix was a strict, total abstainer - who regularly spoke in strident advocacy of the so-called "temperance" movement and against the evils of alcohol.

After he became Archbishop of Melbourne, Mannix was regularly seen, in his top hat and frock coat walking, with a cane, from Raheen to St Patrick's Catholic cathedral in East Melbourne, which is situated near St Vincent's Private Hospital. On the way there and back, the imposing Archbishop would often dispense coins to young children and the needy.

As far as we know, Mannix never used the telephone and, in the main was indifferent to the motorcar. However, in his last years, he liked watching the news on television and the Western serial "Gunsmoke".

Mannix had few friends and, after he was unable to attend his mother's funeral in Ireland in 1925, he had little contact with his extended family. This meant that there did not exist a trail of familial correspondence. Even though he spent up to five hours each day in prayer, he left neither a spiritual journal nor a private diary.

While in the main aloof and reclusive, Mannix did have a decidedly messianic attitude to and belief in the militant Irish leader Eamon de Valera, who eventually came to power in 1932, and in the Australian Catholic anti-communist Bob Santamaria - both of whom he regarded in different ways as being "saviors" of their people.

Indeed it was with Mannix's strong support that Santamaria, for years, effectively organised what became known as "the Movement" or "the Show". This involved establishing an informal set of so-called Industrial Groups to take on the Communists in the Australian trade union movement. Indeed, Santamaria adopted the Communists' own methods of establishing and developing secret "cells" in each union or Australian labour movement organisation. This method he used against communist infiltration of the trades union movement and, more broadly, against the Communist Party of Australia - whose influence was at its height at the end of World War II, and especially from 1945 to 1949.

For a while, the unstable federal ALP leader Dr H.V. (Doc) Evatt collaborated with Santamaria. But a few

months after the increasingly erratic Dr Evatt was narrowly defeated in the May 1954 federal election, in a bid to hang on to his federal Labor leadership, he turned against Mannix's Melbourne-based protégé. Evatt did this by denouncing secretive Movement members and supporters as being disloyal to himself and to the Labor Party. In so doing, he exposed the then relatively unknown Santamaria's role in undermining the ALP – both federally and in the states. Evatt's intemperate outbursts led directly to the tumultuous Labor Split of the mid 1950s, which helped keep the ALP out of office for decades. Niall cogently puts it thus: "Another Labor split – the third in Mannix's time in Australia – brought back much of the sectarian bitterness of the conscription period."

After Father Hackett died in July 1954, Mannix's most frequent visitor was Bob Santamaria who, on Saturday afternoons, would often drop in at Raheen on his way home from watching his team Carlton play football. As Niall recounts, the Archbishop was keen to hear details about the Victorian Football League. According to Niall (who produces no clear evidence to back up her claim), Mannix supported my beloved club Collingwood, which she aptly describes as "the team of the underdogs, (Mannix's) neighbors across the river from Raheen".

The most touching scene in this well-produced book is when Mannix is observed at Raheen, arm gently around the shoulder, comforting his old enemy "Billy" Hughes - after the latter's beloved daughter Helen had died prematurely in London in 1937. In Mannix, Niall makes a convincing case that the unmarried Helen Hughes had been pregnant when she left Australia and that she died of septicemia after giving birth. To this day, the identity of the father is not known.

The Mannix/Hughes meeting of 1937 was not their last. From time to time thereafter, until the Little Digger's death in October 1952, aged 90, Hughes visited Mannix at Raheen, and the two ex-rivals regularly exchanged birthday greetings.

Throughout Niall's book there are remarkably few typos and mistakes. However, the militant Industrial Workers of the World (commonly known as the IWW or the Wobblies) is wrongly rendered as the International Workers of the World. But, to be fair, this is a common mistake made by authors who do not understand the details of the radical international labour movement of the early twentieth century.

In a chapter entitled "The Last Hurrah", Niall claims that, for her, "Evatt's attack on the ALP men who were associated with the Movement wasn't a complete surprise." This was, in part, because she had read two articles that explained the link – written by Alan Reid, the influential, political journalist and lead correspondent for The Daily Telegraph. But, annoyingly, nowhere in the Endnotes or in the Bibliography of Mannix are Reid's articles cited or even mentioned. This means that the reader does not know what were their titles, where or when they were published or what they had to say.

Professor Fitzgerald, a columnist with The Australian, recently edited Alan Reid's unpublished Labor novel of the 1950s, The Bandar-Log, (Connor Court)

PARTNERS IN HISTORY – WAR, LOVE AND SACRIFICE

First Lady – The Life and Wars of Clementine Churchill

By Sonia Purnell

Aurum Press 2015

ISBN: 978 1 76131 306 0

RRP - \$45

Margot at War – Love and Betrayal in Downing Street, 1912-1916

By Anne De Courcy

Weidenfeld & Nicolson 2014

ISBN: 978 0 297 869 832

RRP - £20 (hb)

Reviewed by Anne Henderson

History has a lot to thank twentieth century feminism for. Big men history is no longer enough. Battles won, leaders idolised and public office recorded will not do. Gaps in the human tide must also be filled. A convincing view of greatness must not only include bold public achievements but also the private lives behind such accounts. Greatness has been humbled and the education of women has forced such transparency. Emotional impacts, relationships, the psyche, home as well as the office – all are part of the story.

Letters between husbands and wives, lovers, romantic triangles reflected on in private correspondence and in interviews with family and contemporaries, hidden rivalries, illnesses, psychological weaknesses and, more especially, the publicly hidden but intensely influential role of consorts and partners now fill memoirs and biographies and the history of power. Historical memory is no longer complete without the full human picture.

It is unsurprising then that two recent books on the wives of two British wartime prime ministers have thrown new light on their spouses. That the word “war” features in both titles should also not surprise – both women, while very different in character, held their own forts against many challenges.

Sonia Purnell’s *First Lady – The Life and Wars of Clementine Churchill* and Anne De Courcy’s *Margot at War – Love and Betrayal in Downing Street, 1912-1916* take their readers through some spicy and revealing British history while detailing not only riveting times but also a patchwork of upper class British life when the British establishment indeed ruled Britannia.

However, while British establishment women had a front row seat, the ruling was very much done by their menfolk. And it was not unusual for those men of the ruling class to cast aspersions at the frailty of women generally while leaning very heavily on their wives and other women for emotional and even material support.

The masculine opinion of where women belonged in the scale of intellectual activity could be summed up by comments such as those from the young Jock Colville, when Winston Churchill’s private secretary in 1941: “[It is] a waste of time and exasperating to talk to most women on serious subjects. Sex, the Arts and the Abstract seem to me the only topics to discuss [with them].” Churchill himself dismissed the female gender in his novel *Savrola*, describing his character Lucile as, “Woman-like she asked three questions at once”.

By 1913, Margot Asquith, with her wealthy background and in spite of mounting debts, was supporting not only her husband’s extravagance but that of his older children by his first marriage. And this while, to his wife’s despair and discomfort, Asquith made his name notorious for his lovesick pursuit of his daughter’s friend Venetia Stanley. Women were very clearly in the support contingent, with loyalty and the ability to play hostess among the important traits required. Meanwhile, few females of the upper classes were permit-

ted the advantage of tertiary education.

To be a formally educated woman was to be tagged a blue stocking. In spite of Clementine Hosier (later Churchill) being a success at Berkhamsted High, especially in French, and ensured of an academic place, her mother Lady Blanche put paid to such “university nonsense” by arranging for a wealthy relative to chaperone Clementine’s launch into London society and – in time – a good marriage. Ironically, it would be Clementine’s need to earn a living (teaching French), and her ability to discourse about many topics of interest, which attracted the young Winston Churchill to her.

On an evening when a tired, home from work Clementine was forced to make up the numbers for dinner by her London chaperone, Lady St Helier, her dinner companion turned out to be a very late arriving Winston Churchill who “paid her such marked and exclusive attention the whole evening that everyone was talking about it”. The attraction, apart from her beauty, was that “never before had he met a fashionable young woman at a society dinner who earned her own living ... she already knew far more about life than the ladies of cosseting privilege he normally met, and she was educated, sharing his love of France and its culture”.

Both authors have immersed their upper class subjects, at the seat of power, in the world of their eras. A world of servants and few holidays for any other than the rich. A world where national pride came with poor working class conditions. A world where those who dominated government, as De Courcy puts it, were just “2000 families – many of them related, some linked by marriage, others by long-standing friendships”. A world where the centre of global influence was a country where primogeniture meant the vast estates of these families represented some 90 per cent of all the land in Britain. For all that, Asquith, whose father had been a wool merchant, made his way up through study at Oxford and opportunity in politics.

In so many ways, Clementine Churchill and Margot Asquith could not have been more different, but it is this world of upper class privilege that connects them. Neither woman could be said to lack forbearance or temerity and yet their life-saving loyalty to their respective husbands saw them bow to the prevailing mores.

Clementine Churchill did her best to influence her husband to look more favourably on women’s emancipation. She failed, and thereafter took up a more successful guidance of her husband’s career. Margot Asquith, for all her headstrong opinions, was a fierce opponent of the suffragettes as her husband faced their physical attacks as well as abuse.

Both women took particular care about their fashionable clothes – yet their obsessiveness had quite different origins. For Margot, whose face had a plain and severe outline after a riding accident, it was the uncertainty of her looks, aided by overhearing uncomplimentary comments on her lack of beauty at sixteen, made by her mother, that saw Margot begin to make “style and chic” her forte. For Clementine, it was a dysfunctional early family life among a variety of unloving adult guardians and a single mother who, in spite of being the daughter of an earl, managed her children’s lives just short of penury. Clementine thus experienced more of the real world than other children of her class but she would forever be anxious over her position in society, her talents and her appearance.

Sonia Purnell has set out to fill a void – the lack of any widely understood picture of Clementine Churchill and her contribution as the life-time partner of one of the modern world’s best known heroic leaders. Purnell’s portrait is superb and it shows how Clementine Churchill was more intrinsic to her husband’s success than anything else. It is not wrong to say, after reading Purnell’s account, worked from the many letters, diaries and accounts by contemporaries, that without Clementine as his devoted and politically astute spouse, Winston Churchill would have faded from history some time after World War I, to be known thereafter as an impetuous and failed MP who wrote interesting history.

As Purnell writes early in the biography, using Churchill’s son Randolph as a source, unlike other powerful men Winston Churchill was “not tremendously fired up by sex” - “ambition was the motive force and he

was powerless to resist it". However, he felt he needed a wife. Seeking one, he was turned down by various young beauties until he persuaded Clementine Hosier. The two were a special match - both were the children of exceptionally promiscuous and neglectful parents and neither had won parental love. This would affect their approach to conjugal loyalty, although neither would prove to be a hands-on parent of any note.

But they did fall in love – a love that endured untold moments of stress and Churchill tantrums, even surviving Clementine's desire for a divorce in 1935 soon after her romantic four months sea voyage escape from her difficult husband sailing to the East Indies on Guinness heir Lord Moyne's Rosaura. Clementine would always play second fiddle to her husband's ambitions and possessiveness of her time and devotion. Their marriage survived, however, because of a bond that was never severed. In the first three decades of their married life, Purnell writes, "Winston and Clementine were united by a common project: making him Prime Minister".

The Churchill trajectory to Number 10 took many twists and turns, and survived some spectacular descents and blunders, alongside an impulsive temperament in the man himself who often showed a lack of judgement. His good friend Violet Asquith observed that while he had the ambition and drive for politics, Winston lacked the antennae. He would find that gap filled in Clementine – even if he ignored her good advice to his own detriment on occasions. From the trenches, he would write to Clementine rather than his favourite "pals", his mother and Violet Asquith. Soon he would recognise his wife as his "vy wise & sagacious military pussy cat".

As First Lord of the Admiralty, as World War I started to unfold, Churchill became infatuated with the "volatile" Admiral Lord Fisher ("my dear" Jacky Fisher to Winston) who was brought in from retirement to become First Sea Lord. Fisher was egotistical, explosive and constantly threatening to resign but never actually going. But whatever his failings or criticism others made of Fisher, Churchill made excuses for him as if devoted to the older man. Fisher even tried to undermine Clementine telling her that Churchill was in Paris with a lover. Clementine detested the man.

As the Dardanelles campaign was being planned, Fisher made erratic changes and when the early advances proved disastrous he blocked Churchill's attempts to send further naval reinforcements. The Dardanelles campaign quickly spelled the end for Churchill, and his reputation has ever since been shackled with his responsibility for its failure. Clementine, however, stood loyally by him and offered her best advice – that her husband should join up and spend time at the front. He did.

Yet, within a couple of months, with Clementine working fiercely to smooth relations for her husband in London, arranging meetings with the Asquiths and so on, Winston decided he would come home. He was given ten days leave in March 1916, a time during which Clementine hoped he would continue the charm offensive she had put in motion. From the front, Churchill sent her lists of instructions for his arrival, tasks and meetings to organise that exhausted her. For all that, once home, Winston blew his chances by going into the Commons to give a speech that made a clear case against the Navy's inactivity and ended with a bombshell as he argued that Admiral Jack Fisher should be returned as First Sea Lord, the very man who had caused Churchill's downfall.

After his leave, when he and Clementine had hardly a moment to be together, Winston returned to the front in continuing disgrace. Clementine advised him to stay there until he could be welcomed home, smoothing his hurt ego with arguments that his Commons speech had gone down badly because people did not "understand" it.

And so the Churchills would continue. Clementine smoothing and covering for a self-indulgent and ambitious son of the aristocracy; Churchill adoring her but forcing her on along the road of his obsessions. Like a spoilt child, more often than not.

Clementine's presence in her husband's life often became fraught, but at any serious suggestion that she

would throw in the towel or resign her confidant's role, he would write begging her forgiveness and making it clear he could not go on without her. More and more, she was asked to check his speeches, hear out important moments of strategy. During the Second World War, Eleanor Roosevelt was not advised of the D Day landings until the eve of the event, but Clementine was kept fully informed as they were planned. She counselled her husband throughout.

To outsiders and family, there were times where Clementine appeared highly strung and frail or needing extra care. In Churchill's "wilderness years" during most of the 1930s, she would take to her bed at the worst of times – what Purnell describes as the result of "nervous exhaustion". The Chartwell "regulars" expected their hostess to be on call but her husband's demands left Clementine in poor health. She also suffered depression, which was not diagnosed until the 1950s. One painter guest at Chartwell – William Nicholson – had the cheek to send illustrated notes to her bedroom addressed to "Mrs Churchill in bed".

Winston was impulsive and the one in charge – he would scoff at moments of indebtedness, work on new ways to earn some money or be pulled up by the kindness of friends. She, meanwhile, worried that he would blunder into another disaster and that they would run out of money. Their daughter-in-law, Pamela Digby, estimated that while Clementine devoted her life to Winston, she may have spent up to eighty per cent of their marriage without him. And, as they moved house and juggled the bad times, it was Clementine who had to manage the shifts, the children, the uncomfortable arrangements; Winston would absent himself to better digs where he could work and entertain.

Clementine came into her own during her husband's years as PM, overseeing weekends for select international visitors, especially the Americans in 1941 as Churchill desperately tried to bring them onto the war, and charming heads of state. The Churchills also supported their daughter-in-law Pamela in her notorious work in London as party hostess to significant visitors, where the bedroom became as important as the drawing or dining room and she was tasked to pry information and report back to Number 10. Clementine toured the country and boosted the spirits of local groups from factory workers to volunteers. In the First World War she had run a network of canteens. Her iconic turban headwear at the time was a strategy to cheer people up – looking smart and appearing in good spirits was her way of saying Britain could yet win.

Chartwell, the country manor house Churchill bought on a whim only to tell his wife later, cost them a fortune over time. After her husband died, Clementine did not sleep another night there. It was soon handed over to the National Trust and, under her instructions, was returned to its layout and appearance in the 1930s.

Long separations certainly saved the Churchill marriage, but it was more than that. Their letters - and there are many as a result of the separations - show that while Winston knew he could not endure any loss of Clementine, his wife also realised he had given her a life of excitement and stimulation she could not have found elsewhere. She loved the challenges as he did. They just wore her out. As he did.

Margot Asquith likewise loved the life her husband had offered her. A wealthy heiress, and unmarried, Margot at twenty-five writes De Courcy, "was friends with most of the cleverest men in the country". But when it came to marriage, it had to be a man of substance – or as her friend Lord Curzon advised, she should marry for the long haul not for youth and good looks. So Margot passed on the news to the love of her life at the time, Evan Charteris, that she would be marrying the widowed Home Secretary, Herbert Asquith. Asquith himself was aware Margot did not feel for him as he did for her but after their marriage they became a devoted couple.

In compressing her portrait of Margot Asquith to the three years around a time of domestic and international upheaval, De Courcy intimately and sharply captures expertly both a tragic and enlightened portrait of her subject. Margot Asquith loved entertaining, revelled in society gatherings from the bohemian to the elite and was often regarded as empty headed for her apparent shallowness. Yet her quirky sharpness of mind comes through from a snippet written by Chips Channon who stayed with the Asquiths and recorded them at leisure:

Mrs Asquith, distraite, smoked and read the papers during luncheon, and occasionally said something startling like, apropos of spiritualism, “I always knew the living talked rot but it is nothing to the nonsense the dead talk.” She also said she could not help being sorry for ghosts – “Their appearances are so against them.”

As her marriage to Asquith and its difficulties reveal, Margot Asquith had judgement, tenacity and style. While the Asquiths were for years a devoted couple, the possessive nature of Asquith’s only daughter by his first marriage, Violet, gave Margot years of strain. So much so that, as she grew to an adult, Violet made it almost impossible for Margot to have any private time with her husband. Asquith also indulged Violet and, as he began his pursuit of Violet’s best friend Venetia Stanley, his time with Violet away from Margot added to her burdens.

The four years covered by De Courcy take her reader through Asquith’s fall from the leadership of the Liberal Party and loss of prime ministership – during all of which Margot Asquith gave loyal support. That his fall owed as much to his distraction and dalliance with Venetia Stanley – confiding in her about government decisions and the war, exchanging letters, many written in Cabinet meetings, and so on – as to his weakening hold on his colleagues was all the more a bitter irony for Margot.

But Margot held the line. In time, she married off Violet, and watched on as Venetia gave up Asquith (there is no evidence the relationship was ever consummated) and married the second son of the 1st Baron Swaythling – Edwin Montagu - for whom she converted to Judaism. The Asquith marriage prevailed.

In these portraits of prominent women partnered with historic figures of British history, there has been a rounding out of the historical record. Neither man, Asquith or Churchill, is fully understood without knowing the part played by their strongest supporters, their wives. Both women, in different ways, not only make their partners’ stories complete. Their stories also offer profound insights into how Westminster functioned and how its subjects have been governed.

Anne Henderson is Deputy Director of The Sydney Institute and author of *Menzies at War*

TEXTBOOK EXAMPLE OF COMEDIC FARCE

Arms and The Man by Bernard Shaw

at The Drama Theatre, Sydney Opera House

14 September – 31 October 2015

Reviewed by Nathan Lentern

George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man* is perhaps the textbook example of the comedic farce. Meticulous details, scattered with apparent pointlessness among the first act crash and collide in the second and third to create an hysterical state of confusion and pandemonium. In the throes of the Serbo-Bulgarian war of 1885, Raina Petkoff, daughter of the aristocratic, affable yet simple Major Petkoff is engaged to the flamboyant idiot Major Sergius Saranoff. Her idyllic betrothal is unsettled when Swiss soldier Bluntschli, fighting as mercenary captain for the Serbian army, climbs through her bedroom window to escape his Bulgarian pursuers.

After overcoming her initial shock and patriotic instincts to turn Bluntschli over, Raina's mistrust soon turns to sympathy then affection, setting in place the foundations of a classic love triangle. When peace is reached Bluntschli returns to Bulgaria to work with Majors Petkoff and Saranoff, bringing Raina and Bluntschli into close contact one more.

Saranoff meanwhile has a lingering eye of his own as indeed do betrothed servants Louka and Nicola and soon a love triangle has snowballed into an absurd yet touching romantic pentagon.

The simplicity of Major Petkoff, the fierceness of Mrs Petkoff, the impetuosity of Raina and buffoonery of Saranoff provide perfect fodder for Bluntschli's dry wit as he swaggers his way through the chaos to the chagrin of Raina and the delight of the audience. Only servant Nicola, a more nuanced and sophisticated variation of the wisecracking butler trope seems to share Bluntschli's gift of self-awareness.

When dealing with a script as adroit as *Arms and the Man* it is paramount to let the dialogue shine and the wit translate and in Richard Cotrell's latest production he does so deftly. The timing, clarity and blocking is near perfect and ensures none of Shaw's classic one-liners are spoiled and many moments of visual humour are added in without detracting from Shaw's legendary prose.

Andrea Demetriades captures Raina's callow flourishes skilfully. Her comical attempts to adopt a deeper, more authoritative tone of voice and her teenage eye rolling juxtaposes neatly with the cocked eye brows and deadpan sarcasm of Mitchel Butel's Bluntschli. As does Charlie Cousin's Saranoff with his pompous head tossing and histrionic delivery.

Butel himself starts a little shakily. In the opening scene he plays an exhausted and terrified Bluntschli and Butel communicates this reasonably well with some agitated scurrying, drowsy stumbling and at times a shrill and panicked tone. Although logical and convincing, on one or two occasions has the unfortunate consequence of undermining the sardonic tone which makes Bluntschli the irresistible character he is. However by the second act Bluntschli returns bathed, fed and rested, and his agitation is replaced with a charismatic suavity. The product is a delight to behold and Butel thrills the audience with his twinkly eyed cheek and condescending charm.

William Zappa is a warm and likeable duffer as Major Petkoff, Olivia Rose a headstrong and cynical maid and Brandon Burke as the servant Nicola is a master-class in subtle, understated humour.

The standout however is clearly Deborah Kennedy, perfectly cast to play the imperious matriarch Mrs Petkoff. Everything from a regal posture to a deep and refined inflection combines to create a great and terrifying performance. At times she need only enter the stage to receive howls of appreciation from the audience.

The three sets: Raina's bedroom, the back garden at the Petkoff home and the library at the Petkoff house are all elegant and subtle. Employing generous quantities of calming whites, pale blues and pale greens they are handsome and complimentary without becoming a distraction.

There is a degree of responsibility involved in taking on *Arms and the Man*. Shaw's enduring acclaim sets such a high bar, it would not be difficult to do it an injustice. But the Sydney Theatre Company rises to the task and has produced a stellar production of a true classic.

Nathan Lentern is a writer and performer.