Paul Hasluck in Australian History
Civic Personality and Public Life

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Paul Hasluck in Australian History

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Preface

Paul Hasluck might best be described as a ‘man of many possibilities’ and one of considerable achievement. He was both a ‘man of letters’ and an intellectual politician. He divided his life into two parts. In the first phase he ‘mucked about’. In the second, he became more serious and gave himself over to duty. He may have regretted that he left behind the figure of his youth but he accepted the choice he had made to be a politician and the responsibilities he believed that this choice entailed. The great influences on his political life were H V Evatt as a model of what not to be, John Curtin as a man who gave himself to the service of his nation, and Robert Menzies, the politician he most admired and whom he served faithfully even during twelve years of great doubting as the minister for territories.

The contributors to this book approach Paul Hasluck as poet, journalist, historian, academic, public servant, member of parliament, minister and ultimately governor general. *Paul Hasluck in Australian History* locates the individual and his influences, but looks well beyond his personal circumstances to the shape and nature of the many historical contexts he found himself in and which shaped Australia in the second half of the twentieth century. Hasluck is fascinating in his many elements but, importantly, he held responsibilities in areas which speak down to the present.

*Paul Hasluck in Australian History* gathers together many of Australia’s leading intellectuals who investigate the life, the circumstances and the influences of Hasluck. Along with my co-editors, Tom Stannage and Kay Saunders, I wish to thank the contributors for their dedication to the task of producing this book, and their patience through its various phases. I acknowledge and thank in particular the work of the production editor, Penny Holliday, in seeing the book through into press and the production staff of the Journal of Australian Studies: Ben Goldsmith, Jay Messenger, Kerry Kilner and Jason Ensor. I wish also to thank the University of Western Australia’s Extensions Service, the Western Australian History Foundation, and PEET Co for their support and encouragement. Acknowledgements and thanks go to the Milikapiti Community Government Council, Melville Island, for clearance and the Australian National Archives for permission to use the cover visual.

Particular thanks go to the Hasluck family for their co-operation in the production of this book. While providing every support, the family made plain from the very beginning that they did not wish to intrude on or influence the arguments and conclusions drawn by the editors and the contributors. Such even-handedness is rare in such circumstances but entirely in keeping with the notions of intellectual perspective articulated by Paul Hasluck.

Richard Nile
Light That Time Has Made

Charles Court

This book will add to our knowledge of Sir Paul Hasluck. While Hasluck was ahead of his time, Malcolm Fraser has observed, he was also a man of his time. This may seem contradictory, but let me explain. Sir Paul had progressive views on a range of topics but, as a politician, he had to operate within the generally acceptable boundaries of the period. On the topics of Aborigines, for example, he believed Australia should dramatically improve the way it treats its original inhabitants. Education, he believed, is vital for their future as is a dramatically improved health and welfare system. But at times he used the word 'assimilation'. That arouses great anger amongst some self-styled experts today. I ask them to remember the times in which Sir Paul was operating and have another look at what he really said and meant. More particularly, they want to have a close and objective look at where they themselves are coming from.

Sir Paul Hasluck is notable for the remarkable number of separate 'careers' he had. He was a success in all of them. What is more, he was respected in all of them. Journalist, historian, writer, diplomat, politician, senior minister and governor general, Sir Paul gave generously of himself in all of them. If the federal parliamentarians of the Liberal Party had been wiser, Australia would also have seen Sir Paul as prime minister. We might have missed out on having John Gorton and Billy McMahon hold the job — but I pass no comment on that.

Sir Paul has been rightly described by the West Australian as 'the best prime minister Australia never had'. According to political journalist Alan Reid, he was just a phone call away from being prime minister. Sir Paul Hasluck took the view, however, that he shouldn't fight for the job. If they wanted him, they would ask him and he would consider it.

One could argue that this was an unrealistic approach in the cut-throat political scene but in some ways it spells out more than any other recorded fact that Sir Paul Hasluck was, in terms of intellect and political integrity, so far ahead of his contemporaries that he was unique. As I was once advised by a tough old ALP warrior towards the end of his political career when I was reluctantly starting mine, 'Never let them know how good you are, they love mediocrity'.

Sir Paul rendered extraordinary service to this country. It is a pity that these days, similarly skilled people choose, for whatever reason, not to enter politics. My own sad assessment is such people would not have a chance of endorsement and advancement in any of the political parties today. It could be that the public re-assessment of Sir Paul could strike a blow to change that.
Sir Paul performed on many fronts. He was a sub-editor of the West Australian when John Curtin, then prime minister of Australia, invited him to join the diplomatic service in 1941. While there, he assisted at the difficult birth of the United Nations at the 1945 San Francisco conference, not the least of the difficulties being the conduct of Australia's increasingly erratic minister for foreign affairs, Dr H V Evatt.

After leaving the diplomatic service in 1947, Sir Paul set to work in the University of Western Australia's history department, concentrating on a volume of the official war history, The Government and the People. It was then that he was approached to stand for pre-selection in the federal seat of Curtin. He was elected to parliament in 1949. It was fortuitous that his pre-selection was possible because of the unusual set of early postwar circumstances and the political climate at the time. Sir Paul made his mark early in Canberra and caught the eye of many political observers. Sir James Killen recounted: 'Hasluck was one of the most intelligent persons to enter Parliament in the post-war years. Industrious, he worked long hours. A studious man, he was one of the few frequent browsers in the Parliamentary Library'. Sir James was not alone — the Canberra press gallery also noticed Sir Paul early. Leading journalist Don Whitington identified Sir Paul's intelligence as one of his most outstanding features: 'His skills were seen quickly by Prime Minister Robert Menzies who appointed him as Minister for Territories in 1951, a portfolio he retained for 12 years'. During this period, Sir Paul played key roles in the development of Papua New Guinea, urging participation in administration and education as essential steps towards self government — views he held very strongly and not always understood by those seeking more spectacular things.

After a brief stint as minister of defence, Sir Paul moved to external affairs when Sir Garfield Barwick moved to the high court in 1964. It was in this role that he pushed Australia closer to Asia, a good 30 years before Paul Keating discovered the faster growing part of the world consists of those nations closest to us geographically. He dealt calmly and firmly with problems created by Indonesian confrontation and the dispatch of Australian troops to Vietnam.

But it was Sir Paul's apparent lack of desire for the top job — as Australian prime minister to succeed Harold Holt — that captivated journalists and historians alike. Most observers claim the job was his if he wanted it. Did he want it? We may never know. But what we do know is that, for his own good reasons, he did not fight for it. Menzies' Child, the history of the Liberal Party written by Gerard Henderson, recounts that Robert Menzies convinced Sir Paul to run for the leadership. But when Henderson interviewed Sir Paul he found he was not an ambitious person, that he never had any ambition to get into politics but that it 'just happened' — something I understand as one who never wanted to be in parliament but when there you give it everything you've got.

Within a year of John Gorton becoming leader, Sir Paul had accepted the offer to move to Yarralumla. His appointment as governor general in 1969
demonstrated many of Sir Paul’s particular human skills. Despite some initial concern about a serving politician being appointed to the job, Sir Paul quickly showed he was a person who could travel above party interests and represent and meet people from all walks of life. Historians tell us he was invited to serve another term in the position. One can only speculate how history might have been different if he had accepted.

I first met Sir Paul on an intimate basis through wartime Sunday night gatherings of a group of Western Australians when I was in Canberra for a four month stint at Duntroon Military College attending a high pressure course to smarten up some of us civilian soldiers. Many years later, I well remember some dinner parties arranged in Perth by Sir Paul to discuss some important political matters, including some internal Liberal Party issues. His great sense of humour and mimicry came through as a surprise to us all who, by this time, were used to a more serious and very conscientious Sir Paul.

Why publish this book on Sir Paul now? He has left us with a number of serious works of history and politics, all of it more important than that left by men more recently departing the political scene. We already have a good biography of the man and his contribution has been examined in other political histories. But like the editors, I believe it is time we re-examined his work and his life and thus determine his true greatness in the hope present and future generations will better understand the man and have the good sense to make it easier for people of intellect and integrity to contribute in their day.

He was very conscious of the significance and origin of Australia’s culture. He had a great affection for it and placed great store on it. He believed there was an Australian culture. He also believed it was based on a uniquely British-Australian experience which some want to discard and replace with something of dubious character and without the proven worth of what we have inherited and which we Australians have honed to its present fine qualities. I congratulate those responsible for initiating and then organising this book. They were probably wise beyond their own understanding of what they were starting.

The title for this preface is taken from Paul Hasluck, Light That Time Has Made, with an introduction and postscript by Nicholas Hasluck, Canberra, 1995.
Paul Hasluck in Australian History

Gough Whitlam

On 26 June 1995 I attended the ceremony which the city of San Francisco held to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the signing of the United Nations charter. The Australian government's publication for the event had three photographs on its cover, H V Evatt, Paul Hasluck and Gareth Evans. Inside was a photo of the Australian delegation to the conference. Paul Hasluck had been a member of the delegation. His course in Australian history runs long and strong indeed.

As governor general, Sir Paul opened three parliaments: on 25 November 1969, the 27th after elections for the House of Representatives; on 27 February 1973, the 28th after elections for the House of Representatives; and on 9 July 1974, the 29th after elections for the House of Representatives and the whole Senate.

On the evening of 9 July 1974 the new parliament gave a dinner in honour of Sir Paul and Lady Hasluck to mark their retirement from Yarralumla. I pointed out that he was the first person to present credentials to the first secretary-general of the UN and that he had the unique experience of coming to head, as minister of external affairs, the department in which he had served. Between those events, what a majestic career he had.

In this volume which examines the career of high accomplishment by a most highly accomplished Australian, I may be allowed to quote some passages from my speech on that occasion:

The list is extraordinary — journalist, author, historian, academic, civil servant, diplomatist, Member of Parliament, Minister of the Crown, Viceroy — a career remarkable in its diversity, yet equally remarkable in its consistency. There has not been a proconsul of more diverse attainment since Cicero.

I might interpolate here that, in his response, Paul rebuked me for pronouncing the name of the great Roman with the soft rather than the hard C. In prose and verse he was always a punctilious, in fact, felicitous writer and speaker. I acknowledge that I should now have said Kikerio, not Sisero. In Canberra in July 1974 I continued:

This shining career has one clear, consistent theme, the service of Australia and the people of Australia. In one capacity or another, he has been in the service of the Crown and the Government and the people for an uninterrupted thirty-five years. In the brief periods when he was not helping to make Australian history, he was teaching it or writing it.
Lady Hasluck is an historian in her own right, of elegance and charm in her writing and her person alike.

Sir Paul came to head one of the most effective and expeditious executive councils Australia has ever had. It was a happy, harmonious, heady triumvirate. For two weeks in December 1972 there was total private and public unanimity among all twenty-seven departments. In those days Lance Barnard and I struck an accord with the governor general which has remained unmarred, undiminished. His governor generalship, the circumstances in which he was placed as governor general, confirm conclusively, if confirmation were needed, three great truths: the absolute fitness of appointing Australians to Australia’s highest position, the absolute fitness of politicians to hold that office and the absolute ability of opposing politicians to bury partisanship in the service of the nation.

It was during our nineteen months together as head of state and head of government that I belatedly perceived and acknowledged Hasluck’s debt to Curtin. Because I was in North America at the time I could not attend the commemoration ceremonies for John Curtin in Perth. Curtin befriended Hasluck in the late 1930s when he was WA president and Hasluck a committee member of the Australian Journalists Association (AJA). Hasluck was foreign affairs sub-editor for The West Australian when Curtin urged him to join Australia’s diplomatic service in 1941.

I learned of Curtin’s devotion to the AJA in 1944. US servicemen used to be sent miniature airmail copies of Time and they would then pass them on to us in the RAAF. Through the National Museum’s Political History Advisory Committee, on which Doug Anthony, Fred Chaney and I represented the major parties, I have located the issue for 24 April 1944 covering Curtin’s visit to the US. I quote: ‘He has good relations with the press (still sports his Australian Journalists Association emblem on his watch chain)’. Time afforded another side-light on Curtin: ‘At the swearing in of members after the general elections of 1937, Curtin held the bible high while his old friend, Chief Justice Sir John Latham, prepared to intone the oath. Dignified Sir John was startled when Curtin leaned forward to enquire softly: ‘Do you remember the old days, John, when we both used to give Christ hell?’ Paul Hasluck’s generosity of spirit may be measured by the speech he made on the 25th anniversary of the victory in the Pacific when he unveiled a memorial to Curtin at the Cottesloe Civic Centre:

In 1935 he was elected to the leadership of the parliamentary Labor Party. This decision of Caucus was one fateful both for the party and for the nation. When Curtin became leader, the Party was disunited and divided. He lifted it away from its divisions and its failures and helped it to rediscover some central purpose, even if he could not at once remove all of the more deep-seated differences. In doing so he made the Labor Party fit to govern and gave the nation the alternative government
which, under our democratic usage, was required once the formation of a wartime national government was found to be politically impossible. If he had not succeeded so well in the years between 1935 and 1940, there would not have been a viable alternative government at the critical point in 1941 when one had to be found. As leader of the alternative government he found himself Prime Minister largely as the result of the sound and useful work he had done as a party leader in restoring the health of his own party. He accepted office as the destiny of the party.

On 20 April 1975, I opened Curtin House in Perth in Sir Paul’s presence. I quoted his tribute to Curtin and then said:

This generous tribute is all the more valuable coming as it does from one who could speak not only as a public servant, historian and statesman but as one who throughout his long and distinguished political career was a good party man, an honourable partisan. Both his tribute to John Curtin and his own career illustrated one of the great truths of our democratic system. The strength of the system depends upon the strength of the two opposing parties. In our parliamentary democracy, partisanship — honourable partisanship — is not seldom the highest patriotism.

I never met Curtin but I came to know his widow well. In April 1967 I was in the then unprecedented position of being a new leader of the federal opposition under threat from his party’s power broker in Western Australia. I was immensely reassured by a letter from Elsie Curtin, still a highly respected and influential figure in labor circles in the state. To my astonishment she observed that Margaret and I must be celebrating the 25th anniversary of our wedding, which had taken place on the 25th anniversary of her own.

I assume that one of the reasons why I have been given the honour of writing a foreward to this volume is because Sir Paul and I gave meaning to the concept of Australia having a resident head of state. We changed the channel for delivering correspondence between the queen and the governor general from the British High Commission in Canberra to the Australian High Commission in London. On 30 May 1974 the queen assigned to the governor general all her powers and functions in respect of appointing Australian ambassadors to countries outside the commonwealth and high commissioners to commonwealth countries which were republics or had other monarchs and approving, receiving and withdrawing the credentials of such ambassadors and high commissioners to Australia. Sir Paul achieved another diplomatic first on 13 July 1973 when he had the first ambassador from the People’s Republic of China and a new US ambassador together to dinner at Yarralumla. The Haslucks were very good hosts.

When I was prime minister the leader of the opposition was often represented at Government House dinners by Tom Drake-Brockman, the Country Party senator from WA. We took the opportunity to facilitate the Country Party’s support before the end of 1973 for the final passage of the bills recommended
by the Karmel Committee appointed on 12 December 1972. He had been appointed by the Hawke state government to fill a casual vacancy in the Senate in 1958. I confidently assert that he would not have voted to reject the budget bills in 1975. He was the second member of his family to be a senator from WA. Four members of the family had been members of the WA legislature, William Locke Brockman MLC (1872), Edmund Ralph Brockman MLC (1878-1880, 1887-1889 and 1890-1894), Henry Brockman MLC (1884-1889) and Edmund Vernon Brockman MLA (1933-1938). I cannot understand why Western Australians use a hyphen in the federal parliament alone. The WA dynastic name Lee Steere, without a hyphen, dates from a union sanctified in England in 1675. The only difficulty I had was with a hyphen introduced in Queensland early this century from Denmark via New Zealand. In the bipartisan spirit of this foreword I should mention that my party had some difficulty in South Australia in 1969, when candidates were still listed on ballot papers in their alphabetical order. Our candidate for Adelaide, Chris Hurford-Jones, was standing against a Liberal MHR, Andrew Jones; he dropped the hyphen as a handicap in the party and ‘Jones’ as a handicap on the ballot paper.

In The Truth of the Matter I describe my relations with Sir Paul and my regret that he could not stay on as governor general beyond the end of June 1974, by which time a Senate election had to be held.¹ I wrote the preface in January 1979 and the preface to a second edition on 3 February 1983. On 1 October 1979 Sir Paul sent me an annotated edition of the William Queale Memorial Lecture which he had delivered on 24 October 1972. In the addenda he also describes our relations. The simple fact is that we entirely trusted each other. This was established right from the outset, when he told me of Prince Charles’s efforts to buy a property south of Canberra as his home in Australia. They were not revealed until the prince gave an interview in February 1994 to Paul Kelly, the editor of the Australian.

I must interpolate a reference to the conduct of Sir Paul’s successor solely because their official secretary and Sir Garfield Barwick have gratuitously and tendentiously referred to Sir Paul.

In an ABC interview in January 1994 Sir Garfield said: ‘Governors-General seem to have had the idea that they can get advice from the Chief Justice ... I remember Hasluck applied to me to look through a paper he was writing on the Constitution. Would I tell him whether it was right?’ In his recent book, A Radical Tory, the passage reads: ‘Later Mr Hasluck, when he was governor general, asked me to read an article he proposed publishing about his office and advise him if it was correct’.² In January 1994 Sir David Smith also asserted that not only Sir Paul’s successor but Sir Paul himself and five other governors general had been given advice by chief justices. The only subject on which Sir Paul sought Sir Garfield’s advice was the illuminating and impeccable Queale Lecture of 24 October 1972. The subject on which Sir Paul’s predecessor
sought Sir Garfield’s advice was the succession to Prime Minister Holt. A grossly partisan letter had to be retrieved from Holt’s briefcase after he drowned; the text appears in W J Hudson’s biography, *Casey* (1986). It is reassuring to note that at his first press conference as governor general designate, Sir William Deane, stated:

> I cannot envisage any circumstances in which I would seek the advice of the Chief Justice or any other member of the High Court.

Let me conclude my comment on this matter by saying that I find Sir Garfield’s comparison between Sir John Kerr and Sir Paul Hasluck as egregious as it is offensive.

During the 16 years that we were in parliament on opposite sides Paul Hasluck would have thought that I was insufficiently conformist and I that he was excessively so. The other contributors to this volume will cover Hasluck’s achievements before he became governor general. I shall merely recall four initiatives when he was minister for territories and I on the back bench. He knew my father in Canberra during the war and at overseas conferences after it. Shortly after I was sworn in as a member of parliament on 17 February 1953, three years after him, I sought an appointment with him, under pressure from my local RSL, to ask about soldier settlement in PNG. I was glad to find that he was against it. In retrospect we can see that he spared PNG the post-war fate of Rhodesia. Later in 1953, as a member of the parliamentary contingent which attended the dedication ceremonies for the war cemeteries in PNG, I learned that the union jack still flew from the flagpole at Government House in Port Moresby until he became minister. During the parliamentary winter recesses he arranged for a delegation to tour the Northern Territory; with the 1956 delegation I saw the condition of Aborigines in the pastoral industry. In January 1959 the Australian Institute of International Affairs chose him and me to represent our parties at a Chatham House conference in Palmerston North, New Zealand. We debated the future of Melanesia. To anticipate the last issue which I shall raise, the territory issues which we most differed in the house concerned the suffrage for Aborigines in the Northern Territory and for indigenes in PNG.

Hasluck’s 1942 book, *Black Australians*, is based on his 1938 MA thesis on ‘official policy and public opinion towards the Aborigines of WA from 1829 (when the Swan River was settled) to 1897 (when control of Aborigines was transferred by the Imperial Government to the WA Government)’. He points out that WA was at last given self-government on condition that one percent of the gross revenue of the colony should be appropriated for the welfare of the Aboriginal natives. In 1897 Britain allowed the WA parliament to control expenditure on Aborigines. Three years later, on the eve of federation, parliament’s expenditure had been cut to one-sixth of one percent.
The attitude of settlers as late as 1920 was coolly described by Mary Grant Bruce in a typical pastoral idyll about the spearing of a jackeroo:

Out in the bush, north of the run, infuriated men were scouring the ranges for the flying blacks, dealing out swift justice without waiting for black trackers and police, whose slower methods were little satisfaction to a district that clamoured for revenge. From fifty miles around men had come to help hunt down the slayers, until Narrung resembled a huge camp when night brought the hunters home to the head station.

In campaigning for the native title bill (1993) I frequently quoted not only Hasluck’s 1942 book but also the elder Beazley’s elegant and eloquent speeches in the early 1960s. Both of them benefited from an excellent and free education at Perth Modern School and the University of Western Australia. On 10 October 1961 Beazley stated: ‘In any land policy, for God’s sake, let us get over the great historical assumption that you must make a decision about the lands as though there was no one living on them’. On 23 May 1963 Beazley moved:

In the opinion of this house —

(1) An aboriginal title to the land of aboriginal reserves should be created in the Northern Territory,
(2) A form of selection by aborigines of trustees to conduct affairs arising from this title should be devised, and
(3) Meanwhile the safeguarding of aboriginal rights should be ensured by discussion with spokesmen for the aborigines of the Gove Peninsula area.

The motion was in the context of exploring and exploiting the bauxite at Gove, where my RAAF squadron had been based 20 years earlier. Beazley proceeded:

Since the first settlement in 1788, we — the European descended people of the continent of Australia — have never acknowledged that aborigines have any entitlement at all to land. The proclamation by the Commonwealth of large reserves, some of them with great potential, as land for the aborigines in the Northern Territory, will, of course, mean nothing if systematically, when anything of value is discovered in them, areas become excised from the aboriginal reserves and the aborigines have what is left.

On 14 May 1964, Beazley stated:

irrespective of who has control over aborigines only one government is answerable before the forum of international opinion — the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia. In the form of international opinion — the United Nations — no one will raise Western Australia’s policy or Queensland’s policy but the delegates of the Government of Australia will have to answer for Australia’s attitude.
On Aboriginal issues I have been repeating what I wrote in a paper ‘State Rights vs. World Values’ which I presented on 3 August 1994 to the student law society of Murdoch University and which is published in the *University of Western Australia Law Journal*. In preparing this address I remembered Hasluck’s interest in the royal commission which he issued to Justice Woodward on 15 December 1972 to inquire into and report upon arrangements for granting titles to land to Aboriginal groups and procedures for examining Aboriginal claims to land in the Northern Territory. I found that, after the 19th Parliament opened on 22 February 1950, he had immediately put a question on notice about the educational requirements of Aborigines in the territory; the answer appears in the *Hansard* of 14 March 1950. He spoke on the adjournment on 28 March on the welfare requirements of ‘aborigines and half-castes’. On 8 June he moved:

> That this house is of the opinion that the Commonwealth Government, exercising a national responsibility for the welfare of the whole Australian people, should cooperate with the State Governments in measures for the social advancement as well as the protection of people of the aboriginal race throughout the Australian mainland, such cooperation to include additional financial aid to those States on whom the burden native administration falls most heavily; and the house requests the Government to prepare proposals for submission at the earliest opportunity to a meeting of State Premiers and, in preparing such proposals, to pay due regard to the principles of (a) State administration of native affairs and (b) cooperation with the Christian missions.

Hasluck’s 30 minute speech was the most thorough speech on Aborigines ever to have been delivered in the national parliament. In the course of it he used words which foreshadowed Beazley’s speech on 14 May 1964;

> When we enter into international discussions, and raise our voice, as we should raise it, in defence of human rights and the protection of human welfare, our very words are mocked by the thousands of degraded and depressed people who crouch on the rubbish heap throughout the whole of this continent.

Hasluck was briefly supported by Tom Gilmore (country party MHR for Leichardt, Queensland, 1949-51) and then, in a speech foreshadowing the 1967 referendum, by Beazley. The minister for the interior took the rest of the time allocated for the debate. The motion lapsed at the double dissolution of 19 March 1951.

From time to time references occur to my government’s difficulty in getting the 1975 budget through the Senate. There would have been no difficulty if an initiative in 1951 by WA Premier Ross McLarty had been honoured. If the NSW parliament had appointed an ALP candidate to succeed Murphy and the Queensland parliament and ALP candidate to succeed Milliner, there would
never have been a majority of votes for the motions to stall supply. Even if the votes were equal, then, to quote section 23 of the constitution, the question would 'pass in the negative'.

A year after the Liberal Party was formed, Menzies, its leader, was to contest the federal elections as leader of the opposition. The Curtin government had at last secured a majority in the Senate on 1 July 1944, when the senators elected in August 1943 took their places. One of Curtin’s ministers from Victoria died on 26 April 1946. To Menzies’ mortification, a joint sitting of the Victorian parliament, in which the anti-Labor majority in the council was larger than the Labor majority in the assembly, chose a Liberal, A J Fraser, to succeed him. Fraser had the glory of heading the anti-Labor ticket at the election on 28 September, when he was replaced by a Labor senator.

Menzies was not going to be caught in such a shabby exercise again. The next casual vacancy occurred when Western Australian ALP Senator R H Nash died on 12 December 1951. The Liberal Party wanted Ross McLarty to appoint a Liberal replacement. He, an old-style Western Australian Liberal, persuaded his party to let him consult Menzies. Menzies, who now had the prestige of having been elected prime minister twice in two years, proposed, and the premiers, of whom three were ALP and three Liberal, agreed, that, whenever a casual vacancy occurred in the Senate the replacement should come from the same party as the former senator. I could not recite these facts if Sir Charles Court had not given me the documents from the state archives.

On 13 February 1975, three days after Senator Murphy, my attorney-general resigned, the Senate unanimously resolved:

The Senate commends to the parliaments of all the States the practice which has prevailed since 1949 whereby the States, when casual vacancies have occurred, have chosen a Senator from the same political party as the Senator who died or resigned.

The constitution alteration (Senate casual vacancies) referendum was carried on 21 May 1977 by majorities in all states and by 5 805 669 votes to 1 664 156 in the whole of Australia.

In April 1987 Bob Hawke, the most celebrated graduate of the University of Western Australia and Rhodes scholar, appointed one of his ministers, a Tasmanian senator, as ambassador to the Hague. The Gray government declined to appoint a replacement who would support the policy of the federal government and oppose the policy of the state government. On 8 May a joint sitting of the Tasmanian Parliament voted 26-26 against the ALP nominee. The joint sitting was then adjourned. That night John Howard, as leader of the federal opposition, stated:
I believe that the person appointed to fill casual vacancies of this kind ought to be the person nominated by the retiring Senator's political party. Until the current impasse is resolved the Opposition will continue to grant the Labor Party a pair in the Senate in relation to Senator Grimes' vacancy. This means that the voting strength of Labor in the Senate will not be diminished in any way.

The 1977 referendum was considered by the constitutional commission, comprising Sir Maurice Byers, Professors Campbell and Zines, Sir Rupert Hamer and me. On 30 June 1988 we unanimously stated:

We can see no change that will produce an impeccable and impregnable constitutional provision. Yet we are satisfied that its defects can be ameliorated by sensible, practical actions such as those taken by Mr Howard. We trust that his example will be taken as setting a proper principle and precedent.

I am convinced that Australia is a better place and plays a better part in the world because the people whom I have mentioned were attracted to public office. Public office, however one defines the term, is a great experience and a great trust. Hasluck and Curtin before him could not have done so much for this nation if they had not sought and held public office. Hasluck, after barely a year on the backbench, accepted special responsibilities for Australia's original inhabitants and closest neighbours as minister for territories. He accepted special responsibilities for Australia in the world as minister for defence and for external affairs. I have picked out several other Western Australians — from all parties — who have made distinctive contributions to the Australian nation, Beazley, the Drake-Brockmans, Alix Hasluck, Dorothy Tangney, Rachel Cleland, Johnston, Hamilton, Wilson and Chaney. Western Australians are diminished if, as Australians, they do not accept their responsibilities to other Australians. They are diminished if, as Australians, they do not accept their responsibilities to the rest of the world.

When Paul Hasluck's, place in Australian history, is recalled it should also be remembered that he saw himself not especially as a Western Australian, though he loved this place, but, first, and last, as an Australian. He would not, of course, have claimed for himself to be a great Australian. But he was — foremost in the ranks of honour and service, and, as you testify by the very title of this book, in Australian history.

Endnotes

3 Paul Hasluck, Black Australians: A Survey of Native Policy in Western Australia, 1829-1897, Melbourne, 1st edn 1942, 2nd 1970.
Here’s Luck

Richard Nile

In his contribution to this consideration of Paul Hasluck, Charles Court sets the editors and the contributors a challenge with a twist, saying that we may have been ‘wise beyond [our] own understanding’ of what we ‘were starting’, having made the decision to produce this book. In public life, Sir Charles demonstrated that he had little time for what he refers to here as ‘self-styled’ experts and the former liberal premier of Western Australia (1972-1982) made a professional life out of wrong-footing the left. Court’s politician’s instinct in treating cautiously our intention to investigate the life of Sir Paul Hasluck, conservative politician and thinker, may be reasonably founded. My co-editor and one-time mentor, Tom Stannage, for instance, is one of Western Australia’s foremost public intellectuals and he has been vocal on many issues: he opposed the Vietnam war when Hasluck was minister for defence; he stood up to the Court government during the Noonkanbah dispute; he has an ongoing commitment to citizens rights, social and cultural justice; and he has worked tirelessly to see Aboriginal studies introduced at the University of Western Australia. He has been a thorn in the side of the right for many years now.

The political inclinations of Australia’s public intellectuals are a source of suspicion for some — indeed in more recent times ‘academics’ in particular have been blamed for virtually all that is perceived to be wrong with the nation — and while the left is sometimes well represented in such debates, Australia can also boast intellectuals who are conservative. Robert Manne stands out as one of the most important and influential thinkers of the late twentieth century. Conservative and non conservative intellectuals are represented in this volume. Regardless of political commitment, they conceive of their roles as thinkers and communicators. In simple terms, as Morag Fraser has argued, public intellectuals are ‘people who spend a great deal of their time thinking hard about issues’ and who ‘make those thoughts accessible in a way that is, broadly speaking, for the public good’. Moreover, as Nicholas Jose observes: ‘the interesting thing is that intellectuals in Australia are bound together by some sort of commitment to or responsibility for Australia’.

Contributors to this volume tend to be critical of the policy of assimilation which Hasluck oversaw as the responsible minister and which Sir Charles asks us to consider more precisely as the product of well meaning governments, in their own times and not ours, working for the benefit of all Australians. We accept that this may be the case but maintain that we have an obligation to consider Hasluck in his time whilst acknowledging the times in which we now
write. We hold that we cannot be expected to overlook the consequences of assimilation — stolen generations, for example — in the same way that we would surely not be expected to ignore the consequences of self government in Papua New Guinea, or Australia’s involvement in the United Nations. Like Sir Ronald Wilson, Hasluck believed that his actions, at the time, were in the best interests of Aboriginal Australians. This is clear from all that he has said on the topic. But the cost of this belief we now know was considerable, as Sir Ronald has acknowledged on many occasions. Yet Sir Charles’ warning keeps us on our toes — it is a charm against complacency should any exist — and serves to remind us that the path of the public intellectual is unlikely to be smooth. It is in the nature of the work that public intellectuals perform that we sometimes confront challenges and unpopularity in our search for deeper understanding. Native title and multiculturalism are contemporary sites of dispute where public intellectuals have been influential but in some quarters vilified. In the climate of the late twentieth century, there is a certain bravery in even calling oneself a public intellectual, in standing up to be counted. Yet it remains a fundamental obligation of public intellectuals to look beyond what may appear obvious and self evident and to question whether or not face values or ‘common sense’, in any given situation, deliver incontrovertible truths. This may be an uncomfortable position for some but in this book we treat seriously the implications of our title: Paul Hasluck in Australian History.

In his many public roles, Hasluck was both an historian-biographer and a Western Australian. In his autobiography, Mucking About (1977) he wrote that the Western Australia of his early years was an ‘open society with a strong emphasis on opportunity for all’, and he maintained that Geoffrey Bolton, pre-eminently among historians, appreciated the special community values of Western Australians. Bolton returns the compliment in this volume by writing with justice, span and perspective about Paul Hasluck as an oral historian. With equal balance Jenny Gregory has critiqued Western Australian consensus historians such as Hasluck and Bolton. In what she calls the ‘Bolton-Hasluck thesis’, Gregory maintains that although ‘Hasluck understood that there were “marked social gradations in Perth”, he believed that these were based on “family connections” resulting from membership of those families who could trace their roots back to Western Australia’s pioneering past, rather than class’. In his history of the depression, A Fine Country to Starve In (1972), Bolton argued that ‘Good West Australians disliked extremes in politics, kept on friendly terms with their rivals, and never rocked the boat’. In common with Hasluck, he demonstrated a liking for the family metaphor while talking about Western Australia and maintained that ‘Controversies occurred, of course, but they were kept within limits: they were family rows’. A qualification may be made here that family rows are not kept within limits as a matter of course but are contained by the observance of intricate and often unstable power relationships. Families can
bring great joy, fulfilment and security but, even more dangerously than family rows, they can result in tremendous pain, great violations and violence.

Writing on the eve of the publication of *Mucking About* (1977), Stannage argued that the ‘present state of historical writing in Western Australia has brought about a very serious distortion of our understanding of the Westalian past’. Ordinary people were very often ‘losers in their own times’ he argued and they ‘have remained as casualties of history since’. According to Bolton, Stannage may have overstated the case and his arguments were ‘regarded by some as unduly contentious’. Stannage maintained that it is one ‘thing to share the agonies, the trials and tribulations of the gentry — that we must do — for as Hancock reminds us repeatedly it is the yoke of the historian to attach himself to a subject of study, but we must also share the life experiences of groups in Westalian society within the embrace of the gentry yet apart from them — groups who did not keep diaries or write letters’. In his seminal essay, ‘Uncovering Poverty in Australia’, Stannage argued that historians had ‘come to worship too readily at the altar of an authorised version of our past — an orthodoxy which I would label as the “gentry tradition” of Western Australian historical writing’.

According to Hasluck, Stannage demonstrated fine scholarship but was misguided in seeking out and highlighting conflict as a theme of history. More importantly, Stannage lacked direct experience: ‘We were living then and Tom Stannage was not’. Stannage argued that the historian must ‘re-open that dialogue between the past and the present which is the legitimate, indeed legitimising function of the historian, and extend the range of facts with which the historian interacts’. This Hasluck knew and accepted, professionally, but when the circumstances involved conflicting historical perceptions, he resorted to the authority of his full life. Accordingly ‘life was rather simpler’ then and the historian concentrating on ‘losers’ missed the significance and proportion of a past that is not so much to be recovered but an intimately remembered experience.

Under the influence of the writings of Hasluck and Bolton, consensus may have become an historical orthodoxy but there have been, from time to time, significant dissenters. An otherwise agreeably disposed Fred Alexander, for instance, proffered that in the interwar years, where Hasluck and Bolton most conspicuously find common ground, ‘hardship first came to, and continued to be experienced most sharply by, those who had no “fat” upon which to live while times were hard’. Depression novelists Katharine Susannah Prichard and J M Harcourt, for instance, depicted the conditions for those who had no fat. Prichard’s view of ‘family connections’, moreover, was that they afforded men, in particular, the circumstances to lord over those of lower status. In her *Intimate Strangers* (1937) an aged conservative politician is able to conceal from public notice his second family in a working-class suburb who are not
acknowledged by his estate when he dies. The social custom of the city of Perth honours the surviving members of the ‘first family’ while ignoring the ‘illegitimate’ connection.

Hasluck comments on a not altogether unrelated situation in Mucking About but his focus is on police ‘containment’ of illegal prostitution: ‘The police told me that there had been no brothels except in Roe Street for many years. The last one in a more fashionable part of West Perth had been allowed largely for the convenience of a very distinguished citizen who wanted his amenities close at hand and it had been closed when he came to the end of all carnal desire and, after a grand State funeral, went to play a harp among the angels’. While Hasluck may be implicitly acknowledging hypocrisy here, he does not draw the conclusion that Raelene Frances does in her analysis of prostitution in Western Australia, that by corrupt means a powerful alliance of government and police controlled Perth’s sex industry. The police ‘simply believed in “keeping the streets clean”’, wrote Hasluck, ‘So far as I ever heard, the police carried out this toleration of brothels with complete honesty and I never heard even a suspicion expressed that there was any corruption in the giving of protection to the tolerated houses’. Perhaps so, but it may be legitimately asked if the young journalist ever considered which houses were tolerated, which operations were closed down and why, more broadly whether the containment of illegal activities was not only duplicitous but of itself corrupt. Frances has argued: ‘As long as the police could threaten prostitutes and “madams” with prosecution under the Police Act they had arbitrary power ... The police maintained that by controlling prostitution ... they were protecting the women ... but in doing so they were exposing women to exploitation by the police’. Hasluck was aware of an open secret which circulated at the time that a ‘respected elder of the Presbyterian church’ and member of parliament who ‘spoke often in the Legislative Council about the decline in morality’, was the owner of several properties used as brothels and had profited handsomely from exorbitant rents. A very close conspiracy maintained a silence on the matter. ‘If I’d been a modern journalist, I suppose I would have searched the titles to find out who owned the several properties’, admitted Hasluck, but in ‘those days a respectable morning newspaper would not have even admitted the existence of brothels, let alone published stories about them’. As journalists put down the first draft of history, the consensus historians gained their first allies from the past.

As a young journalist, Hasluck joined the vice squad one night on their rounds of Perth’s red light district in Roe Street. He was not in ‘search of copy’, he said, nor had he any ‘intention of writing anything’ for the newspaper but was perhaps more motivated by ‘thoughts of writing my novel and had a young writer’s illusion that anything to do with the sordid side of life was more realistic than the moral’. His reflections on the roles of journalism (and we might extrapolate here to history) as moral and fiction as concerned with the sordid
may provide a clue as to why in *Mucking About* he ignored Prichard’s contrasting insights into the depression experience. At the end of several pages detailing Perth’s brothel district, Hasluck describes murders, sexual harassment of young women by male youth gangs, and street brawling, each of which may not have been out of place in Prichard’s novel. He then digresses in a paragraph on ‘committing a nuisance’, a euphemism for urinating in public. Hasluck concludes: ‘I have slipped into this digression for it reminds me of how Victorian the city was... In many respects it was a more highly cultivated, well-mannered and urbane community than it became later’. Given what has preceded Hasluck’s digression this seems to be a strange conclusion to arrive at. Hasluck draws attention to the otherwise harmless offence of ‘illicit piddling’, not the prostitution, the murders, nor the street gangs, to sum up the people of Perth.

Clearly the manners of the Perth preferred by Paul Hasluck are open to alternative interpretations and we should not be surprised that Prichard, a member of the communist party, would select for literary treatment such an easy target as a duplicitous politician who keeps a second family. This, however, is but a minor theme in a richly textured novel. Prichard maintained a career-long ambition to ‘write about Australia and the realities of life for Australian people’. *Intimate Strangers* investigates the frustrations of a married relationship which slowly transforms and dissolves into an unreliable partnership of strangers. The novel depicts rape inside marriage, domestic violence, abortion, infidelities and attempted suicide. Overarching these concerns, Prichard draws attention to class differentiations in a fragmented society. She writes against the ‘capitalist system which breeds unemployment and war, poverty, prostitution and crime’. *Intimate Strangers* is concerned with class, gender and race disguised by social customs and manufactured consent: ‘She had said, “the mirage is breaking up” ... She was thinking of the mirage which had hidden their lives, as much as the mists lifting from the island lying against the skyline. The love which had driven them to domesticity and rearing a family’. *Mirage* is sustained throughout the novel as a metaphor for hegemonic consensus reinforced by regional nationalism which acts to mask social and cultural divisions.

On his rounds as a journalist, J M Harcourt undoubtedly witnessed all those things described by Hasluck. However, he reported them, according to Hasluck, as ‘sexy stories from the police courts’. As Australia’s first socialist realist novel, and a contender for the title of Australia’s first proletarian novel, Harcourt’s *Upsurge* (1934) deals with class and sexual exploitation. ‘I know why I am being sacked!’, says a young female shop assistant to the owner of a large department store, ‘It's because I would not let you seduce me!’ ... he turned and dashed back to his office. ‘The Slut! The Bitch! The bloody little Whore’. The novel was referred to federal authorities by the Western Australian state police. For Hasluck, if such instances as those depicted by Harcourt occurred, they were better left unstated. His mirage did not break up:
‘Perth in those days was still a small and compact city’, he wrote, ‘A young man about town was bound to see everyone else simply by ‘going down the terrace’ or by dropping in at one of the standard resorts’. The Victorian veneer of Harcourt’s Perth conceals and provides a shelter for corruption — and if the newspapers would not report below the surface, then Harcourt, unlike Hasluck, was prepared to use literature as a vehicle. *Upsurge* provided Harcourt with the opportunity not afforded by local newspapers. It was a high price to pay. His novel was almost immediately banned and Harcourt was ‘run out of town’ with the threat of arrest and defamation action — which might suggest that there was some truth in his fiction.

In his *Poet in Australia: a Discursive Essay* (1975), Hasluck makes the case that the ‘question whether a writer had anything worth saying depended on whether he had discovered anything not already plain to others — whether he has passed from observation to perception’. According to this maxim, Prichard and Harcourt might reasonably be said to be successful writers of prose because they went beyond that which was commonly observed according to the consensus view. It might also be argued in Prichard’s case in particular that the author moved beyond reportage to insight. Hasluck wrote some well crafted poems as Bruce Bennett points out in this volume. In a review of Hasluck’s first volume, *Into the Desert* (1939), Walter Murdoch wrote that some of Hasluck’s poems ‘pass with flying colours’ while others ‘fail’. A budding writer should expect such a response to a first publication. ‘Looking back on my writing, I think that I was writing chiefly for my own satisfaction... My writing of verse had no great literary intention’, Hasluck wrote in 1969. In 1985 he published *Dark Cottage* which drew his title from Edmund Waller, ‘The soul’s dark cottage, battered and decayed/lets in new light from chinks that time has made.’ Barbara Giles reviewed *The Dark Cottage* in the *Australian Book Review*. Much like Murdoch’s review of *Into the Desert* almost half a century earlier, Giles commented on the unevenness of the works. ‘His best poems have nothing to do’ with the ‘revealed wisdom’ of Waller, but are ‘celebrations of this world. When he tries to view both worlds at once he becomes both sententious and trite’.

Of poetry Hasluck wrote that he had little ‘learning but much love’. Kenneth Slessor appeared among his most admired Australian poets. Hasluck initially came to the notice of Perth’s literary fraternity as a writer of short fictions and journalist yarns. As a young writer, he had taken to signing his works with the initials P H until he discovered that another Western Australian writer, Peter Hopegood, employed the same moniker to sign his work. Perth was too small a literary community for a confusion of this kind to take place. Both Hasluck and Hopegood published creative works in the *Western Mail* and the differences between the two may be discerned in Hasluck’s story, ‘Old Howie’s Mare’ and Hopegood’s poem ‘Metamorphosis’. Hasluck’s story concerns the gradual
advancement of settler 'civilisation' over savagery. Hopegood's 'Metamorphis' is an attempt to employ the Grecian mythic tale of Daphne as a plot line for an alleged mythic story told by north-western Aborigines. Hopegood went on to become a respected Australian poet who maintained an abiding interest in mythology. In his novel, *Cloudstreet* (1991), Tim Winton depicts a budding young poet who, at a Perth literary gathering, is mistaken as the writer of a poem written by another. The young man is humiliated by the error. Early in his career, Hasluck changed his pen name to 'Polygon'. While all writers think about the meanings of the pseudonyms they employ, Hasluck's is especially revealing. In geometry, the polygon is a figure of many sides, conventionally five or more. Hasluck's many interests and professional pursuits are an indication of his many possibilities. Yet a polygon is not only many sided, it is two dimensional. It may have been Hasluck's very great insecurity that while he was good at many things, he was not great at any one of those things he undertook, including politics, but was, in fact two dimensional. As a writer he may have suffered all the anguish of a major poet without being one. As a politician, he wrote: 'In my more extensive acquaintance with politicians I have wondered why a man who uses words for political purposes — including the yelling of an interjection such as "Sit down, mug!" — is considered to have shown talents more worthy of respect than the writing of a sonnet'. He also argued that in Australia a 'politician is considered to be incapable of being a poet and his writing of verse is turned into a joke by journalists ...'.

Hasluck earned his stripes as a politician not as a poet. In a combination not unknown in the Australian parliament, though not always overwhelmingly so, he was thought of as being a politician and an intellectual. In this category we might count the likes of Gough Whitlam who was prime minister during Hasluck's term as governor general. Upon Hasluck's retirement in 1974, Whitlam maintained that the list of accomplishments is extraordinary — journalist, author, historian, academic, civil servant, diplomatist, Member of Parliament, Minister of the Crown, Viceroy — a remarkable career in its diversity, yet equally remarkable in its consistency. In his introduction to this volume, Whitlam, poses the question of what might have happened to Australian political history in 1975 if Hasluck had accepted a second term as governor general and not been succeeded by Sir John Kerr. History indeed could have been very different if Hasluck had been confronted with Kerr's cur. Whitlam, it appears certain, would not have had his commission revoked by Hasluck as governor general.

Speculation on Hasluck's possible role, had he remained as governor general, is often posed in terms of the Whitlam government but I have sometimes contemplated in the course of preparing this book: what was the impact on Hasluck? Did he ever feel that he had vacated his post at a significant moment of crisis in the history of the Australian nation and its constitution; did the actions of Kerr ever make him contemplate subsequently that he may have altered the
course of history, that he may have changed destiny by arriving at a different
decision to the incumbent governor general? All of this, of course, is speculation
with hindsight, but then Sir Paul did live a long life. Hasluck said that he was
prepared to serve a second term, but Alexandra Hasluck’s failing health and
very likely the unexpected and sudden death of their son, Rollo, convinced him
that it was time to leave Canberra and return to Perth. ‘Mr Whitlam ... had
wanted Paul to remain on as Governor General’, recalled Alexandra Hasluck,
‘and Paul would have liked to do so, but I felt I was too much of an encumbrance
with my disability, and also felt I had earned my rest’.34

Intriguing ‘what ifs’ surround Hasluck’s life. He began many possible careers
but only really stuck with being a politician: what if he had continued with
journalism, what if he had become an academic or a writer, what if he had
succeeded Holt as prime minister. Hasluck has been described as the greatest
prime minister Australia never had, though this is by no means a commanding
view. Had he won the premiership in his contest with John Gorton he would
have been the oldest politician to succeed to the top job. Much like other ‘what
ifs’, Hasluck’s possibilities might best be described in historians’ terms as a
case of ‘Cleopatra’s nose’: what if Cleopatra had not so attracted Antony,
what if King Alexander of Greece had not died of a monkey bite, what if
Trotsky had not come down with fever during his critical argument with Stalin,
what if Holt had not drowned, what if Alexandra did not have a hip operation.35
In time a PhD in history may consider Alexandra’s crook hip and the sacking
of Gough. Speculating at the time of Hasluck’s contest with Gorton, Don
Whittington remarked that Hasluck would have been ‘serious, hard working,
unspectacular’ as prime minister. In the journalist’s view, Hasluck would not
be an ‘election winner in a tight situation’.36 In any case, it seems Hasluck did
not lobby hard to succeed to the top job, as John Warhurst points out in his
chapter on Hasluck and the Liberal Party. History now tells us that Gorton
won the contest, and as David Williamson’s play, Don’s Party (1973) dramatically
illustrates, went on to defeat Whitlam at the 1969 poll. What if Whitlam had
won in 1969 ...

As a politician, Hasluck never served on the opposition benches but remained
in government from 1949 when he entered the parliament to 1969 when he
became governor general. For all of that, Hasluck appeared as a somewhat
solitary, if at times resolute and earnest, individual. According to Whittington,
‘Mr Hasluck is a conscientious, a thinker, a man with a belief in his own theories,
a stubborn man ... testy, touchy, courteous to friends and strangers but
uncompromising with those he considers don’t understand him or he regards as
enemies’,37 much like another politician who never became prime minister, H
V Evatt. It is a matter of public record that Hasluck disliked Evatt, but Carl
Bridge observes in his chapter on Hasluck as diplomat, the two men shared
many similarities of character. Unlike Evatt who had a wide circle, few people
seem to have known Hasluck very well. His professional relations seem to have been mostly formal. As a minister he maintained that he had to ‘resist’ close relationships with ‘any public servant’ and while he was rarely seen within his department, he ‘interfered so much in the routine’ of its running that his ‘officers used to refer to him as the “Chief Clerk”’. In their chapter on Hasluck in the department of foreign affairs, Garry Woodard and Joan Beaumont, argue that he was meticulous with even the smallest of details, often correcting the grammar of his officers.

Although Hasluck seemed almost naturally inclined to aloofness he was known by a few close associates and friends as a man of some humour and hospitality. These characteristics are alluded to by both Charles Court and Gough Whitlam. There are, however, only glimpses of the affable Hasluck who apparently could whip-up a very good meal at short notice and who was a charming host at dinner parties. At the time of his appointment as governor general, the New York Times carried a report of him once playing drums at a party: ‘The Minister stripped off his coat, took the stand and played bongos and snare drums from midnight to 3 am’. Such breakouts, however, tended to be contained by responsibility to the nation. Hasluck is not the only political figure to present himself differently in public and private life, nor has he been Australian’s only politician to appear awkward in public. Yet few have seemed so contrary in their public and personal character. I have wondered from time to time about the wrap around sunglasses, ‘cool shades’, he occasionally wore in summer while formally dressed as the governor general. Another concession he may have made to the bongo-playing side of his character was carried into the otherwise sombre death ritual. As a former governor general he was accorded a state funeral which was attended by political and cultural elites from around the country. As a state occasion he knew it would be a very formal affair but Paul Hasluck had made it his wish that eulogies be replaced by trombones blaring out ‘When the Saints Come Marching In’.

Hasluck may have felt misunderstood on account of his public formality. ‘I’ve had to put up with this sort of character assassination for years, often from people who have never met me’, he told a journalist in 1969, ‘Just because I don’t giggle or dig people in the ribs all the time ... outsiders say I don’t have a sense of humour. You go around to my electorate and you’ll find out what a warm-hearted old fellow I am’. There is, of course, a difference between a warm-heart and a sense of humour, and the statement may reveal a good deal more than what is actually being said. The interview was conducted early in the morning as the newly appointed governor general was standing in his pyjamas, watering the lawn. As background it is worth mentioning that Hasluck had, on one occasion in the parliament, so infuriated Gough Whitlam, then opposition leader, that he was soaked by a glass of water tossed from the opposition benches. Whitlam, of course, was known more for his wit and humour, and had
on the occasion of a liberal leadership challenge referred to William McMahon as Tiberius with a telephone. In Hasluck’s garden setting he might have thought of himself as Prometheus in pyjamas and given the reporter a squirt. It is even possible that before he went up in the flames of the boilermaker’s son, he called on Hasluck, Heroditus with a hose, to return the water.

As a historian of his own life, Hasluck divided himself into two halves. In the first phase, he says he ‘mucked about’ in a series of pursuits from writing poetry, journalism and history to working as a newspaperman, academic and diplomat. Thereafter, he says, he took the ‘chance of politics’ and from that ‘point on’ his ‘life ceased to be [his] own’. ‘Duty took charge’, he says, and he ‘kept assiduously’ to a ‘political career’, frequently feeling that he was the ‘wrong driver in the wrong bus’.42 Coming as it does, in at the end of Mucking About, this admission, Judith Brett observes, is ‘rather melancholy’. From a man who enjoyed so much and placed so much store in ‘mucking about’ the acknowledgment that duty took over and consumed his life is quite devastating. Mucking about, it seems, gave way without so much as a whimper, but later very much regret, to discipline and denial.

Yet there is evidence to suggest that Hasluck was, even in his ‘mucking about’ phase, disposed to duty and to pleasing by good behaviour those whose favour he desired. His faithfulness to Menzies through years as minister for territories may perhaps be implied in the admission he makes of his life as a young man. ‘I was a very dutiful boy’, he says, ‘and, like most boys of that kind, kept on doing things that I really disliked doing simply because this was expected of me and I did not want to bring my parents pain’. Thus ‘[d]angerous seeds’ of ‘self deception’ were sown: ‘I was pretending to a goodness that I did not have, because many of those around me wanted me to be good. In later life I might have been a better man if it had not been for the confusions and hypocrisies of the double life I came to be leading in the strain of this adolescent period’. He concluded that as a consequence of his weakness to try and please others with ‘expected’ behaviour he became ‘hesitant about being myself and living my own life’.43 Hasluck also placed great store on the decisions taken by others in the courses his life took. By his own admission, he did not choose any particular path, so much as have paths chosen for him — journalist, writer, academic, historian — which may help explain why he did not more vigorously contest the prime ministership in 1968. To accede to the top job he must be chosen, not choose. His fate would be determined, as it had been throughout his life, by the will of others. More broadly, if he had actively deceived others about his true nature the choices they made concerning him would always be suspect. Here his use of the term ‘self deception’ is critical to our understanding of Hasluck. Were his acts of deception so thorough as to result in self deception? If so, how devastatingly lonely must he have felt before and after he realised what he was doing. The personal cost, by his own admission, was high.
In a carefully placed sentence in her autobiography, *Portrait in a Mirror* (1981), Alexandra Hasluck spoke poignantly of the strains on family life of the long separations she and Paul endured as a consequence of his work. Remembering love letters he had sent her before they were married, she wrote: 'Never had a girl such wonderful letters as I got, and have kept — fortunately, for in later life they bolstered up my belief that I had been loved, in a period when I had come to doubt it'. For Paul Hasluck: 'Territories killed me politically and I knew all the time it was killing me, but what else could one do but stick at a job that no one else wanted'. What indeed? In what might be interpreted as a classic act of sublimation, Hasluck redoubled his efforts to make his mark outside his portfolio responsibilities while grinding on remorselessly to excel in that which he detested. He was minister for territories for twelve years, between the ages of 46 and 58, critical years in the life of any politician. 'During most of my term', he explains, 'that portfolio was not highly esteemed and it was of scant political significance. Whatever standing I gained in Cabinet was due to the strength and force with which I contributed to Cabinet decisions on other questions and not to the fact that I was doing anything in Territories that was considered to be of moment'. It seems he placed a great deal at risk, personally, but for those early poems, by maintaining his staunch commitment.

Except in a government that would control the treasury benches for more than two decades, it is difficult to envisage a minister in any Australian parliament lasting so long in such a debilitated frame of mind. Perhaps Hasluck took solace from the thought that he controlled a veritable fiefdom: 'it gave me a range of administrative experience that exceeded by far that of any Federal ministerial colleague, for in a country of two million people I was virtually the premier and the whole of a state Cabinet'. Brett investigates the psychology of the administrator and makes a convincing case that, as a politician, Hasluck was inclined to administration above all else. John Warhurst supports this general proposition and argues that Hasluck was, as a consequence, a dour public figure. It is arguable that it was only in circumstances where the minister is the minister, year in and year out, that an administrator of the kind Hasluck clearly became could emerge. In more turbulent political times, Hasluck may have been quite different.

In this respect, Kim Beazley (snr) is an interesting point counterpoint to Hasluck. Beazley was elected to the federal seat of Fremantle in 1945 following the death of John Curtin. He was four years in the parliament before Hasluck was elected. Both Hasluck and Beazley were Western Australians and, over the period of more than two decades, made the long haul across the continent to represent their constituencies. Beazley was a member of the opposition for twenty three years (1949-1972) before becoming minister for education in the Whitlam administration. Alexandra Hasluck remembers Beazley in the
parliament as a dashing young man who stood out among the tired and older looking men of Labor: ‘they could boast few young members with a university education. The most noticeable one was Kim Beazley, member for Fremantle, a good and thoughtful speaker, and so handsome that he acquired the nickname “The Student Prince”’.

Paul Hasluck first came into contact with Beazley when Beazley was an undergraduate student at the University of Western Australia and Hasluck was a temporary lecturer in history. He remembered Beazley as a ‘tall, fresh-faced, prancing and somewhat self-centred undergraduate ... intolerant of other students’ opinions and rather fond of his own’. Apart from the particular physical description this is not an unfamiliar criticism which might be written of an undergraduate but Beazley failed the Hasluck test of detail in similar ways to Evatt: ‘He seemed rather more attracted towards the vivid summing-up of a question than to a patient exploration of it’.

Hasluck was surprised and, perhaps somewhat envious, that Beazley had succeeded to the Fremantle seat: ‘he did not seem the sort of candidate that the Labor Party usually favoured, and I was surprised that, at the age of twenty-eight, with so little experience or achievement behind him, he would have turned towards politics. Perhaps it is a pity that he started in parliament so soon, before reaching adulthood’. To the older man, Beazley would always be disqualified from serious consideration because he would always be the younger. As a ‘member’ of the Western Australian ‘family’ he would always be judged harshly as someone who was only ever ‘mucking about’. Hasluck doubted the story that Chifley had had an eye on Beazley as ‘Cabinet material’ and went on to argue that ‘talk about him being regarded as “a coming man” and “perhaps a future prime minister” was very much exaggerated ... he remained a phrase-maker, who gave descriptions with a flourish or complained of others’ lack of vision but never came squarely in front of what could be done. He never had to march in heavy boots carrying a heavy pack’. A note of resentment also appears in Hasluck’s conclusion that Beazley had a ‘fancy’, as he called it, for ‘brilliant summing up’: ‘He really felt triumphant, I believe, when he could say something like, “You cannot build a hate-free society with hate-filled men”’. It is to be expected that political opponents, even when they hail from the same state, will be less than complimentary to one another. Writing as he was in 1958, Hasluck may have been performing nothing more than a routine put-down of a rival.

Yet Hasluck writes of Beazley as one might criticise someone who has been unjustifiably successful which was Hasluck’s view of Evatt. But it was Hasluck who was on the winning side with, at the time, almost a decade of government under his belt. Beazley’s promise had been cut down and his party lost every election it contested between 1949 to 1972. In his criticism of Beazley, Hasluck may be revealing something of his own frustration and perhaps
even depression at the status quo which kept him in government and made him a minister of long standing. Why otherwise, except that there were few other opportunities for an ageing politician, who would be returned year in year out to a job he disliked. In moments of despair Hasluck may have looked with some longing across the parliamentary benches to a much younger man who had once been his student prince but who now flourished in diminished circumstances. Being out of government prevented Kim Beazley from becoming prime minister, being in government prevented Hasluck from achieving more than he did.

As with any individual, Hasluck was not one thing only, but, more intricate than a polygon, a complex of emotions and abilities. Perhaps well described as an ‘all-rounder’, Hasluck worried for much of his public life that he was not sufficiently good at any one thing. In a review of Mucking About, Noel Adams recorded what may now pass as a consistent theme: ‘There is nothing he couldn’t do better than most people. At the same time, he feels that everything he did he could have done better had he been more dedicated.’ Hasluck described himself in terms of an uncertain heritage. ‘The standard reference books on surnames give a Scandinavian origin’, to the name Hasluck, he says, and ‘trace its appearance in England back to the time of Canute ... references to three different persons named Oslac in Bede’s Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’. Variants included: ‘Aselock and Aslac in Nottinghamshire and Oslac at Osloctuna in Norfolk’ Asla of Aslacton, Aslak, Aslack, Aslake, Asloc and so on. I am tempted to draw a conclusion that, Lennie Lower-like, Hasluck might have put an antipodean spin on his name ‘Here’s Luck’. For all his accomplishments and good fortune, Hasluck may have been, for considerable times, a deeply troubled and unfulfilled individual, something he would have found difficult to admit. At the end of his life as a public figure, therefore, a return to his imaginative days of ‘mucking about’ must have seemed a very attractive proposition. Even here, however, Hasluck appeared only half convinced that he had ever let himself go sufficiently. His life was by measures and restrained. His memories of mucking about, like the cool shades, the bongos and the dinner parties, may have been an outward sign of a man who wanted from time to time to live his life differently to the way it panned out.

Endnotes

3 Jenny Gregory (ed.) Western Australia Between the Wars 1919-1939, special issue of Studies in Western Australian History XI, June 1990, p. 8.
5 Ibid., pp. 8-9.

7 Ibid., pp. 8-9.


16 Ibid., pp. 102-103.

17 Ibid., p. 110.


20 Ibid., p. 17.

21 Melissa Hasluck and Nicholas Hasluck, *Paul Hasluck: a Literary Life*.


36 Don Whittington, 'Uncompromising — and Deadly Earnest', *Australian*, 1 January 1968.

37 Ibid.


39 Ibid.


41 Ibid.


43 Ibid., p. 76.
Here's Luck

44 Alexandra Hasluck, *Portrait in a Mirror*, p. 117.
45 Hasluck, *A Time for Building*, p. 4.
46 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
Paul Hasluck in Australian History

Poet

Bruce Bennett

My direct links with the subject of this book were few and tenuous, but for me, memorable. After returning from Oxford in late 1967 and soon thereafter having a choice, in those easier days, of a diplomatic post in the department of external affairs or a university lectureship, I approached Paul Hasluck, then minister, for his advice. Having drawn from me that my chief interest in external affairs would be to influence foreign policy he politely but firmly indicated that the best place to shape Australia's foreign policy, was parliament. I should get myself elected to the federal parliament and formulate policy there. Alternatively, if I found university teaching satisfying, as I thought I would, the intellectual influence I could have on students and a wider public would be worthwhile goals too. In coolly and deftly placing these alternatives (and throwing in the wild card, for me, of entering politics), I now realise that Paul Hasluck was recounting some of his own dilemmas of the 1930s and 40s. Not only had he been relatively uncommitted in a party political sense but he had several vocational options in journalism, university life and international diplomacy before, as he says in his autobiography, *Mucking About*, he 'let them all down and went into politics'. I was especially interested in his reasons for turning down an offer of a position in the United Nations because, as he later remarked: 'I was too nationalistic to be a good international public servant, but largely because I wanted to live in Australia, have my two sons grow up as Australians and not as international diplomatic waifs'.

One of those sons, Nicholas Hasluck, I got to know when we fortuitously shared a cabin on the P&O liner *The Himalaya* en route to England and studies at Oxford — a journey that would re-emerge in heightened imaginative terms in the younger Hasluck's first novel *Quarantine*. Not surprisingly, perhaps, I became interested in the relationship of sons to famous fathers and well known and highly regarded mothers. My parents, who had both left school in their early teens, and never aspired to public office, seemed in some ways to make it easier for their children to go their own ways. On the other hand, Nicholas Hasluck had absorbed the legacies of a reading and writing family. As an academic in the field of English, I now see the examples set in families as deeply influential in subsequent learning.

My focus in this chapter is on Paul Hasluck as poet, but I want to stress his broader concept of the writer. Hasluck had a high regard for good writing in all its forms. He had a higher regard for writing than for mere talking. The telephone, he came to believe, was in some respects a curse: 'The facilitation of communication has been a great benefit for persons with nothing to say', he
remarked. On the other hand, poetry, as one of the higher art forms, required expertise in verse forms, a fine control of language and a subject of significance. An old-fashioned Australian democrat in his belief that the poet should not be seen as a special person — a shaman or magician figure — Hasluck nevertheless believed, as the British neo-classicists did, that poetry should be part of civilised discourse. In his extended essay *The Poet in Australia*, published after he retired as governor-general, Hasluck summarised his utopian vision for Australian society: ‘I will not believe Australia is fully civilised ... until some men will talk as naturally and as knowledgeably about poetry as most men talk about golf and the stock market’.

The targeting of men here owes something to Hasluck’s generation’s tendency to talk of civilisation as a male’s responsibility; but it is still the case that poetry is mostly thought of as ‘women’s business’, and the civilising of men specifically in this way would indeed be a breakthrough.

As a writer as well as a reader, Hasluck’s interests were broad and inclusive, and often surprising. The breadth is evident in his interest in historical fiction, on the one hand, and French poetry of the ‘symbolists’ on the other. Moreover, like many writers before him, he used his writing to experiment with different selves and ways of seeing the world. Paul Hasluck’s presentation of pseudonymous selves could not compete with some recent examples (he was never guilty of ‘doing a Demidenko’), but when his initials P H were sometimes confused with another writer of his time, Peter Hopegood, he changed his signature as a critic of drama in the *West Australian* to ‘Polygon’ and used this name subsequently for short stories and historical reconstructions in the *Western Mail* and elsewhere.

The sources of Paul Hasluck’s poetic self seem to lie in his late adolescence, between the ages of sixteen and nineteen, when, as he put it in his autobiography, ‘confusion came into my life’. The catalyst was his parents’ departure from Guildford and their transference from ‘the social work of the Salvation Army into the field work’, effectively making them peripatetic clergy for the Salvation Army cause. Hasluck increasingly found the ‘hot-gospelling and the public practice of religion ... very uncongenial’. As he later saw it, he was:

> living a double life — one centred on the strict and narrow religious discipline of a Salvation Army family and another life centred on school and the comradeship of ordinary boys, bemused by strange dreams and ambitions and hopes, privately and indeed secretly enriched by poetry.

He gradually distanced himself from religion, convincing himself that Christianity was a barrier to intellectual advancement but continually hearing the echo of the scriptures in what he read, thought and wrote. The despatch of Christianity from the centre of his life required a replacement. Looking back on this period half a century later, Hasluck concluded that ‘What chiefly supplanted religion
was English literature. Wordsworth gave me more than the Pauline epistles'. Indeed, Wordsworth echoes often through Hasluck's poetry as in his autobiographical recall of solitary walks 'through the Darling Range from the gorge of the Swan River in the north to the vicinity of Karragullen in the south'. Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive', Wordsworth wrote of his time of walking and reflection in pre-revolutionary France and there is something of that exhilaration in Hasluck's memories of drinking from 'running brooks' in the Darling Range in the winter of 1925 and returning to the fireside where he read a Shakespeare play each Sunday evening before going to bed.

Hasluck's reading of English literature during his school and university years was very comprehensive and, in the best sense, personally meaningful. In the great tradition of the autodidact, he read Chaucer, Milton and Shakespeare, George Herbert, Tennyson, Cowper, Matthew Arnold, Shelley, Byron, Coleridge, Browning, Dryden, Pope, Johnson and Goldsmith; but Wordsworth and Keats made the deepest impression. The romantic spirit in Hasluck is one of his least explored aspects and this is perhaps because it is often counterpointed in his writings by a ruminative, ironic and worldly wise voice. Nevertheless, it finds its fullest expression in his poetry.

The Australian poets who came to mean most to Hasluck included Furnley Maurice (Frank Wilmot), Kenneth Slessor and, surprisingly, Christopher Brennan. Hasluck's discovery of Brennan's Poems 1913 preceded any knowledge of Brennan's work in the English department at the University of Western Australia, and led to a paper on Brennan's symbolism to a newly formed English literature society in 1933 or 1934, soon after Alec King's appointment as lecturer. Interestingly, Hasluck came upon Brennan's work through his interest in French symbolist poetry, fostered by Margaret Clarke in the French department, and fuelled by a 'patriotic fervour' for a more difficult, cerebral poetry in Australia than that of Henry Kendall and Adam Lindsay Gordon. In later years, Hasluck was remarkably balanced in his assessment of the literary and intellectual influences operating at the University of Western Australia in the 1920s, recognising that he had 'grown up in Australia in an old-fashioned community in a part of Australia even more remote from novelty than the rest'. His assessment of the influence of the foundation professor of English, Walter Murdoch, was similarly balanced but with an edge to it: Murdoch was important for his 'personality and influence rather than ... his achievements'. Summing up, Hasluck remarked, 'It was our peculiar blessing that our professors and lecturers had learnt to love books before 1914, just as it is sometimes the misfortune of undergraduates today to be lectured on literature by persons who developed a dislike for books after 1945. Our teachers expounded with joy the merits of their favourite authors; their successors mumble about the defects of those whom they do not appreciate'.

In reading Paul Hasluck's four books of poems published between 1939 and 1991, I am struck by their importance not just to an understanding of Paul
Hasluck but also to the art of poetry in Australia. The first of these books, *Into the Desert* has its genesis in the 1920s and 30s when Hasluck was fostering a hidden life as poet alongside his more public roles as student, journalist, academic historian, husband, and traveller. As in many first books, the author experiments with a variety of voices and styles. In Hasluck’s case, he ranges from poems of contemplation and vision to lyrics, sonnets, hymns and metrical exercises. The opening section of the book, which sets its agenda, is a series of poems about entering the desert and the insights that can flow from this. These poems are not concerned with geographical realism, though one of them locates itself at Cook on the transcontinental railway on the Nullarbor Plain, and muses on the temptations to lose oneself in the immensity of space. However, other urgent voices pull the speaker back to present realities: ‘... plan the day. Plan better days ahead./Forget the sky. Focus dilated eyes./You dare not look at space or think beyond/The sky and desert edge’. The epigraph to this sequence, ‘And He went into the desert to pray’, recalls Christ’s desert experience and indicates the continuing influence of Hasluck’s Christian upbringing even as he sought alternatives to it. The desert thus comes to symbolise both renunciation and a space in which spiritual regeneration may occur:

The air is singing. We will see life new
At music’s centre, understanding’s heart;
Go calmly from the coast, led by the faith we keep,
Out to the untouched inland plains.

Against this impulse towards the ‘music’s centre’ is set a deadened suburban mentality and way of life in ‘Discontent in the Suburbs’:

The tarred road through the suburb is lined with dying trees
And grey dried weeds
Between a palisade of skinny poles and whining wire.
We know brief repetition, never birth,
For we have strangled love, dashed beauty from the rock.

Because the quasi-biblical journey into the desert has become a familiar trope in Australian writing from works such as A D Hope’s poem ‘Australia’ (also first published in 1939), Patrick White’s *Voss* (1959), Randolph Stow’s poem ‘The Land’s Meaning’ (1962) and Stow’s novels *To the Islands* (1958) and *Tourmaline* (1963), it is important to note Hasluck as a pioneer in this field in Australia, although T S Eliot’s influential poem ‘The Waste Land’ (1922) had set the scene by definitively locating the inter-war period as a desert awaiting the life-giving rains of spiritual regeneration.

A D Hope, who was two years younger than Hasluck, provides an interesting comparison. Hope was the son of a Presbyterian minister and spent most of
his childhood in rural New South Wales and Tasmania. His poem ‘Australia’
differs from Hasluck’s desert sequence in its bold assertion of Australia as a
cultural desert, from which prophets might miraculously spring who would re-
orient the national spirit, setting aside ‘the chatter of cultural apes’, which
purported to be civilisation in Europe. Yet, as Leonie Kramer has pointed out,
very little of Hope’s own poetry reveals any ‘direct inspiration from his actual
[Australian] environment’. Hasluck, on the other hand, was closely observant
of his natural environment, and had honed his descriptive skills in journalism, as
had his Western Australian predecessor, Katharine Susannah Prichard.

Among the various voices and roles that Hasluck was hypothesising for
himself in the interwar period was that of the romantic nationalist, singing a
song of the land. There were many models for this, but P R (‘Inky’)
Stephensen’s Foundations of Culture in Australia (1936) seems to have
provided some of the ideas and impetus. In ‘Songs of Australia’ Hasluck
switches from a satire against the banks and all city-bred (and therefore un-
Australian) hypocrites to the men of the land who are relished for their colour
and courage:

O, give us your hand, digger, dingo, sand-groper, old fossicker, swaggie, cow-
cocky, sheep-chaser, mullock-shoveller, crow-eater, boundary rider and farmhand
For Christ’s sake, don’t sing; but give us your hand.

‘Songs of Australia’ suggests the influence of Whitman among others, with its
long lines and its expansive, energetic celebration of a national ethos, but there
is more humour, ironic understatement and sheer idiomatic pleasure in Hasluck’s
lines.

Hasluck’s audacious combination of biblical-style prophecy with a
recognisably Australian vocabulary and speech rhythms was tested at greater
length and depth in his ambitious script for radio, ‘The Burden of Habbakuk
and the Sword of Gideon’, which was written in the 1930s but not published
until 1969 in the Collected Poems. Hasluck himself described this script as
an attempt to deal with ‘the struggle between individualism and communalism
that goes on both inside the personality and in the daily struggles of life in
society’. Based closely on the old testament book of the prophet Habbakuk,
Hasluck’s script is not intended as a dramatic composition but as a monologue
— ‘the tumult of many voices playing around inside a man’s mind, the man’s
mind itself, like that of a troubled prophet in a wilderness, being full of echoes
of his own age as well as of all he has inherited from the past’. Although
somewhat static, the script has its moments of neatly orchestrated counterpointing
of voices, views and attitudes. A narrow, isolationist cultural nationalism, for
example, is excoriated as:
The proud invocations of inbred Aussidolaters
Searching Lawson and Furphy for something to quote,
Spinning high romance in the shoddy brutalities of Kelly,
And making each speech one long peroration
Hung round with the smell of stale eucalyptus.

This is not a communalism worth giving oneself up to. Yet an almost mystic communion of the individual with the land is not denied:

I once stood on a mountain in the morning and said:
This is my land. I belong to these hills and plains
And my body escaped from my mind.

The script seems written with a sense of the coming war and is testing (but not fully resolving) the limits of individual self-interest against the requirements of patriotism and the commitment to fight for one’s country.

Hasluck’s war years were spent not as a fighting man (he was thirty-four in 1939) but initially as a replacement for Professor Fred Alexander who was on sabbatical leave in 1940 from the history department at the University of Western Australia, and then in the department of external affairs working on ‘the civil side of the war effort’. Hasluck had enough poems for a second collection in 1947, which he would have dedicated to the Melbourne poet Furnley Maurice, but he waited until 1969, when the Hawthorn Press in Melbourne published his Collected Poems. The new poems in this book, written as they were in the margins of a relentlessly busy public life, are generally shorter and less poetically ambitious than his prewar verse. While some of these poems have that special imaginative quality that Hasluck himself associated with the best poetry, others have a more journalistic appeal, prompted by experiences at places as far apart as Wyndham, Wagin or a bus in Mount’s Bay Road, Perth. In such poems Hasluck’s west appears as a place of inwardness and relief from his outer world of politics and anger.

Hasluck’s poetic experiments with communalism in the interwar years gave way in the war and postwar years to an engagement with a more solitary, unified speaking subject. Nevertheless, against the backdrop of a busy working life we sometimes see the vulnerability of a thinking, feeling, divided person constantly aware of his mortality. In the fine poem ‘At Augusta’, Hasluck’s persona questions his achievements as he looks out across the ‘sandhills and bar and the green troubled seas’ as the wind blows in from the ‘far Polar waste’, offering no peace. Other poems express a frustration with the gap between rhetoric and the speaker’s personal reality which is shown to derive ultimately from a faith in the Australian soil and its propensity to regenerate.
Such a faith seems a resting-point rather than an occasion for that restless scepticism which Hasluck praised elsewhere in the figure of Montaigne, and which so often characterised his own thinking.  

Paul Hasluck's second major phase as a poet occurred in his third book *Dark Cottage* (1984). In some respects the book may seem a throwback to an earlier phase of youthful poetic and personal exploration in the Darling Range. However, although a Wordsworthian romanticism recurs in *Dark Cottage*, Hasluck's poems of his later years have a deeper and more satisfying complexity as they interact with the Australian landscape, European music and English metaphysical poets such as Edmund Waller and Thomas Traherne. The versatile seventeenth century English politician and poet, Edmund Waller provides Hasluck with the epigraph and title for his third book:

The Soul's dark Cottage, batter'd and decay'd,  
Lets in new light thro chinks that time has made.  
Stronger by weakness, wiser Men become  
As they draw near to their Eternal home:  
Leaving the Old, both worlds at once they view  
That stand upon the Threshold of the New!

Although Waller's topsy-turvy record of switching political allegiances from Charles I to Cromwell and then back to Charles II has no discernible parallel in Hasluck's career, the seventeenth century poet's image of the 'Soul's dark Cottage' as a site from which past and future may be viewed without illusions, was clearly compatible with Hasluck's outlook. Judith Wright's book of poems from the same phase of her life, published when she was seventy, with similar intent, is called *Phantom Dwelling*. In both of these books the poets have stripped their public egos and modes of address down towards bare, unadorned statement. The idea of stripping the personality of all extraneous trappings is epitomised in Hasluck's opening poem in the image of a mummy being unwrapped in Cairo:

What has survived?  
Cracked flesh, dry bone, not even nakedness  
And nothing of the vital shell  
With which this shape began.

This poem offers an altogether bleaker vision than Dorothy Hewett's youthful, romantic challenge to 'walk naked through the world'. No person in Hasluck's kind of public life could show Hewett's kind of temerity and survive. Yet Hasluck's private inclination was towards that romantic world-view which values the *spirit* with which a person lives his or her life rather than their trappings or position.
The last poem in *Dark Cottage*, restores hope for the unadorned self as the speaker pictures himself in his garden after reading Thomas Traherne’s poetry, and echoes something of that English poet’s style and sentiment:

Let no alien sound intrude  
Where clear skies bless  
With fruitfulness, fulfilment and a mood  
Of happiness  
The place that is my home.  
Apples as old as Eden  
Deep in Australian loam  
Burden the bough  
Where noisily the parakeets return  
In coloured flight  
And here I read Traherne.  
He and the Saxon Sheep are native now.  
This is my sacred site.

This closing declaration in the poem asserts quietly but firmly the writer’s belief that the European Australian, like the Aborigine, can have his sacred sites.

That is not quite Hasluck’s last word. Like A D Hope in his later years, Hasluck allowed a number of light-hearted spoofs in verse to be published in a pamphlet under the title *Crude Impieties*. The sense of fun in these light verse exercises occasionally leads to a satiric point, but generally the sound of the words, their rhymes and rhythms are centre stage. In his poem ‘An Inexact Comparison’, Hasluck compares the achievements of two men in 1829, Felix Mendelssohn, who published a symphony, and James Stirling who founded a city. In his later years, Hasluck believed that art, especially music, was a more important achievement than the development of cities and wealth, as his concluding stanza indicates:

Now, tell me, Felix, what did you achieve?  
‘I tossed some semi-quavers in the pond’.  
And you? — Young Jimmy Stirling I believe.  
‘I opened up the way for Alan Bond’.

From his early, intense experiments in verse, which enabled him to make the difficult transition from religion to art, to his later light-verse spoofs, Hasluck managed the difficulties of the double life with great dexterity. His record as a poet, together with his prose writings, across a variety of subjects and styles, establish him as the most developed literary intelligence in Australian public life since Alfred Deakin, and therefore a figure likely to endure in the Australian mind. It is interesting, in view of his later statements about the importance of poetry to the civilisation of Australia, that Hasluck did not publish his poetry
while he was in the full glare of public life and that his two most important books, *Into the Desert* and *Dark Cottage* were self-published by the Freshwater Bay Press. Hasluck was fully aware of the capacity of journalists for ridicule and derision, and if he were to lay his heart bare, it would be where and when he wanted. Poetry, then, was a secret vice — and all the more satisfying, and revealing, for that.

**Endnotes**

6 Hasluck, *Mucking About*, p. 11.
23 Hasluck, *Mucking About*, p. 266.
28 See Dorothy Hewett, *The Chapel Perilous*, Paddington, 1972, Act Two, p. 86. Hewett’s alter ego, Sally Banner, defends her defiant honesty with the statement: ‘I walked naked through the world’, but her accusers find her guilty of not considering ‘the outraged reticence of others’.
29 Hasluck’s engagement with Hewett’s verse is evident in *The Poet in Australia*, pp. 36-37. Although repelled at first by her poem ‘Rapunzel in Suburbia’, he admits to being drawn to the ‘emotional intensity’ in ‘the experience behind the verse’.
Oral Historian

Geoffrey Bolton

It was not the least of the paradoxes of Paul Hasluck’s sufficiently paradoxical career that in his later years he was inclined to speak dismissively of oral history, having as a young man been one of its earliest and most innovative practitioners. The extent of his achievement came into the public domain, when the transcripts of twenty-six interviews taken between 1926 and 1936 were lodged in the Public Record Office of Western Australia.

These can be supplemented by an earlier collection lodged in the Battye Library in 1971 by Professor Frank Crowley, to whom Hasluck had evidently made over notes of interviews conducted in the 1930s with elderly inhabitants of Bunbury as material towards an intended biography of Sir John Forrest, a project which Hasluck laid aside during the second world war and never had the opportunity of resuming. Together they constitute valuable primary material for the social history of colonial Western Australia, as well as offering insights into the speech patterns of the first generation of native-born white Western Australians and their attitudes towards Aborigines and convicts.

Hasluck’s interest in oral history began with his appointment as honorary research secretary at the foundation of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society in 1926. As he recalled it in Mucking About: ‘Often I would be called into a conversation to be told that there was a dear old lady or a fine old man who could tell all about this and that, and I would arrange to call on them at home and would take some notes in shorthand of their reminiscences and transcribe them for our records’. The transcripts surviving in the Public Record Office collection — and, as I shall suggest later, there is reason to believe that these are not the whole of Hasluck’s oral history output — indicate that Hasluck soon went about choosing his interviewees with a certain amount of system.

Two transcripts survive from 1926. The first was with the 83-year-old William Traylen, a former mayor of Guildford most noted for his earlier career as Wesleyan minister and politician. A zealous foe of alcohol, Traylen entered politics largely because he thought that people could not be expected to abstain without a healthy supply of piped water and the maintenance of forest reserves as catchment areas. His single-mindedness earned him the nickname of ‘water on the brain’, but he had some success. But Traylen was failing, and as Hasluck noted was not always able to maintain the thread of his discourse. In fact, the interview was only just in time, as Traylen died in December 1926.

Hasluck fared better with his next interview, with James Kennedy who had accompanied the Forrests on their 1874 expedition. Perhaps Hasluck was already forming a plan to write John Forrest’s biography. But Kennedy’s main
value turned out to be his almost photographic memory of the layout of the village that was Perth in the 1860s. With his aid Hasluck was able to construct a map of what is now the central business district, indicating the location of individual shops and residences. Again he was only just in time, as Kennedy died eight months after the interview in August 1927. It would seem that this experience not only whetted Hasluck’s urge to secure the testimonies of old colonists before it was too late, but also interested him in the reconstruction of historical topography. Often interviews conducted in 1927 six were with residents of Guildford or nearby — understandably, since Hasluck’s family lived there at the time — and several of them are concerned with pin-pointing the location of houses and businesses in the 1850s and 1860s. Other themes were emerging, notably the relations between settlers and Aborigines, the convict experience, and the technology of everyday life, all of them eventually to surface in different aspects of Paul and Alexandra Hasluck’s historical writings.

By the end of 1927 Paul Hasluck’s activities were sufficiently well known to attract approaches from old colonists willing to set the record straight. In December 1927 the Bunbury South-West Times published an article based on the reminiscences of the 93-year-old Richard Gale. Gale had been Colonel John Molloy’s factotum at Fairlawn, his property at the Vasse, and was still in residence there. It is possible that he considered himself as having inherited from Molloy a sense of competition with the other leading family in the district, the Bussells. At any rate he related one or two anecdotes about John Garrett Bussell which Bussell’s surviving daughter, Mrs Josephine Prinsep, thought incorrect. At her request Hasluck travelled down to Busselton, pausing to take in an interview at Mandurah on the way, and there took down Mrs Prinsep’s recollections which corrected not only Gale, but also Professor Shann’s recently published Cattle Chosen on several points of detail. He also took the opportunity of calling at Fairlawn. Richard Gale was apparently not well enough to converse with him, but he had a lively interview with Gale’s wife Hannah, who managed at one and the same time not only to score a point against the Bussells but also to offer an interesting sidelight on ecological change. She prided herself on the arum lilies she had planted at Fairlawn: ‘The neighbours objected to them as a pest. I remember Miss Bussell paying a man sixteen shillings a day to grub out lilies. But I kept on planting. I also planted water lily seeds. That is something by which I will be remembered’. Sixteen shillings a day was high pay but anyone who travels through the Busselton district in the early springtime will see that Hannah Gale had the better of the feud. Connoisseurs of the gentry tradition in Western Australian historiography may also be interested to note that Josephine Prinsep was the only one of Hasluck’s interviewees who might be classified as colonial gentry, and she took the initiative for the interview. All Hasluck’s other informants come from the small farming, tradesman and skilled working classes. It is history from below.
After the Busselton expedition Hasluck’s interviews apparently became fewer. In October 1928 he spoke with another Guildford senior, Thomas O’Rourke, but found his yarns of outback conflict with the Aborigines rambling and unconvincing. But in December he struck gold with the 92-year-old Michael Pollard of Marradong who, as Hasluck later recalled, lived alone in a mud-walled cottage festooned with honeysuckle. Pollard had spoken with Aboriginal survivors of the battle of Pinjarra. As an eight-year-old he had run three miles to fetch help when his elder brother was murdered by the teenage Parkhurst lad, John Gavin, who thus became the first non-Aboriginal to suffer public execution in Western Australia. There is only one interview in the collection for 1929 and none for 1930. In September 1931 Hasluck went to York to interview the two oldest inhabitants, but the returns were meagre. Of Mrs Elizabeth Screaigh he wrote:

She seemed uncertain of her age ... She was unable to recall much of the early days ... Her thoughts were centred on her own grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and it was apparent that she knew of human history only as a continuing process of begetting.7

It would be another half-century before feminist historians placed value on testimony of this kind, and it is the case (though, as we shall see, not invariably), that the majority of Hasluck’s informants were males speaking of events in the public arena.

During the rest of the 1930s Hasluck conducted twelve interviews now held in the Public Record Office. Of these six comprise source material for the projected Forrest biography, four include material of Aboriginal interest and the others were apparently from individuals who had approached either Hasluck or the historical society with an offer of testimony. It would not, however, be safe to infer that Hasluck had decided to concentrate only on informants of direct relevance to his own research, since we know from Mucking About that he interviewed several more old colonists whose accounts are not among the Public Record Office’s holdings.

One such interview dating from February 1928 was published a few years later in the Journal of the Historical Society.8 Its subject, Frederick Moore, was the 89-year-old nephew of George Fletcher Moore and the interview took place at the Weld Club — possibly the first time that Hasluck had entered the portals of that distinguished institution. Other interviews now lost include Frederick Denant, who remembered meeting Thomas Carlyle in London and Eliza Chester from Albany who provided a dramatic and psychologically convincing story of the death of Sir Richard Spencer, first government resident at Albany:
As a result of some old battle wound in the head, he was given to great rages. In one of them he ‘burst a blood vessel and fell down dead.’ The cause of his rage had something to do with a quarrel with a local resident named Belches, and Mrs Chester, who had been in domestic service with the Spencers, enacted in full for me the scene when Belches called to offer sympathy and Lady Spencer rose, drew herself up like Lady Macbeth and, pointing dramatically at her husband’s corpse, cried, ‘There lies your victim. Now be gone!’

It would also appear that some of the transcripts now in the Public Record Office are incomplete. The typescript of Michael Pollard’s interview omits the moving account of John Gavin’s last moments given in Mucking About:

Michael Pollard told me the story of how the condemned youngster was driven in a one-horse dray to the place of execution. He wanted to know if it was going to hurt to be hanged and they told him it wouldn’t hurt. It wouldn’t take long. Then he started to take off the new pair of boots with which he had been fitted out for his trial. When told he need not do that, he said, “I don’t want my nice boots to be spoiled”. They were probably the first boots he ever had. And the last.19

The Hasluck transcripts offer some valuable insights into the attitudes prevalent among colonists towards such groups as convicts and Aborigines. Ted Lewington presented a graphic picture of the fear felt by some members of the community: ‘I remember the convicts being in Fremantle in chain gangs when they were running away each day. They were a bad lot and would knock you on the head as soon as look at you’. And he spoke of an attempted breakout at Fremantle prison in 1859:

They all got together once with axes and spades inside the prison and were going to break out and take Fremantle. Captain Finnerty collected all the pensioners and got them outside and then he drew the gate open for the convicts to come out, but the men saw the pensioners ready with fixed bayonets and they turned back.12

This corroborates other evidence suggesting that the residents of Fremantle lived in constant apprehension of a convict uprising, but in rural areas attitudes seem to have been much more relaxed. Consider Josephine Prinsep at Busselton: ‘We liked convicts. They were very well behaved. All our servants at Cattle Chosen were convicts ... Some of the convicts were splendid workers, particularly the Irish. They used to make splendid ditches’.13 Ellen Cooper at Mandurah showed a similar tolerance, but also reflected the working class fear of defencelessness against marauding escapees: ‘I think the average convicts were a good class of men sent out for very little. When I was a girl we used to be greatly alarmed when we heard that one of the prisoners had got out and the black trackers were after him’.14
There was a comparably wide range of opinion about the Nyoongah Aborigines. Ted Lewington once again took the hard line, but this may be because he believed that what he called a 'nigger' had snatched a baby from his mother's arms and run away, only to drop the child when shots were fired after him. More typical was the comment of Grace Blechynden of Boyadine: 'The natives used to do a bit of hut robbing but there was no particular crime and I never knew personally anything worse than taking a bit of food and knocking over a sheep occasionally. They were very useful people. When they made friends they stood true'. Mrs Prinsep told a story which illustrates the long standing of some of our less admirable Western Australian traditions:

I remember one native was tried at Fairlawin and he came over to us for relief. He had been dreadfully beaten. The police were cruel. He was bleeding and my mother told us to make him some sago or something, and we took it out and gave him the food and milk. We were little children then, and it grieved us to see poor Sambo so dreadfully beaten. He had been stealing. He is the only case I ever remember. Mr Bussell was a justice and he used to sit there sometimes. If he had anything to do with it the beating would not have been so hard.

Several informants had stories about the battle of Pinjarra in 1834, an episode of sufficient significance to members of the historical society to provide a symposium in the first issue of their journal. Ted Lewington estimated that three or four hundred Aborigines were killed. 'That civilised them', he said, adding somewhat unconvincingly: 'Only men were killed and not women and children'. But Ellen Cooper, who had talked to survivors of the incident, recalled that Winjan told her that not many were killed, and that he had saved himself by lying close to a log in the river: 'They cleared out to Lake Clifton and did nothing desperate afterwards and turned out a very honest and industrious race'. Michael Pollard did not experience the Aborigines as in any way cowed by their defeat: 'When I was a boy the blacks used to speak a lot about the Battle of Pinjarra, and those who fought used to delight in telling us what they did in the battle. There was one old rascal, Noonaar, who used to take delight in telling us that he speared Captain Ellis in the head'.

Sometimes there seems to have been a collective amnesia about racial conflict. Josephine Prinsep, born in 1849 only twenty years since her family settled at Busselton, commented: 'When I read Cattle Chosen I was surprised to see how much trouble there had been with the natives. They never talked about it during my time and we were not a bit afraid of the natives'. She remembered them as good-tempered people whose recreations included playing a form of hockey with gumnuts and sticks. In the end, according to several of Hasluck's informants, it was the measles epidemic of 1860 which completed the destruction of traditional Nyoongah society. Ralph Ashworth told Hasluck: 'As a boy once when I was coming into York I remember seeing fifteen or
sixteen blacks lying dead and their mates too weak to bury them. That was when there was an epidemic of measles. There were hundreds of blacks about before then, but that was the end of them'.

Quite apart from the intrinsic interest of their content, passages such as this comment by Ralph Ashworth give an insight into the speech rhythms and turn of phrase of colonists of the first native-born generation in the mid-nineteenth century. Consider the attempted gentility of Esther Flaherty discussing the Picton schoolmaster: ‘Unfortunately he drank a good deal and he married that wretched woman who later became Mrs Rose Hutchinson. She was an Irish emigrant girl, a very common woman. I believe Jones got married to her on a drunken spree’. Or the discourse of the clergyman’s son Edward Withers discussing the Picton miller: ‘Old William Forrest was all right when he was working. He was a good chap but when he dressed up he was right out of it. He could never look a toff or anything like that’.

The word ‘toff’ is a giveaway. Eric Partridge’s magisterial *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* dates it from the 1850s, so Withers, who was born in 1856 and arrived in Western Australia with his parents in 1863 was up-to-date with his slang. But Partridge also stamps the word ‘toff’ as ‘proletarian’. In Britain a clergyman’s son trying to distance himself socially from a working-class Scot would not have used the term.

One of Hasluck’s most picturesque interviewees was George Washington Logue, whose custom it was to be interviewed while seated on his outdoor privy, from which vantage point he could fire potshots at the parrots which infested his orchard:

> I knew Bishop Salvado well when I was with the mail from Perth to Geraldton. He had a regular monkish style with him. He would enter into a chat with you gladly and hand you a pinch of snuff every now and again. He was a proper Spaniard."

Is it fanciful to detect a hint of Logue’s Anglo-Irish Protestant origins in his turns of phrase? He was a cheerfully candid observer of the deterioration which overtook the would-be gentry of the Swan River colony in a pioneering environment. He remembered the original rector of All Saints, Upper Swan as one who had to leave the colony in disgrace after his wife died, when he took to drink and was strongly suspected of abusing his teenage daughter. The next rector, a more respectable figure, was known as ‘Crying Mitchell’ because of his doleful sermons. The founder of one noted Western Australian family who may still be found in Debrett’s *Peerage* he described as a ‘fine old fellow, but he was terribly addicted to drink and his wife could not stand him any longer and so left him with his two sons and went back to England with her daughters’.

Hasluck did not ask his informants much about their sports and recreations. Probably for the most part they were too busy making a living. James Kennedy could remember no pastime other than running around the streets. But Ted
Lewington offered one vivid picture from Fremantle in the 1850s: ‘We would toss for sides and then chase each other around the town. At each corner then we would shout “Hunt the stag!” We used to chase each other half the night and end up with the police chasing us’. But when would the small boys of colonial Fremantle have heard about stag-hunting? Adult entertainment was at times equally simple. James Sale, pilot of the *Adur*, the supply ship for the Forrests’ 1870 expedition, recalled: ‘When we went ashore to meet the explorers we used to sing a good deal around the camp fire. John Forrest used to recite standing up with his arms out, and the verse of the piece he used to recite was’:

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With thee, my bark, I'll swiftly go
Across yon foaming brine.
I care not what land thou bear'st me to
If not again to mine.
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Enough examples may now have been given of the material in the Hasluck transcripts to suggest its usefulness for the social historian of nineteenth century Western Australia. It remains a question as to why Sir Paul Hasluck in his later years turned against oral history, when as a young man he had shown not only imagination and diligence but also an obvious relish for recapturing the lost world of pioneer Western Australia. Several speculations may be offered, none of them immune from overthrow.

I begin with an autobiographical insight. Even in the early 1950s a young person who had never travelled outside Western Australia might find its scant hundred years of modern history in some respects thin and insubstantial by contrast with the older cultures of Europe and Asia. The imaginative stimulus which ancient buildings and literature might provide a young European could best be matched by the experience of conversing with elderly survivors who had been present in the formative decades of Western Australia; in this way at least one might intuit a vivid sense of touching the past. Such a stimulus might lose some of its potency with broadening experience of other societies. In Paul Hasluck’s case it may also be that growing familiarity with archival research, first in the writing of *Black Australians* and subsequently as official war historian, left him with a sense that oral history was a lowlier form of activity than the construction of academic history from printed and written sources. Certainly a historian of race relations and of the home front in wartime might have made greater use of oral history than he did.

Hasluck’s practice of oral history probably also made him aware of its limitations. It could have some usefulness as a guide to the character and motives of individuals; thus there was a marked degree of congruence in the portraits which eight or nine informants gave of the young John Forrest and his parents. Oral history might also reconstruct the ambience of a past society and
chart the attitudes of mind then prevalent. But memory could often be fallible, so that estimates of the death toll at the Battle of Pinjarra could vary from 'not very many' to three or four hundred. In such cases it was safer to stay with the contemporary written or printed record, as has been argued in our own time by Professor Patrick O'Farrell. Perhaps Hasluck was also reacting to the use made of oral history by other contemporary Western Australian writers. Thus Katharine Susannah Prichard stated in her introduction to her novel The Roaring Nineties that her book was based on several years of historical research: 'I read all the old newspapers and almost everything that has been written on the subject; but the story grew from the reminiscences of two people I have called Dinny Quin and Sally Gough'. Sally Gough is quite thinly disguised, as the novel describes her as coming from a pioneer family called the Russells of Russelton, an echo too obvious for any Western Australian to miss. Although Hasluck was not without admiration for Prichard as a writer, he could not have agreed with the radical political slant which Prichard put into The Roaring Nineties and its sequels, and he may well have felt uncomfortable with the apparent validation which oral history might be seen as giving to left-wing interpretations of the past.

All this is speculation. For whatever reasons, Paul Hasluck came to see oral history as an unsafe source for the serious historian, however great its merits at the level of the local historical society. And yet, as we have seen, this is not the last word. For how else can we describe the admirable video constructed by Nicholas and Melissa Hasluck from interviews with Sir Paul in his old age as other than a technologically advanced and altogether useful piece of oral history?

Endnotes
1 Forrest papers, Public Record Office of Western Australia, (PROWA 767A).
2 Paul Hasluck, Mucking About, Carlton, 1977, p. 43.
5 Southwest Times, 23 December 1927.
6 Hasluck transcripts, Hannah Gale, 5 February 1928, PROWA 4553A/6: 1184/3.
7 Ibid., Elizabeth Screaigh, September 1931.
9 Hasluck, Mucking About, p. 147.
10 Ibid.
11 Hasluck transcripts, Ted Lewington, 9 April 1927.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid., Josephine Prinsep, February 1928.
14 Ibid., Ellen Cooper, 28 January 1928.
15 Ibid., Grace Blechynden, 1936.
16 Ibid., Josephine Prinsep, February 1928.
18 Ted Lewington, op. cit.
19 Ellen Cooper, op. cit.
20 Ibid., Michael Pollard, December 1928.
21 Ibid., Josephine Prinsep, February 1928.
22 Ibid., Ralph Ashworth, September 1931.
23 Forrest papers, PROWA 767A.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Hasluck transcripts, George Washington Logue, 18 June 1928.
27 Ibid., Ted Lewington, 9 April 1927.
28 Ibid., James Sale, 17 August 1927.
Official Historian

Darryl McIntyre and Kay Saunders

The compilation of the official history of Australia’s participation in the second world war remains one of the largest historical projects ever undertaken in Australia. The aim of the official history was simple in its description but enormous in its complexity: to tell the story that the Australian people played in the war, both in combat and on the home front. This record was intended to be read by both service personnel and workers in the war industries. The objective was also nationalistic — to ensure that Australia’s contribution to the global war effort was not overlooked by the larger partners in a common enterprise. On completion this monumental project would comprise 22 volumes of which five were devoted to the home front. The purposes of this chapter are to examine Hasluck’s selection as writer of the two political-social volumes and his contribution to our understanding of the role of government in wartime and the impact of war upon the civilian population.

On 30 January 1943 the war cabinet appointed Gavin Long, defence correspondent with the Sydney Morning Herald, as general editor of the official history, and authorised him to prepare a provisional scheme for the history and submit a list of possible authors of each volume. Following extensive discussions with Dr Charles Bean, official historian of the first world war as well as Long’s mentor for the official history project, and to a lesser extent with the Australian War Memorial board of management and senior military officers, Long submitted his provisional scheme to the advisory war committee on 8 July 1943. Long envisaged the series comprising volumes relating specifically to the army, navy, air force and the home front, with the commencement of the war with Japan forming an appropriate division in the narrative of events. The advisory war committee agreed with Long that the home front would require detailed treatment as it was a much larger and more complex story in comparison with the first world war. In addition, the committee recognised the important role played by women in wartime, although predominantly in relation to their military service: ‘The women’s side must not be forgotten. They might want a separate volume or possibly a set of unit histories might meet the need’.

Throughout the latter part of 1943 the advisory war committee waxed and waned over the priority to be attached to the compilation of the official history. Finally the committee agreed that those volumes describing the role played by the fighting forces would have priority and that research and collation of material should begin immediately on the campaigns fought in the Middle East. However, the committee also agreed that the writing of the non-military volumes and the
selection of those writers should be deferred for the time being, although the collection of material and records for these volumes could commence.³

At the same time Long was considering potential writers and had begun to test their names with senior military officers, bureaucrats and academics. Unlike the military volumes, which would be written predominantly by journalists, Long was keen to select academics as authors of the home front volumes. This approach was also in keeping with Sir Ernest Scott's appointment under Bean. During March and April 1943 Long met with the vice-chancellors of Sydney and Melbourne universities who suggested a panel of names as well as commenting on some of the nominations. For example, Medley the vice chancellor of Melbourne University considered Brian Fitzpatrick, who had been nominated by E R Walker, to be not only gifted but also 'ultra critical', and 'it was not a libel to say that he was unreliable and drank heavily'.⁴

Long discussed these nominations, which included Syd Butlin, Richard Dowling, Douglas Copland, Ken Bailey, Fred Alexander, Max Crawford, Gordon Greenwood, Paul Hasluck and 'Nugget' Coombs, with Bean, Ben Chifley and the highly influential civil servant, Sir Frederick Shedden.³ Shedden also agreed that the political, social and economic aspects of the war should be treated in a single series rather than in a number of monographs on separate departments or administrative issues, as had been proposed by some senior bureaucrats in the economic portfolios.

During their discussions Long and Bean had devised some criteria for eliminating names from this list:

(a) left wingers who appeared to be so doctrinaire that they would be inclined to use the history to prove a political or historical theory;
[Presumably 'right wingers' were acceptable.]
(b) men who had been so closely associated with wartime administration that they would be asked to tell a story in which they found themselves to be leading actors; and
(c) men inclined to be inoffensive, even where criticism was demanded.

Bean placed the candidates in the following order, together with a brief estimate of their strengths or disadvantages:

Fred Alexander — practical and courageous;
Syd Butlin — courageous, perhaps not so practical;
Paul Hasluck — if he is a permanent public servant, he should be excluded;
W G K Duncan — no comment.⁶

Following a conversation with Syd Butlin — Bean seems to have placed considerable confidence in Butlin's opinions about the structure and potential authors of the home front volumes — the poll stood as follows: Fred Alexander,
Paul Hasluck and W G K Duncan (in that order) for the political-social volume and Syd Butlin and Trevor Swan for the economic volume.\(^7\)

Fred Alexander was an established and reputable historian, who had been absent from Australia during 1940 on a Rockefeller Travelling Fellowship. On his return to Perth in late 1940, Alexander became both director of adult education at the University of Western Australia and a major in the army in charge of the western command section of the Australian army education service. Hasluck, on the other hand, was a journalist with a special interest in social justice issues, and had completed part-time in the late 1930s a BA and a MA. His master's thesis was subsequently published as *Black Australians*, attracting critical acclaim and the attention of the then leader of the federal opposition, John Curtin. Hasluck had accepted a temporary lectureship at the University of Western Australia during Alexander's absence, following which both Curtin and Alexander were influential in setting Hasluck on a career in public administration. In 1941 Hasluck joined the department of external affairs where, during the next six years, he was in a position to both provide and gain valuable insights into the development and administration of foreign policy under Dr Evatt.

By August 1943 Bean and Long had settled on Paul Hasluck as the proposed author of the political-social volume. While the official records and Long's diaries are silent on why Hasluck was finally chosen, it was most likely because Hasluck had gained a solid reputation built on his historical writings and academic work, his career as a journalist which would have appealed to both Bean and Long, and his work as a public servant which provided an understanding of the machinery of federal government and domestic political events. Following soundings with bureaucrats, Long was confident that Hasluck, who was employed on a temporary contract with the department of external affairs, would leave the public service after the war.

On 27 August 1943 Long asked Hasluck if he would be willing to have his name submitted as the writer of the political and social developments volume, with each volume to be of 500 pages for a fee of £1500 per volume. Hasluck accepted the invitation in a formal response, much in keeping with his style. In December 1943 Long learnt that the advisory war committee had decided not to proceed with the formal selection of the writers for the home front volumes, nor, incidentally, with the appointment of Gill as naval historian, although the collection of material could continue. This decision contradicted previous decisions that, although the histories would be written after the war, the writers would be chosen now so that they might spend their spare time preparing for their future work. While Long must have found this decision disappointing, it did not deter him from continuing to lobby members of the 'history committee' of the advisory war committee such as Menzies and Evatt. Menzies questioned Long in private whether Hasluck, 'holding a junior post', was in a position to write about the policies of a government which employed him; but Long was able to convince
Menzies that Hasluck would not be writing the history as a member of the external affairs department. Evatt was and remained ‘hesitant’ about Hasluck’s appointment. In Long’s view this was because Evatt was reluctant to lose Hasluck from his department prematurely.

It was not until 20 November 1944 that Long was able to advise Hasluck that the advisory war committee had agreed to his appointment on the condition that he would not be employed by the public service when he undertook the work. Hasluck advised Long two days later of his acceptance of the commission. It was Long’s view that the writers should commence to write their volumes about twelve to eighteen months after the war’s conclusion when the documents would have been assembled and, in the case of the home front volumes, would allow the historians to write more frankly than might have been possible during the concluding stages of the war or immediately at the war’s end. In the interim, as part of a broader agenda to establish a federal archival authority, government departments were urged to compile departmental histories and to retain their records.

Following the appointment of the authors of the home front volumes, Long met regularly with Hasluck and Butlin to delineate the themes and issues between the political-social and economic volumes as well as sources, both documentary and interviews. Hasluck found these discussions rather tedious. However, he had little, if any, opportunity to commence detailed research or even to identify sources of information as his work as head of the post-hostilities division of the external affairs department consumed all his time. In April 1945 Hasluck became a member of the Australian delegation to the San Francisco conference which would lead to the creation of the United Nations Organisation. In 1946 he returned to Australia briefly before taking up an appointment in New York as counsellor of the Australian mission at the United Nations, a post he held until April 1947 when in an increasingly acrimonious relationship with Evatt and Dr John Burton, recently appointed as secretary of external affairs, he returned to Australia. Hasluck formally resigned from the department in August 1947.

Hasluck was now able to work full time in Perth on the official history. In March 1948 he accepted a fellowship, as reader, in historical research at the University of Western Australia which allowed him to work only half-time on the history. During occasional visits to Canberra, Hasluck and Long discussed at length the structure and content of the volumes and the perennial problem of meeting the completion deadline.

In early August 1948 Long learnt that Hasluck had been approached to stand for the Liberal Party in the forthcoming federal elections. Hasluck had to decide whether to resign from his official history commission or attempt to complete it before the staging of the elections; he chose to continue with the project. By September 1948, after spending many days in Canberra and Melbourne undertaking research, he had written about 60,000 words on the
period to 1939. By early December 1948, in an enormous burst of productivity, Hasluck had written five chapters of the first volume — longer than he would have wished — and Long was pleased with the style and content. Hasluck continued to work apace. By late January 1949, following the formal announcement of his candidature, he had completed the story to the end of 1941, which amounted effectively to the completion of the first volume.

Working largely in isolation in Perth, Hasluck regularly corresponded with Long about the interpretation of military events in the Middle East and Syria and their impact on domestic politics during 1940-41 as well as the state of Australia’s war readiness in late 1941. Both Hasluck’s manuscript and Long’s draft text for the military volumes influenced each other’s interpretation and description of events and, just as Hasluck and Butlin had to define boundaries, so too did Long and Hasluck on civil-military relationships.

Elected to parliament in December 1949, the immediate issue confronting Hasluck was his contract as an official historian. Hasluck agreed to have his contract terminated by mutual consent and to complete the work without further payment. Evatt, however, viewed Hasluck as a ‘political partisan’ and was displeased that he had been allowed to continue with writing the official history. On 30 September 1949 Evatt requested Long’s presence and denounced Hasluck in extravagant style:

He criticised Hasluck for ‘violently and viciously’ attacking the Government — how could he be attacking the Government in these terms on 1 October [1949] and become an impartial historian on 1 January [1950]. What did Hasluck know of the big crises, eg return of the AIF and Evatt’s fights in Washington for more aircraft etc. I [Long] said by threading the documents and filling in with interviews; no one had asked him [Evatt] for anything. I [Long] at several times said I regarded Hasluck as a detached historian.

Evatt made no similar comments about other official historians who on the one hand were active members of the Labor Party, such as Douglas Gillison, or alternatively had on occasion in the post war period been publicly critical of some decisions of the Labor government.

By late January 1951 Hasluck had completed the first volume of the history. The manuscript was read by former Labor ministers Holloway and Cameron, senior bureaucrats such as Dr Roland Wilson, Sir Frederick Shedden, as well as some chapters by Dr Lloyd Ross, Professor Fin Crisp and Trevor Swan. Hasluck felt relatively confident that he had dealt adequately with military questions and the state of public opinion during wartime. The other major issue was Hasluck’s treatment of Labor viewpoints:

I have been very careful over the Labour material, avoiding personal comment and watching even the verbs and adjectives lest I give offence to a sensitive tribe. The
Labour people to whom I showed the original draft [unnamed] said, in effect, 'It's all quite true, but don't rub it in.' In considering this section, however, I think we should remember that at the present time, 1951, we are reading the manuscript under rather exceptional conditions of patriotic excitement... The only way of being truly 'fair to the Labour Party' is to state the truth, so long as it is stated, neither with apology nor implied condemnation, in a way that fairly represents the circumstances at the time when the original statements were made. I regard this Labour material as essential to an understanding of (a) Australian opinion and the political scene and (b) to the actions of the Labour Party and of Curtin when in Opposition and when in Government. Unless it is known, many public and political actions will be wrongly judged.

Following preparation of the manuscript for the printer, *The Government and the People 1939-1941* was published in 1952. While it was well received in the popular media, Arthur Calwell, then acting opposition leader, criticised Hasluck's volume as 'more fictional than factual', designed to clear Menzies and Fadden of blame for failure to prepare Australia against the Japanese threat of war. Calwell was also critical of Hasluck continuing his commission as an official historian while a member of parliament. Gavin Long responded vigorously to these criticisms.

Hasluck was able to draw on his extensive experience with writing contemporary history in a paper which he presented to the ANZAAS conference in Brisbane in May 1951. His focus was exclusively the official records he had used in writing the first and second volumes, in which he viewed cabinet records and Hansard as answering his 'what, who and where' questions and departmental records providing the answers to 'how and why' questions. He emphasised the value of departmental records as a vital source of contemporary history and made a strong plea for enhancing the powers of the Australian Archives Office. Hasluck also questioned whether official records not only told the complete story but also whether they did so accurately. It was his experience that occasionally public servants preferred to maintain an inoffensive file and destroy those records likely to cause embarrassment. Laudable as Hasluck's plea was for the establishment of a strong and effective archival authority, his paper failed to provide any insights into the strengths and values of official government records as an important primary source in understanding the dynamics of the government and the impact of wartime events and conditions on the civilian population.

Much of the 1950s was spent on completing the manuscript of the second volume. Hasluck's ministerial and parliamentary duties severely limited the amount of time he could devote to drafting and revising the text. There was an expectation by both Hasluck and Long that the volume would be completed by December 1960; however, production was not as fast as anticipated. In November 1960 Long confided in his diary that the first half of the volume was
Hasluck’s own work, whereas the second half contained some of Long’s own work but the vast majority of the research and text had been completed by Joyce Fisher, Butlin’s dedicated research assistant, who was borrowed for extended periods to work on the Hasluck volume. Joyce Fisher wrote draft narratives of various elements of chapters and appendices, such as the Australia First movement, which were sent to Hasluck whose job was to edit, re-write supplements and ask for more research. He could only undertake these tasks during parliamentary recess or while on sea voyages to the Indian Ocean territories as part of his ministerial duties. Both Long and Fisher became increasingly frustrated by the slow progress and the difficulties of extracting material from Hasluck — some draft chapters of volume two remained with Hasluck for revision for almost 12 months.

The relationship between general editor and official historian was not always a smooth one. Long became vexed with Hasluck who ‘seems to be taken up with the idea that he has a mission to pass those moral judgements on the Government in 1942. I told him [at a dinner in late October 1961] that as time went on I became more unimpressed by the value of the moral judgements that a historian might sprinkle through his story; it was the story that mattered’.

Long had also by late 1961 read the draft manuscript and with some reduction and tidying up, ‘it is as you [Fisher] say an adequate record. It gives the 4,430 purchasers of the first volume what they have been waiting for so long. I’d be happy if the author were to write a few pages of peroration and leave the rest to us’. Despite these occasional examples of vexation, Long and Hasluck enjoyed on balance an amicable working relationship and shared mutual respect for other’s scholarship.

Although the entire text of volume two had been completed in draft form with the exception of an epilogue and the ‘social’ chapter by mid 1963 when Gavin Long retired as general editor, the text was still subject to editorial revision until 1969. The Government and the People 1942-1945 was published in 1970.

Hasluck’s two volumes consist of 1415 pages encompassing approximately one million words. To place this prodigious effort in its proper context, this would represent today ten to twelve standard volumes as most history texts are around 80-100,000 words. Manning Clark’s impressive six volume series, A History of Australia, which charts the development of European civilisation and society in this continent from the late seventeenth century until 1935, comprises some 1900 pages and in terms of word length is shorter than The Government and the People. A more appropriate comparison might be made with The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18, overseen by the official historian and principal author, Charles Bean. In this series of eleven historical and operational texts, published between 1924 and 1942, only one volume was devoted to the home front. The author of Australia During the
Great War (published in 1936), Sir Ernest Scott, believed that the war was uniquely formative in the development of modern Australia. Scott’s volume is an impressive account that has its raison d’être the imperative to contextualise Australia’s commitment to a European war. Scott charted Australia’s political, economic and constitutional developments as well as Australia’s role in the post war world, the impact of the two conscription referenda, the formation of the AIF and military policy. However, his achievement has been overshadowed by the detailed analysis of and popular accolade accorded to Bean’s writings, especially as the ideologue of the concept of nationhood forged in the crucible of Gallipoli. With 25 April being commemorated as Australia’s sacred national day, its most influential exponent has assumed a place in Australian life that few intellectuals have rivalled.

In one sense this emphasis on the writings of Bean have obscured the intrinsic merit of the work of other official war historians. Gavin Long, the general editor of the series, Australia in the War of 1939-1945, awaits the equivalent of Ken Inglis to resuscitate his reputation and present the scale and breadth of his achievements to a new audience.

Australia during the War and The Government and the People have many structural similarities. Both attempted to chart a broad course that encompassed detailed analyses of the relationship of the war zone to the home front, national and international political factors, constitutional changes, biographical portraits of the major players, both political and military, as well as defence policies and strategies. Hasluck’s two volumes have far less emphasis upon trade, fiscal management and economic policies and initiatives; these themes are analysed in Butlin’s magisterial War Economy (two volumes).

Again Scott, a passionate advocate of the League of Nations and international obligations to manage national rivalries, devoted considerable space to post war development in book IV, ‘The Coming of Peace’, which examined Australia’s role in the peace conference, the Treaty of Versailles as well as the internal issue of repatriation. Hasluck, on the other hand, deliberately avoided examining the consequences of the second world war:

Working throughout on material that had been assembled and arranged before 1951, I have tried to avoid writing into my earlier drafts the experiences of later years. After deliberation I rejected any changes that altered the emphasis or the relative importance of the matters selected for attention by me when writing the first volume. I also refrained from a reassessment of the chief actors in the light of opinions formed about them in subsequent political developments and I tried to see their actions, as I saw them in 1949, in the context of the wartime events I had studied.... On reflection, I do not think that truth has suffered from this self-discipline although it might be that I should have enlivened the narrative with stronger judgements than I chose to make twenty years ago.
This lengthy prologue represents an important testimony to Hasluck's purpose and intent. Several points warrant scrutiny. First, it should be emphasised that Hasluck was quite literally writing contemporary history. His experience as a journalist, public servant and academic prepared him well for this task. His long experience as a journalist gave him the discipline to produce massive quantities of high level commentary; his secondment to the civil service provided him with an understanding of the machinery of government as well as insights into dynamics of international diplomacy and key participants; and his years as a university teacher stimulated his talents as a critical thinker and shrewd analyst. The Government and the People, however, largely depended on his academic training and skills; both volumes do not primarily constitute reportage or narrative but well researched analysis demonstrating depth of understanding and breadth of vision.

Hasluck was given full and unrestricted access to war cabinet papers as well as top secret documents, including cablegrams and more routine files. Thus, Hasluck was able to explore the complexity of issues he analysed without the limitations of reliance upon newspaper reports which were, as he painstakingly alludes to in his text, highly censored or to personal observations albeit aided by judicious interviews with prominent players. In his preface to volume one Hasluck states that some departmental records were not well-maintained and, in the absence of a national archival authorities or the research facilities of the Australian War Memorial both of which came into existence after his most significant endeavours, there may be omissions. On the broader subject of censorship vis-a-vis the two volumes Hasluck is adamant that he was a free agent. He concluded:

No direction was at any time given to the writer as to what he should put or leave out, nor was he required to submit to anyone except the General Editor of the Official History, Mr GM Long. The only restraints were those which both the General Editor and the writer imposed on themselves by their sense of what was fitting. In the case of the writer this resulted chiefly in restraint in expressing his personal judgements on political events and charity towards the actors.

There seems to be little doubt that Hasluck's whole professional demeanour was honourable and assiduous. His career as a diplomat under Evatt would have honed his skills of interpersonal tact, discretion and sense of appropriateness. This professional undertaking also cemented friendships with a wide variety of crucial bureaucratic mandarins, such as Sir Frederick Wheeler, Sir Arthur Tange, Dr 'Nugget' Coombs and Sir Roland Wilson, who were influential in shaping post-war Australia.

Rather blandly in the preface to the first volume he declared a 'number of those prominently associated with the events described assisted the writer by their private discussions of particular events'. Surprisingly Hasluck did not
interview the major players from each party such as Menzies, McEwen, Chifley, Evatt or Forde. Rather he sought comment from Eddie Holloway, minister for social services, minister for health and minister assisting the minister for munitions in the first Curtin administration and minister for labour and national service in the second administration, as well as Archie Cameron, minister for commerce and minister for the navy in the March-October 1940 Menzies administration. Perhaps junior ministers, Hasluck surmised, may have had a detachment that the senior ministers might have lacked and, however subtly, attempt to influence the interpretation of events to highlight and reinforce their particular viewpoints.

Perhaps the central figure was Sir Frederick Shedden, secretary of the department of defence and secretary to the war cabinet. Hasluck stated that:

The War Cabinet Secretariat which developed under the direction of Mr Shedden became one of the most efficient instrumentalities in the whole of the Commonwealth Public Service and its system of minutes with supporting agenda and documents provided a notable aid to administration at the heart of government. The efficiency of the secretariat may be counted among the major reasons for the rapid growth of the importance of the War Cabinet during the first six months of its existence.20

Shedden provided the continuity in high policy and direction throughout the entire war, serving Menzies, Fadden, Curtin and Chifley with equal professionalism and dedication. Hasluck mentions, surprisingly as a brief aside, that Shedden was the broker between meetings of Curtin and MacArthur.21

Hasluck's even-handedness can be best observed with his appraisals of the major actors. On reading both volumes any reader would be hard pressed to identify Hasluck's own political and ideological beliefs. In preparatory notes for volume two, written in 1959, Hasluck recognised the problems associated with evaluating Curtin's career:

It will be necessary because of the fact of his death [in July 1945 before the war with Japan was finished] to evaluate his career and his work as a war leader even although that would not have been necessary in the same manner if he had survived the war. It is difficult at the present time to see exactly the way in which Mr Curtin's death and the not very important events which followed his death, can be fitted into the book, but I imagine it will have to come in this final chapter. My own disposition is to give full value to whatever merit John Curtin had but to avoid the overdramatising his death. His death was fortuitous and accidental, it was not an event of war even though the strains of war may have contributed to it. I feel that it is likely to falsify history if we make Curtin's death a sort of hero's funeral pyre just on the eve of victory. Rather the tone was that of a tired-out man — almost a distraught man — who laboured against many difficulties as best he could and died without knowing whether the events would be good or bad. This will need extremely careful handling.22
In the published text, Hasluck assessed Curtin in the following terms:

Curtin’s chief political problems at home were in his own party, both in his parliamentary caucus and in the Australian Labour Party. One of his greatest achievements was the way he carried his party with him.... Curtin would have regarded what he did for the Labour Party and with the Labour Party as his triumph. But though he triumphed, the Labour Party helped break him. The criticism, sometimes bitter, by his own parliamentary caucus was not just a political fight but a family wound.... His own dedication was complete.... A wholly committed man who had given everything he could and who had done much good for the nation became one of the most tragic casualties of the war.23

Hasluck had less to say about Menzies but this may be due to the circumstances each faced.

While facing the fact that neither Menzies nor Curtin became the dynamic, inspiring and fully-trusted leader of a nation at war, a proper tribute should be paid to what both of them did in the organising and direction of the Australian war effort. Any comparison between them would be out of place for they faced different tasks in widely different circumstances, the one before Japan attacked and the other after, the one when combat was chiefly in Europe and the Middle East and the other when it was global; the one when Australia was still waking up and the other when the nation was fully aroused.24

In addition to a superb narrative account of major domestic political events which exercised the minds of successive governments, Hasluck explored many major and important themes such as federal-state relationships, the defence of Australia, higher defence policy and the changing strategic outlook, international affairs, a balanced war effort, and manpower. One of Hasluck’s primary themes was the administrative revolution wrought by the second world war.

However, some controversial issues were quarantined outside the main narrative. An analysis of internment policy and procedures would have confirmed some of his contentions about the expansion of the state’s apparatus deployed merely to operate within the unprecedented period of adjustment. It would have demonstrated amply how authority was divided between the attorney general’s department and the army at the federal level and aided by the civil policy at the state level.

The second adverse effect was that Hasluck sanitised his account. Other controversial subjects such as the ‘Brisbane line’ episode, the banning of the Communist Party, wartime industrial disputes and treatment of conscientious objectors were all relegated to appendices. Though Hasluck by no means contended that the second world war in Australia was a period distinguished by unanimity and social cohesion, by removing the discussion on aliens and dissidents from the mainstream text, he marginalised processes which ironically
bore witness to his key proposition. Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter to analyse Hasluck’s historiographical legacy, it should be noted that later scholars have been fascinated primarily by questions confined to his appendices.

The final issue relates to the title The Government and the People. Hasluck and his diligent research assistant, Nancy Penman, collected an extraordinary range of primary material, both documentary and oral testimony, on social conditions during the war. Yet Hasluck expressed considerable reluctance to describe these conditions:

It has been thought that something should be written on the effect of the wartime experience on Australian social life, on health, education, social habit, living conditions, the family transfers of population, child welfare, any consequent problems of delinquency and so on. Two difficulties were encountered. One was finding verifiable evidence. Many of those changes which might be measurable had not apparently been measured but were still matters for original investigation and record. The other was my own lack of experience. It was recognised that the evaluation of such material as might be gathered would call for training in a sociological discipline different from that of the historian. 

In a meeting with Gavin Long during May 1948 Hasluck raised for the first time his reluctance to analyse and describe domestic wartime social conditions. Long summarised Hasluck’s reasons as: ‘[he] feels incompetent to do it; not his bent; should be done by another; some combination of novelist and historian but has no one in mind. I let this be talked out. He can do it as well as anyone else whom we can judge on actual performance’. 

By the time the draft text had been completed, Long was convinced that the ‘social’ story was adequately told throughout the book. However, on close reading of both volumes there is very little analysis of the effect of the war on the Australian people. This is not altogether surprising. Hasluck’s primary documentary sources came from federal departments which dealt largely with policy formulation and its administrative implementation rather than upon particular effects upon the populace. Much of this latter issue would have been recorded in state government records owing to the delegation of powers laid down in the commonwealth constitution.

In addition, Hasluck would most likely have been at a loss of how to explain sexual promiscuity, the impact of venereal diseases, alcohol abuse, the sexual attractions of American servicemen to many Australian women, and black marketing and many other ‘social conditions’ that would have been necessary to analyse if his usual thoroughness was pursued both thematically and spatially in his narrative. If communists and enemy aliens were quarantined, how could he maintain his view of Australia at war if he included those other complex social issues in the mainstream text. He concluded in his epilogue: ‘There
were many grisly stories current in wartime of the social evils. On this the historian encounters more opinions than facts. Perhaps some other writer studying the post-war development of Australia on the social side will be able to trace the origin of trends both good and bad to the happenings of the war years. Contemporary reviewers such as Inglis Moore in an extended critique remarked:

It is possible that some more even balance might have been struck between the story of the Government and the story of the people, that the course of the ship of war might have been seen in a little more from the deck and the fo’castle at the expense of seeing it so completely from the bridge, even if Mr Hasluck had necessarily, by the nature of his assignment, to see through the eyes of the Captain rather than the crew.

Hasluck wrote his analysis long before the emergence of social history as a separate genre and, from his whig perspective, these ‘social evils’ bespoke only of heedless pleasure, irresponsibility and individual indulgence. The development of social history as a discipline in the late 1960s provided historians with the theoretical, methodological and historiographical tools to enable them to analyse social structures in flux as well as individual actions. Furthermore, the influence of psychohistory, feminist analysis and race relations theory gave historians added conceptual frameworks that were totally unavailable to Hasluck. Hasluck had neither the intellectual framework nor the personal understanding of the irrational and the carnal to be able to tackle social conditions as part of his framework. In the final estimation, Hasluck was always more comfortable as a historian in the realms of ‘high policy’ and lofty ambitions than in the hedonism of ‘live for today for tomorrow we die’ morality that pervaded so many of Australia’s youth during the war years.

Hasluck’s monumental history provides a superb chronicle and analysis of wartime political events and administration. The complex problem of organisation of source material was handled with great skill and the main thread of the story was never submerged in detail. On balance, Hasluck demonstrated a detachment from an understanding of the underlying currents of Australian politics in his assessment of the role and performance of the national government and the effect of total war on political institutions. Hasluck’s volumes have stood well the test of time because his patient and adroit scholarship produced the solid foundation on which all subsequent studies of the Australia’s political and social developments during the second world war have built.

Endnotes

1 War Cabinet [WC] Minute 2599, 30 January 1943, Australian Archives [AA], A5954/1, item 739. Long’s appointment was announced on 15 February 1943.
2 Advisory War Committee [AWC] Minute 1219, 8 July 1943, AA, A5954/1, item 739/2; Gavin Long Diary, 4 March 1943, AWM 67/1, item 1/1.
3 AWC Minute 1264, 25 November 1943, AA, A5954/1, item 739/2.
4 Gavin Long Diary, 27 March 1943, AWM 67, item 1/1.
5 Gavin Long Diary, 21 April 1943, AWM 67, item 1/1.
6 Ibid.
7 Gavin Long Diary, 24 June 1943, AWM 67, item 1/2.
8 Gavin Long Diary, 30 September 1949, AWM 67, item 1/12.
9 Letter, P Hasluck to G Long, 30 January 1951, AWM 93, item 50/9/3/9/1-A.
10 Letter, G Long to J Fisher, 16 November 1961, AWM 93, item 50/93/3/9/2A.
11 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
22 Memorandum, Hasluck to J Fisher (copy to G Long), 30 April 1959, pp. 9-10 of notes on chapters. AWM 93, file 50/9/3/9/2A
24 Ibid., p. 633.
25 Ibid., p. x. See also letter, P Hasluck to G Long, 19 September 1949, AWM file 50/9/3/9/1A in which he outlines a wish to describe a 'picture of what people actually did during 1942, particularly in Queensland, Northern Territory and northern Western Australia, and as no one seems to have recorded it we can probably only get it by finding the right people, talking to them and taking down their stories from their lips'.
26 Gavin Long Diary, 5 May 1948, AWM 67, item 1/12.
27 Letter, G Long to P Hasluck, 19 September 1961, AWM 93, file 50/9/3/9/2A.
28 This was also noted at the time by reviewers such as T Inglis Moore, ‘Australia at War — the Political Story’, *Australian Outlook*, March 1954, pp. 32-4.
30 Inglis Moore, ‘Australia at War’, p. 34.
The 'Civic Personality' and the Public Intellectual

Stuart Macintyre

You will all have observed in your own discipline or professions the dire fate of the scientist who becomes a populariser of science; the historian who becomes a broadcaster; the philosopher who gives armchair chats; the doctor who writes articles about a newly-discovered disease so effectively that within a week half the population are sure they have it. It is the same dire fate of the politician who by necessity or by natural disposition becomes a salesman of politics. His errors and temptations both grow.

This admonition is contained in a public lecture delivered by Paul Hasluck in 1958 about the difficulty of telling the truth in a democracy. The lecture traverses a number of his recurrent complaints — the slipshod handling of evidence by those responsible for 'making communications to the people', the willingness of 'a careless and neglectful people' to take such communications on trust; the propagation by irresponsible Australian writers of the myth of the class war and the consequent debasement of political argument; the decline of journalistic standards, the decay of language; the preference for the momentary, the trivial and the sensational over what has 'enduring reality', and the neglect of those 'who are styled intellectuals' to balance rights with responsibilities. Throughout the catalogue the emphasis is on decline, from the individual to the collective, from older standards of reason and duty to impulse and gratification. This is a conservative lament over a Gresham's law of public life in which the false displaces the true and the flatterer triumphs over the man of serious purpose.

In this sense Hasluck's lecture might be seen as anticipating by fully ten years his own failure to secure the leadership of his party after the retirement of Sir Robert Menzies and the death of Harold Holt. By that time the tendencies he had discerned were rampant and Hasluck's aversion to the television camera contrasted with Gorton's cultivation of the media, just as his reluctance to lobby support among parliamentary colleagues set him apart from the telephonic McMahon. We have also his retrospective judgement: 'in the political paddock I was handicapped by being more interested in the processes of government than in political controversy. I gave more intention to practice than to disputation or debate. I was a diligent practitioner of government but an indifferent politician'.

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Here the criticism is cast as self-criticism. Though Hasluck served as a federal parliamentarian for two decades and held ministerial office for all but two of them, he regarded himself as lacking qualities vital to success in that calling.

His criticism of the failure of Australian intellectuals, on the other hand, contains no such note of self-reproach. Both in the 1958 public lecture and in various addresses during and after his term as governor general, he had trenchant things to say about intellectuals and intellectual institutions. An address delivered at the University of Queensland in 1973, ‘On Learning’, is gloomy in its description of the pollution of academic life. His lecture in 1986 to the Academy of the Social Sciences, from which I quoted earlier, is politely sceptical of the proposition that the academicians had invited him to consider, which was how the social scientist could contribute to public policy. He spoke as a fellow of long standing yet declared he was not sure if he was any better qualified as a social scientist than as a politician: ‘I have scratched the ground in both paddocks without reaping a full harvest from either of them ... In the academic paddock I never really had a good chance to discover my gifts or reveal my shortcomings’. Furthermore, even if he had tilled the latter field with more application, he was not at all sure he would have been a social scientist, for that seemed to him an hubristic designation of certain kinds of technical skills that were by no means necessarily conducive to good government. Hence his modification of the theme of the symposium, the role of the social scientist as a policy advisor, in the formulation of his own lecture which was entitled ‘The Social Scientist in a Democracy’.

Hasluck’s own academic career was brief. He served as temporary lecturer in history at the University of Western Australia during 1939, while Fred Alexander was in the United States. He took up a position as reader in the same department after resigning from the department of external affairs at the end of 1947 and was sounded out for chairs in history and political science in the eastern states but instead returned to Canberra as a parliamentarian at the end of 1949. As he relates this final choice of career in his memoirs, there are two versions of how it came about. This first is his wife’s, that upon his resignation from the post of head of the Australian mission to the United Nations at the end of 1947, Adlai Stevenson said he should do so and she agreed — and prevailed. The second is that he was approached by the state secretary of the Liberal Party and yielded out of fancy. In either version, the decision was fateful. He took to politics as another field for his congenital habit of mucking about only to discover that his days of mucking about were over: ‘From that point onward my life ceased to be my own. I was unable to do many things I would have liked to do and was required to do many things I had no personal interest in doing. Duty took charge. Mucking about ceased to be a way of life’. Mucking about is, of course, the motif of Hasluck’s autobiography,
once a source of pleasure and of guilt. His apparent aimlessness was tempered by strong evangelical conscience, so that although his inclination and happiness was to muck about he found himself working hard at tasks for which he had little inclination and in which he found little happiness. Furthermore, his strict religious childhood left him prey to introspection. 'For a man of affairs', he writes, 'I was too introspective to be a success'.

Hasluck, then, was critical of both politicians and intellectuals for their deficiencies in civic virtue. Yet while he judged himself lacking in the qualities needed for political success, he was troubled by no such self-doubt about his intellectual capacity. Nor should he have been. His publications include an accomplished early history of Aboriginal administrative history, the two impressively orchestrated volumes of the official war history, a trio of reflective works on his experience as a diplomat and the ministerial responsibilities for Papua New Guinea and Aboriginal affairs, as well as journal articles, verse, literary criticism and occasional pieces on public affairs. The scholarly books and articles alone would put many a professor to shame. But this way of calibrating his productivity, faithful as it is to the present procedures of the accountable academy, makes him into something he was not. He was not an academic: he was an intellectual in politics and his writings brought a particular kind of political intelligence to bear on their subjects.

Hasluck’s formal educational experience can be stated briefly. Perth Modern School from 1918 to 1922; a diploma of journalism through university extension study from 1928 to 1929, followed by a BA and then MA by thesis. The diploma and the degrees were all undertaken while Hasluck worked as a journalist, a career he had chosen upon completion of his secondary education for both financial and temperamental reasons. As he put it, ‘A newspaper office changed my life by giving me an experience and an opportunity for self-education of a kind that I would not have found anywhere else’. Journalism inculcated skills of diligence, accuracy, syntax, judgement; it provided a ‘crash course of education in the ways of the world’; it stimulated his interest and augmented his confidence. He became a young man about town, taking full advantage of the amenities of an isolated, cohesive, self-sufficient provincial metropolis — the close, organic community that is described in the opening pages of Geoffrey Bolton’s history of the depression in Western Australia, A Fine Country to Starve In (1972).

Hasluck’s account of how he resumed formal study in his mid-twenties constitutes the third and least developed part of a chapter entitled ‘Widening Interest’, which consists largely of accounts of how he became interested in history and theatre. His involvement in the Western Australian Historical Society both strengthened his attachment to the past and fostered the research skills he would apply to his university studies. Across Australia in the early decades of the twentieth century, these state historical societies formed a junction between
the antiquarian and the academic, affirming the nostalgic conservatism of the old settlers while providing the professor with a platform for original research. Thus Hasluck collaborated with Edward Shann on local history, while Fred Alexander taught him the mixture of British, European and imperial history, political institutions and international relations that made up the history curriculum at that time. His studies were directed both outwards to the wider world, augmented by his honeymoon wanderyear to England and Geneva in 1932, and inwards to the history and circumstances of the original inhabitants of the Western Australia, informed by his involvement in the Australian Aborigines Amelioration Association (AAAA) and coverage of the Western Australian Royal Commission into Aboriginal Administration that was established in part because of his journalistic activity.

It is here, I think, in the application of a critical and humane intelligence to practical engagement in public affairs that Hasluck’s notion of the public intellectual is exemplified. We catch its social and cultural assumptions in the way he suggests how in the 1930s his generation of younger, travelled Australians brought a new way of thinking and living into a limited urban circle. They prefigured ‘a more highly civilised Australian community with good manners and high ideals, minds well furnished with literary allusions, having a cultivated interest in music and the theatre and being able to relax over a pleasantly chilled bottle of wine and some fish cooked perfectly but simply’. This is a civilising mission that seeks to reform and elevate; it is affirmative and hopeful, not rancorous and radical.

Similarly, his recruitment into the department of external affairs in 1941 illustrates the informal networks that linked the university to government. As at Melbourne, where Shann and Alexander had studied, the University of Western Australia grouped history, politics and economics into a curriculum marked by strong emphasis on the application of learning to contemporary affairs. In the east, extramural organisations such as the Institute of International Affairs and the Institute of Pacific Relations served as a nursery for the bright young interwar graduates who were recruited into the diplomatic corps when the commonwealth belatedly realised it could no longer depend on imperial diplomacy. There was no branch of the Institute of International Affairs or Institute of Pacific Relations in Perth before the war, and Hasluck seemed not to have been attracted to its nearest equivalent, the more popular and progressive League of Nations Union; his own participation in a League of Nations summer school in Geneva in 1932 was not conducive to such enthusiasms. It is noticeable also that it was John Curtin rather than Fred Alexander who pulled the strings for his recruitment. Even so, there is a clear continuity from the content of his university studies and the skills of weighing, interpreting and contextualising evidence those studies fostered, to their application in public life.
From him and from colleagues we have accounts of the qualities that made him such a successful diplomat — his industry, stamina and thoroughness; the scrupulous attention to accuracy, with every detail checked and every contingency covered; the insistence on logical precision and consistency; the courtesy and patience. These same sources also record his growing impatience with his minister and the senior officers of his department and perhaps something more. Granted, he was ill used, but then more recent ministers for foreign affairs than Dr Evatt have used their officers roughly. As I read the evidence, Hasluck experienced acute temperamental difficulty in the self-effacement that was required of him.

I am struck also by his own reputation in his ministerial dealings with senior administrators as an impatient, exacting taskmaster: ‘My criticisms are always made against a standard of perfection’, he wrote in an effort to soften one rebuke. Indeed, as I read of his direction of the department of territories — the constant invigilation of subordinates, the prodigious reading of files, the reluctance to delegate and the readiness to criticise, the testiness, the impersonality and the caustic rebukes — I was reminded of the heroic autocracy of Governor Arthur, the governor of Van Diemen’s Land as he drove the panoptical regiment described before Foucault by another historian-turned-diplomat, W D Forsyth. Both Arthur and Hasluck were men of high principle and stern paternalism. ‘We should remember that paternalism in its true nature is good,’ Hasluck insisted.

Any reader of A Time for Building (1976) will appreciate the frustrations of serving in a political backwater, enduring the constant frustrations of his lowly portfolio in the absence of ministerial support and yet persisting in his singular mission, always with the knowledge that it was at the expense of his career. Such zealotry is conducive neither to popularity nor political success. In his story of the parliamentary buffoons who interrupted his presentation to the House of Representatives of a campaign to overcome the health problem of yaws with the repartee ‘What’s yours?’, ‘Make mine a schooner’, we catch Hasluck’s aloof disdain for:

the chosen and elect in Canberra — fat and pink men who stared daily into bathroom mirrors as they dabbed their smooth, self-satisfied proletarian cheeks with after-shave lotion as advertised in every Women’s Weekly.

There is also his aversion to theory, a recurrent theme of the memoirs. Against the schemes for social justice he sets the blind Australia-sick old man living in a London slum basement he befriended in 1932, as a touchstone of obstinate human reality. Later he explains why his responsiveness to human suffering did not lead him to ideology:
Political theory did not seem to be immediately relevant to hunger or sickness or distress and these conditions seemed to rise more from human frailty, human selfishness, administrative neglect or administrative arrogance than from any flaws in political doctrine. I never saw solutions in the overthrow of a system or the winning of a general election but rather in persuading citizens, officials and parliamentarians to be more considerate and more attentive.

Good policy for him was good administration.

What then was the role of the intellectual in public life? The 1958 address on 'Telling the Truth in a Democracy', with which I began this chapter, concluded with the proposition that truth was the basis of trust and that the 'disease which can eat out the vitals of democracy is the mutual distrust of governors and governed'. Nearly thirty years later, the lecture to the Academy of the Social Sciences shifted the emphasis. The social scientists who wished to influence public policy had 'renounced any academic vows of intellectual celibacy'; they wished to be worldly, influential, 'intelligently potent'. But in serving as advisors to those whose main aim was to remain in office, were they not 'joining in the task of fooling the people'? Hasluck suggested that 'the dwindling faith in democracy' would be better served if such academics preserved a detachment in order to observe, record analyse and where necessary criticise the government in order to inform the people.

The shift in perspective is clear. In 1958 Hasluck spoke as a member of the cabinet, in 1986 he was a former governor-general. Yet my brief sketch of his experience and opinions suggests that he did not reconcile himself easily to the specific roles he was called on to perform. He chafed under the restrictions of a public servant but as a minister he seemed often to want to perform the functions of an administrator. He was by temperament and by training an intellectual but one who applied his intellect to a range of practical activities and mistrusted theory. He understood intellectuals as lying across the dichotomy of governors and governed that always informed his understanding of democracy. Their task was to preserve standards of truth and intelligence. It was a task he discharged with singular devotion.

Endnotes
3 Paul Hasluck, "On Learning": Address delivered by His Excellency the Governor General, the Right Honourable Sir Paul Hasluck, GCMG, GCVO, K.StJ., MA, at the Ceremonial Opening of the Mayne Hall, University of Queensland, Saturday 31st March 1973', mimeograph.
4 Hasluck, *The Social Scientist in a Democracy*. 
7 *Ibid.*, pp. 73, 120.
15 Hasluck, *Telling the Truth in a Democracy*, p. 20.
Citizen Biographer

James Walter

Among many other writings, Paul Hasluck wrote some perceptive biographical essays. We can read them on three levels. First, they have something to say about the nature and purposes of political biography. Second, they are centrally concerned with the question; what is good leadership? Third, they reveal some of the characteristics of Hasluck himself; his ideals about government, his concern with administration based on true principles (and disdain for opportunistic politics), his preoccupation with order, logic and precision, and his judgments on the attributes he least liked in others (and perhaps in himself).

The distinctive thing about political biography — and something Hasluck understood well — is that we want from it more than gossip and personal stories. Why? Because the political sphere shapes and influences our lives more directly than most others. We have an interest in understanding how it functions and how it might be made more effective and responsive. When it comes to biography, therefore, we want more than inside dope we want to understand how people affect institutions and institutional change. We want to understand not only leaders but also types of leaders. That is, we want a handle not only on a person but on the art of leadership. Political biography, therefore, tends to be functional, to lead towards arguments relating to classes of leaders, or types of organisational behaviour, or modes of political thought. Political biography—with these general aims of elucidating leadership, philosophy, or institutions—has purposes beyond the individual life. It is as much nomothetic as it is individualistic and in this way it may seem at odds with other forms of biography.

It is significant that Hasluck's excursions into biography took the essay form. Essays, of their nature, are tendentious and Hasluck clearly wanted to use them to make particular points rather than to produce extended narratives. His biographical essays demonstrated two impulses. The first was his concern to gain insight into the people who had made history so that he might better interpret that history. The second was an interest in understanding and explaining the principles of good leadership. If you compare his approach with that of contemporaries writing about the same figures at that time, Hasluck's penchant for an intellectual, analytical framework — as opposed simply to anecdote — is striking. He was preoccupied with identifying and setting out principles of performance and relating these to a view of society. He was more or less uninterested in the personal, or in the inside dope of conventional biography. Forty years before Judith Brett clarified our aims with the argument that 'the public man is the real man and the task is to read his life and character where
we find it—in the public life', Hasluck understood this. He understood, in other words, the tasks of political biography. On the other hand, his was no neutral ‘academic’ exercise. His analyses of the principles of performance were judgmental—sometimes harshly so. He brought to the task his own values of good citizenship and not only assessed how leaders stood as exemplars of citizenship, but also understood the biographer to be performing a social duty. Hasluck was, I would argue, a citizen biographer.

Hasluck knew three of the political leaders of mid-century well, John Curtin, H V Evatt and Robert Menzies. He worked closely with two of them, Evatt and Menzies. He wrote about each of them in a number of places and if we read these essays side by side, an argument about the nature of political leadership emerges. Curtin and Menzies each had some of the attributes of the ‘good’ leader, while Evatt was used to demonstrate dysfunctional leadership. Hasluck’s judgments were unlikely to have been entirely divorced from his political credo but the reader can see that they have more to do with assessing characteristics and styles of operating than with political affiliation.

Despite his own liberal sympathies, Hasluck appreciated both the positive aspects of the labour movement and the reason why it appealed to the ‘working man’. He admired many of the qualities of the Western Australian union movement and the ALP in the interwar period: loyalty to a common cause, simplicity and moderation, concern for the welfare of members, faith in the arbitration system giving fitting returns for labour, the conservative nature of the way rights were protected and a due share in the progress of industry was sought. John Curtin was seen by Hasluck to embody the best qualities of that movement: Curtin manifested ‘straightforward support for his mates’, great simplicity and humility, service to the welfare of all citizens and total dedication to the cause. Indeed, within the labour movement Hasluck discerned a ‘staunchness of ... loyalty to the party and the common cause ... of a kind I have never seen elsewhere in public affairs’. In his career as a journalist, Curtin had attributes that Hasluck admired. ‘Curtin was a journalist who thought as well as wrote’. He had standards and he was active in the promotion of higher standards amongst his peers through organising university extension lectures. He had faith in the power for good of the press and a noble picture of the working journalist. He carried his ideals into his work as an editor so that labour readers gained a broader view of the world, while those who read him ‘for evidence to support their own prejudices ... were enlightened to read the labor point of view strongly, clearly and reasonably argued’. Curtin, in short, was a professional.

As a leader, Curtin had two great achievements. First, he came to party leadership when his party was ‘disunited and divided’, and unified it. ‘He lifted it away from its divisions and failures and helped it to rediscover some central purpose ... In doing so he made the Labor Party fit to govern, and gave the
nation the alternative government which, under democratic usage, was required ... at the critical point in 1941 when one had to be found'.

Second, in the extraordinary circumstances of war, Curtin showed a capacity to grow. 'Having come to the heavy responsibilities ... he grew in wisdom, character and strength with the added burdens that were laid on him. His own dedication was complete. He held nothing back from the service of his nation'.

In both of these achievements, Curtin 'carried his party with him. Both he and the party grew in stature and responsibility as higher demands were made on them'. In part, these achievements depended on a contingency: Curtin 'had been prepared for the tasks of wartime leadership by reason of his membership of the Advisory War Council'. Nonetheless, they were underscored by particular qualities:

He was politically sensitive to the Australian electorate. He had become a skilled parliamentarian and he knew how to use the public service. He had size — no pettiness, no vanity ... and a good sense of what was important and what was not.

This checklist, preparation, dedication, parliamentary skill, political sensitivity, a proper use of the public service, an appropriate sense of what was important was one Hasluck came to again and again when assessing leadership. Amongst these attributes, a leader's recognition of the divide between the politician and the public servant and the professional and independent status of the latter, was a specially important measure in Hasluck's view and he rated Curtin very highly on this score.

Though Hasluck accorded to Curtin 'the spark of greatness', he saw within him the things that would destroy him. Curtin was too sensitive to criticism, prone to brooding over problems, subject to deep hurt when he felt others had let him down and perhaps, at the end, he carried self-sacrifice too far. As victory approached he became more austere, more intolerant of the self-indulgence of others and began to question whether he had done enough: 'He worked harder and harder and spared himself less and less'.

'A prime minister', says Hasluck, 'cannot fret or he will collapse or die'. But Curtin did fret and the strains this induced killed him. 'For a politician', concluded Hasluck, 'he was an unusually vulnerable man'.

The picture Hasluck drew of Evatt was much more detailed than that of Curtin and much more critical. Hasluck, after all, had worked very closely with Evatt over an extended period (1941-1947), as an officer in the department of external affairs while Evatt was its minister. It is clear that Hasluck found the 'strange ways of this extraordinary man' difficult, and we know from another source that the tensions in their relationship eventually contributed to Hasluck's resignation from the department of external affairs after very considerable achievements. Hasluck conceded as much in his disquisition on Evatt yet, characteristically, tried to assess Evatt's performance against general principles.
We may conclude that the tenor of their interchange undercut this generalising exercise.

At one level, Curtin stood as the measure of just why Evatt failed to achieve greatness. Hasluck made no explicit comparisons between the two yet Evatt scored poorly on the checklist. Where Curtin carried very particular ideals into his work, 'I seldom heard Evatt show any interest in ideas or principles in the broad'.

Curtin was a professional and respected the professional integrity of others. Evatt 'saw foreign affairs as a field in which he could advance his own political career ... Evatt had not hitherto any deep seated interest in foreign affairs' argued Hasluck 'and ... turned to it out of political opportunism rather than because he had already formed definite ideas about Australian foreign policy'.

Where Curtin carried his party with him, Evatt was divisive and distrusting: 'He expected a personal attachment to his own interests without having the qualities that attract and hold personal loyalty'. Where Curtin was politically sensitive to the electorate, 'Evatt's chief limitation was that he started by looking for a "good issue" on which to have a fight rather than examining the whole situation to discover what was vital to Australia'.

Where Curtin respected and insisted on the independence of the public service, 'Evatt could only conceive of a department as his own possession — a sort of personal secretariat ... [H]e set departmental officers at odds with one another and did not receive good service from the department as a whole'.

Where Curtin had size, without vanity or 'sidetracking for personal advantage', Evatt 'could not endure the success of others [and] was often childish in insisting that he should be given the credit personally and that statements should be made in a way that brought his name into the record'.

Where Curtin knew what was important and what was not, Evatt did not study all the facts in order to draw from them a sound conclusion; 'He picked what he thought would be a good conclusion and then looked for facts and arguments to support it ... one could readily see that a "good" conclusion meant little more than an advantageous one — an outcome that would suit him and his cause and would not suit his opponents'.

Along with this description of proclivities, Hasluck rendered a detailed picture of Evatt's administrative style. A central feature was the 'frenzied and sometimes frantic disorder and confusion in which most of [Evatt's] own work was done'. He had little experience of large administrative organisation and his departmental officers were handicapped in assisting him because he was suspicious of their motives. While secretive in some ways, he was careless about documents and official papers and quite haphazard about maintaining records: many of his instructions and ministerial activities were not reported in any formal way: 'He had the zeal for proving what was right and what was wrong and saw more value in selection than in completeness of the record'.

The result was that Evatt had to rely on memory rather than an efficient office
to keep track and on lackeys and go-betweens rather than on his public servants to expedite matters. These tendencies limited his achievements.

How, then, did Evatt make his mark? Hasluck attributed much to his intellectual gifts—a capacity for shrewd analysis, for improving on the work of others, for seizing on the sense of an argument with astonishing speed and seeing, too, where it could best be attacked. He was ingenious rather than constructive or creative and despite his gifts, the range of his knowledge was limited according to Hasluck: ‘Evatt did not know a great deal about international affairs and... had a good deal less than the average Arts graduate’s knowledge of modern European history’.

Part of Evatt’s success was in attracting staffers who would protect and defend him, though in indicating this, Hasluck undercut his assertion that Evatt could not command loyalty. Hasluck praised the work of some of those who were close to Evatt, but thought that they were hoodwinked—drawn in by the zest and boyish happiness Evatt showed when things were going well while feeling compelled to ‘mother him’ when crises loomed. Borrowing a phrase from an American journalist, Hasluck summed up Evatt as ‘emotionally simple and intellectually complex... very like a... child — a rather naughty one, but strangely lovable’. It is significant, I think, that while Hasluck went into considerable detail about the unproductive outcomes of Evatt’s administrative and political style, there is no detail at all in the essay that would persuade one that Evatt was, in fact, ‘strangely lovable’ (which might suggest that Hasluck didn’t really believe this). The remark may be a grudging concession to the fact that there were people who were intensely committed to Evatt’s cause and some, indeed, who saw him as a great man. Evatt was certainly as irascible and cantankerous and as intellectually quick as Hasluck depicts him to be but his other biographers suggest that he was rather more besides. For instance, his historical gifts—evident in several books—sustain a claim for his importance to the radical nationalist tradition, and they seem quite at odds with Hasluck’s belittling of his historical knowledge (though Hasluck would presumably respond that even in this Evatt’s was in the nature of selective knowledge, that he knew only about Australia and not about Europe). Again, Hasluck’s derisory analysis of Evatt’s negotiations at the San Francisco conference establishing the United Nations can be offset against other accounts which, while conceding his unorthodoxy and self-interest, suggest a more complex agenda on security, welfare and economic progress than Hasluck will allow. We might go on but the general point is that Hasluck is less than fair to Evatt. That said, we should remember that what Hasluck focused on were those characteristics of a working style that impeded Evatt’s leadership. Hasluck’s may be a partial picture and a tendentious one but it contributes further to his picture of the dynamics of leadership.
It may be, finally, that there is more than a little projection in Hasluck's essay on Evatt. The mercurial Evatt at least as Hasluck saw him, might have been accused of more than his share of 'mucking about'. Yet it was mucking about as a source of pleasure (and of guilt) that was the theme of Hasluck's autobiography of youth and the thing Hasluck felt compelled to renounce when he became a serious politician. Further, Hasluck's own biographer, in summarising the views of those who worked with him, lights on characteristics not far removed from those for which Hasluck had criticised Evatt:

Hasluck gained a reputation as an extremely demanding Minister ... Hasluck was not ... good dealing with people. Some observed in him an extraordinary mixture of both compassion and cruelty: a capacity for consideration and care yet an equal capacity for brusqueness, if not rudeness, and a disregard or insensitivity for the feelings of others ... a tendency to dismiss or ignore the views of others, to be ungenerous in providing praise for achievements to others, to be diffident about accepting advice that differed from his own views and to be unnecessarily intimidating ... he seldom succeeded in generating within others the level of personal commitment and vision that he brought to ... his ministerial approach.

Hasluck was respected but rarely liked by those who worked with him.35

If Curtin and Evatt were used by Hasluck to illustrate the positive and negative potentials of political leadership, it was in an extended lecture on Robert Menzies that he drew together the threads of his thesis on the ‘art of public leadership’.36 The Menzies lecture was both a tribute to the man and an elaboration on those values Hasluck had pursued in his earlier essays on Curtin and Evatt.

Menzies was a distinguished leader, argued Hasluck, not only because of personal attributes, but also because he had certain technical qualifications. The personal attributes were four. First, Menzies had a knowledge of history and ‘he stood off and talked about events and himself as though he was observing them from outside’.37 Evatt, we recall, had less than the average arts graduate’s knowledge of history (a hard claim to sustain, as I have noted). Second, Menzies was ‘learned in the law’. He brought order into arguments, and ‘understood the law as an expression of the best purposes of society’. Third, Menzies acted according to a body of principle, not so much following party doctrine but looking for the answer that was right and facing the question of practicability later. Curtin, too, was in this sense a principled man. Evatt, in contrast, was said to have no principles in the broad and assessed arguments according to whether they served his purposes and disadvantaged his opponents. Fourth, Menzies could listen and comprehend — he could learn — and this compared with Curtin’s growth in wisdom and stature.

These attributes fed into his working habits. Menzies, says Hasluck, was ordered and meticulous: ‘He always studied his brief’. Like Evatt, ‘Menzies could grasp the central issue quickly’ but in comparison with the frenzy and
disorder of Evatt’s habits, Menzies was ‘like a cricketer who has done hours of hard preparatory work at the nets, he could make the single flashing stroke in an instant’.

Hasluck described these four qualities of leadership — a sense of history, understanding of law, a body of principle and ability to listen and comprehend — as mainly intellectual. They were, in Menzies’ case, complemented by four technical qualifications. First, Menzies knew and understood the place of parliament and insisted on the responsibility of the executive to parliament. Second, Menzies knew, respected and used the public service. Like Curtin, he understood its distinctive place and professional integrity — not for him Evatt’s tendency to confuse his experts with a personal secretariat. Indeed, Menzies resisted the build-up of ministerial staffs and instead worked to re-establish the public service after the war as efficient, non-partisan and self-respecting. Third, he had developed considerable skills as a speaker and advocate: ‘He spoke well not because he had “a gift of the gab” but because he had fashioned for himself good tools of trade and handled them like a master craftsman. Above all he spoke clearly because he thought clearly’. Fourth, he gained immense authority because his hard preparatory work and the respect he always gave to cabinet responsibility (and in turn to loyalty) made him quite simply the best man there.

While wanting to rescue Menzies from various misreadings of his fall in 1941, Hasluck placed greatest stress on Menzies ability to provide a clear analysis of Australian prospects after 1943 and to act on this. In particular, Hasluck emphasised Menzies’ achievement in building an alternative government — and here made the comparison with Curtin quite explicit:

it was largely due to Menzies that the Liberal Party was produced out of a disordered Opposition ... Like Curtin, he also gave to the people of Australia an alternative government. It was a major contribution to the national advantage ... This was what Menzies achieved between 1946 and 1949 as Curtin had achieved it between 1935 and 1941.

Where Evatt was ‘neither orthodox nor straightforward’, Hasluck saw Menzies as ‘both orthodox and elevated’. Menzies perhaps joined Curtin in according too much respect to the ‘place of the parties, the trade unions and the press’. A traditionalist, Menzies ‘did not do much that was wrong but he was slow to do anything that was novel’. Yet he was not a doctrinal conservative but a Deakinite liberal, as in Hasluck’s view his post war innovations in education proved. His faith ‘was an intellectual faith’. In contrast to the emotional volatility of Evatt, with Menzies Hasluck saw ‘behind the facade a very shy man ... loath to expose himself and slow to give away even to those close to him his inmost feelings’. Menzies subscribed to a ‘code of loyalty that is best expressed in the schoolboy phrase “not letting the side down”’. With Menzies, finally,
Hasluck made a point that does not emerge in the earlier essays — Menzies showed ‘that the leader is recognised as better than the others and commands the respect of those he leads’. A more searching analysis of Menzies’ record might indicate that, just as he has been unduly harsh towards Evatt, Hasluck has given us a view of Menzies that is over idealised. One might suppose that, given his implication in the sorry downfall of the United Australia Party in 1941, Menzies had a strong motive for standing off and talking about events as if he himself were not part of them. Certainly there are more critical views of his domination and manipulation of cabinet in the public domain. Further, the emotional restraint remarked as a sign of decency by Hasluck has been seen in other quarters as the thing that made Menzies so aloof and intimidating — indeed, not unlike Hasluck himself. For all that, however, the reader is bound to concede that again Hasluck is less interested in the man than in the qualities that matter in ‘the art of public leadership’ and that whatever the biases and projections we might detect, a consistent picture emerges. Hasluck, elsewhere, summarised the qualities that matter this way: ‘tolerance, sympathy, clarity, logical precision, the wisdom that selects and judges the important issues by values that are enduring’. One might conclude that in his preoccupation with the intellectual, technical and administrative qualities of leadership, Hasluck paid insufficient attention to the more distinctively ‘political’ aspects — the need for a leader to be a broker, a diplomat, a builder of factions, a manager of compromises, a manipulator and sometimes an aggressive guerilla fighter. Hasluck clearly had no taste for these aspects of the task. But he had a very clear focus in these leadership essays on the way, ideally, individual ambition should be mediated by principle and allied to collective responsibility. There is a view of citizenship at work here — a citizenship that points two ways — to the way the community fosters the individual (and Hasluck’s autobiography testified eloquently to the way he had himself been fostered by the Western Australian community) and to the social responsibility the individual owes to the institutions in which he functions. His essays on leadership emphasised this last, for instance, in their lauding of the Western Australian ALP’s exemplary commitment, Curtin’s dedication, Menzies loyalty to colleagues and determination ‘not to let the side down’, as the chief virtues. Evatt was represented in contrast as the egotistical, self-serving individualist. The best leaders were both exemplary individuals and exemplary citizens — they could stand outside themselves and see the sweep of history.

The sort of leadership Hasluck set out to describe and analyse has, I think, been swept away on both sides of politics in the 1990s. The strong sense of social responsibility inherent in these essays has fallen victim to what Paul Kelly has described as ‘the end of certainty’. In his book, Kelly discussed the way in which, in the 1980s, the Liberal Party set about ‘torching the edifices of the
past’. In the process, it cut loose from the very qualities Hasluck felt to be integral to good leadership. It is unlikely that Hasluck who, fifty years earlier, ‘started to ponder the limits of individualism ... to wonder whether individualism had gone too far ... [whether] individualism might be an element in disorder, disintegration and decay’,48 would find in the libertarian excesses of economic rationalism either the social responsibility or the body of principle he rated so highly. Given his endorsement of the ameliorative, Deakinite strand of liberalism in the Menzies case, it is unlikely that he would see the cant of free markets as an adequate response to community needs. Given his commitment to collective loyalty and order, it is unlikely that he would see the frenzied disorder and opportunism of contemporary machine politics in both parties as appropriate to good leadership. Given the importance he ascribed to policy and to building parties fit to govern, it seems unlikely that he would endorse the cat and mouse games over policy played by opposition parties which thereby deprive the people of any means of judging their fitness to govern until the moment of the election campaign. Indeed, in this context it is worth reflecting again on Hasluck’s conviction — made central in his portraits of Curtin and Menzies — that the ability to lift a party above disorder, to unify it and to make it in fact and in perception fit to govern, is one of the greatest achievements of leadership. Whether this achievement is in the reach of leaders whose preoccupations with economics and with public opinion deafen them to Hasluck’s admonitions about the intellectual, technical and administrative necessities of leadership is doubtful. Yet if they would but listen, Hasluck still has much to tell them about good leadership.

Endnotes

1 Hasluck makes this clear in describing the methodology of his work on the history of civil government during war within his essay on Menzies (discussed below). See Paul Hasluck, *Sir Robert Menzies*, Melbourne, 1980, p. 3.
8 Ibid., p. 134.
9 Ibid., p. 135.
11 Ibid., pp. 633-634.
13 Ibid., p. 135.
16 Ibid., pp. 634-635.
17 Ibid., p. 634.
18 Hasluck, Diplomatic Witness, p. 21.
20 Ibid., p. 25.
21 Ibid., p. 27.
22 Ibid., p. 30.
23 Ibid., p. 29.
24 Ibid., p. 29.
26 Hasluck, Diplomatic Witness, p. 32.
27 Ibid., p. 25.
28 Ibid., p. 23.
29 Ibid., p. 31.
30 Ibid., pp. 24-25.
32 Ibid., p. 33.
34 See, for instance, Peter Crockett, Evatt: A Life, Melbourne, 1993, chapters 13 and 14.
35 Porter, A Political Biography, p. 313.
36 Hasluck, Sir Robert Menzies, p. 2.
37 Ibid., p. 3.
38 Ibid., p. 9.
39 Ibid., p. 15.
40 Ibid., p. 22.
41 Ibid., p. 27.
42 Ibid., p. 31.
43 Ibid., p. 33.
45 Quoted in Porter, Hasluck, p. 55.
46 Hasluck expressed this most clearly when he argued 'that the success of democracy required both respect and concern for the individual person and an acceptance of responsibility by each individual in his role as citizen and elector. Individualism does not mean selfishness but personal responsibility'. Hasluck, Mucking About, p. 279.
48 Hasluck, Mucking About, pp. 278-279.
Alexandra Hasluck Historian

Marian Quaity

In her autobiography, *Portrait in a Mirror*, Alexandra Hasluck tells how she wrote some of the manuscript of her first history, *Portrait with Background*, while holidaying on Norfolk Island. She describes her walks in the old grave yard, where she:

read the story of Norfolk Island carved on so many of the headstones, my Irish blood rising at the execution in 1834 of a number of young Irishmen from Limerick and Tipperary for mutiny, and my mother's heart wrung by the oblong raised tombs of six or seven children of officers, as if their parents could not bear to put them in the alien earth. All among the scent of sweet alyssum and lavender, and trailed over by convolvulus, ran the story of death far away from home, whether the person was bond or free.

Then, typically for her, the passage moves from feelings of ‘sadness and cruelty and fear’ to the beauty of Norfolk, the sunshine and the equitable weather, and the hope that for convicts, however bitter their lives, ‘there must have been times ... when hope might rise again’. Its conclusion captures something of the meaning that Hasluck invested in history, history as the residue of the past in the present. She writes:

I shall always recall the feelings that Norfolk aroused, and the smells of the place — the scent of wild pelargonium crushed underfoot walking along the shore; the smell of cow prevailing everywhere; the clean smell of the pines, and most of all, the smell of ‘Oldness’ — of ancient cedarwood in the old houses, and of mould and damp; an odour that not everyone notices, but to which I am very sensitive. Norfolk above all other places of old Australia has this, one could call it the smell of history.

Here are the historical elements that Alexandra Hasluck valued and recreated in her histories: birth and death, both extraordinary and ordinary; bright hope and bitter fear; exile and regrowth in a new place. Note too the reification of ‘oldness’ and the unhesitating play upon the senses and feelings, of writer and reader both.

Alexandra Hasluck (née Darker) was born in Perth in 1908 and lived there for as much of her life as she was able. Her father was a mechanical engineer and her mother a school teacher, one of the early women graduates from Sydney University. Both parents came from rather peripatetic middle class families with more intellectual capital than financial, ‘poor but not humble’. After graduating from the University of Western Australia in 1929 she too worked as
a school teacher before marrying Paul Hasluck in 1932. Though never connected
to a university, she produced a list of publications of which an academic might
be proud: four historical monographs, an autobiography and family history, two
editions of letters, three short biographies, a book of photographs and a book of
short stories. Two fictional works remain unpublished: a historical novel set in
Tudor England, and a children’s play. I am centring my discussion here upon
the autobiography, one of the monographs — Portrait with Background, and
her short story collection, Of Ladies Dead.

Addressing Alexandra Hasluck’s historical output within a book otherwise
devoted to her husband’s career is a difficult task. A better context would be a
book discussing the Australian varieties of local history, or biography, or the
relationship between history and fiction. In the existing context the trick is to
read Alexandra Hasluck’s work in a way which enlightens the larger themes of
the book — and it is clearly relevant to historical questions of nation, race, class
and gender as well as to historiographical concerns — without presenting it as
a domestic side-show to the main event.

The task is made no easier by the fact that Alexandra Hasluck’s autobiography
presents her life very much in those terms. Its story is shaped by intersections
with larger events: Australian federal politics, the early years of the United
Nations, the administration of the territories, ambassadorial doings and viceregal
obligations. Alexandra’s work as a writer and historian is presented as an
absorbing personal interest, a source of great personal satisfaction; she writes:

I can still recall the sense of barely contained exhilaration when, flying home from
some visit to Canberra by way of Melbourne, Portrait with Background ... was
given into my hands and lay in my lap throughout the flight as tenderly guarded as
an infant.5

The exhilaration was contained, and the authorial life is contained as well, to
just one chapter in the autobiography. I will discuss later the understandings of
public and private, of male and female relations, of historical significance bound
up in that containment.

One biographical element needs unpicking here, before coming to the texts.
The clear message of the autobiography is that Alexandra Hasluck saw her
life’s story as determined by her husband’s career, and that while loyal and
appreciative of the benefits this brought, she found both the structural and
personal situation extremely difficult at times. From her mother she brought an
instinctive feminism to the marriage. She wrote of the ceremony that:

My mother and I walked down the aisle together and she gave me away. I wore a
long cream guipure lace dress and a pale pink hat, not a veil, which I regarded as a
token of submission.6
And she tells us frankly that battle was joined ‘almost immediately’. Paul revealed ‘a very bad temper’, severe migraines, and bursts of melancholy, which all:

made for some very dark times, when Paul would savagely fling off on his own, leaving me in strange city not only alone, for I did not mind that much, but unknowing what had become of him.... I had married a complex and moody, introspective soul, and I could not cope.  

She learned to cope, but the relationship could never be the active marriage of minds that she had anticipated. Separation became part of the structure of their lives, and her ‘urge to create’ — the title of a chapter that deals both with childbirth and novel writing — had to be pursued without intellectual support from her husband.

The minds that the Haslucks reveal in their autobiographies are very different. Take for example their respective makings as historians. Paul Hasluck’s autobiography, Mucking About, soberly appraises its subject’s historiographical progress; he describes his activities as Geoffrey Bolton observes as an oral historian and an editor of the historical society’s journal, concluding that:

This detailed work on local history gave me my basic training in historical research and eventually, by fusion with my amateur interest in anthropology, led me to my academic studies on Australian aborigines.  

Alexandra Hasluck was not so abstractly self-reflective; her making as a historian has to be inferred from a range of sources. Her first love was really ‘old’ history, the history of Europe, learnt from historical novels as a child, strengthened by university studies with Alexander which contained no Australian history and confirmed by a honeymoon visit to Britain and Europe. For both the Haslucks, their interests on this trip ‘concentrated on history’; Paul writes that they ‘made the happy rediscovery of all the treasured bones our education had buried’. Paul delighted in cathedrals and Alexandra ‘specialised in castles’. Both also worked in the reading room in the British Museum, and their reports of this make an interesting contrast. Paul discovered ‘a monastery of learning’ where he ‘was happy serving [his] novitiate in the disciplines of research’. Alexandra remembered reading and reading ‘in its leather-smelling warmth’. Paul recalls (with irony) that he ‘started to imagine [himself] a mild unambitious scholar, quietly and endlessly delving in preparation of a book for which no deadlines had been set’. Alexandra’s account sets herself no goal but her reading was to produce her unpublished novel, ‘Tudor Blood’.

Back in Perth Alexandra Hasluck discovered Australian history in a rather different context. Taking over the position of secretary to the Western Australian historical society in her husband’s absence, she found herself involved in a
bitter debate about the historical significance of a collection of letters written to a convict in Western Australia by his English wife. Alexandra was moved by the intensity of feeling of their ‘poor and illiterate’ author. She was appalled when members of the historical society argued that the letters should be destroyed because they were not in fact ‘historical records’: ‘they contained no reference to historical events, places, or personages; they described only the feelings of the convict’s wife, and were extremely pathetic’. The subtext was that Western Australia’s convict past was better forgotten. The ‘shy and reserved’ temporary secretary found herself arguing heatedly that the convicts should be remembered for their part in the making of the state, and that: ‘if these letters were personal letters to a convict, nevertheless they were letters that he had apparently valued and had kept carefully in a pouch made specially to preserve them. Such a thing was a trust to the people who found it’.

The letters were not destroyed, but their status as documents at once historical and personal remains unclear in this debate. A decade and a half later the argument had moved on. In her introduction to Portrait with Background, published in 1955, Hasluck assumes an audience that did not expect a history confined to the public actions of notable personages; her subject was an essentially domestic life of Georgiana Molloy, set against ‘the ordinary life of the colonists in the first decade or so of the colony’. And when she returned a few years later to the convict letters which had torn at her heartstrings in 1934, Hasluck set out to write a social study of convictism in Western Australia, making their convict owner ‘a prototype of the period’.

Alexandra Hasluck does not identify the historiographical sources of her contextualist approach, beyond citing J E Neale on the frontispiece of Portrait with Background: ‘Human beings are the stuff of history. Their social activities, whether political or otherwise, are the result of environment and personal qualities, in which I include personal interests. And to these two I would add that third, strange factor, group behaviour’. If intended as a claim to intellectual heritage this is misleading; there is nothing in either Portrait or Immigrants of Nealian group behaviour. I think it was Neale’s other causitive factors — environment and personal qualities — that appealed to Hasluck, and primarily environment, though she extended the explanatory power of the personal in her first paragraphs of her autobiography by invoking the ‘skeletal finger’ of ‘a long-dead ancestor’ as a trigger for occasional feeling and action. Her most immediate influences probably derive less from any purely academic tradition than from an Australian stream of historical novels and biography, written on the edges of academe by mostly women authors such as Nettie Palmer, Eleanor Dark, Barnard Eldershaw, Henrietta Drake Brockman and Marnie Bassett — a stream swelled in the 1960s by family and regional historians such as Margaret Kiddle and Mary Durack. Her themes are their themes — European tradition in exile tempered
by the growth of a sense of place; confidence in a new society tempered by discontent with its injustices; women’s strength and men’s inadequacy, tempered by a lurking commitment to romantic love and companionate marriage. In this company Hasluck has a honourable place and an influential one.

Alexandra Hasluck is not a great historian, but her collected works form a substantial contribution to Western Australian history and Portrait with Background seems to me to have maintained its interest for a national readership long enough to qualify as a classic. She considered Thomas Peel of Swan River her ‘best historical work’, because: it contained new material about a most controversial figure of Western Australia’s founding days, who had always been much maligned, and apart from that, or as a result of that, was a most interesting character. In other words, the interest lay in the book’s contribution to an existing British historiography. But to a feminist, Georgiana Molloy is a more compelling subject. Hasluck was thinking of writing a biography of her mother but lacked sources and came upon the Molloy documents instead. She writes:

There are times in life when an object or a theme says almost audibly to one, ‘I’m for you’, and one must recognise and take the thing to oneself. Here was something close to hand, with the places and records within reach, and on the subject I was feeling for — the Australian pioneer woman.

Molloy’s letters are a wonderfully passionate source, and Hasluck engages with them passionately. Georgiana’s hopes and fears as a mother, daughter, sister and (less fully) wife are evoked with universalising sympathy. Her scientific achievements as a botanist are established with proper respect. But Hasluck’s identification with her subject is never complete; her reading of the sources is always qualified by what Bruce Bennett calls her ‘ironic, speculative wit’. Take for example the incident during the voyage to Australia when Georgiana engaged the ship’s captain in days of theological argument on the subject of Christ’s power of atonement, causing the captain’s wife much weeping and sleepless nights. Hasluck comments on the wife’s tears: ‘Whether too much religion impaired the gaiety of life which was essential to her, or whether she considered the Captain’s interest was less in St John than in the blond hair and long downward sweeping lashes beside him, cannot be said’. Similarly, after a sympathetic description of the drama and losses of a fire at the Bussell establishment, Hasluck notes that as soon as the flames had died down Bessie Bussell:

with a heart full to bursting, sat down among the wreckage to write a letter describing it to Miss Fanny, who was staying with Mrs Molloy at Augusta. No doubt she was too excited to sleep; but what a formidable pair Miss Bessie and Miss Fanny would have been had the telephone existed to take the place of their pens.
Often her comments have a consciously feminist edge. Georgiana’s education was typical of the day, ‘a thorough grounding in the art of pleasing men’. Georgiana’s final illness, the immediate result of her seventh pregnancy, is blamed upon her husband’s sexual demands; ‘A later generation may opine that it was to him that she owed her present situation: she should never have had her last two children.’ But Hasluck continues instantly:

this thought would never have occurred to her. She would see only the years of struggle and happiness, the mingling of mutual interests, the love and respect that makes mere existence a minor detail when life has been lived to the full. With him she had created her posterity; with his help she had pursued her interest in the flowers and plants of her chosen county. In both she had fulfilled herself... She was content.

At this point I wish to follow Hasluck’s example and distance myself a little from my historical subject. The comment above seems to me both to reveal an informed historical empathy with Molloy and to project the self that Alexandra Hasluck wished to be in the early 1950s—equally fulfilled as mother, intellectual companion and historian. Drusilla Modjeska sees the women writers of the 1930s, as ‘passionate in their criticism of the effects of marriage’, and ‘yet none of them... criticised the institution of marriage itself’:

Their novels are angry protests against the experience of women in marriage, but it was a protest limited by their confidence in marriage as the institution through which domestic and sexual relations should be organised.

Hasluck shared this feminist vision, with all its qualifications — and usually without its anger. But there was anger there. The contained heat in the comment on Molloy’s death — ‘she should never have had her last two children’ — burns visibly in a short story published in *Of Ladies Dead*. Called simply ‘Lady’, it tells of a lady about to be dead — a pedigree dog valued only for her breeding capacities, now after her sixth litter ‘a used-up female, her job done’. A visiting woman pities ‘the captive female’, ‘her flaccid sides... fallen in’, but cannot save her from the awaiting grave.

The stories in this collection are very instructive about Alexandra Hasluck, as woman and as historian. Its title turns on the fact that every story refers to a dead woman/female/lady, a conjunction of meanings I will return to below. Its subtitle — *Stories Not in the Modern Manner* — can be read as referring to the style of the stories, which as Bennett comments, ‘sometimes recalls Hawthorne, Hardy and Poe’. It can equally be read as a playful allusion to the essential historical nature of the stories. Hasluck tells in *Portrait in a Mirror* how she discovered in writing ‘Tudor Blood’ that she was not a novelist, but a historian. Publishers rejected her attempts: ‘to give verisimilitude to the
story by employing only conversation which could be taken from the characters' own letters, or writings of the time. I cried for a couple of days with the disappointment, and then put the bulky manuscript by'. That same search for verisimilitude fuels every story in Of Ladies Dead — a verisimilitude that turns upon an engagement with some relic of the past in the present — memories, manuscripts, objects, landscapes, even ghosts. Hasluck is consciously probing the interconnection of fact and fiction — assessing the weight of fact that fiction can bear.

The exercise works too in the other direction — to release memory and emotion from the weight, the containment of reality. I remarked before that in her histories Hasluck shares the tendency of the liberal feminist novelists and biographers to generalise female experience, to assume a universal womanly experience, especially of mothering. In these stories Hasluck does not resile from this position but she explores it, pushes it to the limits of its contradictions. The title begins the game, casually gathering together as ‘dead ladies’ a collection including a woman settler murdered last century near Bunbury, a Chinese woman on the New South Wales goldfields, the wife of a Chinese painter in present day Vietnam, the unfortunate breeding spaniel, an English woman long expatriate in America, a Yugoslav migrant woman in Perth, an Aboriginal woman killed by a white settler’s wife, and Hasluck’s best friend, the novelist Henrietta Drake-Brockman. In case the reader misses the intention of this juxtaposition, the first story — about the ghost of ‘a real white woman’ murdered by ‘an Asiatic’ — her terms — is called ‘The Shade of Difference’. Hasluck is quite deliberately probing the question of racial difference with an innocence (or an ironic distance?) quite shocking to post-modern sensibility. And she is especially interested in the action of difference within what she continues to hold as universal female experience.

Race is not an issue in the earlier histories. The Aborigines function as part of the landscape, hostile until it and they can be accommodated — as gatherers of flowers and seed, for example. Hasluck generally accepts uncritically the standpoint of the white invaders, only occasionally quizzing them from a modern point of view. Her most extensive criticism is provoked by a newspaper editorial sermonising upon the ‘acts of kindness’ offered by the settlers to ungrateful ‘savages’:

Seen across the lapse of hundred or more years, the reader of today may think this piece of journalism ironical. But it was written without the background of anthropological and ethnographical knowledge that we have today. The study of native races had scarcely begun. It is therefore conceivable that the sentiments expressed in this article were those of sincere indignation based on an assumption that gratitude is an instinctive virtue.
The language is uncharacteristic of Hasluck and I suspect the intellectual position, at least with regard to the universal currency of human virtue. When the Haslucks recalled hearing Sir James Frazer lecture in London in 1932, he remembered a door opening for him into an anthropological study of the Australian Aborigines; she remembered the author of that compendium of human myth and belief, *The Golden Bough*. It is conceivable that the sentiments expressed here owe something to Paul’s intervention.

The short stories are written from a very different position. Most commonly the central speaking voice is concerned to explore similarity within racial difference. I should explain instantly that this exploration is not in the postmodern manner, which attempts to give equality to both the differentiated “terms”. Hasluck gives the central voice — her voice — the narrative power to define the exploration; the question is how far she and/or her narrator can come to understand the position of being (usually) female in another culture. Two stories in particular push this question to its limits. ‘The Clean Kitchen’ is an autobiographical piece set in Vietnam in which the wife of an Australian “Very Important Person” finds herself culturally alienated in the course of a visit to the home of a Chinese painter — alienated by his style of painting, his drinking habits, even by his dog — though the wife of the very important person had never before met a dog that she could not communicate with. Pressured to buy a painting, she does so largely out of sympathy with the painter’s absent wife because she keeps the kitchen so scrupulously clean. That was an impulse the Australian wife and her Presbyterian forbears could understand.

‘The Patriot’s Wife’ works through the question still more elaborately. The story retells the death of the Aboriginal leader Yagan — a much told tale in Western Australian history. The title doubles to refer to two women — most obviously to Yagan’s unnamed wife, but also to Kate Loveday, mother of the boy who killed Yagan. The story is told entirely from Kate Loveday’s perspective, and it is only at its conclusion that we meet the second wife standing over the bodies of Yagan and the boy Loveday. Yagan’s wife menaces Kate Loveday’s husband with a spear, and Kate Loveday shoots her:

Kate knew that she had killed; and, to the ruination of all her ideals, she knew that she would do the same again if necessary. To her it was not a case of black or white, savage or settler; it was quite simply a case of ‘yours or Mine, and I shall defend’.

She knew, too, that the black woman had felt that: their eyes had conveyed it to each other. They had been equal adversaries in a duel of emotions, and how would a man have understood that? Men thought of events in the strangest terms. They never reduced them to first feelings. Kate knew that she had faced Yagan’s wife as an equal, a respected equal, and she knew that she would never forget her, whatever her name was. Only women knew how to avenge, Kate thought. For them it resolved itself into the narrowest meaning — Yours or Mine. And any woman
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could understand that, in any strife or war. The Scriptures did not come into it; it was a feeling straight from the primeval earth — ‘Yours or mine, and I shall defend’.

At this distance it is a bit ridiculous — too elaborate, melodramatic. But I bring it to you not to mock, but to applaud its intent.

After a period of denying any possibility of mediating difference between women, theorists are moving tentatively towards a feminist way of enunciating an inclusive difference. One writes of: ‘Speaking our selves within layers of difference ... Speaking with attitude ... articulat[ing] together and in as many modes as possible the questions of “who is she and who am I?”’

I am not claiming Hasluck as a precursor of feminist cultural studies. Nor would I argue that the postmodernists have solved the problems of speaking feminism in difference. But I am heartened by the passion that both devote to the issue. In her engagement with history, Alexandra Hasluck found a tangible other upon which she could exercise both sympathy and judgement, passion and irony. She embraced the contradictions of her subjects’ positions and of her own. She understood that the irresolvable can only be endured as gracefully as possible.

Endnotes:

I am grateful to Mark Peel for his comments on the first draft of this paper.

2 Ibid., p. 229.
3 Ibid., p. 38.
5 A Hasluck, Portrait in a Mirror, p. 234.
6 Ibid., p.119.
7 Ibid., p.128.
9 Ibid., p.161.
10 Ibid., p.163.
11 A Hasluck, Portrait in a Mirror, p.126.
12 A Hasluck, Unwilling Emigrants, pp. xi-xvi.
13 Ibid., p. xii.
14 Ibid., p. xiii.
15 A Hasluck, Portrait with Background, p. ix.
17 Ibid., p. 1.
18 Ibid., p. 236.
19 Ibid., p. 232.
20 Bruce Bennett, (ed.), *The Literature of Western Australia*, Nedlands, 1979, p. 141.
21 A. Hasluck, *Portrait with Background*, p. 34.
22 Ibid.
23 A Hasluck, *Portrait with Background*, p. 3.
24 Ibid., p. 243.
25 Ibid.
28 Bennett, (ed.), *The Literature of Western Australia*, p. 141.
29 A Hasluck, *Portrait in a Mirror*, p. 140.
31 A Hasluck, *Portrait with Background*, p. 224.
33 A Hasluck, *Of Ladies Dead*, pp. 43-49.
34 Ibid., pp. 136-137.
Painting the Haslucks

Romola Templeman

I have painted four Hasluck portraits. The first in 1960 of Dame Alexandra, then Mrs Hasluck to me, when I was in my early twenties and had just returned to Perth after studying at the Slade School of Fine Art in London. Although our families were friends, I have often wondered why Dame Alix would have commissioned the portrait from one so young and inexperienced. I had my first two solo exhibitions at the Skinner Gallery in Perth and, in the second of those in 1960, I showed a number of family portraits. This could have been the reason I came to paint 12 portraits that year including the one of Dame Alix. I later won the Helen Rubenstein portrait prize but that was not until after I had completed the Hasluck commission. I was working very hard to save money to satisfy an urgent longing to return to the stimulation of my European experiences. It was lonely being a young artist in Perth in those days. Anyway, the portrait commissions were a great help earning my fare back to London and more years of travelling. I do think Sir Paul and Dame Alexandra had an interest in encouraging young talent and seemed to follow my development as a practising painter with special attention.

From my diaries I see that I had six sittings for this portrait. I was very much in awe of my sitter, being a shy young woman, but I quickly realised that the reserve surrounding the person I was attempting to paint was also due to a natural shyness. My sitter did have a firm idea, however, how the painting was to look and it was she who expressed the desire to be painted against a West Australian landscape background, which was unusual at that time. Of course, I thought, that seems natural for the author of Portrait with Background published just a few years before. But the idea delighted me and although the dimensions of the painting are quite small, I attempted to depict a glimpse towards the Swan River of trees near the foreshore of their family home in Freshwater Bay. We must have struck some rapport because the painting appeared to go easily and was finished in 14 days. I do remember she seemed pleased with the finished result and remarked that it bore a striking resemblance to her own mother, or was it her grandmother — but this continuity of physical resemblances interested her greatly.

Sometime during that year, or maybe before, I also remember designing some bookplates for Sir Paul — another nice little commission and something I had never attempted before. I think I did four different designs incorporating the Australian blackboy or xanthorrhoea, the motif of his particular choice and a plant with which he was particularly fascinated. He thought he would
have two or three of the designs printed for different sections of his library. I don't know if he did.

It was probably not until eight years later that Sir Paul approached me to paint his own portrait.

In the intervening years I had travelled much, fallen in love in Paris to a young artist representing Australia at the Paris biennale, married in London and lived in Manchester while he taught at the Manchester College of Art for a year and returned to Australia with a young baby daughter. It was the era of the Beatles, Mary Quant, Carnaby Street, pop art and the mecca for artists had shifted from Europe to New York. We were full of the new painting and on our return worked for exhibitions in Sydney and Perth, both of which were financial flops. So we were very poor and I remember being thrilled with the expectation of a portrait commission. The Haslucks hosted a delightful lunch at the Caprice restaurant in Rose Bay, Sydney, for the visiting prime minister of India, Mrs Indira Ghandi. My artist husband and I were among many young guests invited, representing all areas of the arts in Australia at that time. It could have been on that occasion that Sir Paul broached the idea for the portrait, having discovered that I was now living in Sydney. It was 1968. After the sudden death of Harold Holt, John Gorton had been elected prime minister but Sir Paul remained as foreign minister, or minister for external affairs, and his travelling continued for the rest of that year. Any attempt to begin the portrait seemed impossible to arrange. Later, of course, came the announcement that Sir Paul was to become the next governor-general. I immediately thought 'Well, that is the end of that!' He, on the other hand, relayed to me that it would now be possible to sit for me at Admiralty House when he came to Sydney from Canberra, which he would need to do from time to time.

However it was some two years after that first request that I think I began that portrait. I now had another baby only a few weeks old. We were living in a little house in Marrickville in the shadow of the Eta margarine factory and the buzz and pollution of Sydney airport, paying a peppercorn rent to a wealthy art patron who took pity on our state of penury. So it was with great glee that I rode in the chauffeur-driven car across the bridge to Admiralty House for sittings. A new confidence that married life, motherhood and hardship had given me fell away, I discovered, as I confronted Sir Paul and Lady Hasluck in their new and dignified roles surrounded by great formality, though they both greeted me warmly with, it seemed, genuine delight. The ponderous formality that attended Sir Paul seemed to cause him some irritation and I could feel some empathy with that as, even now, I can recall a little informal lunch prior to my sittings at which I felt cowed by the presence of the fierce-looking waiters at both ends of the table. It seemed to make conversation stilted over the main course, which was lamb cutlets and brussel sprouts of a bullet-like variety. My fork seemed unable to penetrate the offending vegetable and it shot over my shoulder to the floor.
right in the path of the waiters coming to collect the plates. I did not know whether to reach out with my foot and kick it under the table, attempt to pick it up with a dramatic toss of the napkin, or warn the man. As I pondered my dilemma under the supercilious gaze of the attendant waiters, the tiny sprout grew in my mind to the size of a cabbage. Over the period of the sittings at Admiralty House, Sir Paul did manage slowly to divest himself of most of his entourage until I think only one aide accompanied him to Sydney. I was fascinated to know how they were both adjusting to their new life at Yarralumla. Lady Hasluck complained that one couldn’t put a handkerchief down without it being whisked away to the laundry. Indeed the laundry seemed to afford them both much amusement, especially one of the first laundry lists which had at the end of it ‘two black things’. What could the ‘two black things’ be? They never did discover as the unidentifiable articles of clothing never reappeared.

Occasionally there were moments of real nostalgia for the simpler life voiced by them and when, for fun, I brought Sir Paul a packet of crumpets from the local supermarket after he had told me how he longed for cosy evenings toasting crumpets by the fire, he leapt on them with glee, sending them to the kitchen to be toasted for tea. I still remember the horrified expression of the man bearing the offending packet out to the cook.

The sittings at Admiralty House were to be of one hour’s duration so I wasted little time setting up my easel and materials. I found I was warned to the minute when I was to stop and was hustled out fairly quickly. As time went on I think Sir Paul quite enjoyed his moments in Sydney away from the rigours of the household at Yarralumla. He used it to advantage to write and seemed often to enjoy an hour of quiet contemplation while I painted.

A portrait painter has to develop particular skills. All artists develop their own special workplace practices to help the creative energy to rise. We perhaps need some music, the radio, silence, isolation, coffee, wine, food, etc to stimulate us into activity. The portrait painter cannot indulge in his or her own normal habits as she has the sitter to consider and must try to help the subject to relax and enjoy the experience. You may think the painter is only concerned with the physical appearance of the sitter. Indeed she is, but there is more to it than that — and what we attempt of course is ridiculous. How can one distil into a single static image on a flat surface all that one knows, feels and sees in a living person? You cannot, but a good painting can say much. A painting can reveal more than a camera shot which captures one fleeting moment in time. The painter is a manipulator of colours, light — she can exaggerate, heighten things to effect — she can capture the stance of a person which is just as much a ‘likeness’ as the arrangement of the features on the face, she can create a mood to suggest personality, put the subject in a setting and use any number of creative devices. Yet, after all, it is still a personal view. How often in a portrait class have I heard the model remark that the paintings which are so diverse look so like their creators.
While conversing with one’s sitter, hopefully to enable him or her to relax and also to keep the face animated and engaged, the portrait painter still deals with all the normal painterly problems. I am now much practised with this but it was hard, particularly for one who finds the art of conversation not easy. Visual artists are not always good with words and I found often that the going was tough with Sir Paul. At times he seemed remote, inscrutable, the face became a mask; at others so warm, engaging, full of fun and amusement. I contemplated this fascinating mix of the public figure, the private man, the politician, the poet, the historian, the reserved and the passionate person. I knew of his love of horse riding and of the Australian bush. I dreamed of a portrait with an indoor/outdoor setting like some of those early Italian portraits with an exquisite little landscape viewed through a window. I broached many subjects that I felt might trigger some enlightenment from him but mostly he seemed happy to remain silent until one day something brought the talk around to cooking. To my amazement his face lit up and he spoke animatedly at length about the dinner parties he had cooked for in Canberra and the soufflés he had brought to the table to the guests’ applause. I would never have imagined it.

Well, the formal sittings and strictures of time decided the completion of the painting which did not do justice to the sitter but he seemed pleased with the finished result, so much so I remember he paid me $100 more than the agreed fee which was like a fortune to me at the time. And as it was a bonus I indulged myself and bought a suede coat that only found its way to the good Samaritans about ten years ago.

The Haslucks had returned home to Perth when Sir Paul retired from the governor generalship. I too was now living back in Perth when I received a strange request from the Historic Memorials Committee of Australia for some photographs of my portraits. No indication was given of the need for these, but it was urgent. I assumed it was for some recording of portrait painters for publication or something like that. The next curious thing was a phone call from the Women’s Weekly saying that they had heard I was painting the official portrait of Sir Paul Hasluck for Parliament House. ‘Oh no,’ I insisted, ‘I have already painted Sir Paul. It was a private commission’. Months later the Historic Memorials Committee invited me to prepare a sketch for their consideration of possibly commissioning of me to paint the official portrait.

Evidently, years before the governor general, had been requested to ‘turn up’ for sittings with a particular artist to have his portrait painted. He was furious. First of all he didn’t like the painter’s work; secondly he hadn’t even been consulted and he flatly refused. Time went by and no painting had been done. When approached again with some urgency, as he had now retired from this high office, he expressed the desire to be painted by this unknown West Australian painter. Some research evidently needed to be done.
I still have the amazing eight-page document of the agreement between Romola Morrow and the Commonwealth of Australia for the portrait of Sir Paul Hasluck. On page six, clause eight reads (and I quote), 'If the Artist becomes physically or mentally incapable of completing the work, or dies before she completes the work:

(a) this agreement shall terminate except as is provided in or requisite to give effect to the provisions of this clause;
(b) the Commonwealth shall have copyright reproduction rights and property in the portrait (at whatever stage the artist has reached) and in the sketch referred to in this agreement on the basis that the Commonwealth shall make fair and reasonable payment for the work that has been done by the artist; and
(c) the Commonwealth shall be entitled to employ or engage another artist to complete the work...

It was a big commission and came again at an opportune time in my career. It required a trip to Canberra (strangely I had never been before) to see the paintings in Kings Hall. Sir Paul particularly liked the less formal paintings and as we discussed his attire for the portrait he was adamant that he did not want to be painted in any sort of regalia. This became a bit of a worry to me. After the painting had actually begun Dame Alix approached me at a book launching in Fremantle and asked when the portrait was to commence. I was surprised she was not aware the portrait was already underway. The sittings were taking place in Sir Paul’s office space in Perth. ‘What is he wearing?’ she asked. ‘Just a suit — we are deciding which one’. ‘Not that dreadful light grey one!’ ‘No I think a dark one’. She was upset that this painting was to be without all his insignia of office. As I repeated the reason Sir Paul gave me, she retorted ‘that is just false modesty and historically it is not right’. This left me with a dilemma. Maybe a portrait of a governor-general should include his decorations — symbols of office. I wrote to the Historic Memorials Committee and tackled Sir Paul about it. ‘Ridiculous!’ Sir Paul said ‘look at me’. ‘A photograph in morning suit and top hat as evidence’. ‘It’s alright for people like Sir William Slim etc. I look utterly absurd!’ The Historic Memorials committee replied ‘whatever he says’ obviously not buying into another confrontation with an angry Sir Paul.

The sketch to be half-size on stretched canvas was then completed and sent to Sydney to be approved. Months went by and after approval sittings took place. I think there was an overseas trip for Sir Paul somewhere in the middle. I know the whole thing took about two years from beginning to end and I did not enjoy it or the finished painting. To work on the scale required for those official paintings means the figure is quite a bit larger than life size which is hard to handle well. The scale is necessary for the importance of the subject and the place of hanging but even the best artists sometimes have problems.
Portraits are not quite like other works of art for which the usual standards of aesthetic validation might apply. Portraits are always intentionally tied to the representation of actual persons in some potentially discernible way to an audience conditioned by the social conventions of the day. Portraits reflect social realities. Their imagery combines subtle interaction between the artistic and social connections of behaviour and appearance appropriate to the members of society at a particular time. Many of the artists who get the commissions are able to paint the acceptable images. It does not mean the acceptable image is always a great work of art. Remember how Lady Churchill destroyed Graham Sutherland’s great portrait of Sir Winston Churchill? Her displeasure with the image robbed the art world of a very strong portrait. But Picasso’s portrait of Gertrude Stein, much criticised at the time, is now the enduring image of that writer and art patron. You must have heard the artist’s reported reply to the suggestion that it did not look enough like the subject. ‘It will’ Picasso replied. ‘It is I’ she said. In fact it is always friends and family one needs to please — the sitter usually accepts the image. He or she is familiar only with a reverse image in a mirror anyway. But of the people we know intimately we always know too many faces, so we have a blurred image and feel confronted by the one stark picture presented.

Why is it we are all so fascinated with portraits, particularly in this country? We are drawn to images of people both known and unknown. Is it because they are not nameless, they have an individual identity? John Updike, fascinated by Roman portrait busts, wrote: ‘Others in museums pass them by, but I am drawn like a maggot to meat by their pupilless eyes and their putrefying individuality!’ It is interesting to me that the first images drawn by a child are of a face, a face that they know, that usually has a name. There is however the undeniable historic value and significance of portraits which I am sure was the main reason for both Dame Alix and Sir Paul Hasluck’s very genuine interest in this documentary form of art expression.

I painted one last portrait of Sir Paul, possibly the strongest, which was hung in the Parmelia portrait prize in Perth in 1976. Its fate, like many other portraits which don’t find their way into family or public collections, was destined for the bottom drawer of one of my studio cabinets, now suffering the rigours of the harsh Canberra climate and dry air. Portraits will I believe reveal as much about the artist as the sitter. And as I look back at the Hasluck portraits I can relive some very different periods of my life.
The Formative Years: Paul Hasluck and Aboriginal Issues During the 1930s

Anna Haebich

The 1930s witnessed the tentative beginnings of a shift in perceptions towards Aboriginal issues in Australia and a move towards the development of new policies in Aboriginal affairs. Paul Hasluck was a significant contributor to public debate on these issues in Western Australia through his writings as a journalist for the *West Australian* newspaper. In this chapter, I examine these writings in the context of the interplay between new European knowledges about Aborigines, shifting constructions of Aboriginality and changes in government policy.

Bain Attwood has argued that Aboriginalist knowledge was not a critical tool in colonial rule in Australia, being too esoteric or too critical of existing policies and practices to serve such a function, although complicit in the process due to its failure to sufficiently challenge accepted orthodoxies. This paper traces a more direct nexus between colonial rule and Aboriginalist knowledge than Attwood’s argument suggests. It argues that new knowledges contributed in significant ways to new policies adopted by Aboriginal administrations in the 1930s and 1950s. This occurred through a complex interplay between knowledge generated by research, legislative and administrative practice and the actions of committed and informed individuals such as Paul Hasluck. While Hasluck’s writings had only limited immediate impact on the course of Aboriginal affairs in Western Australia, they did significantly shape local debate and perceptions of Aboriginal ‘problems’ and ‘solutions’, in particular, the new policy of assimilation. At the same time Hasluck’s own staunch commitment to assimilation was forged. When he was appointed minister for territories in 1951, he was strategically placed to put his commitment and accumulated knowledge into action and, as a senior minister in the Menzies government, to set in train practices to change Aborigines’ terms of existence through the experiment of assimilation.

Many of the accepted ‘truths’ about race, Australian society and Aboriginal people were seriously challenged during the 1930s. Accounts of horrific massacres of Aborigines in remote Australia brought into question myths of a peaceful and civilised frontier while new research threatened to undermine many cherished stereotypes about Aborigines. For the first time the situation of mixed race populations and their future in white Australia were identified as issues demanding urgent attention. Increasingly these mixed race populations...
were constructed as a major social problem and a serious threat to Australian society.

Popular perceptions of race mixing were a cluster of often contradictory ideas based on beliefs about racial purity and the absolute superiority of the 'British race'. While the mixing of racially distant populations was understood to produce inferior off-spring, the infusion of 'British blood' was also believed to produce persons superior to their Aboriginal ancestors. Such persons were also associated with disharmony, racial inferiority, difference and danger: as a 'hybridised people' they were believed to be 'badly put together ... dissatisfied, restless and ineffective' but, at the same time, because of their white ancestry, they were construed as being capable of leadership and 'revolutionary agitation'.

Research findings from the new department of anthropology at the University of Sydney challenged some of these perceptions. Field studies detailing complex social and cultural practices cut across nineteenth century notions of a simplistic primitive stone age people and promoted some respect for Aboriginal social and cultural life. New perspectives on race mixing reclassified the 'Aboriginal race' as being proto-caucasian, deriving from the same racial stock as white Australians. Concerns about the degenerate consequences of the mixing of distant races therefore did not readily apply. Results from intelligence tests challenged beliefs in Aborigines' innate intellectual inferiority and suggested that persons of mixed descent, at least, were educatable. One consequence of this research was a tendency to conflate traditional culture with race; this led to the growing tendency to deny the Aboriginality of persons of mixed race and to project a separate future for them in white rather than Aboriginal Australia.

Official statistical data providing evidence of a rapidly growing mixed race population, devastated by the economic depression and living in conditions of extreme poverty within white Australia, was publicised widely in the press during the 1930s. This data was promoted by administrators who appeared to be eager to replace existing 'protectionist' policies premised on social Darwinian beliefs in the ultimate extinction of Aboriginal populations with legislation granting wider legal powers over persons of mixed descent. Within this intellectual and emotional context of concern, race mixing was seen to undermine the assumption that Aborigines were virtually extinct, and seriously threatened cherished ideals of a racially homogenous white Australia built on equal rights and a single living standard for all. It also created widespread public alarm about the possibility of the racial tensions and violence that had erupted between black and white in America.

Legislative measures and institutional controls in the nineteenth century were developed to segregate mixed race populations from the wider community, limits on mixed race births were maintained through prohibitions on sexual
contact between whites and blacks and ‘half-British’ children were removed from their families and placed in segregated institutions and missions. During the 1930s these segregationalist practices came under increasing public scrutiny and new policies of biological absorption and assimilation were advocated in their place.

In Western Australia between 1930 and 1934 alone some 600 articles and letters relating to Aboriginal issues appeared in Perth newspapers. The majority of letters to the *West Australian* demonstrated strong racialist attitudes and staunch support for continued segregation and rigid control of all persons of Aboriginal descent. Nevertheless, a more informed debate was conducted in the press by several prominent spokespersons including the chief protector of Aborigines, A O Neville and representatives of the Australian Aborigines Amelioration Association (AAAA), a group of prominent local church dignitaries, businessmen, journalists, including Mr Paul Hasluck, and, initially at least, the staunch feminist and missionary, Mrs M M Bennett. Hasluck had developed an antiquarian interest in Aboriginal traditions and contact history. He recalled in his memoirs that in the 1930s on his return to Perth from a visit to Britain, where he spent some time working with London slum dwellers, he ‘started to look for social disadvantage and found it right in the middle of a congenial hobby’. No doubt Hasluck’s attraction to social justice issues also reflected the influence of his parents who had devoted their lives to Salvation Army mission work amongst the poor of Western Australia.

Neville actively encouraged debate on the ‘half-caste problem’ seeing public interest as a catalyst for the introduction of greater legislative controls over persons of mixed descent. He was a strong supporter of the new policy of biological absorption along with several prominent scientists, doctors and anthropologists, including Dr Cilento in Queensland and N B Tindale in South Australia, and the chief protectors of Aborigines in the Northern Territory and Queensland, Dr Cecil Cook and J W Bleakley. This policy advocated the gradual breeding out of Aboriginal characteristics through interracial marriages arranged by the state and strict social engineering programs to ensure the adoption of ‘civilised’ ways. It owed much to the reclassification of the Aboriginal race as proto-caucasian and the promise that race mixing would not ‘introduce any aberrant characteristics and ... no reversions to the dark aboriginal type’. The policy and was also linked to eugenic practices introduced from the turn of the century to improve the strength and vitality of the Australian nation through scientific state intervention and was grounded in the belief that white prejudice was ‘inherent and ineradicable’ and that ‘national cohesion could only be assured if divergent racial qualities were quickly absorbed’.

In addition to publishing alarming statistical data about the mixed race population, Neville wrote several articles in the *West Australian* under the name ‘A O N’ to popularise his policy position. He claimed that ‘the natural
outcome was for the black to go white' and, since Aborigines were caucasian in origin, progressive inter-marriage could not lead to degeneracy or atavism. Neville assured his readers that, while this policy would require even greater controls and stricter legislation, "our coloured people must be helped in spite of themselves".8

The AAAA was dedicated to ensuring the preservation, protection and development of the 'Australian native races', primarily by acting as a watchdog in relation to government policy and by promoting public interest in Aboriginal issues. Neville initially encouraged AAAA participation in public debate, however, as the body increasingly criticised his administration, relations inevitably soured. Hasluck later recalled that, while he harboured a certain sympathy for Neville and the difficulties he faced dealing with an indifferent government and public service, he was critical of his administration. Hasluck stated that Neville considered himself the 'sole proprietor of the aborigines of Western Australia and ... he had undoubtedly come to a state of mind in which he received his "job satisfaction" by bringing more and more persons under his proprietary care ... "Mister Neville" ran their lives for them'.9

The AAAA was opposed to existing discriminatory laws and practices that lumped together all persons of Aboriginal descent and that forged a segregated mixed race population with no provision for their future development. Pointing to the states' poor record, they urged the federal government to assume responsibility for Aboriginal affairs. It considered the situation of mixed race people to be the major Aboriginal issue, particularly those in the south who had been devastated by the 1930s depression. The solution lay in the policy of assimilation, to enable them to become 'self respecting and useful citizens'.

The policy of assimilation marked the emerging shift from racial to social explanations of Aboriginal disadvantage. Originally proposed by the social anthropologist, A P Elkin, the policy advocated social engineering and the gradual extension of citizenship rights to enable Aborigines of mixed descent to live as white Australians. This shift towards social rather than biological racial explanations was a gradual process which only slowly developed from a loose set of propositions into a clear policy. According to Hasluck, writing in the West Australian, it was a loose plan for the 'gradual reception' of mixed race people into the wider community as useful citizens. This could be achieved by removing families to agricultural settlements where they would be subjected to the assimilating process and then allowed to move out free of legislative controls and with full citizenship rights and access to employment, housing and education. Aborigines of the full descent were to be left to develop 'naturally' on remote segregated reserves.10 This policy reflected the influence of new research findings on the educatability of persons of mixed descent and the denial of their Aboriginality.11
Hasluck recalls in his memoirs that, given white beliefs in their innate superiority and the forward march towards a higher civilisation, it was taken for granted that Aboriginal people would willingly embrace a life in white Australia. In fact, various Aboriginal spokespersons of the time had stated publicly that they wanted freedom from repressive government controls and the right to choose their own way of life, although not necessarily the lifestyle of mainstream Australians. William Harris, the leader of a delegation of southern Aboriginal family representatives to the West Australian premier in 1928, stated, ‘We want to live up to the white man’s standard but in order to be able to do so we should be exempted from the Aborigines Act and allowed to live our lives in our own way’.

The AAAA advocated strategies of conventional political intervention and reasoned discussion based on detailed research and condemned the more inflammatory tactics of their former member, Mrs Bennett. In 1933, Bennett had a paper read to the conference of the British Commonwealth League attacking Neville’s administration, in particular its failure to halt the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal women. When Neville publicly disputed her claims, Bennett responded by having the full text of the paper printed in the Daily News. She subsequently went on to make allegations of slavery in the Kimberley pastoral industry and of government complicity through neglect of Aboriginal workers. Hasluck later commented scathingly that Bennett’s actions only prompted the ‘customary unintelligent debate in which some people were only finding fault and other people only offering excuses ... as usual, when one side lays blame and the other side is concerned with escaping blame, there was more argument than enlightenment and a great shortage of information’.

In an effort to halt such vociferous attacks, the government in 1934 set up the Moseley royal commission to report on the condition and treatment of the state’s Aboriginal populations. The commission’s terms of reference directed attention to issues of Aboriginal health, employment and treatment in the courts and to controversial allegations of ill-treatment of Aboriginal pastoral workers and domestic servants. The commission was also charged to enquire into laws affecting persons of mixed descent and to recommend changes to existing legislation and administrative practice. In recognition of his growing expertise, Hasluck was invited to prepare a series of articles setting the context for the commission. He was also invited to accompany Moseley on his three-month tour of the Kimberley as the sole representative of the press.

Perhaps influenced by the nostalgic writings of the 1929 state centenary celebrations, Hasluck chose to review a century of colonial race relations in Western Australia. He also believed strongly in the ‘lessons which past experience can give’. Hasluck contrasted the settlers’ ‘honourable intentions’ to civilise and Christianise the Aborigines and to extend to them the full status and legal rights of British subjects with the ‘villainous effects’ of their
performance which left Aborigines dispossessed of their lands, decimated in numbers and reduced to a life of utter poverty. He attributed this to the combined impact of policies which failed to protect Aborigines in frontier conditions or to provide a place for them in settler society and the Aborigines’ persistent maintenance of practices which conflicted with British law. Hasluck drew the following conclusions:

There has been no policy of planning a future for the blacks; but only during the past quarter of a century a more efficient care in making their lot easier and protecting them from the less pleasant phases of civilisation. Considering the conditions with which they had to contend throughout the century, it cannot be concluded that the decrease in their numbers means they are necessarily doomed to extinction. As a matter of fact, recent reports of the Aborigines Department yield no proof of the popular conception that the decline is proceeding. Perhaps we will have to adjust our views and plan a future that is not based on the expectation that sooner or later the blacks must die out.

Hasluck seems to have been overwhelmed by his first glimpses of the Kimberley landscape and described flying over ‘a land which seems not to belong to mankind, but to the sun, a land which is so vast and whose meaning is so hard to grasp, that any idea of a Providence who made the earth as a garden for the chosen beings to inhabit must be lost’. As he traversed the region with Mosley he wrote a series of informative articles for the *West Australian* to acquaint readers in the south with Aboriginal living conditions and major issues of the region. His appreciation of regional difference and the dangers of treating Aboriginal populations as a homogeneous bloc was heightened during this trip. He described Aborigines in the Kimberley as a ‘separate unit from the rest of the state’ and a ‘distinct problem calling for a separate solution’. Within the region he identified the varying situations of ‘town blacks, blacks on missions or government reserves and stations, and blacks on stations’, each having their own distinctive elements and requiring different ameliorative measures.

Not surprisingly, Hasluck expressed particular interest in the north’s sizeable mixed race population living in the towns, missions, stations and the bush and he took the opportunity to expand on his position concerning their future. He described the operation of a strict colour bar in Broome which was producing ‘an annually increasing body of discontented misfits’ while the missions and government settlements were producing separate, self-perpetuating populations that were thrown back onto ‘black ways’. Children taken there by police on pastoralists’ advice were lifted ‘out of black camps’ but not given the ‘opportunity to improve their white inheritance’. He asked his readers whether the ‘half-caste’s’ future was to be an ‘outcast’ or to be ‘helped towards a future that is linked more closely to that of the life of his white parent than of
his black parent’. He advised that ‘if the wish is that the half-caste should be
given the opportunity to raise himself to a higher standard and claim the rights
of his white parent eventually, that opportunity will need to be a good one, and
at every step there will need to be not only planned encouragement but a gentle
severance one by one of the ties that would drag him back into the bush’. Hasluck condemned policies advocating the permanent segregation of mixed
race families in villages of ‘coloured people’, the breeding out of colour which
he believed could never succeed because of the north’s colour bar, and continuing
strict legislative controls which kept the people as a separate group. Action
must start from the premise that they were ‘human beings with the right to lead
happy and useful lives’ and they must be admitted into the white community
with the ‘opportunity’ to gain full citizenship without any show of contempt and
with their self respect fully restored.21

Hasluck was impressed by the contribution of the 1800 Aboriginal workers
in the pastoral industry. However, he was concerned by the pastoralists’ attitudes
as expressed in such comments as the ‘black should never leave the wood
heap’ and the ‘less a boy knows about things the better’. He concluded that
the pastoralists’ ‘humaneness’ was ‘of the type which the Royal Society of
Prevention of Cruelty to Animals lives to foster’. Nevertheless, he came to
see the stations as the ‘best hope for the future’ and was convinced that, given
proper guidance, pastoral stations could provide the ideal site for the gradual
transformation of bush Aborigines into productive workers. They were already
the ‘natural medium’ of contact between black and white in the north, providing
a place for Aborigines as workers in the station economy and enabling them to
maintain contact with the country they loved and their traditions and to make a
gradual transition from the old to new way of life. While Hasluck was not
antagonistic to the maintenance of Aboriginal cultural traditions he observed on
the stations, he did believe that these practices would be progressively abandoned
in the ‘transition to civilisation’.22

Hasluck expressed growing frustration with services provided by government
agencies in the Kimberley. He openly criticised the department of public health
for its deplorable official neglect of Aboriginal health (he was particularly shocked
by the sight of 60 lepers camped without shelter in the Derby police paddock
awaiting transportation to Darwin) and urged the immediate appointment of a
travelling medical officer and the establishment of regional medical surveys for
leprosy and venereal disease and a central treatment clinic.23 He was also
alarmed by the hopeless condition of Aborigines department institutions which
lacked money, ideas and structure and quipped rhetorically, ‘What are they
there for? Heaven knows’.24

These articles also indicate the further development of Hasluck’s position
on various issues. With some humour he endeavoured to persuade his readers
that assimilation was the only possible long term goal for all Aboriginal people:
The starting point must be that blacks are to enter the white civilisation. Knowing some of the disadvantages of white civilisation — such as the wearing of waistcoats and being polite to persons whom you would prefer to club, filling in tax forms and living next door to radio maniacs — one might well question whether it is best for the black that he should be civilised. Perhaps, if we had thought of it early enough, we could have all stayed away from Australia and left the native in primitive sylvan peace; or we could have decided not to enter certain parts of the country. But the facts after a hundred years are that even in remote places like the Kimberleys most of the blacks have to a greater or less extent entered our civilisation and the whole trend of development is to bring them still further into it. Of very few parts can it now be said that we are dealing with a virgin people... We have been handed on the problem of seeing that they find the best possible place in our civilisation.

For the first time he wrote of colonial practice in other countries and League of Nations mandates and introduced his readers to the principle of trusteeship, that is, when 'a superior race occupied the land of an inferior race it assumed the responsibility to help and guide that inferior race ... towards a higher civilisation and to assume throughout the position of trustee for its future'.

The pastoralists of the north, he noted, had failed to fulfil this role of trusteeship. While he discounted allegations of slavery and overt cruelty on the stations he was shocked at the pastoralists' failure to plan for their employees' future betterment and the total lack of confidence and trust between black and white. Provocatively he posed the questions, 'Have blacks got souls? Are blacks human beings with human feelings, longings, fears and hopes? ... Have blacks got any reasoning faculty? The North, it seems to a passer-by, answers, "No"'.

When A P Elkin, the anthropologist, left the Kimberley in 1928 after twelve months of anthropological fieldwork he was 'angry, disturbed and determined, [he] knew he was no longer an ivory tower academic'. Hasluck was similarly moved by his experiences. On his return to Perth he poured his energies into the problem closest at hand — the situation of mixed race communities in the south of the state which the report of the Moseley royal commission described as the ‘great problem facing the country today’. The situation of the people there must have seemed more manageable than in the north, being, in Hasluck's opinion, not an issue of race or culture but simply a mandate to improve their social environment and thereby to facilitate their entry into white Australia.

In 1936 Hasluck travelled through the south collecting first-hand information about conditions in the local camps and reserves. His findings were published in July in four newspaper articles with the headlines 'Camps swarming with children,' 'Rubbish tips of humanity', 'The evils of rations' and 'Seeking a solution'. No doubt he was hoping to influence the outcome of debates in the September sitting of parliament on a bill to significantly amend the 1905
Aborigines Act. After a further visit in 1938 these articles were published by the native welfare council (an amalgamation of the AAAA and various women’s and church organisations) as a pamphlet entitled *Our Southern Half Caste Natives and Their Conditions*.

Hasluck’s observations of these communities were indeed alarming. A population of almost four and a half thousand, over fifty percent children, lived in dwellings worse than the ‘poorer class of suburban fowl house’ on waste land reserves lacking even the most basic facilities. He described how:

large families crowded into miserable humpies made of bags and children grow up in conditions which prevent them from becoming anything but ‘half-castes deemed to be aborigines’. Some of the better people attempt to maintain homes of higher class and would seem to merit special help to enable them to leave the reserves and their aboriginal associations, but no help is given.  

Originally intended as temporary camps, most town reserves accommodated up to two hundred permanent residents, many of whom had been forced out of their previous independent way of life and into dependence on Aborigines department rations by the effects of the depression. The only available employment was casual, seasonal and contract work. A man was lucky to earn £70 a year to support a family of eight to twelve children. Due to a combination of white prejudice and government policies, families were denied access to schools, hospitals, cinemas and other town services. This prompted one man to comment, ‘You work hard but you can never get anywhere. You try to improve your place but you still can’t get any of the privileges that the white people get’. In Hasluck’s opinion the actions of the Aborigines department in doggedly classifying virtually all mixed race people as ‘Aboriginal natives’ under the 1905 Aborigines Act for the ‘purposes of better protection and control’ had prevented the families from separating themselves from their ‘aboriginal associations’ and gradually joining the whites.

Hasluck explored the options available to the government to remedy this situation. Again he rejected permanent segregation in government settlements, this would only exacerbate the threat of an internal coloured population. Furthermore, settlements had little hope of becoming self sufficient and would become an ‘eternal burden’ on the state:

What satisfaction are we to find in the spectacle of this strictly-isolated group of ‘foreign’ people, multiplying themselves on biologically unsound lines, going on and on without getting anywhere. They would have the economic value of the hermit, without his claim to spiritual distinction, and would absorb the sole attention of a host of ministering angels, Government officials, who might be better employed on other concerns’.  


The only alternative was to plan for their 'gradual reception' into the community, although Hasluck admitted that 'at present the path is not clear'. Nevertheless, he advocated immediate action to amend the 1905 act to classify persons of mixed descent separately from 'Aboriginal natives' and to provide clear stages, each with its own 'privileges', to encourage the families 'to separate from aboriginal association and gradually join the whites' as well as accommodating the varying needs of different regions, individuals and families. Given the right assistance some 'better families' were already capable of moving into the community. The long term 'key' to the problem lay with the children who must be educated and cared for according to 'white standards of living' to enable them 'to enter the white community on a desirable level'. Hasluck outlined various proposals including small boarding schools and farm training institutions, the majority based on the necessity of removing children from their families. While his proposals would require a 'good deal of patience' and considerable planning and expenditure, it would mean 'the passing into the community of some hundreds of valuable workers and the giving of a chance to these submerged people and in two generations there would be no half-caste problem.' Hasluck concluded:

Whatever is done, it should be done at once. The conditions now existing are a reproach to the State, an outrage to human beings, and a waste of materials. If there are any feelings of humanity in the community the present order will not be allowed to continue. If we recognise the claim that these people have on us by blood relationship we will lift them up instead of pushing them back to the blacks. If we remain indifferent to that appeal, we cannot escape the fact that we are faced with an embarrassing nuisance which grows worse each year. The half-caste problem calls for immediate action.\textsuperscript{35}

Hasluck appears to have overlooked parallels between his ideas and those of a younger, more optimistic A O Neville who in 1915 had supervised the establishment of native farming settlements for the training of mixed race children with the ultimate aim of their absorption into the wider community. Neville had predicted that the settlements would act as 'clearing houses' which could be closed down after two to three generations as the young people gained acceptance in the wider community and as the older people died off. Instead, as Hasluck must have known, the settlements had developed into draconian institutions with enduring institutionalised Aboriginal populations.\textsuperscript{36}

Hasluck's experiences during this period left him convinced that assimilation was the only future for Australia's Aboriginal populations. He endeavoured through his writings to convince others of his position and in doing so helped to shape public perceptions of the policy while also contributing to debate on the mechanics of its implementation. Despite Hasluck's best efforts, his writings aroused little immediate support for the policy. While there was a greater
public awareness of Aboriginal issues, white racism, government disinterest and departmental agendas continued to determine outcomes detrimental to Aboriginal interests. Typical of public opinion is a letter to the *West Australian* in August 1936 in response to ‘all the talk about our coloured people’:

I hope something will be done — not because we have taken their country or anything like that; they were not doing anything with it — but in the interest of the white people. As for building and expecting them to live in houses, anyone who has seen how they live would consider that hopeless.37

In 1936 the Western Australian government chose to adopt chief protector Neville’s biological absorption policy which promised an ultimate solution to the ‘half-caste problem’ with a minimum of change and expense. The 1936 Native Administration Act enshrined the policy and granted the commissioner for native affairs unprecedented controls over a wider range of persons of mixed descent. Government endorsement of the continued integral role of large centralised institutions was also evident in the up-grading of Moore River native settlement and the re-opening of Carrolup settlement in 1938. Under the 1936 act virtually any children of Aboriginal descent could be forcibly removed from their families and placed in government institutions to be trained in the ways of ‘white civilisation’. The commissioner of native affairs, not their parents, controlled their lives until they reached the age of twenty one. From this age any person of ‘quarter-caste’ descent or less was prohibited by law from associating with ‘natives’. In this way they were to be forced to live in the white community, although no measures were introduced to ensure their acceptance. Other adults remained under the strict control of the department of native affairs for the rest of their lives. Through his controls over all ‘native’ marriages, the commissioner could ensure that parties married lighter rather than darker strains while prohibitions on the mixing of ‘quarter-castes’ with ‘natives’ obliged them to seek near white marriage partners. Increased restrictions on sexual contact outside of marriage could also prevent the continued injection of dark strains into the population by preventing unions with other racial groups such as African and American blacks. Through these controls the mixed race populations could be gradually bred out in accordance with the principles of biological absorption, thereby providing an ultimate solution to the problem.

The policy was only implemented over a short period, however, it is sobering to note that its demise was due, not to humanitarian concern and intervention, but to the drain of resources and manpower to the war effort and the retirement of its principal advocate, Mr Neville.

It was not until the 1950s that assimilation emerged as a clearly enunciated policy formally endorsed by federal and state governments and to be applied to all Aboriginal people. Hasluck’s appointment as minister for territories in the Menzies government in 1951 placed him strategically to promote state and federal
endorsement of assimilation. Furthermore, in the context of post-war government rhetoric about the assimilation of migrant communities into white Australia, the assimilation of Aborigines began to appear both natural and inevitable. In 1961 the native welfare council, consisting of federal and state government ministers for Aboriginal affairs, announced that:

In the view of all Australian governments ... all Aborigines and part-Aborigines are expected eventually to attain the same manner of living as other Australians and to live as members of a single Australian community enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same responsibilities, observing the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs, hopes and loyalties as other Australians.¹⁹

This was to be achieved through the offer of citizenship rights to ‘worthy’ Aboriginal individuals together with government action to gradually repeal all discriminatory legislation and to grant full citizenship rights to all Aboriginal people. At the same time all Aboriginal children were to be acculturated into the Australian way of life through compulsory schooling in mainstream education systems. Federal government welfare benefits were also to be gradually extended to all Aboriginal people along with housing and essential services funded largely by the federal government. While this policy did bring material benefits for the many Aboriginal families struggling to exist in third world living conditions, it did not bring an end to policing, surveillance, poverty and destitution. Nor did it acknowledge Aborigines’ traditional ownership of the land and their right to maintain their culture. For many families it posed a terrible choice — for the promise of dignity through citizenship rights and desperately needed improvements in living conditions they must agree to strive to abandon their land, cultural values and ways of living.

Endnotes

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An Abiding Interest and a Constant Approach: Paul Hasluck as Historian, Reformer and Critic of Aboriginal Affairs

Will Sanders

Paul Hasluck had an abiding interest in the circumstances of Aboriginal Australians and their relationships with more recent settlers. Up to the 1920s, he wrote in his autobiography, there had been nothing in his 'personal experience' to 'divert' this interest from a 'keen and respectful inquiry about their past without being worried about their future'. However, after his 'wanderyear' in Europe in 1932 and experience of the London slums, Hasluck returned to Australia with what he later referred to as 'a livened concern for the underprivileged'. He assisted a colleague at the *West Australian* in the formation and work of the Australian Aborigines Amelioration Association (AAAA) and became much more concerned about Aborigines as a 'contemporary social problem'. In 1934, he contributed a series of articles to the *West Australian* on the conditions of Aborigines across the state, based largely on experiences travelling as a journalist with the Moseley royal commission. Similar, more geographically restricted journalistic exercises followed in 1936 and 1938. Also in 1938, Hasluck completed a master of arts thesis at the University of Western Australia on native policy in WA from 1829 to 1897, which was published in 1942 as the book *Black Australians*.

In the 1940s Hasluck’s career took him away from Western Australia and from Aboriginal affairs. However, in 1950, as the newly elected member of the House of Representatives for Curtin, he returned to the subject with enthusiasm, focussing his first major parliamentary speech on the circumstances of Aborigines and commonwealth policy towards them. In 1951 Hasluck became minister for territories in the Menzies government, a position which he held for over twelve years. Through this ministerial office, Hasluck became an important player in the affairs of Aborigines not only in the Northern Territory, but Australia-wide. While there was at this time no formal commonwealth minister for Aboriginal affairs, Hasluck made himself, in many ways, the *de facto* minister. As well as overseeing commonwealth Aboriginal affairs policy in the Northern Territory, Hasluck became a more general voice on Aboriginal issues within the commonwealth government and a prominent voice among state ministers and officials involved in Aboriginal affairs.

From the mid 1960s, Hasluck’s official duties again took him away from Aboriginal affairs. However, in retirement in the 1980s, he returned to the
subject writing the book *Shades of Darkness*. This was an account of Aboriginal affairs from 1925 to 1965, as Hasluck saw it. But the book also contained some reflections on the directions Aboriginal affairs was taking in the 1970s and 1980s. The most striking aspect of Hasluck’s abiding interest and long involvement in Aboriginal affairs was the consistency of his approach. This approach was becoming clear in his contemporary journalistic and more academic historical studies undertaken during the 1930s. It was clearly enunciated by the time of his first major speech to parliament in 1950 and then appears to have remained essentially unchanged for the next forty years, through ministerial office, other official duties and retirement. This consistent approach endowed Hasluck with some firm views about the direction Aboriginal affairs policy needed to be heading and placed him at the forefront of Aboriginal affairs reform as a commonwealth government minister in the 1950s and early 1960s. The approach also led to him having some firm, rather critical views on the direction Aboriginal affairs policy was taking in the 1970s and 1980s. So what was this approach, how did Hasluck act upon it as a reformist minister in the 1950s and early 1960s and how did it shape his critical views of policy developments in the 1970s and 1980s?

The argument of Hasluck’s MA thesis and of *Black Australians* was that the early ideals of native policy in Western Australia in the 1830s and 1840s had gradually been lost during the latter half of the nineteenth century. These early ideals, as Hasluck saw them, were about ‘civilising’ Aborigines, receiving them in to the ‘brotherhood of society and the Christian church’, according them the ‘full status and rights of British subjects’ and fully protecting their ‘physical well-being’. They had been gradually lost from view in Western Australia, Hasluck argued, because of a lack of preparedness to pay for their realisation and because of the more pressing nature of simply managing the problems of first contact in successive districts across the colony. Hasluck claimed:

> From about 1850, official expressions of policy became narrower until they concerned only protection from physical violence and relief of the worst cases of physical distress ... The idea of ‘civilising’ natives, of promoting religion and education among them, of converting them to the Christian faith faded. Even the protecting of them in their person and in the free enjoyment of their possessions took on a reduced meaning.³

Alongside this fading of the original ideals, Hasluck observed the undercutting of the legal status of Aborigines as full and equal British subjects. Although this was often done with intentions of protecting Aborigines, of making the law more applicable and appropriate to their circumstances and even at times of recognising Aboriginal law, Hasluck was sceptical of the results of the process. ‘What purpose or plan’, ‘what possible outcome’ could there be, he asked,
from a system that confines the native within a legal status that has more in common with a born idiot than of any other class of British subject. Such a system could only, in Hasluck’s view, serve to justify abandonment of the ideals of ‘civilising’ Aborigines and be to their ultimate disadvantage.

The core of Hasluck’s approach to Aboriginal affairs, which grew out of this analysis of Western Australian history, was to re-invigorate the early ideals of ‘civilising’ Aboriginal Australians, through instruction and guidance and to restore their legal status to that of other Australians. He believed that far more needed to be spent on the welfare of Aborigines and that the commonwealth should become involved in financing Aboriginal welfare in the states, as well as in the territories. He did not, however, advocate a commonwealth takeover of Aboriginal affairs administration, but rather commonwealth cooperation with the states. This latter aspect of Hasluck’s approach related to his observation of a diversity of Aboriginal circumstances in various parts of Western Australia dating back to the 1930s. He believed that such diversity needed to be approached differently at the level of administration and was appropriately mediated by state Aboriginal welfare authorities and state governments more generally. The one policy commonality which Hasluck sought, in addition to nationwide commonwealth financing, was a commitment among the states to getting rid of special laws applying only to Aborigines. This concern with ending special laws was the bedrock of Hasluck’s approach to Aboriginal affairs. It grew out of his analysis of Western Australian history and his firm belief that the undercutting of the legal status of Aborigines which he observed in nineteenth century WA needed to be radically reversed.

Hasluck’s approach to Aboriginal affairs could perhaps best be summarised as advocating three things. First and foremost was the restoration of the legal status of Aborigines to equality with other Australians. Second was commonwealth financing of Aboriginal welfare nationwide. Third was a slightly greater policy, but not administrative, role for the commonwealth but strictly in cooperation and conjunction with the states. This approach put Hasluck at the forefront of Aboriginal affairs reform as a commonwealth minister for territories in the 1950s and early 1960s.

As minister for territories from 1951, Hasluck operated at a number of different levels in relation to Aboriginal affairs. His most obviously relevant role was overseeing the native affairs branch of the Northern Territory administration. However, he also became a more general voice on Aboriginal issues within the commonwealth government and the driving force behind the ministerial native welfare council, which drew members from the states as well as the commonwealth. At all these different levels of ministerial activity, Hasluck’s strong and constant approach to Aboriginal affairs became clearly evident in concerted reformist efforts.
In the Northern Territory, Hasluck perceived 'stark immediate needs' among Aborigines 'in fields such as health, housing schooling and nutrition'. He also perceived a lack of capacity in the native affairs branch and its associated church missions. Hasluck set about restructuring the branch and building up its financial and other capacities with considerable enthusiasm. He encouraged the secretary of the department of territories to recruit a new director for the branch and in the process took the opportunity to change its name to the welfare branch. Explaining this change thirty years later Hasluck wrote:

From the start I had urged that we should replace the idea of protecting the Aborigines with the idea of advancing their welfare. Protection was a negative policy which showed neither faith nor hope in their future. Consequent on a change towards positive attempts to make life better for them we should also cease treating them as sub-normal people and regard them in the same way as all other Australians. In keeping with this idea, the welfare branch should also have administrative responsibility for any Australians of European origin who needed special care and consideration.

Hasluck went on to explain that in his view:

A logical extension of this approach was to cease using a racial classification for Aborigines. The existing practice in most Australian administrations, under both State and Territorial legislation, was that an Aboriginal was treated as belonging to a separate class unless he applied for and was granted 'exemption'. When he was 'exempted' he could do most things that other Australians did but he lived under the restraint that at any time his 'exemption' could be cancelled and he would cease to be like other Australians. I thought that, although the intention of this legislation was to protect them, the practice subordinated them and lessened their legal and social status in the Australian community. I sought a system under which Aborigines were recognised as Australian citizens and were regarded as having the same status and rights as other Australian citizens unless they were committed to the care of the welfare branch because of their need for special assistance.

In line with this approach, Hasluck oversaw the re-writing in non-racial terms of the main ordinance under which the welfare branch operated. The Northern Territory welfare ordinance of 1953 made no reference to Aborigines per se, only to 'wards'.

Later assessments of this exercise in branch restructuring and ordinance rewriting in the Northern Territory under Hasluck's guidance were not always that glowing. Rowley argued in the late 1960s that the powers of the Northern Territory director of welfare over 'wards' had been 'one of the last big efforts to use authoritarian legislation to control the processes of social change'. He also argued that through a definition of wards which included those not eligible
to vote under the Northern Territory’s electoral regulations, an effective racial category remained since these electoral regulations still excluded Aborigines.¹¹

Although there was some substance to Rowley’s critique, in that large numbers of Aborigines in the Northern Territory did remain both unable to vote and wards of the welfare branch until 1964, there was also a clear sense in which this exercise of the early 1950s was establishing in public policy a line of argument which Hasluck held dear. This argument was about non-racial definitions of legal status and rights, so that Aborigines might, at least in principle, be treated equally with other Australians. Special measures and tutelage applying to particular Aborigines would not be permanent or based on race, but temporary and based on need.

Hasluck’s advocacy of his approach to Aboriginal affairs was also evident in his contacts with state ministers and officials. Hasluck cultivated these contacts assiduously, developing the previous occasional meetings of the ministerial native welfare council into regular bi-annual events. Hasluck chaired these meetings and through them promoted his general approach. This was not done in any overbearing way and not with the direct results that could be achieved in the Northern Territory. Hasluck was committed to working in cooperation with the states and his position on the council was largely that of the Northern Territory’s Aboriginal affairs minister among his state counterparts. He was not on the council in any clear national role, although he was both the chair and a commonwealth representative. Relations between the ministers and officials associated with the council were predominantly ones of mutual respect among equals and Hasluck had to rely on powers of persuasion rather than commonwealth authority.

Hasluck’s influence within the council was, however, significant and could perhaps be inferred from some of the language of the policy of ‘assimilation’. The 1963 version of the policy adopted by the council at a meeting in Darwin stated:

the policy of assimilation means that all Aborigines and part-Aborigines will attain the same manner of living as other Australians and live as members of a single Australian community enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same responsibilities, observing the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs, hopes and loyalties as other Australians. Any special measures taken for Aborigines and part-Aborigines are regarded as temporary measures, not based on race, but intended to meet their need for special care and assistance to protect them from any ill effects of sudden change and to assist them to make the transition from one stage to another in such a way as will be favourable to their social, economic and political advancement.¹⁵

Hasluck always insisted that the policy of assimilation was not something which he and his contemporary ministerial colleagues had invented but had been
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Inherited from the 1930s. The native welfare councils of the 1950s and early 1960s had simply clarified the policy and given it 'greater precision'. Even so, the clarification which the council developed clearly reflected the Hasluck approach.

In regard to the key policy issue, as Hasluck saw it, of getting rid of special legislation, he reported to the commonwealth parliament after the 1963 meeting of the native welfare council that a review of 'action taken to repeal legislation applying only to aborigines' had been undertaken at the conference and that the 'trend throughout Australia' was 'now clearly towards ending any special legislative provision for aborigines'. Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania claimed to have already ended such legislation and the other jurisdictions were actively reviewing it. Clearly Hasluck saw his approach to the legal status of Aborigines enjoying some influence and success outside as well as inside the Northern Territory, through his co-operation with state ministers.

On the issue of commonwealth funding of Aboriginal welfare in the states, as well as the Territories, Hasluck did not enjoy such influence and success. Recalling events in the 1980s, he wrote that the commonwealth:

maintained the view that it should not open any side doors into the established system and procedures for the distribution of funds; that any claims by the states for extra funds should be made only in the annual meetings of the Premiers' Conference and the Loan Council; and that the commonwealth did not lightly give money away without having some control over the way it was spent. As chair of the native welfare council meetings with state ministers, Hasluck noted, he: 'necessarily had to avoid debate on funds and take the federal line that this question could only be handled at the premiers' conference'. Cooperation with the states had to be focused on matters of 'policy and administration', rather than finance.

Hasluck's third level of ministerial involvement in Aboriginal affairs during the 1950s and early 1960s was in relation to his other commonwealth ministerial colleagues. During this time two very important changes were made to commonwealth legislation which were clearly in line with the Hasluck approach of restoring the legal status of Aborigines to that of other Australians. These were the inclusion of Aborigines in the general provisions of the commonwealth's social services/social security legislation in 1959 and its electoral legislation in 1962. In each case some minor special provisions relating to Aborigines remained. 'Nomadic and primitive' Aborigines were excluded by the social security legislation until 1966 and commonwealth electoral enrolment remained voluntary for Aborigines, though compulsory for other Australians, for over two decades after the 1962 changes. Nevertheless, the move towards equal non-racial provisions in both these important areas of commonwealth legislation was clear and Hasluck's influence in pushing in this direction cannot have been
insubstantial. Speaking to the change to commonwealth electoral laws in 1962, Hasluck noted just how far Australian attitudes on this matter had shifted since he had advocated it as an ‘ardent young’ member of the AAAA twenty-five years earlier and how the ‘true analysis of the legal position of the aboriginal’ had finally been recognised in the work of the parliamentary committee recommending these changes. The parliament was not, Hasluck argued, giving Aborigines rights they had never had, but rather was restoring to them equal rights with other ‘British subjects’ which various legislatures had taken from them over the previous century. This clearly harked back to his analysis of the history of Western Australian native policy.

Just how significant Hasluck’s influence was during these years among his commonwealth ministerial colleagues on matters relating to Aborigines can perhaps best be suggested by the Menzies government’s approach to section 51 (xxvi) of the constitution. At that time, this section gave power to the commonwealth to make laws for the peace order and good government of the commonwealth with respect to: ‘The people of any race, other than the aboriginal race in any State, for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws’. During the 1950s a movement had grown up advocating that the commonwealth should become more involved in Aboriginal affairs as a pressing national issue and one of the preferred methods for facilitating such involvement was to delete the phrase, ‘other than the aboriginal race in any State’ from 51 (xxvi) leaving the commonwealth with a power to make laws for ‘the people of any race for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws’. Although Hasluck was in favour of a greater commonwealth role in Aboriginal affairs, at least in finance and policy if not in administration, he steadfastly refused to contemplate the possibility of creating a commonwealth constitutional power in Aboriginal affairs by altering section 51 (xxvi) in this way. It was, as he saw it, directly contrary to his avowed approach to special laws in Aboriginal affairs. He elaborated on his arguments after the idea of this change to section 51(xxvi) had come up at the 1963 native welfare council meeting. A resolution had been passed at the meeting, no doubt at Hasluck’s initiative, which stated that ‘the whole tendency in Australia’ was at that time ‘to eliminate laws that apply especially to the Aboriginal people’. Hasluck argued to the parliament:

This clear tendency to dispense with any special laws affecting Aborigines only is directly relevant to the case that is sometimes urged for the amendment of the Constitution to enable the commonwealth to pass special laws for the people of the Aboriginal race. The train of our thought is that the Aborigines should not be made the subject of special laws and that consequently a power in this parliament to pass laws concerning Aborigines only would be largely unnecessary. Let them come within the laws made for all Australians.
Menzies supported Hasluck in this line of argument and in 1965 proposed a constitutional alteration relating to Aborigines which left section 51(xxvi) intact, while deleting the only other reference to Aborigines in the commonwealth constitution. This other reference was section 127 which had until then forbidden Aborigines from being counted in reckoning the numbers of the people of the commonwealth. This constitutional alteration proposal was not, however, put to a referendum before Menzies retired as prime minister in January 1966.

After Menzies retirement Hasluck’s influence over his ministerial colleagues on matters relating to Aboriginal affairs began to decline. Prime Minister Holt listened to different counsel on section 51 (xxvi) and yielded to the more popularly held view that the phrase ‘other than the Aboriginal race in any State’ should be deleted. This was part of the package approved at the constitutional alteration referendum of May 1967, of which Hasluck remained mildly critical twenty years later. Hasluck doubted that the large majority who had voted ‘yes’ in the 1967 referendum had made a ‘considered judgement on the question of Federal and State powers’ or that they had ‘required the Federal Government to take the principle role in the administration of aboriginal affairs’. Rather he believed that they were simply expressing an ‘opinion that more should be done for Aborigines and that any appearance of discrimination against them should be removed.’

This episode involving section 51 (xxvi) suggested just how strongly and constantly Hasluck held to his avowed approach to Aboriginal affairs. In many ways, the change to section 51(xxvi) forced the commonwealth to become involved in financing Aboriginal affairs in the states, as well as the territories, which Hasluck had long advocated. But even the likelihood that this would be the result of changing section 51 (xxvi) could not move Hasluck from the bedrock of his approach to Aboriginal affairs. As Hasluck saw it, special laws applying only to Aboriginal people needed to be ended by all legislatures, rather than extended to the commonwealth realm. There was, for Hasluck, no resiling from this core aspect of his approach to Aboriginal affairs. Having developed the approach through his analysis of Western Australian history and applying it consistently over a decade of reform as minister for territories, Hasluck was not going to give it up in the face of changing tides of public opinion. Hasluck’s commitment to the approach was intellectual and social, rather than political and he saw no reason to change it. Thus began a period from the mid 1960s in which Hasluck became less influential and more critical of government policy in Aboriginal affairs.

In retirement in the 1980s, Paul Hasluck returned to Aboriginal affairs as a subject of his writings. His purposes in doing so would appear to have been twofold. First, he clearly felt that the era of Aboriginal affairs in which he had been involved had been misrepresented and misunderstood since and he wanted to give an account of the era from the perspective of the times. Second, he
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wanted to express some reservations about the contemporary direction of Aboriginal affairs policy.

Hasluck expressed three reservations about the 'inauguration' of the 'new order' in Aboriginal affairs which had followed the 1967 constitutional alteration referendum. The first was that he did not support the form of commonwealth intervention in Aboriginal affairs which had developed. While there was, he argued, 'a need for national co-ordination of policy and for national provision of funds', his 'experience' in Aboriginal affairs had led him to the view that 'most administrative measures for the benefit of Aborigines' could 'best be undertaken by State instrumentalities' responding to 'local situations'. Commonwealth development of an Aboriginal affairs administration had, he argued, led to 'needless and costly duplication', 'conflict between the Federal and State governments' and a 'disregard of local conditions':

Ministers with limited experience have tried to deal with aboriginal affairs as though there was a single question to be settled by a single decision instead of a diversity of situations calling for flexibility and variety in administration and carefulness in imposing the views of the centre on the outlying parts.

Hasluck's second reservation was that the inauguration of the new order had not had 'enough regard' for the 'experience of the past'. Experienced 'senior officers' had not been 'used to advantage' as the 'eager puppies did not recognise the value of the old dog for a hard road'. Third, and more serious as Hasluck saw it, was the 'misrepresentation by the newcomers of their predecessors ... Some of these misrepresentations were that we had given the Aborigines no choice about their future, that we had been 'paternalistic' and that we had not discussed matters with Aborigines'. These 'false statements' as Hasluck saw them, 'crystallised' in a 'general misrepresentation' of the policy of assimilation, about which some 'harsh words' had been written 'without full appreciation of how it was seen by its proponents'. Hasluck recognised the political truism that: 'To prove that a new policy is good it is usually found necessary to prove that the old policy was bad'. Yet, despite this recognition, Hasluck still wanted to defend assimilation against misrepresentation. He argued that the policy of assimilation had grown out of the 'observation of two happenings'. The first was that Aboriginal 'fringe-dwellers' who were 'living in close association with Europeans, had no prospect of returning to the aboriginal way of life'. The second was that 'young Aborigines' were 'being attracted more and more towards European settlements and towns'. Having observed the fact of this 'drift', Hasluck continued:

one hoped that closer association with whites might not mean deterioration and further disadvantage for the Aborigines but might mean improvement of their lot and their acceptance on equal terms — that the end might not be what Elkin had
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described as ‘intelligent parasitism’ but full membership of and participation in Australian society, and that the Aborigines would see themselves as citizens not fringe-dwellers.¹²

For Hasluck, there were only two possible ends of Aboriginal affairs policy; assimilation or absorption of Aborigines into the larger society on the one hand and segregation or separate development on the other. His era of Aboriginal affairs policy had opted for the former not, as he saw it, because ‘someone in government’ had a ‘bright idea’ but as the ‘result of recognising what was happening to the Aborigines and responding to the changes in their condition’.³³

There was, as Hasluck saw it, a certain inevitability to assimilation as a social process and it was logical for government policy to ease the path towards it. The next generation of Aboriginal affairs policy makers, Hasluck feared, was lapsing into ideas about segregation and separate development. He saw decisions being made to ‘treat Aborigines as persons racially distinct and socially different from other Australians’.³⁴ This new policy was, as Hasluck saw it, ‘reawakening’ and at times actively promoting ‘racial divisions and antipathies’. It was ‘avoiding the fact that a return to the past is never a solution to the problems of the future’.³⁵

At the level of policy instruments, Hasluck also saw what he regarded as special laws, such as land rights laws, being applied anew to Aboriginal people. He feared that these special laws might lead to something like a repeat of the history of native policy in WA in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to which his whole approach to Aboriginal affairs had been a reaction. Hasluck saw a generation of policy making effort in Aboriginal affairs being turned away from and threatened and he reacted accordingly. He had analysed history and acted upon that analysis clearly and consistently in his time. Guided by this constant approach in a changing world, he had now become a critic of new directions in government Aboriginal affairs policy in the 1970s and 1980s.

In Shades of Darkness Hasluck expresses some elements of doubt about his long avowed and constant approach to Aboriginal affairs. He acknowledged that the social reformers of his time had been influenced by the ‘evangelism of mid and late Victorian England which placed emphasis on the individual’ and that this may have meant that they ‘did not see clearly the ways in which the individual is bound by membership of a family or a group’.³⁶ He also acknowledged that at the time of developing his approach, his generation had ‘still had faith’ in the ‘way of life of Europeans’ as somehow ‘more civilised’ and ‘more advanced’ than the ‘way of life of the Aborigines’.³⁷ Because of this, Hasluck acknowledged, the ‘sympathisers’ with Aborigines of his generation had not given ‘enough attention to the barriers that impede change or to the question whether all the Aborigines wanted a change’.³⁸ Although these were clearly significant doubts which had entered Hasluck’s thinking over the intervening years, his general approach to Aboriginal affairs remained intact.
He was no longer at the forefront of Aboriginal affairs reform but was a defender of policy history and a contemporary policy critic.

As an observer of Aboriginal affairs who deeply respected Paul Hasluck but cannot in the end agree with his assessment of developments in government policy in the 1970s and 1980s, it perhaps behoves me, in conclusion, to make some comment about where I see his judgement erring in this assessment of the new era in Aboriginal affairs.

Perhaps Hasluck’s first blind spot on Aboriginal affairs post 1967 was his insistence that the ends of policy had to be either absorption or assimilation of Aborigines on the one hand or segregation and separate development on the other. Post 1967 policy has not been as much about separate development as Hasluck would have us believe. It has in fact been far more about choice and the involvement in choice of Aboriginal people themselves; hence the new key policy terms ‘self-determination’ and ‘self-management’. The idea of Aboriginal people choosing and being involved in the development of their own futures does not preclude assimilation or absorption into the larger Australian society. There are indeed still strong commitments within the substance of Aboriginal affairs policy to achieving social and economic equality with other Australians for Aborigines, which are redolent of assimilation. These commitments sometimes sit somewhat uneasily beside the emphasis on choice in modern Aboriginal affairs policy which although it does not prescribe difference and separate development certainly allows it. These tensions in modern Aboriginal affairs policy are significant but may in the end be able to be reconciled. The choice for Aborigines may not be so stark as either separate development or assimilation. There may in the end be middle ground alternatives which Aboriginal people may choose and which Hasluck from his historical perspective could not foresee.

Perhaps Hasluck’s second blind spot on recent Aboriginal affairs policy was in relation to the role of special laws. Hasluck firmly believed, on the basis of WA history that such laws could only be to the disadvantage of Aborigines, relegating them to a status less than citizenship. Because of this, he could not conceive that in another time, in response to other historical circumstances, special laws might be to Aboriginal peoples advantage, providing them with full, appropriate citizenship. The history of special laws might not necessarily repeat itself so much as evidence similar legal forms being utilised for different policy purposes in different historical circumstances. Hasluck also probably underestimated the conceptual fluidity of the idea of special laws. He maintained that recognising Aboriginal land rights was a special law, recognising ‘one system of landholding for one section of the population and a different system for another’.39 However, Justice Brennan, in the lead Mabo judgement recognising native title in 1992, argued that not to recognise native title would be to ‘destroy the equality of all Australian citizens before the law’.40
Breinan clearly believed that recognising native title was not a special law but a general law involving equal treatment. What counts as a special law is clearly not self-evident. But the complexity of this issue was never really acknowledged by Hasluck.

Clearly Paul Hasluck was a very substantial figure in Australian Aboriginal affairs. He was, in his time, both an innovative historian and a prominent reformer of Aboriginal affairs policy and administration. He was, however, also a man of his time in Aboriginal affairs and by the years of his retirement the times had moved on. As the subtitle of Shades of Darkness suggests, Paul Hasluck’s time in Aboriginal affairs was 1925 to 1965. After that he was himself becoming part of the history.

Endnotes

2  Ibid., p. 242.
3  Ibid.
4  Paul Hasluck, Black Australians: A Survey of Native Policy in Western Australia, 1829-1897, Melbourne, 1942, p. 13.
5  Ibid., p. 62.
6  Ibid., p. 161.
7  See Hasluck’s first major speech to Parliament, which as noted earlier was on the conditions of Aborigines and commonwealth policy towards them. Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates, vol. 208, 8 June 1950, pp. 3976-81.
8  Hasluck, Mucking About, p. 249.
10  As well as fighting for increased finance through the budgetary process, Hasluck developed some far-reaching ideas about royalties derived from economic development on Aboriginal reserves in the Northern Territory being dedicated to the benefit of Aborigines. See J C Altman, Aborigines and Mining Royalties in the Northern Territory, Canberra, 1983, chapter 1, Hasluck, Shades of Darkness, pp. 111-115.
11  Hasluck Shades of Darkness, p. 86.
12  Ibid., p 86.
15  Hasluck, Shades of Darkness, p. 93.
16  Ibid., p. 70.
18  Hasluck, Shades of Darkness, p. 91.
19  Ibid.
20  Ibid.
21  After 1962 however, like other Australians, Aborigines had to vote if enrolled.

25 It is logically possible that Hasluck did not foresee such financing as a likely result of changing section 51 (xvi). However, the push behind the change was so much about creating a greater commonwealth role that this is highly unlikely.

26 Hasluck, *Shades of Darkness*, p. 125.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid. This recognition was also clearly reflected in the title of the chapter in which this discussion occurred 'Ring in the New: Pull the Plug on the Old'.

32 Ibid., p. 126.

33 Ibid., p. 130.

34 Ibid., p. 139.

35 Ibid., p. 149.

36 Ibid., p. 130.

37 Ibid., p. 7.

38 Ibid., p. 24.

39 Ibid., p. 104.

The Modesty of the State: Hasluck and the Anthropological Critics of Assimilation

Tim Rowse

It will be my argument in this chapter that the juridical, individualist tendency within Paul Hasluck's liberalism made him apprehensive about the persistence of Aboriginal peoples' sense of identity and togetherness. His apprehension, at times, took the form of revulsion. In 1959 he spoke of Aboriginal people being 'tangled in their own distressed situation like flies on sticky paper. They could fly if only they could get clear of their surroundings, lift themselves free of their past, leaving behind them their present life'. Even when the flies soar free, the image is hardly alluring to any Australian who has been on a picnic.

I will first examine two unpublished speeches which Hasluck delivered in 1959 to show the language in which he explored some of the problems of 'assimilation' as a project of government. The first address was to the 'Pleasant Sunday Afternoons' meeting on July 12; the second was Hasluck's presidential address to the anthropology section of the August 1959 ANZAAS [Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science] conference in Perth. I will then contrast Hasluck's views in these papers with the arguments of anthropologists who had begun to criticise the implementation of assimilation policy. This contrast will lead me into the argument that Hasluck's liberalism was of a rather narrowly juridical character, hostile to the sociological realities on which rested an alternative stream of liberalism espoused by his critics and embraced by Australian governments since the 1970s.

In 1959 Hasluck told the anthropologists: 'The policy of assimilation was not the result of someone in government having a bright idea but was the result of recognising what was happening to the aborigines and responding to the changes in their condition'. If 'they are to live like us' — Hasluck's most succinct formulation of 'assimilation' policy — then it was not going to be government so much as 'society' itself which would do the transformative work. Hasluck offered the anthropologists the following account of the pressures to conform:

Societies come into being and they flourish through the similarity of outlook and habit among the members. A society has to impose some measure of conformity with its requirements as a society and its strongest sanctions are not — most certainly are not — the penalties imposed by its statutes but the customs and conventions according to which a person is accepted or rejected, considered worthy or considered unfit. Society will not change very much just to accommodate the...
person who is described as a ‘social misfit’ or as having ‘anti-social tendencies’; nor, in the long run, will it tolerate him if he tries to live separately in his own way in the midst of society. He is expected to make a change. He is only accepted if he does make a change.³

It was an ‘error’ characteristic of the ‘thinking of some champions of aboriginal rights’ argued Hasluck to assume that ‘governments or administrative officers decide these matters. They do not’:

Society has its own preferences, customs, habits, exclusiveness, censorship and cruelty.⁴

Even if ‘society’ bore the major burden of ‘assimilation’, it was not beyond ministerial chiding. In his address to the PSA, Hasluck made frequent use of the second person pronouns — ‘you’, ‘your’ — in order to accuse the ‘general community’ of being so distracted by the remote aborigines’ conspicuous (and only apparent) deprivation that it did not notice ‘the fringe-dwellers’: ‘It would be your neglect if you let the fallen man lie in the dust. In the same way it is your neglect if you pass over the plight of the aboriginal with the remark that he is a poor type anyhow and will not try to better himself’.⁵

‘[T]he general community’ had not helped these people ‘take advantage of the opportunities before them as citizens of Australia’.⁶ In the same speech Hasluck cited an Aboriginal speaker’s point that ‘it is not governments but God who changes the hearts of the people’:

My parallel point is that it is not governments but the community that touches the feelings of these outcasts about the way they live.⁷

Hasluck’s denial that government is the agent pre-eminently responsible for ‘assimilation’ could be interpreted as a professional politician’s evasions. His remarks may have had that pertinence, but there is more to his denials than that. Hasluck gave a number of examples of the inherent difficulty on the part played by governments.

Though statements about ‘assimilation’ often postulated a sequence of stages through which Aborigines would pass, it proved difficult for governments to know how to help to bring one stage to a close in order not to stifle the emergence of the next. Hasluck reported:

Perhaps the most difficult decision to be made by anyone engaged in native welfare administration is a decision whether one form of help is no longer needed and when another form of help should be given, and this question is allied with another problem of how far the guardian should go in making decisions for the aboriginal. There is the danger of going on too long and impeding the development of the aboriginal’s own character and sense of responsibility.⁸
Some people accused the government of tardiness in making legislative and administrative changes, while others complained of its crude haste in lifting restrictions on an unready subject population. Hasluck nominated both haste and tardiness as dangers. 'Many of the problems today are often not problems of neglect but of the results of forcing the pace of change', he said of the remote Aboriginal people of the 1950s. Yet Hasluck also believed that Aboriginal society was irreversibly compromised by its contact with non-Aboriginal society, that it had no future. It is implicit in this view that governments have a certain responsibility not to let Aboriginal people linger, in an incapacitated condition, over their transitions to a better life:

Today, most groups of aborigines have passed the stage when they might make adjustments as a society and, in those few places where there might be something that could be described as an aboriginal society the innovations are being forced upon the people so purposefully that it is doubtful whether the aboriginal society can make those adjustments which, in slower days, marked their acceptance of an innovation and their attempt to accommodate their life to it.

A second and related problem which preoccupied Hasluck was the 'administrative dilemma' of the settlement. How to prevent a settlement:

which was designed for protection or education in a period of transition, from turning into a fixed community of its own? How do you make sure that the staging camp does not become the end of the road? At this ultimate stage of transition the aboriginal may also hold most devotedly to his own associations with people of his own kin and colour, rejecting of his own will the opportunity to ‘become an Australian’.

A third set of dilemmas is more deeply implicit in some of Hasluck's speaking and writing. Though he often evoked Aboriginal people as individuals, governments acted upon indigenous Australians as categories of persons with common, disabling, characteristics. Not all social administration in the assimilation era took the form of individual case-work; the government had inevitably to act upon Aboriginal people in aggregates. Since governments could not completely avoid categorically nominating its objects, Hasluck went to extraordinary lengths to find categorical terms which did not require entrenching criteria of 'aboriginality'.

This was not only a way to deal with variations in definition of 'aboriginal' and 'native' across five state jurisdictions and the commonwealth; it was also an attempt to reduce the salience of racial difference in Australia’s public culture. The statement issued by the 1951 Commonwealth and States Conference on Native Welfare explained that the various populations to be given special
treatment were not, in the eyes of government, ‘Aborigines’ or ‘natives’. Rather they were ‘wards of the State who, for the time being, stand in need of guardianship’:

This view could be given clear expression by amendments of existing legislation where necessary, so that, in place of attempts to define a native or an Aboriginal, the legislation would be made to apply only to those persons deemed to stand in need of the provisions of such legislation for their guardianship and tutelage.¹²

Only in the Northern Territory was the term ‘ward’ written into legislation and the language of administration. The governing of the Aboriginal population otherwise perpetuated one of the historic conditions of an emerging, politicised Aboriginal identity — the very terms ‘Aboriginal’ and ‘native’.

Even had Hasluck’s wish been granted and the terms ‘Aboriginal’ and ‘native’ disappeared from the vocabulary of statute and administration, the modalities of government action would have remained aggregative and segregative. This ill-suited Hasluck’s vision for indigenous Australians as socially mobile individuals and households. By the late 1950s, Hasluck was arguing that, as Aboriginal society disappeared, the categorical constitution of the objects of government (even if they were called ‘wards’) was becoming less and less appropriate. The ‘displaced individual’ was now the most important phenomenon for native welfare to come to terms with. ‘I feel reasonably sure that, more and more, we will have to think in our native welfare administration of individual persons of aboriginal descent’, wrote Hasluck. ‘The behaviour of the individual, the response of the individual, the aspiration or the effort of the individual, the heart and mind of the individual are at the core of our problem’.¹³ Not to revise the modalities of social administration would militate against the realisation of one of Hasluck’s great hopes: that Aboriginal people would cease to think of themselves as members of a labelled category — Aborigines — and regard themselves primarily as individuals. In short, Hasluck had to deal with executive realities which were inherently adverse to his ambition to individualise indigenous Australians — the arbitrary time-table of a ‘transition’ conceived as managed ‘stages’ through which people would move en masse, an institutional order whose segregative structure tended to create enclaves and the administrative nomination of an Aboriginal ‘commonality’. The gap between Hasluck’s cherished doctrine — the primacy of individuals — and these administrative realities gave him excellent grounds to write effacingly of government. Executive pathos is the subtext of writings which ostensibly reek with cultural confidence.

Hasluck’s 1959 speeches were preoccupied with the problem of the persistence of senses of difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. In fact, he spoke about the persistence of difference as two different kinds of problem — the social psychology of Aboriginal people in
transition and the problem of political representation. Let me deal with the second problem first.

In his July 1959 speech, Hasluck characterised troubling political phenomena as ostentation. He opened his July speech by referring to the kind of speech he was not going to make — a 'speech that is easy to make about aborigines' about their 'neglect' by governments: '[I]t is both easy and noisy — like kicking a can along the street.... I do not want to make that easy and noisy speech this afternoon.' And 'it is easy to paint a lurid and dramatic picture of primitive men and women crouching in crude bush shelters'. He contrasted the conspicuous behaviour of reformers and critics with the unostentatious work of good government: '[W]e are supposed to do good by stealth but there is not half the attraction in doing good by stealth as doing it in the full light of television cameras or popping up where someone is bound to take a picture of us'. Hasluck was making a point not merely about the demeanour of public life, about the virtue of modesty and the vulgarity of flaunted concern. He believed that the ostentation of some critics' approaches to public policy on Aborigines militated against the gradual reduction in the visibility of Aboriginality itself. For example, he warned against the kind of concern which has the 'effect of making everyone regard the aboriginal as something that ought to be in a side-show rather than as a human being' and which 'has the effect of heightening race consciousness on both sides'. Any 'heightening of race consciousness', he went on to say 'becomes an obstacle to the process of assimilation... we do not want to become more and more conscious of their differences from us but of their likenesses to us....When we see them taking themselves naturally and escaping notice for heaven's sake keep their privacy sacred'.

Six weeks later, in his ANZAAS speech, Hasluck again turned on the critics of 'assimilation', accusing them of selfishness and of a lack of genuine heed for the welfare of those whom they championed:

The besetting folly of persons eager for reform is in forcing issues that need not be forced without regard to what happens to unfortunate parties. How many poor wretches have been dragged into the arena of social controversy and butchered to make a reformer's triumph or a prize-winning newspaper story?

Again he contrasted such ostentation with the humility of effective government — the 'sheltering, protecting, guiding, teaching and helping and eventually, as the final and most difficult act of native welfare, quietly withdrawing without any proud fuss when the aboriginal enters the community'.

Though Hasluck argued that persisting senses of difference between Aborigines and other Australians were an artefact of his critics' inappropriate political demeanour, he dwelt also on what was stubbornly enduring about Aboriginality. In his ANZAAS address to the anthropologists he confidently plotted Aboriginal society's lack of future:
Here and there throughout the continent there are crumbling groups of aboriginal people bound together by ancient tradition and kinship and living under a fading discipline ... the tattered threads of kinship ... None of these can be identified as a society in the same way as the rest of the people in Australia can be identified as a society.

He also reminded his audience that anthropologists, rather than government, were the authors of this vision. The 'adoption of that policy of assimilation ... owed a good deal to the observation by anthropologists of the crumbling away of aboriginal society and culture'.

However, he was now uncertain about one aspect of that scenario. It is 'reasonably clear what happens to aboriginal society', he asserted, but it was 'rather more difficult to trace the expiring influence of aboriginal culture'. If the 'influence of his cultural past may still be felt by the individual' then some of the blame must be apportioned to certain unnamed critics of government policy, because 'the aboriginal ... is the victim of the Cult of the Aboriginal that is fostered in Australia today'. But that 'cult' flourished partly because Aboriginal people, whose society was gone or doomed to expire, were in a condition of psychological jeopardy: 'It appears that there has to be a breakdown of the aboriginal society and a loosening of the compulsions and emotional links with aboriginal life before there is any real chance of entry into Australian society'. It was therefore possible to take different views of the resulting vulnerability of Aboriginal people:

Looked at from one point of view, the weakness of the old aboriginal society and of the present-day groups of aborigines is an advantage. The more it crumbles the more readily may its fragments be mingled with the rest of the people living in Australia. Looked at from another point of view, the disappearance of aboriginal society leaves the aboriginal person with limited capacity to assert himself or to serve his own interests.

He was conscious that Australian society was not necessarily sympathetic to Aborigines’ transitional vulnerability. He hoped that Australian society would be 'capable of looking tolerantly at some departure from its usual standards'. As he ruminated, 'the complexity and fluidity of our society add to the difficulty and uncertainty of assimilation'.16

The interaction of the 'Cult of the Aboriginal' with the genuine problems experienced by Aboriginal people in their transitional state made it 'hard to disentangle the real from the spurious'. A sense of Aboriginal identity whose bases were a mixture of the 'spurious' (political ostentation) and the 'real' (the emotional stresses of transition) posed a challenge to Hasluck. He met it by asserting a role for government as an inconspicuous support for troubled individuals. Without such protection as native welfare bureaucracies could
offer, the Aboriginal person 'may seek his own shelter and protection within a
group composed of persons like himself and these groups have a tendency to
harden and become less penetrable than the individual... the grouping together
of Aboriginal people may become one of the most serious obstacles to social
change'. In short, it was Hasluck's view that 'grouping together' was doubly
pathological — both an artefact of inappropriate political criticism and a symptom
of genuine Aboriginal distress.

According to the biographer of A P Elkin, Tigger Wise, Hasluck was stepping
into a trap laid by Elkin when he made these points to the anthropological section
of ANZAAS. Wise tells us that Elkin had been exchanging horrified letters
with Ronald and Catherine Berndt about some of the things Hasluck had recently
been heard to say about 'assimilation'. Hasluck was giving 'unfortunate
connotations of force' to a term over which Elkin felt some proprietorial
responsibility. Elkin and the Berndts wondered whether Hasluck any longer
read what anthropologists were saying. The Perth meeting of ANZAAS would
honour Hasluck by allowing him the presidential address, but it would also call
on him to account to anthropology for his views.18

As discussant, Elkin took Hasluck on. He insisted that though:

full-blood Aborigines will become literate and educated, skilled and more fitted to
play parts in our economic life, they will remain in the foreseeable future Aborigines
in their social and kin relationships and in their appreciation of values. They will
earn money, but their use of it and of what is obtained with it will be determined by
their kinship ties, NOT by our concept of individual ownership, just as their houses
will in many cases be shelters for relations, not for the exclusive use as a home for an
individual family, and probably too, work will be regarded not as a responsible
relationship to an employer, but as an inescapable food gathering activity when
cash is low.19

He asked the minister to accept that Aboriginal people 'will observe a partial
and voluntary segregation — an apartness for an unpredictable period' because
'group life' and 'continuity with the past' were 'essential principles for a people's
well being'.20 He reformulated 'our task' as 'to see that the phase of apartness
does not become apartheid, but that the Aboriginal integers are truly integrated
... in a plural society — Australia'.21

Over the next few years, other prominent anthropologists voiced similar
corns about Hasluck's application of the doctrine of assimilation. It is
interesting to consider the work of T G H Strehlow in this context. Some parts
of Strehlow's work on the Arrernte of central Australia could have been cited
by Hasluck as attesting the 'crumbling away of aboriginal society and culture'.
But Strehlow, as I have argued elsewhere, referred to Arrernte culture in two
different ways.22 On the one hand, when he referred to the passing of Arrernte
culture, Strehlow pointed to the fact that, to the best of his knowledge, certain
ceremonies were no longer performed. On the other hand, he referred to Arrernte culture as surviving and continuing: the psychological importance of group life, the language, the art, the knowledge of country. In his 1960 pamphlet Nomads in No-Man’s Land Strehlow urged action:

to strengthen and build up rather than to destroy the remains of aboriginal authority and aboriginal pride on the more isolated aboriginal settlements ... [T]he responsible authorities should ease off their attacks on [initiation] rites and cease undermining the last traces of Aboriginal authority.  

My third example of anthropological critique is a paper published in 1962 by Catherine Berndt. Berndt’s work is noteworthy because she went further than Elkin’s and Strehlow’s defence of the group life of ‘full-bloods’. Her critique questioned the individualisation of people of mixed descent. She observed that Aborigines were evidently not making the move ‘from an environment of warm, secure, primary relations to a world where the “citizen-isolate” stands alone and unprotected’. Nor should they be expected or forced to make such a move. She referred to arguments within recent social theory which held that the family was a better site of care than the institution. In this perspective, the welfare client’s relationships were considered more significant to his or her well-being than ‘material and physical environment’. Berndt argued that in all industrial societies the solidity of ‘primary group relations’ had become problematic, not only for those whose lives were a ‘social problem’, but for all. The dilemma facing administrators of Aboriginal welfare was thus universal, though particularly sharp in the Aboriginal case, since ‘assimilation’ had been trying to detach young Aboriginal people from their families — emotionally, culturally and sometimes physically. ‘Assimilation’ also sought to detach ‘nuclear’ families from the wider kin network:

The principal dilemma here is an intergenerational one, hinging on the nature of the bond between parents and children: should the social and emotional aspects of this relationship be stressed at the expense of the achievement aspect? Or does prolonged separation, breaking up the family as a co-resident unit, have long-run advantages which counterbalance its apparent demerits? 

Berndt was inviting authorities such as Hasluck to recognise that what she termed the ‘citizen-isolate’ was a fantasy, an undesirable working hypothesis for social policy.

There is a discursive tradition in which it makes sense to imagine that people can be ‘citizen-isolates’. I propose that we call this tradition ‘juridical liberalism’ and that we distinguish it from a strand of liberalism on which Berndt, Strehlow and Elkin were drawing — a sociological liberalism. I will argue that programmatic statements about the desirability of ‘assimilation’ were phrased
in terms of either of these two liberalisms. I will illustrate the history of their divergence and tension by quoting from the writings of A P Elkin and Paul Hasluck before and after their 1959 confrontation in Perth.

Before doing so, I want to draw attention to the relevance of the work of Emile Durkheim. Recent Durkheim scholarship has changed our image of him. He was once portrayed as a conservative who made sense of the nineteenth century by lamenting the difficulty of maintaining social order, as the modernisation of societies made them more and more internally differentiated. The revised view finds that Durkheim was a liberal who explored with some optimism the possibilities of new forms of social order which were appropriate to modern differentiated societies. Durkheimian liberalism argues that democratic nation states are to be held together by moral ideals — such as respect for the individual — which were socially embedded in the vitality of what Durkheim called ‘secondary groups’:

Sociologically, democracy was grounded in the vitality of multiple groups and institutions in society which provided the main focus of the lives of individuals; such strong social groups constituted the intermediate ground of social life — somewhere between ‘the individual’ and ‘the state’.

In the Durkheimian tradition of social criticism, writers differ over which social formations are to be considered the more important ‘secondary groups’. Even though Durkheim thought that ‘race’ should and would become a less important factor in social life and that it was not conceptually adequate to the explanation of social structures, I have no doubt that it is in keeping with Durkheim’s views on modern democratic societies that ‘secondary groups’ may include formations and associations held together by common senses of ethnic identity.

Durkheim was highly critical of the utilitarian and contractarian traditions in social theory because they were able neither to account for, nor to envisage the maintenance of, the necessary moral density of social relationships. Concerned for the moral constitution of the social order, the Durkheimian tradition has conducted an often uneasy dialogue with the strand of liberalism which I am here calling ‘juridical’. The historic preoccupation of juridical liberalism has been a sometimes militant concern to unfetter individuals from pernicious social bonds and to imagine individuals and to act towards them in terms of their abstract universal equivalence from the point of view of the state. The liberal tradition can be understood as an unceasing intercourse and tension between its juridical and sociological sub-traditions.

A P Elkin was one of our foremost Durkheimian liberals. Tigger Wise, whose portrait of Elkin is more psychological than intellectual, refers to his ‘old gods — Darwin, Durkheim and a dash of Kant’. Elkin’s experience of Australia in the great depression made him one of those 1930s liberals who condemned western liberalism’s egoistic individualism, its impoverished conception of
To Elkin, rounded and psychologically-integrated persons could flourish only in culturally integrated societies. In some essays of the thirties and early forties, Elkin extolled the functional integration of Aboriginal society as exemplary of what egoistic European liberalism was not; Aborigines traditionally enjoyed a condition of community which complex European societies must strive to match lest they sink further into anomic egoism. In Elkin's view, the culture which Aborigines had shared and in some places still shared, was a source of individual psychological strength for its members.

As an early advocate of 'assimilation', Elkin had advised against thinking of Aborigines as an ensemble of individuals, each to be liberated from their Aboriginality by the state. In his 1944 book Citizenship for the Aborigines, he listed and expounded the principles that he hoped would guide policies for Aboriginal citizenship; one of them was that 'Group — or community — life is of fundamental importance to persons of Aboriginal descent'. Government settlements and missions should therefore preserve 'Aboriginal group life ... with its social and ceremonial aspects, thus aiding the development and integration of the individual personality. The Aborigines, like the whites, need in all normal cases, to belong to a community, and not be mere hangers on and survivals'.

By contrast, Hasluck subscribed to notions of the social whole and of the individual which drew on the juridical language of liberalism. In Hasluck's writing, the individual is the bearer of certain democratic rights and allegiances vis-à-vis the state. His or her entitlements and responsibilities were not contingent on such secondary features or such criteria as religion, class or race. In this commitment, Hasluck was a resolute opponent of white Australian racism, in the name of national unity. A nation's wholeness depended not only on the majority accepting such minorities as Aborigines but also on the individuals from those minorities relinquishing their loyalties to any sub-groups of the nation. Social policy must hold fast to the essential equality of individuals: their cultural or racial attributes were of little or no account.

In the formulations of 'assimilation' which he advocated in the 1950s and defended to the end of his life, Hasluck's vision of the ultimate homogeneity of Aborigines with non-Aborigines was striking in its abstraction. As he reiterated in 1988:

The policy of assimilation means that all Aborigines and part-Aborigines will attain the same manner of living as other Australians and live as members of a single Australian community enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same responsibilities, observing the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs, hopes and loyalties as other Australians. Any special measures taken for Aborigines and part-Aborigines are regarded as temporary measures, not based on race, but intended to meet their need for special care and assistance to protect them from any ill effects of sudden change and to assist them to make the transition from one stage to another in such a way as will be favourable to their social, economic and political advancement.
Simply by repeating the word 'same', Hasluck's formulation avoided specifying the cultural attributes which were to be discouraged or promoted by 'assimilation'. His conception of 'assimilation' was predicated on a primarily juridical conception of nationhood as a condition of formal equality of citizenship. The emotional and cultural textures of human relatedness were conceived by him negatively, that is, in terms of their tendency to compromise his high-minded vision of a social whole of absolute equals.

Whereas Elkin could not think about 'assimilation' without considering the dangerous dynamics of Aboriginal cultural disintegration, Hasluck minimised his doubts about the vicissitudes of cultural change by dwelling on the abstractly-conceived outcome. He was uneasy about the challenge that any residual cultural difference seemed to offer to a sense of Australia's unity. Keeping 'culture' at bay, Hasluck presumed an emergent individualism with juridical, not cultural, predicates; he imagined 'assimilation' in terms of its end — a nationhood unified by the state's gradual dissolution of Aborigines' sense of communal or ethnic identity.

It is interesting to speculate whether Hasluck was surprised by Elkin's 1959 critique. Perhaps their different philosophies of assimilation had been obscured by their common hostility to many of the government practices inherited from the between-wars practices of 'protection' and segregation. In 1951, Elkin criticised the policy of the commonwealth director of social security not to extend pension benefits to Aborigines living on reserves serviced by government or government-subsidised institutions. The director's eligibility rule insisted that only those Aborigines merited pensions who were exempt from such official control and care. Equitable as this might sound, it had an unfortunate consequence. Aboriginal people had to choose either to get social security or to live with their relations on reserves and missions. Either they were financially induced to desert those to whom they had the closest ties, or they were deprived of cash social security payments in penalty for remaining with those loved ones. Such exemption/eligibility rules were 'inconsiderate', Elkin protested: 'the Aborigines must move up in groups'. Hasluck reportedly agreed with Elkin's criticism of the department of social security's eligibility rule. Perhaps such moments of accord helped to make their divergence of opinions in 1959 as dismaying to Elkin as Tigger Wise says it was.

In 1988, Sir Paul Hasluck recalled that, when he began to assemble the ideas that guided him as minister for territories in the Menzies government, his outlook was 'still influenced by the evangelism of mid and late Victorian and Edwardian England which placed emphasis on the individual ... The individual made the choice and made the effort and as a result was changed'. He reflected self-critically that 'we did not see clearly the ways in which the individual is bound by membership of a family or a group'. Since Hasluck's time, 'the group' has been given its place in the ways governments order their relationships
with indigenous Australians. I want to conclude by pointing forward from the period of Hasluck's ministry to highlight two ways in which the group relations of indigenous Australians are now positively significant to Australian governments.

First, Aboriginal groups have been given a formal place in the scheme of government arrangements to deliver essential services to Aboriginal people. One of the foremost critics of Hasluck's legacy, C D Rowley, drew explicitly on social psychology (and perhaps implicitly on Durkheim?) when he advocated a major change in the modalities of government:

The aim of 'assimilation' has been to winkle out the deviant individual from the group, to persuade him to cut the ties which bind him and his family to it, and to set him up as a householder in the street of the country town. But policies which aim to change social habit by educating individuals, while ignoring the social context which has made him what he is, can have only limited success. A program involving social change must deal with the social group.  

The Fraser government acted in a way which was consistent with Rowley's advice in 1976 when it legislated the Aboriginal councils and associations act of 1976. When Aboriginal people are subsidised to deliver services to one another, according to the policy of self-determination, their corporations and councils are the essential mechanisms. The incorporated Aboriginal group has now become the site and modality for the learning of new skills and orientations.

Second, the group affiliations of Aboriginal people have been made essential to policies of 'land rights'. As 'assimilation' policies came under increasing attack in the period 1960-75, the recognition of the worth of the relationships among Aboriginal people entailed a growing respect for the relationships between Aboriginal people and land. Hasluck's Liberal and National Party colleagues were not immune to this change in perception. The Fraser government accordingly enacted a version of the Whitlam government bill for Aboriginal land rights in the Northern Territory, in 1976. The land rights act attributes traditional ownership to the 'local descent group' and when the minister grants land, it is in the form of inalienable communal title, vested in a lands trust.

Recently, Australian governments' preference for seeing the group as the primary legal modality for indigenous land ownership has come under attack. When the bill to create a native land fund was debated in the Senate in October and November 1994, there was strong but ultimately unsuccessful resistance. Senators sensitive to some sections of indigenous opinion tried to amend the requirement that title to land purchased from the fund be communal and inalienable. Gareth Evans, defending his government's bill, put forward three justifications for land fund's purchases to be held in communal title. Communal ownership would widen the number of beneficiaries; it would maintain a
traditional style of ownership; and it would give a statutory basis for the accountability of beneficiaries. Of the three reasons, it was the second which Evans chose to emphasise.

It is, of course, the case that Aboriginal people traditionally invariably held a communal form of title — moreover, an inalienable communal form of title. They are totally familiar with operating on a corporate basis. It is totally consistent with Aboriginal custom and tradition so far as land ownership is concerned.37

Evans' case for communal ownership confirms the newly achieved orthodoxy of a point of view which Hasluck's juridical liberalism — his individualistic doctrine of nationhood— would not allow. When reformulated as 'corporation' or 'trust' the associational tendencies of 'Aboriginal tradition' have become essential to rendering Aboriginal people a governable and accountable constituency within a modern, plural nation.

Endnotes

1 Paul Hasluck, 'Are Our Aborigines Neglected?', unpublished paper, Box 80, item 294, papers of A P Elkin, Fisher Library, University of Sydney. This was given as an address at the P S A Service, the Lyceum, Sydney on 12 July 1959.
2 Paul Hasluck, 'Some Problems of Assimilation', unpublished duplicated paper, Box 80, item 295, papers of A P Elkin, Fisher Library, University of Sydney. This was given as an address to section F of the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science in Perth, Western Australia, on Friday, 28 August, 1959.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Hasluck, 'Are Our Aborigines Neglected?'.
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8 Hasluck, 'Some Problems of Assimilation'.
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10 Hasluck, 'Some Problems of Assimilation'.
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12 AA (ACT) A452 Item 57/3943 'Statement on Citizenship Status' commonwealth and states conference on Native Welfare, Canberra, 3-4 September 1951.
13 Hasluck, 'Some Problems of Assimilation'.
14 Hasluck, 'Are Our Aborigines Neglected?'.
15 Hasluck, 'Some Problems of Assimilation'.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Tim Rowse, 'Strehlow's Strap: Functionalism and Historicism in a Colonial Ethnography'

25 Ibid., p. 82.
26 Ibid., p. 83.
30 A P Elkin, Citizenship for the Aborigines, Sydney, 1944, p 22.
31 Ibid., p. 50.
32 Paul Hasluck, Shades of Darkness, Carlton, 1988, p. 93.
34 Hasluck, Shades of Darkness, p. 130.
36 For a detailed discussion of the way in which Aboriginal organisations can be both vehicles of self-determination and sites of acculturation to non-Aboriginal ways, see Rowse 'From Houses to Households: the Aboriginal Development Commission and the Economic Adaption by Alice Springs Town Campers' in J Beckett (ed.) Aborigines and the State in Australia, special issue of Social Analysis, no. 24, 1988.
Diplomat

Carl Bridge

Hasluck more than any other embodied the fundamentals of the diplomat as defined by an old French master of the trade. The master believed, as did Hasluck, that open dealing is the basis of confidence, that the negotiator must be 'a man of probity who loves truth', that 'deceit is the measure of the smallness of mind of him who uses it', that 'a lie always leaves behind a drop of poison' and that 'menaces always do harm to negotiations'.

In his brief career as a professional diplomat, from August 1945 to April 1947, Paul Hasluck tried to work by these ideals. In this period he served on the executive committee of the preparatory commission of the United Nations and then in the very high profile role as Australia's delegate to the security council. He has left a full account of these experiences in two books — *Workshop of Security* (1948) and *Diplomatic Witness* (1980). Throughout his time as a diplomat, Hasluck had a troubled relationship with his minister, the mercurial Dr H V Evatt, and he felt he suffered from the machinations of rivals in the department of external affairs, notably Evatt's protege, Dr John Burton, and John Hood, sometime acting secretary of the department. Renouf, who served under Hasluck in 1945 and 1946, judged Hasluck's work in New York as outstanding and when Hasluck resigned prematurely in 1947 feeling that he had not been appreciated at home, Trygve Lie, the UN secretary general, offered him a very senior post in the UN. What were Hasluck's achievements and what went wrong?

Hasluck initially encountered the world of international affairs through books and as a part-time university student at the feet of Professor Fred Alexander and others at the University of Western Australia in the late 1920s and in the 1930s. Along with the rest of his generation he debated the vital issues of pacifism, communism and fascism. But, unlike most, he had the opportunity to go beyond book learning. Using money he had saved as a journalist, he attended two summer schools of the League of Nations Union at Geneva during 1932 — his and his wife's ‘wanderyear’ in Europe. Then, after his return to Australia, he became international sub-editor on the *West Australian*. It was his job to follow foreign developments in detail as each cable came in. In 1938 he added another first-hand dimension with a trip through south-east Asia and Indo-China. In 1940, he bore the fruits of his experience back to university when he gave Alexander's lectures.

This was all useful preparation, but it was his friendship with John Curtin, a fellow journalist who was soon to become prime minister, that pitched Hasluck into the department of external affairs. In February 1941 Hasluck had a chance
meeting with Curtin, whom he had known when both served on the Western Australian district committee of the Australian Journalists' Association in the 1920s. Curtin suggested that rather than join the army, as Hasluck was intending to do, Hasluck would be more useful to the war effort as an officer on a temporary wartime appointment in the department of external affairs in Canberra. No sooner was this proposed than it was done.

Hasluck's work in external affairs mostly involved what was called 'Post-hostilities Planning' — amassing information and writing analyses and policies for the postwar world. In 1942 his talents were noticed by his new minister, Evatt, and he soon became one of Evatt's regular speech-writers and advisers. In this capacity he attended the talks which produced the Australia-New Zealand Agreement (or Anzac pact) in 1944 and went to the San Francisco conference which hammered out the United Nations charter in 1945.

In November 1942 the department sent him as an observer to the non-official but influential Institute of Pacific Relations conference at Mont Tremblant in Quebec, at which he met several of the figures who were to play important roles in the early United Nations years. His contemporary impressions of that conference tell us a little about his cast of mind. He was a realist rather than an idealist. Notions of 'world government', an 'international police force', and a 'higher standard of living for all' were well and good, but in keeping with Judith Brett's observations of him, he clearly wanted to see concrete proposals. He questioned what he saw as many of the delegates' 'doubtful assumptions', for instance: 'that all dependent peoples of South East Asia are capable of self-government at an early date, that Japan is the only possible Pacific aggressor now and for all time, that the Chungking government can re-establish stable and undisputed rule over all China ... and that balanced economic development of the region can be taken for granted'. Considering the communist success in China seven years later and the turmoil that was to accompany decolonisation in South-East Asia and Indo-China, these were prescient doubts. Nevertheless, he remained cautiously optimistic. If Australia did its homework and developed arguments of quality, it might prove possible to sway the major powers, particularly the United States and Britain, to take into consideration Australia's interests.

Hasluck had a clear, personal view of the way foreign policy should be made. To his methodical way of thinking, a nation needed to define its bed-rock interests and to pursue these regardless of the distractions of the moment. As was his wont, in 1943-4 he put down these ideas in a draft pamphlet which he hoped Evatt would agree to have published by the department of external affairs. The interests Hasluck defined were the obvious ones — territorial integrity, a democratic constitution, trade, being a good global citizen, and maintaining the Australian 'way of life' socially, economically and culturally. To achieve these, trusted connections forged in the war and earlier, with Britain, the Commonwealth, and the United States should be nurtured, and new links with
like-minded states forged, particularly in Australia's region. Evatt read the draft but, for reasons he did not specify, did not authorise its publication. Efficient and able as he was, Hasluck had problems in the department. Hood saw him as a rival and did all he could to undermine him, such as delaying decisions and failing to approve schemes for expansion. Alexandra Hasluck describes Hood as 'a tall melancholic man of saturnine appearance, with a problem', and he was probably the 'unmitigated bastard' Hasluck complained of in a letter in 1945. On two occasions when Hasluck was out of Australia, in 1942 and 1945, Hood tried with some success to dismantle Hasluck's section in the department. Burton, ten years younger than Hasluck and a rising favourite of Evatt's, was under Hasluck in 1944, but eclipsed him in the next couple of years to become in 1947 at the age of 32 the youngest ever secretary of the department. The rivalry between Hasluck and Burton was so intense by July 1945 that Mrs Evatt reported them 'almost throwing the deck quoits at each other' on a sea voyage back to Australia.

Evatt ran his department like a ramshackle personal fiefdom, or an old-fashioned lawyer's office. Staff were always at the minister's beck and call. They were played off against each other so that nobody knew quite where they stood and each was dependent on the minister's patronage. Burton thrived in this unorthodox environment, but Hasluck suffered a great deal of disquiet. Then, in August 1945, Hasluck received his first proper diplomatic posting, as Australian representative on the executive committee of the preparatory commission of the United Nations, a committee which was to meet in London over several months. This body was to prepare in detail for the first meeting of the General Assembly of the UN to be held in early 1946.

The work on the executive committee was gruelling but relatively routine. Its tasks were to find ways of translating the clauses of the charter into practical administrative form. Hasluck was in his element: 'The work was hard slogging but I enjoyed working among professionals and found it much more congenial to be alongside foreigners than ... among my strange compatriots in the Department of External Affairs'.

One issue which the executive committee considered was that of the location of the UN's permanent headquarters. Britain and France favoured a European site; Australia wanted San Francisco, because it was closer and because it would be easier there to be Pacific-minded. (Hasluck personally preferred a site near the main east-west fault-line in international politics, maybe Vienna or somewhere in the eastern Mediterranean, but he kept this view to himself.) Like Australia, the United States and the Soviet Union also wanted a site in North America and in the end New York was chosen as a sort of compromise.

From an Australian point of view, perhaps the most important decision made came after the General Assembly met in London, while the New York decision was still sub judice. This was the voting for the non-permanent positions on
the all-important security council. Here Britain favoured Canada and Australia had to lobby hard to stay in the race. Hasluck was involved in the politicking, arguing that Australia had been more independent of the Anglo-American club at San Francisco, championing the 'smaller nations', that South-East Asia and the south-west Pacific were security areas which needed representation, and that Australia had more than pulled its weight in the recent war. (Hasluck later recorded with delight the 'unorthodox way' W R Hodgson, the Australian ambassador in Paris, won over the Turkish representatives. Hodgson did it 'by slapping his gammy leg wounded in Gallipoli and saying to the Turks with a grin: "You bastards did that. Now do something else for me or Dr Evatt will tear my balls off"'). Canada beat Australia in the first ballot but failed to get a two-thirds quota. However, after three more ballots, which only involved Australia and Canada, Australia emerged with the requisite majority. Evatt's reputation from San Francisco coupled with Hasluck's and Hodgson's persistence had won the day for Australia.

On a personal level, Hasluck's relations with Evatt were still unhappy. When Hasluck was sent to London Evatt, in a typical move, instructed Hasluck to have no truck with S M Bruce, the highly experienced and well regarded Australian high commissioner there. Evatt trusted few men, and certainly not Bruce who had been a non-Labor prime minister in the 'twenties. Dutifully, Hasluck agreed not to talk to Bruce. On second thoughts, however, Hasluck felt that Bruce had to be informed. He decided to tell Bruce what had happened and to send all of his communications to Evatt via the high commission, thus giving Bruce the opportunity of reading them should he wish to do so. Thus on this occasion Hasluck strayed from the advice of the old French master. He followed the letter of Evatt's instruction but not the spirit, no doubt telling himself that it was for the greater good.  

In his last weeks in London Hasluck drafted a proposal for the appointment of a permanent Australian representative to the new home of the UN in New York. If Australia's bid for election to the security council was successful, the most important function of the appointee would be to occupy that seat. Hasluck wrote his own job description, asked for and was given the post, though with two important provisos. First, the rank would be counsellor, several steps in status and salary below the ambassadorial rank enjoyed by the other council members. And second, Evatt would appoint himself as the actual Australian representative on the council and Hasluck, who would do virtually all of the work, would merely be his alternate.  

Nevertheless, it was a very prestigious appointment for a youngish diplomat on only his second posting and Hasluck accepted with alacrity. In New York Renouf had already found offices for the Australian delegation, and rather elevated they were, too — on the 45th storey of the Empire State Building! Renouf recalls that on one occasion all of the lift-drivers were on strike in the
building and he had expected Hasluck to cancel the day’s work. Not a bit of it, they climbed the stairs. Hasluck was no shirker.21

Hasluck also plunged headlong into the work of the council, where, as he later recalled, he had ‘a job worth doing among men of quality’.22 On the council he witnessed some of the opening skirmishes of the cold war. Poland brought a case for UN action against Spain on the grounds that Spain was a fascist state. Iran objected to soviet troops who were refusing to leave Azerbaijan. Britain and Albania disputed the Corfu Channel. And there were other clashes over Trieste and Mukden, and on issues concerning Lebanon, Syria and Indonesia.23

On each of these issues Australia’s solution was to recommend a quasi-judicial enquiry by a sub-committee of the council followed by recommendations. But the process was always thwarted at one stage or another by the Soviet Union, usually when their delegates Molotov and Gromyko used their nation’s great power veto.

Hasluck’s closest encounter with the realities of these power politics came when he chaired the Spanish sub-committee. In this case, the soviet bloc was trying to weaken fascist Spain, a country with western ties. Hasluck encouraged a full enquiry, and thousands of pages of evidence flooded in. Australia’s natural allies had a united approach. Britain, with considerable economic interests in Spain, and the United States which was anxious to invest there, wanted to stymie the soviet move. Evatt, however, read the matter very differently. He was keen to get the kudos for solving the dispute and saw it as an opportunity to support the Soviet Union against a fascist state. In Hasluck’s view, this was a case of Evatt’s placing short-term publicity ahead of Australia’s long-term interests and encouraging the Soviet Union to ‘start another Civil War in Spain’ to boot.24

Hellbent on playing a prominent role, Evatt ordered Hasluck to delay his sub-committee’s report on Spain until Evatt could wing in from Australia to take the chair. As it turned out, Hasluck’s careful consideration of the problem, which involved the thorny issue of ‘domestic jurisdiction’ and would have taken weeks, was cut short by Evatt. Once Evatt arrived in New York, he ‘whipped up’ the sub-committee to produce a quick ‘political’ answer in a matter of days, regardless of the evidence. Hasluck was mortified at what he saw as Evatt’s opportunism and lack of objectivity, and also not a little upset personally at being shunted out of the chair at a critical time. But the whole affair became academic when the soviet delegate vetoed the findings for not going far enough.25

Similarly, Evatt tried to storm his way to a solution for the problem of international control of atomic power, when Australia had its turn to chair the atomic energy commission for a month. This time the issues were even more intractable and Evatt only succeeded in upsetting virtually every delegate and official. Months later, with Evatt gone and Hasluck back in Australia’s seat,
patient committee work came up with some recommendations. Again the soviet veto intervened.26

Interestingly, US state department files show that the Americans suspected Evatt and most Australian representatives on the various international bodies at this time of being too sympathetic to the communists and found them at times variously 'embarrassing', 'obstructionist', and 'difficult and uncooperative'. The Americans, however, excepted from this judgement Hasluck, of whose arguments and conduct they approved.27 It appears that on most occasions Hasluck had the ability to put Australia's point of view with sufficient finesse to keep both Evatt and the Americans satisfied.

The atmosphere of the time was brilliantly summed up by an anonymous parody written by one of the Australian diplomats, probably F L McDougall. With apologies to Lewis Carroll, I quote from the 'United Nations Jabberwocky':

"Twas greenwich, and the gromyko
Did byrnes and trygve in the lie:
All evatt was the vandenberg,
And the thomas connally.

"Beware the Molotov, my son!
Avoid its clauses if you can!
Beware the yalta bird, and shun
The red azerbaijan!"

He took his trieste sword in hand:
Long time the mukden foe he sought —
So rested he by the nuclear tree,
And fissioned there in thought.

And, as in fulton thought he stood,
The Molotov, with ears aflame,
Came brettoning through the plenary wood,
And vetoed as it came!

The United States Senator Tom Connally expressed the frustration of many UN delegates when, speaking at the General Assembly in October 1946, he denounced the Soviet Union for its overuse of the veto on the security council. Dramatically cutting the air with his hand, he described the Soviet Union as 'going around with blood in its eye and a meat-axe in its hand'.28

Hasluck loyally put the argument for revising the charter to limit the use of the veto to cases where arbitration had been shown to have failed. The Soviet Union had used its veto nine times and threatened to use it on several other occasions while none of the other permanent members had used their vetoes at all. Hasluck argued strongly both inside and outside the UN that it was wrong
to use the veto ‘as an instrument of national policy’ as it was intended only to be used in the spirit of international cooperation enshrined in the UN charter. A resolution recommending this was passed in the General Assembly, but there was no change in Soviet behaviour on the Security Council. The sordid game of international politics went on. It must be said, however, that at least by setting up enquiries and by forcing the use of the veto, naked power politics was exposed for what it was, and that, in this sense, the council did good work, and Hasluck showed that Australia was a brave and good international citizen.

On one of these occasions, in May 1946, Hasluck achieved celebrity status in the press when he strongly attacked the Soviet Union for putting the whole operation of the UN in jeopardy when their representative failed to take his Security Council seat during the Iranian debate. (Among other places, Hasluck’s name appeared in the main front-page headline of the New York Times.) Evatt later claimed that Hasluck had exceeded his brief, but the documents show that he had not. The true reason for Evatt’s concern was probably that he was jealous that Hasluck had got the publicity at a time when Evatt was even more hungry than usual for notice, both with the federal elections coming up and beginning his first campaign for the presidency of the UN General Assembly.

Ironically, Hasluck was a rather introverted man who ordinarily shunned publicity. Indeed, he thought it was often inimical to the proper working of diplomacy. In Workshop of Security he roundly condemned the American-designed Security Council’s temporary chamber at Lake Success as being in ‘a style rivalling the Radio City Rockettes’. ‘Every influence in the place hinders concentration’, he wrote. ‘Everything is done in artificial light by men breathing conditioned air. There were blinding spotlights on members’ faces, microphones to pick up their every grunt, and the table was arranged so that representatives faced the audience rather than each other’. He felt ‘like an Atlantic Beach beauty contestant’ and feared that the new permanent UN headquarters under construction in New York would become like a ‘World Fair’. He preferred the simple, puritan atmosphere of Church House in London where the early meetings of the Security Council had been held and where real work could be done.

Evatt and Hasluck famously did not get on. Hasluck saw Evatt as a glory-seeker, always in a hurry, never getting to what Hasluck saw as the ‘objective’ heart of an issue. In January 1947 Hasluck resigned from his post. He has written a great deal about this episode and I shall do no more than point out the range of factors involved.

Hasluck had been living a high-profile ambassador’s life on the relatively humble salary and allowances of a counsellor. Most of his counterparts from other nations had three times his money, others even more. When Evatt refused to increase his allowance, Hasluck had had enough.
Hasluck had been Australia’s recognised representative on the council yet when in January 1947 Australia’s turn in the chair next came around Evatt saw to it that a higher-ranking diplomat, Norman Makin, Australia’s ambassador to the United States, was brought in for the occasion.37

Burton, Hasluck’s former junior, and rival, who had been acting in the post for some months, was made departmental head of external affairs in early 1947. Further, three others who had been junior to Hasluck were also promoted over his head.38

And Evatt’s modus operandi offended Hasluck’s views about the proper relationship between public servant and minister. As Hasluck wrote privately at the time, Burton’s appointment showed that ‘Cabinet set its approval on a whole system of petty intrigue, talebearing, favouritism and personal attachment to the Minister which as an Australian citizen I consider contrary to public service principles’.39 And as he said in public in 1947, ‘the present Minister of External Affairs does wish to make diplomatic staff ... his personal possession. I do not wish to have any place in a service of that kind’.40 Nor was Hasluck alone in his criticisms of the department under Evatt and Burton. Renouf, who himself left the department for a post in the UN secretariat at this time, privately called the department a ‘slaughterhouse’ and wrote of the ‘purge’ which had removed Alan Watt from Canberra, marginalised Hasluck and placed Burton in charge.41

The precise mixture of personal slight and public morality involved in Hasluck’s decision to resign is unknowable. Perhaps Escott Reid, a Canadian diplomat who observed Hasluck and Evatt at close quarters at this time, had the right of it: ‘the value of his [Hasluck’s] contribution to an international discussion increases as the square of his distance from Dr Evatt’.42 They were simply allergic to each other. Despite their obvious moral differences, it is tempting to suggest that part of their antagonism stemmed from their being too much alike: in their own ways, both were testy, self-absorbed ‘scholarship boys’ on the make, and both were destined to be labelled the best man in Australian politics never to have been prime minister.

Hasluck had served his state well and they knew it. It is a pity his diplomatic career did not end in happier circumstances.

Endnotes

2 Both published in Melbourne.
4 As the UN’s main representative in Europe; Paul Hasluck, Diplomatic Witness: Australian Foreign Affairs 1941-1947, Melbourne, 1980, p. 290.
5 Paul Hasluck, Mucking About, Melbourne, 1977, chps 13 and 15.
6 Ibid., chps 20 and 21.
7 Ibid., p. 99.
Ibid., pp. 264-5.

For Hasluck’s full account of these years, see Hasluck, Diplomatic Witness, chs 1-21; A balanced account of Australia’s achievement at the San Francisco conference can be found in W J Hudson, Australia and the New World Order: Evatt at San Francisco, 1945, Canberra, 1993.

10 Australian Legation, Washington, to department of external affairs [DEA], 21 December 1942, Hasluck Papers [HP], M1942/5, Australian Archives.

11 Pamphlet on Australian foreign policy drafted by Paul Hasluck and submitted to minister but not issued, n.d. [c. December 1944], HP, M1942/3.


15 Hasluck, Diplomatic Witness, p. 231.

16 The relevant file is M1943/5, HP; See also Hasluck, Diplomatic Witness, chapter 24.

17 Paul Hasluck, Light that Time Has Made, Canberra, 1995, p. 129.


19 Hasluck to Dunk, memorandum, 14 December 1945, DAFP, vol 8, doc. 452.

20 Hasluck to Dunk, cables, 31 December 1945, 19 January and 1 February 1946, HP, M1943/1; Diplomatic Witness, pp. 260-2.


22 Hasluck, Diplomatic Witness, p. 272. There were no women representatives.

23 For a fuller discussion of some of these issues see Hasluck, Workshop of Security, passim, and N Harper and D Sissons, Australia and the United Nations, New York, 1959, esp. ch. 6.

24 ‘Australian foreign policy under Dr Evatt’, address to the University Liberal Club, Perth, 5 May 1949, Hasluck Manuscripts [HM], MS 5274/3, National Library of Australia.

25 Workshop of Security, pp. 105-7, and ‘Twelve Months on the Security Council’, a talk given by Hasluck at the University of Western Australia, 9 September 1947, HM, MS 5274/37.

26 Hasluck, Diplomatic Witness, pp. 277-80.


29 Transcript of CBS broadcast by Hasluck and others, 3 November 1946, Hasluck’s address to the Joint Council for International Cooperation, Boston, 21 February 1947, Statement by the Australian Representative on the Application of Article 27 of the charter, first committee of the general assembly, 3 November 1946, draft report of the work of the first committee, 1 March 1947, HP, M1943/10 and M1943/4. The main purpose of Workshop of Security was to put Hasluck’s arguments for making the charter work better.

30 Hasluck, the realist, later came to admire Gromyko for his ‘dignity and sense of purpose’ and the fact that he ‘never loses a point for his country’, Adult Education talk, n.d. [c. 1948], HM, MS 5274/37.


33 Renouf to Hasluck, letter, n.d., [August 1946?], HP, M1943/12, Alexandra Hasluck, Portrait in a Mirror, pp. 179 and 202-3. Evatt failed in his first bid for the presidency of the 1947 meeting of the general assembly but was successful in his second bid becoming president for the 1948 session, Peter Crockett, Evatt, Melbourne, 1993, p. 222.
36 Hasluck to Dunk, letter, 24 May 1946, HP, M1943/2, Hasluck, *Diplomatic Witness*, pp. 262-3; see also Renouf, *The Champagne Trail*, p. 32.
38 Hasluck to Dunk, cable, 25 March 1947, HP, M1943/16.
39 Hasluck to Dunk, 25 March 1947, cable, HP, M1946/16.
40 Hasluck, *Diplomatic Witness*, p. 291.
41 Renouf to Hasluck, 22 October 1946, 2 May 1947, HP, M1943/12 and 16.
Paul Hasluck and the Bureaucracy: The Department of External Affairs

Garry Woodard and Joan Beaumont

Studying Paul Hasluck’s relations with the bureaucracy as minister for external affairs is an intriguing exercise, in that his performance and attitudes as minister can be set against the yardsticks of his own experience as an official of the department from 1941 to 1945 and his publicly stated views about the role of the public service. Rarely in public life do we encounter a minister so clearly articulating his conception of his role and his relations with his departmental officials.

Hasluck’s introduction to the bureaucracy was in 1941 when through the agency of John Curtin, he joined the small department of external affairs. As is well known, from Hasluck’s Diplomatic Witness, his relationship with Dr Evatt, his minister from October of that year, was a troubled one. Hasluck developed doctrinal objections to what he saw as Evatt’s falsification and suppression of the official record; to his disorderliness and inconsistency; and to his playing favourites and using patronage — with the result that too much power was conceded to an official whom Hasluck saw as a crusader, a politician (and almost equally reprehensible, a poor grammarian), Dr John Burton. ‘Teaching by negative example’, as the Chinese say, Evatt’s working methods and use of officials were influential in shaping Hasluck’s conception of the roles of minister and official. In his Robert Garran Memorial oration of 1968 Hasluck said:

I once saw a good department brought to confusion and near ruin by a Minister who tried to make it his own private possession to serve his own interests and no other interest, and who tried to subordinate all public servants to his own directions.

The thinking of both Hasluck and some other external affairs officers, who later served under him, was also influenced by their perception, as Hasluck wrote in 1954, that Evatt gave insufficient weight to ‘the great international questions of power and military security and the composing of the interests of national states’. Hasluck was not a permanent public servant but in his four years in Canberra he proved himself the quintessential bureaucrat. As he himself has recounted, he got close to his minister and proved himself indispensable. He carved out his piece of turf and defended it stoutly and successfully. He used information to bolster his bureaucratic position and to build a network of useful contacts.
throughout the public service and beyond. He maintained his own filing system and files, far superior to anything else in the fledgling department. He recruited bright staff who were beholden to him — Bill Forsyth and Ian Milner. He managed to be in the right places at the right times (he did not belie his name). He was reasonably gregarious and enjoyed a party without damaging his reputation for high seriousness. He earned a high international reputation.

Alister McIntosh, New Zealand’s top public servant for two decades and no uncritical admirer of his Australian counterparts, described him in 1945 as ‘quite one of the best Australian officials I have met in External Affairs and certainly one of the most cooperative colleagues one could have’. Yet Hasluck never felt that the career service (such as it was in those early days) fully accepted him; and it is safe to venture the opinion that he harboured a grudge against the department of external affairs and his treatment by Evatt and Burton.

Writing in 1980, Hasluck described the interplay between minister and officials in the processes leading up to a cabinet or ministerial decision as ‘a struggle to achieve a good working relationship’. However, it was, as he saw it, a working relationship within well defined constraints. The minister’s role, he said in 1968, was to ‘have the powers and bear the responsibility’ particularly within the realm of cabinet and the wider political environment. The public servant was to give ‘firm non-partisan advice, without fear or favour’ while the minister protected him from ‘subsequent political inquests and arguments on what his advice is or should be’.

Within this framework Hasluck developed quite contrasting working relationships with officials at home and overseas. There are few discordant notes in the recollections of Australia’s overseas representatives of Hasluck as a visiting minister who was cultured, impressive, hard-working, and receptive in both official and social intercourse. He presided over regular regional heads of mission conferences (held more regularly than under any other foreign minister) conscientiously and with an interest and enthusiasm which encouraged debate. Hasluck did not ‘change his plumage in mid-flight’ (as an anecdote by Michael Cook below will show), but he seemed a different man when he alighted overseas.

At home, the necessary interplay between minister and officials was much more cribb’d, crabb’d and confin’d. Hasluck seemed intent on keeping his department at a distance. There seem to be several threads in this.

One was his temperament, perhaps reinforced by a certain unsureness, or anxiety not to be intellectually upstaged or constricted, or desire not to be seen by his colleagues as falling easily into becoming a captive of his officials. As he wrote later, external affairs ‘often seemed to have the attitude to Cabinet that bright young men have to their parents; "It’s no use trying to explain it to you. You would not understand"’. 
Hasluck seems not to have felt comfortable with Arthur Tange, the formidable secretary who had held the position for over a decade from 1954. Even before Hasluck became minister, it had been agreed to change the secretary, but to meet the convenience of Tange and his successor, James Plimsoll, the change did not take place for some ten months. Tange recalls that he found it impossible to engage Hasluck in discussion on policy issues and that it proved very difficult to extract decisions on administrative and personnel matters. He later described Hasluck as ‘a Minister who crushed initiatives and, sometimes, civil requests for approval of proposals’.

Plimsoll initially did not find access any easier than Tange, though he was willing to accompany Hasluck overseas, a role which Tange considered inappropriate. Sir Laurence McIntyre, who returned from Tokyo in 1965 to become Plimsoll’s deputy, was rebuffed when he ventured to treat Hasluck as a former colleague: when he called him by his first name, he was asked to address him as ‘Minister’. McIntyre commented ruefully to Alf Parsons, counsellor in Jakarta, who saw Hasluck three times when, at the height of the Indonesian attempted communist coup in 1965 he was called to Canberra from home leave, that Parsons had seen more of the minister in a week than he had in five months.

By and large, Hasluck discouraged personal relationships, even after the danger that former colleagues would seek to presume upon past contact had passed. Memories of Evatt’s style lingered. He maintained that a minister ‘has to resist so close a relationship with any public servant as to make that officer his own officer rather than the officer of the department’. Although there may have been others, we have been able to trace only one instance of Hasluck visiting his department: in 1969 he came to the office of Hugh Dunn, with whom he and his wife Alexandra had earlier struck up a relationship when visiting Saigon and discussing Dunn’s unpublished ‘Life of a Royal Chinese Poet’, to tell him he was posting him as ambassador to Taiwan.

Hasluck’s modest life-style in Canberra was legendary. Two former senior external affairs officers used identical words in describing him as ‘holed up in that little house in Deakin’; but Alan Renouf, a friend and admirer of Hasluck from their days together in New York, says that when in 1966 he wanted to discuss his future and rang Hasluck at home, the minister readily invited him to share the dinner he was cooking — and settled his posting overseas. Thus the picture is a mixed one, but the more common experience of Canberra-based officials was similar to that of Michael Cook, who as a junior official accompanied Hasluck to Taiwan:

I remember noticing [on the plane] that ... he had a vacant seat next to him. I agonised for some time as to whether to sit next to him or leave him in peace. Eventually I did go over and take the seat, but he made it clear pretty quickly — very politely, but quickly — that he would prefer it to be left vacant.
The arrangements in Hasluck's private office accentuated the obstacles to easy communication. His personal private secretary, Miss Elleson Dusting, wielded substantial power; even ministerial colleagues found her a formidable watchdog. Hasluck dispensed with a departmental liaison officer in his office after six months, ceasing a practice adopted by all other holders of the portfolio.

In Canberra Hasluck preferred exchanges to be on the papers—he was a self-confessed 'pedant regarding documentation', believing that 'wisdom ... is stored in the files'. This was an intended boon for historians, but it was not always conducive to the most effective operation of a department whose decisions had to be made on the cables and whose modus operandi Plimsoll described as the art of the skilful fumble.

Canberra was for Hasluck 'the political paddock', where, he said in 1986, 'I was handicapped by being more interested in the processes of government than in political controversy. I gave more attention to practice than to disputation or debate'. In his relations with officials, too, undue emphasis was put on practice and process. Hasluck issued meticulous instructions on English usage, forms of address, and even punctuation. For example from 1968:

> I dislike the use of the word ‘must’ unless I want to use a strong imperative. ‘Should’ is usually sufficient. I was brought up in the view that to say ‘must’ to anyone was impolite.... I am drawing attention to these prejudices of mine in the hope of reducing the amount of re-typing that is now being done.

He corrected submissions and draft speeches and statements in the same vein. He laid down guidelines for submissions. In late 1966 and on 3 January 1967 Hasluck instructed that the word 'we', which often appeared in guidance to overseas posts, should be avoided and the originator should be precisely defined for the sake of the historical record and clear understanding by the recipient. The latter minute began:

> Up-to-date I have had no response whatever to an earlier minute I wrote about the use of the personal pronoun in outward telegrams ... The point on which I must now insist is that in the drafting of telegrams for despatch to our posts overseas, care must be taken to ensure that a personal pronoun is only used when the context makes quite clear what the pronoun represents. Please let me know as early as possible what you are doing in order to give effect to my directions that greater precision be brought into the use of personal pronouns in telegrams overseas and that the pronoun 'we' is not to be used without defining the proper noun for which it stands.

Levity was frowned upon, though it could not be eradicated from overseas reporting. Sloppiness and shoddiness were reduced, but at a cost in raising doubts in the minds of all officials, except the handful who had direct access, as
to whether their minister was keeping his eye on the main game. Junior officials complained publicly that Hasluck wanted not only to be minister ‘but also departmental secretary, section head and junior clerk’. Arguably, in subordinating officials to his own directions, Hasluck developed a relationship which was ‘peculiarly analogous to that for which he criticised Evatt’.

Practices which had come to be taken for granted were rejected or came under review. Hasluck’s well-known aversion to the press arising from his perception of a decline in standards since he was a journalist (described by Allan Barnes of the *Age* as the attitude of ‘a reformed alcoholic’) led him to reject the use of his department as an intermediary between him and the press.

A minute to Tange in February 1965 advised that he would never use the services of the public information officer but would make any statements himself — as Mr Menzies did. Tange offered to abolish the position if that was the minister’s wish. Hasluck did not respond. Later the public information branch proved its usefulness but it lived on a knife-edge, particularly as Hasluck’s secretiveness became reinforced by the snowballing of leaks, not unconnected with William McMahon’s inclusion on the circulation list for all politically sensitive telegrams from January 1966.

The policy planning officer position also gave Hasluck pause: noting a proposal for an ANZUS policy planners’ meeting, Hasluck read Tange a short lecture on the impropriety of public servants planning policy with a foreign power; but he agreed to the talks taking place when the US proposed them in the ANZUS council. Hasluck also queried the well-established practice of an external affairs officer being attached to all-party international parliamentary union delegations and made the role of the officer more restricted, seemingly unconcerned about how this might be viewed by his parliamentary colleagues.

In the ten months that Tange, who took his statutory responsibilities as chief officer very seriously, remained as secretary there were occasions when he challenged his minister vigorously and, apparently successfully, on matters of practice — most notably Hasluck’s suggestion that the practice since the secretarship of Alan Watt of a senior diplomatic officer heading the division responsible for administration should be changed in the interests of efficiency by bringing in a professional administrator from outside. Hasluck returned to the suggestion more formally with Plimsoll in 1965, but apparently did not pursue it further. The institutional arrangements remained unchanged, although Stuart Harris experimented with a change along the lines Hasluck suggested when he was brought in as secretary from the Australian National University by the Hawke government.

To give another example: on successive days in February 1965 Hasluck took exception to references in telegrams on minor administrative matters to decisions being subject to ministerial or treasury approval. To Hasluck these matter-of-fact caveats breached the convention that the government was one:
There is a sole responsibility [he wrote to Tange] for decisions and that rests on the Government, considered comprehensively as combining the Department of External Affairs, the Minister and the Treasury, all of whom share the responsibility and none of whom can identify itself as having a distinct personal view of its own.\(^3\)

Tange replied that he had ‘communicated to senior officers, in as persuasive terms as possible, the argument against revealing unnecessarily a proposal which the Department is making to the Minister’, but he insisted that, as chief officer, he was entitled in the interests of good management to inform departmental officers, whether in Canberra or overseas, what was the exact state of play in regard to matters awaiting or requiring treasury approval.

Plimsoll’s style was different from Tange’s. He avoided confrontation, as did his deputy, McIntyre, to whom Churchill’s criticism of foreign office officials, that every alternate paragraph of their minutes began ‘On the other hand’, peculiarly applied. Sir Humphrey Appleby would have applauded Plimsoll’s private dictum that ‘inaction is a policy’ and his implementation of it by stowing uncongenial missives in his celebrated bottom drawer.\(^3\)

Those who served Hasluck in Canberra would have been surprised to hear him in his 1968 Garran oration in single out for emphasis a passage in the Fulton report on the UK civil service that ‘imaginative humanity sometimes matters more than tidy efficiency and administrative uniformity’.\(^4\) The face that Hasluck presented to most of the bureaucracy was of a man who was pedantic about conventions, carping, distant, unreceptive, and quick to rebuke (especially favourite targets like one first assistant secretary, Malcolm Booker, who had earlier worked under him for a time in the department of territories). Overseas officers saw an entirely different image: urbane, sensitive to cultural nuances, engaged, self-confident, impressively articulate, generous and convivial to the point of kissing the wives and girls.

None, alas, saw — except occasionally fleetingly — the sensitive, poetic and vulnerable sides of this many-faceted man revealed in his later writings.

For all the negativism of adversarialism and the preaching on matters of practice, process and convention, Hasluck’s philosophical view, as expressed in 1980, was that ‘public servants should try to shape policy and to take part in decision-making’. However, in practice this was circumscribed by his way of operating and doctrinal conservatism. Generally he gave little opportunity to officials to argue policy, especially a change of policy. When two departmental submissions of August 1968 ended with a recommendation that the minister should give support to certain proposals in cabinet, Hasluck stated:

the Department is not in a position to recommend what I should or should not do in Cabinet. The Department will certainly never be informed by me what views I expressed in Cabinet on any subject. In Cabinet discussion my sole responsibility is to Cabinet so that I cannot be regarded at any time as an advocate talking to instructions contained in a departmental brief.\(^4\)
In any case, argumentation was not the style of Plimsoll and McIntyre, the two officials who as secretary and deputy and acting secretary were conceded access to him. The practice of a successor, Andrew Peacock, in inviting senior second division officers to brainstorming sessions based on a theme paper, would have been unthinkable to Hasluck. His broad framework was set, by his own convictions as well as by the circumstances of the time, when he came to office. However, it may be the case that when the full documentation for the latter years of his ministry are open, Hasluck’s reputation will come out rather better than this accepted wisdom suggests.

This review of Hasluck’s relations with his department when minister for external affairs leaves us with an overpowering sense of loss, at both the personal and the national level. At the personal level, the department, partly initially in reaction to the arbitrariness, for all their excitement, of the Evatt years, partly responding to Tange’s strong leadership style, and partly out of pride (perhaps hubris) over its performance in the many regional challenges it had had to meet, culminating in the tour de force of maintaining a bilateral and regional dialogue with Indonesia during confrontation, had reached its apogee. Its esprit de corps gave it the elasticity to accommodate a representative range of views and attitudes, and a consequent potential for flexibility when circumstances demanded a change of tack. Each little dog (except Sinologists) could expect to have its day.

In the Casey and Barwick eras there was a real sense of partnership between minister and officials, without loss of respect the latter showed to the former and his office. Casey was to Tange always ‘Mr Casey’ and on the one occasion he addressed Tange by his first name he immediately apologised. The observation of the forms did not stand in the way of Casey taking a deep and often generous interest in his senior officers’ personal circumstances. Barwick’s style was of course different. He was approachable, roamed the department in his shirt-sleeves in the late afternoon, and used Christian names. When he was given little alternative by Menzies and his colleagues but to accept the chief justiceship, he took Tange off to Sydney for the weekend to discuss it. When he returned to Canberra, his farewell to departmental officers was apologetic and charged with underlying emotion on both sides. But it was regret for an effective partnership lost, between a strong-minded minister who had learned on the job and public servants for whom his highest accolade was ‘a good officer’.

All this changed under Hasluck. He cut himself off from the possibility of mutually rewarding personal and professional relationships (though when he left office he revived a personal relationship with Tange which had begun in New York in 1946). His emphasis was on the effective implementation of policy rather than on innovation: to all but the two or three officers with whom he chose to deal regularly it did indeed appear, as Tange saw it from New Delhi, that he ‘stultified initiative’.
Yet a closer study of Hasluck’s interaction with the department on policy issues indicates that this was by no means the full story. When that story can be written Hasluck’s intellectual stance may be seen to be complex, sensitive, and less fossilised than condemnation of him as not being an innovator has suggested. His style, justly criticised as rigid, pedantic, aloof and abrasive, was counter-productive to the achievement of his policy aspirations, and by striving officiously to keep the Westminster tradition alive, he may well have helped to kill it.

Endnotes

We wish to acknowledge with thanks the assistance in facilitating access to files and papers in the department of foreign affairs & trade of the historian, Dr W J Hudson, and of his assistants Ms Moira Smythe and Mr Chris Taylor, and subsequently in clearing for reference and publication papers originating after 1 January 1965. For guidance towards some of the documentation, as well as more generally, we are greatly indebted to Sir Arthur Tange. We express appreciation to Sir Paul Hasluck’s parliamentary colleagues, Sir Fred Chaney and Sir Gordon Freeth and to all the former diplomats and others who spoke to us, most of whom are acknowledged, but inadequately. We thank our research assistant, Damien Browne.


2 Paul Hasluck, Diplomatic Witness, Melbourne, 1980. Hasluck’s relationship with Evatt is also examined in Robert Porter’s Paul Hasluck: A Political Biography, Nedlands, 1993, ch. 3.


5 W D Forsyth, Recollections of a Maverick Diplomat, NL. (nd).


8 McIntosh to Day (New Zealand High Commissioner in London) 5 October 1945, McIntosh Papers, NZ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

9 Hasluck, Diplomatic Witness, p. 22.


11 Ibid., pp. 6-7.

12 Some eight in all. Alf Parsons, then high commissioner in Singapore, recalls the southeast Asian heads of mission meeting in Manila in 1968 as very useful, with Hasluck presiding as though he were conducting a University seminar. Tange, confronted with organising a heads of mission meeting in New Delhi, had a different perspective, writing to Plimsoll on 13 September 1967 that ‘What we need most of all is not a seminar but some prompt guidance on policies — and encouragement to take initiatives’ (Plimsoll papers, DFAT).

13 Peter Boyce has similarly concluded that officials working in Canberra were likely to be more negative about Hasluck than those who dealt with him from abroad (Introduction to Paul Hasluck, Mucking About: An Autobiography, Nedlands, 1994 edition, p. xii).
14 Paul Hasluck, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 1, 1946-64, p. 21, MS 5274, Box 37, NL.
15 Though Tange was absent for significant periods during this time.
16 Tange to Plimsoll, 21 October 1969, Plimsoll Papers, DFAT.
17 Tange to Plimsoll, 1 February 1967, Plimsoll Papers, DFAT.
19 Conversation with A R Parsons, 10 May 1995.
21 Conversation with H Dunn, 13 July 1995.
23 Interview with M R Booker, 10 May 1995; interview with Sir Arthur Tange, 19 June 1995.
24 Interview with Alan Renouf, 10 October 1994.
25 Interview, Michael Cook with David Lowe, 7 June 1995.
26 Interview with Sir Fred Chaney, 30 June 1995.
27 In advising Tange from Bonn of this decision he explained that ‘the volume of routine work in my office was not sufficient to justify the retention of a Liaison Officer in addition to a Private Secretary’ — although when he had earlier sought approval from the Prime Minister for his office establishment including a liaison officer he had noted that his delay in doing so had given him ‘a better chance of assessing the volume and nature of the work’. (Hasluck to Tange, 2 November 1964, Australian Archives, A1838/1 1270/35/7; Hasluck to Menzies, 18 May 1964, Australian Archives, A1838/1 1270/35/2).
28 *Diplomatic Witness*, pp. 31, 22. As Sir Owen Dixon observed of British Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon, this practice was not necessarily to the advantage of the pressed minister (Owen Dixon, *Jesting Pilate*, Melbourne, 1965, p. 7).
30 Hasluck to Plimsoll, 15 August 1968, Plimsoll Papers, DFAT.
31 Especially on aid expenditure, and often amended them in extraordinary detail.
32 Hasluck to Plimsoll, 3 January 1967, Plimsoll Papers, DFAT.
33 Obituary in *Age*, 11 January 1993.
34 On 14 October 1964 he minuted to the Secretary: ‘There is no need for the Department to act as an intermediary in any personal arrangements I may make about my own appointments with newspapers or wireless stations’ (Australian Archives, A1838/274 558/1/1/ Pt 1).
35 It had been created under Barwick, following earlier approval in principle by Menzies when he was acting minister.
36 Notably in writing and placing on the leader page of most metropolitan newspapers an article in the Minister’s name linking Australia’s Vietnam commitment to SEATO.
37 The role of the Branch was downgraded after the Minister sighted a record of a background briefing to the *Age* in which Richard Woolcott expressed personal agreement with editor Graham Perkins’ observation that there should be some change in China policy before going on to state the official line. Yet, consistent with the bifurcation in his attitudes towards diplomats overseas and officials in Canberra, Hasluck in May 1965 wrote to the Prime Minister from London arguing that information attaches from the News & Information Bureau should be replaced by ‘developing within the Department of External Affairs a group of officers who, while part of our general diplomatic service, were trained to specialise’ in information work (Hasluck to Menzies, 13 May 1965, Plimsoll Papers).
38 Australian Archives, A1838/1, 1270/35/75, 5 February 1965.
41 Minute to Secretary, Plimsoll Papers. Correspondence with the minister January 1967-December 1968, DFAT.
Papua and New Guinea

Hank Nelson

In May 1951 Paul Hasluck, forty-six years old and just over two years in the House of Representatives, was appointed minister for territories. In July he paid his first visit to Papua and New Guinea. He has left a memorable picture of a backwater permeated by the ‘habits and outlook of colonialism’, where Australian men in white ducks gave ‘repertory club performances of a pukka sahib who had just come in from a damned awful day of taking up the white man’s burden’. And where some women ‘had once read a Somerset Maugham novel about planters’ wives in Malaya and had sincerely admired all the things that made the author smile’. The masters, he said, did not fetch and carry and the ‘house boys’ were ‘cheerful in the way in which pets are cheerful’. From his sharp observations and sharp prose Hasluck drew the conclusion: ‘I came away from that first trip revolted at the imitation of British colonial modes and manners by some of the Australians who were there to serve the Australian Government’. Hasluck ceased to be minister for territories in December 1963 and he chose not to make the grand processional farewell — the idea of a serial of stilted formalities would have been repugnant to him — and he later declined to attend the independence celebrations in 1975. His last visit was for work. Hasluck’s relationship with Papua and New Guinea included a deep sympathy for people and place but his overwhelming commitment, even passion, through the twelve and half years of his ministry was for a just and efficient administration directed at what he thought were clearly stated and appropriate goals.

An obvious measure of Hasluck’s ministry is to compare Papua and New Guinea of 1951 with that of 1963. The extent of change in those things easily counted was a test that Australians often applied — a process encouraged by the fact that the statistics collected for the annual reports to the Australian parliament and to the General Assembly of the United Nations were always available. In 1951 the total Papua and New Guinea population was said to be just over 1,000,000 ‘enumerated’ (that is those people sufficiently at ease with government patrol officers to ‘line’ and have their names entered in village books), and another 325,000 were ‘estimated’. By 1963 the enumerated population was 2,000,000, and the number estimated was under 50,000, about two per cent of the total. In the Hasluck years the Australians had rapidly expanded government control, and in the process they had found more people than they had expected. That meant that of the 2,000,000 they administered in 1963, 1,000,000 were unborn or largely beyond government control when Hasluck first took his oath of office. The brevity of Australian control of — and service to — so many was often in Hasluck’s mind.
In 1951 the number of Europeans in the territory public service was just 1,280. When Hasluck thought that the 'personal difficulties' of junior officers were being ignored he instructed the administrator that in a service so small senior officials should show the 'same personal attention and concern for the welfare of the men under their command as characterised by any good battalion commander'. But by 1963 the Europeans, now called 'expatriates', totalled over 4,000. With Papua New Guineans in the auxiliary division and various Asian and specially contracted officers it was a service of just over 6,000. The Australian grant to the territory had increased from $10,000,000 in 1951/2 to $50,000,000 in 1963/4. When Hasluck first arrived in Port Moresby 'Native Village Councils' were still experimental: there were just two in Papua (Hanuabada and Ealeba in Milne Bay) and four in New Guinea (three in and around Rabaul and Baluan on Manus). The councils included 19,000 people, about two per cent of the people under government control. By 1963 there were 77 Native local government councils and they administered 700,000 people. Less than 5,000 Papua New Guineans in government schools in 1951 had grown to over 40,000 in 1963. And there was similar growth in many other things that can be measured and used as indices of economic and social change — the numbers of hospitals, aid posts, infant welfare clinics, and air strips, the increased area covered by the malaria eradication campaign, the spread of department of information and extension services radio stations, the miles of road, the 10,000,000 coffee trees owned by Papua New Guineans and the amount of money held by Papua New Guineans in savings bank accounts.

The quantitative changes were many and basic to economic, social and political change. Some, it is true, were outside Hasluck's control or interests — for example, the spread of coffee growing among the highlanders, and the growth of the Tolai cocoa project. Who should take credit for the new roads was disputed. When Colin Simpson's *Adam in Plumes* was published in 1954 Hasluck wrote him a long letter and in one of several corrections claimed it was 'completely fancifil' to suggest that Ian Downs had 'originated the idea of road-building'. Downs and other district commissioners, Hasluck said, were working within a policy that he had outlined in July 1951. But in 1968 the administrator, Donald Cleland, said that Downs had taken the initiative on the major project to connect the highlands to the Markham Valley. And Downs in his official history, *The Australian Trusteeship*, said that because the minister was known 'to be nervous of embarking on road programs' other than 'jeep tracks', he was not told until 'whole sections had been completed'. In his autobiography Downs again claimed that there was a deliberate policy not to tell the minister of the plan to build a road from Gusap through Kainantu to Goroka. The difference between Hasluck and Downs is partly one of scale: Hasluck had a vision of local officers encouraging the people to turn walking tracks into cart-tracks, gradually putting in fords, culverts and bridges, and
gravelling the wettest sections; but Downs had immediately carried out a major engineering feat with thousands of labourers.\textsuperscript{13}

To apportion credit for the growth between 1951 and 1963 is obviously not simple, but there is no doubt that much praise should rest with Hasluck (and the two might not rest easily together). It is hard to think of any other minister of that time who had an equal capacity for close surveillance in the field and of the files, for selecting central issues from cautious reports, for sustaining interest over a long period and for hounding and harrying his senior public servants. He drove himself hard. In May 1957 Hasluck set down what he hoped would be his program for a two-day visit to Port Moresby: official opening of the Rouna hydro-electricity scheme, meet members of the Port Moresby chamber of commerce, the mixed-race community, the Port Moresby town advisory council, the Hanuabada council and any other council; inspect administration housing of all kinds including hostels and the accommodation for single men and women; visit hospitals; and have a discussion with the public service association if it wanted it. In addition he was sure that the administrator had things in and around Port Moresby that would warrant inspection, and he would make time to see them.\textsuperscript{14} His timetables for particular meetings were equally detailed and seemingly equally unlikely to fit into the time allowed. He probably kept to the agenda — and the next appointment. As time passed his sense of urgency increased: ‘Year by year I become impressed more and more by the dire emergency of the tasks to which we have set our hand in Papua and New Guinea. We must bring greater drive and greater energy into every aspect of that task’.\textsuperscript{15} If the urgency was greater, so was his obligation to reward and punish. Hasluck started letters to the administrator: ‘I have been profoundly disappointed ...’.\textsuperscript{16} He spoke of particular senior officers as having been ‘singularly inept’, of having shown ‘gross misunderstanding’ and of having written ‘silly twaddle’. When the auditor-general found fault in the territory accounts he wrote that if by the next year’s report:

The whole of the unsatisfactory features have not been cleared up, I shall feel obliged to report the fact to Cabinet, and to seek approval for changes in the Administration to ensure that the standards of efficiency which the Government demands shall in fact be applied in future.\textsuperscript{17}

That seemed like a threat to sack someone.

In 1957 government officers at Tapini were charged with burning village houses, killing pigs and mistreating prisoners. In the course of his comments Hasluck said that the Tapini events added to other matters causing him concern.\textsuperscript{18} Cleland in his response wondered what those other matters might be. In just over a week Hasluck’s list of administrative deficiencies was back in Port Moresby:
the repeated inability to produce a satisfactory programme for housing ... and the failure to realise the housing programme; the apparent unsatisfactory control in respect of the Wau Hospital, the Wewak hospital and the Lae sawmill; the general standards in the Sepik District; the wide gap which seems to me to exist between the higher levels of the Service and the middle and lower levels; the fact of your advocacy for the promotion as Assistant Administrator of ... when weighed against my own strong impression that some of the major imperfections are [in his department]; the long continued inability of the Education Department to measure up to my minimum requirements; ... a falling off in the promptness ... a failure to correct ... the slowness in implementing policy directions in such matters such as the advancement of women, uniformity of development, corrective establishments, introduction of cattle, extension of village agriculture and housing and social care for mixed-bloods.  

It was a devastating denunciation of his own officers, touching almost all activities of their work.

Hasluck did write letters of praise but they were few and confined to particular actions. Perhaps it comforted the staff in Papua and New Guinea to know that the public servants in Canberra were also having their inadequacies pointed out to them. In 1961 the secretary of the Department of territories, C R ‘Esky’ Lambert, wrote to Cleland about mining policy. Hasluck countered: ‘I am wholly unconvinced that the department of Territories is working on the right lines and ... I am unconvinced that they properly understand the situation in the Territory’.  

He asked Cleland to send him, at his ‘earliest convenience’, a paper on the future of mining including the need to provide for economic activity and opportunity ‘among the indigenous people’.

On his last visit to Papua and New Guinea as minister, Hasluck took the time to visit the border with west New Guinea. What had been Netherlands New Guinea had recently passed from the control of the United Nations temporary executive authority to become a province of Indonesia. Hasluck said that he wanted to impress on Australian officers at their remote posts on the upper Fly and Sepik that they were doing important work, and to give them every chance to ‘yarn in an informal way’. He began his letter to Cleland with customary frankness: ‘I have learnt the saddest lesson that I have had since I became Minister for Territories’. Some of the officers that Hasluck had spoken to had later talked with journalists or written to newspapers. Hasluck believed he had been betrayed and misrepresented by officers who in ‘the half fuddled state to which they reduce themselves in the evening’ had not even understood what he had said. Although there were honourable officers he would, he said, never again expose himself to the dissemination of lies. He ended his letter: ‘If it should happen that I do not continue to hold this portfolio I will leave it with yet another great bitterness added to the many I have suffered in my attempt at fair and friendly relationships with the people of the Territory’.  

Hasluck seemed
to expect disappointment, and he was quick to find it, but that did not diminish its impact. Cleland was told to transmit the accumulated anguish of the minister to the field staff.

Through Hasluck’s twelve and a half years as minister he had the one administrator, Cleland, and the one secretary of the department, Lambert, and many of the senior officials in Port Moresby held office throughout Hasluck’s ministry: eg. Harold Reeve (treasurer then assistant administrator), John Gunther (director of public health then assistant administrator), Anthony Newman (treasury official then treasurer), Frank Henderson (senior official then director of agriculture). Most of the district commissioners and other senior staff in district administration had been in Papua New Guinea from — or before — the war: Keith McCarthy, Horrie Niall, David Fenbury, Gerry Toogood, Robert Cole, Allan Roberts, Ivan Champion and others. Given that degree of stability in the service, it is obvious that many able men, who bore the brunt of Hasluck’s harrowing criticism, chose to continue to work with him and for him.

Cleland, a fellow Western Australian and former director of the Liberal Party, had known Hasluck before their Papua and New Guinea partnership. He later wrote of Hasluck:

> In some ways he was a hard task master always expecting perfection, and with a singleness of purpose in pursing government policies. He was fair in all his dealings and his integrity was beyond reproach. For his friendship and help over the period when I served under him I shall always be grateful.

A glib answer to why the senior public servants chose to work under Hasluck is that they accepted the accuracy and justice of his criticism. That is simply untrue. Sometimes they thought he was wrong and at other times they thought they were blamed for the faults of others or for factors beyond their control. What they did recognise was that Hasluck had industry, intellect and a heightened sense of propriety and procedure. Where he found fault he would reprimand them but in the appropriate way and there would be no comment about them in another forum. When the service appeared open to public condemnation Hasluck quickly carried out his own inquiry, and if was convinced that his officers had acted correctly then he defended them with all his considerable skill.

In an ugly incident at Navuneram near Rabaul in 1958 the police, under the command of Australian officers, opened fire on a threatening crowd, expended fifty-four bullets and killed two men. Hasluck visited the area, talked with a wide variety of people and, after a commission of inquiry had been held spoke in the House of Representatives:

> The real tragedy of Navuneram lies in the inevitability with which events marched with accelerating pace to their sad conclusion. Once a course of action had been commenced it could not be checked. The officers concerned, described by the
Commissioner as 'all men of outstanding ability and integrity', were faced with a situation of unusual difficulty. They made decisions which, from their experience and their knowledge seemed to be best, and they carried out those decisions with moderation, patience, a high sense of duty and a constant attempt to avoid bloodshed. It is easy enough, after the event, to question the rightness of the decision. Opinions among people entitled by experience to speak on these matters may differ widely concerning the expedition to Navuneram on 4th August, but I suggest there is nothing in the record that will entitle any one anywhere in the world to say that the decision was not made with careful thought, responsibility and in good faith with the purpose of doing what would bring the best outcome for the people of the Territory.26

No one else in the parliament could have spoken in the officers' defence with that knowledge, fluency and credibility. Hasluck was equally persuasive when he outlined general policy or particular priorities in law, education, labour relations and political development. Even those officers who had advocated other goals or methods could work with the confidence that the administration's policy had been subjected to tough, informed analysis, it had been set down clearly, and it could (and would) be defended trenchantly.27

Hasluck was not a compulsive interferer. Where officers were obviously energetic and with a clear and appropriate policy — as with Gunther in the department of public health — he let them go. On some particular issues he monitored but chose not to take command. The postwar liquor laws of the territory continued to prohibit the sale or supply of alcoholic drinks to Papua New Guineans, and the ban on drinking soon became one of the most obvious and resented signs of discrimination. The numbers of Papua New Guineans who broke the laws were increasing and at times they were drinking home brews that put health — and life — at risk. Hasluck accepted that the local officials were those best placed to judge when any advantages from prohibition exceeded benefits and when those within the missions most in favour of the ban on liquor sales could be persuaded to accept change without destructive divisions in the community. Cleland recommended that the liquor laws be changed in 1962 and Hasluck and the Australian cabinet accepted Port Moresby's timing and procedures for change.28

After Hasluck left territories Cleland believed he had greater cause for resentment. The new minister, Charles Barnes, was less likely to exercise authority based on his position, mastery of the files, or inspection, and in the absence of firm ministerial control, the secretary of the department, Warwick Smith, tried to direct Port Moresby. But that was contrary to the proper conduct that Hasluck had so strictly observed. The secretary was not the immediate superior of the administrator: he should have transmitted the minister's instructions, not assumed the minister's authority. Cleland now believed he suffered from the 'dictatorial attitude' of Canberra.29 He resented not so much
that instructions came from Canberra but that they were no longer based on the same degree of knowledge, they did not follow the processes that allowed the best informed officers to comment and they came from an officer without the appropriate authority. Many of those who had served under Hasluck retired or moved on.

What is clear is that Hasluck, so uncompromising in his readiness to monitor, inspect and scourge, must be acknowledged when the targeted officers do more patrolling, building, teaching and healing. Those rising graphs of performance from 1951 to 1963 were not, of course, entirely a result of his policies and his urgings but they were his to a much greater extent than is normally the case with a minister holding office in the Westminster system. He was nominally and actually the minister responsible. It may also be said that he was determined to be both minister and his own departmental head.

There is another perspective on the quantitative data, on those objective tests to support a subjective judgement. The figures that give a picture of Papua and New Guinea in 1963 can be measured against what was needed by the independent nation that came into being twelve years later. When Hasluck left territories the total revenue of Papua and New Guinea was $76,600,000, and two-thirds of it came from Australia. Exports were just $36,000,000, nearly all them coming from trees — copra, coffee, cocoa, rubber and timber. The imports exceeded exports by over 50%. Private capital flowing into Papua and New Guinea was only about $10,000,000 to $12,000,000 annually and it exceeded the capital being taken out by just $2,000,000 to $4,000,000. The 27,000 non-indigenous people produced two-thirds of the gross domestic product, and that one third in the hands of Papua New Guineans was nearly all wages.

The growth in local government councils had been significant but in 1963 two-thirds of the people were still not in councils. In the legislative council, of 37 members fifteen were Australian officials, ten were elected or appointed non-official expatriates and twelve were appointed or elected Papua New Guineans. One Papua New Guinean, John Guise, sat on the administrator’s council, an advisory body. But the main political institutions were about to change; Hasluck had already piloted legislation through the Australian parliament to establish in 1964 a 64 member house of assembly that allowed for the election on universal franchise of a Papua New Guinean majority.

In the public service 2,824 expatriates held permanent positions in the first, second and third divisions. No Papua New Guineans were in the first division, thirteen were in the second and 100 in the third. The number entering primary schools were increasing rapidly but still less than half of those of primary school age were in government and registered mission schools. Just twelve Papua New Guineans were at the top of the territory secondary schools and another twenty-five were in the final year of high school in Australia. The International Bank estimated that one per cent of adults had a full primary education and less
than one hundred individuals had completed a full secondary education.\textsuperscript{33} No Papua New Guinean had graduated, but in 1964 eight Papua New Guineans were studying at Australian universities.\textsuperscript{34}

When Hasluck left Papua and New Guinea in 1963, then, the money economy was slightly developed, dependent on Australian government funds, dominated by the 2.5\% who were European or Asian and with no immediate prospects for rapid change. Most Papua New Guineans had never voted in a local government or national election, no Papua New Guineans were in the first division of the public service and they made up a tiny minority (about 4\%) of the second and third divisions. Most Papua New Guineans were illiterate, most of those of primary school age were not in school and the names of all those who had had a full secondary education could be listed on one page. The highest ranked Papua New Guinean police were sergeants and the first sub-inspectors were expected to graduate in 1964. In 1963 the first two Papua New Guineans to be commissioned as officers in the Pacific Islands regiment completed their training in Australia. Eighteen years after the end of the second world war Papua and New Guinea seemed to be a long way from having the economy, the institutions and the trained personnel to run a nation. And it was just ten years from full internal self-government and twelve from independence. If Australians could reasonably have been expected to know that they only had ten years then their aims or rate of implementation in, for example, education or the extension of a centralised formal court system, should have been changed. There was simply no chance of building a national system in the time available. In fact, the policy of universal literacy, proclaimed for all the thirty postwar years, did not get halfway by 1975. And there were commentators warning of the short time left for Australia to fulfil its obligations in nation building — a point returned to later.

To take the statistics of 1963 and place them against the needs of 1975 is to present in stark and extreme form what historians often do: judge one era by the values and events of one that follows. In fairness to Hasluck he should be measured by what he was attempting to do and what he could reasonably have been expected to know and do at the time.

Through his years in the ministry Hasluck was broadly consistent in his aims. Under the United Nations charter the declaration regarding non-self-governing territories said that Australia, as the administering nation of the trust territory of New Guinea, was to: ‘promote the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the inhabitants ... and their progressive development towards self-government or independence as may be appropriate to the particular circumstances of each territory and its people and the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned’.\textsuperscript{35} Having been at the San Francisco conference in 1945 and as one of the authors of the report of the Australian delegation led by Frank Forde, deputy prime minister, and Herbert Evatt, minister for external affairs, Hasluck was more aware of the genesis and detail of Australia’s trusteeship obligations than anyone else in the parliament.\textsuperscript{36}
Hasluck was always reluctant to give short answers to the question: What was Australian policy? Where a concise statement was required the Australian government said that it aimed to bring New Guineans ‘as quickly as possible to the stage where they will be able to manage their own affairs and decide their political future as a people’. New Guineans would then be ‘in a position to determine their own future and self-government or independence, as they may choose’. It gave the same commitment for its possession, the territory of Papua. As in the formal statements, Hasluck in his speeches was careful to make clear that the end of policy was not necessarily independence. At times he spoke of Papua and New Guinea eventually choosing a ‘measure of independence’. In 1958 in a considered attempt to set down the constitutional destiny of the territory Hasluck said he hoped that Papua New Guineans would choose a ‘future that keeps them in close, direct and friendly relationship with the Commonwealth’. While he did not think that Papua and New Guinea would enter the Commonwealth on the same terms as the existing six states, he thought another relationship might be negotiated between the Commonwealth and Papua and New Guinea, and by that time Hasluck expected that Australian federation would itself have changed.

In some of his last speeches in the House of Representatives as minister for territories Hasluck repeated his commitment to protect ‘to the utmost the right of the inhabitants to choose’. And twice when asked about whether Papua and New Guinea might one day be a state of the Commonwealth, he accepted the possibility. He said that the people of Papua and New Guinea had told him, ‘in many places in the territory with great clarity’, that:

They realise that they are advancing towards self-government, and their present view ... is that when they reach the stage at which they can undertake self-government they would like to remain in continuous association with Australia. The best way they can see of doing it is by entering into an arrangement to become an eighth State.

Some idea of the time scale involved can be gauged from the fact that the Northern Territory was to be the seventh and Papua and New Guinea the eighth, state.

Consistent with his belief that the people of Papua and New Guinea would have the right to choose the timing and direction of their own constitutional future, Hasluck refused to set target dates for political change. Such decisions, he said, would ‘come directly out of their own response to the efforts which we make to promote their political advancement’. Hasluck did not believe that a society could be made: societies were organic, they grew. ‘Societies’, he said, ‘build themselves’. As the society of Papua and New Guinea developed the people of Papua and New Guinea would take cumulative acts of self-determination. In 1960 he thought that the ‘urgent tasks’ were not political but
the ‘advancement of law and order, health, education and how to earn a living’. And target dates in education and other sectors of the social and economic infrastructure could be set.

Hasluck believed that the ‘New Guinea situation is unique and comparisons with Africa and Asia are inapplicable’. Australia was not a ‘colonial power in which that term is used by the anti-colonial critics’. When introducing his last major constitutional change, the legislation to establish the house of assembly, Hasluck foresaw Papua and New Guinea going down the same track previously taken by the Australian colonies: ‘Each of the several Australian colonies passed through the stages of representative government and of responsible government, and, out of a colonial experience, we shaped a single nation with full national autonomy’. In Port Moresby after the United Nations Visiting Mission of 1962 (the Foot Report) Hasluck repeated assurances:

I say explicitly to the native people as I have said before: so long as you need our help we will give you our help. We are not leaving you until you yourselves wish us to leave ... The United Nations Charter mentions either self-government or independence, as may be appropriate. We hope and believe that when the decision is made it will keep Papua and New Guinea and Australia in a close, friendly and interdependent relationship.

At times Hasluck’s policies have been characterised as ‘gradualism’ and ‘uniform development’. It is certainly true that he opposed the granting of power to an elite, that he thought social and economic change should precede political, and that advances in local government should come before national. But what was most important was his commitment to the growth of a Papua and New Guinea ‘society’, the growth of a sense of community with specific values — even unpredictable ‘caprices’ — right across Papua and New Guinea and for this society to make choices about the speed and direction of change. The ‘great task’ for Australia was to promote and foster the growth of, but not to attempt to make, that society.

By 1963 there were other well-argued public statements of what Australia should be doing in Papua and New Guinea. Four staff members of the Australian National University, D G Bettison, E K Fisk, F J West and J G Crawford, gave lectures ‘before a large Canberra audience’ on the prerequisites for the independence of Papua and New Guinea. These were published in 1962. As well-informed as anyone in the Australian universities about colonialism in general and Papua and New Guinea in particular, they argued that:

Papua and New Guinea was going to be a completely independent nation. The boundaries of the new nation would be those of the existing Australian Territory. The time available for Australia was ten to fifteen years. The symbols of a nation — a flag, an anthem, a common name for the people, and a
new parliament building — were needed.

The power to make decisions should be given to Papua New Guineans, and Australian public servants should administer Papua New Guinean-made law within a system influenced by Papua New Guinean values.

A Papua New Guinean elite should be fostered.

Australia should accept that it would have to give substantial economic aid long after it had no power to control the way that money was spent.

When the four Australian academics predicted the sequence of events they were — as we now know — sometimes wrong. They presumed that the emerging elite would embrace radical policies and that there would be an accelerating fervour of nationalism. In fact the Papua New Guinean leaders were restrained in their demands and the nationalism muted — particularly before self-government. But the academics were in sharp contrast to Hasluck in giving a precise end to policy, nominating the time available and setting particular tasks that could be accomplished within that period. And they were right in their prediction of the time left to Australia.

None of the specific recommendations of Bettison, Fisk, West and Crawford were accepted in Hasluck’s time, and more importantly none were implemented until the 1970s. Had the recommendations been put into practice earlier we cannot be sure that the people of Papua New Guinea would have benefited. But what can be claimed is that there were basic weaknesses in the policy pursued by Hasluck, and some of these were recognised at the time. Australia constantly repeated that it offered choices to the peoples of Papua and New Guinea. Some Papua New Guineans thought that this meant that they might choose not to join other Papua New Guineans in a new state: Australian policies allowed hopes of secession — or at least hopes of negotiating a different constitutional settlement. Australia said belatedly that all Papua New Guineans would go as one, and they would all become part of the independent nation of Papua New Guinea. That meant that only the question of when Papua New Guinea would become independent was open to choice, and by the time Papua New Guineans exercised that choice in the parliament in 1972 it was made in the light of the fact that both the Liberal and Labor parties had said that Australia was leaving. The degree to which Papua New Guineans could speed up or delay the process was slight. Papua New Guineans came quickly to power with very brief experience of executive government, and with a rapid transition from self-government to independence. In the end, Papua New Guineans had little choice — the promise had been illusory and destructive — and there was no gentle transfer of powers over a long period as the Australian states had known.

Another source of informed comment on Australian policy was the Australian School of Pacific Administration in Sydney. Charles Rowley published the New Guinea Villager just as he ceased to be principal of the school. Subtitled A
Retrospect from 1964, Rowley began his introduction with a discussion of Australia’s ‘colonial’ relationship with Papua and New Guinea. Rowley decided that what Australians ‘have done there is very like what other colonial powers did in their colonies: and the reactions of the people may be broadly similar’. After twenty years of observation and scholarly interest Rowley began from a distinctly different starting point from Hasluck’s assumption of a ‘unique’ Australian association with Papua and New Guinea.

Hasluck read widely, but he, and the system that he directed, were not as open to outside ideas as might have been expected. His temperament, his doubts about the relevance of much overseas experience, and his determination to have things done with due concern for procedure and propriety impeded the flow of informal and unorthodox ideas. Writing of the Dutch officials with whom he negotiated the difficult question of West New Guinea he wrote:

They all had the sort of education that would have given them the label of ‘academic’ in Australian public life. I found it very refreshing to be working with men who, when business was over, could talk of something else, and who when business was on, could examine a question against a wide background of knowledge and pick up an allusion or understand a phrase with some exactness. I had a snobbishly intellectual delight in their company that I did not find often in my usual round of duty.

But of course among those thousands of permanent public servants in Papua and New Guinea there were people the intellectual equal of the Dutch. Generally Hasluck chose not to have relaxed conversations with them.

Hasluck’s inclination to observe strict lines of administrative command were strengthened by his own experience as a public servant. In the 1940s he had been disturbed by the erratic ways of Evatt who did not write minutes of instruction to his staff, who had unorthodox relations with his department, and who constantly took advice from John Burton and others careless of the formal public service structure. He was sceptical of the influence of the directorate of research and its sometimes eccentric head, Alf Conlon: ‘we’, Hasluck wrote, ‘told him nothing, and exchanged jokes about him after he left’. Hasluck was unusual in that he came to politics, as he said, with a greater interest in the processes of government than with politics or ideology. His pedantry with documentation, his belief in the ‘wisdom that is stored in the files’, and his concern for due process all helped restrict his access to those with insights not reported on the files that went to the minister.

That same concern for propriety was carried beyond the needs of immediate administrative order and efficiency. In 1960 he was approached by a young Australian woman who was about to marry a New Guinean man. Her father wanted the government to refuse her permission to re-enter the Territory. In Port Moresby where the divisions between the races were still sharp, the
relationship between the attractive black man and attractive white woman was exciting much interest and some shrill prejudice. Hasluck wrote to Cleland:

You know my strong views against intervening in the personal affairs of citizens or using powers given to us for public purposes to arrange the private lives of people. I am writing simply to inform you... and assume that unless some question affecting the public interest arises the matter will be of no further concern to us officially.\(^{56}\)

That was an admirable statement about the role of government. Hasluck was determined that he and his officers should be equally disinterested in all private commercial transactions. Probably no other minister for territories was so informed about investment and so unlikely to grant economic favours.

In November 1953 two young Australians, Patrol Officer Gerald Szarka and Cadet Patrol Officer Geoffrey Harris, and two Papua New Guinean policemen, Constables Buritori and Purari, were killed near Telefomin, an isolated government station on the upper Sepik. The incident was made all the more dramatic by the first radioed report from a missionary giving just one death, and then the gradual emergence of the extent of the killings, the pursuit and arrest through mountainous country of 165 people, official enquiries, the trial in Wewak, the sentencing of over thirty men to death, and finally the commuting of their sentences to ten years’ imprisonment.\(^{57}\) Of the Papua New Guinean police and medical orderly who fought alongside the dying Harris, the presiding judge said, their ‘story of heroism, resolution and loyalty... even in the cold marshalling of facts in a judgment, must appear sublime’.\(^{58}\)

Hasluck, who would as a matter of course be well-informed about such an incident, immediately faced questions in the House of Representatives. Szarka, after his appointment to Telefomin, had written frankly to his parents about the actions of previous government officers and his letters were used as the bases for further well-informed questions.\(^{59}\) Hasluck had to know whether government officers had burnt houses to punish villagers, if two men recruited to carry for a government patrol had been accidentally drowned and the relatives not compensated, if a government officer had been living with local women, and if normal patrolling in the area had been neglected. Cleland warned that the government could not give a ‘categorical and public denial’ to some and perhaps all the charges.\(^{60}\) Eventually the enquiries and the trial decided that the attacks on Szarka, Harris and their police were not related to particular acts of injustice by previous government officers. And they may well have been right. Hasluck was also faced with the anger and grief of the dead patrol officers’ parents — and he responded with sympathy and practical help.\(^{61}\) The problems arising from attempts to work out compensation payments to the parents continued into 1955.

In spite of the fact that these were the first killings of any patrol officers since the war and his own close involvement in the case, Hasluck chose not to
mention the Telefomin killings in *A Time For Building*. Other violent confrontations between government and villagers, such as those at Navuneram, Hahalis, and Tapini, are also omitted or given a passing reference. His constraint was certainly not a result of a lack of knowledge. When he received an ASIO report on the activities of a Tolai leader in 1962 Hasluck immediately saw that it was superficial: it presumed the statements of grievance were new and associated them with anthropologists in the area when Hasluck knew they were long-standing and arising out of complex issues. Hasluck was truly a man of policy and process. But Hasluck’s rejection of any analyses of such incidents also made it easier for him to make assertions such as: the Australian administration had ‘brought law and order without bloodshed’.

And it was generally true that the Australian field officers by Hasluck’s time were skilled and restrained when initiating new people into the ways of the government. But it was also true that many communities had histories where ten, twenty, thirty people had been killed by earlier government patrols, and the presence of the police with their rifles, and the occasional act of petty intimidation — a rifle butt dropped on a bare foot, a kick or a cuff — were still important in government control during Hasluck’s administration.

By making little public reflection on those moments when village protest burst into violence, Hasluck also avoided searching for factors that might underlie the dissatisfaction. Charles Rowley said that it was unlikely that:

> the politics of discontent will be nicely channelled into the House of Assembly or expressed mainly in the forms of British parliamentary tradition. A riot in the streets of the capital, Port Moresby, might well prove more politically significant for the Territory and Australia than resolutions in the House.

Hasluck chose not to re-examine the causes of the brawl that had taken place between the Pacific Islands regiment and police in Port Moresby: he wrote about the process and appropriateness of the Territory administration calling on the army to assist the civil forces.

Hasluck linked his praise of the way Australians imposed law and order in Papua and New Guinea with his claim that Australia had a unique relationship with Papua and New Guinea — one different from a colonial relationship as it was known in Africa and Asia. ‘Our young Australian patrol officers’, he said, ‘... have done by patience, common sense and force of character what was done in some other lands with battalions of troops’. Within ten years of Hasluck leaving Territories, that Australian imposed peace was looking increasingly fragile and was often broken. The 1973 ‘Report … Investigating Tribal Fighting in the Highlands’ gave many cases of a resurgence of fighting, for example, near Mt Hagen:

A major fight involving some 8,000 people broke out in August [1972]. It lasted for seven days before it was broken up. Three men were killed and 33 injured, 92
houses were burnt down. The police arrested approximately 1,000 people after the fighting had finished. Of these some 700 were convicted.

The committee also reported threats to expatriate businessmen, stoning of cars, breaking and entering and 'general lawlessness'. 'One of the most worrying aspects of the increased violence' the committee said, was the frequency of attacks on government field officers and police, 'virtually unheard of in the early 1960s'.

The committee was drawing its evidence from 1971 and 1972 when constitutional change was under way but when Australia was still clearly the responsible administering power. Had the Australians stayed in authority they would have been faced with either suppressing the tribal fighting or accepting increasing lawlessness. Both would have resulted in international opprobrium. By the early 1970s it could be argued that in large parts of the Highlands there had been neither a period of Australian colonialism nor a successful imposition of central government authority. What had happened was a successful and significant, but temporary, disruption to old enmities, old disputes and old methods of settlement.

Paul Hasluck was the longest serving Australian minister for territories. He was the most significant and the most articulate: he is important for the history he made and the history he wrote. He was hard on those who worked for him — at the time and in his later writings — but most of those who received direct, eloquent details of their shortcomings were surprisingly tolerant, indeed they admired him, and that is significant for anyone now attempting to judge Hasluck as writer of minutes and history. When Hasluck's administration is measured against what was said by others at the time, and more particularly when measured against events of a decade and more after he ceased being minister, it is — of course — possible to suggest that another method or another target would have been more appropriate. But so much of the origins of Australian postwar policy, or the speed of its implementation, or the clarity of its articulation, or the morale of those who carried it out was determined by Hasluck. In a conscious effort to make a policy that was Australian, and not just that of the Liberal Party, Hasluck was generous to his Labor opponents, supplying them with information and arranging for them to travel to Papua and New Guinea. He recognised that Australia had a 'great task', the initiation of people into relationships with the outside world and the making of a nation. One of his great regrets was that he could not convince his fellow Australians of the danger, complexity and grandeur in the task. Even if Hasluck had done nothing in his life other than be minister for territories he would still be a significant Australian. He said he gave about one third of his working time to Papua and New Guinea, so we are talking about the equivalent of just four years of his life.

That makes his achievements all that much more extraordinary.
Endnotes

1 It was the Territory of Papua and New Guinea during Hasluck's ministry; it was the 'Territory of Papua-New Guinea' 1945-1949, and 'Papua New Guinea' from 1971. I was not living in Papua New Guinea in Hasluck's time, having gone there to live in 1966. Apart from comments in general histories, I have previously written on Hasluck, 'Filling some gaps and building for a nation' in Ward, Voutas, Jinks et al, The Hasluck Years: Some Observations, The Administration of Papua New Guinea, 1952-63, Discussion Paper 1/79, La Trobe University, 1979, pp. 64-77.


3 Ibid., p.14.

4 To conform with Article 88 of the charter of the United Nations and to answer questions set by the trusteeship council the Territory of New Guinea annual report was submitted to the general assembly of the UN. The annual report of the Territory of Papua was to the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia (both hereafter Annual Report). Paul Hasluck used statistics on growth, for example, in his speech in the House of Representatives on 23 August 1960. The speech was printed separately as a pamphlet by the government printer, Canberra.

5 Figures from the Annual Reports.

6 Hasluck through Lambert to Cleland, 14 March 1956, Cleland Papers, Pacific & Asian History, Australian National University. I am grateful to Dame Rachel Cleland for making the papers available. Her own account of her time in Government House Port Moresby has been set down in Papua New Guinea: Pathways to Independence, Perth, 1983.

7 The name changed in the Annual Reports.

8 The growth in local government — with the figures ever expanding — was one of the tables usually included in the Annual Reports.

9 Colin Simpson, Adam in Plumes, Sydney, 1954. When this book was republished as part of Plumes and Arrows, Sydney, 1962, p. 187, Simpson began his section on Highlands road building with the acknowledgment that it was 'greatly to Mr Paul Hasluck's credit' that the road system had been extended 1000 miles. Hasluck sent a copy of his letter to Simpson to Cleland, 26 November 1954, Cleland Papers.


13 Hasluck, A Time for Building, p. 148.

14 Hasluck to Cleland, 24 May 1957, Cleland Papers.

15 Hasluck to Cleland, confidential letter, 27 May 1958, Cleland Papers.

16 Hasluck to Cleland, 12 February 1960, Cleland Papers.

17 Hasluck to Cleland, 2 October 1955, Cleland Papers.


19 Hasluck to Cleland, 2 August 1957, Cleland Papers.

20 Hasluck to Cleland, 15 August 1961, Cleland Papers.

21 Hasluck posed perceptive questions about what was then an industry showing few signs of the spectacular growth to come.
22 Hasluck to Cleland, 28 October 1963, Cleland Papers.
23 The territory public service commissioner resigned because of a harsh reprimand from Hasluck. And Cleland told Hasluck that was the reason, 27 October 1954, Cleland Papers.
24 Cleland 'New Guinea Days', preface.
25 In an interesting draft letter of 19 April 1960 Cleland told Hasluck 'With great respect' he was asking for the impossible and that he was unjustified in some of his criticisms. There is no evidence that the letter was sent. Cleland Papers. Several ex-officers or people with PNG experience reviewed Hasluck's *Time for Building*: Les Johnson (Asian Studies Association of Australia Newsletter March/April 1977), Stuart Inder (Pacific Islands Monthly, August 1976), Peter Hastings (Sydney Morning Herald, 16 October 1976), W Morrison (Age, 17 July 1976), H Nelson (National Times, 2-7 August 1976), J Gunther (I have a copy of the review but not where it was published), C Rowley, (Historical Studies April 1978), and Harry Jackman circulated a letter that he wrote to Hasluck.
27 See, for example, Hasluck's outline of education targets, Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, 26 October 1961, pp. 2529-32.
28 Cleland, 'An Administrator Reflects', pp. 218-20; and Cleland, 'New Guinea Days', pp. 166-70; Hasluck, *A Time for Building*, p. 340, says 'the initiative rested with him (Cleland)'.
29 Downs, *The Australian Trusteeship*, p. 201, gives more credit to Hasluck who took 'a policy decision'. It is more accurate to say that Hasluck had agreed that there would eventually have to be change, and he would accept advice on timing.
32 Ibid., p. 30. The GDP here includes only the monetary sector. It omits subsistence production.
40 Hasluck, 'Present Tasks and Policies', p. 86.
42 Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, 8 March 1962, p. 608; and the second question was on 13 March 1962. See earlier answer on 20 October 1957, p. 945 when Hasluck distinguished between the Northern Territory and Papua and New Guinea.
45 Hasluck, House of Representatives, 1960, p. 10.
46 Ibid.
When Hasluck reviewed his time as Minister in 1976, *(A Time For Building, p. 239)*, he said that he had always seen clearly that Papua New Guinea would be independent, and what he was uncertain about was the relationship between an independent Papua New Guinea and Australia. This does not agree with his writings at the time: e.g. 'some measure of independence' (1958), 'interdependence' (1962), the discussion of questions in Parliament about Papua and New Guinea becoming a State (1962), the careful emphasis on 'self-government or independence' and pointing out that the United Nations agreement did not commit Australia to independence (1962 and elsewhere), and his clear statement on the relationship between Australia and Papua and New Guinea 'after self-government' 1962.

49 The nicely chosen term 'caprices' is in 'Present Tasks and Policies', 1958, p. 82.


52 Hasluck, *Diplomatic Witness*, p. 132. Conlon rarely wrote down his advice and he did not have access to many basic government files — significant handicaps in Hasluck's (and many administrators') eyes.

53 Ibid., p. 21.

54 Ibid., p. 22. He himself said 'I am myself something of a pedant regarding documentation' p. 31.

55 Hasluck to Cleland, 2 August 1960, Cleland Papers.


59 Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives 10, 11 and 18 November 1953, pp. 11, 38-9, 198. Anthony Luchetti, Labor member for Macquarie, was the main questioner, eg. 9 April 1954, p. 249.

60 Cleland to Hasluck, 8 May 1954, Cleland Papers.

61 Hasluck to Cleland, 4 November 1954, Cleland Papers. Hasluck was very moved by the distress of the Harrises, and he wanted to find some way to console them. He pressed Cleland to consider awarding medals, but as the two Australians had been taken by surprise they had little opportunity for heroic action.

62 Hasluck to Cleland, 1 August 1962, Cleland Papers.


Vietnam

Henry S Albinski

Paul Hasluck was a central figure during Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam conflict, a watershed in Australia’s foreign policy and politics. His tenure as minister for external affairs stretched across nearly the last two years of Robert Menzies’ prime ministership, all of Harold Holt’s and, until early 1969, the beginning of John Gorton’s.

My interest in this chapter lies in assessing the rationale and policy lineaments Hasluck brought to the issue of Vietnam; what they were, where they fitted into his intellectual framework and personal attributes; and how their passage was influenced by the decision-forming environment in which Hasluck functioned. Aspects of this sketch are inferential, but hopefully serviceable in illuminating the person and, to a degree, his time.

Hasluck was a historian, and history in his own words was template; the ‘best preparation for the practice of politics is the study of history’.1 His treatment of foreign affairs has been described as ‘an affirmation of personal belief, an approach embodying, as it were, the connections reached by long experience and thoughtful reflection about the significance of that experience’.2

For thirty years before becoming foreign minister, Hasluck was witness to a panorama of seemingly unrelenting social upheavals and armed conflicts. He saw the times as unpredictable, unsafe, and unsuited for complacency. As a public servant, Hasluck had been deeply involved in Australia’s contribution to assembling and placing in motion the United Nations but grew pessimistic that an amicable, freshly minted international order would result. These early impressions conditioned his interpretation of later developments. The postwar period ushered in great power rivalry, played to the edge of nuclear confrontation during the Korean war and the Cuban missile crisis. In Malaya, Indonesia and elsewhere, decolonisation and its aftermath were turbulent. Indonesia’s pressure to wrest control of Irian Jaya from the Dutch caused trepidation over the security of Papua New Guinea, Australian territory over which Hasluck had held responsibility as minister for territories.

The emergence of communist regimes, movements and insurgencies was frequently identified as a prime source of international instability. The issue of communism became embedded in domestic Australian politics, reminding one observer of the way in which, since the nineteenth century, Australia’s isolation ‘encouraged ideological or emotional or liturgical approaches to foreign problems’.3 Communism sparked controversy over control of the trade union movement, and etched itself on the fortunes of the Australian Labor Party and of the Democratic Labor Party phenomenon. It was highlighted by such events
as the Menzies government’s efforts to ban the Communist Party, and by the
Petrov espionage case.

During the mid- and late 1960s, Hasluck grafted his own appreciation of the
conflict in Indochina onto prevailing Menzies government foreign policy
assumptions and movements. Early in his role as foreign minister, with the
government and the public much more focused on confrontation, Hasluck
championed Vietnam’s importance.

Among Hasluck’s concerns was that South Vietnam’s population was entitled
to determine a political and socio-economic course for itself, not under duress.
The view was unexceptional but Hasluck had personally held a genuine and
long-established concern about the disadvantaged and under-empowered —
behind the noblesse oblige of an enlightened patrician. The sentiment had
been manifested during his ministerial stewardship of the Northern Territory
and of Papua New Guinea. Within the constraints of the times, he promoted
Aboriginal welfare, and tried to protect Aboriginal people’s legal and social
status within the wider Australian community. In PNG, he is remembered for
his efforts to thwart the influence of expatriate economic and official interests
at indigenous expense. His subsequent stance on Rhodesia and South Africa
reflected deeper human concern and a more progressive political position than
was held by many of his parliamentary colleagues. Regarding Vietnam, as
Peter Edwards explains in his official history of the period, Hasluck did perceive
the North Vietnamese regime as nationalist as well as communist, but that
‘geography and the strength of the pro-Chinese faction in Hanoi made it unlikely
that Ho could be an Asian Tito. The interests of the people of South Vietnam,
including the million or so who had left the north in 1954-55 to avoid communist
rule, could not be sacrificed in such an uncertain pursuit’, to be almost willfully
‘abandoned to exploitation by a determined minority’.

For Hasluck, events in Vietnam encapsulated much more than a Hanoi regime
pretending to be the patron of a ‘war of liberation’ or a ‘people’s war in the
south’. Hanoi was quite simply seen as predatory, an aggressor. Behind it lay
a rogue China, and danger that was global as well as regional. The Vietnam
crisis was not some sort of imponderable phenomenon. It was part of a pattern,
even a grand design, which had cast its shadow over Korea, India and SouthEast
Asia, and ‘at the end of the road there is always China’. The problem was
compounded because Vietnam was physically adjacent to other, fragile and
strategically located countries. In 1964, Hasluck wrote in an influential American
journal that: ‘We should not fall into the error of thinking that the world power
contest is other than world-wide ... aggression must be resisted and made to
fail wherever it threatens peace; and the principles of civilised conduct have to
be maintained abroad as well as at home’. Indeed, Hasluck quickly reached
the conclusion that what was happening in Vietnam would prove more fateful
for the cause of international order and well-being than anything else since the
second world war.
These strong opinions can be extrapolated from several elements of Hasluck’s intellectual predilections. One was his insistence that it was the fully unrolled canvas, not isolated patches, that informed the playing out of international politics. Another was his strict personal sense of the appropriate rules of international conduct, which some might regard as cliché and moralisation and others as standards mirroring both the rectitude of the man, and his feelings about mitigating international anarchy. Still another factor was his conviction that while there were compelling reasons to resist aggression in Vietnam per se, there was more to be said, namely in context of China’s identified support for destabilising and overrunning South Vietnam. Deflecting China’s tendencies to threaten the independence of others would likely subject it to a broader, mellowing effect. China would be enabled to become an acceptable, working member of the international community. Hence, as will be suggested later, Hasluck’s association with a ‘realist’ or power politics-oriented version of world affairs was not driven by simple, force majeur considerations. Power, in Hasluck’s mind, also was instrumental to crafting a disciplined international order in which force would become less attractive, less necessary and certainly less capriciously invoked.

Hasluck naturally tied his reading of the Vietnam conflict’s significance more directly to Australia’s interests. In the broad brush with which he painted, it was foolhardy for an isolated middle power, bordering on a highly volatile region, to be anything but anxious and, within its resources, creative in its response. The regional contagion, or domino effect to which Hasluck subscribed, strengthened this conclusion. Early in his service as foreign minister — and beforehand during his brief time in the defence portfolio — Indonesia was in this manner fitted by Hasluck into the Vietnam equation. Indonesia was an arc across Australia’s northern approaches, straddling the inter-oceanic choke points. Resorting to force in Borneo, it was frustrating the completion of Malaysia’s legitimate territorial identity. It was threatening the Dutch in Irian Jaya, which abutted on Australian PNG. Sukarno was viewed as demagogic and mercurial. He acquired weapons systems from communist nations and flirted openly with China. The Chinese-oriented Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) was seen to be enjoying rising influence as well as numerical strength. In Hasluck’s view, ‘if we could get stability and peace in South Vietnam it would be easier to deal with Indonesian confrontation and vice versa’.

Relatedly, until Sukarno’s fall in 1965, Hasluck was mindful that while the United States was concerned about the situation in Vietnam, it was less concerned regarding Indonesia’s behaviour in Borneo. To lift American consciousness over confrontation, and potentially Washington’s willingness to back Australia’s own diplomacy in the dispute, Hasluck wished to make Australia more attractive to the US by highlighting Vietnam. Simultaneously, he strived to pull the Americans more emphatically into committing themselves in Vietnam.
As Sukarno’s eclipse brought confrontation to a close, the political and military situation in South Vietnam was deteriorating. Hasluck’s response on Australia’s behalf underlined two salient facets of his conception of world affairs and of conflict resolution: the role of great powers, and the uses of force.

Power politics was for Hasluck an organising framework for understanding world politics. It was an orientation acknowledged by essentially all who came into contact with him. Robert Porter, Hasluck’s biographer, describes his subject as a practical, pragmatic man who ‘rarely extolled the value of political philosophies or theories to explain the cause of a particular social situation … The exception was Hasluck’s interpretation of international power relations, where he consistently adhered to a thesis of great power conflict’. In essence, power — military or otherwise — was the touchstone of international relations. Postwar, a few great powers had come to dominate the international stage. How they behaved vis-à-vis one another in regionally interlocked settings defined the balance. The overarching point of international politics was to ensure that those powers that had the capacity to exert major influence were discouraged from irresponsible, destabilising practices. Responsible power was needed to counter irresponsible power; great powers shouldered great responsibilities.

Hasluck believed that while the United Nations had its uses, virtually from the organisation’s inception, great power rivalry had exposed its limitations as paladin of world order. His own involvement with UN affairs earlier on served to validate confidence in his subsequent observations that idealism and legalism were deceptively frail foundations on which to build order. Hasluck’s regard for the UN was not on balance enhanced by his experiences as minister for territories. While acknowledging that Hasluck had compiled a progressive record in PNG, Tom Millar’s critique was that ‘the government’s view tended to be that UN bodies were uninformed and interfering. Australia would listen to their views, and then do what it thought best almost irrespective of UN recommendations’. In effect, Hasluck ‘was especially contemptuous of UN comments and resolutions’.

For Hasluck, the Soviet Union was a most unpleasant place, protagonist of an obnoxious ideology, and wielding ominous power. By the mid-1960s, Hasluck had however concluded that the soviets had probably accepted a stand-off, or grudging detente, with the west. This in part he saw resulting from the west’s demonstrated resolve — during the Berlin blockade, over soviet missiles in Cuba, and in the construction of an imposing NATO shield. The soviets could therefore be helpful as counterweight or balancer opposite China, which Hasluck targeted as an unbalancing power with pan-Asian aspirations, vividly manifested in Vietnam. Gregory Clark recounts Hasluck’s 1965 visit to Moscow, during which he describes the minister as imploring the soviet leadership to use its influence with Hanoi not to allow itself to be manipulated by an expansionist China.
Checkmating China in Vietnam and beyond rested quintessentially, inescapably, on American shoulders; on American power husbanded to countervail wrong, minatory power. The US had to be engaged on behalf of Vietnam in its own right, for the sake of the region and of Australia, and for global purpose. Hasluck portrayed the cause in Vietnam as a strategic rather than moral crusade, but a crusade all the same.

Hasluck’s sense of national and international purpose in the face of threat was intimated in the first volume of his official history of the Australian home front during the second world war. The book was published in 1952, many years before he became foreign minister. What surfaces is Hasluck’s disappointment that, in time of war (but before Japan’s intervention) Australian political leadership did not more categorically demand sacrifice, nor the public more willingly forswear the pursuit of private and sectional interests.

In the event, Hasluck was persuaded that the safety and well being of small and middle powers such as Australia depended on American fortitude, of which Vietnam was a test case. Within this context, Australia’s responsibility became twofold. One was to encourage the friendly great power through reasoned, quality and persistent representations. The other was to demonstrate through tangible support its own credibility; as for instance had been done in Korea, to supplement the major power’s own investments. Australia had to discourage the ‘loneliness of the great power’ syndrome. Hasluck was perturbed when, in 1967, Britain decided to draw down its regional presence. He was especially eager that this in no way diminished the Americans’ will to stay the course in Vietnam.

Hasluck’s disposition toward the employment of various instruments to achieve desired ends in Vietnam is instructive. As mentioned, it was not his avowed purpose to smash the regimes in Hanoi or Beijing, but to cause them to desist from destabilising neighbours, and to become more responsible international actors. He, however, was deeply sceptical about their willingness to negotiate in good faith. He felt that negotiations were pointless, indeed counter-productive, except from a position of confident strength: ‘The meaning of the government — I put it in plain Australian terms — is this: If there is a bushfire, you have to put the bushfire out before you can go on with your farming.’ Ill-conceived concessions would otherwise become a fig leaf, masking a gift victory to the enemy, and sacrificing the South Vietnamese population’s interests.

It was the Americans who of course held the key to dealing with the crisis in Vietnam. From an early stage, Hasluck not only prompted them to be urgently seized of the matter but to exert appropriate force. Yet as Edwards remarks: ‘Although the Australians were trying to reinforce the views of the like-minded elements in the American administration, there is little evidence to suggest that they had anything more than marginal influence on the course of United States policy’. Throughout his period as foreign minister, Hasluck voiced scepticism
about US bombing pauses and other steps designed to win the other side's confidence and reciprocation. He eventually found himself and Australia advocating military resolve just as the Americans began to reconsider a full bore approach. Porter judges that Hasluck had created a conundrum for himself: ‘He had reached the conclusion that the war was unwinnable in the sense of an outright military victory. However, given his scepticism about the willingness of the Vietnamese to negotiate, Hasluck believed that continuing military activity was necessary to tire the enemy and produce the conditions that would lead to an appropriate settlement’.

While Hasluck became preoccupied with the imperative of American steadfastness, his conduct of other tangents of Australian policy disclosed a seemingly more nuanced, cautious temper. During the last, traumatic year of confrontation in Indonesia, Hasluck as foreign minister pursued a balanced approach toward Indonesia. Confrontation was strongly resisted, including through military assistance to Malaysia, but diplomatic links and civil aid and training programs with Indonesia were preserved. Australia privately urged the US to apply economic assistance leverage against the Sukarno government. That arguably was consistent with Hasluck’s belief, germane to Vietnam, that small and medium nations could not for the most part achieve much dealing with major disputes without enlisting the sort of leverage only available to the powerful. The adoption of conscription was seen as the necessary Australian mechanism for deploying a battalion to Malaysia and another to Vietnam. In early 1965, the Malaysian deployment was regarded as the more urgent in terms of the situation on the ground, but it also was an exercise in signposting. It was a message to Washington that, as Canberra pressed for tough American action in Vietnam, Australia wished to be welcomingly regarded as contributing unilaterally to its own, special concerns in the region, illustrated in this instance in Malaysia.

Australian advisers and other elements had been active in Vietnam for some time before the battalion was authorised. Australia had not been pushed by the United States to commit a full battalion; it volunteered the contribution. A second, and then a third, battalion were eventually deployed. Hasluck was hardly an opponent of an Australian combat presence but on the initial, and then on the third, battalion decisions he was more reserved than others in the government, at least on timing. His tenure as defence minister had probably helped to educate him about the ADF’s limitations. He worried that Australia lacked adequate spare resources and could be denying itself prudent military flexibility.

Hasluck’s approach to the economic dimensions of Australia’s handling of Vietnam also reveals something other than a one-eyed perspective. He was not oblivious to South Vietnam’s internal circumstances but favoured early and meaningful civil assistance. He also subscribed to Lyndon Johnson’s offer of
an ambitious economic reconstruction program for the region, North and South Vietnam alike, but only if peace on sensible terms were achieved. Perhaps this was an 'easy' position to assume, since peace seemed distant and Hasluck continued to promote a dogged American military effort. It was, however, in keeping with his wider geopolitical belief that North Vietnam should not be destroyed politically or otherwise but incorporated into the comity of regional nations.

Australia's management of its trade with North Vietnam can also be construed as matching Hasluck's broader dispositions. Australia did not bar trade with North Vietnam until August 1965, well after Hasluck had indicted Hanoi, after conscription was introduced and after the first combat detachment had arrived in Vietnam. To be sure, the bilateral trade had been incidental and irregular and its suspension was basically painless.

Several, connected reasons seemed to account for the decision to suspend trade: first, it was hoped that the step would make the government's firm diplomatic posture more credible; second, it was designed to please the United States — which Australia was enthusiastically supporting, and which in time became so agitated about other nations' conduct as to enact legislation providing that those governments that maintained any form of commercial intercourse with Hanoi would forfeit American foreign aid opportunities; third, trade with North Vietnam was cut to deflect complaints at home or overseas that Australia should cancel its trade with China. Australia enjoyed a highly lucrative trading relationship with China in wheat and other nonstrategic commodities, which was never interrupted during the Vietnam conflict.15

On balance, from Hasluck's angle of view, the intended result of chopping off trade with North Vietnam, namely a freer hand in the vigorous allied prosecution of the conflict, continued to matter most. Drawing upon Hasluck the historian, Hasluck the analyst and policy maker placed priority on broad perspective and attention to essential national interest. Hence his insistence on long-term perseverance in Vietnam. The history-in-depth versus immediate circumstances distinction apart, Hasluck has, especially in hindsight, been frequently charged with not after all being an especially sound historical diagnostician. He allegedly drew misplaced or exaggerated analogies and inferences in such matters as China's imperial intentions, the legacy of relations between China and Vietnam and the empirical evidence to sustain the domino hypothesis. Hence Hasluck's long-time colleague Alan Renouf's verdict that as an exercise in foreign relations, Australia's Vietnam policy was technically well-handled: 'The only defect was that the policy was wrong'.16

It is nevertheless worth underscoring that Hasluck's focus on the prominent role he favored for major western powers, particularly the United States, was analytically rather than sentimentally grounded. He obviously found welcome affinities between Australia and the UK and the US but was not smitten or
overawed by them. He was a devoted, practicing Australian nationalist; albeit in his own style, not for example in the John Curtin earth-colour or Gough Whitlam oratorical, grand vision sense.

Hasluck's personal contribution to Australian policy in Vietnam and its foreign policy generally was most pronounced during Menzies' prime ministership. It was somewhat less so under Holt and under Gorton. One reason was basically substantive. Once the building blocks of Vietnam policy were in place, what followed for the next few years was minor variations. The other reason was attributable to the personalities involved and the dynamics of Hasluck's relationship with the prime ministers he served.

Hasluck enjoyed the exercise of power attached to his office. He worked diligently and had a high opinion of his own views. His impressions of previous Australian foreign ministers helped to shape his own style. He believed in the serious, cerebral give and take of policy discussion under senior ministers and noted that Richard Casey would have won more rounds when he held the external affairs portfolio had he been a more vigorous and articulate advocate. Hasluck's earlier contacts with Evatt had convinced him that while Evatt had an excellent mind and could grasp a brief exceptionally well, he and his contributions had suffered from becoming too diffused, and in respects blinkered by naive idealism.

In Menzies, Hasluck found a leader and colleague whom he genuinely admired, and with whom he could fruitfully work. He was impressed by Menzies' command of foreign affairs and by the prime minister's willingness to listen to reasoned argument and to trust his cabinet colleagues with a generous brief. Hasluck later wrote approvingly that Menzies 'liked the company of his peers and was at his best and happiest when in the company of those whose minds matched his own ... the real quality of the man emerged and his great delight appeared when he was talking with men of the first class'”. The remark reveals much about Hasluck, who saw himself as among those men of the first class. Menzies on his part returned the compliment. Although Hasluck spent a dozen years as a junior minister in territories and did not always get his way, Menzies was impressed by his application and achievement: ‘Whatever comes or goes in the future, he has a great place in Papua-New Guinea history’”. When he was foreign minister under Menzies, the setting of Vietnam policy was not in all detail Hasluck's, for instance the timing of the original combat deployment. But this was overshadowed by the overall thrust of policy, including Hasluck's successful undertaking in cabinet to elevate Vietnam to a high level of government priority.

As Russell Trood has pointed out, Australian prime ministers have been inclined to focus on foreign policy matters of special interest to them. Menzies focused on British Commonwealth connections, Holt on Asia, Fraser on southern Africa, and so on. Under Menzies, Hasluck in this sense had a long tether on
Vietnam. Under Holt, the problem lay in what Hasluck regarded as the prime minister's interference on Asian (including Vietnam) issues, compounded by Holt's lack of conceptual breadth. Despite his accusing view of China's insinuation into the Vietnam conflict, Hasluck was nonplussed by Holt's capricious decision to appoint an Australian ambassador to Taiwan.

When a new Liberal leader and prime minister was chosen in early 1968, Hasluck narrowly lost the race to Gorton, though from the sidelines Menzies was known to favour Hasluck. Hasluck was personally depressed, in part because he had small regard for the successful candidate. Gorton basically did away with serious, collegiate, cabinet consultation. Hasluck subsequently wrote that 'one of the few members in cabinet from whom I could expect some understanding of my views on foreign policy and defence was Gorton', though he did regard him as something of a loose cannon. Hasluck became more distant, even marginalised, especially after learning that Gorton wished to ease him out by appointing him governor-general.

Bureaucracies variously affect public policy. Hasluck brought to the office of foreign minister experiences and biases that imbued him with definite opinions about public servants and their relations with ministers. This came to play a part in shaping Australia's Vietnam policy. The 'yes, minister' syndrome did not apply.

As an external affairs official, Hasluck had glimpsed the system from within. The experience 'had not given me great concern about the dangers of bureaucracy. What worried me was that public servants might be turned into the tools of ministers and corrupted by a system of favours'. He in particular reproved Evatt for having turned the department into a private possession, capped by his appointment of John Burton as secretary. Rank favoritism, Hasluck felt, toward a person unqualified for the job and under whom he would not serve.

Another imprint on Hasluck derived from his tenure as minister for territories. He correctly viewed his department's public service as dilatory and unresponsive to his instructions, especially within the ranks of the PNG administration. He applied himself to rectifying the situation, including by taking a personal and detailed approach to departmental affairs, and denied that he was improperly running things by 'remote control'. Looking back, he believed that he still had been 'far too correct and considerate and not forceful enough ... I relied on the Territory Administration too much and left the execution of policy to them ... I should have moved much more heavily and brushed them aside more often'.

The department of external affairs that Hasluck inherited was staffed by many able, thoughtful, and professionally rigorous officers. It was not a bureaucratic poor relation. The minister's lengthy, arguably overlong immersion in territories contributed to a firm hands-on style in external affairs. Hasluck preferred formality, including through written policy directives rather than
interpersonal engagement. He did not ‘play favourites’ in the manner for which he faulted Evatt. But he held views about officials’ loyalty to their task, and to him, which were not conducive to an atmosphere of robust, critical discourse. This predilection was reinforced by Hasluck’s own confidence in his own skills and analyses. As Malcolm Booker complained: ‘Since Hasluck had made up his mind on all basic issues there was no scope for developing new strategies to deal with the changing international environment; decisions could be quickly made because they were kept within the framework of established policies’. In this quite real sense, external affairs’ Vietnam policy was in fact of Hasluck’s making. Counsels of caution or reconsideration were discouraged, turned back. Early in his ministry, Hasluck rebuked his ambassador to Saigon for not having been sufficiently seized of the geopolitical gravity of what was transpiring, and the rebuke was well-publicised through the department. Moreover, as Errol Hodge recounts, Hasluck became frustrated with his department’s inability, or unwillingness, to control Radio Australia broadcasts. The conflict in Vietnam was the catalyst for his belief that overseas reporting that was unflattering, that ran counter to established foreign policy, was contrary to the national interest. Hasluck wished that Radio Australia be separated from the ABC and placed under cabinet control. On this occasion, deliberate stalling or ‘policy inertia’ within the department contributed to the pattering out of Hasluck’s proposal. The episode nonetheless stands as testimony of Hasluck’s single-mindedness in promoting what to him was on the larger mural right and proper, and his readiness to reconstitute established (and in this instance respected) administrative structures to suit his purpose.

Hasluck was by self-admission a reluctant politician. When originally persuaded to stand for parliament, he grudgingly agreed, pleading that he had never belonged to a political party and held no noticeable partisan attachments. An election leaflet issued on his behalf in 1949 emphasised Hasluck’s credentials as journalist, holder of a master of arts, and as an ‘international figure’. Even while in parliament he identified himself as less than comfortable with a politician’s label. He concluded his autobiography, published in 1977, with the observation that while he had stuck to his political career, he did so often feeling I was the wrong driver in the wrong truck. His inclination was to stand back from politics; instead, by sense of reason and public duty, to do what he considered right. His reflections on Evatt as someone the impact of whose gifts had been diminished by political ambition reinforced Hasluck’s already essentially detached, apolitical demeanor. Labor prime minister John Curtin was by contrast singularly admired by Hasluck because he was ‘a politician who became much greater than his politics’. Menzies, who most certainly was a political creature and an accomplished politician, was admired by Hasluck for his large policy proportion and judgment. Hasluck chose to emphasise in Menzies a disposition to do what was right rather than necessarily popular and expedient.
Hasluck's personal electoral circumstances also militated against becoming more of a partisan calculator and battler. He never spent time in parliamentary opposition, and therefore never had to consider how he and the coalition had to manoeuvre to recapture office. His seat of Curtin was very safe and did not require bruising campaigning. His majorities were in the 60 per cent and upward range. In 1955 he stood unopposed; in 1963 he took 75 per cent of the vote. As the Labor opposition came to question and then openly attack the government's, i.e. his, Vietnam policy, as public opinion became more impatient, Hasluck seemed hurt and even bewildered; he saw himself as following a perfectly rational, national interest course that critics did not appear to comprehend. Indeed, the coalition's inflated, 1966 electoral majority, outward popular support for government policies at the time and various self-wounding tendencies within the ALP initially dampened incentive for a reappraisal of Vietnam policy.

Hasluck lacked burning ambition but he was not averse to the prospect of leadership. He supported Holt to succeed Menzies in 1966 but stood for the Liberal deputy leadership and lost to William McMahon. In 1968, after Holt's disappearance off Portsea, he stood for the leadership but lost to Gorton. He was certainly not unmindful that party/governmental leadership carried a 'political' connotation. He felt that he offered credentials as a national leader and thereby qualified for advancement. He did not campaign vigorously in 1966 and 1968 for the jobs he sought and thought less of the men who did, and won, by the undignified means by which they conducted themselves. Alexander Downer, an old Liberal political hand, was to write of Hasluck's failed bid against Gorton that 'he offered himself as a formidable alternative but, being the man he is, adopted a Coriolanus-like attitude and refused to lobby members for their votes. Had the party required resumption of Menzies' philosophical style of leadership, Hasluck was the obvious choice; but much as they revered the old statesman, they felt that a different expression of Australian feeling had become necessary'.

Hypotheticals are simply that. It is nevertheless tempting to consider that a long-time Labor insider, Graham Freudenberg, concluded that had the Liberals chosen Hasluck as leader and therefore as prime minister, Labor's massive electoral recovery at the 1969 election would have been impossible, and its 1972 assumption of power difficult. Freudenberg is not alone in his judgment. Such reasoning is informed by what happened during Gorton's and then McMahon's prime ministerships. The coalition gradually withdrew combat troops from Vietnam and only advisers remained when government changed in December 1972. Whitlam had however reviled the coalition as irresolute, confused, and mired in intramural strife. He accused the government of suffering from bankrupt leadership and from having pursued discredited policies, such as over Vietnam and in its isolation of China, unconscionably long. Labor delighted in citing McMahon's remark: 'Our attitude is a clear one. As yet we have not
made up our minds definitely as to what our policy should be. It was, according to the slogan, time for a change. In other words, there was an imputed legacy of wrongheaded policies and a recent record of incompetent leadership. Hasluck would putatively have offered the country a steadier, more methodically presented, less factionally divided option. He was personally respected, and not a party-political lightning rod. ‘Credibility’ would accordingly have been far less an electoral liability.

The ‘better Hasluck as prime minister’ electoral scenario is not however altogether persuasive. Hasluck’s lack of political drive and arguably nous were not likely to have been compensated for by magisterial, rather above the fray leadership. A head-to-head contest with the charismatic Whitlam would have been fascinating. How Hasluck as prime minister would have handled Vietnam in 1969-72 is anyone’s guess. His association with Vietnam and China policies — the stakes and directions he had defined — would probably have been difficult for him to jettison, at least with sufficient deftness to neutralize political criticism. It nevertheless is possible that Hasluck would have invoked that side of his intellectual makeup that stressed not dogma but rational assessment of power politics, i.e., a recognition of what had changed during 1969-72 and what was now feasible and ‘right’ within the power equation paradigm to which he consistently adhered.

In his capacity as governor-general, Hasluck swore in the incoming Whitlam government. The new government promptly recalled remaining military personnel from Vietnam, ended conscription, and extended diplomatic recognition to the Peoples Republic of China. These measures nullified what Hasluck had once embraced. As Hasluck’s self-imposed, five year term as governor-general was drawing to a close, Whitlam offered to extend him. Hasluck demurred. He did however agree to Whitlam’s request for names of prospective appointees. Among those on Hasluck’s illustrative list was John Kerr. The eventual choice was of course Whitlam’s. Subsequent developments in Australian politics nevertheless bear the teasing earmarks of historical irony.

Endnotes

11 See Paul Hasluck, The Government and the People 1939-1941, Canberra, 1952, esp. pp. 566-70. He for instance writes that ‘Many people were more conscious of a boom of prosperity than they were conscious of a war. They were treated politically as persons who would act selfishly and not as patriots who were capable of sacrifice. Many of them saw an opportunity rather than a demand’, p. 568.
14 Porter, p. 256.
20 Cited in Paul Hasluck, Light that Time has Made, compiled by Nicholas Hasluck, Canberra, 1995, p. 157.
26 Paul Hasluck, Light That Time Has Made, p. 119.
28 Graham Freudenberg, A Certain Grandeur: Gough Whitlam in Politics, Melbourne, 1977, p. 120.
29 See Melbourne Age, 18 November 1972.
30 Hasluck later was at pains to explain that the names he put to Whitlam ‘were introduced only to be suggestive of various classes of persons who might be considered and were offered as examples of the way he might look around rather than as nominations’. See his The Office of Governor General, Melbourne, 1979, p. 44. It was part of a section on ‘Additional Information’ he appended to the republication of a 1972 lecture by the same title.
Limited Politics

Judith Brett

Hasluck's is a puzzling political life. In his autobiography, *Mucking About*, he professes little deep interest in politics and no pleasure yet he works hard in politics from 1941 when he enters the department of external affairs till his retirement as governor general in 1974. Despite this hard work, his enduring political achievements seem few. In the 1930s he displays a sympathetic interest in Aboriginal people in Western Australia remarkable for the times, yet as minister for territories in the 1950s, his staunch advocacy of assimilation shows starkly the limitations of this imaginative sympathy. He is an intelligent man of wide reading with a good historical sense, who makes a distinguished contribution to the official history of the second world war yet as minister for external affairs during the 1960s, when Australia is at war in Vietnam, he is writing pedantic minutes to his departmental secretary about the use of personal pronouns in telegrams.

The fussy, difficult minister for external affairs described by Gary Woodard and Joan Beaumont elsewhere in this volume seems a very different person from the younger Hasluck revealed in his wonderful autobiography, *Mucking About*. A rather idle schoolboy, day dreaming a good deal, loving the bush, he became a journalist on leaving school not through any deliberate choice but because the opportunity arose. The chance to explore the world around which journalism offered suited him well. As he grew older his interests widened: he became a foundation member of the Western Australian Historical Society, joined the Perth Repertory Theatre and began attending lectures at the University of Western Australia. Newly married, he and Alexandra set off on a trip to Europe, using the money they could have put towards a house for a year of travelling. While such open-ended, adventurous travelling to see the world became common amongst young Australians after the war, it was much rarer in the 1930s, mostly from lack of means but also from lack of curiosity in the insular Australian society of the inter-war years. A few years later they make a trip to Asia, an even more remarkable undertaking for the time than the pilgrimage ‘home’.

In Hasluck’s account of his childhood, youth and early adulthood there is a sense of openness to experience, of things happening, of opportunities presenting themselves, of possibilities stumbled cross. He writes, ‘Looking back I can see no steady and consistent purpose in my life and certainly I never planned any sort of career... most of the major moves in my life and all the decisions affecting my career were made on the initiative of someone else’. He enters external affairs on the suggestion of John Curtin, he stands for election for the Liberal
Paul Hasluck in Australian History

Party in 1949 on the suggestion of either his wife or of Clive Palmer, the general secretary of the Liberal and Country League of Western Australia. Such haphazard stumbling into a political life is not common in political autobiographies. Far more common are accounts of early ambition and singleminded pursuit, such as one finds in Robert Menzies' reminiscences. Superficially Hasluck bears some resemblance to Menzies, in their breadth of knowledge and their love of literature, poetry in particular, but the emotional structures of their political lives are quite different. Menzies found his direction early, while still at primary school, in response to a phrenologist's prediction that he would be a public speaker and a barrister. 'From that day on,' he writes, 'my course was charted and my mind was clear'. This ambition quite soon became even more specific as he aimed to become the chief justice of Victoria; he then worked single-mindedly to win the scholarships necessary to realise it.

Both men made trips to the United Kingdom in the early 1930s — Hasluck aged 27 on a combined honeymoon and wanderyear, Menzies as attorney general and member of the Australian delegation attending the silver jubilee of King George V. It is as if they visited different places. Menzies found the green and pleasant land he had long imagined, redolent with the words and deeds of the past. Hasluck came with clearer, more open eyes. This was not his first trip, he had visited as a boy of nine accompanying his father to an international congress of the Salvation Army in London, and had stayed with relatives. Alexandra too had relatives in England. That they were a generation closer than Menzies to their English forebears may partly account for Hasluck's greater sense of the reality of ordinary English people's lives in the difficult days of the 1930s. As well, Hasluck engaged in arduous voluntary work in the slums of a sort quite outside Menzies' ken. But the difference in the social worlds, to which they had access, is not sufficient to account for the differences in Menzies' and Hasluck's accounts; it is certainly not sufficient to account for the almost complete absence from Menzies' diary of industrial England or any reflection on the poverty he undoubtedly saw. When Menzies saw evidence which disrupted his idealisations, he turned aside, from the ill-smelling poverty of Edinburgh or the commercialisation of Yarmouth. The differences in what they saw in England are the other sides of the different ways in which their careers developed. Menzies saw in England what he already knew and took from it what he needed, just as he directed his ambition early towards a specific goal. Hasluck, who to some degree allowed his life to happen to him, was a much better observer of the places through which his life's journey took him.

But the capacities of the sensitive observer revealed in Mucking About were not easily incorporated into his political life. These capacities are closely related to the form of activity which he describes as 'Mucking About': 'The characteristic of those who muck about is that they do not plan what they do; they have no set purpose. They feel an impulse to do something or go somewhere
and so they do it and go there'. In the rather melancholy concluding paragraph of *Mucking About* he sees such activity as ending with his entry into politics:

I took the chance of politics and started mucking about in a new field of endeavour. But the days of mucking about were over. From that point on my life ceased to be my own... Duty took charge... My future road had little variety except that some hills were steeper and some curves more hazardous than others. I kept assiduously to my political career, often feeling I was the wrong driver in the wrong truck.³

For Hasluck politics was the path of duty not of pleasure. Although it is true that very few politicians admit to the pleasures of power, that most present their motivations for entering politics in terms of duty and disinterested service, their claims to sacrifice generally have a hollow ring. Descriptions of those other interests put aside in the service of duty are insubstantial in comparison with the obvious investment in the political life. The vividness with which Hasluck writes of his non-political interests — theatre, travelling, horses, the bush — gives a degree of credibility to his claim that, for him, the political life held few deep and enduring satisfactions.

Once having chosen politics, however, his expectations of himself were high, as they were of others, and he had very firm ideas about how politics should be conducted. The pioneer political psychologist, Harold Lasswell, distinguished three broad styles of political work: that of the agitator, the administrator and the theorist. The agitator is the public politician, deeply ambivalent about authority, gifted with language and searching for gratification in the public’s responses to his agitation; the administrator has an ease with authority, a liking for structured relations with others and for working as part of a team and a drive for certainty; the theorist has an attraction towards intellectualisation, a passion for judgement, emotional detachment and a difficulty with action.⁹ Of these Hasluck is clearly an administrator, and most of what he disliked about public politics was the characteristic behaviour of Lasswell’s agitator. His parents, he recalled, disliked agitators, not so much because of their views as because they made a fuss and showed little regard for others.¹⁰ If you want politics without fuss and without undue self-regard and self-promotion, then administration is the answer.

Hasluck respected authority. In *Diplomatic Witness* he comments that the 'happiest way to work is with people better than oneself. That is an adventure. Most other work is drudgery'.¹¹ In the early 1940s, working with stimulating colleagues in the department of external affairs he began to thrive. Recollecting of an afternoon spent talking with Owen Dixon he says that ‘one of the rarest and most delightful experiences for a young man is to take part in a conversation with his betters when there is no attempt to impress nor any concern to belittle’.¹² Perhaps Hasluck is deceiving us, or himself, but he seems to me to have little of that impatient desire to impress by challenging the powerful which is the mark of the agitator. Compare him with the youthful Menzies’ audacity in the
engineers case, or his difficulties in harnessing his ambition in the cabinets of both Stanley Argyle and Joe Lyons. For Hasluck, however, to be respected the authority must be contained, exercised in the interests of ends beyond the self. To the extent that any hint of personal self-interest entered into the exercise of authority, he recoiled, as he did from Evatt.

Elsewhere in this volume James Walter discusses the qualities Hasluck looked for in a political leader, elaborated most explicitly in his lecture on Menzies — a sense of history, understanding of the law, the intellectual capacity to analyse a situation and master arguments, and adherence to a body of principle which mediates individual ambition. For the most part these are intellectual capacities, and Walter notes that Hasluck shows little interest in what might be considered the more distinctively ‘political’ aspects of leadership, brokerage, diplomacy, faction and coalition building and fighting hard when the need arises.

Hasluck comments frequently that his interest in the forms and processes of government was originally much keener than any interest in political doctrines, or in the ins and outs of political manoeuvring and the results of political contests, and he describes himself as a craftsman or mechanic rather than a political innovator. The solution to the social problems revealed by the depression was not the reform of the whole social structure but the acceptance of personal responsibility, personal kindness towards each other and better administration — wiser decisions and more careful management. Hasluck writes often, too, of his admiration for the top public servants, those who work tirelessly behind the scenes, in an atmosphere of calm, untroubled by the need to seek public endorsement, with the time and security to reach objective judgements. They are the experts, the skilled operators, ensuring by their professional skills that the executive is effective and that the constitutional relationships and requirements are fully met, objectively analysing the facts of a situation and drawing out the conclusions based on those facts.

Hasluck’s definition of good politics as good administration is, as Walter suggests, a partial one and this partiality is the key to some of the political limitations Hasluck displayed as a parliamentary member and as a minister. It is a definition which leaves the people out of politics; and the faith in objectivity leaves him with few strategies for dealing with those political problems which are not amenable to purely technical solutions.

The men Hasluck admired were those who could put aside their personal interest for the service of a greater end. So he speaks with praise of Bruce’s stoic ability to rise above Evatt’s insult to him when he appointed the much junior Hasluck as the Australian representative on the UN executive committee in London in 1945 instead of the Australian high commissioner, as would have been expected. Bruce said ‘it all doesn’t matter a damn!’ which Hasluck interprets to mean, ‘that you don’t think yourself more important than your work’. Similarly he praises John Curtin for his apparent lack of ambition for office, his lack of pettiness, vanity or consideration of personal advantage.
Hasluck is always meticulous about separating the person from the office. For example, he has meticulously sorted his papers such that all those having anything to do with his period of ministerial office are held in the Australian Archives, the rest are at the National Library. The volumes of his public addresses and articles in his papers in the National Library are all described as ‘other than speeches in Parliament and official statements’. This same sense of the separation of the personal from the official life is found in the opening paragraphs of Mucking About in which he says ‘as soon as a man becomes a public figure and takes part in public affairs he should give up autobiography and simply proffer evidence as a witness so that others can write history’. His recollections ‘will be unsullied by self-importance, self-justification or self-advancement, and not disfigured by excuses’.

At times one feels Hasluck protests impersonality just a little too much, for, as Woodard and Beaumont show, an insistence on the formal requirements of the office can in fact be a way of wielding considerable personal power in one’s day to day work relations. Three examples they give illustrate this from his period as minister for external affairs: the insistence on being addressed as ‘minister’ by a former colleague; the extreme rarity of his visits to the department itself; and the minute to the secretary of the department, James Plimsoll, reprimanding the department for advising him to support a particular proposal:

> the department is not in a position to recommend what I should or should not do in Cabinet. The Department will certainly never be informed by me what views I expressed in Cabinet on any subject. In Cabinet discussion my sole responsibility is to Cabinet so that I cannot be regarded at any time as an advocate talking to instructions contained in a departmental brief.

Keeping subordinates at arms length with the formal requirements of the office, Hasluck as minister does not seem easily to have allowed others the access to himself that he enjoyed in some of his dealings with older men in the 1940s, and Woodard and Beaumont write tellingly of the loss at both a personal and national level entailed by Hasluck’s insistence on impersonality.

When Hasluck spoke of the virtues of impersonality he had in mind the vices of those whose personal interests in politics were, too his mind, all too apparent. But leaving the people out of politics leaves out not just the pushing, shoving ambition of the politicians eager for success and approval, it also leaves out the public of the democratic polity who have to be appealed to, cajoled and persuaded if a government is to retain office. Where administrators see politics as about the solution of problems, for agitators politics is all about people. It is about the clash of personal ambitions in the quest for public power, but it is also about seeking the support of others, about devising strategies which depend on one’s ability to persuade. Agitators’ obvious ambitions make them easy targets for moral disapproval, as in such comments of Hasluck’s as: ‘I suffered from
a lack of identity with those who seemed to find politics wholly satisfying, and who felt that a political triumph, achieved by any means, was the chief end of man'. But agitators' concern for the support and approval of others also makes them important conduits in democratic politics between popular interests and opinions and the processes of government, their need for support providing a point of leverage for the arguments and interests of others. The agitator's personal ambition to succeed can be accompanied by a modesty with regard to their own opinions and judgements often missing from the mandarin's implacable certainty.

Hasluck's faith in objectivity leaves no room in politics for subjectivity or point of view, let alone irreconcilable differences of value and interest. Hasluck valued the view from above, the objective view based on comprehensive coverage and calm analysis of facts. He attributes this to his early work as a journalist when he was trained in comprehensive coverage, balance and fairness in his reporting and says that as a parliamentary reporter the view from above gave him a certain sense of superiority, a feeling that a journalist was above politics.

In an address to journalists in 1958 titled 'Telling the Truth in Democracy', he sets out the way journalists and by implication all others involved in public life should go about determining the truth in a democracy:

Democracy requires as a basic condition of its success the free and intelligent judgement of its citizens. A free and intelligent judgement requires exact information on which judgements can be made. Exact information requires a devotion to truth both in the giving and receiving of it. The judgement of that information will be prone to error if it is not made with the clear and honest purpose of reaching the truth.

As a historian Hasluck was well aware that people may have different ideas about the truth, that two people often draw different conclusions from the same set of facts, but he sees this as the result of an obsession with one point of view or too narrow a preoccupation with one set of interests. The implication of this passage is that there is indeed one correct view, if only the point of view is wide enough and the distortion of interests is removed. He then goes on to chastise publicists, whether they be clergymen, university professors, members of parliament or journalists, who make public pronouncements without having looked at well-known original source material, or who report something they've been told without verifying it by going to original sources.

Not only would public debate grind to a halt under such rigours, but there is no room in this account of political discourse for irreconcilable differences of value, nor for the recognition that some truths serve some interests more than others, that whatever the truths on which political judgements are based there will be winners and losers and that the losers, at least, may require some
persuading. That is, there is no room in Hasluck’s view of the proper way of
making judgements for persuasion, bargaining or compromise. In fact, he sees
the reliance of politics on such methods as one of its limitations. In the bad
press such methods often get, the attention is generally on the back room deals,
with their suggestion of crude self interest and shady dealing, but in fact the
work of compromise and persuasion is central to the work of politics, from the
personal networking that establishes the relations of trust to be drawn on when
compromises are needed to persuading publics to reimagine the political world.
Hasluck’s faith in objectivity is then closely tied to his preference for a politics
without people and the limitations of the practice of politics which this entails;
but it has other problems as well. In particular it can lead to poor decision
making.

To begin with, Hasluck’s view of the proper way to reach decisions on the
basis of the objective analysis of all the relevant facts and consultation with all
the relevant primary sources can lead to rigidity and closure. Once this exhaustive
process has been completed, a great deal is invested in maintaining the
conclusions reached. This seems to be what happened in Hasluck’s policies as
minister for external affairs, which Alan Renouf described as having ‘a baffling,
irrational constancy’. As Woodard and Beaumont describe, he was
uninterested in the ideas of others and unresponsive to any initiatives coming
from his department.

Perhaps even more limiting is the fact that not all political problems have an
‘objective’ solution. Indeed, it is this very absence which makes them political
and not technical problems. One notices in Hasluck’s writings a careful, at
times almost pedantic, delimitation of problems, as if getting the definition right
will solve the problem. Many of his public lectures begin with the need to
define the terms and he can be a third of the way in before he has done this
sufficiently to start addressing the topic.

Such a strategy has many shortcomings. One can end up, through the process
of definition, ruling out many of the most difficult questions which need
consideration. Consider his very narrow definition of politics as ‘a limited range
of activities related to the aims and methods of government’. That is all very
well, but it leaves you without a framework for understanding, say, a popular
independence movement. A closely related limitation is that one attends to
those often minor aspects of a problem or situation which are amenable to
simple solutions, while ignoring the heart of the matter, such as ‘issuing meticulous
instructions on English usage, forms of address, and even punctuation’ while
minister for external affairs during the Vietnam war. Hasluck also seems to
have consistently displaced his attention from the actions and decisions at hand
to their meticulous and accurate recording of what took place irrespective of
what that may be. ‘Wisdom’ he said, ‘is stored in the files’, even presumably if
it is the record of a stupid decision.
As well, such a strategy can leave you interminably delaying decisions about complex situations until you have mastered all the relevant facts. Discussing the treatment of the status of colonies at the San Francisco conference, Hasluck is very critical of the United States for its simplification of the problem into one of tyrannical rule. His perception is overwhelmingly of the complexity of the situation, of the different categories of colonial territories which need consideration. A perception of complexity makes for a good historian but not necessarily for a decisive and effective political actor.

Paul Hasluck’s enduring political achievements were limited by his attempt to reduce politics to administration; they were also limited by his particular form of liberalism, which left him unable to understand the demands of Aboriginal Australians for a measure of autonomy and self-determination, despite his very obvious sympathy for their situation on the fringes on European society.

At first glance Hasluck's sympathy for ordinary people and their suffering seems likely to have drawn him to the Labor rather than to the Liberal Party. He openly expresses admiration of the labour movement as he saw it in Western Australia but perhaps its strong class-based identity made him feel that while he may be for them he could never be of them. Then there was Evatt, his ambition too little checked by a commitment to principles and ideals, his treatment of people too inconsiderate, his erratic and unpredictable behaviour unbearable at close quarters. These explanations both focus on the reasons Hasluck may not have joined the ALP rather than the reasons for his attraction to the Liberal Party. As such they fail to recognise the deep chord which the Liberal Party’s individualism struck with Hasluck's own experience, in particular his loneliness and his relations with his parents and childhood.

A key question for all modern political philosophies is how we are to reconcile our sense of ourselves as individuals with our membership of society, our need for identity and autonomy with our need for and interdependence with others. Liberalism’s resolution of this starts with the individual whose separateness is taken to be self-evident — the existence of society must then be explained; collectivist political philosophies face the same problem but in the reverse order. The interdependence of people on each other seems self-evident and they must then think about how to reconcile this with the individual’s demands for separateness and identity.

In his discussion of Hasluck’s assimilationist policies as minister for territories, Tim Rowse describes Hasluck as a juridical liberal, as one who is concerned with the civil rights of abstract individuals and who imagines and acts towards them in terms of abstract universal equivalence. Juridical liberalism imagines people as ‘citizen isolates’, firmly rejecting any differential treatment in terms of inherent characteristics such as race. Rowse contrasts this with a tradition of social liberalism which focuses on the social relations which come between people and the state, and which sees a density of social relations as necessary
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for social integration. Rowse's category of juridical liberal is too wide to capture the particular quality of Hasluck's liberalism; for there is more than one way of being a juridical liberalism. Here again the contrast with Menzies is instructive. He too is a juridical liberal, but the emotional concerns of his liberalism are quite different.

Both men discussed the ideas of John Stuart Mill. Hasluck in 1935 in an essay on the value of democracy, Menzies in one of his radio broadcasts in 1941. In his argument for the value of democracy, Hasluck uses some of Mill's arguments about the need to remove hindrances to individuals' capacities to develop. Liberalism's Christian origins are clearly evident in Hasluck's emphasis on each individual's worth in relationship to the whole of being, and his assertion that each individual human being has the seed of perfection within. Also evident is a heavy emphasis on the opportunity individual freedom gives for the exercise of duty and responsibility: 'Ethically the merit of democracy is in the opportunity it gives and the argument it should place on self-control, self-restraint and duty'. Hasluck stresses the duties and obligations of people towards each other much more emphatically than Mill with his passionate pleading that people leave each other alone. Writes Hasluck:

The effect of my own political development was that the success of democracy required both respect and concern for the individual person and an acceptance of responsibility by each person in his role as a citizen and elector. Individualism does not mean selfishness but personal responsibility; otherwise it is a disintegrating force.

Menzies' Mill is further from the original than Hasluck's, for he imports into Mill a concern with the regulation of aggression that is not present in the passages he discusses. Menzies' liberalism was preoccupied with harnessing male competitiveness and aggression for socially useful and creative ends and with the contribution of the rule of law and the institutions of parliamentary democracy to this task. In Hasluck's writing, by contrast, there is almost no mention of aggression. The law is needed not so much to keep people apart as to bring them together in the first place. Consider the use of the word ‘fashion’ in the following passage from an address on 'The Individual and Society', and how the meaning would be changed if it were replaced by 'control':

In my view one of the major questions calling for the clear and exact use of human intelligence today is the life of man in society and the relationship between the individual and society... [I] see the law and its administration as being one of the chief means by which to fashion and to maintain a recognised relationship between one citizen and another, between each citizen and the whole of society and between those who exercise authority and those who are called on to respect and obey authority.
For Hasluck relations between people were problematic, not because of the harm people might do each other but because they might never relate to each other at all, each staying locked in lonely isolation. Duty, obligation, responsibility thus become ways of linking people up with each other and so constructing a working society out of a collection of separate, isolated individuals. In his poetry solace from loneliness is never found in the warmth of human companionship but in the contemplation of nature, and the individual’s place in the overall unity of the cosmos, as in the poem ‘Identity and Wholeness’ which begins with the assertion ‘Each lives in his own character/ Each keeps a single and distinctive Self’ and ends with the insight:

That this identity is only part
Of a great truth that covers all of life:
Existence can be only of one kind —
Of tree, of stone, of animals and stars. 34

This discussion of Hasluck’s particular variety of what Rowse calls juridical liberalism helps us to understand the apparent contradiction in his Aboriginal policy between the progressive sympathy of the 1930s and the stubborn defence of assimilation in the 1950s. Because his liberalism is little concerned with questions of social control, he does not see Aborigines as bearers of ‘primitive’, anti-social attributes (such as laziness, or irresponsibility, or deceitfulness, or aggression) which need to brought within the rule of white society but is able to see Aborigines as individual human beings. But his belief that society is made up of a collection of individuals held together only by the self-discipline of a responsible commitment to duty, his blindness to the binding power of people’s natural sociability and co-operativeness, leave him unable to comprehend Aboriginal people’s embeddedness in their social world and the emotional and psychological costs of assimilation.

Both Hasluck’s limitation of politics to administration and the emotional basis of his liberalism carry the marks of his Salvation Army childhood and his subsequent estrangement from it. Loneliness is one of the dominant emotions in his poetry, closely allayed to themes of sadness and stoic endurance. One poem ends, ‘The lonely learn again/ To suffer and to wait’. 35 He refers often to his loneliness in Mucking About and traces its origins to his parents move, when he was sixteen, from the ordered life of the old men’s home in Guildford, to the peripatetic and impoverished life of Salvation Army fieldworkers. He opens the chapter called ‘A Double Life’ with these words: ‘Between the ages of sixteen and nineteen confusion came into my life ... Many of the incidents I recall apart from the happenings at school are marked by an uncomfortable feeling of embarrassment, and the only succession I find in them is a growing shyness and a withdrawal into myself’. 36
‘Getting away’ became a recurrent theme, fantasising about joining the navy, going for long solitary rides on his bicycle, spending hours reading in the public library, fishing alone. He recognises that in part his feelings of estrangement from his family were due to growing up, but they were due also to his distaste for the Salvation Army’s public displays of religious faith:

Being still very tightly under the discipline of a strict religious home, I could not help being drawn into the hot gospelling and the public practice of religion, and both were very uncongenial. The distaste I had felt at the roughness and noise of worship when a small child at Kalgoorlie came back like a regurgitated sickness in the throat.37

The chapter on this period of his life ends, when he is financially independent enough to buy a motor bike and psychologically independent enough to cease attending church altogether, with the words, ‘at last I had escaped from the bonds of my family and was my own man. I had come of age’. Hasluck’s parents do not appear in the autobiography again after this point, nor in any of Hasluck’s other writings, although his father lived until 1971 when he was 98, and was the oldest Salvation Army officer in Australia when he died.38 The bonds, once escaped, were relegated to the past. By contrast, Hasluck’s two younger siblings, who had more exposure to the army’s direct influence, did not ‘escape’ and stayed in the Salvation Army all their life.

Hasluck’s rejection of the Salvation Army, while it freed him to pursue his subsequent political career, left its mark indelibly on the shape of that career. Here again the contrast with Menzies is telling. Liberalism is a philosophy well-suited to the life experiences of upwardly mobile men, as both Menzies and Hasluck were. But where Hasluck’s father seemed to become almost irrelevant once his son began to make his own way, Menzies’ father, James, was still very present, advising him on how to conduct his cases when he was a young barrister, being consulted at the great moment of crisis in 1941 when Robert resigned as prime minister. James Menzies had been a state member of parliament, and in becoming a politician his son Robert was following his father’s footsteps, even if he soon surpassed him. The younger Menzies’ political career was marked by a competitive ambivalence towards authority and an urgent ambition, whereas in Hasluck both seem surprisingly absent. Similarly Menzies’ liberalism was preoccupied with the benefits of controlled competition and aggression, underpinned by an Oedipal rivalry quite absent from Hasluck’s liberalism of lonely individuals held together by their sense of duty and obligation.

Hasluck’s rejection of the Salvation Army is also seen in his distaste for agitators, for those who put themselves forward and make a fuss. Although Hasluck links this distaste to his parents’ dislike of those who put their own interests before those of others, at a deeper level the rejection of those who stand out and make a fuss can be seen as a rejection of his parents’ choice of
the Salvation Army for their lives' work. Both converted when they were young and unmarried, the father, according to the son giving up a promising career in the post office to take up the cross for Christ. They donned the distinctive uniforms and after their marriage 'knew no life except the life of "The Army" and had very few friends outside it'. Religiously, if not politically, the Salvation Army is all about making a fuss, the uniform marks one apart from others, the brass bands and noisy evangelism draw attention to one's religious beliefs. Hasluck's later lack of sympathy for political agitation of all sorts and particularly for protest politics, I would suggest, is informed by his childhood embarrassment at his parents' very public and noisy religion. So in one of the 1959 speeches discussed by Rowse, Hasluck rejected ostentation in people's interest in Aboriginal problems. He was not going to make a speech that was 'both easy and noisy — like kicking a can along the street'.

To some extent, Hasluck's Salvation Army childhood may have increased his sympathy for certain aspects of Aboriginal experience. In his 1959 speech to the anthropology section of ANZAAS he speaks with heartfelt conviction of society's lack of tolerance for those who try to live separately in the midst of society and of the pressures society places on the misfit. 'He is expected to make a change. He is only accepted if he does make a change'. The greatest benefit one can thus offer to Aborigines is the chance to 'escape' their background and fit in. The theme of escape in Hasluck's own account of leaving his family underpins the account of the persistence of Aboriginal group life which Rowse quotes:

Another handicap is that they are tangled in their own distressed situation like flies on sticky paper. They could fly if only they could get clear of their surroundings, lift themselves free of their past, leaving behind them their present life.

Just as he had done, Hasluck did feel compassion, but it was a compassion limited by his belief that he had escaped his past, even if that escape had left him with an enduring sense of inner loneliness. Hasluck took from his Salvation Army childhood a strong sense of duty and selfless obligation, but nothing of the sense of group membership or the joy of faith which sustained his parents, and so no basis for understanding those for whom the need to be part of a group is stronger than their need to be alone.


Endnotes
2 Ibid., p. 5.
3 Ibid., pp. 308-10, 333.
6 Menzies Diary, 21 July 1935; 12 May 1935.
7 Hasluck, *Mucking About*, p. 3.
8 Ibid., p. 335.
10 Introduction to Papers on Government 1932-1989, a bound collection of occasional addresses in Hasluck collection (MS 5274) NLA.
12 Ibid. pp. 65, 73.
16 For example, papers on Government, Introduction; Hasluck, *Diplomatic Witness*, pp. 159-61, 289.
17 Hasluck, *Diplomatic Witness*, p. 229.
20 Ibid., p. 330.
21 Ibid., p. 316; Introduction to papers on Government.
22 Twenty-first George Adlington Syme Oration, 19 August 1958. Copy held in Hasluck's papers, NLA, MS 5274.
23 Introduction to Papers on Government.
25 Introduction to papers on Government.
27 Hasluck, *Diplomatic Witness*, p. 22.
28 Ibid., p. 211.
31 Ibid., p. 325-6.
32 See discussion of this essay of Menzies in my *Robert Menzies Forgotten People*, pp. 109-112.
35 'Returning from a Lonely Shore', Ibid., p. 27.
37 Ibid., p. 86-7.
41 Ibid., p. 119.
Paul Hasluck and the Politics of the Liberal Party

John Warhurst

Paul Hasluck suffered mixed political fortunes. He experienced very considerable party and personal success, although what some may consider the ultimate prizes of leadership of the Liberal Party and of the country escaped him. Like so many other Liberal Party parliamentarians who were among the '49ers' who entered in 1949, he served a successful party until he retired of his own accord in 1969. In that sense he knew only success, eight successive victories in elections for the House of Representatives. A backbencher for less than eighteen months he was a minister for eighteen years, from May 1951. For most of his time he was minister for territories, rising in the order of ministerial seniority from nineteenth in 1951 and twelfth in 1956 to seventh in 1958. When he became minister for defence in 1963 and then minister for external affairs in 1964 he had risen to be the fifth most senior minister in the Menzies-McEwen government.

Then came the clearest setbacks. While Hasluck may have held out hopes of a ministry upon election in December 1949, may have considered himself for the deputy leadership of the Liberal Party when Sir Eric Harrison stepped down in 1956, or may have wished for another portfolio during his years at territories, he was certainly successful. His experience of public defeats came with the contests for the deputy leadership, upon Menzies' retirement in January 1966 and for the leadership, upon Holt's death, in December 1967-January 1968. It is these contests, particularly the latter, which have stuck in the public memory and in the considerable literature which surrounds the death of Harold Holt and the election of John Gorton.¹

Advancement in any organisation is a mixture of good luck and good management. Or to put this another way the politics of a political party revolves around questions of structure and personality. Two interpretations of Hasluck's failure to win the very top positions can be found in the literature and in speaking to parliamentarians of the time.² One is that he would have been successful if he had been willing to campaign harder on his own behalf. Perhaps he was not ambitious enough. The other is that there is more to it than that. Perhaps his personality was not suited to gaining leadership, especially in the late 1960s. Perhaps the fact that he represented a Western Australian electorate and for most of his parliamentary life held a portfolio which kept him in Canberra, the Northern Territory, and Papua New Guinea, limited his ability to build support among his Liberal Party colleagues and with the Australian public. Of these
two interpretations the former has substantial currency. For example, Alan Renouf writes that ‘Hasluck was not particularly ambitious for himself (as distinct from his country) and did no more than an essential minimum to advance his own interests (hence, he did not become Prime Minister). Likewise Peter Boyce concludes that ‘he missed the opportunity to succeed Harold Holt as Prime Minister because of his reluctance to canvass support’. His biographer Robert Porter concludes of the two episodes: ‘Hasluck’s interpretation of the appropriate forms of political behaviour and his unwillingness to promote his own cause meant that he was unsuccessful’.

Hasluck’s defeats did come towards the end of his parliamentary career, in the middle to late 1960s. This may be significant. The 1960s was a time of change in Australian politics. It was a period of popular participation and protest which saw the rise of new social movements. Television was becoming an increasingly significant medium for election campaigning from 1963 onwards. Menzies’ resignation in January 1966 was in itself the end of an era. Shortly after the 1966 elections Arthur Calwell had resigned and Gough Whitlam had been elected leader of the Labor Party. These were increasingly modern times. And at the time of the contest for the deputy leadership in 1966 Hasluck was sixty.

The 1949 elections brought a large group of talented individuals into the parliament to represent the Liberal Party. The Liberal Party won 55 seats in the House of Representatives and the Country Party nineteen. Advancement was to prove relatively slow for many with high expectations of ministerial office. For instance, one who was to experience disappointment was Sir John Cramer, from New South Wales. The choice of members for elevation to the ministry was subject to the usual state rivalries and state representation, though there was to be no Western Australian in Menzies’ first ministry. There were competing groups and tendencies within the Liberal Party, some of them dating back before the formation of the party in 1944-45.

Menzies’ own opinion was probably decisive in the selection of the Liberal members of the coalition ministry throughout his period as prime minister. This would have done Hasluck no harm. He had first met Menzies in 1936, and they had first had a ‘longer conversation’ in the latter part of 1947, by which time Hasluck had already been approached to stand for the Liberal Party. Hasluck admired Menzies greatly as his Daniel Mannix Memorial Lecture in 1979 shows, and as Judith Brett and James Walter point out. Menzies, in turn, respected Hasluck’s talents and regarded him with ‘benign affection’ but did not class him among his closest confidantes or favourites.

By the 1960s close identification with Menzies was not an unalloyed blessing. The election of Harold Holt to succeed him in January 1966 was seen by many within the party as an opportunity to put a new, more modern face on the government. The November 1966 elections had resulted in a landslide win to
the government and had brought a large influx of new members into the parliamentary party, many of whom would have not known the achievements and personalities of the 1950s. It was something of a new start for the Liberal Party and for the government.

Hasluck did not have strong party political views. He was as much the political scientist as he was the politician. As Peter Boyce has written, 'he was never much enamoured of political theory, or inspired to join a political party, or to draft a blueprint for social and political reform', and in the 1940s he may have seemed potentially as close to Labor as he was to the new Liberals. Hasluck himself wrote on the final page of *Mucking About*:

I am still not sure why I took a chance to go into parliament instead of taking a less risky chance to become a professor of political science. I still do not know which path would have suited me best or in which occupation I could have done more good. I took the chance of politics and started mucking about in a new field of endeavour.

His own version of how his political career began is quite remarkable. He was certainly not desperate to enter parliament. As he puts it: 'I did not have to clamour and contrive to become a candidate for parliament and then a member of parliament. I was asked to do it and complied'.

According to Hasluck he was approached by the then general secretary of the Liberal and Country League in Western Australia, Clive Palmer, to see if he would be a candidate for the new seat of Curtin. Earlier, on September 25, 1947, J L Paton, a leading WA figure and a friend of Menzies, had written to Hasluck asking if he would be interested in 'political life'. It seems as though the LCL had been interested in Hasluck for some time. He was subsequently endorsed as the Liberal candidate, survived an objection to this endorsement, and eventually won the seat of Curtin at the December 1949 elections.

He was a diffident candidate, uncertain of his commitment to politics. In March 1949, while spending a month in Canberra conducting research, he wrote to his wife, Alexandra, that 'he inclined to wish that he had not got the endorsement for Curtin because he hated Canberra so much and his sights of political life there'. Though it later seems that he and Alexandra enjoyed campaigning in Curtin and very much enjoyed getting to know the people of the electorate.

Hasluck was regarded as a chance for immediate promotion to the ministry when Menzies took office in December 1949. As he himself later wrote: 'there was some expectation that in forming his first Cabinet he would pick at least one Western Australian member and there was an opinion that it might be me'. However, this was not to be and there were no Western Australians in the cabinet. Of the nineteen ministers, only one, Senator W H Spooner from...
New South Wales, had no previous commonwealth parliamentary experience (like Hasluck and all of the other Western Australians in the Liberal Party).

The omission of a Western Australian did not pass without notice. The *West Australian* editorialised:

Mr Menzies has departed from long-established practice in his neglect to find a place for a Minister from Western Australia, which is the only State without representation. It must be conceded, however, that the Prime Minister has a right to make what he considers to be the best selection from the talent at his disposal. All the prospective Liberal members from Western Australia will be new to the Federal Parliament, although this argument is weakened by the appointment of Mr Spooner. The limited representation of the Country Party militated against Mr Hamilton's chances. There is much to be said for having a spokesman for the interests of a distant State in the inner councils of the Federal Government and it is to be hoped that the exclusion of Western Australia will be rectified as soon as the opportunity occurs. In the meantime, the possible appointment of Mr Hasluck as Under-Secretary for External Affairs may go part of the way towards mitigating the Western Australian disability.*

The latter reference was to Menzies' proposal to appoint Hasluck and some others to the post of parliamentary under-secretary, 'which would carry no pay beyond the ordinary parliamentary salary, would provide valuable experience for its occupants and would give the necessary assistance to ministers in heavy departments'. When Menzies appointed three parliamentary under-secretaries on February 22, 1950 Hasluck was not one of them. Clearly, however, Hasluck had established himself as the leading Western Australian and one of the leading candidates for the next ministerial vacancy. In the meantime he devoted his spare time to revising his manuscript of the official war history.*

Hasluck's elevation came in May 1951, after the double dissolution election, when he was chosen as minister for territories, the position he was to hold for twelve years. He writes typically that the reason he occupied this position for so long may have included 'some stubbornness, possibly some lack of political ambition'. He held the position from the age of 46 to the age of 58, and is quite open about the damage this may have done to his political career:

Territories killed me politically and I knew all the time that it was killing me, but what else could one do but stick at a job that no one else wanted. During most of my term as Minister for Territories that portfolio was not highly esteemed and it was of scant political significance. Whatever standing I gained in Cabinet was due to the strength and force with which I contributed to Cabinet decisions on other questions and not to the fact that I was doing anything in Territories that was considered to be of moment. It was an obscure and lonely portfolio in those days. Twelve years as Minister for Territories killed me all personal political ambition and deadened my political interest. Yet it gave me a range of administrative experience that exceeded
by far that of any Federal ministerial colleague, for in a country of two million people
I was virtually the Premier and the whole of a state Cabinet.21

These years may have contributed to keeping Hasluck out of the mainstream. They certainly kept him out of Perth and in Canberra where he spent ‘the greater part’ of his time.22 According to Sir Wilfred Kent Hughes Hasluck spent more time in Canberra that any other minister, with the exception of the prime minister himself.23 Hasluck calculated that (although he kept his home in Perth):

adding up week-ends, Christmas and Easter, Public Holidays, and periods of political work in my constituency, I spend about eight or ten weeks of the year in W A, and possibly six weeks on official visits to the territories and the remainder of the year in Canberra. There is scarcely a month of the year in which I am not at Canberra for at least a week, and there are some months in which I am in Canberra for most of the time.24

The one major change in the order of things occurred in 1956 when Sir Eric Harrison stepped down as deputy leader of the Liberal Party to become high commissioner in London. Hasluck did not stand, and Harold Holt who at 47 was four years younger than Hasluck won a four-way contest. There was a changing of the guard as Richard Casey, much more senior than Holt, was easily defeated. Still even at that stage, or shortly afterwards, Hasluck had his admirers.25

Later, Hasluck was to be promoted, first to defence in 1963 and then, after Garfield Barwick’s elevation to the high court, to the very senior position of minister for external affairs, the position he held at the time of the major leadership contests in 1966 and 1967-68.

What impression had Hasluck created by that time? There seems little doubt that, whatever his private persona, Hasluck conveyed the impression of ‘a dour public figure’.26 This image was to do him some harm. Like Menzies he kept his distance from the press and, though a former journalist himself, he came to be resented by them. One of his most outspoken critics was the senior journalist and author, Don Whittington, who wrote in The Rulers: Fifteen Years of the Liberals, shortly before Menzies retirement, that Hasluck:

did not impress as a likely leader, though he was an extremely able Minister.... He was respected and even admired in the Liberal Party, but that did not mean he was regarded as a likely leader. He was too much the earnest intellectual, too much the academic, and too little the earthy, shrewd man-of-the people whom the common man conceived to be his ideal leader.27
The contest for the deputy leadership of the Liberal Party upon Menzies' retirement in January 1966 has attracted little subsequent attention. Harold Holt was guaranteed the leadership as Menzies' nominated successor. He was nominated for the position at the party meeting by Hasluck and was elected unopposed. The contest for the deputy leadership was between Hasluck, minister for external affairs and William McMahon, the treasurer, from New South Wales. This was an even contest. McMahon had also entered the House of Representatives in 1949 and had to wait for a ministry only until July 1951 (shortly after Hasluck) when he was appointed minister for the navy and air. From January 1956 Hasluck and McMahon were the two junior ministers in a cabinet of twelve. Hasluck was the early favourite, although the outcome was always going to be closely fought. At a press conference after his election Holt said that the voting for the deputy's position had been 'very close'.

McMahon does appear to have campaigned much more vigorously than Hasluck. The Sydney Morning Herald of 29 January 1966 reported that the contest was 'marked by intense Australia-wide canvassing of Liberal senators and members for support by Mr McMahon and a far quieter campaign by Mr Hasluck'. This report seems true to what we know of both men. McMahon had the advantage of coming from the larger state, New South Wales, and the NSW representatives may have been sensitive to their lack of leaders as both the prime minister, Holt, and the deputy prime minister, John McEwen, came from Victoria. Perhaps strong support from the other 19 from NSW was just enough. McMahon, fifth in cabinet seniority, was the senior man from NSW.

Hasluck's personality and temperament may also have been a factor. The experienced journalist Ian Fitchett reported criticisms of Hasluck's public behaviour upon his return from a trip to South East Asia just a month earlier in December 1965:

> Mr Hasluck did little for his own cause, not so much for his refusal to grant a Press interview in either Sydney or Canberra on his return from South-East Asia just before Christmas as by the petulant and bad-tempered manner in which he did so. True enough he gave an interview in Perth a few days later, but the damage was done ... It was an unfortunate lapse for a man seeking a high leadership position.

Holt appointed McMahon as treasurer and Hasluck remained minister for external affairs. They were third and fourth in the order of seniority respectively. In November 1966 the coalition was returned to office with a substantially increased majority. The twelve-man cabinet was little changed and McMahon and Hasluck remained in their positions. The other Liberals in the cabinet, in order of seniority, were Fairhall, Senator Henty, Hulme, Fairbairn, Senator Gorton and Bury. This was the situation when the next leadership contest suddenly occurred.
The prime minister, Harold Holt, died on December 17, 1967, while swimming. The consequent contest for the prime ministership became the most intriguing in modern Australian politics. It is well documented. There is a book, The Power Struggle and there are many autobiographies, biographies and published diaries which discuss the events.\(^\text{32}\) However there is still a great deal of room for interpretation. The bare bones of the story are as follows. After Holt’s disappearance and presumed death the Country Party leader, John McEwen, was appointed acting prime minister. In some early speculation it was thought that Hasluck was favoured to win against a field which would also include the deputy leader of the Liberals, McMahon.\(^\text{33}\) However it appears that Hasluck’s immediate instinct was not to stand, perhaps because of his previous defeat, and that in an early meeting with Senator John Gorton he communicated this decision and urged Gorton to run. Later in the week McEwen, on his first day in office, announced that ‘neither I nor my Country Party colleagues would be prepared to serve under Mr McMahon as Prime Minister’.\(^\text{34}\) This effectively eliminated McMahon from the race. Hasluck may have been hurt by the later impression that he too did not wish to work with McMahon and, if successful, would remove him from his position as treasurer.

The ballot was held on 9 January 1968. There were, eventually, four contenders: Hasluck, Bury and Gorton from the cabinet and Billy Snedden from the outer ministry. Bury and Snedden were eliminated on the first ballot, and after a second ballot Gorton defeated Hasluck, possibly by Reid’s estimate of 43 votes to 38.\(^\text{35}\) Once again Hasluck had been quite narrowly defeated.

Like McMahon in 1966, Gorton appears to have organised a strong campaign. His backers were the chief government whip, Dudley Erwin from Victoria, the minister for the army, Malcolm Fraser, also from Victoria, and the government whip in the Senate, Malcolm Scott, from Western Australia.\(^\text{36}\) While Gorton faced the disadvantage of having to move from the Senate to the House of Representatives, the perception that he might be better able to ‘handle Whitlam in the House’ appeared to have been a significant factor. So, too, was the perception that Gorton was more comfortable with television than was Hasluck.\(^\text{37}\) Here, too, it was thought that Whitlam had considerable skills. Whitlam’s biographer Graham Freudenberg emphasises this line of argument:

The struggle for the Liberal succession demonstrated for the first time the importance of television in politics ... In their quest for Holt’s successor the Liberals were heavily influenced by the need, as they saw it, to find someone to match Whitlam’s apparent television skills.\(^\text{38}\)

This parallel between Gorton and Whitlam was taken up by journalists covering the campaign. A profile in The Age of 2 January 1968 of Gorton was headlined ‘This other Whitlam’ and the article was of the opinion that: ‘In many ways — though neither would approve the comparison — Senator John Gorton and Mr
Gough Whitlam have similar public personalities'. Ominously, on the same page, a profile of Hasluck was headlined ‘Shadowy Minister’.

Once Hasluck had committed himself to standing he did invite each of his colleagues to support him. He wrote (in a personal letter to Jim Killen):

Dear Jim,

After careful consideration of all that is involved, I have decided to submit my name for the party leadership on January 9. I know that you will wish to weight the merits of all candidates in the privacy of your own mind, but I wanted you to know at first hand that I have a firm intention to nominate and hope to be able to serve. If you honour me with your confidence I will not only value it but do my utmost to justify it.

With kind regards and seasonal greetings

Yours Sincerely

Paul

Hasluck did little more than this. He did not even telephone a single one of his colleagues asking for support. Rather he stood on his merits, despite advice from senior colleagues such as McEwen who told him that if he wanted to win ‘you ought to get someone working for you straight away’. His political biographer comments that ‘to the extent Hasluck did promote his own interests, he did so with little fervour and with apparent minimal desire to win the prime ministership’. At the time he gave little indication of personal ambitions and made it clear that he lacked drive of this kind. Years later, when interviewed by Gerard Henderson Hasluck ‘the reluctant candidate’ was equally, and most revealingly, ambivalent:

When I interviewed Hasluck he confided that he was ‘not an ambitious person’, that he ‘never had any ambition to get into politics, it just happened’ because he was approached. He added that he ‘never wanted to win’ anything at any time, claiming that he was ‘not competitive’.

Hasluck did have one influential Liberal working for him, Sir Robert Menzies. Menzies encouraged him to stand and then lobbied hard, from retirement, for him. He attempted to convince Sir Frank Packer that his newspapers ought to support Hasluck rather than their first choice Gorton. The intermediary, whom Menzies rang, was the journalist David McNicholl. However Packer would not be moved. Menzies also attempted to influence the editor-in-chief of the Melbourne Herald. Not only did Menzies support Hasluck ‘on grounds of sheer ability’ but he believed that an admission by the Liberal Party that it
could not find a suitable leader in the House of Representatives could be
electorally damaging.48

Hasluck did not have a great deal of support in the press although many of
his attributes were considered admirable. The Age of 9 January 1968 chose
Gorton as ‘the man for the job’, while ‘Hasluck has found that his most
comfortable niche is away from the hurly-burly of frontline politics’:

The Minister for External Affairs is a dedicated administrator, a man of unchallenged
intelligence and honesty. He would probably make an excellent Prime Minister,
given the enthusiastic loyalty of his colleagues. But it is doubtful whether the
determinedly colourless Mr Hasluck could make easy work of inspiring such loyalty
or of presenting himself on the hustings as a man capable of spirited leadership.

The Age of 30 December 1967 considered that both Bury and Hasluck
were ‘rather shadowy figures’. Bruce Grant wrote of Hasluck’s ‘strong sense
of Australian history’ and of his ‘integrity’, but did think him ‘immensely
conservative’ and drew attention to his ‘withdrawn and occasionally petulant
air’.49 Allan Barnes, the chief political correspondent, was also supportive.
Hasluck was experienced: ‘a respectable, responsible, well-educated man of
the type most ordinary Australians would be happy to have representing their
country abroad’. Yet he also pointed out that he was a ‘shy, taciturn man,
whose] apparent aloofness has antagonised many people’.50

The Sydney Morning Herald of 3 January 1968 bracketed Hasluck and
Bury together and preferred them both to Gorton, whom they saw as a risk.
Both Hasluck and Bury were experienced, intelligent, and had integrity. Of
Hasluck it said: ‘one cannot help admiring a politician who so resolutely refuses
to use the vulgar arts of politics’: ‘Mr Hasluck would never let us down, and if
he could break out of his self-imposed prison, might prove an outstanding
leader’.51

The major Sydney Morning Herald profile, by Evan Williams, was entitled
‘the intellectual at the Cabinet table’. It emphasised his lack of personal ambition
and his opposition to the cult of personality and sought enlightenment in lines
from Hasluck’s 1939 poem, ‘Metrical Exercises in St Paul’s Cathedral’:

Our insides are dirty and dark,
Our nature is nasty and foul,
So never stay out after dark in the park,
Where the wolves of your appetite prowl.

Here, thought Williams, was clear evidence of Hasluck’s aversion to politics
and political ambition.52

Paul Hasluck fell short of leading the Liberal Party despite his many
accomplishments. Any explanation of this must necessarily be complex. Several
reasons have been canvassed, including his personality, the demands of territories, his approach to political contests and the Liberal Party’s needs at the time, in the mid to late 1960s, that the opportunities occurred for him to put himself forward. There is something to all of these explanations. The most popular explanation is, in its simplest form, that Hasluck failed because he did not campaign for himself. At the very least this is not a complete explanation. It may indeed be misleading. The point may be not whether campaigning harder would have won the day for Hasluck, but rather why a man of his experience and obvious abilities was locked in close contests; especially after his strongest opponent, McMahon, was removed on the second occasion. A more complete politician would not have been so vulnerable.

There is no evidence that Hasluck’s achievements within the party were curtailed by his political beliefs. He was a political conservative, but this does not appear to have been decisive in the two leadership contests. There may have been a sense, however, in which he was handicapped by a perception that he was not a ‘modern’ man in tune with the times.

In the course of summing up Hasluck, his political biographer concludes that he experienced ‘a growing disenchantment with some aspects of the political process’, and that ‘he found a number of the elements of public life petty and tiresome’. Porter continues that: ‘Ultimately, it was his refusal to accept certain of the forms of behaviour of modern politics that cost him the prime ministership’.

In fact, it seems that Hasluck was not so much disenchanted as never enchanted with the political process, in ways which goes well beyond being unwilling to campaign for himself. He himself writes in Light that Time has Made that he was ‘always more interested in administration than in politics and perhaps was better equipped for administration in the conduct of public affairs than for political contests’.

The heart of the problem appears to be Hasluck’s deeply rooted diffidence about his own life’s direction. He always wanted to be asked or to be pushed. He claims in his autobiography that ‘most of the major moves in my life and all the decisions affecting my career were made on the initiative of someone else’. This applied to his entry into politics in 1949 and to his entry into the leadership contest in 1967-68.

The link between Hasluck and Menzies is important and revealing. Each admired the other. They shared attitudes about the proper role of the press and the public service, which has led Tiver to argue that ‘Hasluck revealed an anti-modernist temperament similar to that of Menzies’. If Menzies’ best years were the 1950s rather than the 1960s then perhaps the same may have been true of Hasluck. His opportunity for senior leadership came a little too late. He was in the Menzies mould in a post-Menzies age. The comparisons with Whitlam and Gorton probably underscored this in the eyes of his Liberal Party colleagues.
If Hasluck had won in 1968 he would surely have become a prime minister of steady achievement. It is mere speculation whether he would have survived the challenge of Whitlam in 1972; although it is likely, even with personal doubts resolved, that some of his characteristics, such as his reticence in communicating through the press would have been exposed to full public glare. He had weaknesses which would have limited his effectiveness as prime minister.

Endnotes

1 A Reid, The Power Struggle, Sydney, 1969.
2 I am indebted to Sir John Carrick, Mr Don Chipp (by telephone), Sir John Gorton, Mr Peter Howson, and Mr Ian Sinclair for talking about these issues with me. I also grateful to Mr lan Hancock and Dr Allan Martin for advice, tips on sources, access to their files, and for comments on a draft of this paper, and to Ms Fiona Lambeck for research assistance.
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8 Hubert Opperman, Pedals, Politics and People, Sydney, 1977, p. 347.
9 Peter Boyce, Foreign Affairs For New States: Some Questions of Credentials, St Lucia, 1977; Porter, Paul Hasluck, pp. 71-72.
10 Hasluck, Mucking About, p. 335.
11 Ibid., p. 335.
12 Ibid.
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16 West Australian, 20 December 1949.
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19 Hasluck, A Time For Building, p. 4.
20 Ibid., p. 6.
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22 A Hasluck, Portrait in a Mirror, p. 215.
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28 Porter, Paul Hasluck, p. 79.
30 Ibid.
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35 Reid, The Power Struggle, p. 199.
36 Ibid, p. 7; Ayres, Malcolm Fraser, p. 124.
37 Porter, Paul Hasluck, p. 81.
39 Age, 2 January 1968.
40 Killen, Inside Australian Politics, p. 125.
42 McEwen, John McEwen, p. 76.
43 Porter, Paul Hasluck, p. 81.
44 Ibid.
49 Age, 28 December 1967.
50 Age, 19 December 1967.
51 Sydney Morning Herald, 2 January 1968.
52 Sydney Morning Herald, 1 January 1968.
53 Porter, Paul Hasluck, p. 315.
54 Paul Hasluck, Light That Time Has Made, Canberra, 1995, p. 49.
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A Question of Colour

Chris Cunneen

When John Gorton was elected as leader of the parliamentary Liberal Party on 9 January 1968 and appointed prime minister the following day, there was general agreement that the former senator was likely to be a more lively leader than his rival, who was described as dour or ‘shadowy’. The description, ‘colourless’, was used more than once to describe Hasluck. Indeed, as John Warhurst points out one commentator used the phrase ‘determinedly colourless’. This un-politicianlike characteristic — lack of colour — seems to have been almost deliberately cultivated. The adjective was to continue to be applied to him in the remaining years of his public life.

Hasluck soon began to talk privately about retiring at the following federal election, and he certainly informed Gorton of his intention. Despite the new prime minister’s determination to stamp his own personality upon the government and reward his supporters, who had almost entirely been outside Holt’s cabinet, there was little opportunity to do so during 1968. In about September that year, however, Lord Casey informed Gorton of his wish to retire, for it was then that Alexandra Hasluck first got wind of the proposal that her husband would be offered the post. It came as a great shock to her, but she knew that Hasluck ‘would feel very honoured and would probably want to accept’, although she also knew that it would ‘put a great strain’ on her.

By 1968, the right to select a governor-general had come to belong to the prime minister alone. It is easy to speculate on Gorton’s motive for offering the post. While eager for an early opportunity to remove from active politics his principal rival and replace him in cabinet with one of his own nominees, he would certainly have regarded Hasluck as an ideal governor-general. From Hasluck’s point of view, the timing was appropriate. In 1968 he was sixty-three years of age, six and a half years older than the new prime minister. He had spent some twenty years in public life, most of it as a government minister, and had attained high government office, culminating in the post of minister for external affairs. Having narrowly failed to secure the prime ministership, he had little more to hope to achieve in politics. Moreover, he had writing tasks he wished to resume, and he did regard the offer as an honour, probably more so than Gorton. He was both an ardent nationalist and a committed monarchist.

He had closely observed seven widely different representatives of the crown in Australia at work for nearly thirty years. These had included both Britons and Australians, both noblemen and commoners. Lord Gowrie had been at Yarralumla during the second world war, followed by the Duke of Gloucester, when Hasluck was in the diplomatic service. As a government minister Hasluck
had served under Sir William McKell, Sir William Slim, and Lords Dunrossil, De Lisle and Casey. There had been, therefore, plenty of opportunity to study both developments in the office and the style of the incumbents and as a keen observer of the government process Hasluck had done so. He was keen to maintain the new Liberal policy of appointing an Australian to government house, begun with Menzies's selection of Casey. Indeed, Hasluck would have seen himself as considerably more of a representative Australian than the patrician former British governor of Bengal. He also wanted to develop the office 'as an element in Australian constitutional life rather different from what it had been in earlier years'. I take him to mean by this that he intended that the office exhibit more local characteristics to reflect Australia's growing independence from the British imperial system, have more of a centralising role as the country evolved from a collection of colonies to a nation and show less of a military character as befitted a time of peace.

Hasluck quickly accepted Gorton's offer, in late 1968, but some time elapsed before the appointment was made public. Eventually, the announcement was made in February 1969. The press response was restrained rather than enthusiastic. As Richard Nile argues, 'colourless' appeared, even in so distant a commentator as the *New York Times*, which referred to him as 'aloof, cold, colourless and austere'. Closer to home, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, thought the appointment 'a good choice but a bad precedent'. According to the Herald it was 'now almost certain that all future governors general will be Australian-born and it is increasingly probable that most of them will be political appointments'. The Hobart *Mercury*, regretted that men from 'the United Kingdom or elsewhere in the Commonwealth' had been abandoned. Opposition leader Gough Whitlam was complimentary towards Hasluck, although critical of Gorton for 'cronyism'. One sour note came from Liberal MP Jim Killen, who disagreed with both the selection and the fact that only one name had been placed before the Queen. He also criticised a statement by Country Party leader McEwen approving the choice.

Hasluck decided that there should be an interval between his serving as a government minister and his taking up of the office of governor-general. He therefore resigned from parliament on 10 February. One reason for the hiatus was his desire to visit London to see the Queen. This he did, and thus fortified with monarchical sanction and bolstered by appointment as knight grand cross of the order of St Michael and St George, he took office at a ceremony in Canberra on 30 April 1969.

In one sense his predecessor was a hard act to follow. In the apt words of his biographer, 'Although he refused to wear uniforms ... [Casey] had the age, the bearing, the voice and the enthusiasm for the job'. Hasluck lacked the advanced age and bearing, and his personality was not one to show enthusiasm. Casey had been one of the most interventionary governors general since the
early years of federation. His interference during Harold Holt’s term as prime minister and in the aftermath of Holt’s disappearance was a matter of public discussion at the time. Hasluck took up office, partly because of a book by Alan Reid which revealed correspondence between Casey and Holt. In a veiled reference to Casey’s interpretation of the role, Hasluck was later to assert that he did not believe that it was ‘the business of Governor-General to act as an intermediary or “honest broker”’. In line with this belief, he was to maintain a notably low political profile during his period at Yarralumla, despite the high political drama of the time.

Although Hasluck claimed that he worked well with three prime ministers, the clear impression remains that he found his former Liberal cabinet colleagues less than ideal. There was some public unease about the perceived discourtesy of Gorton in providing the governor general with a speech of only one hundred and eighty words, lasting one minute, in a one-day sitting of parliament in November 1969. On another occasion Hasluck ‘rapped the McMahon government over the knuckles when it failed to observe proper procedures in the processing of official business’. He appears to have watched with detachment the melodrama that engulfed the Liberal Party after he left it.

Much of the governor general’s ceremonial duties were formal and routine affairs. In October 1971, however, Sir Paul and Lady Hasluck took part in an extraordinary and colourful occasion. They attended the celebrations at Persepolis, in Iran, of the 2500th anniversary of the Persian Empire of Cyrus the Great. It was a remarkable event, made more so, in hindsight, by the swift downfall of the Shah in the following years. The significance to Australia, however, lay not in any anachronism of foreign policy, but in the fact that this was the first occasion on which a governor general, in travelling outside Australia, was accorded the status of head of state.

Twelve months later, in October 1972 Hasluck delivered a lecture which is one of the few considered assessments by a governor-general of the office. The occasion was an address given at the University of Adelaide, to the state division of the Australian Institute of Management, commemorating a prominent South Australian businessman, William Queale. This was the nineteenth lecture in a series inaugurated by Menzies in 1954. Governor-General Slim had spoken in 1957 and Lord Casey in 1961, after his retirement from politics but before he was offered the post of governor-general.

Disclaiming any knowledge or experience in the field of commerce or industry, but having by now had three and a half years at Yarralumla, Hasluck took the opportunity to speak about the office. The speech was a carefully worded account of the constitutional and ceremonial public duties of the governor general. Although he pointed out that conceivably ‘a Governor-General could be a cipher, do whatever he was told to do without question and have little influence on what happened’, he preferred a more active role. He also touched on the change in
the position since federation, during which period Australia had "grown into a stage of independence and international recognition that was never envisaged in 1901". In this context he referred to the recent precedent of the governor general being accorded head of state status when travelling to Iran. The address was later to be frequently referred to and was republished, together with additional comments on his term, in 1979. There is no doubt that in importance it has overshadowed all eighteen previous Queale memorial lectures. At the time it was delivered, however, there was little comment, as Australia was in the midst of a political campaign which would sweep the Liberals from office for the first time in twenty-three years.

As had occurred with McKell twenty-three years previously, in November 1972 a 'political' governor general was to find himself with a government composed of his former party enemies. There was to be, however, no more evidence of partisanship in this case than there had been when McKell had cooperated with Menzies. In all his dealings with the Whitlam Labor government Hasluck acted with perfect constitutional impartiality.

In its very early days, as Whitlam has described, Hasluck 'cooperated with goodwill in the process by which my deputy, Lance Barnard, and I, on 5 December 1972 formed the ... administration ... He facilitated the decisions of our "duumvirate" during the following fortnight until the full Ministry could be elected'. It was, Whitlam has said a 'happy, harmonious, heady triumvirate'. Lady Hasluck later wrote that she had 'liked Whitlam and his wife Margaret as the Prime Ministerial couple most congenial during our years ... Unlike their predecessors, invitations to them were always replied to on time, and their arrivals always punctual, nor did they want to leave a state dinner before it had concluded, as one eminent gentleman sometimes tried to do'.

Apart from their punctilious performance of social obligations, the new ministers were grateful for the political experience of the governor-general. It must be remembered that not one of them been in government previously. Hasluck himself has explained how 'several Ministers in successive governments welcomed an opportunity of talking with me, as an independent person ... they respected the fact that I had long experience as a Minister'. While never interfering in the manner of Casey, he did provide advice to the tyro Labor ministers. Bill Hayden has written that executive council meetings with Sir Paul were 'usually followed by coffee and intellectually stimulating discussion on a surprisingly wide range of subjects'. Discreet counsel has been an important role of the best governors-general, as, indeed, it is of any constitutional monarch. Of course, it requires good will on both sides. From the very early years of the century when Northcote was a friendly counsellor to Deakin, during the 1914-1918 war when Munro Ferguson was close to Hughes, and in the second world war when Curtin found a sympathetic listener in Gowrie, the role of an independent but experienced head of state has been an unobtrusive
element in the running of the political machinery of state. Hasluck has written that "after any conversation on questions of substance I made a hand-written note in a personal journal." When, in due course, these private journals become public, they may reveal more about the role of a governor-general in his relations with his ministers. It is clear that in the vital relationship between Whitlam and Hasluck there was mutual respect and confidence.

Constitutionally, the governor-general was involved in stirring times. In March 1974 he accepted Whitlam's advice to call a half-Senate election but rescinded this the following month and agreed to a double dissolution. Perfectly properly, he regarded these as matters on which he acted solely on the advice of his elected ministers.

In his speeches opening parliament the representative of the crown has no private influence. But in all other public utterances he is free to speak without advice by his ministers or by government departments, unless he wishes it. Hasluck has written that "A governor-general in Australia is required to talk a lot without saying too much." In 1971 he published a selection of his addresses, and his papers in the National Library contain others. He wrote all his speeches and prepared all the notes for them himself, never using a speechwriter. Some, he conceded, 'read rather like mild sermons ... I saw no bar to saying something that might start others arguing'. Not everyone regarded his sermons as salutory. In January 1970 one reporter described the 'carping, whining and just plain belly-aching of Sir Paul and his predecessor'. Reading his speeches twenty years later, they do seem (to me at least) to be conventional and patronising. It was a time of spectacular public controversy in Australia, with political demonstrations over Australia's involvement in Vietnam and public airing of opinion on what was then being described as 'the permissive society'. Hasluck once described himself as 'an old and unashamed square' and certainly, in his sober suits, and slightly ridiculous top hat, he stood out from the paisley shirted, wide-tied, flared-trousered men, and platformed soled, mini-skirted women of the time. In a speech entitled 'A Season of Protest' delivered at a state reception in Sydney in June 1969, he said: 'However well-meaning may be our attempts to understand the young and to appreciate their problems, don't let these youngsters imagine for one moment that we are going to forego the privilege or neglect the duty of giving them good advice'. He went on to complain that he had "difficulty in understanding some sections of youthful opinion today ... I can see what they are against — sometimes in a rather jumbled way, for they tend to get their protests mixed up together — but ... I seldom can see what they are for. Is student protest only negative and anarchic or is there a positive, practical and constructive side to it?" Well, I know at least one protesting student of that time who did not feel that Sir Paul represented the young as much as the old and conservative.
Yet Hasluck took his public appearances very seriously indeed. He wrote that he was ‘convinced of the importance of the office of Governor-General in its influence, either for good or ill, on the structure of Australian society and the outlook of the Australian community. Many people engaged in public affairs in Australia take politics... too seriously... One of the highly useful roles a Governor-General can play is in ignoring divisions and trying to set up an idea that we are all Australians even if we differ in our views... The office of Governor-General as the representative of the Queen is the highest single expression in the Australian governmental structure that Australians of all parties and all walks of life belong to the same nation’.

One change that Hasluck effected at Yarralumla was the replacing of the long-serving official secretary, Sir Murray Tyrrell, with David (later Sir David) Smith. Young, though with wide experience in the public service, and as secretary to the executive council, Smith was to run the office, and to help shape the public view of the incumbent at Yarralumla, for the next seventeen and a half years. In Sir Paul’s words Smith ‘gave an administrative efficiency and a clearer shape to the office of official secretary... he helped the office [of governor-general] to evolve in keeping with the requirements of a new period in [its] history’. Since his retirement in 1990, Sir David continues to assert vigorously the monarchical nature of our constitution and the role of the crown in the Australian government.

Hasluck’s term of office coincided with one of the high points of Australia’s devotion to the British monarchy. In the Haslucks’ five years in office the Queen visited this country no less than three times, and a deal of responsibility for hospitality and protocol rested with the governor-general — and his wife.

It is appropriate that in a discussion of Hasluck’s term as governor-general, there be some comment on Lady Hasluck’s role at Yarralumla. She performed her public duties with dignity and courage, for it was a very unhappy time for her. Most tragic was the death in June 1973 of their son Rollo, aged only 32, of viral myocarditis. Her health and mobility was not good and she was in constant pain from arthritis in the hip which eventually led, in December 1973, to an operation. She did not enjoy opera or concert music. As a public figure in her own right and an established author, she had a heavier load than any of her successors have had since. Moreover, her autobiography makes it clear that at this stage of their marriage she and her husband were living separate lives within government house. No wonder, then, that as early as May 1973 she indicated that she wished to leave Yarralumla in the following year. Although Whitlam asked Hasluck to extend his term and Hasluck himself clearly wished to do so, she insisted that he fulfil his undertaking that the term be only 5 years. So, Hasluck was not in office in November 1975 when he might well have placed an even more enduring stamp on the governor-generalship.
Instead, when he did step down on 9 July 1974, press reaction to his term was less than enthusiastic. The *West Australian* felt he had ‘proved that a former Australian politician can rise above party loyalties to become a distinguished Governor-General’. But the *Daily Telegraph*’s reporter wrote that Hasluck had ‘bowed out as perhaps the most colorless Governor-General in Australian history... Sir Paul’s term of office was all about [was] pomp and ceremony with very little significance’.

Of course, no one would take too seriously a newspaper’s assessment of the significance of Sir Paul’s term as governor-general. The *Daily Telegraph*’s reporter was doubtless expressing the opinion of a generation that during Hasluck’s tenure of office had experienced all the colour of the Aquarius festival, and ‘flower power’. Like McKell and Casey, Hasluck had declined to wear the colourful uniform and plummed hat that his British predecessors had revelled in. As Romola Templeman has indicated, he clearly disliked the regalia of the office, and felt that he looked ridiculous in a top hat. Moreover, he had decreed that his military *aides de camp* wear lounge suits when they were attending him on non military occasions. In Sir David Smith’s words, Hasluck was keen to ‘civilianise’ the office. So, perhaps especially in contrast to psychadelically-inclined journalists, the governor-general had certainly been colourless.

Apart from the generation gap, newspaper reporters had a particular gripe about Hasluck. Throughout his public career, because of his previous experience in that profession, he had attacked the press. Moreover, Hasluck had used his farewell speech as governor-general to criticise not only protesting demonstrators and public relations gimmickry but also the standard of parliamentary reporting in Australia. There was, therefore, in press comments on his retirement, some grumbling at what the Melbourne *Age* called his ‘intemperate and misguided view of political journalism’.

Despite some of the newspaper comment of 1974, Hasluck was one of Australia’s most successful governors-general. An Australian appointed by a conservative government, he helped to ensure that the era of British appointments to Yarralumla was finally ended. He was particularly significant in reinforcing the McKell precedent that a serving politician would act in a notably non-partisan way when he assumes vice-regal office. Hasluck himself believed that the Queen’s representatives needed ‘experience in law or politics which qualified them for the constitutional duties of the office... It is not enough to have a distinguished citizen who does not have some experience or training in the theory and practice of Australian government’. For some time in 1995 it appeared that Mr Hayden’s successor might not fall into the two categories expounded by Sir Paul. But, it is now clear that the appointment of Sir William Deane follows the line of judicial appointments.

In general, former politicians have been better governors-general than former judges. Hasluck was one of the best of the politician category, perhaps because,
as this book has revealed, he was never a particularly passionate person or politician. He exhibited the characteristics of Australianship, dignity, discretion and non-partisanship that are the hallmarks of the best occupants of the office. It is, perhaps, still too soon to judge the impact he had upon the development of the post. Fin Crisp, writing in 1974, saw the history of the office of governor-general up to then as a ‘sure and steady erosion of the small initial deposit of personal initiative and discretion ... becoming, politically ever more innocuous and unobtrusive’.

That view was soon to receive a jolt. We all now know that a very significant deposit of power remained and still remains. But as Hasluck himself has pointed out, although a governor-general has the power to dismiss a prime minister, this is not ‘one of the main functions of the office’. In retirement Hasluck was scrupulous to avoid any specific comment on his successor’s actions. Yet he was a man who took great care with his words and surely there is an implication of reproof in his comments on the dismissal of 1975, that ‘the point at issue ... is not whether the Governor-General had the power but whether he was justified by the facts as he saw and interpreted them, and if he were justified by the facts whether he was wise to use the power’. This is a political assessment, rather than a judicial or legalistic one. Moreover, Hasluck asserted that to some extent the problem of the 1975 dismissal lay not so much in the constitution as in the ‘apparent inadequacy of communication and consultation (and perhaps lack of confidence in each other) in the relationship between Governor-General and Prime Minister ... In the situation between [them] ... the real breakdown was that they were not talking enough to each other’.

The absence of a dramatic gesture by a constitutional monarch is a sign of a system working well. It may be that in the long view of the history of the office, the term of Hasluck, quietly co-operative rather than confrontational, will be seen as the exemplar of the modern representative of the crown, and perhaps of the future president of the republic. He was certainly a good advertisement for appointing an Australian politician to the post. It may even be seen to be high praise to describe a constitutional monarch (or future president) as ‘colourless’.

Endnotes

4 11 Feb 1969. For *Sydney Morning Herald*, comment and more enthusiastic reports in *Age* and *West Australian*, see editorials on the same date.
6 Ibid., p. 7.
9 Hasluck, *The Office*, p. 29.
11 See A Hasluck, *Portrait in a Mirror*, chapter 15, for a detailed account of these curious celebrations.
14 Hasluck, *The Office of Governor General*.
18 Hasluck, *The Office*, p. 29.
19 Cited in *The Truth of the Matter*, op. cit., p. 98.
20 Hasluck, *The Office*, p. 32.
33 See *Age*, 11 July 1974, editorial.
34 Hasluck, *The Office*, p. 46.
36 Hasluck, *The Office*, p. 2.
38 “Tangled in the Harness” the Constitutional Debate’, *Quadrant*, November 1983 p. 38. An edited version of this book review was included in Hasluck’s *Light That Time Has Made*, pp. 182-190.
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Paul Hasluck in Australian History

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Paul Hasluck had many lives: poet, journalist, academic, historian, diplomat, politician and governor general of Australia. As minister for territories for twelve years to the mid 1960s, he presided over the policy of assimilation. He was minister for defence at the height of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam war. Yet Hasluck wrote moving and personal poetry. The public responsibilities and the personal life were significantly different. He lived a successful life in many fields of endeavour but he always felt that he had not done enough in any of them.

This consideration of Hasluck brings together many of Australia's leading intellectual figures: Henry Albinski, Joan Beaumont, Bruce Bennett, Geoffrey Bolton, Judith Brett, Carl Bridge, Chris Cunneen, Anna Haebich, Stuart Macintyre, Darryl McIntyre, Hank Nelson, Richard Nile, Marian Quartly, Tim Rowse, Will Sanders, Kay Saunders, James Walter, John Warhurst, Garry Woodard, and includes reflections by Gough Whitlam and Charles Court, and a personal testimony by Hasluck's portraitist, Romola Templeman.

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