

ESSAY REVIEW*Arthur Calwell: Transforming Australia through immigration.*

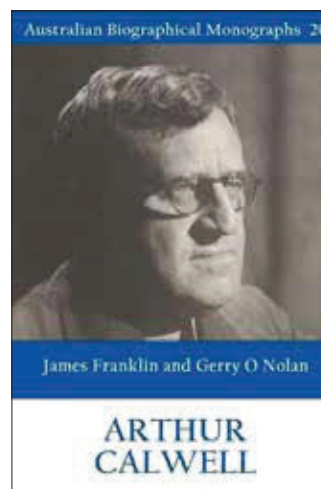
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I commend the sub-title of this book *Transforming Australia through Immigration* that includes research into my father's life. It is important to recover the actual facts about this subject and many others throughout his career and the authors identified some misrepresentations.

However, they often rely on pre-conceived interpretations based on uninformed or hostile, secondary sources that have been used to try to destroy Arthur Calwell's major achievements. There is an offensive caricature of his appearance in the Introduction. In the Series Overview, Scott Prasser asserts that there has not been a biography of Arthur Calwell for nearly 50 years. My biography, that is a summary of my Master of Theology and Doctorate of Theology theses entitled *I am bound to be true: the life and legacy of Arthur A. Calwell*, was published in 2012 and is mentioned in this book. The quote that he was an aged and unsuccessful leader was made by Whitlam trying to denigrate my father in New Zealand when my father was 68 years old. Whitlam implied that winning was the only imperative rather than persuading people of the validity of Labor values instead of succumbing to political blackmail.

Arthur Calwell was dedicated to promoting an independent, tolerant and democratic nation, free from ancient hostilities, with a distinctive identity that led the world in areas of social justice and equality of opportunity and would play a

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significant role in the world. The Statute of Westminster in 1926 gave the British Dominions political independence from Britain formally recognised by an Act of the Australian Parliament in 1942. Most people in Australia during these eras considered themselves to be Australian, not British, and the Australian Labor Government did not take directions from a British Government as suggested in respect of immigration. Calwell introduced Australian citizenship for the first time proclaimed on Australia Day 1949 and Australian passports were introduced for the first time. Everyone born in Australia was an Australian citizen regardless of their parents' nationality. There was no confusion between nationality and ethnicity. In 1946, Calwell introduced legislation that allowed Australian women to retain their nationality after marriage to a foreigner.

Calwell's father who had Welsh and American parents, was a police constable, later a Superintendent responsible for about a third of Victoria, and, in his early life, they lived mainly in police residences. His mother's parents came from Ireland and met here. At the end of the 19th century there were many people affected by the Depression of the 1890s. It was relevant to mention his speech in Irish at Richmond Racecourse in 1917. My mother taught Irish while my father learnt it independently. They were both very involved in Irish organisations. Calwell was responsible for the Chifley Government's initiation of diplomatic relations with Ireland in 1946 and my parents were welcomed to Ireland by Irish Governments in 1947, 1963 and 1967.

Arthur Calwell was elected a member of the Victorian ALP Executive in 1926, not 1913, and played major roles on the Federal Executive for many years. He was Campaign Director for Dr William Maloney from about 1925 doing most of his electoral work while having a full time job and elected positions in many organisations. Mannix was a friend not a mentor. My father wrote that it was a tragedy that Evatt was remembered by many Australians for his few mistakes rather than for his many achievements.

When Arthur Calwell became Minister for Information in 1943, the Prime Minister, John Curtin, handed over the supervision of censorship and told him that he either supported the Censor or sacked him. My father supported the Censor. The newspapers attacked my father, not the Censor, especially when the newspapers were suppressed to protect Australian Prisoners-of-War whose lives would have been jeopardised by dramatic headlines in Australian newspapers as in the Cowra breakout by Japanese soldiers in 1944. It was wrong to publish a malicious assertion that my father made a reference relating migrants to 'an oily rag' that was totally untrue and 'planted' to discredit him.

Calwell, as Minister for Information initiated many policies to promote Australia in war and peace as an independent nation with a distinctive identity. Calwell ensured that Advance Australia Fair was played as well as God Save the King at official events, in picture theatres and before the ABC news. After the 1949 Federal Election,

these decisions were reversed and the ABC replaced *Advance Australia Fair* before the News. Arthur Calwell encouraged the use of the Australian flag in preference to the Union Jack flag. Under his leadership, the Department of Information had many roles including employing war correspondents, journalists and monitoring foreign radio broadcasts during war-time, publishing *Guinea Gold*, a paper for the troops, and a periodical, *South Pacific*, publicising Australian cultural identity in war and peace through literature, articles, films, an independent news service and broadcasting overseas on Radio Australia in addition to promoting immigration. As the Minister, Calwell approved and supported the American Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land in 1948 that made significant discoveries. In 1945, the Department was broadcasting 18 hours a day in several European and Asian languages, gave lectures, produced films and articles for publications overseas and promoted Australian writers. By 1948, the Department was distributing material, including films, to most overseas countries, readers included fifty million Americans a month and Radio Australia broadcast for 23 hours a day.

Arthur Calwell's first speech as first Minister for Immigration on 2 August, 1945, stated that Australia welcomed all people within our existing laws, including Allied Ex-Servicemen and condemned racism. He was involved in several overseas-born communities such as Italian, Greek, Jewish, Lebanese, Chinese and Maltese Communities before becoming Minister for Immigration. He supported the Italian Community with Archbishop Mannix, Fr. U. Modotti and Mrs Lena Santospirito during World War II. As stated in this book, Calwell was Chairman of the Aliens' Classification and Advisory Committee from 1942 to 1944. In July, 1945, he announced that members of the Jewish Community could nominate close relatives to come to Australia and allowed them to process their applications before the end of the War in the Pacific. The first priority was to bring returned service personnel and their families home. There was no shortage of British migrants. It is incorrect to claim that there were periods of inaction or failure and the Department was inundated with applications. Calwell initiated Assisted Schemes and in 1947, proposed agreements with Italy, that had not signed a Peace Treaty and Greece, fighting a Civil War, that took effect later. Displaced Persons included people from several nationalities. By August, 1949, 100,000 Assisted British migrants, 'Ten pound Poms', and 50,000 Assisted Displaced Persons had arrived and Agreements with the Netherlands Emigration Foundation and Malta for Assisted Passages had been signed. Thousands of people from Britain, Italy, Greece, Egypt and other countries arrived in Australia sponsored by relatives and organisations. Calwell enabled many Lebanese people to come here. He ensured that the Cabrini Sisters were allowed to take over a hospital in Melbourne.

In the official history of the International Refugee Organisation, Louise Holborn stated that Australia was the overseas country that responded most generously to the IRO policy of resettlement of family units, the IRO was able to promote

the resettlement of unmarried mothers in 'notably' Australia and it was the only country that conducted its own orientation work. Calwell introduced the term New Australian to make people feel welcome and agreed to the establishment of Good Neighbour Councils. He consulted with Catholic and Protestant Churches to provide chaplains on ships and with Lutheran and Orthodox Churches to also appoint chaplains to Reception Centres such as Bonegilla. They were all paid for by the Federal Government. He appointed a woman to a responsible position as a Welfare Officer, one of the first in the Australian Public Service. Joan O'Donnell became my father's Private Secretary and remained with him, equivalent to Hazel Craig who worked for five Prime Ministers.

Arthur Calwell was the first person to amend the Restrictive Immigration Act 1901 in March, 1947 to assist Chinese to be naturalised but, in the Post-War environment, Cabinet only agreed to Regulations being amended and ordered that the decision be kept secret. Support for the Restrictive Immigration Act 1901 did not mean racism and the ALP was concerned with protecting jobs and conditions and to prevent the discriminatory employment conditions that had been used previously against Asians and Pacific Islanders. Dr Rumble MSC commented that of itself, Australia's policy could not be regarded as a violation of Christian charity and was concerned with the right of our legislators to decide this issue in relation to the temporal welfare of Australia. He quoted Malaya's PM Tunku Abdul Rahman and later the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* that it was better to help people in their own environment, apart from refugees, The O'Keefe Case was related to Australia attending the New Delhi Conference in 1947 that supported the Asian countries' fight for independence. The Dutch Government objected and the media were hostile, the Indonesian Government invited them home and the O'Keefe Case was used to attack the Government. Chifley, Evatt, Daly and Haylen all supported the 1949 legislation. A newspaper and a foreign country must not be allowed to determine Government policy. In 1952, Harold Holt excluded British Jews of Middle Eastern origin. In 1964, Hubert Opperman prevented the Prasad family from using four year old Nancy Prasad, born in Australia, to bring her Indian family from Fiji.

In the Post-War years, there was racial turmoil in many countries and the Government did not want to import these difficulties. In the 1960s, there were racial conflicts in Britain and the US and most ALP Members and the LCP Australian Government did not want to import these divisions to Australia. In April, 1972, A.J. Forbes, Liberal Minister for Immigration declared that claims of racial prejudice could not be sustained and Calwell quoted him: Racism means prejudice, bigotry, and attitudes of superiority, all of which have no place in Australia's immigration policy, It is important to quote comments in their context as otherwise they can be misunderstood. Both major parties wanted a stable society with a shared culture. The 1971 ALP conference called for the avoidance of difficult social and economic problems which may follow from an influx of peoples of different standards of

living, tradition and cultures. Arthur Calwell assisted aboriginal Australians and Archbishop Copas placed a plaque in St Mary's Cathedral in Port Moresby in honour of our family.

The Australian Labor Party is the political wing of the Labor Movement and was founded to represent the interests of unions. In the 1930s and 1940s, Communists attained power in some unions because of their militancy but in the Victorian Branch of the Waterside Workers' Federation in the 1950s, there was a DLP President with a Communist and ALP Executive. In secret political elections, only 2 per cent of the Australian population voted for the Communist Party but unions were frequently misrepresented by DLP supporters. Maurice Blackburn moved and James Scullin, a Catholic, seconded the Socialist Objective of the ALP in 1921. In 1931, Pope Pius XI condemned capitalism in the encyclical *Quadragesimo anno*. The ALP believed in Fabian Socialism that evolved in Britain with a Christian heritage.

Arthur Calwell stated that, in Australia, Church and State are separate for their mutual benefit as in other modern democracies in the English speaking New World. The authors give credibility to Santamaria, an articulate person outside the political system who was allowed by some bishops to use the faith of Catholics to promote his unsubstantiated claims about Communism in Australia. He caused major divisions in the Catholic Church and ALP. Many Australians were persuaded to vote against their own political interests resulting in the subversion of many ALP achievements. At the installation of Archbishop O'Brien in Canberra in 1954, Archbishop Simonds declared that he was sure that with his knowledge and experience, Archbishop O'Brien would set his face sternly against any attempt to involve the Church in underground political intrigue. The authors of this book do not adequately recognise that a secret "Catholic" organisation known as The Movement, that led to the establishment of the Democratic Labor Party, abused the loyalty of Catholics by directing them how to vote in an effort to control the ALP in a modern democracy.

There was opposition from several leading Catholic churchmen and a meeting of bishops called by Cardinal Gilroy led to a delegation to Rome in 1957. The Vatican ruled that any lay action in politics could not be in the name of the church. This book does not mention the malicious abuse, physical altercations and insults at churches and within religious institutions, insults and ostracism with divisions in communities, religious organisations and families that devastated lives and denied many good ALP people, both Catholics and non-Catholics, careers in politics. My father's sister and sisters of Nick McKenna and Pat Kennelly were nuns and they suffered because of the political activities of their brothers. These activities inhibited further socially important legislation and ignited sectarianism. It was an irresponsible intrusion into a major political party and was not just about opposition to communism. My father wrote Memoranda to the Vatican that are ignored in this book. Calwell's involvement in preventing the bombing of Rome or theological discussions are not mentioned.

In the 1961 Federal Election, 23 seats in Victoria went to the Liberal Country Party on Democratic Labor Party preferences. The ACT and Northern Territory, both ALP seats, were not counted in the result as they were Territories so both the ALP and LCP actually won 62 seats, The final result was declared when Jim Killen won Moreton in Queensland on 3rd preferences so the DLP denied my father the opportunity to be Prime Minister. In the 1963 Federal Election, there were horrible advertisements on TV promoting the DLP that identified the ALP with the Katyn Forest murders in World War II. In 1966, the DLP sponsored pamphlets with black arrows coming from China implying Australia would be invaded should the ALP win although China did not have a navy. The US President intruded into the campaign and Gough Whitlam contradicted the ALP policy on Vietnam on the Monday and Wednesday before the Federal Election. The Menzies-Holt Governments were kept in power through the use of a dishonest, unfounded fear of Communist invasion. Calwell stated after the 1966 Federal Election that It is better to be defeated on principle than to win on lies and was vindicated in his opposition to the Vietnam War. Calwell and Menzies vigorously opposed each other but Menzies told Calwell he was retiring before he told Members of his own Party.

When Arthur Calwell was elected Leader of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party, he had six and then five people working for him to cover his Electorate and the whole of Australia. Graham Freudenberg became his Press Secretary after Cyril Wyndham and wrote material under Calwell's direction . Freudenberg was a clever writer, disloyal employee and became the amanuensis of Gough Whitlam. *Labor's Role In Modern Society* incorporates material that reflects Calwell's deep commitment to Australia previously written by Calwell and states his values, not those of Freudenberg. In *A Certain Grandeur*, Freudenberg sneered at the quotation of Barton by Calwell: A continent for a nation and a nation for a continent, yet British PM, Harold Wilson, wrote the Foreword for the second edition at the suggestion of Freudenberg. Both Freudenberg and Whitlam contoured material to achieve a desired result and tried to destroy my father's achievements. It would have been relevant to quote Geoffrey Blainey that the political decision that changed Australia the most in the 20th century was made by Arthur Calwell and declared that it is slightly puzzling to observe how often this shaper of modern Australia is either belittled or misquoted by people who wear the shoes he made for them and who stand on the space he set aside for them. Bob Hawke also stated that the most important political decision of Australia in the 20th century was made by Arthur Calwell as Minister for Immigration.

When he was shot at in 1966, Calwell got out of his car, called out to Doug McClelland that he had been shot and they returned to the Mosman Town Hall where he rang his home. He was Chairman of Trustees of the Melbourne Cricket Ground from 1952 to 1973. There are misleading assertions throughout the book. The authors construct scenarios based on their assumptions that misinterpret events

and apply the misrepresentations of his opponents as evidence of his motivations and convictions. The correct quotation of a statement to Caucus that the authors quoted from a misquotation on page 2 was that Labor would either be a socialist party or a muddle-minded, middle class, petit bourgeois, status-seeking party. Unlike his critics, Calwell was never vindictive. After he died, there were many tributes to his empathy, humour, compassion, intellect, integrity and achievements.

Professor Jerzy Zubrzycki stated that Calwell was the father of Multiculturalism and, as stated, Australia was transformed.

In his last book, Calwell quoted Paul: 'I have run my course, I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith.'



*Arthur Calwell and Mrs Calwell at the New Australian festival
(Lithuanian handcraft festival held in Canberra), 1949.*

Image: National Archives of Australia: A12111, 1/1949/17/5A

*See Mary Elizabeth Calwell's essay review of James Franklin
and Gerald O. Nolan, Arthur Calwell, page 152*