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War and depression

c. 1914–38

During the whole course of World War I, more Australians than Americans died on the battlefields, and every one of them had volunteered to fight overseas. The total Australian population was less than five million – about equal to that of greater New York City at that time, or to one-twentieth of the population of the United States. It is not surprising then that the 1914–18 experience was a traumatic one for Australians. After a century of peaceful and surprisingly orderly development during which rumours of distant wars had hardly troubled people, events on the other side of the earth suddenly brought death near to practically every Australian home. The utopian dreaming of the past two or three decades was fractured, and with it the illusion that the young nation might forever escape involvement in Old World sins and quarrels. Worse – especially after the broad measure of agreement which had characterised the previous decade or more – the community was divided against itself more bitterly than at any time before or since. After the war Australian life never quite regained its provincial innocence, and even the tempo of material development did not really recover its former momentum for the next twenty years and more. None of this was foreseen, however, when the Great War began on 4 August 1914.

In the federal election campaign being waged at the time, the party leaders vied with each other in promising all-out support for the British war effort. Fisher, the Labor leader, undoubtedly spoke for the consensus of opinion, though not for all members of his own party, when he promised to help defend the mother country "to our last man and shilling". Fourteen years of national independence and advancement within the Empire seemed to have liquidated the small but vociferous republican minority of the 1890s. Almost everyone seemed to feel their Britishness as the extension and guarantee of their Australianness rather than as any kind of limitation on it. And yet there was from the beginning a small band of Australian nationalists who opposed the war itself, or at least dismissed it as a far-off imperial struggle of no concern to young Australia. The radical federal politician, Frank Anstey, and seven of his ALP colleagues, made no secret of these views,[1] though Fisher and the right wing of the party made, if anything, more bellicosely pro-British speeches than the most conservative spokesperson. Within two years the tiny minority was to become a bare majority – at least to the extent of opposing conscription of men for overseas service.

On 5 September Labor was returned to power with a comfortable majority in both federal houses. With no precedents to guide it, the new government set about the difficult task of organising the war effort. The Royal Australian Navy, already a going concern, immediately took over the almost defenceless German portion of New Guinea and then turned to home waters. The first considerable engagement with the enemy took place on 9 November 1914 in the Indian Ocean off the Cocos Islands. The German light cruiser, *Emden*, was caught and sunk in a duel with the slightly better armed Australian light cruiser, *Sydney*. Unrestrained jubilation marked the reception of the news. It was a small battle no doubt, but after all it was the first purely Australian one. In the Boer War Australian and other "colonial" soldiers had been distributed among British units in order, it was held, to "stiffen" their morale and provide them with reliable leadership.

That this practice was not followed in 1914 was largely due to the opposition of the first commander of the Australian Imperial Force, the volunteer army which was recruited to fight overseas. A grandson of Betsy Broughton, the survivor of the *Boyd* massacre,[2] Major-General W .T. Bridges pressed successfully for the principle that Australian soldiers should not be

distributed among British units but should retain their own identity throughout the conflict. It was also established, perhaps partly in reaction to the execution of Morant and Handcock in South Africa, that Australian soldiers were not to be subject to the death penalty. Bridges planned to recruit a force of about 20 000 men, but the rush of volunteers at first, almost overwhelmed the ability of the skeleton military organisation to cope with them. By the end of the war, over 330 000 soldiers had actually sailed to Europe or the Middle East as members of the AIF.

By the beginning of 1915 they were quartered at training camps in Egypt because there were not enough barracks and camp facilities ready for them in England. Thus, accidentally, they took a leading part in the ill-starred Gallipoli campaign. The plan, strongly supported by Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, was to seize control of the Dardanelles and thereby open the Black Sea to Allied shipping, bring help to Russia, and perhaps knock the Turkish enemy completely out of the war. It was a good idea, but one doomed to failure by botched tactical planning and insufficient allocation of resources. In the half-light of early dawn on 25 April, thousands of Australia's bravest and best young men stormed ashore on a narrow beach at Gallipoli and clawed their way up an almost perpendicular hillside, in the face of murderous Turkish fire from prepared positions along the crest at the top of the ridge. Among those killed was Captain Peter Lalor, wearing the sword his grandfather had brandished at the Eureka Stockade. Those who survived dug in and, with reinforcements, retained their positions for eight months until the order for withdrawal was given. More than 10 000 Australian and New Zealand soldiers, including Bridges, as many French soldiers, and nearly three times as many British troops, were killed for no appreciable military gain. But to have been an "original Anzac" – a member of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps at Gallipoli – is still a proud boast for a man and his descendants. The first response to the casualty lists was an increase in voluntary enlistments, and 25 April, Anzac Day, has become the Australian national day above all others. After the evacuation, some of the AIF stayed to fight on in Palestine until the final Turkish defeat. At their training camp in Egypt they were provided with horses from the Remount Depot commanded by the great poet and horseman, "Banjo" Paterson.[3] As the Australian Light Horse under Sir Harry Chauvel, these men created their own legend, but most of the Australians were shipped to England for regrouping before joining the Allied armies in France.

There Australian troops soon came to be known as "diggers" – probably from memories of the Gold Rush and Eureka as well as from the vast amount of trench-digging done by the men of all armies. In the long horror of trench warfare on the western front, the five Australian divisions fought valorously. Because they were volunteers, and perhaps also because they were less dependent on, and yet closer to, their officers than the men of European armies, they early came to be regarded as the best shock troops in the Allied ranks, and were employed accordingly. They suffered more casualties in proportion to the total number of enlistments – nearly 65 per cent – than the soldiers of any other belligerent nation, including France and Germany. In the initial stages of the final attack on the Hindenburg Line, the Australian contribution was of decisive importance. By then the diggers were commanded by General Sir John Monash, a Jewish Australian born and educated in Victoria where he took degrees in Arts, Law and Engineering at the University of Melbourne. Such was his military genius that B.H. Liddell Hart, leading historian of World War I, thought this "unprofessional" soldier might well have become commander-in-chief of the British armies had the war lasted longer. He played a vital part in planning the attack that led to the final breakthrough and the defeat of Germany, but his civilian service to his country, both before and after the war, was hardly less distinguished. Australians are perhaps more apt than most people to expect little good from high-ranking military officers, but Monash understood and loved his men and was loved in return. His life

helps to explain why there is probably less anti-Semitism in Australia than in most other English-speaking countries.[4]

At home, affairs were in charge of a very different type of man – William Morris Hughes, attorney-general in the Labor government until Fisher retired to become High Commissioner in London from October 1915, and thereafter prime minister. Born in Wales in 1864, Hughes emigrated to Australia at the age of 20 and become the most fantastic character – in both senses of that term – so far to distinguish Australian political life. Diminutive, skinny and gnome-like in appearance, he worked in his youth at a multitude of jobs. He claimed to have been at one time or another, among other things, a fruit-picker, student-teacher, shearer, cattle-station rouseabout, seaman, cook, tally-clerk, steward, actor, second-hand bookseller and umbrella-mender; but as early as the 1890s he was seeking better fortune in the trade-union and Labor movements. He sat in the New South Wales Parliament from 1894 to 1901 and was thereafter continuously a member of the Commonwealth Parliament until his death in 1952 – not, however, after 1917 as a Labor representative. His early experiences may have helped to make him as cunning and as faintly scrupulous as he was able and energetic. Restless, irascible and ambitious, he drove those near him as hard as he drove himself. It is said that none of the hundreds of male secretaries who worked for him held the position for more than a few months. It is possible to discern throughout the turns and twists of his political career an underlying bias toward nationalist and reformist principles, but much easier to see him manipulating men and ideas toward his own ends. Yet his reputation as a great war leader is largely deserved, and in spite of everything he is more widely known and remembered – if not exactly revered – than any other Australian except the legendary Ned Kelly. Even his political opponents were sometimes half-charmed by his murderous wit, the effontery of his opportunism, and what seemed for so long his sheer indestructibility.[5]

As the war dragged on into its second year, the first flush of adventurous enthusiasm gave way to a mood of dour endurance mixed, as in other countries at war, with some complaining at the irksomeness of censorship, price-fixing and other necessary but burdensome measures. Government and people alike realised, as casualty lists mounted, that a long and hard trial lay ahead. It was at this juncture early in 1916 that Hughes went to England to see for himself what was happening. His fiery speeches, and his apparent scorn for diplomatic finesse in dealing with dignified and conventional British politicians, appealed to many as typical of the younger fighting nation "down under", and Hughes was made much of by the British popular press. This adulation was echoed in Australian newspaper reports. His fellow-Welshman, David Lloyd George, Britain's wartime prime minister, had nothing to teach Hughes in the art of playing to the gallery. While abroad he also fought hard to persuade the British government that more ships must be diverted to the Australian run to bring badly needed supplies of wheat, wool and other essentials to the United Kingdom. Finally he bought for the Commonwealth a number of vessels, which as a government-owned line went some way toward solving the problem. He also became convinced that Australia must speedily introduce conscription for overseas service as Britain had already done.

At home universal service leagues had been urging compulsion even before Hughes' departure. The sweeping powers taken to itself by the government in 1914 under the *War Precautions Act* were probably wide enough to have enabled it to introduce conscription for overseas service by regulation, had it wished to do so. Alternatively the Liberal opposition, conscriptionists almost to a man, would certainly have joined with Hughes in passing a new law for the purpose, though the massive Labor majority in the Senate would probably have rejected such a bill and either course would obviously have split the Labor Party and brought down Hughes' government. While most Australians could support the voluntary system, a great many Labor voters, and certainly also some Liberals, balked at forcing men to fight and perhaps die on the other side of the world. Some Labor left-wingers were influenced by the internationalist

ideals of doctrinaire socialism and others by the lingering isolationist-utopian aspirations of the previous period. Probably more important was the influence of Irish-Australians. Although Catholic enlistments in the AIF were slightly higher, proportionately, than those of men from other denominations, and although some prominent Catholics like Dr Kelly, Archbishop of Sydney, advocated conscription, the ancient Irish hatred of Britain was fanned into new life by the suppression of the 1916 Easter Rebellion in Dublin. Most important of all, perhaps, was the growing suspicion on the part of trade-union organisations that social advance had not merely been halted, but was being undermined by the government under cover of war emergency measures.

Hughes sought to circumvent the problem by putting the issue to a popular referendum. He was probably right in calculating that, if the people declared for conscription, many of the anti-conscriptionists in Labor's parliamentary ranks would be converted or at least neutralised. The chances seemed good. Most prominent and respectable citizens, the entire daily press of the country, and the still very influential Sydney Bulletin passionately advocated compulsion. And most church leaders concurred. The Anglican Synod in Melbourne passed unanimously a resolution certifying that the war was a religious one, that God was on the side of the Allies, and that conscription was morally necessary. If this were true the Devil found a powerful voice in the newly arrived Catholic Coadjutor Archbishop of Melbourne, Dr Daniel Mannix. At a great public meeting in that city he held that, though he wished for an Allied victory, Australia could continue to do its duty nobly under the voluntary system and that in some respects the conflict was "a sordid trade war". At the end of the meeting a large section of the crowd rose and sang *God Save Ireland*.

Hughes threw everything he had into the campaign while his party was crumbling round him. He was expelled from the Labor Party by the extra-parliamentary New South Wales Executive and on the eve of the referendum several of his cabinet ministers resigned. Then the people decided, by 1 100 033 to 1 087 557 votes, against conscription. Anticipating a vote of no confidence in his leadership, Hughes walked out of a Labor parliamentary caucus meeting, followed by twenty-four others. Some said that the Labor party had "blown out its brains", while others talked of rats and sinking ships. No one seems to have reminded Hughes of his remarks about Deakin at the time of the fusion. The bitterness was greatest of course in Labor's own ranks, but the whole community was divided more deeply than it had been even at the time of the great strikes. Hughes and his rump of the Labor Party formed a new minority "National Labor" government with the support of the Liberals, but before long the two groups fused to form the Nationalist Party with Hughes as its leader and prime minister.

In the 1917 general election, the Nationalists, on a platform of all-out support for the war effort, were returned to power with a resounding majority – partly because Hughes had promised in the most explicit terms that conscription would not be introduced unless it were approved at another referendum. The second referendum campaign in 1917 was even more envenomed than the first, not least because of the example set by the prime minister. His misuse of the wartime censorship powers went so far as, on one occasion, to make the anti-conscriptionist Labor premier of Queensland appear to have said the opposite of what he in fact had said in a public speech. In November 1917, when he attempted to address a small crowd in the Queensland town of Warwick, Mr Hughes' hat was knocked from his head by a rotten egg aimed by one Patrick Brosnan – who was duly fined ten shillings and costs three days later. This incident so inflamed the prime minister that he at once gave orders for the creation of a Commonwealth Police Force. This body has since proliferated to include secret security organisations of the kind deemed essential by all civilised countries, which, while guarding against foreign spies and domestic traitors, also tend to inhibit the expression by thoughtful citizens of new, unpopular or unconventional ideas. The addled Warwick egg marked, in a sense, the beginning of the end of Australia's age of innocence.

The bitterness of the referendum campaign was increased by the greatest wave of strikes in Australian history. In fact the strikers were motivated by the sharp fall in real living standards since the outbreak of war, but conservatives and Austral-British patriots shouted that they were being led by the nose by devilishly cunning, anti-conscriptionist enemy agents and in particular by members of the Industrial Workers of the World (the IWW), a revolutionary socialist sect which undoubtedly did exercise some influence on Australian trade unions at this time: much less, however, than during the first referendum campaign. Then twelve alleged IWW leaders had been arrested, charged with no less than conspiring to burn Sydney to the ground, and imprisoned. Most were set free after the war when a Royal Commission found that they had been "framed" by the arresting police. Some real leaders, including Tom Barker, the editor of the IWW newspaper, *Direct Action*, were imprisoned at the same time. Barker was found guilty under the *War Precautions Act* of prejudicing recruiting. His specific crime was to publish in Direct Action an anti-war cartoon drawn by a gifted young artist who had not long left school. It depicted an Australian soldier being crucified on an immense piece of artillery with a large, bloated gentleman collecting his blood in a bowl.[6]

The second referendum was even more decisively negatived than the first. Surprisingly, some thought, even the AIF men in France voted for conscription by only a very slender majority. Perhaps some diggers, knowing the hell of the trenches, could not wish anyone else to be forced into it, but more seem to have been motivated by the *esprit de corps* of a proud force which disdained to beg for unwilling recruits. It is difficult to say certainly why the referenda were defeated, but one motive by no means confined to Labor voters, was the wish of many people to preserve their own freedom of conscience. There were certainly many families like that of the future Liberal prime minister, Robert Gordon Menzies, which felt they had the right to keep one brother at home when the others had all enlisted. The fact that there was at no time any clear and present threat of invasion to Australia itself was probably decisive. Under such circumstances, and with the war being fought on the other side of the earth, one may doubt whether any people ever had, or ever would have, imposed conscription on itself by popular secret ballot.[7]

During the second campaign Hughes had repeatedly promised that he would resign if the referendum were defeated. He did so, but those on both sides of the House who had ingenuously assumed this would mean his stepping down from the prime ministership did not allow for his infinite resourcefulness. Since he was still leader of the majority party, he and his entire cabinet were solemnly sworn in again by the Governor-General two days later. Yet, when all is said, the incredible Welshman served Australia well. It was largely owing to his energy and persistence that the foundations of an efficient metallurgical industry were laid during the conflict. Pig-iron production, for instance, increased from 47000 to 332 000 tonnes between 1913 and 1919. By governmental intervention he did more than any other man to ensure that the basic wool and wheat industries remained stable and productive, and that most of their output was shipped to Britain where it was needed so desperately. And at the Versailles Peace Conference he defended ably, if with characteristic truculence and showmanship, what almost all Australians then considered to be vital national interests.[8]

First he ensured that Australia was represented (by W. M. Hughes of course) as a separate nation, not merely as a part of the British Empire. When the dominating figure at the conference, President Woodrow Wilson of the United States, objected to the noise and delays emanating from the "little digger", Hughes replied crushingly, "Mr President, I speak for 60000 dead. How many do you speak for?" Lest there should be any possible threat to the sacrosanct "white Australia" policy, he fought successfully, though by no means alone, to prevent having a declaration of racial equality incorporated in the League of Nations Covenant; and lest the Japanese or any other foreigners should benefit from the Australian conquest of German New Guinea, he bullied the League into creating C-Class mandates which gave Australia the

substance, if not the legal form, of sovereignty over the area. This coup enriched white Australian planters, business-people, gold miners and others for the following thirty years or more, but did little for the black inhabitants of Papua New Guinea and the adjacent islands. Between the two World Wars, two large Australian shipping firms, Burns Philp and W. R. Carpenter, enjoyed a virtual monopoly of trade with the islands. That they made the most of it is suggested by the nicknames they earned among their customers – "Bloody Pirates" and "Would Rob Christ". The Melanesian inhabitants were protected from some of the grosser forms of exploitation by Sir Hubert Murray, whom Deakin had appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Papua in 1908, but when he died in 1940, just before the arrival of Japanese invaders, hardly one of the estimated two million natives of the country had received any kind of tertiary education.[9]

The surviving diggers returned to a country which had changed in many ways during their absence, most notably perhaps in the role accorded to, or claimed by, women. A much higher proportion of women, both single and married, had taken jobs outside their homes, particularly as clerks, typists and secretaries in business houses. Many returned men found the positions they had held on enlistment occupied by women. Since the female workers usually did the job just as efficiently as any male, and since they did it perforce for only a fraction of the male wage, even the most be-medalled returned hero frequently had Buckley's chance of getting his old job back again. Women also took to themselves a freedom of dress unknown to their ancestors during the 1900 years of Christian civilisation. Young women, nicknamed "flappers", wore skirts of knee length and cut short the long hair which St Paul had declared a shame to them, in several styles of which the Eton crop was felt to be the most daring. In Britain, the "flapper vote" was given in 1928 by a Conservative government to women between the ages of 21 and 30, but all Australian women had then been enfranchised for twenty years. In both countries women began to drink alcohol and smoke cigarettes in public, but the liberation of the new woman was more apparent than real. Those who cropped, or bobbed or shingled, their hair also bound their breasts tightly so as to look as much like boys as possible. Half a century later it seems clear that the flappers of the 1920s felt that they approached liberation and equality in proportion as they imitated the god-like male who still dominated Australian life and ideology.

Efforts to help the returned soldiers adjust to peaceful living took two main forms – legislation guaranteeing "preference to returned soldiers", especially in government services; and schemes for settling them on the land. The latter proved, on the whole, costly failures. Preference to returned men was made a reality, at least in the Commonwealth government services, though it often made for lowered efficiency. The Returned Soldiers' League became, however, a very powerful political pressure group as well as a ubiquitous social club which did much for its members and their dependants.[10] Idolised as the "little digger" by many returned men, Hughes continued as prime minister, but was not so well trusted by many who had worked with him at closer quarters. His position was threatened particularly by the Country Party, a third grouping in politics which sprang up at this time.

As in the United States at the same period, most people wanted to forget about the war and get back to normal living as quickly as possible. And, in spite of the comparatively great development of secondary industries that had taken place, people and governments alike continued to act on the traditionally hallowed belief that Australian development must continue to be primarily rural development. Yet tariff protection of infant manufacturing industries, which inevitably raised farmers' costs, had become the settled policy of both the established political parties. For fifty years or more before the Fusion of 1909, Free Trade politicians had served the interests of graziers, farmers, importers and retail traders by keeping down the cost of imported articles. After the Fusion, most Free Trade legislators were forced to adopt the high tariff policy of their new bedfellows, the erstwhile Protectionists, representing primarily the interests of manufacturers and the new industrial bourgeoisie. At the same time, more and more Labor people adopted Protection because they saw it, from the time of Deakin's New Protection

policy onwards, as providing well-paid jobs for armies of white Australian workers. The old, low-tariff alliance between the commercial bourgeoisie and the primary producers was left with no effective group to press for its interests. Revolt came first in Western Autralia, the state in which manufacturing industries had been hardest hit after federation by the powerful factories in the eastern states. In 1914 eight Western Australian rural seats returned Country Party members to the state parliarnent.[11]

After the war, Dr Earle Page[12] and others launched the Country Party in the eastern states. At the federal election of December 1922, the new party won fourteen seats, giving it the balance of power between the Nationalists and the Laborites, who had won thirty seats each. Page swore that he was ready to co-operate with anybody who would work for rural interests, but in fact the forces behind the Country Party were probably on balance more conservative than those which supported the Nationalists. Working with many members of the Nationalist Party who disliked or distrusted Hughes, Page succeeded in having him ousted from the leadership as the price of Country Party support.[13] The new government was a coalition of the Nationalist and Country parties led by Stanley Melbourne Bruce, a capable Victorian businessman and lawyer who had been educated largely in Britain and was more English in manner than many Englishmen.[14] Frank Anstey, the English-born radical Labor MP, said of the new conservative leader, "Stanley Bruce, an English gentleman [was] born in Australia – as other Englishmen are born in China, India or Timbuctoo". The Bruce-Page coalition set the pattern of co-operation between the two anti-Labor parties which has lasted ever since in the federal sphere and in most, though not all, of the states. Though tensions between the two groups boil over at times, on the whole they have been at least as successful in maintaining unity in face of their common enemy as Labor has been in containing its own internecine feuds.

These latter were at least as divisive as usual in the period between the two World Wars. Battered by the conscription campaigns and the desertion of some of its most capable leaders, the Labor movement was further weakened by a deepening distrust between its political and industrial wings. As political action seemed to have failed them, many trade unionists returned to the idea of militant industrial activity. They were also strongly influenced by the "One Big Union" ideal of the IWW. One popular IWW song deriding parliamentary and Arbitration Court procedures did not spare even that incorruptible radical, Henry Bournes Higgins. A Labor candidate for parliamentary honours sings:

I know the Arbitration Act
As a sailor knows his "rigging"
So if you want a small advance,
I'll talk to Justice Higgins.

So bump me into parliament,
Bounce me any way;
Bang me into parliament,
On next election day.

From its foundation in 1920, the Australian Communist Party rapidly came to displace the IWW as the ideological focus of leftwing agitation, but majority Labor opinion continued overwhelmingly committed to gradualist reform through the parliamentary system.[15] Under these conditions it seemed almost as though the country as a whole distrusted Labor in the vital federal sphere where foreign policy was an issue, while welcoming piecemeal welfare legislation introduced by moderate Labor governments in most of the states. In the twenty-four years from 1917 to 1941, anti-Labor government ruled the Commonwealth except for the two years 1930-31; yet the same electors returned Labor governments for much of the time in most of the states.

Under the slogan of "men, money and markets", the Bruce-Page coalition pursued a policy of developing national resources, primarily by tariff and other devices aimed at encouraging secondary industry. Protective duties on a wide range of manufactured goods were increased and the uneasiness of the government's Country Party supporters was appeased by the device of extending the protective umbrella to cover also many primary products such as sugar, canned and dried fruits, hops, butter and grapes. It seemed that there was to be protection for all –except of course for the basic wool and wheat-growing industries and, as it seemed to many trade-union members, for wage-earners. In its concern to keep down costs so that markets abroad could be found for Australian products, the government seemed to its critics to spend more energy in keeping down wages than in demanding greater efficiency from management. To many it seemed that the prewar effort to spread the benefits of protection evenly through the community was being abandoned. But the Commonwealth also spent considerable sums in assisting immigration from the United Kingdom, mainly to promote development but partly also with the "white Australia" policy in mind. If Australia was to be kept forever a "white" continent, more of its empty spaces would have to be occupied quickly by white people, and preferably by Britons. Thus schemes like the group settlements plan in Western Australia, which sought to transform at a stroke underprivileged British workmen into self-reliant Australian bush-dwellers, were encouraged. Generally speaking, the results were even less impressive than those of kindred plans which had been sponsored in the eighteenth century by J. D. Lang and others, but these schemes did bring over 200 000 new citizens to Australia, even if few of them became successful farmers.

While Labor was, if possible, even more firmly wedded than its opponents to white Australia, it was at best indifferent, and sometimes strongly hostile, to immigration. While unemployment figures remained high, as they did throughout the 1920s, Labor maintained that the government's first duty should be to look after its own citizens by promoting public works instead of bringing in more people to compete for the few jobs available. The government responded by introducing a public works program which included the building of better main roads in country districts – a project which naturally appealed strongly to its Country Party members; and also by pushing ahead with the building of Canberra whither the federal parliament repaired in 1927. Posterity may hold that the Bruce-Page government's greatest single achievement was the creation in 1926 of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, later to be known as the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, or CSIRO. This body of first-rate scientists, pure and applied, has wide freedom to carry out an kinds of research which may benefit Australian industry. Its findings are made known freely to all, and it has been of enormous importance to Australian development. Its best-known achievement is probably the "invention" of myxomatosis, a disease which brought the continent-wide rabbit plague under control after World War II.

Neither the CSIRO nor the federal and state governments had much to do with the great improvement in communications which took place at this time. The internal combustion engine and wireless telegraphy had both been invented before the war but had both improved greatly during it. Before the war most people and goods in Australia moved about by horse-drawn vehicles and rail; after the war, more and more quickly, motor transport replaced horse-drawn vehicles, even in the "feeder services" from railway termini. In 1924, for instance, the last Cobb and Co. coach was replaced by a motor bus in North Queensland. The last coach-driver was said to have been the father of Bin Barney, later warden of Uluru (Ayers' Rock).[16] During the 1920s, tractors gradually replaced horses in the pulling of ploughs, seed-drills and harvesters on farms. Motor transport did not displace that of animals completely or suddenly. In northern South Australia in the 1930s, one could still see huge wagons, loaded high with bales of wool, being pulled into Maree near Lake Eyre by teams of twenty or more camels. Nor had the last sailing ships been banished from the seas by steam- and oil-driven vessels. At Port Victoria in

Spencer's Gulf, half a dozen four-masted barques from Finland loaded wheat for the European market each year unti11939. Oddly enough, horses were used longest, even in the cities, to pull the delivery carts of butchers, bakers, milkmen and other tradesmen. A few were still so employed at the outbreak of World War II. While motor vehicles multiplied, thousands of miles of "dirt" roads were paved with bitumen or cement to carry them. In November 1914 the *Sydney* had been able to intercept the *Emden* because of a timely wireless message, but wireless had no place at all in civil life. Twenty years later the Australian Broadcasting Commission and dozens of commercial stations were operating and very few Australian homes were without a wireless set.

When the war ended, most Australians had never seen an aeroplane. Within ten years aviation had developed further and faster here, relative to population, than in any other country in the world. Ross and Keith Smith, Charles Kingsford-Smith, Bert Hinkler and others had established – and broken – more record times for inter-continental and trans-ocean flights than the aviators of half a dozen other countries put together. More importantly, the "tyranny of distance",[17] which had so hampered Australian development for 150 years, was well on the way to being broken – at least insofar as transport of passengers and mails was concerned. An east-west air service between Perth and the eastern states was established in 1927, but very few Australians ventured into an aeroplane until after World War II, when air travel rapidly became commonplace. When the Labor Prime Minister, James Scullin, attended the Imperial Conference in London in 1931, the return journey, by the fastest means available, took about nine weeks. Twenty years later his successors flew frequently to London and back in a few days.

By 1929 signs of coming world depression had not been much marked by the Nationalist government. All through the decade it had wooed prosperity but at the cost, in the view of most unionists, of the traditional Australian regard for the welfare of working people. There had been many strikes and lockouts, particularly in the transport industries, and the government had passed several measures aimed at disciplining the unions. Now unemployment was growing and yet there seemed no way of increasing the productivity of labour. Rather hastily, and without taking into his confidence all of his own backbenchers, Bruce introduced a bill which would have had the effect of virtually abolishing the whole Commonwealth system of arbitration with its built-in provisions for safeguarding the basic wage. He argued that the state arbitration courts would take over, but the whole Labor movement and some of his own supporters suspected an all-out attack on the national standard of living. Among the back-benchers who had been kept in the dark was Hughes. Scenting revenge for his deposition by Bruce in 1923, he organised the Nationalist and Country Party malcontents and the government was defeated on his no-confidence motion. In the following election there was a landslide to Labor, which, however, was left with a minority in the Senate. Hughes' hopes of returning to high office were frustrated by the undiminished hostility of the Labor Party, which did not forget or forgive what it regarded as his betrayal of his trust over the conscription issue.

Owing to its heavy dependence on the export of primary products, Australia suffered from the Great Depression rather earlier and rather more severely than did most countries. For a time, nearly 30 per cent of breadwinners were unemployed.[18] Thousands tramped the bush roads again with swag and billy-can, often ready to work for their keep if only work of any kind could be found. In their bewilderment people did the only thing that offered even the satisfaction of making an angry gesture -and blamed the politicians. The federal government was only the first to be affected. Between 1929 and 1933 every government in the country was thrown out of office by electors reduced to the expedient of "giving the other mob a go – they couldn't be worse". South Australia and the Commonwealth elected their only inter-war Labor governments at this time, and Queensland its only anti-Labor one, but politicians understood no

more than electors how to cure the great slump. The main battles were fought in the federal and New South Wales parliaments.

James Scullin, the new prime minister, was a devout Irish-Australian who stood near the middle of Labor opinion. After a lifetime of working for party unity, he could act decisively enough when sure that all sections of the movement were behind him. When a new Governor-General had to be appointed, for instance, he virtually forced a most unwilling King George V to name Sir Isaac Isaacs, the first native-born Australian to hold the office.[19] The son of poor immigrant Polish Jews, Isaacs had been a Deakinite Liberal, prominent in the federation movement and later a distinguished High Court judge, and in appointing him Scullin was only implementing long-standing Labor policy, but his action caused hysterical outbursts in the daily press and among many Nationalist supporters. Unfortunately, the worsening economic problem was susceptible of no such simple solution, and Labor opinion on what should be done varied all the way from the abolition of the capitalist economic system by act of parliament to obeying exactly the advice of Sir Otto Niemeyer, Bank of England expert on that system, who was invited to Australia by the government to give his views. The only man in parliament who seemed to have any real understanding of high finance was Scullin's treasurer, the forceful and extremely able E. G. Theodore, known as "Red Ted" both for his views and the colour of his hair; but soon after the election he was heavily discredited by the Mungana Mines scandal which cast at least some doubt on his integrity.[20] So the government floundered indecisively while dole-queues lengthened and John Thomas Lang, in October 1930, was elected premier of New South Wales with an enormous Labor majority. Lang, or "the big Fella", as he was called by many admirers, was a forceful demagogue, somewhat on the left of parliamentary Labor opinion, though strongly anti-communist. He had already served as premier of his state from 1925 to 1927, and over the years he had built up a personal "machine" – of the type more familiar in American politics – for controlling the New South Wales Labor Party.

Before Lang's return to power, Sir Otto Niemeyer had addressed a premiers' conference called by Scullin in August 1930. At this Melbourne meeting, Niemeyer, reflecting the orthodox economic thinking of the time, strongly urged the adoption of deflationary policies. As he saw it, Australia had no alternative but to reduce its artificially high standard of living, not least by cutting salaries and wages. The premiers, however painfully, all agreed to this plan, but most of them did little to carry it out while argument proceeded over ways and means. Lang won power in New South Wales partly by denouncing the "Niemeyer Plan" as a sinister plot of overseas bondholders, and by promising to restore the forty-four-hour week and the state's civil service salaries, which had been cut by his Nationalist predecessor in office. He also proposed to end unemployment by an extensive program of public works. If money could not be found for these things, then the state should find it by postponing, or if necessary repudiating, interest payments on past overseas borrowings. Many hundreds of thousands of suffering people, not all in his own state, swore by Lang's supposed genius. Slogans such as "Lang is Right", "The Lang Plan" and "Lang is greater than Lenin" were repeated by many and heard by all. Conservatives naturally regarded him as a monster of wickedness, hell-bent on the destruction of all private property and public honour.[21] Feeling grew so intense that for a short time there came into existence an organisation of a type unknown, though not necessarily nonexistent, in Australia before or since. The self-styled "New Guard" was a quasi-military, quasi-secret band of "right-thinking" young men from the wealthier suburbs, sworn to preserve the country from Langism. They forcibly broke up some meetings of unemployed and radicals but, as so often in Australian history, there was no loss of life. In March 1932, when Lang was to open the new Sydney Harbour Bridge by cutting a ribbon, a New Guardsman named De Groot spurred forward on horseback and slashed at the ribbon with a sword, crying that he opened the bridge "in the name of His Majesty the King and all decent people". Excitement was intense, but the

police, under the direct control of Lang's government, merely took De Groot to the reception house to be psychiatrically examined.[22]

Meanwhile, at a federal election in December 1931 there had been a landslide against Labor, already undermined by another internal split. Joseph Aloysius Lyons, a right wing Tasmanian Labor member, had resigned from the cabinet over the Mungana scandal and also because he felt the government's vacillating policies were too dangerously radical. With a number of other right-wing Labor members he negotiated with the Nationalists to reorganise yet again the anti-Labor forces under the style of the United Australia party, pledged like its predecessors to anticommunism praise of private enterprise, and the support of respectability. Like Hughes before him Lyons became leader of the new, or renamed, party and prime minister of Australia from 1932 until his death some months before the Second World War broke out in 1939. Cartoonists and comedians made much of the fact that he looked very much like a koala, for he had not Hughes' capacity to inspire admiration or hatred.[23]

The Lyons government set about the task of implementing what J. K. Galbraith has since called the "conventional wisdom" of the time.[24] Some months before the election, the distracted Scullin government had already been forced to begin carrying out what was essentially the policy of its opponents: a reduction of 20 per cent in all salaries, pensions, etc., a roughly commensurate reduction in interest rates, and steep tax increases. The UAP government continued these generally deflationary policies. It also helped to force Lang from office. He went quietly, and the succeeding UAP state government, led by BSB (later Sir Bertram) Stevens, brought New South Wales back into line with the rest of the country. In doing so, Stevens achieved a nickname more colourful than most in the profane world of Australian politics. Denounced in the Sydney Domain by Stan Moran, a popular communist orator, as "that barnacle on the backside of the ship of state", Stevens was known by many thereafter as "Barnacle Bert".[25]

Very gradually, the depression eased, but there was still widespread unemployment when World War II broke out in 1939. Given the prevailing conditions, the deflationary policies adopted in Australia as elsewhere were no doubt inevitable, largely because the conventional economic wisdom of the period backed them vigorously and unanimously. Since then, however, the quite different economic theories of John Maynard Keynes, themselves born of the experience of the great world slump, have become conventional wisdom. It would be implausible to suggest that "the Big Fella" had any deep knowledge of economic theory. Indeed he was once heard to admonish a keen young Labor member discovered reading in the Parliament Library – "Reading eh? You'll soon get over that nonsense, son. No time for it here." But ignorance of economic theory in no way distinguished him from all the other political leaders of the day, state and federal, with the possible exception of Theodore, who had read Keynes' early works. What did distinguish him from them was his passionate advocacy of increased expenditure on public works and other "pump-priming" policies, more inflationary than deflationary in their tendencies. According to today's conventional economic wisdom, such policies would have been considerably more helpful in combating the depression than the ones which were generally adopted. We may freely agree that Lang's formulation of his policies was incoherent and emotional rather than logical, and that he would certainly not have been able, even if he had been given the opportunity, to carry them out effectively. Nevertheless, it now seems that, in the broadest sense – that of the direction economic policies should ideally have taken – Lang *was* right after all.

However that may be, the depression experience left a deep impression on Australian attitudes. The spectacle of such widespread involuntary unemployment, and even of actual undernourishment, in Australia, while at the same time wheat stacks at the railway sidings were overflowing with unsaleable grain, was not forgotten. The traditional belief that the state's first duty is to look after the welfare of all its citizens, more especially the less fortunate among

them, was deepened in intensity. After the Great Depression and World War II, maintenance of full – not just high – employment became perhaps the greatest single preoccupation of all Australian governments whatever their political complexion. Between 1944 and 1974 in the Commonwealth as a whole, the number of registered unemployed only very rarely and briefly rose much above 2 per cent of the workforce. One important reason seems to have been that the electorate would not then readily tolerate a higher rate.[26]

The United Australia Party, with the accustomed support of the Country Party, continued to govern until 1940. Though trade recovered slowly, it was hardly a prosperous time. After all the government's declared policy, even on the hustings, was one of severe retrenchment and of caution. The UAP's most positive achievement was probably its courageous trade policy. As we have seen, protection had been the policy of the country ever since federation. Tariffs had risen steadily, right up to and including such emergency depression measures, introduced by the Scullin government, as total prohibition of some imports. There was considerable substance in the Niemeyer view that the national protection policy, with its inevitable tendency to raise internal costs, had placed Australia in an untenable position. The policy could not be simply reversed. Not even the Country Party any longer contained many outright free traders but, despite opposition from within its own ranks as well as from Labor, the government did lower tariffs here and there throughout the 1930s, while it sought reciprocal trade agreements with other nations and particularly with other British Empire countries. Under the Ottawa Arrangements of 1932, lower, preferential tariffs were extended to a wide range of British, Canadian and other Empire goods. These policies, despite the passionate objections of many Australian manufacturers, were certainly beneficial in the long run if only because they forced Australian secondary industry to become somewhat more efficient and competitive.

Under its general anti-communist mandate, the government sought to encourage what it regarded as right thinking at home and to protect citizens from impure or dangerous thoughts from abroad. On the whole, these efforts brought more discredit on the government than on its opponents. A censorship of imported books, administered largely by only modestly literate customs officials, sought to keep out of the country Marxist works and also such purely literary masterpieces as James Joyce's Ulysses. In 1934 Egon Kisch, a learned Czech author, came to Australia to attend a Melbourne anti-war conference. The government declared that he had affiliations with communist organisations and forbade him to land. Kisch jumped on to the wharf, broke his leg, and was taken to a hospital in Melbourne. The government decided to deport him under a clause of the *Immigration Restriction Act* which had been designed to safeguard the "white Australia" policy. Instead of saying openly that a man could not land because of the colour of his skin, this clause empowered officials to give a prospective visitor or migrant a dictation test in any European language. Its obvious intention was to enable officials to use a language unknown to the testee who could then be barred technically on some vague suggestion of illiteracy. Such was Kisch's reputation for scholarship, however, that the government thought it wise to give him a dictation test in Gaelic, the almost extinct language of the Highland Scots. Kisch duly failed. "Australia is disgraced," wrote the nationally respected scholar and essayist, Walter Murdoch. Later the High Court found that Gaelic was not a European language within the meaning of the act.[27] Possibly even more damaging to the government's reputation was the case of Mrs M. M. Freer. This respectable Englishwoman was given a dictation test in Italian and kept out of the country for nearly a year – for no other reason than that a minister of the Crown had listened to a personal friend, who told him he believed that Mrs Freer might '"break up an Australian home". Such events demonstrated that the broad streak of petty provincialism, which has so often been associated with Australian nationalism, was by no means confined to one side in Australian politics.

But even this strong tendency toward isolationism was not completely proof against Hitler's preparations for another war. Compulsory training had been abandoned by the Labor

government at the beginning of the depression, ostensibly as an economy measure but possibly more in fact because of Labor's deep-seated distrust of any kind of militarism. As the international situation darkened the UAP government did little to strengthen the land forces but began to spend a little more money on naval rejuvenation. Labor, at the official parliamentary level, advocated instead the creation of a strong air force, partly because its leaders felt that an air arm, in view of Australia's remoteness from Europe, was in its nature a more defensive weapon than a navy. But in fact both parties, though for different reasons, found it almost impossible to formulate a coherent foreign policy. The electorate, as always in the past except during the actual fighting of World War I, continued to be vastly more concerned with bread-and-butter domestic issues. Almost everyone was horrified at the Nazis' bestial treatment of the jews, and there was widespread support for Lyons' decision in 1938 to welcome 5000 refugees a year from Nazi tyranny; but what should be done to meet the military threat of Nazism seemed a more difficult but less urgent question. Like conservative parties everywhere, the U AP was divided between its fear of the revisionist aims and violent, larrikin methods of the Fascist powers, and its hope that all this explosive force might in the end be spent on weakening or destroying Russian communism. Like "socialist" parties everywhere, Labor was divided between its hatred of all that Fascism stood for, and its strong traditional attachment to ways of peace, which inhibited it from preparing effectively for war. Thus, the UAP prepared half-heartedly for war, while at the same time making conciliatory and appeasing gestures toward Fascism; and Labor for the most part denounced Fascism in unmeasured terms, while at the same time it was even less willing than its opponents to underwrite really effective war preparations.

The paradox was vividly illustrated in 1938 when the UAP attorney-general Robert Gordon Menzies, acquired his sobriquet of "Pig-Iron Bob". In June, to scotch a Japanese scheme for importing large quantities of iron ore from Western Australia, the government imposed an embargo on its export from the whole country. Yet considerable quantities of pig and scrap iron continued to be shipped to Japan from eastern ports. The militant Waterside Workers' Union at Port Kembla refused to load such cargoes on the grounds that they would help Fascism and might be returned to Australia later in the form of Japanese bombs. Menzies threatened to coerce the union under some provisions of the *Crimes Act*, and he had the courage to face the men on the wharves personally to explain his government's point of view. Nevertheless, the whole incident was a great embarrassment to the UAP for many years, particularly after Pearl Harbor. At bottom the whole foreign policy debate had a faint air of unreality about it because everyone knew that in fact Australia, as in the past, would simply follow Britain's lead and go to war with her if things became really serious. And nearly everyone who thought at all of such matters agreed that this would be both natural and right.

In the arts there was a reaction between the wars against "out-backery" and "aggressive Australianism", healthy in itself but leading nowhere very much else at the time. On the whole the cultura1 achievement compares poorly with that of the thirty years before World War I. Compared with that of the Heidelberg school, most painting was derivative and pleasant rather than new and robust. In literature, "Henry Handel Richardson" and Christopher Brennan reached the first rank, but their work belongs as much to the earlier period as to the interwar one. In their anxiety to break away from the horse-and-stockwhip tradition of the 1890s many of the poets emphasised a neo-paganist, art-for-art's-sake approach which was a natural reaction to the prevailing shallow materialism, but which was also curiously reminiscent of the literary attitude popular thirty years earlier in the England of the "naughty Nineties". And the best works of Kenneth Slessor, perhaps the most considerable poet of this *Vision* group, owe little to its declared theories. Indeed, a poem like "Country Towns" does not so much repudiate the earlier tradition as use it in a new, wry way to say something more permanently worthwhile about Australia than was implied by the contemporary cry for "men, money, markets".

Country towns, with your willows and squares,
And farmers bouncing on barrel mares
To public-houses of yellow wood
With '1860' over their doors,
And that mysterious race of Hogans
Which always keeps the General Stores...

At the School of Arts, a broadsheet lies
Sprayed with the sarcasm of flies:
'The Great Golithly Family
Of Entertainers Here To-Night'
Dated a year and a half ago,
But left there, less from carelessness
Than from a wish to seem polite.

In the 1920s Katharine Susannah Prichard wrote two good novels, *Coonardoo* and *Working Bullocks,* and the following depression decade inspired some worthwhile "realist" writing by Vance Palmer and others. Xavier Herbert's *Capricornia* will probably always find readers and Kylie Tennant' s *The Battlers* deserves to. But for the most part the writers themselves were among the first to contrast their own barren time with what had gone before.

In what most Australians regarded as a far more important sphere, there was less to be despondent about. They liked to believe that they led the world in cricket, tennis and swimming. It was in this period that the swimming stroke known elsewhere as the "Australian crawl" was adopted by most other nations, as the "Australian ballot" had been earlier. Surf and life-saving clubs, manned entirely by volunteers, multiplied enormously, and an Australian who could not swim came to be regarded as something of a cripple. On 6 February 1938, when three freak waves in succession swept thousands of surfers out to sea off Sydney's Bondi Beach, the local lifesavers rescued from drowning over 200 people in half an hour or so and only five lives were lost. More often than not Australia beat England in Test cricket and the whole world in tennis matches for the Davis Cup; and neither the Great War nor the Great Depression was allowed to interfere with the most important national ritual apart from Anzac Day, the running of the Melbourne Cup on the first Tuesday of November. Indeed, Australia's greatest horse, Phar Lap (actually raised in New Zealand), won the race in 1930 and competed in the following year only to die shortly afterwards – darkly, some insisted on believing – in America; but his body was brought home, stuffed and reverently mounted in the Melbourne Museum, while his heart was enshrined at Canberra.

In more conventionally important areas there was some advance in the mid-1920s, but before and afterwards the economy was hardly more than static even in "good" years. In fact, at the height of the modest postwar "boom" in 1926, 7 per cent of trade-union members were unemployed. During the depression that followed the total Australian population actually declined by more than 10 000 between 1931 and 1935. In 1937 the CSIRO's charter was broadened to include research in fields relevant to secondary industry. The Australian Broadcasting Commission was founded in 1932. Almost at once it began to raise the standard of public taste in music and the arts generally by its competition with privately owned radio corporations. And in the late 1930s, by admitting a number of graduate cadets into the Commonwealth government departments, the U AP did something toward raising the generally low standard of efficiency in the civil service. But this above all others was the time when Mechanics' Institutes and School of Arts, founded so hopefully in the previous century, fell into hopeless decay; and it was hard to see what, if anything, was to take their place. The number of universities, university teachers and students remained almost at the low pre-war levels, except in Western Australia and Queensland where unusually beautiful university buildings were begun. The Western Australian wheat industry, too, really became important in the 1920s.

Not the Great War, the mini-boom of the 1920s or the great depression of the 1930s had any perceptible effect on race relations on the moving frontier of pastoral settlement, the place

where murder and massacre had reigned for 150 years. Indeed, two particularly brutal massacres showed that British justice for the Aborigine had become a mockery, more callous by far than in the days of the butchery at Myall Creek a century earlier. Then a white policeman, Denny Day, had swiftly and honourably brought to their account the white murderers. In the 1920s white policemen led them. In 1926 Aborigines killed a man caned Hay in the Kimberley district of Western Australia. Two police constables, two "special" constables, Hay's partner, a person called Overheu, and seven Aborigines set out, ostensibly to arrest the murderers and bring them to trial. The party arrested some thirty Aborigines, yoked them together with neck-chains and then, either to "teach the blacks a lesson" or to save themselves trouble, murdered their captives and burnt their bodies in a number of campfires. Overheu subsequently murdered an Aboriginal employee who had witnessed the killings. This sickening story was pieced together by a Royal Commissioner, G. T. Wood SM, appointed by the Western Australian government to inquire into the affair; but though every bushman and beachcomber in the Wyndham district knew the facts, the bonds of mateship were so strong that no white man could be found to give effective evidence against the police party. None of the murderers was punished in any way.[28]

At this period white graziers were moving west from the Overland Telegraph Line at Barrow Creek and Ti-tree Well into poor pastoral country occupied by the Walpari tribe. In August 1928, on Coniston Station, tribesmen murdered Frederick Brooks for having, according to Walpari tradition, forcibly abducted some of the tribal women. A few weeks later the blacks attacked another white man, "Nugget" Morton, who escaped with his life. The Commonwealth government resident at Alice Springs, J. C. Cawood, despatched Mounted Constable W. B. Murray with orders to arrest the murderers and any other Aborigines who had been spearing the new settlers' cattle. With six or seven aggrieved pastoralists to help him, Murray scoured the district for Aborigines. He arrested two, who were later acquitted of Brooks' murder, but seems to have exceeded his orders by engaging in a *de facto* punitive expedition. He and members of his party seem to have shot down about seventy Walpari tribespeople, including a few women and children.

As with the Kimberley massacre, public uproar from missionaries and other concerned whites forced the holding of an inquiry – though mime would be a more accurate description of what took place. The Prime Minister, S. M. Bruce, appointed three government officials, the police magistrate from Cairns, the police inspector from Oodnadatta and Cawood himself, to inquire into Cawood's own orders to Murray and how well or badly Murray and his party had carried them out. Murray was allowed to be present and give advice throughout the hearings, but no one was allowed to represent the interests of missionaries, other critical whites or the Aborigines themselves. The board's finding did very little to clarify what had happened and nothing at all towards trying, or even reprimanding, the white killers. Nevertheless outback settlers and policemen, the latter also charged with "protection" of the Aborigines, were given a bad fright. The Kimberley and the Coniston killings had roused, however tardily, the conscience of most decent people "in the south" and in the cities. The prime minister's hand-picked board had shielded the guilty on this occasion, but the publicity given to this massacre gave some hope that it could be the last.[29]

R.M. Crawford characterised the 1920s as Australia's "mean decade", and few will disagree with his belief that the meanness derived in an important measure from the effects of World War I. Over 60 thousand of this small nation's most generous and gifted men, those who might have led the way, fought and died far from home in that war. But few will agree with Crawford's further suggestion that things began to look up quite remarkably in the late 1930s. In fact the whole inter-war period, compared with those which preceded and followed it, was an uncertain, cautious, and shabby era. Honourable exceptions notwithstanding, most political and other leaders, made timid by their memories of the bitter conscription troubles and by the vivid

if distant spectre of Bolshevism, sought to survive rather than to create. War had shattered the possibly naive, but nonetheless constructive, idealist national mood of the previous decades without substituting anything very positive in its place. Australians' honoured the fallen and would continue to do so, but were not at all clear about what – other than the continued existence of Australia as a sovereign state – they had died for. So the fire went out of the vision which had inspired so many men of the previous generation, while contemporary experience suggested little more than a disillusioned continuance of the habitual attitudes from which the vision had sprung. Recovery and advance to a more mature national stance was to be the work of the diggers' children rather than of the survivors of the "war to end all wars".