

# **Australian Political Studies and the University of Melbourne**

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## **Introduction**

THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE at the University of Melbourne is the oldest political studies department in Australia. It had its origins in the groundbreaking efforts of William Macmahon Ball during the 1930s, culminating in the establishment of a dedicated program in Political Science in 1939. Macmahon Ball ('Mac Ball' or simply 'Mac') was appointed foundation professor of Political Science in 1949. The department has a dynamic tradition of research and training, pioneering work on Australian politics, international relations, political sociology and political psychology among other areas. Academics and alumni from the department have gone on to become prominent figures in the academy in Australia and overseas, in public affairs and politics at all levels, in the print and electronic media, and in public controversy across the decades. Mac's founding vision was of strength through diversity, and a steadfast commitment to the importance of informed vigorous debate for a healthy public culture.

The figure of Mac Ball is the obvious point of departure for an historical reflection on the links between Australian political studies and the University of Melbourne. Mac's pioneering efforts in the establishment of the discipline of political science at the University are milestones in the history of political studies in Australia. In terms of disciplinary history, Mac began his famous course on Modern Political Institutions in the early 1930s, the first dedicated political science subject offered at the University of Melbourne. He was the driving force behind the establishment of a

department of Political Science in 1939, initially administered within the History School. The department became fully established with the appointment of Mac as the foundation professor in 1949, the first department of political science in Australia. While many politics departments in Australia have been transmogrified or amalgamated over recent years, the Melbourne department to this day retains both its disciplinary distinctiveness and organisational robustness.

The perseverance of Melbourne Political Science as a vibrant independent department can be attributed in no small measure to Mac's legacy and his founding vision. Diversity, not orthodoxy, has ensured the department's ongoing vitality and distinctiveness through time and changing circumstances. Paradoxically, the strength of the department as a distinct 'disciplinary' entity has resided in an adherence to neither a particular school of thought nor a specific methodological orientation but rather to a non-specific plural culture. Tested at times, this culture of diversity and tolerance has enabled the department to maintain its own identity and to flourish. There is no Melbourne School of Political Science in the strict sense, no canon or singular disciplinary tradition. Nonetheless the department has made extremely important and highly significant contributions to political studies in Australia and elsewhere since its gestation through Mac Ball's efforts in the interwar period. This story of political studies at Melbourne has never been told.

## **A prehistory**

Political studies in Australia have a long link with the University of Melbourne extending back to the very foundation of the University. In his brief history of political science in Australia Don Aitkin cites the foundation professor of History and Political Economy at Melbourne,

William Edward Hearn, as the first person to hold a university position in the field or ‘something akin to it’. While Aitkin notes the renown of Hearn’s publication on government, he also maintains that ‘no tradition of political science as a university discipline developed at Melbourne, or indeed any other Australian university, in the nineteenth century’.<sup>i</sup> Aitkin observes that the study of politics and government during this period may have been encountered within courses of study in law, philosophy and history, but only incidentally. Aitkin’s proviso here of the incidental character of political studies in the academy can, however, be questioned. While there may have been no tradition *per se* of political science inaugurated by Hearn at Melbourne, his work offers an initial and important staging point for tracing the contribution of the University and its alumni to Australian political studies prior to Mac.

Assessments of Hearn’s place have varied. He has been described as the ‘first Australian economist’, as an unoriginal economist, and as ‘exceptional both for his productivity and his prominence in public affairs’.<sup>ii</sup> Whether the Commerce Faculty at the University would still claim heritage rights is a moot point though Hearn’s portrait heads the gallery of notables in the present day History Department. Hearn wrote a number of scholarly tomes while at Melbourne as well as becoming, somewhat controversially, a member of the Legislative Council in the Victorian parliament. (Shifting from Professor to Dean enabled him to circumvent the University statutes that embargoed professors from parliamentary service). His major economics work, *Plutology* (1863), had a notable impact on W. S. Jevons and Alfred Marshall, and its contribution to industrial organization is still debated today.<sup>iii</sup> His work on politics, *The Government of England* (1867), was well regarded at the time and went into a second edition. Hearn also published a sociological study, *The Aryan*

*Household* (1878). This work is cited in Bob Connell's analysis of classical sociological theory, where he describes it as a prime example of nineteenth century bold sociological abstraction, executed by an evolutionary social scientist working in 'far away' colonial Melbourne.<sup>iv</sup> Hearn's other major work, *The Theory of Legal Duties and Rights* (1883), outlines the principals that informed his practical endeavours to codify the laws of Victoria.<sup>v</sup>

I am not so much interested in a critical evaluation of Hearn's work but rather wish to draw several themes to the fore through his example. First, there is the obvious range of scholarly endeavour to which Hearn committed pen to paper. This is indicative of the broad job description facing a professor in a small new colonial university. This predicament was to continue well into the twentieth century, even into the 1960s and perhaps beyond, in political studies departments in particular. The smallness of scale that necessitated versatility across a range of areas is important. While small scale, especially in the Antipodean case, generates strengths, it can also produce pathologies — what Alan Davies called 'small country blues'.<sup>vi</sup> Nonetheless, small scale means that more complex divisions of labour in the academy — or, if you like, sharp disciplinary boundaries — are not always possible given resource limitations. Breadth becomes a necessity, sometimes with less than ideal results, but at other times producing novel insight cutting across predetermined and self-referential perspectives.

Second, and this is linked to the former point, the wide-ranging character of Hearn's work was not simply an outcome of the job description. Peter Groenewegen and Bruce McFarlane argue that there is a systematic conceptual relationship that links Hearn's *Plutology* with his other two major works, *The Government of England* and *The Aryan Household*. Hearn's evolutionary theory is identified as the social

theoretical thread that draws together these various studies. According to Groenewegen and McFarlane, this ‘interdependence in Hearn’s work — combining as it did history, economics, politics, law and jurisprudence — is perhaps one reason why his lectures, disorganised as they were said to be, were able to inspire those students who attended them with a deep curiosity and interest in the study of society’.<sup>vii</sup> Among these students were Alfred Deakin and Henry Bournes Higgins who were greatly influenced by Hearn’s evolutionist views on social progress, though without sharing his free trade position.<sup>viii</sup> The theme here is the attention drawn to the wider agenda of society through a social philosophical lens, and how this attracts and inspires students.

Third is the theme of engagement in public affairs. Hearn was prominent in public life in an array of contexts including adult education, royal commissions, public service organization, the Church of England, and as a member of the Legislative Council representing the Central Province. Hearn’s engagement in public affairs was not without controversy. Inside the academy, his dogged attempts to enter parliament in defiance of University regulation certainly upset the University authorities.<sup>ix</sup> In town, his positive views on free trade, his close association with the *Argus*, and his preference for the authority of the Legislative Council, caused the proprietor of the *Age*, David Syme, to dub him the ‘Professor of Dodgery’.<sup>x</sup> And in matters of state, his drafting of the 1862 Land Act was not completely up to scratch, leaving loopholes that enabled the consolidation rather than dispersal of large pastoral estates, contrary to the original intent.<sup>xi</sup> In some ways, controversy is par for the course for involvement in public life, especially for figures associated with the University in what was, for a long time, a small circle of educated (and not so educated) cultural and political elites. Hearn’s *laissez faire* economics

may not have triumphed in colonial Victoria, but his interest in engagement in public life can be linked to the emerging ‘colonial liberalism’ that came to drive many of the nativist generation he had first taught at the University.<sup>xii</sup> The involvement of University figures in public affairs, controversial and otherwise, forms a thematic thread stretching from Hearn to present generations. This has been the case particularly for a number of those associated with political studies across the twentieth century.

### **Three themes**

The three themes I wish to draw from Hearn’s example can be summarized as follows: a breadth of field beyond narrow (twentieth century) disciplinary boundaries; a synthetic capacity to bring society into analytical focus; and engagement in public affairs. The argument is not that these three themes form a tradition in a customary sense in political studies at the University but rather that they are recurring without any necessary continuity. Elements of colonial liberalism and its various legacies in twentieth century Australia are involved. Something about the Antipodean condition, viz. distance and smallness, also seems to contribute to their recurrence. Before turning to Mac Ball I would like to register a few cases up to the early 1930s that exemplify these themes.

The first is the figure of Charles Pearson who, though only briefly employed as lecturer in history and political economy in the early 1870s, can I think be claimed for the University as a significant contributor to political studies. After his departure from the University staff, he became a member of the University Council. In his role as Royal Commissioner investigating education in Victoria, Pearson formulated a radical blueprint to transform the University into one of the most comprehensive educational institutions in the world (though not implemented due to lack of resources).

Pearson had a distinguished career as an educator, publicist and Minister for Public Instruction in Victoria before leaving the state in the early 1890s. In retirement he wrote *National Life and Character* (1893), in which he offered an analysis of European civilization and its future prospects. While pitched to an American and European audience, the work is profoundly informed by the experience of colonial Victoria. Pearson argued that the world was undergoing a major transformation as European expansion reached its outer limits. In the process, the vigorous independence of the individual was giving way to a 'state socialism' as it had been pioneered in settler societies. The sweep of Pearson's speculation is wide, combining broad social analysis with considerations on the fate of the moral order. If nothing else, Pearson's *National Life and Character* offers a significant, if less than sanguine, evaluation of the Australian experience and colonial socialism on the eve of Federation.<sup>xiii</sup>

The second case revolves around the teaching of sociology at the University at the end of the Great War. In 1912 moves were made to divide Hearn's old professorship into a Chair in History and a Chair in Economics and Sociology. As is well known, Ernest Scott was appointed to the History Chair in 1913, but nothing came of the other, with the teaching of political economy continued by a lectureship.<sup>xiv</sup> Under the auspices of the Workers Educational Association (WEA), however, sociology was introduced into the University in 1918 with the appointment of Meredith Atkinson as Director of tutorial classes. Professor W. Harrison Moore, chair of the University Extension Board, had envisaged that the position would involve the teaching of economics. Atkinson, however, immediately focused on sociology, becoming a self-styled Professor of Sociology, somewhat to the dismay of a number of those involved in the experiment inside and outside the University. The whole sorry saga of sociology at this time is now

reasonably well documented.<sup>xv</sup> Keith Hancock famously recalls that the sociology course was ‘mumbo jumbo,’ a hotchpotch of ‘second-hand fact, disputable generalisations and a pretentious vocabulary’.<sup>xvi</sup> Yet Helen Bourke surmises that despite his shortfalls, Atkinson’s formulation of social and political problems may have left more of a mark on Hancock than he would later admit, especially on his seminal work *Australia* (1930).<sup>xvii</sup> A number of Hancock’s contemporaries or near contemporaries graduated with a major in the subject, notably Brian Fitzpatrick and Mac Ball, while a young Fred Alexander edited the second edition of Atkinson’s *The New Social Order* (1920).

While something of a self-aggrandiser, Atkinson is nonetheless part of the story of Australian political studies at the University. In the sociology course and in a number of publications, he grappled with issues of democracy and the state in the period following the Great War.<sup>xviii</sup> He introduced students to questions about industry and workers, about citizenship, politics and the state, and about the overall coherence and dynamics of society. He coupled an examination of the Australian experience of the state with major concerns of the postwar years, such as the problem of social cohesion, the potential of education and the role of experts. He introduced students to major political and sociological writings including Graham Wallas’ *Human Nature in Politics*, Mary Follett’s *The New State*, and L. T. Hobhouse’s *Social Evolution and Political Theory*. In terms of my three themes, Atkinson most certainly straddled a breadth of field and endeavoured to analyse society as a whole, even if it is hard to find the ‘sociological unity’ he claimed for his work.<sup>xix</sup> Outside the University his impact on public life did not seem to have extended far beyond the controversies surrounding WEA/University politics, though his Australian edited collections drew together an array of figures reflecting on

the pressing political and social problems of the time. His 1920 edited collection of essays, *Australia: Economic and Political Studies*, has contributions from G. V. 'Jerry' Portus, Elton Mayo, W. Harrison Moore, W. Jethro Brown, George Knibbs and Griffith Taylor.

The third case I would like to highlight is Keith Hancock's famous book *Australia*, published in 1930. It may seem odd or a bit thin to make a Melbourne claim on Hancock's *Australia*. He wrote the work while at the University of Adelaide, prior to which he had been at the University of Western Australia, Balliol and All Souls at Oxford. Nonetheless, he was first a dazzling graduate of Ernest Scott's history school, as well as a disgruntled student of Atkinson's sociology. Hancock also freely admitted that he had synthesized the original research of several others into this seminal book, in particular E. O. G. Shann's *Economic History of Australia* (1930) and Frederick Eggleston's *State Socialism in Victoria* (1932). Shann was a graduate of Melbourne, a contender with Scott for the Chair in History in 1912, and held university positions at Queensland and Western Australia, finally succeeding Hancock at Adelaide. Eggleston had studied law through the articulated clerk system and was not a graduate of the University. He had a long association with the University, however, and was a tireless advocate for the development of the social sciences at Melbourne and later at the Australian National University. Hancock's work evaluates the Australian Federation experiment, and its roots in colonial socialism and the Victorian experience. On these grounds, I would thus like to make a small partial claim on Hancock's *Australia* even though it has had a kind of life of its own in twentieth century Australian culture, permeating its political language and popular conceptions of Australian identity. Hancock was far more a brilliant figure of the academy than a

person of public affairs, but his little book on Australia became a notable part of its public culture.

The breadth of Hancock's *Australia* ranges from politics to political economy and culture, and it has an analytical sweep that transcends any one of these. Stuart Macintyre has described it as 'an authoritative account of Australian history and something more'.<sup>xx</sup> In terms of 'something more,' it has had an enormous impact on Australian political studies and the self-conception of Australian political culture that extends way beyond Hancock's initial intentions and his subsequent critical evaluation of the work. The work itself is both magisterial and elegantly brief, a realist critique of the Australian experiment in search of the redemptive moment of its ideals. Its taxonomy of Australian political culture is still cited as apposite in much of mainstream political studies, and the notion of the 'Australian Settlement' popularised in Paul Kelly's 1992 publication *The End of Certainty* is heavily indebted to Hancock's 'classic'.<sup>xxi</sup> This ongoing indiscriminate reiteration persists despite an accessible critical literature dating from Hancock's own reflections on the work in the 1950s.<sup>xxii</sup> The interwar condition Hancock captures in *Australia* is part of the world of the young Mac Ball, but not his total world. Where the historian Hancock settles on irony, Mac takes to the world with verve (though not without a sense of ironic humour).

### **William Macmahon Ball**

The three recurrent themes I have highlighted—a breadth of field beyond narrow disciplinary boundaries; a synthetic capacity to bring society into analytical focus; and engagement in public affairs—are all manifest in the case of Mac. But it is his particular combination of all three that marks the significance of Mac's contribution to the scholarly analysis of politics. He

was not a dazzling scholarly researcher in the sense that Hancock was and he never published a systematic political or social theory. Nonetheless he was a towering figure both in the academy and beyond, having a major impact on the development of political studies in twentieth century Australia. He professed erudite and wide-ranging political analysis without fear or favour, and sometimes suffered because of it. The principle of the free exchange of ideas was fundamental to his conception of a democratic society and its key institutions such as parliament and the university. While recognizing the contingencies of political and social action, he emphasized the importance of informed analysis of its patterns and consequences. From a strict evangelical background, he was to transform into one of the most prominent liberal-minded public intellectuals of mid-twentieth century Australia.

The son of a country clergymen, William Macmahon Ball was born in Casterton, Victoria, in 1901. He commenced his studies at the University of Melbourne in 1919, where, after some initial difficulties, he blossomed. On graduation in Arts in February 1923, he topped the First Class Honours list and was awarded both the Hastie Scholarship in Philosophy and the Dwight Prize in Sociology. Funded by a Fred Knight Scholarship, he embarked on postgraduate studies in Philosophy examining J. B. Watson's behaviourist psychology, and in the mid 1920s began tutoring in philosophy and sociology. Later in the decade he assumed the lecturing responsibilities for sociology and subsequently transformed it into political philosophy.<sup>xxiii</sup> In 1925 he was a founding member of the Melbourne University Labor Club along with Brian Fitzpatrick, Bob Fraser, Ralph Gibson and Lloyd Ross. Off campus, he became absorbed in the lively social life of Melbourne's intellectual and artistic circles of the 1920s,

mixing with writers and artists such as Nettie and Vance Palmer, Max Meldrum and Justus Jorgenson.<sup>xxiv</sup>

In 1929, funded by a Rockefeller Scholarship, Mac travelled to London to study at the London School of Economics under Harold Laski, who left an indelible mark on his thinking. At this time Mac toured Germany, France and Italy, giving him a first hand taste of political affairs in the wider world. In 1975 he recalled that it was during this period that he became ‘an obsessive reader of newspapers,’ spending a good part of every morning poring over *The Times* and the *Guardian* rather than working on his studies at the LSE library.<sup>xxv</sup> On his return in 1932 Mac began to build the study of political science at the University of Melbourne into something more than simply a subject offering. In the course of the 1930s, his Modern Political Institutions (MPI) became extremely popular among students, its renown due to both its analytical coverage of contemporary politics, and the highly engaging drama and informality of Mac’s teaching style.<sup>xxvi</sup> At the same time, he became a regular broadcaster on the wireless, a newspaper feature writer, University extension lecturer as well as an active participant in the Australian Institute of Political Science and the Australian Institute of International Affairs, all of which contributed to his growing reputation as an authoritative commentator on public affairs.

In 1936, Mac published his first book, *Possible Peace* (1936), which analysed the prospects for peace and a new civil international order with a focus on both Europe and the Pacific. Two years later he edited a collection of essays on the media and foreign affairs, *Press, Radio and World Affairs* (1938), a pioneering work of communication analysis in Australia. In May 1938 he went on sabbatical leave travelling to England, Europe and the Americas. An early commentator on the Nazis’ ambitions in Europe, Mac produced reports for the ABC and the BBC covering his travels through

Sudetenland and Czechoslovakia during the ‘Munich’ period. His report on his visit to the ‘Sachsenhausen concentration camp as the guest of the S.S.’ was prophetic of the imminent horrors to follow, and was the ‘last straw’ that destroyed his pacifism.<sup>xxvii</sup> On his return to Melbourne in March 1939, he became head of the new Department of Political Science.

During the Second World War, Mac was Commonwealth Controller of Overseas Broadcasting, which in subsequent years transformed into Radio Australia, the voice of the ABC in the Asia-Pacific region. He was part of the Australian delegation to the United Nations Conference on International Organization at San Francisco in April-June 1945, a key event in the framing of the architecture for international governance in the postwar era. In the immediate postwar period, he also served in a number of high-level diplomatic posts in Batavia (Dutch East Indies) and Japan, and led the Australian Goodwill Mission to East Asia in 1948.<sup>xxviii</sup> Of particular note, he was the Australia Minister and British Commonwealth representative on the Allied Council for Japan headed by General MacArthur. Mac’s stories of MacArthur’s dictatorial antics were often recounted to students and associates alike. These years of diplomatic service were never straightforward for Mac, especially given the often-fraught relationship with the Australian Minister of External Affairs of the time, H. V. ‘Doc’ Evatt.

Mac returned to the University in 1949 to become the foundation Professor of Political Science, building Melbourne Politics into one of the nation’s leading departments. He was a keen exponent of the challenges confronting Australia’s foreign relations in the postwar era, especially in terms of its place in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>xxix</sup> In domestic politics, he was a longstanding advocate of civil liberties and often an outspoken critic on events of the day.<sup>xxx</sup> During the 1950s he continued a regular radio spot,

broadcasting on international affairs every Sunday in an accessible yet intelligent manner to thousands of Australians. Mac retired from the University in 1968 and was made a Companion of the Order of Australia in 1978. In retirement, as always, Mac remained a highly sociable and affable character deeply interested in the world of public affairs. He died on Boxing Day 1986.<sup>xxxix</sup>

### **Macmahon Ball's complex liberalism**

In his years as an undergraduate and immediately following, the world began to open up for Mac. On campus he mingled with a lively group of political activists and intellectuals that included Brian Fitzpatrick and Lloyd Ross. Over the next decade, he developed intellectual associations with a diverse array of people ranging from his University contemporaries to Herbert Brookes and Frederick Eggleston through to overseas figures of all sorts of political persuasions.<sup>xxxix</sup> This diversity was indicative of Mac's politico-philosophical perspective as he came to intellectual maturity. In some ways a critical heir of Melbourne liberalism, he was a 'pragmatic yet idealistic liberal democrat ... who recognized the limitations of liberal thought in the years between the world wars'.<sup>xxxix</sup> Mac combined a commitment to a form of rationalism with elements of humanism, and a strong belief in the benefits of education for social development. A creature of his time, he saw merits in economic planning and a measure of egalitarianism, and in particular he saw the desirability of some form of equity in the distribution of national wealth. Like Eggleston he believed that liberal democracy could be achieved in Australia, but like Hancock he had strong reservations about this and thought that it could only be attained if Australia developed stronger engagement with the wider world. On the issue of protection, he could appreciate the local arguments but also

became more and more disturbed by its corrosive effects on international relations during the 1930s. In these senses, Mac exhibited a complex liberalism that blended strands of social liberalism with Laskian liberal socialist elements.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Perhaps the most pronounced dimension of Mac's politico-philosophical perspective was his concern with the free exchange of ideas in a democratic society. This underpinned his life-long preoccupation with the relationship between public opinion, the media and modern government. Like Laski he was ever wary of the potential encroachments of state power on freedom of speech and expression. He was equally suspicious of the capacity of 'money power' to manipulate public information and opinion. If liberal democracy was to survive and flourish Mac argued that there needed to be a robust independent press, a free flow of ideas (and books), and the cultivation of critical education. The free exchange of ideas was not something that could be established once and for all but was an ongoing challenge, a critical and crucial task that needed to be revisited and enacted by each generation in a pluralistic society.<sup>xxxv</sup> This perspective informed all of Mac's professional and public life, from his academic activities to his media work and public service, a perspective that he bequeathed to colleagues, generations of students, and others in political, governmental and business circles.<sup>xxxvi</sup> It was a perspective that he imprinted on political studies at Melbourne, and, in its spirit, one that is always in need of revitalization.

### **A department in the making**

The first record of discussion of a Chair in Political Science appears in the University Council minutes in 1911, a year prior to the breaking up of the older Chair in History and Political Economy in 1912 on the retirement of

Professor Elkington.<sup>xxxvii</sup> But it was not until 1919 that a subject entitled ‘Political Science’ first appears in the University Calendar, the same year that Modern Political Institutions also makes its debut. They are not listed for 1920 but reappear in 1921. The subject title ‘political science’ thereafter vanishes until 1948. MPI is however listed for the years 1922 to 1925, before its rebirth in 1931-1932 in the hands of Mac. The subject International Relations also makes its first appearance at this time, which was taught for many years by P. D. Phillips. Nonetheless it was Mac’s development of Modern Political Institutions that put the dedicated study of politics ‘on the map’ at Melbourne.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

In the second half of the 1920s, Mac battled to secure a permanent position for himself at the University. Douglas Copland’s review of the Arts Faculty’s offerings at this time opened a space for Mac to begin to find a foothold. The review enabled Mac, as lecturer-in-charge of sociology, to jettison its ‘mumbo-jumbo’ elements and in the process to reconfigure the subject into political philosophy, the subject title ‘sociology’ finally being erased from Arts Faculty listings by 1931. On his return from the LSE in 1932 he was appointed lecturer-in-charge of Modern Political Institutions and Political Philosophy. The popularity of these subjects grew rapidly and in 1937 there were 200 students enrolled including sixty Honours students.<sup>xxxix</sup> No doubt Mac’s spellbinding and ‘commanding presence’ as a lecturer is part of the reason for this success.<sup>xl</sup> But what must also be added to this account is his capacity to arouse an informed interest in current political affairs among his students (as he did outside the University extramurally and in the media). The 1930s were turbulent times and thus ripe with lecture material. Nonetheless, Mac wanted to do something more than offer mere reportage. He saw his work in this period as ‘a serious effort to make MPI an *analysis* of contemporary

political issues and institutions, and not just a “historical descriptive” approach’.<sup>xli</sup>

His years abroad in the late 1920s and early 1930s brought Mac into direct contact with cutting edge debates in political analysis, especially through his supervisor at the LSE, Harold Laski. He would later recall the significant impact the clash between Laski and those involved in the Liberal Yellow Book (including Keynes) had on his thinking at the time. This period abroad also gave him first hand experience of British and European politics. He accompanied Laski on the hustings during the 1931 General Election, observing how exposure to the everyday miseries of mass unemployment had shocked and transformed Laski’s thinking. During his summer vacations in Germany he got to know the young Nazis in the universities, including the sociologist Karl Heinz Pfeffer.<sup>xlii</sup> Mac thus brought to his political studies classes both a sophisticated and up-to-date form of political analysis and a worldly-wise sense of contemporary political realities.

Over the course of 1936-7 Mac’s labours began to pay off as the case for an Honours school in Political Science developed. Finally in December 1937, the Arts Faculty and the Professorial Board recommended to the University Council that a School in Political Science be established at the beginning of 1939.<sup>xliii</sup> On his return from overseas leave in early 1939, Mac headed up the new though small Department of Political Science. Around him he had the lecturing assistance of a young Geoffrey Sawer and Edmund Foxcroft with G. S. Plant and Zelman Cowen taking tutorials.

A year later, the University Council granted Mac indefinite leave of absence ‘on his service being requested for the duration of the war by the Department of Information’.<sup>xliv</sup> In his absence, Professor Max Crawford from History was assigned oversight of the fledgling department and a new

full time lecturer, Ian Milner, was appointed.<sup>xlv</sup> A New Zealander by birth, Milner was Oxford trained, a poet and apparently had the public demeanour of a very proper scholarly don. He left the department in 1944 to take up a senior position in External Affairs, after which followed appointments at the United Nations, eventually joining the staff at the Charles University in Czechoslovakia in 1950. Milner would later become infamous as the so-called 'Rhodes Scholar spy,' having been named in the Petrov Royal Commission in the early 1950s.<sup>xlvi</sup> Aside from Milner, lecturing duties in the department were taken by Sawyer, Foxcroft, P. D. Phillips (part-time) and from May 1944 by Manning Clark. In 1945, Mac returned as Head of the Department but resigned from the position in April 1946 upon his appointment as member of the Allied Control Commission, headed by General MacArthur in Tokyo.<sup>xlvii</sup>

On Mac's departure, Manning Clark became acting senior lecture-in-charge, Lloyd Churchward was appointed lecturer and the young Alan Davies was taken on as an acting lecturer. A Professorial Board committee reviewed the department during 1946, recommending that Political Science continue as 'a separate and independent Department', that a Professor of Political Science be appointed as soon as practicable, and that in the interim the vacant Senior Lectureship-in-Charge be filled forthwith.<sup>xlviii</sup> The committee also considered the scope and content of the course, concluding that it 'should be recognized as being concerned with Politics generally, and not simply with state institutions. For example an examination of non-state institutions, such as the family, should clearly be included'.<sup>xlix</sup> This would suggest that even at this level of the University, there was recognition of the desirability of breadth of field in the study of politics.

By the end of 1946 the University had appointed P. H. 'Perc' Partridge as Mac's permanent replacement, from a shortlist that also

included Manning Clark and Colin Badger.<sup>l</sup> Clark's teaching duties reverted solely to History after this.<sup>li</sup> Partridge remained only a year before returning to his alma mater, the University of Sydney, to take up the Chair in Government. Partridge nonetheless made a strong impression on students and staff at the time with his Andersonian-derived philosophical perspective of critical pluralism.<sup>lii</sup> The disruptions of the war years and the revolving door of staffing were finally brought to an imminent close when the University created a Chair in Political Science in September 1948.<sup>liii</sup> By this time Mac had had enough of the diplomatic life and its political vagaries.<sup>liv</sup> He applied and was officially appointed Professor in April 1949, the first dedicated Chair in Political Science in Australia.<sup>lv</sup> He remained in the position until his retirement in 1968.

### **The Department of Political Science**

Once installed as Professor, Mac began to build Political Science at Melbourne into one of the leading, if not pre-eminent, political studies departments in the nation. Many of the department's top graduates in the immediate postwar period went on to become renowned academics in the field, a number taking up prominent positions in other universities around the country (just as Scott's and Crawford's students did in History in the interwar and postwar periods). Among them, figures such as Henry Mayer, Sol Encel, Harry Rigby and Herb Feith all became seminal names in the development of political studies in Australia, each pursuing quite different interests and professional paths.

In the department itself, Mac gathered around himself a group of colleagues that was varied in scholarly interests and demeanours. The gentlemanly labour intellectual Lloyd Churchward pursued research on the Australian labour movement, American politics, and Soviet politics.<sup>lvi</sup> In

his much-reprinted work, *Australian Democracy* (1958), the poet-social scientist Alan Davies not only introduced many an Australian to the workings of the political system, but also provided subtle analytical insight into the nation's political culture, highlighting the peculiarities of the Australian style with its 'characteristic talent for bureaucracy'.<sup>lvii</sup> The 'Dunera boy,' Hugo Wolfsohn, opened up the world of European politics and social theory to students from the suburbs of Melbourne.<sup>lviii</sup> The sophisticated Creighton Burns brought together the spheres of media and political analysis with a confidence akin to Mac's. By the end of the 1950s the lively Englishman Jim Jupp was entralling students with his verve on new forms of political action, and the affable Arthur Huck was focusing attention on the politics of Asia.<sup>lix</sup>

Many of those associated with political studies at Melbourne were involved in the formation of the Australasian Political Studies Association in 1952. Apparently, the initial efforts could not be described as enthusiastic, yet once Henry Mayer took a multitasking lead, the association began to flourish. The nomenclature of 'political studies', rather than 'political science', was adopted to reflect the range of scholars involved, thus enabling the inclusion of figures such as Geoffrey Sawer, an academic lawyer.<sup>lx</sup> Sawer had contributed to the teaching in Political Science at the University since the late 1930s before taking up his post at the ANU a decade later, and his booklet *Australian Government Today* (1948) was a standard introductory primer for many years, going into numerous editions.

Mac was also assisting the cultivation of political studies at other institutions during the postwar years. The Department of Political Science at Canberra University College was established in 1949, though as an annex of the Melbourne department. The Chair of the Canberra department

was L. F. 'Fin' Crisp, whose friendship with Mac dated back to the Australian Institute of Political Science summer schools in the late 1930s. Mac had employed Crisp at the Overseas Broadcast Service for a brief time in early 1940 and they were regular correspondents, Crisp often seeking Mac's professional (and personal) counsel. Moreover, and as his correspondence attests, Mac was a great proponent of a civic pluralism in the profession. On many an occasion, he was characteristically forthcoming if he thought his political science colleagues at Melbourne or elsewhere were acting in an intolerant or uncivil manner. He also strongly defended the principle of academic freedom in the teaching of politics against narrow-minded attacks from politicians.<sup>lxi</sup>

This was all entirely consistent with Mac's longstanding defence of civil liberties and freedom of expression, in line with his belief that the free exchange of ideas was a basic value in a pluralistic society. While he may not have been as animated in his final years as a lecturer, Mac passed on a legacy of critical engagement that retains its merit today, perhaps even more so.

## **A conclusion**

The University environment that nurtured Macmahon Ball seems a distant world from the perspective of the new millennium. A huge gulf, formed by new modes of university governance, much larger student populations, a more connected international academic scene, and dramatic transformations in Australian and global society, separates the two eras. Nonetheless, the three themes I have highlighted—a breadth of field beyond narrow disciplinary boundaries; a synthetic capacity to bring society into analytical focus; and engagement in public affairs—remain significant in the life and various activities of the Department of Political

Science at Melbourne. They are sometimes pronounced and very public, at other times quietly cultivated in the classroom. The size of the contemporary university means that there is no longer the necessity for polymathic efforts as in the example of Professor Hearn at the University's foundation. Yet the broader political culture no doubt benefits from, indeed demands, a sound critical perspective to keep it in something like robust health. Hopefully political studies at Melbourne will continue to contribute to this task.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>i</sup> Don Aitkin, 'Political Science in Australia: Development and Situation,' in *Surveys of Australian Political Science*, ed. Don Aitkin (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1985), 1.
- <sup>ii</sup> D. B. Copland, *W. E. Hearn: First Australian Economist* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press; 1935); J. A. La Nauze, *Political Economy in Australia: Historical Studies* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1949); Stuart Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism. The Lost World of Three Victorian Visionaries* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1991), 147.
- <sup>iii</sup> Peter Groenewegen and Bruce McFarlane, *A History of Australian Economic Thought* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 52; Enzo Pesciarelli, 'W. E. Hearn on the industrial organization of society,' in *Industry, Space and Competition: The Contribution of Economists of the Past*, eds Michel Bellet and Corine L'Harmet (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1998), 157-73.
- <sup>iv</sup> R. W. Connell, 'Why Is Classical Theory Classical?' *American Journal of Sociology* 102 (1997), 1523.
- <sup>v</sup> J. A. La Nauze, 'Hearn, William Edward (1826-1888),' in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 4: 1851-1890, Section eds Bede Nairn, Geoffrey Searle, Russel Ward (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1972), 370.
- <sup>vi</sup> Alan Davies, 'Small Country Blues.' *Meanjin* 44 (1985), 243-252; see also Michael Crozier, 'A Problematic Discipline: The Identity of Australian Political Studies.' *Australian Journal of Political Science* 36 (2001), 7-26.
- <sup>vii</sup> Groenewegen and McFarlane, *A History of Australian Economic Thought*, 53-4.
- <sup>viii</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-6; see also Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism*, 147-8.
- <sup>ix</sup> Geoffrey Blainey, *A Centenary History of the University of Melbourne* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1957), 56-7.
- <sup>x</sup> Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism*, 147.
- <sup>xi</sup> La Nauze, 'Hearn, William Edward,' *ADB*, 371.
- <sup>xii</sup> See Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism*.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Blainey, *A Centenary History*, 59-63; John Tregenza, *Professor of Democracy: The Life of Charles Henry Pearson, Oxford Don and Australian Radical* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1968); Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism*, ch. 4; Gregory

Melleuish, *Cultural Liberalism in Australia: A Study in Intellectual and Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 35-38.

<sup>xiv</sup> University of Melbourne Council Minute Books (CMB) Vol. 16 (1912-3), 198-200, 212-5, 276, 289, 397-6; University of Melbourne Professorial Board Minutes (PB) 24/7/12, Vol. 9. University of Melbourne Archives (UMA).

<sup>xv</sup> Helen Bourke, 'Sociology and the Social Sciences in Australia, 1912-1928.' *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* 17 (1981), 26-35; Michael Crozier, 'Society Economised: T. R. Ashworth and the History of the Social Sciences in Australia.' *Australian Historical Studies* 33 (2002), 125-142; Tim Rowse, *Australian Liberalism and National Character* (Melbourne: Kibble Books, 1978).

<sup>xvi</sup> W. K. Hancock, *Country and Calling* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), 70.

<sup>xvii</sup> Bourke, 'Sociology and the Social Sciences in Australia', 30.

<sup>xviii</sup> Meredith Atkinson, ed., *National Efficiency* (Melbourne: Victorian Railways Printing, 1915); Atkinson, *The New Social Order* (Sydney: WEA, 1919); Atkinson, *The New Social Order*. 2nd edition. (Melbourne & London: Macmillan, 1920); Atkinson, ed., *Australia: Economic and Political Studies*. (Melbourne: A. H. Massina & Co., 1920).

<sup>xix</sup> Bourke, 'Sociology and the Social Sciences in Australia', 30.

<sup>xx</sup> Stuart Macintyre, "'Full of Hits and Misses": A reappraisal of Hancock's *Australia*,' in *Keith Hancock: The Legacies of an Historian*, ed. D. A. Dow (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001), 33.

<sup>xxi</sup> Paul Kelly, *The End of Certainty*. (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1992); see also Crozier, 'Society Economised', 17.

<sup>xxii</sup> Hancock, *Country and Calling*; R. Connell, 'Images of Australia.' *Quadrant* XII (1968), 9-19; Rowse, *Australian Liberalism*; Melleuish, *Cultural Liberalism in Australia*; Capling et al., *Australian Politics in the Global Era*. (Melbourne: Addison Wesley Longman, 1998); Macintyre, 'Full of Hits and Misses'.

<sup>xxiii</sup> W. M. Ball to Lloyd Churchward, 28 May 1971. Wm. Macmahon Ball Papers, National Library of Australia Manuscripts Section (NLA), MS 7851, Box 4.

<sup>xxiv</sup> W. M. Ball, 'W. Macmahon Ball,' in *More Memories of Melbourne University Life: Undergraduate Life in the Years since 1919*, ed. Hume Dow (Melbourne: Hutchinson, 1985), 1-15; Brian Fitzpatrick, 'Student Life: the Twenties. Giants in Those Days ...'

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*Melbourne University Magazine* (1961), Spring, 10-16; Kathleen Fitzpatrick, *Solid Bluestone Foundations: Memories of an Australian girlhood* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1983), 171; A. Hunt, 'Political Clubs in the University.' *Melbourne University Magazine* (1949), 54-56; Graeme Osborne, 'William Macmahon Ball: Making communication visible.' *Australian Journal of Communication* 24 (1997), 65-84; Betty Roland, *The Eye of the Beholder* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1984).

<sup>xxv</sup> W. M. Ball, *The Government and the Media*. The Arthur Norman Smith memorial lecture in journalism, 29 October 1975 (Melbourne: University of Melbourne, 1975), 2.

<sup>xxvi</sup> See Manning Clark, *The Quest for Grace* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1991), 22-25; B. A. Santamaria, *Against the Tide* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1981), 11-12; see also Lee Kersten, 'W. Macmahon Ball's report on the Sachsenhausen concentration camp,' in *Dachau and the Nazi Terror 1933-1945*, Vol. II Studies and Reports, ed. Wolfgang Benz and Barbara Distel (Dachau: Verlag Dachauer Hefte, 2002), 115-124.

<sup>xxvii</sup> W. M. Ball to Mr. S. Murray Smith, Editor, *Overland*, 16 October 1973. NLA MS 7851, temporary box 3.

<sup>xxviii</sup> See W. M. Ball, *Intermittent Diplomat. The Japan and Batavia Diaries of W. Macmahon Ball*. Edited and introduced by Alan Rix. (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1988); H. V. Evatt, *Foreign Policy of Australia: Speeches*. Introduction by W. Macmahon Ball. (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1945), introduction.

<sup>xxix</sup> See W. M. Ball, 'Australia in world affairs.' *Meanjin* 4 No. 1 (1945), 151-156; W. M. Ball, *Japan: Enemy or Ally?* (London: Cassell, 1948); W. M. Ball, *Nationalism and Communism in East Asia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1952).

<sup>xxx</sup> See Ball, *The Government and the Media*; K. S. Inglis, *This is the ABC: The Australian Broadcasting Commission 1932-1983* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1983), passim; Fay Woodhouse, *Anti Communism and Civil Liberties: The 1951 Communist Party Referendum Debate at The University of Melbourne* (Parkville: History of the University Unit, University of Melbourne, 1998).

<sup>xxxi</sup> Peter Ryan, *William Macmahon Ball: A Memoir* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1990).

<sup>xxxii</sup> W. G. Osmond, *Frederic Eggleston: An Intellectual in Australian Politics* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1985), 289-90; Rohan Rivett, *Australian Citizen: Hebert Brookes*

1867-1963 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1965), 171.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Osborne, 'William Macmahon Ball', 68.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> See Osborne, 'William Macmahon Ball', 68-69; Sol Encel, 'W. Macmahon Ball: A Political Grammarian,' paper presented to one-day symposium, *W. Macmahon Ball: Political Communicator and Diplomat* (University Melbourne, 3 October 2003).

<sup>xxxv</sup> Encel, 'W. Macmahon Ball: A Political Grammarian'.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Osborne, 'William Macmahon Ball', 68.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> CMB 13/11/11. UMA.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> T. M. Cherry, Faculty of Arts, University of Melbourne document, recommending the appointment of a tutor in MPI and Political Philosophy given the dramatic increase in students enrolling in these two subjects over the period 1932-1935, signed by Professor T.M. Cherry and dated 23 March 1935. NLA MS 7851, temporary box 6.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Cherry, NLA MS 7851; W. M. Ball to the Vice Chancellor, University of Melbourne, 20 March 1939. NLA MS 7851, temporary box 6.

<sup>xl</sup> Clark, *The Quest for Grace*, 23.

<sup>xli</sup> W. M. Ball to Lloyd Churchward, 28 May 1971. NLA MS 7851, Box 4. Emphasis in original.

<sup>xlii</sup> W. M. Ball to Mr. S. Murray Smith, Editor, *Overland*, 16 October 1973. NLA MS 7851, temporary box 3.

<sup>xliii</sup> CMB 3/4/36, Vol. 25a, 281; 6/12/37, Vol. 25, 144-5; PB 30/11/37, Vol. 14, 483-5. UMA; W. M. Ball to Dean of Arts, University of Melbourne, regarding the establishment of a School of Political Science, undated. NLA MS 7851, temporary box 6.

<sup>xliv</sup> CMB 4/3/40, Vol. 27, 5. UMA.

<sup>xlv</sup> CMB 18/3/40, Vol. 27, 199; 29/4/40, 223. UMA.

<sup>xlvi</sup> Richard Hall, *The Rhodes Scholar Spy* (Sydney: Random House, 1991); Clark, *The Quest for Grace*, 151-153; Phillip Deery, 'Cold War Victim or Rhodes Scholar Spy?' *Overland* 147 (1997), 9-12.

<sup>xlvii</sup> CMB 1/4/46, Vol. 33, 24. UMA.

<sup>xlviii</sup> The committee comprised the Chair of the Board, the Deans of Economic and Commerce, Arts, and Law, and took advice from Professor Gibson, Mr. Burton, Mr. Badger, Mr. Clark and Mr. Sawyer.

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<sup>xlix</sup> PB 13/8/46, Vol. 21, 343-4. UMA.

<sup>l</sup> CMB 21/12/46, Vol. 33, 315-8. UMA.

<sup>li</sup> Stephen Holt, 'Deconstructing Manning Clark: Was he meant to be an historian?' *National Library of Australia News* 5 (1995) No. 9, 15-18.

<sup>lii</sup> Lloyd Churchward, 'Archival Memories.' *Melbourne Journal of Politics* 4 (1971), 69-72; P. H. Partridge to Vice Chancellor, University of Melbourne, 28 May 1947. UMA: UM312, 47/825.

<sup>liii</sup> PB 21/9/48, Vol. 21, 339-40. UMA.

<sup>liv</sup> Ryan, *William Macmahon Ball*; Osmond, *Frederic Eggleston*, 251-2.

<sup>lv</sup> CMB 4/4/49, Vol. 36, C26. UMA.

<sup>lvi</sup> R. D. Marwick, 'Activist Academic: Lloyd Churchward as a Labour Intellectual.' *Labour History* 77 (1999), 27-43.

<sup>lvii</sup> Alan Davies, *Australian Democracy. An Introduction to the Political System* (Melbourne: Longman, 1971), 4; James Walter, 'Bureaucracy and Democracy in the American Century: A.F. Davies on Administration and the "Knowledgeable Society".' *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 58 (1999), 23-32.

<sup>lviii</sup> D. F. Miller, interview with the author, 29 March 2000.

<sup>lix</sup> James Jupp, '80 Years of Student Action.' *Melbourne University Magazine* (1962) Spring, 11-14.

<sup>lx</sup> Joan Rydon, interviews with author, 24 April, 1 May 1998; Joan Rydon and Murray Goot, guest editors, *Politics* 20 (1985) No. 2. Special issue marking the retirement of Henry Mayer from the Chair of Political Theory, University of Sydney.

<sup>lxi</sup> See for example: Letter from Mac Ball to Senator G.C. Hannan, dated 24 October 1960, explaining the pedagogy of the essay topic 'The DLP is the Catholic wing of the Liberal Party'. NLA MS 7851, Box 7, Folder R.