

# Labour and Anzac: Historical Reflections

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Thomas Hunter was a Broken Hill miner. In July 1916, having been wounded at Pozzières, he was travelling in a Red Cross train through Peterborough in England on his way to a hospital in Yorkshire when his attendants decided that he was too ill to continue. He died in a local infirmary. The death of “The Lonely Anzac”, as he soon became known, struck a local chord; here was a loyal Antipodean son of the Empire who had come halfway across the world to help the Mother Country. A recent biography of Hunter has as its sub-title *A True Son of Empire*.<sup>1</sup>

Hunter, in fact, was a recent emigrant to Australia, having arrived only in 1910. He had spent the first three decades of his life in a Durham village, working – like so many other men in Durham villages – as a miner. On enlistment in the First Australian Imperial Force (AIF), Hunter said he had no living relatives but in fact he had family, including a father, in England.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, the Mayor of Peterborough decided that this lonely Australian who had died so far from home should receive a civic funeral while local newspapers began a subscription for a memorial. Sufficient money was raised not only for a stone and Celtic cross to be laid at his grave, but also for a bronze plaque in Peterborough Cathedral where it remains to this day. The

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<sup>1</sup> John W. Harvey, *The Lonely Anzac: A True Son of Empire* (Bourne, Lincolnshire: Birches Publishing, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15.

“pathetic” fate of the Australian had evidently attracted much local sympathy. A poem composed in Hunter’s honour undoubtedly expressed the sentiments of many local people moved by his fate:

With British pride, in British soil,  
Amidst our own dear dead  
We laid him, freed from warrior’s toil,  
In a true warrior’s bed.  
His tomb, as long as it shall stand,  
Shall keep alive his worth,  
And link this spot of Motherland  
With those who sent him forth.<sup>3</sup>

Hunter has been recalled as an Empire man, an Australian and an Anzac. Every year now, there is a well-attended Anzac Day ceremony at his graveside in Peterborough. Yet Hunter was also a miner in both England and Australia, a working-class man. Like many other such working-class men and women in England, he had sought opportunities in a far-away British dominion; others, in the same period, travelled from Britain to South Africa where mining also provided many opportunities, others still to North America, or to New Zealand. Some travelled between dominions; several of the major trade union leaders of South Africa in the

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<sup>3</sup> *Peterborough Advertiser*, 22 December 1917, unpaginated. The poem, “To Australia”, was by A.G. Darley. For this poem and Hunter generally, see also Bruce Scates and Frank Bongiorno with Rebecca Wheatley and Laura James, “‘Such a great space of water between us’: Anzac Day in Britain, 1916–1939”, *Australian Historical Studies* 45, no. 2 (June 2014): 226-7.

early twentieth century had spent time in Australia, while the trans-Tasman movements of working-class people, in both directions, are increasingly well known.<sup>4</sup>

This working class was imperial and white. Sometimes it carried with it, across the globe, racist ideas developed in one place that were then transplanted to another. Yet it also carried with it ideas of international brotherhood and class solidarity that were as much a manifestation of the British Empire as drums and trumpets. Empire was about cloth caps as well as pith helmets.<sup>5</sup>

It was just this kind of working class – mainly white, mainly British, mixing native-born Australians with British and Irish migrants, many of them recent arrivals – who formed the bulk of the First AIF. We have long known that this was a predominantly working-class army, a product of Australian cities and towns despite the bush mythology with which C.E.W. Bean and others tried to imbue it.<sup>6</sup> Yet the language of Anzac is hardly ever a classed language. The values associated with Anzac are understood as *cross-class*, even as inimical to the dominant values of the labour movement and class-conscious workers. Anzacs were loyal to empire, the labour movement was nationalist. Anzac was about solidarity between all men irrespective of rank or status; class consciousness was foreign to its ethos. Anzac was a culture

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<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Hyslop, "The Imperial Working Class Makes Itself 'White': White Labourism in Britain, Australia, and South Africa Before the First World War", *Journal of Historical Sociology* 12, no. 4 (1999): 398-421; James Bennett, *'Rats and Revolutionaries': The Labour Movement in Australia and New Zealand 1890-1940* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> Neville Kirk, *Comrades and Cousins: Globalization, Workers and Labour Movements in Britain, the USA and Australia from the 1880s to 1914* (London: Merlin Press, 2003), esp. chs. 2 and 3 and *Labour and the Politics of Empire: Britain and Australia 1900 to the Present* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2011); Frank Bongiorno, *British to their Bootheels too: Britishness and Australian Radicalism*, 2006 Trevor Reese Memorial Lecture, Series Editors: Carl Bridge and Catherine Kevin (London: Menzies Centre for Australian Studies, King's College London, University of London, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> L.L. Robson, "The Origin and Character of the First A.I.F., 1914-18: Some Statistical Evidence", *Historical Studies* 15, no. 61 (October 1973): 738.

of enthusiastic voluntarism and rugged individualism; labour was about state compulsion and socialist collectivism – a strange juxtaposition in view of the conscription controversy, in which the labour movement championed voluntarism, but the impression has nonetheless persisted.<sup>7</sup> These are the fragments of belief that comprise a culture, and they invariably infuse political rhetoric, popular belief and historical writing. They can be challenged empirically, shown to be simplistic or even plain wrong, yet their mythological power is compelling. Even today, the Labor Party seems less comfortable with Anzackery than its political opponents. It is impossible to imagine a conservative Coalition government appointing one of its political opponents to lead the Australian War Memorial during the most important commemorative period in the nation's history, in the way that a Labor Government appointed the former Liberal Party federal leader, Brendan Nelson.

We now have a vast body of research on the many ways in which the AIF was an expression of the class which figured so largely in its ranks. Lloyd Robson's statistical work of the 1960s paved the way and it is also there, at least by implication, in the pioneering social history of Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years* (1974).<sup>8</sup> But it was perhaps in the work of British-born University of New England (UNE) historian, David Kent, that the issue was really tackled head-on for the first time. Kent made a study of *The Anzac Book*, edited by C.E.W. Bean and published in 1916.<sup>9</sup> His technique was to compare the material that made it into the published version with what had been rejected, and which lay unread in the archives of the

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<sup>7</sup> Nick Dyrenfurth, "Conscription is Not Abhorrent to Laborites and Socialists': Revisiting the Australian Labour Movement's Attitude towards Military Conscription during World War I", *Labour History*, no. 103 (November 2012): 145-64.

<sup>8</sup> Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1975 [1974]).

<sup>9</sup> D.A. Kent, "The Anzac Book and the Anzac Legend: C.E.W. Bean as Editor and Image-Maker", *Historical Studies* 21, no. 84 (April 1985): 376-90.

Australian War Memorial. It was an ingenious piece of research, an effort which following press coverage of its presentation at a conference, earned Kent a whopping file of hate-mail, a stream of abuse that only let up when Geoffrey Blainey's famous Warrnambool speech of 1984 on Asian immigration acted as a welcome distraction. "Sack the Bastard", one correspondent urged UNE, while another thought Kent "the vilest man alive".<sup>10</sup>

According to Kent, Bean was a highly selective editor, one who wanted to create a particular image of the Anzac. Bean rejected contributions to the *Anzac Book* which portrayed the rowdy behaviour of the Australian troops in Cairo. Soldiers' criticism of officers were kept within acceptable limits, and manuscripts which suggested that ordinary soldiers were forced to make greater sacrifices than officers were not published. On the other hand, said Kent, material which implied that the AIF was an egalitarian institution with no class differences appeared prominently in the *Anzac Book*. Kent's suggestion was that there was a gulf, on the one hand, between the customary behaviour, social identity and lived experience of the diggers themselves, and on the other, a more respectable Anzac legend which was largely the creation of elites.<sup>11</sup> It is a model that has been taken up since with great effect by scholars such as Graham Seal and Nathan Wise. Wise, for instance, has made a close study of the ways in which notions of entitlement and modes of protest – such as the strike – found their way into the AIF via the working-class men who comprised it.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> David Kent, "Sack the bastard!" – "David Kent, the vilest man alive", after-dinner speech, Second Trevena Conference, Mars and Minerva: Intellectuals and War in Australia and New Zealand, University of New England Armidale, 4-6 February 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Kent, "*The Anzac Book* and the Anzac Legend".

<sup>12</sup> Graham Seal, *Inventing Anzac: The Digger and National Mythology* (St Lucia and Perth: University of Queensland Press in Association with the API Network and Curtin University of Technology, 2004); Nathan Wise, "'In military parlance I suppose we were mutineers': Industrial Relations in the Australian Imperial Force during World War I", *Labour History*, no. 101 (November 2011): 161-76.

Meanwhile, Peter Stanley's award-winning *Bad Characters* (2010) wasn't so much a study of a few bad apples in a good barrel, but of the way a predominantly working-class army displayed something like the full range of behaviours that one would have expected, considering its pre-war roots and wartime experience. Stanley made the AIF more real and more human; I think he also made it more working-class. Alongside the respectable, there were the rough; in the AIF, as in any industrial suburb of an Australian city. There were teetotallers and boozers, honest men and thieves, lads who remained virgins as well as randy soldier-tourists and hardened venereal cases who had to be retrieved, metaphorically (and perhaps sometimes literally) kicking and screaming from the brothels of Cairo, Amiens and London, and the estaminets of northern France. There were rapists and murderers, as well as men who embodied in their lives an ideal of chivalry given new life by the war. There were men who remained "steadfast until death" – to borrow Bean's phrase – and others who tended to go missing from time to time when there were better things on offer than yet another stint among the mud, blood and stench of the Western Front.<sup>13</sup>

The official Anzac legend embodied a particular version of military manhood; the digger was a man who did not flinch. Yet, in the thick of battle, it was inevitable that some soldiers ran away and hid. In the Anzac legend, men laughed in the face of danger and joked about near escapes from death. If a digger was wounded, he supposedly accepted his fate without complaint, perhaps with a joke or a smile on his face, and he would try to return to the battlefield as soon as possible to join his

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<sup>13</sup> Peter Stanley, *Bad Characters: Sex, Crime, Mutiny, Murder and the Australian Imperial Force* (Millers Point: Pier 9, 2010); Alistair Thomson, "'Steadfast Until Death'? C.E.W. Bean and the Representation of Australian Military Manhood", *Australian Historical Studies* 23, no. 93 (October 1989): 462-78.

mates.<sup>14</sup> The classical roots of these ideas are apparent. In her study of non-fatal wounding in Homer's *Iliad*, Tamara Neal has shown that the epic's narrator reveals the worth of the Greek heroes by emphasising their greater capacity than the Trojans to endure wounding.<sup>15</sup> In other words, certain ways of presenting wounded warriors have been part of the heroic tradition since the time of Homer, and Great War journalists, thoroughly familiar with these tropes (and sometimes classically trained; in Bean's case, at Oxford), recycled them in writing about the Anzacs. The result was a warrior class that, in the telling, has seemed at times to have more in common with the world of Achilles and Agamemnon, Paris and Priam, than with either C.J. Dennis's city-bred scrappers or Henry Lawson's battling country folk.

There is certainly no shortage of evidence for the "rough" character of many Australian soldiers. Sexual ribaldry and misbehaviour were undoubtedly part of a "digger culture" that can be seen as a rough working-class version of Australian military manhood. Consider the testimony of Colonel A.G. Butler, a doctor who would later write the *Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services*. Writing to his wife late in 1914, he contrasted some German prisoners that his ship had picked up from the sinking of the *Emden* — "awfully decent chaps" — with the Australians, who were "filthy there is no other word for it — in their language their habits & their persons. ... The language is very foul often". On New Year's Day, 1915, he was thinking of "our little house & the sweet peas and roses", which he could only contrast with the "very masculine & rude sort of life here. The conversation —

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<sup>14</sup> The Anzac Legend is explored in: Peter Cochrane, *Simpson and the Donkey: The Making of a Legend* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1992) and Alistair Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>15</sup> Tamara Neal, "Blood and Hunger in the *Iliad*", *Classical Philology* 101, no. 1 (January 2006): 15-33.

language — thoughts &c are crude & elementary & are mostly of fighting & women and the work”.<sup>16</sup>

The process by which the experience of a class was translated, in history and myth, into the experience of a soldiery, nation and empire, has been a complex – and fundamentally political – process. One of the best studies we have of it is Peter Cochrane’s brilliant 1992 book – recently reissued – of *Simpson and the Donkey: The Making of a Legend*. As is well known, John Simpson Kirkpatrick, or the man with the donkey, was killed at Gallipoli on 19 May 1915. Simpson became famous for his brave exploits in rescuing wounded men, who were carried to the hospital on the back of his trusty donkey. He has come to represent all unsung heroes in war, a symbol of selfless devotion to duty. School children were taught that they should try to emulate him. The story of the man with the donkey became standard fare in the schools on Anzac Day each year. When in 2002 there was some polite questioning of whether sending into primary schools posters of the celebrated Gallipoli figures of Simpson and his Donkey was an effective way of promoting a sense of civic responsibility, Brendan Nelson, then Education Minister, declared: “[I]f people don't want to be Australians and they don't want to live by Australian values and understand them, well then they can basically clear off”.<sup>17</sup>

In the legend, Simpson is a typical Australian larrikin digger, sometimes a noble bushman turned soldier. Simpson, however, was born in England and had only been living in Australia since 1910 – just like Thomas Hunter, with whom I began this

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<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Frank Bongiorno, *The Sex Lives of Australians: A History* (Collingwood: Black Inc., 2012), 128.

<sup>17</sup> “Teach Australian values or ‘clear off’, says Nelson”, ABC PM, Transcript, 24 August 2005 <<http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2005/s1445262.htm>> accessed 2 February 2013.



discussion. And there is not a hint in the Simpson legend of political radicalism. Between 1915 and 1917, the imperial patriots on the home front used the image of Simpson and the donkey to rally support for compulsory military service. Simpson, however, was a political radical, who supported trade unions and the Labor Party, expressed hostility to capitalists, liberals and the privileged classes in his letters to his mother, and declared that “[w]hat they want in England is a good revolution”.<sup>18</sup> School children have never been introduced to this Simpson, and Cochrane shows that such details were omitted from a 1965 biography produced by the conservative clergyman, Irving Benson, even though he drew on the same letters as Cochrane. They didn’t suit Benson’s patriotic purpose.

While he is not as well-known as Simpson, the so-called Last Anzac, Alec Campbell, suffered a similar fate, although in his case at the hands of John Howard and the culture wars of the early 2000s. Campbell was a boy soldier – just sixteen when he enlisted – and his fame is derived from his recognition as the last Australian Gallipoli veteran. On 16 May 2002, Campbell died in Hobart. At his state funeral, John Howard referred to “the respect we feel and the debt we owe to the Grand Old Man and those he came to represent”. “Within this one life”, said Howard, “are illustrated the living values that transformed Australia”.<sup>19</sup>

Campbell was at Gallipoli for just six weeks; by way of contrast, he had spent much of his long life as a radical socialist. Largely self-educated, he was an active unionist and for a time president of the Tasmanian branch of the Australian Railways Union and the Launceston Trades Hall. According to one friend, “the thought of voting

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<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Cochrane, *Simpson*, 18.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Humphrey McQueen, *Social Sketches of Australia* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2004), 376.

anything else but Labor would have made Alec choke on his potatoes”.<sup>20</sup> A good boxer, he was also – reports Humphrey McQueen – “an unofficial bodyguard” to communist-sympathising Labor senator, Bill Morrow.<sup>21</sup> Campbell opposed the Vietnam War and in 1999 voted for the Republic. John Howard despised almost everything that Campbell stood for, yet his funeral was an opportunity to pretend that Campbell’s values were part of some broad consensus, rather than those of the dissident, the radical and the protester.

Much the same might be said of another Gallipoli veteran, Bert Facey. Facey’s *A Fortunate Life* is now an Australian classic; it’s hard to believe that it has only been with us for a little over three decades. When Australians have in recent years been surveyed about their favourite books by Australian authors, Facey’s invariably appears near the top of the list. The book tells the story of Bert’s youth as an illiterate working-class battler in the Western Australian bush; his brief time at Gallipoli where he was wounded; and his courageous struggle to support a family in the decades after the war. Jan Carter has suggested that “Facey is to secular twentieth-century Australia” what “John Bunyan was to Puritan seventeenth-century England”.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps so, but this “pilgrim” was a loyal unionist and tramways union official, and a Labor bloke. In his own way, he was as hostile to the conservatives as was Simpson. “The Government of the day”, he recalled of a Western Australian conservative regime, “was opposed to the worker in every way. It was called a National Party Government, the worst kind of Government a worker had to put up with. They were, in my view, complete dictators and there was nothing democratic about them”. Of the

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<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Jonathan King, *Gallipoli: Our Last Man Standing. The Extraordinary Life of Alex Campbell* (Milton: John Wiley & Sons, 2004), 140.

<sup>21</sup> McQueen, *Social Sketches*, 377.

<sup>22</sup> Jan Carter, “Afterword”, in A.B. Facey, *A Fortunate Life* (Penguin: Ringwood, 1985 [1981]), 325-6.

Liberal Party, he said, “they’d fight the working man all the way”.<sup>23</sup> The 2014 federal budget would not have surprised Bert Facey.

The stories of these men are familiar enough, but their class and labour movement dimensions figure less prominently than the military theme, which is assumed to be the defining moment in the lives of the men concerned. This is perhaps confirmation of a point made by many of those associated with the *Honest History* initiative, including the authors of *What’s Wrong with Anzac?*, Marilyn Lake, Henry Reynolds and their colleagues: that Anzac has come to displace other significant aspects of Australian history, to the detriment of a balanced understanding of the past.<sup>24</sup> The process, I’d suggest, has been a highly politicised one, in which the conservative side of politics has recognised that it is in a better position to gain from exploitation of the legend than its opponents. Even at the time when Bob Hawke led a pilgrimage of surviving Gallipoli veterans to Turkey for the 75th Anniversary, there appears to have been some concern within the ranks of the government about whether this would arouse hostility among Labor supporters who had opposed the Vietnam War and had belonged to a generation unsympathetic to military commemoration in general and Anzac Day in particular.<sup>25</sup> Interestingly, in his memoirs, Bob Hawke places his account of the pilgrimage at the end of a chapter on the Gulf War of 1990-91, as if one were comprehensible in light of the other. “As I looked back nearly a year later”, he explained, “Gallipoli and the Gulf merged in a swell of pride for my country and its people”.<sup>26</sup> Hawke was arguably more successful than any other Labor leader except John Curtin in identifying the ALP with “pride for my country”, whether the occasion

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<sup>23</sup> Facey, *Fortunate Life*, 289, 310.

<sup>24</sup> Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds with Mark McKenna and Joy Damousi, *What’s Wrong with Anzac? The Militarisation of Australian History* (Sydney: New South, 2010).

<sup>25</sup> Carolyn Holbrook, *Anzac: The Unauthorised Biography* (Sydney: New South, 2014 [forthcoming]).

<sup>26</sup> Bob Hawke, *The Hawke Memoirs* (Port Melbourne: Mandarin, 1996 [1994]), 527.

was a sporting or military triumph. Yet it is now widely accepted among historians that the increasing salience of “patriotism” and “loyalty” from the time of World War I weakened the Australian Labor Party and contributed significantly to the political right’s dominance of national politics from 1916.<sup>27</sup> Before the First World War, Labor’s blend of Australian nationalism, populism, class politics and empire loyalty had proved highly successful in building a base of electoral support sufficient to take Labor into government decades before similar parties enjoyed comparable success in other nations.<sup>28</sup> Yet after the war, Labor stagnated electorally and until the 1940s, it struggled to leave its imprint on national policy. The party’s bruising experience of the cold war of the 1950s (when it split), followed by its troubled engagement with the highly divisive Vietnam War issue – when it was again divided, as well as being punished with an electoral thumping in 1966 – combined to suggest to any Labor strategist with even a basic understanding of Australian history that matters of peace and war were particularly troublesome for the party. And in the 1970s and 1980s, the ALP and labour movement were increasingly influenced by the peace movement itself, as its divisive debate over uranium mining indicated well enough.<sup>29</sup>

There is a sense in which the Labor Split of 1916 and the divisions that opened up in the Labor Party, labour movement and Australian society during the First World War still provide an influential legacy for Australian politics. Labor’s uncertainty in the face of the reconfiguration of Australian national identity that occurred in the wake of the

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<sup>27</sup> Neville Kirk, “‘Australians for Australia’: The Right, the Labor Party and Contested Loyalties to Nation and Empire in Australia, 1917 to the Early 1930s”, *Labour History* 91 (November 2006): 95-111; James Curran, *Curtin’s Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), ch. 2.

<sup>28</sup> Nick Dyrenfurth, *Heroes and Villains: The Rise and Fall of the Early Australian Labor Party* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2011); John Hirst, *Labor’s Part in Australian History: A Lament* (Canberra: Pandanus Books in association with the History Program, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, 2006).

<sup>29</sup> Ashley Lavelle, “‘Conflicts of Loyalty’: The Australian Labor Party and Uranium Policy, 1976-82”, *Labour History*, no. 102 (May 2012): 177-196.

Gallipoli campaign seem to offer part of the explanation for the party's relative lack of electoral success since 1914 – relative, that is, to its political opponents, and to its own precociousness and promise as a young party before the First World War. Radical-nationalist historians have offered an influential account of this process, in which they see a loosening of the relationship of Australian nationalism and radicalism as a result of the war. For Geoffrey Serle, “in the period between the wars the digger legend was largely taken over by the conservative classes”, a conclusion endorsed by Russel Ward.<sup>30</sup> More recently, the highly successful exploitation of the Anzac legend by Prime Minister John Howard between 1996 and 2007 contributed to the impression that Anzac has been a largely conservative force in Australian politics, its version of sacrificial nationhood sitting uncomfortably with the ideology of the ALP.<sup>31</sup>

The story is not quite so simple, as the new collection *Labour and the Great War: The Australian Working Class and the Making of Anzac* shows. There is a notably rich history of contestation over the meaning of Anzac, in which the labour movement and working class frequently played a major part. For instance, Phillip Deery and I show that in the 1920s Labor governments in Victoria and Western Australia did contest militaristic nationalism, if rather equivocally, while incurring significant political costs in the effort to substitute an alternative understanding of Anzac promoting international peace. Each of these governments took steps to

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<sup>30</sup> Geoffrey Serle, “The Digger Tradition and Australian Nationalism”, *Meanjin Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (1965): 156; Russel Ward, *A Nation for a Continent: The History of Australia 1901-1975* (Richmond: Heinemann Educational Australia, 1977), 127. This process of appropriation had already commenced during World War I.

<sup>31</sup> James Curran, *The Power of Speech: Australian Prime Ministers Defining the National Image* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2004), 242-3 and Judith Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class: From Alfred Deakin to John Howard*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 204.

prevent what it feared was the propagation in state schools of jingoism on Anzac Day by returned soldiers. Yet these two state governments' engagement with Anzac placed them in a defensive posture in which their patriotism and loyalty were subject to regular interrogation by conservative political forces.<sup>32</sup> During a meeting in Perth at which Prime Minister Stanley Melbourne Bruce was present in 1925, Major-General Sir Talbot Hobbs claimed that the real motivation of the Labor Party in prohibiting returned men from addressing students was a lack of patriotism and an unwillingness to honour the war dead: "what was objected to was not the visiting of the schools, but the attempt to honour the fallen that such visiting represented".<sup>33</sup> As Deery and I comment in that study, "The desire for peace and support for the work of the League of Nations during the 1920s, which might have been thought a likely benefit to Labor governments attracted to ideas of arbitration and collective security, in reality offered few compensations in the face of the resurgence of imperial patriotism between the wars".<sup>34</sup>

The labour movement and working-class Australians have never allowed conservatives or the middle class to monopolise Anzac's meanings. Rather, Anzac has been a site for intense political debate and social division, as well as a focus of widely shared values. The latter point about consensus should not be overlooked. Martin Crotty and Craig Melrose have emphasised how the themes of triumphalism and sacrificialism, which figured so largely in early Anzac commemoration, represented "the basis of postwar commemorative accommodations, associations

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<sup>32</sup> Phillip Deery and Frank Bongiorno, "Labor, Loyalty and Peace: Two Anzac Controversies of the 1920s", in Frank Bongiorno, Raelene Frances and Bruce Scates (eds), *Labour and the Great War: the Australian Working Class and the Making of Anzac*, a special issue of *Labour History*, no. 106 (May 2014): 205-28.

<sup>33</sup> *Western Mail*, 19 March 1925, 26, quoted *ibid.*, 224.

<sup>34</sup> Deery and Bongiorno, "Labor, Loyalty and Peace", 207.

and alliances between returned soldiers, the bereaved, politicians and religious leaders”.<sup>35</sup> This included Labor politicians such as T.J. Ryan in Queensland. Yet further to the left between the two wars, there was some recognition that the language of sacrifice was a successful vehicle for transmitting conservative political values, and far more successful than a more straightforward celebration of militaristic nationalism would have been. In Melbourne during the 1930s, the Movement against War and Fascism used Anzac Day as an occasion to disseminate its anti-war message. Meanwhile, the communist press bemoaned the “imperial boasting and military boosting” of Anzac Day, criticising its role in preparing a new generation of Anzacs ready for another war.<sup>36</sup>

Anzac was in this way an arena of contestation and an occasion for protest – as it remains – but it also embodied a significant level of consensus that helps explain its growing power as myth during the interwar years, as well as prefiguring Anzac’s ascendancy in Australian culture today.

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<sup>35</sup> Martin Crotty and Craig Melrose, “Anzac Day, Brisbane, Australia: Triumphalism, Mourning and Politics in Interwar Commemoration”, *Round Table* 96, no. 393 (December 2007): 681.

<sup>36</sup> Kyla Cassells, “Politics and Meaning: Melbourne’s Eight Hours Day and Anzac Day, 1928-1935”, *Marxist Interventions* 2 (2010): 95-106. The quotation, which is from *Workers’ Weekly*, 27 April 1928, 2, is at 103.