

## Frederick Watson Fellowship Paper

### **Paul Hasluck: An intellectual in Australian politics**

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It is not an oxymoron to speak of Australian intellectuals, and it is not a paradox to speak of Australian intellectuals in politics. Admittedly in the present federal parliament only Kim Beazley springs to mind as an example, but in the past there has been a respectable rollcall from both sides in politics: Barton, Deakin, Menzies, Evatt, Hasluck, Whitlam: and this list is not exhaustive. Among these figures, however, a further distinction can be made between those who were intellectuals in the sense of being widely read individuals of broad cultural sympathies who were at the same time pragmatic and instrumental in their approach to policymaking – and I'd tend to put Barton, Menzies, Evatt and Whitlam in that category – and those who used their intellectual resources more systematically in public life. Deakin's contribution to Australian policymaking a hundred years ago – the use of a federated polity as an instrument for promoting innovative measures of social welfare, the White Australia policy, the concern for national defence – integrates his reading of such exemplars as CH Pearson and James Bryce. I want to investigate whether Paul Hasluck was another. That he was an individual of wide reading and broad cultural sympathies is unquestionable. I would like you to accompany me in looking a little more closely at his intellectual cargo and in deciding whether his voyage through Australian public life between 1941 and 1974 was determined by the nature of this cargo.

We'll begin by outlining his biography. Paul Hasluck was born in Fremantle in 1905, the second son of Salvation Army officers. Although not well off the family had very respectable English social and intellectual connections (curiously similar to those of Dr HV Evatt) and encouraged the aspirations of the cleverest of their children. When Captain Hasluck was sent to attend an international congress of the Salvation Army in London in 1914 and could take one member of the family with him, the parents chose the nine-year-old Paul. He won a scholarship to Perth Modern School, that dedicated ladder of opportunity for bright

Western Australian youngsters, and was there from 1918 to 1922, one year ahead of 'Nugget' Coombs. He became a journalist on the leading Perth daily, the *West Australian*, and worked for them until 1940. This is the period of life described in the most beguiling of all his autobiographical writings, *Mucking About*. During that time he made a name as a drama critic and wrote poetry, but his main intellectual interest lay in history. At the age of 21 he was caught up in the formation of the [Royal] Western Australian Historical Society, becoming its assistant secretary with the specific task of interviewing elderly pioneers who might have stories to tell of the 19th century colonial past. Using his Pitman's shorthand he assembled a collection of uniquely valuable oral histories, which were lodged with the State Record Office of Western Australia in 1993 and constitute a major resource for that State's history.

His interest in history led him to undertake a part-time degree at the University of Western Australia, and this had three important consequences for him. First, he met and in 1932 married Alexandra Darker, who shared his interest in history and was to become a significant historian in her own right. Secondly, he was taught by Fred Alexander, and I shall say more of this influence in a moment. Thirdly, he came to shift the focus of his intended research. After the publication of Dr James Sykes Batty's magisterial *History of Western Australia* in 1924 there had seemed to be only one substantial topic for a historian working in Perth to tackle, and that was the biography of the local hero, John Forrest, who had died in 1918. Hasluck collected material for this project and wrote the first chapter, which was published many years later. But in 1934, as a reporter, he accompanied an experienced magistrate, Henry Doyle Moseley, who had been appointed as royal commissioner to inquire into and report upon Aboriginal policy in Western Australia.

It is worth noting here that Hasluck's first sustained encounter with Aborigines had occurred during his youth. His parents had charge of a boys home at Collie, in the rural south-west of Western Australia. Its work force included 'Black Paddy', a Nyoongar who sometimes acted as a blacktracker, had become a Christian, and who was remembered many years later, in the condescending phraseology of that era, as being 'as good as a white man'. In these years the young Hasluck may have first formed the idea, not then widely shared, that Aborigines could be as good as white people. The boys home might also have led him to believe that neglected children could sometimes be best served by institutionalised care. As an adult his experiences with the Moseley Commission reinforced his opinion that the existing policies of segregation were not good enough, and he became one of a handful of Perth citizens active in movements for Aboriginal advancement. He could never have guessed that a time would come when some Australians would vilify him as an advocate of genocide.

When the time came for him to embark on postgraduate work he chose as his topic the relations between colonists and Aborigines in 19th century Western

Australia, and this formed the basis of his first major book, *Black Australians*. It was the first study of its kind anywhere in Australia, and showed how Aborigines had been marginalised until their status in society resembled, in Hasluck's words, that of a 'born idiot'. Unfortunately it was published in 1942 at a time when the attention of Australians was concentrated on the Pacific War, and its impact was diminished for the time being.

Hasluck's university studies fed an interest in international relations already stimulated by his work on the foreign affairs desk of the *West Australian*. Alexander's strong suit was modern European history, and in the twenty years between the Treaty of Versailles and the outbreak of the Second World War, this meant a strong dose of diplomatic history. With the catastrophe of the First World War still vivid, attention was paid to the peacemaking processes at the Congress of Vienna following the overthrow of Napoleon and at Versailles. Both episodes strongly reinforced the concept of the balance of power as a cardinal principle of diplomacy. In the years following Waterloo, Castlereagh and Canning, Britain's foreign secretaries, had deliberately thrown in their lot with France to create a countervailing power in Europe against the monarchies of Russia, Prussia and Austria. In the years following Versailles it was easy to blame the outbreak of the First World War on too slavish an adherence to the balance of power factor. Faith was placed in the League of Nations; Alexander himself had been a member of the Australian delegation in 1932 and Hasluck attended some of the sittings. By then the rise of the dictators was showing that Western democracies had been insufficiently attentive to the balance of power. Hasluck's reading and observation led him to a realist view of international relations. Cooperation between nations should be encouraged, with the overriding objective of avoiding war, but it was unwise to overlook for one moment the ever-present force of national self-interest.

The reading that Hasluck had absorbed under Alexander's tuition and beyond stood him in good stead when, at the beginning of 1941, through the combined influence of John Curtin and Fred Alexander, he was recruited into the fledgling Department of External Affairs. Accompanied by his wife and infant son he came to wartime Canberra, and is still remembered in local folklore for overcoming the inconveniences of petrol rationing by riding to work on a horse. On Saturdays the same horse sometimes did duty between the shafts of a sulky bringing the weekend's supply of beer from Queanbeyan. The Haslucks' first impressions of wartime Canberra were not favourable. He wrote to Henrietta Drake-Brockman:

There are no Australians in this hole - no-one who is proudly and vehemently Australian and keenly aware of Australia and interested in every part of it. The people here are clever enough at their jobs, I suppose, but as a people they are denatured. This place annoys me. The best that can be said for it is that it is a completely sterile and safe cage in which public servants can work clearly without any major excitements to disturb their routine. One misses

the intellectual movement that there was in Perth ... Alix and I sometimes get relief by going over to Queanbeyan, seven miles away. It is just an Australian country town but it is real and vulgar and vital and has some sound reason for its existence ...

You chaffed me about the public servants. Take away the specialists and professional men (say five per cent of the whole) and the public servant is really worse than any one could have imagined him to be. Lovable and engaging and even capable in some instances, but so very small and tidy and wrapped up in regulations. In a newspaper office the only questioning arises when it is being decided whether a certain objective is really wanted. That point settled, we go ahead and get it. In the service they never seem to make up their minds what they want, and that state of affairs causes them scarcely any worry. I am sure that if a public servant got into heaven by the wrong ladder he would nurse a grievance against the archangels instead of joining them in tennis matches or poker schools or whatever it is that archangels do up above on sunny days.

Already we recognise the judgmental tone leavened by humour, the aphoristic style, and the critical assessment of civil servants.

Except for the first nine months of his time at the Department of External Affairs Hasluck worked under Dr HV Evatt as minister until Hasluck's resignation at the end of March 1947. This covered the period of the Australia–New Zealand treaty of 1944, the San Francisco conference in 1945, which led to the formation of the United Nations, and the first fifteen months of its establishment at New York. Hasluck's account of this period, *Diplomatic Witness*, is full and accurate, and I shall paraphrase it only to draw from it his comments on that other intellectual in politics, Evatt. At the most obvious level Hasluck found difficulty with Evatt's working habits: his untidiness, his lack of system in recordkeeping, his playing of favourites, his habit of concentrating obsessively on one issue at a time. There is one file in the National Archives of haphazardly miscellaneous material, which has been entitled: 'Dr Evatt's method of filing'. Hasluck's reaction against this may be observed in his own later style as a minister. All the same, he recognised and respected the quickness and energy of Evatt's intellect, and could not refrain from admiring the pertinacity with which he fought the cause of the smaller nations at the San Francisco conference.

Hasluck's philosophical differences with Evatt arose from their concepts of international affairs. In Hasluck's perception Evatt had shown very little interest in foreign policy before his appointment to the portfolio in October 1941, and he tended to approach the creation of the United Nations from the viewpoint of a constitutional lawyer. Evatt, Hasluck thought, wished to see 'a new province for law and order' where under a system of 'one nation one vote' the smaller powers would be able to restrain the great. He seemed in Hasluck's view, to take it for granted that the smaller powers would show

less selfishness in their policies, or rather that their self-interest would make them want to elude the domination of either the United States and Britain on the one side or the Soviet Union on the other. Evatt saw Australia as actively leading the shaping of a third force acting as a curb on the two blocs emerging as the war ended. Hasluck could not share this vision. Although far from uncritical of either the United States or Britain, he considered that the realities of power politics prevented Australia from drifting too far from their orbit.

Hasluck's decision to quit the Department of External Affairs in 1947 no doubt reflected some of these ideological differences, but there were a number of personal factors. One may have been fatigue and a sense of lack of appreciation. He had been working prodigiously hard at a high level at the United Nations, but his status was only that of a counsellor, and when he left the department described him as 'a temporary clerk'. He and his wife wanted to bring up their two young sons in Australia, and when the Secretary-General offered him the post of United Nations representative in London with responsibility for most of Europe, he turned down the offer. For a biographer, there is also surely some relevance in the fact that, while in the department, Hasluck had formed friendships with first John Burton and then Ian Milner, only for a rift to arise in each case. He came to see Burton as too much Evatt's pet, and when at the age of thirty Burton was appointed secretary to the department, leapfrogging seniors such as Hasluck and Alan Watt, it was the trigger for his resignation. Further to the left than Burton, Milner defected to the Soviet bloc. Disenchantment with these friendships may well have fostered disenchantment with the left wing in Hasluck, though he never entirely lost his small 'l' liberalism. This sometimes caused disagreement with his wife Alexandra, who was a more outspoken upholder of conservative positions.

On his return to Australia it might have been expected that, like Macmahon Ball, Hasluck would find his future at a university. He was commissioned to write the two volumes on the home front in the official history of Australia in the Second World War, and at the beginning of 1948 took up a readership in Alexander's department at the University of Western Australia. A few months later he took part in a conference at the Australian National University on the future of archival policy in Australia. In his first years at External Affairs Hasluck had been the departmental representative when, at almost the darkest moment of the Pacific War in mid-1942, with remarkable faith for the future, John Curtin had convened a meeting chaired by Dr Charles Bean to make arrangements for the preservation of wartime archives. Drawing on this experience Hasluck wrote a seminal paper providing the basis for much of the planning on which the present National Archives was founded. It might have seemed that he was soon destined for a chair in history and/or politics, although it would have been outside Western Australia. Instead, he was tempted into standing as the Liberal candidate for the newly formed House of Representatives seat of Curtin at the federal elections of December 1949. At this election the Menzies government was swept into its long tenure of power. Hasluck was returned for what became an increasingly safe Liberal seat, and

the shape of his career was settled. He made a good impression, and at the first Cabinet reshuffle in May 1951 Menzies appointed him Minister for Territories, where he was to remain for twelve-and-a-half-years.

His background as a historian with an interest in archives was to have considerable significance for his performance as a Cabinet minister. As a minister Hasluck insisted that: 'The purpose of keeping archives is to meet the needs of administration. The use of archives for historical research is incidental to that main purpose'. This suggests that their interest to posterity and the historian was at all times a secondary consideration. I doubt if he practised what he preached. Within a few weeks of attaining ministerial office he was already perfecting the art of the crisp and telling ministerial minute annotated at the end of a file, sometimes to praise, more often to exhort and upbraid. I quote two examples among many: 'This memorandum is just a page of excuses to cover twelve months of duck-shoving'; or, on a stocktaking report from Government House, Nauru: 'This is admirable. I know of no other institution that has come under my notice in the past ten years where the wastage has been as small as one cake fork a year. Most of them seem to lose three or four refrigerators and a truckload of furniture'. I find it impossible to imagine that Hasluck, with his historian's training and his intimate knowledge of the value of archives as source material, could ever completely expel from his mind the image of a future historian looking over his shoulder as he wrote. This makes him unusually hard to evaluate, as his comments, whether spontaneous or well considered, could be seen as designed both for the moment and for the eye of posterity.

I speculate that Hasluck resolved this problem in his own mind by striving for consistent standards of bureaucratic impersonality, so that he expected his minutes to be read as a record of administrative process rather than as fodder for a biographer. I'll have more to say about his style of administrative process a little later, but it must be repeated that he was reacting against Evatt's muddled and personalised methods, and expected public business to be conducted through well defined hierarchies with well defined boundaries. He was too good a wordsmith to eradicate the personal touch completely from his minutes and memoranda, but he wanted these documents to express the ideas of the person who happened to be minister and not those of Paul Hasluck the individual with ambitions and prejudices. All the same, as a historian he was not unmindful of his debt to posterity, and as he continued in ministerial office he began increasingly to make another form of payment.

Among his intellectual baggage Hasluck included a lifelong love of French literature, especially the literature of the 17th and 18th centuries. There is a story related of him that on one occasion during a ministerial tour of Papua New Guinea his party arrived at an airstrip where they found a woman and child in need of urgent medical treatment. There was insufficient room on the aircraft to accommodate them, so Hasluck proposed that he should stay behind while the woman and child were flown to hospital. When the aircraft returned it was to find the minister placidly sitting in the jungle clearing

reading a drama by Racine. A writer for whom Hasluck had a particular relish was the duc de Saint-Simon, who never quite achieved his ambitions at the court of Louis XIV and who contented himself by writing memoirs containing acute and acerbic pen portraits of his fellow courtiers. At some time in the 1950s Hasluck began the habit of writing candid pen-portraits of his cabinet colleagues, usually of not more than a page or two in length. As the years went on he sometimes updated them in the light of evolving events, and extended his range to include prominent public figures in the Opposition and elsewhere. Even before he knew how his own career would end, he was training himself to become the Saint-Simon of 20th century Australian politics. Nor did he confine himself to pen portraits. A proficient if untrained artist, he sometimes amused himself during Cabinet meetings by sketching one or other of his colleagues. Two such portraits from 1959, one of Harold Holt and one of William McMahon, may be found in the National Archives at A2668.

When Hasluck took office as Minister for Territories in 1951 his responsibilities included the newly united Territory of Papua New Guinea, the Northern Territory, Nauru and Norfolk Island. From his university studies he had gained knowledge of British experiments in the creation of legislatures in Asian and African colonies, and he was well aware of the problems involved in securing an appropriate balance of ethnic representation, as well as the tendency for indigenous politics to fall into the hands of a comparative minority of the urban and the well educated. There was also the issue of timing: how long could it be expected to take before the white colonists gradually yielded power to an indigenous majority, and what would happen in those colonies where a significant number of colonists had been allowed to acquire land and settle permanently? British history books taught that the Romans in Britain had taken more than three hundred years to advance the aboriginal inhabitants of what is now England from savages who painted themselves with blue woad and burned their enemies in wicker cages to presentable facsimiles of Roman citizenship. It was hard to grasp that Africans and Pacific Islanders might not require so long an apprenticeship. But Hasluck also had the advantage of his time at the United Nations when issues of colonialism and the concept of trusteeship had been well to the fore, and this experience was also to shape his thinking.

He began by consulting widely. His old schoolmate 'Nugget' Coombs told him that it would not be necessary to maintain a separate administration at Port Moresby as air travel had improved accessibility to the point where Papua New Guinea could conveniently be run from Canberra. Hasluck replied: 'Even although public affairs might be run more efficiently, residents in Darwin or Moresby would certainly have a different feeling to an administration centred on Canberra than ... centred on their own town', and added: 'The difficulty in which I find myself in approaching this task is that we have to keep the old machine running at the same time as we are trying to plan changes, and a great number of the parts of the machine seem to be held together with rather odd looking pieces of metal'. He asked that Britain might

send out a senior officer from the Commonwealth Relations Office or the Colonial Office to advise on lines of development for Papua New Guinea, but the British could not immediately spare anyone, and he was soon ready to rely on Australian resources. In choosing his senior advisers Hasluck had some flexibility, since it was the first time that the Department of Territories had a minister of its own. In earlier years it had formed part of a Department of Home and Territories, and in the first eighteen months of the Menzies government it shared its minister, Percy Spender, with the Department of External Affairs. Hasluck was not backward in discarding the inheritances from the past and staffing senior positions with his own men.

The three key positions under Hasluck were the Secretary of the Department of Territories and the Administrators of the Northern Territory and Papua New Guinea. As Hasluck put it to Coombs: 'The sort of administration which may be best is a triangle from Canberra, Moresby, to Darwin with close and intimate relations and frequent consultation between the two Administrators and the Permanent Head of Department.' This did not mean that there would be no direct communication between Hasluck as minister and the two administrators, but it did imply that, unlike Evatt, the channels of communication would be consistent and formalised. The man who expected to fill the secretaryship was JR Halligan, whom Roger Thomson in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* describes as 'Happy' Halligan, experienced and likeable but 'an unimaginative bureaucrat who showed no evidence of having read the growing body of literature on colonial administration'. He was moved to become Australia's representative on the South Pacific Commission, and Hasluck brought in CR Lambert, Commonwealth Director of Regional Development, with a background in rural reconstruction in New South Wales. Hasluck believed Lambert to possess qualities which he himself lacked, and valued his professionalism, although he later wrote that he was never sure that Lambert really understood his long-term goals. It was as well that such a demanding minister as Hasluck was served by such an imperturbable old hand.

AR Driver, the Administrator of the Northern Territory since 1946, had indicated his wish to retire, and Hasluck did nothing to discourage him, as Driver was distracted by personal problems and was widely felt to have been slow in tackling the Territory's problems - though this may have been as much due to shortages of material and manpower as any fault of Driver's. In his place Hasluck attracted Frank Wise, a Labor ex-premier of Western Australia and still Leader of the Opposition, who combined proven experience of administrative and legislative management with a professional background in tropical agricultural science. The Administrator of Papua New Guinea, JK Murray, was also a respected agricultural scientist and, although he was thought to have sympathies with the Labor government who appointed him, Hasluck was at first disposed to keep him. However, he confirmed Spender's decision to appoint an assistant administrator and this post went to Donald Cleland. Cleland was suspect to some because he had been general secretary of the Liberal Party and was alleged to owe his

position to political favour. In fact he was chosen without ministerial interference over more than a hundred competitors by a selection committee made up of senior public servants. He had been in charge of ANGAU, the provisional authority administering Papua New Guinea during the later stages of the war, and in that capacity he had in fact been Murray's senior. After twelve months Hasluck decided to remove Murray, whom he considered too old for the job and too slow to implement policy. He was also critical of a reluctance in Murray to communicate freely or to bring forward issues needing Canberra's attention. Cleland replaced him and remained at Port Moresby until 1966.

Foremost among his long-term goals for the Territory of Papua New Guinea Hasluck put the forging of a sense of unity between its diverse peoples; some might call it a form of assimilation. At the beginning of his term of office he wrote: '

The basic problem of all our work in New Guinea from this time onwards is a problem of race relations. It is a problem of finding a way in which two peoples at different but slowly converging standards of living and cultural habit can live in harmony with each other and with respect for each other's rights and each other's dignity and self-respect.

Twelve years later he still believed there was a long way to go, but his focus was entirely on the indigenous people.

They are not yet a people with a common language, a common religion, a common history or a common ambition ... Instead, there are ancient enmities and many barriers between them.

But the pressures from the United Nations and elsewhere for accelerated progress towards self-government were already mounting, and Hasluck's last years in office involved a constant balancing act of fostering self-government at a pace fast enough to satisfy the critics but deliberate enough to consolidate political growth. In the process started by Hasluck, Australia must have got something right, as after nearly thirty years of independence Papua New Guinea is one of the relatively few formerly colonial nations with a functional parliamentary system with a convincing Government and a convincing Opposition.

Admittedly its parties and factions remind one more of 18th century England than Australia's tightly disciplined and docile caucuses.

Short-term goals included the extension of effective government throughout the Territory, the provision of health and welfare, the encouragement among the indigenous people of commercial agriculture and a curb on the alienation of land to European investors, and the introduction of widespread primary, and subsequently secondary education. This required building up an efficient and dedicated public service, which would work in close empathy with the indigenous population. Several times Hasluck remarked that 'we are not fully

informed of what is happening among the indigenous population', and in 1958 commented to Cleland:

You may remember that when we last toured the Highlands together, I remarked that one consequence of improved transport was that in many areas the distance between the European officer and the native inhabitant had increased, the European being the person who rode in the vehicle and the native being the person who walked, whereas at an earlier period they were all on foot together.

Hasluck often fretted about such things as the effect of media misrepresentation or gossip on public perceptions in Papua New Guinea. His most frequent complaint lamented the slowness of progress in a tropical environment, and he tended to vent his impatience on Cleland. On one occasion when Cleland incautiously mentioned that Hasluck had expressed dissatisfaction and asked for details, Hasluck replied with a letter including a tremendous paragraph consisting of a single sentence, half a page in length and absolutely grammatical, listing sixteen separate shortcomings, and concluding:

I appreciate that there are many difficulties in the way and that you suffer from many handicaps in the non-availability of material both human and inanimate. My criticisms are always made against a standard of perfection.

The partnership endured nevertheless, and when Hasluck finally left the Department of Territories after twelve and a half years Cleland wrote him a letter of appreciation in terms of more than conventional warmth:

I probably know, more than others, just how much you have given to the territories in all aspects of your work, and what has taken place in the last 12 years must stand to your everlasting credit.

My impression is that Hasluck rode the successive Administrators of the Northern Territory less hard, perhaps because they seemed more obviously to be producing the desired results. Wise was succeeded in 1956 by a career civil servant JC Archer, known as 'Cautious Clarrie', and in 1961 Roger Nott, a member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly, accepted the position. Cynics remarked that he had been offered the job in order to give the Country Party a chance of winning his seat at a by-election- though this did not happen - and Darwin remembers him as the least effective of the three. 'Wise was wise', went a Territory proverb, 'and Nott was not'.

Under Frank Wise the reconstruction of Darwin went ahead and Hasluck urged a high priority for urban planning. When the discovery of uranium at Rum Jungle called for the creation of the town of Batchelor, he wrote:

I particularly want to ensure that the town, however large or however small, should be planned and developed in a way that will set a higher standard for the Territory. Here is a chance for us to tackle the social problem of living in the tropics because at last

we have what looks like a solid economic foundation as well as a national interest in building good homes and providing good facilities.

Seven years later he wrote to Archer, approving a town plan for Darwin, and commenting:

It is hard to see where anyone has planted a tree on public property in the past five years ... We ought to try to make this the most beautiful tropical town in Australia.

He was no less concerned for the preservation of heritage sites, such as the Old Telegraph Station at Alice Springs, and the creation of reserves at sites such as Ayers Rock (Uluru).

Hasluck's Aboriginal policies were regarded at the time as the most enlightened in Australia, setting an example to more laggardly state governments. A few months after becoming minister, he wrote to RS Leydin, Assistant Administrator for the Northern Territory: '

Assimilation is the objective of native welfare measures. This means that the aborigines and persons of mixed blood are expected eventually to attain to the same manner of living and to the same privileges of citizenship as white Australians and to live, if they choose to do so, as members of a single Australian community, observing the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs, hopes, and loyalties as other Australians.

Note the operative phrase: 'if they choose to do so'. It is not usually an option open to victims of genocide. In the same letter Hasluck made it plain to Leydin that under a policy of assimilation it was not necessary to take positive steps to break up traditional Aboriginal communities; on the contrary, as he put it:

... the policy of assimilation is the result of an observation that the breaking up of the tribes is actually taking place and that the movement of the coloured people away from the desert and the bush towards settlement is taking place inevitably.

It is fair to comment that Hasluck expected traditional society to decline through attrition. His attitude showed when in 1959 he described a situation in Alice Springs 'when a tribal group starts to disintegrate and the young men are being attracted more and more to white ways'. The old men brought in their *churingas* from a remote hiding place and asked an official, McCoy, to lock them in a safe:

From time to time the old men may come to him and ask if they can see and handle them again. Then he unlocks them and they may either satisfy themselves that they still exist or croon over them a little. Then they go back to the dog-infested ashes of their camps to mourn in loneliness the loss of a culture.

Not that Hasluck ignored attachment to country. In a 1954 minute about educational policy in the Northern Territory he wrote:

The reason for trying to establish schools on pastoral properties is the belief that for at least one generation ahead natives whose family and tribal life is already definitely linked with a particular pastoral property are likely to find their most happy and useful future if they remain on the stations instead of being attracted away either to missions, Government settlements, or towns.

As Tim Rowse has pointed out, Hasluck's policies were predicated on the assumption that the pastoral industry would continue to provide employment for North Australian Aborigines, and might be buttressed by other primary industries. In planning a forestry policy for the Northern Territory in 1955 he urged that:

a start might be made in declaring State forests in suitable parts of aboriginal reserves particularly in those parts where there is not sufficient employment for able-bodied natives. If such action were taken it would provide an immediate means of employment for mission natives ... It would also tend to build up over the years the basis of a future economic industry for the support of the higher social standards which such natives will attain in the next generation.

Hasluck could not have foreseen that, within a little more than a decade, the equal wages award and increasing mechanisation would decimate the employment of Aboriginal labour on the pastoral properties established on their country.

As in Papua New Guinea Hasluck's beliefs rested on the expectation that a nation was best served by a largely or entirely homogenous population. This was compatible with the prevailing view in the 1950s and 1960s that migrants would become wholly Australian within two generations. Such policies were explicable in an Australia aware of numerous examples of racial, ethnic and religious civil strife elsewhere in the world. Hasluck and his contemporaries overlooked the possibility that a sense of Aboriginal identity might not die out with the old men around their campfire's ashes. Aboriginal identity, modifying in a changing environment, adapting new concepts from other cultures, might survive tenaciously among Australians who for more than half a century had been excluded from participating in citizenship because the law defined them as Aborigines. Hasluck's own device of defining most Aborigines in the Northern Territory as 'wards', from which status they could be exempted when their circumstances permitted, was meant to downplay the racial factor in Aboriginal policy, but may in fact have perpetuated it. Unfortunately when critics began to draw attention to the potential defects in assimilation, Hasluck had invested so much intellectual and emotional energy in the policy that he could not listen. In December 1961 he wrote that more than any other group in Australia, it was the Communists who:

try to promote resistance to a policy of assimilation and try to maintain the racial identity of a separate aboriginal group. There are signs that their plausible arguments along these lines are having some effect among some soft-minded commentators who are certainly not communists themselves.

Hasluck was at risk of ossifying. More than a decade of constant hard work supervising every detail of his department from the creation of high policy to the meticulous proofreading of departmental publications had left him without the space to absorb new ideas or to recharge his intellectual batteries.

If I am right in this hypothesis, it would account for his performance when at last he moved from Territories to become at first Minister for Defence for four months and then, in April 1964, Minister for External Affairs. He was disappointed when he was not appointed to that portfolio in January 1960, when RG Casey retired and Robert Menzies decided to take it on himself, and still more in December 1961 when, in response to GEJ Barwick's importunities, Menzies gave him the job. I have not yet found out why Menzies passed over Hasluck. Perhaps he sensed that there would be problems for Hasluck in working with senior diplomats such as Arthur Tange, Alan Watt and Keith Waller who had been his equals as colleagues in the same department twenty years previously. It is true that in 1965 Tange, who in later life was critical of Hasluck, was removed from the permanent headship of External Affairs after eleven years in the office, but there are indications that this move was initiated by Barwick before Hasluck took office. Tange's successor, Plimsoll, who held the secretaryship for the remainder of Hasluck's term as minister, was also a skilled and experienced diplomat, though his working methods were surprisingly unmethodical.

Hasluck brought with him the routine that had worked satisfactorily in Territories, but they were not to serve him so well in External Affairs. Protected by a secretary of legendary efficiency, he preferred to conduct all business through his departmental head, in contrast to the more gregarious Barwick. This was feasible in Territories, and might have been feasible and desirable in External Affairs in Evatt's day, but the department was now too large and complex for this kind of regime. The minister toiled incessantly to master the files in the same degree of detail as in Territories: he packed as much as possible into demanding programs of overseas travel, but he had no space to take on new ideas or to reflect deeply about the ideas already in his thinking. Also he generated ill will within the department by what was perceived as an unwillingness to seek all the advice available. It is hard to resist Joan Beaumont's conclusion that in concentrating on bureaucratic process he crippled his own and the department's capacity for imaginative policy making.

At one of the darkest moments of the Cold War, in March 1951, Hasluck had defined two principles for British and Australian diplomacy: to maintain Australian alliances and to keep potential enemies apart. The first he thought was being achieved; the second was greatly complicated by the bridge between Europe and Asia represented by the ideology-driven Soviet Union.

By 1964 he was prepared to acknowledge that the Soviet Union and the West had arrived at a viable balance of power, but peace was now threatened by the rise of Mao Zedong's China. China he saw as implacable in seeking to expand its power across South-East Asia and perhaps beyond. He believed implicitly in the domino theory, and this was intelligible in the generation who had seen the spread of Nazi Germany across Europe. Yet it remains puzzling why so intelligent an observer as Hasluck seems to have accepted so completely the concept of China as uniquely menacing.

Of course he was not the only one. The concept was widespread in Washington. Only a few years previously that rising young historian Henry Kissinger published his study of post-Napoleonic Europe, *A World Restored*. In this book he argued that the nations who met at the Congress of Vienna grappled with the problem of containing France after twenty years of revolutionary and Napoleonic war. France, he argued, had behaved like a 'rogue nation', endangering the peace of Europe with unlimited territorial ambitions, being ideologically aggressive and untrustworthy about keeping treaties. It was only with the ideological change brought about by the restoration of the Bourbons that France could once more be safely admitted to the family of nations.

It would be easy for Kissinger's readers to jump to the analogy that China in the 1960s was another such 'rogue nation'. I don't know if Hasluck, with his earlier interest in the Congress of Vienna period, read Kissinger's book, but his conduct of Australian foreign policy would not have made it surprising.

True to his maxim of maintaining alliances, he steered Australia into faithful compliance with United States policy during the Vietnam War, though his attitude deserves nuance. It must be admitted that he was too ready to accept that North Vietnam was a satellite of China, and failed to take on board the rueful advice of the French foreign minister, Couve de Murville, that the Vietnamese were habitually resistant to Chinese domination. On the other hand I am unable to go all the way with Michael Sexton's argument in *War for the Asking*, which sees Hasluck as foremost among the Australian hawks pushing the United States into an escalated commitment in Vietnam. It is noticeable that in the film *The Fog of War*, Robert McNamara asserts that America had no allies – as if Australia did not exist. If Australia was pressing for escalated conflict, the United States Secretary of Defence never noticed. There is some evidence that in April 1965 when the Menzies government committed troops to Vietnam, Hasluck was among the minority urging caution. He conducted Australian policy prudently in the crisis over the Indonesian confrontation with Malaysia, ending in the decline of Soekarno and the destruction of the Indonesian Communist Party. He was less prominent than Menzies in the negotiations leading to the Rhodesian unilateral declaration of independence in November 1965. Vietnam remained the central issue during his term as minister. There is no written evidence that he experienced misgivings about Australia's role. It may be significant that although in retirement he wrote reflections on every other aspect of his public

career, he never published anything about his years as Minister for External Affairs.

I think he was ambivalent about leading his party and leading a government. He records that the idea was first put to him in 1964, after Barwick went to the High Court and some backbenchers doubted whether Harold Holt would make an adequate leader after Menzies retired. He gave three reasons for declining, in order of importance: first, he did not want the job; second, his wife was sure that he would do it badly; and third, it was no time to destabilise the Liberal Party. Ambition and a dislike of William McMahon nevertheless led him to contest the deputy leadership when Holt became prime minister in 1966. His first reaction after Holt's death in 1967 was to suggest that he should stand back while John Gorton competed for the leadership, and it is probable that it took the urging of Menzies to change his mind. He did nothing to lobby for support – maybe from a sense of propriety, maybe because of his own uncertainty, maybe because he knew that his wife was unhappy at the prospect of the Prime Minister's Lodge – and narrowly lost the ballot in the party room. He worked loyally enough with Gorton during his first year of office, and in later years liked it to be thought that it was he and three senior public servants, Frederick Wheeler, John Bunting and James Plimsoll, who were carrying much of the work of government. It does not seem that he was sorry to accept appointment as Governor-General, resigning from Parliament in February 1969 and taking office in April.

The consensus is that he filled the post well, and I would agree. He and his wife performed the ceremonial duties with dignity. He acted as confidant and mentor to John Gorton and a few of his senior colleagues, though not to William McMahon, whom he despised. On at least one occasion when Gorton, in July 1970, wanted to call out the Pacific Islands Regiment to quell a disturbance in Papua New Guinea he was an active force for restraint and conformity with constitutional propriety. When Gough Whitlam came to office in December 1972 they got on unexpectedly well. He cooperated in Whitlam's experiment during Labor's first fortnight in power of running the country with a two-man executive. The Whitlam government consisted entirely of members with no previous experience of ministerial office, and in its early months meetings of the executive council often took the form of an advanced seminar in government, with the Governor-General finding himself welcome in the congenial role of constitutional mentor. In 1974 Whitlam would have extended his term, but Hasluck declined because of his wife's health, and Sir John Kerr was appointed. Just as it was said that if Cleopatra's nose had been half an inch shorter the course of ancient history would have been different, so it might be said that the course of Australian political history might have been different but for Lady Hasluck's hips.

While Governor-General he recovered his vocation as a historian. He completed the two-volume history of 'The Government and the People' in the Official History of Australia During the Second World War. In retirement in Perth he wrote a number of valuable histories from the viewpoint of a

participant-observer: *Mucking About, Diplomatic Witness, A Time for Building, Shades of Darkness*. Arguably in the contemplative life of scholarship he found satisfactions that eluded him in the active world of politics. He continued to be productive until shortly before his death at the age of 87 in January 1993.

In this paper I have concentrated somewhat discursively on the theme of Paul Hasluck as an intellectual in politics, and yet there is so much more for a biographer to deal with. There is the man who wrote poetry and in so doing perhaps revealed more of himself than in any of his writings about his public career. There is the somewhat pedantic Hasluck, turning aside from matters of high policy to correct the grammar or the literary style of a public servant. There is the lover of music, both classical and jazz, who bought a piece of land in the Darling Range behind Perth and went there alone at weekends to play both at a satisfying fortissimo. Perhaps there is even a streak of the larrikin. Reg Marsh, who was Deputy Administrator of the Northern Territory in the early 1960s, tells the story of accompanying Hasluck to Katherine in 1960 for the unveiling of a centenary monument to the explorer, John McDouall Stuart. The ceremony took place, the speeches were made, the formal dinner followed, and then came a dance. At about 9.30 pm the minister could stand it no longer. He took off his jacket, elbowed the bongo drummer out of the way, and played the bongo drums with great skill and proficiency for the rest of the evening.

And finally there is the story of the old man who, sensing that he had not long to live, had himself driven to the Anglican Dean of Perth.

'Had he much experience of State funerals?' inquired Sir Paul. 'No', replied the Dean, 'not much. He was fairly new to the job, and his only attendance at a State funeral had been the Catholic archbishop, and he supposed that didn't count'. 'Well', said Sir Paul, 'he might have to take one soon', and precise instructions were given.

And so it was that after an impressive Anglican ritual at Perth's St George's Cathedral, as the coffin was borne down the aisle, four trombonists stood at the High Altar and played 'When the Saints Come Marching In'.

© 2004 Geoffrey Bolton. Professor Bolton is Chancellor of Murdoch University and an extensively published historian. He has undertaken visiting fellowships at Kent, Cambridge and Oxford universities. Geoffrey Bolton was the National Archives' 2003 Frederick Watson Fellow.

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