

## Australia First Movement

### Background

The Australia First Movement grew out of strong anti-British sentiment and vigorous Australian nationalism. Several elements fueled its creation, including the severity of the Great Depression and the imperialistic attitude of some prominent Britons living in Australia.

If the movement could be assigned forefathers they would include writer Percy Reginald Stephensen and William John Miles, a Sydney businessman. Over a six-year partnership they attracted the wholehearted opposition of the Labor left and the tolerance of the right due only to their strong anti-communism. The movement was attributed with a growing sympathy towards the German, Italian and Japanese governments.

The Australia First Movement existed for five months until its leaders and some of its members were secretly interned in March 1942. Their internment was based on the suspicion that the movement might attempt to provide help to Japanese invaders. [1] This led to a Commonwealth Commission of Inquiry headed by Mr. Justice Clyde which sat between 19 June 1944 and 17 May 1945.

Between 1936 and 1942 the movement published 16 volumes of a newsletter titled *The Publicist*. This publication stated that its aim was to 'arouse in Australians a positive feeling, a distinctive Australian patriotism of a thoroughly realistic kind'. Although *The Publicist* was regarded as dully repetitive, argumentative and sometimes childish, it featured prominently in the Commission of Inquiry – mostly due to its seemingly pro-Japanese stance, when Australians were living in fear of Japanese invasion. [2]

### Records dealing with the Australia First Movement

#### Commission of Inquiry into the Internment in 1942 of certain persons connected with the Australia First Movement Group (CA 945)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Transcript of evidence</u>	1944–45	A1107

## Commonwealth Investigation Service (CA 650)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Correspondence files of the Commonwealth Investigation Service</u>	1916–60	A8911
<u>Correspondence files</u>	1941–48	A373

## Investigation Branch, Central Office (CA 747)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Report of Commission of Inquiry into the detention of certain members of the Australia First Movement Group</u>	1945	A374, 1

## Security Service, Central Office (CA 660)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Press cuttings relating to Australia First internees</u>	1942–44	A375, NN

## Attorney-General's Department (CA 5)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Correspondence files, W (War) prefix</u>	1939–49	A472
<u>Special correspondence files</u>	1952–	A467

## Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (CA 1297)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Miscellaneous security files inherited by ASIO</u>	1916–	A6335
<u>Australia First Movement (The Publicist)</u>	1939–42	A6335, 3
<u>Microfilm copies of personal and subject files (A6119 &amp; A6122)</u>	1960–	A6126
<u>Australia First Movement – 'The Publicist'</u>	1940–46	A6126, 30

## Prime Minister's Department (CA 12)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Correspondence files</u>	1934–50	A461
<u>Correspondence files</u>	1939–47	A1608
<u>Australia First Movement part 1</u>	1941–49	A1608, S39/2/3
<u>Australia First Movement</u>	1946	A461, U327/1/4

## War Cabinet Secretariat (CA 1468)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>War Cabinet Minutes without Agenda files</u>	1939–46	A2676

<u>War Cabinet Minute nos 2067 and 2095 – Australia First Movement</u>	1942	A2676, 2067 and 2095
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### **Department of Defence [III], Central Office (CA 46)**

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>The Shedden Collection</u>	1937–71	A5954
<u>Australia First Movement</u>	1942–45	A5954, 431/10

### **Security Service, New South Wales (CA 946)**

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>General summary of the Australia First Inquiry</u>	1944	C419
<u>Transcripts of the Australia First Inquiry</u>	1944–45	C418
<u>Correspondence concerning the Australia First Inquiry</u>	1944–45	C421

### **The Hon. Sir Thomas Stuart Clyne (CP 265)**

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Personal notebooks of His Honour Judge TS Clyne</u>	1939–62	MP688/1

### **Records held at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra**

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Official History, 1939–45 War, Series 4 (Civil) Volumes I &amp; II: Records of Paul Hasluck</u>	1945–69	AWM68

## **Notes**

[1] For information about World War II internment please see:

- *Fact sheet 59 - World War II internee, alien and POW records held in Canberra*
- *Fact sheet 101 - World War II internee, alien and POW records held in Sydney*
- *Fact sheet 107 - World War II internee, alien and POW records held in Adelaide*

[2] Muirden, B, *The Puzzled Patriots – The Story of the Australia First Movement*, Melbourne University Press, Victoria, 1968.