

Survey of Literature on the First Parliament

Kay Walsh

The first parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia opened in Melbourne on 9 May 1901. The foundation parliamentarians, consisting of 36 senators and 75 members of the House of Representatives, sat in an inaugural session which ran until 10 October 1902, and a second session between 26 May and 22 October 1903.

This survey examines sources that deal with the formation and working of the first parliament, without venturing into the broad area of the long-term results of legislative and political issues which it addressed.

Bibliographies

The history of the federation movement in the second half of the nineteenth century has been a focus of research and has received detailed attention from bibliographers. The bibliography by L.F. Crisp in *The Later Australian Federation Movement, 1883-1901: Outline and Bibliography* (1979) remains an admirable summary of federation literature to the time of its publication. This work is now complemented by *Federation: the Guide to Records* (1998), a landmark work published by Australian Archives, which gathers details of archives and manuscripts in Australian repositories relating to federation and its aftermath. J.D. Holmes' typescript 'Bibliography of federation' in the National Library (ms 304), remains a valuable and under-used resource.

Historians, political scientists and biographers have generally examined the first parliament in the context of a broader study, and this is reflected in its bibliographic treatment. No bibliography has focused exclusively on the early parliament, although a number have included relevant material. These included J.J. Pettifer's 'Bibliography' in his 1981 edition of *House of Representatives Practice*, R.L. Cope's

'Parliament, parties and governments' in *Australians: a Guide to Sources* (1987), Robert Goehler's *The Parliament of Australia: a Bibliography* (1988), Albert Liboiron's *Federalism and Intergovernment Relations in Australia: a Bibliography* (1967) and Henry Mayer's large, diffuse work in two volumes, *ARGAP* (1976) and *ARGAP2* (1984). Relevant bibliographies of note in published histories are in L.F. Crisp's *Australian National Government* (1st published 1965) and F.K. Crowley's *A New History of Australia* (1974). Many of the histories listed below also contain bibliographies.

Parliamentary, political and legal histories

Gavin Souter has written two histories which deal comprehensively with the early years of the federal parliament: *Acts of Parliament: a Narrative History of the Senate and the House of Representatives* (1988) and *Lion and Kangaroo: the Initiation of Australia, 1901-1919* (1976). Geoffrey Sawer's *Australian Federal Politics and Law 1901-1929* (1956) examines each parliament from 1901 in terms of legislation, procedure and party politics. *Australia's Commonwealth Parliament 1901-1988*, edited by G.S. Reid and Martyn Forrester (1989) contains ten thematic essays on the Commonwealth parliament.

Some works by contemporary writers throw light on the work of the first parliament. Foremost among these is *Federated Australia* (1968), selections from Alfred Deakin's anonymous column in the *Morning Post* during the early years of federation. Henry Gyles Turner wrote *The First Decade of the Australian Commonwealth: a Chronicle of Contemporary Politics 1900-1910* (1911) and B.R. Wise *The Commonwealth of Australia* (1909). George Cockerill, an *Age* journalist, wrote anecdotes of early parliamentarians in *Scribblers and Statesmen* (1948). Some autobiographies of early federal parliamentarians are mentioned below.

The Handbook of Australian Government and Politics, 1890-1964 (1968) by Colin Hughes and Bruce Graham is a standard source for state and federal ministries and election results for Commonwealth and states for the period covered. *The Business of the Senate 1901-1906*, published by the Department of the Senate in 1999, provides a summary of matters dealt with by the Senate in that period. *Australian Senate Practice* (first published 1953; 7th and subsequent editions titled *Odgers' Australian Senate Practice*) and *House of Representatives Practice* (first published 1981) provide details of practice in both parliamentary houses back to federation. *A Federal Legislature: the Australian Commonwealth Parliament 1901-1980* by Joan Rydon contains analyses of federal elections and representation, and careers and social backgrounds of members of parliament from 1901. *The Biographical Handbook and Record of Elections for the Parliament of the Commonwealth*, first published by the Parliamentary Library in 1915, contains short political biographies of all federal parliamentarians up to that time, and summaries of voting in federal elections 1901-1914.

General histories of Australia deal with varying detail with the first years of the Commonwealth Parliament. Of these, W.K. Hancock's essay 'The Commonwealth 1900-1914' in the volume 'Australia' of the *Cambridge History of the British Empire* (vol. VII, Part 1, 1933) is a very lucid examination of the issues facing the first parliament. In the same volume, essays by W. Harrison Moore 'The constitution and its working' and F.W. Eggleston 'Australia and the Empire 1855-1921' are also

relevant. Other works providing some degree of detail include C.M.H. Clark *A History of Australia, vol v: the People Make the Laws, 1885-1915* (1981), F.K. Crowley (ed) *A New History of Australia* (1974, chapter 7), Gordon Greenwood, *Australia: a Social and Political History* (1955, chapter 10), John Molony, *The Penguin Bicentennial History of Australia* (1987), Ernest Scott, *A Short History of Australia* (1916), A.N. Smith, *Thirty Years: the Commonwealth of Australia 1901-1931* (1933) and Russell Ward, *A Nation for a Continent: a History of Australia 1901-1975* (1977).

Books on the Australian Constitution in the early years of its implementation include W.G. McMinn, *A Constitutional History of Australia* (1979), W.H. Moore, *The Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia* (second edition, 1910), and *The Legislative Powers of the Commonwealth and States of Australia* (1919), W.A. Wynes, *Legislative, Executive and Judicial Powers in Australia* (4th edition, 1970), and L. Zines, *The High Court and the Constitution* (4th edition, 1997). Although written before the first parliament sat, J. Quick and R.R. Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia* (1901) and Andrew Inglis Clark, *Studies in Australian Constitutional Law* (1901) are fundamental to an understanding of how the parliament was intended to function.

Facets of the work of the early parliament receive attention in a number of books with particular themes. Colin Hughes has published research dealing with Australian elections, including, with Bruce Graham, *Voting for the Australian House of Representatives, 1901-1964* (1974), and see also B.D. Graham 'The choice of voting methods in federal politics, 1902-1918' in Colin Hughes (ed) *Readings in Australian Government* (1966). P. Loveday, A.W. Martin and R.S. Parker in *The Emergence of the Australian Party System* (1977) provide an analysis of party voting within the federal parliament up to about 1910. Ian Marsh in chapter 10 of *Beyond the Two Party System* (1995) examines the multi-party system which prevailed in the parliament in the first years following federation. In *Radical and Working Class Politics: a Study of Eastern Australia 1850-1910* (1960), Robin Gollan examines the legislative program of the early parliament in the light of the emergence of the Labor Party. John Rickard, in *Class and Politics; New South Wales, Victoria and the Early Commonwealth 1890-1910* (1976), considers the effects of class on labor and anti-labor representation. Ross McMullin, in his history of the ALP 1891-1991 (1991), *The Light on the Hill*, includes material on the early Federal Parliamentary Labor Party.

Other books which deal with aspects of the early commonwealth parliament, with largely self-explanatory titles, include K.T. Livingston, *The Wired Nation Continent: the Communication Revolution and Federating Australia* (1996), John Mordike, *An Army for a Nation: a History of Australian Military Development 1880-1914* (1992) (chapter 4; the first Defence bill); Myra Willard *History of the White Australia Policy to 1920* (1923), and D.I. Wright, *Shadow of dispute: Aspects of Commonwealth-State Relations 1901-1910* (1970).

Parliamentary and other official publications

A range of parliamentary publications date back to federation and comprise a primary source for research. The *Australian Parliamentary Papers* series, documenting much work of the chambers and parliamentary committees, commenced in 1901. The *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates* provide a transcript of debate in both houses

from the first day of sitting. Copies of bills and acts were published as they were considered and passed; the multi-volume work *Acts of the Australian Parliament 1901-1973* appeared in 1972-77, and in 1914, a 3-volume *Statutory Rules from 1901 to 1914 made under Commonwealth Acts*. Each of the houses of parliament published an official record of its proceedings daily; *Journals* in the case of the Senate and *Votes and Proceedings* in the case of the House of Representatives, and each house from commencement published a *Notice Paper*. In 1903 the Senate published *Standing Orders Adopted by the Senate 19 August 1903*, and the House of Representatives published, in its parliamentary papers, *Temporary Standing Orders*, in 1901.

Other official publications of relevance as primary sources include the *Commonwealth Law Reports* from 1903; the *Australian Argus Law Reports*, which included High Court decisions after 1903, and became the *Australian Law Report* in 1973; *Commonwealth Arbitration Reports* from 1905; the *Classified Election Returns* issued by the Commonwealth Electoral Office from 1901; the *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* from 1901; the *Official Yearbook of the Commonwealth of Australia* (No. 1, 1901-7, issued in 1908); and *Reports* of the Conferences of Secretaries of State and Prime Ministers of Self-Governing Colonies (in *Parliamentary Papers* 1902 and 1907/8) and State Premiers' conferences (Conference of Commonwealth and States), also in *Parliamentary Papers*.

Unpublished sources

Collections of papers relating to members or associates of the first parliament are held in public repositories in Australia. *Parliamentary Voices in History* (1991), compiled by Carmel McNerny, is a guide to the location of the personal papers of federal parliamentarians, including a number of members of the first parliament. The National Library of Australia holds major collections of papers of Edmund Barton (ms 51), Alfred Deakin (ms 1540), William Morris Hughes (ms 1538), Hugh Mahon (ms 93), Patrick McMahon Glynn (ms 553, 1196, 1084), King O'Malley (ms 460) Littleton Groom (ms 236) and Josiah Symon (ms 1736). Lesser collections relate to Andrew Fisher (ms 2919), James Fowler (ms 2280), Robert Garran (ms 2001), Henry Bournes Higgins (ms 1057), Frederick Holder (ms 2268) J.M.H. Cook (ms 601), John Kirwan (ms 277), William Lyne (ms 129), Lord Tennyson (ms 1963), John Christian Watson (ms 451), Isaac Isaacs (ms 2755), George Foster Pearce (ms 213, 192), and Samuel Mauger (ms 1895). The Mitchell Library, Sydney, holds papers of Samuel Walker Griffith (mss Q181-199), Richard O'Connor (mss F4) and on microfilm, the Earl of Hopetoun (mfm 936-937). The papers of James George Drake are held in the Oxley Library, Brisbane (OM 66-4), and papers relating to John Forrest are in the Battye Library (WA). A typescript by an *Argus* reporter, Herbert Campbell-Jones, 'A cabinet of captains: the romance of Australia's first federal parliament' [1935] (in the National Library at ms 8905) is also of interest.

Biographies

There are a number of scholarly biographies of early parliamentarians. Foremost among these are J.A. La Nauze's *Alfred Deakin* (2 vols, 1965), L.F. Fitzhardinge's *William Morris Hughes* (1964), F.K. Crowley's biography of John Forrest (1971 and 2000) and *Charles Cameron Kingston* by Margaret Glass (1997). Others include *Pit Boy to Prime Minister: the story of the Rt Hon Sir Joseph Cook* by G. Bebbington (1988) and *Sir Joe: a Political Biography of Sir Joseph Cook* by J. Murdoch (1996);

King O'Malley by Dorothy Catts (1957), *King O'Malley* by Arthur Hoyle (1981) and *O'Malley, MHR* by Larry Noye (1985); *James Howard Catts MHR* by Dorothy Catts (1953); *Isaac Isaacs* by Zelman Cowen (1967), and *Sir Isaac Isaacs* by M. Gordon (1963); *Alfred Deakin* by Walter Deakin (1941); *Nation Building in Australia: the Life and Work of Sir Littleton Groom* by Littleton Groom (1941); *Quiet Decision: a Study of George Foster Pearce* by Peter Heydon (1965); *George Reid* by W.G. McMinn (1989); *Patrick McMahon Glynn* by G. O'Collins (1965); *Henry Bournes Higgins* by Nettie Palmer (1931) and *H.B. Higgins* by John Rickard (1984); and *Edmund Barton* by J. Reynolds (1948). A major biography of Edmund Barton, by Geoffrey Bolton, is in publication.

Collective biographies which include early parliamentarians include Joan Rydon's *Biographical Register of the Australian Parliament, 1901-1972* (1975) and *The Australian Dictionary of Biography* (1966-). The first volume of a *Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate* is in press, and *The Parliamentary Handbook* has been mentioned above. There are also summaries of the lives and political careers of a high proportion of the first parliamentarians in the various biographical registers of the Australian colonial parliaments.

Autobiographies

Alfred Deakin's *The Federal Story* (first published 1944) does not extend to an account of Deakin's experiences in the first parliament, but it does provide pen portraits of a number of men who were later federal parliamentarians. *Prosper the Commonwealth* by Robert Garran is a first-hand account of the early years of the commonwealth by the first secretary of the Attorney-General's department, and provides insights into the early legislative program, and drafting. *Patrick McMahon Glynn: Letters to his Family 1874-1927*, published in 1974, includes letters about the opening of parliament and the first years of sitting by a member of the first parliament. Billy Hughes wrote two volumes of autobiography, one of which, *Policies and Potentates* (1950) is relevant to this period, as is *My Life's Adventures* by John Kirwan (1936), *Carpenter to Cabinet* by George Foster Pearce (1951); *My Reminiscences* by George Reid (1917) and, very slightly, *Australia's Awakening* by William Guthrie Spence (1909).