AUSTRALIANS at HOME

WORLD WAR II

MICHAEL McKER

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PREFACE TO THE NEW EDITION

To celebrate the submission of the manuscript of my First World War homefront book, my publishers at Thomas Nelson took me to lunch. Those were the days! But there was a purpose to the lunch. Would I please turn around, right now, and start a book on the homefront in the Second World War. We didn't even know yet if the first one would sell, but there was enough confidence to follow through to a second book. I got to work right away.

Now I would argue that there is a much greater continuity between Australia in 1914–1918 and Australia in 1939–1945. Then I was more interested in the differences between the two eras. But my method remained essentially the same in the two books: to look for evidence of homefront life in homes, in schools, in churches, on the playing fields, in the pubs, in the women's magazines, and the social pages of the daily papers. Rather than in the long pages of war news that dominated the rest of the newspapers. I discovered that the Australian War Memorial had a bound and complete run of *The Australian Women's Weekly* (which, remarkably, they were about to turf) and other women's magazines as well. Few other Australian social historians were using these sources.

For an Australian living through it, the homefront in 1942 seemed vastly different from the homefront in 1916. For one thing, Australia was under direct attack. For another, this war necessarily engaged the entire Australian community, in war work, in a way that the First World War did not. Women, and under-employed men and boys, were 'Manpowered', that is, they were conscripted into the workforce. Australia enjoyed a unity of effort and will, under the inspiring leadership of John Curtin, whereas in the first war, the Australian community disintegrated into hatreds and divisions over conscription.

But the biggest difference, undoubtedly, between the two eras was the presence of American troops in Australia, in large number, from 1941 onwards. Australian had never before known such an alien presence in its midst in such numbers. How did the people respond to this, and what lasting effect was there, was a key question that this book sought to answer.

This book was first published in 1983 as *All In! Australia during the Second World War*, and was reissued as a paperback in 1995. In 1983 few Australian historians were interested in the issues this book covered. Since then there has been an explosion of interest in Australian military history and there are many books now devoted to what might have attracted a chapter in my book, or the sub-theme of a chapter. *Australians at Home: World War II* reprints the 1983 text without correction, amendment or addition. This is not to disparage more recent scholarship, but this would be a vastly different book if it sought to incorporate new themes. Today's readers will notice some obvious omissions for which I am sorry. Such was my historical understanding then, and such was the state of the profession too.

I knew and came to deeply admire Reg Saunders, such a remarkable Australian soldier, when he joined the Council of the Australian War Memorial in 1985. I regret deeply that I did not then know something of his story and the contribution of Indigenous Australians to the war effort on the homefront.

My aim with the book was to tell, in summary form, how the Australian people responded to the enormous challenge of the war against fascism and Japanese militarism. As we might have expected, Australians responded with generosity, devotion, determination and that wry, sardonic Australian reaction to almost every episode of life. In these pages you will meet a woman who spent her war years in a factory peeling onions for the troops abroad, and raising her family single-handedly because her husband was a soldier. To me she typifies the 'all in' war effort that John Curtin called for. To me, she is a hero of *Australians at Home: World War II*.

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INTRODUCTION

The history of Australia in the first half of the twentieth century is dominated by war. Between 1914 and 1918, at terrible cost, 330,000 Australians fought to help maintain the integrity of the British Empire. For six years, between 1939 and 1945, Australians fought in another world war, eventually placing about one million men and women in uniform – an enormous contribution for a small nation of seven million people. While their homes remained mercifully almost untouched by the weapons of destruction available to modern man, all Australians eventually found themselves, if reluctantly, affected by the terrible events taking place at the battlefronts.

Understandably, Australia's first major experience of war has attracted the attention of writers, poets, painters and filmmakers. An innocent people awakening at length to the horror of modern warfare, the awesomeness of the landing at Gallipoli and the sheer magnitude of destruction in France provide themes which have encouraged people to return repeatedly to that conflict. The Anzac legend established Australians as fighters almost without equal and the war gave Australians the opportunity to create a national mythology that could stand comparison with mythologies of much older nations. In that sense Australia became a nation at Gallipoli.

By comparison, the second call of war, a generation later, seemed less remarkable and has so far been given much less attention from historians and other myth-makers. Yet the second world war raised tremendous new issues. Fascism threatened the survival of Western civilisation and seemed set to return Europe to a new barbarism. Australia's own security was, for the first time since white man invaded, seriously at risk. Such dangers might have shaped a new society in Australia, forcing a sheltered and isolated people to reflect on what it was they were fighting to preserve. It is curious, then, that the second world war has not been treated as a watershed in Australian history.

Part of the explanation for this lack of interest lies in the course of the war itself. There were two distinct phases: the European war and, from 1941 onwards, the war against Japan. At first the war seemed just another European catastrophe. Australia was involved only because of its membership of the

British Empire, a concept which became increasingly remote as Australia's own sense of independence grew. During this first phase of the war from 1939 to 1941, Empire patriots sought to stimulate the old emotions which had worked so powerfully during the first world war, but many Australians believed Britain's tribulations need not concern them. This conflict between apathy and enthusiasm recalled the earlier war so that the period seemed backward-looking and remote from a more modern, independent Australia. Paradoxically, Australia seemed more distant from the European conflict in 1939 than in 1914. Despite technological advances that enabled Australians to hear the unfolding drama of events as they happened and to travel to Europe within a few days, thousands of Australians remained reluctant to become involved.

Most Australians from 1939 onwards were casting a wary eye towards an aggressive, expansionist Japan. When Japan began the Pacific war in late 1941, Australians at home devoted themselves, almost exclusively, to the security of their homeland and for many the wider issues of the world war receded from view. With an unprecedented sense of unity and common purpose they accepted restrictions and regulations, they welcomed compulsion, they placed a greater proportion of their population in uniform than any of their allies, and they devoted themselves to the manufacture of munitions and other war supplies.

Despite Australia's peril, many of its best fighting troops remained on imperial service in Europe and North Africa. So self-centred had many of those at home become that it was common for these troops to receive white feathers in the mail from Australia – showing that some believed these troops were shirking the 'real' war being fought so close to Australia. Such mean gestures confirm the impression that the European war seemed remote and unimportant to those threatened by the Japanese.

This single-minded commitment to the war proved difficult to sustain. When the threat to Australia receded, the war lost some of its meaning for those Australians whose interest had been confined to Australia's own security. Frustrated by the hardships imposed by an 'all-in' effort Australians increasingly looked for a relaxation of regulations and restrictions from 1943 onwards and often enough took matters into their own hands.

This response to war, self-centred and selfish, is certainly interesting, but it lacks the nobility or the grand passion which attracts so many writers to a re examination of the first world war in Australia. While momentous moral questions such as the total obliteration of German cities or the unleashing of atomic warfare on the world were being decided Australians debated moral questions of little importance, such as the maintenance of Sunday observance. Such responses should not be altogether surprising. Studies of the homefront in Britain, for example, indicate a similar preoccupation with the local and particular rather than with global, grand concerns.[1]

Australia's military historians of the second world war have written at

length about Australia's part in the fighting. Concentrating almost exclusively on the deeds of the troops in battle, they have found heroism, excitement and devotion to duty – even if the tale suffers in comparison with the drama and grandeur the official historian C. E. W. Bean and others discovered when writing about Australia's role in the first world war.

Gavin Long, general editor of the second war series, encouraged his military historians to concentrate on the battlefront and commissioned a Perth journalist and academic, and subsequently public servant and politician, Paul Hasluck, to write about the homefront. Hasluck produced a masterful study of homefront politics, in the broadest sense. Working largely from official files Hasluck concentrated on government, politics and the bureaucracy, observing that as he was not a social historian he would leave to others consideration of the people's response to the war.[2]

This history attempts what Hasluck did not, exploring the war in Australia from the point of view of men, women and children at home. For six years Australians lived with the frustration, inconvenience and, let it be said, the excitement of war. While they were its victims, they did not suffer the agony of nightly bombing raids, of occupation or of mass starvation. Their sacrifice consisted of shortages, long hours of work, the constant anxiety for loved ones absent at battle abroad and the threat of invasion.

Even so, war wrought great changes to the organisation of society. The war made Australians give thought to Australia's place first within the Empire and then in the world. Women entered the workforce in larger number than ever before and participated in the restructuring of the Australian economy. Australians surrendered important freedoms such as liberal working conditions, but they insisted on consultation and, if need be, were quite prepared to evade government regulations. They welcomed thousands of Americans into their country but retained a strong preference for their own way of doing things.

These complex changes, although many proved short-lived, required wise and careful planning; but too often Australians seemed satisfied with ad hoc measures which failed to confront the dimensions of the crisis. There was nobility and generosity on a grand scale; but there was also selfishness and a refusal to give thought to the issues the war provoked. Leaders appealed to emotions and relied on platitudes and rhetoric, whipping up fear and hatred as if these alone could sustain commitment to war. Australians were the victims of events abroad, never masters of their own destiny.

The structure of the book is at first chronological – to emphasise the leisurely, almost languid, reaction to the European war. There was, of course, excitement and commitment on the part of some, and particular moments of danger such as the fall of France and the battle of Britain provoked widespread interest, but these must be seen in the context of long periods when only enthusiastic Empire loyalists paid attention to the war. In contrast, the period of threat to Australia generated great, even frenetic,

activity. For this second part of the war I have concentrated on particular themes.

In writing this book I have been struck by the enormous impact the first world war still exercised during the second. At one level this is understandable. When war came again Australians believed they knew what was required and produced the models elaborated at such cost twenty-five years earlier. While this book is in no sense a comparative history of Australia's response to the two wars, it is inevitable that some attention must be given to what had gone before.

Many 'Anzac memories' had a negative effect when war broke out again. Some Australians recalled the first world war period with a mixture of shame and embarrassment and vowed not to make similar mistakes a second time. Anti-German feelings had reached such a pitch in Australia, stimulated by devices such as outrageous cartoons of the 'Hun' or by hysterical stories of 'baby-killers', that the first world war had been conducted in an atmosphere of great tension and emotion. Slowly, after the Armistice, Australians had begun to realise that they had been duped. Their righteous crusade against fiends and criminals had not purified or sanctified the world as they had been promised, nor had it ended all wars as they had been led to expect. Rather, the 'great war' had resulted in an uneasy truce between the antagonists, and the world had remained as strife-torn and as dangerous as ever. Australian survivors, heroes who had been promised so much when they enlisted, had returned to a country unable to fulfil those extravagant pledges and soon they had suffered the consequences of the worst economic depression the world had known.

Younger Australians rejected the privileged position given to returned Anzacs and they resented the backward-looking celebration of the one day of the year. Confronted almost daily by the physical and spiritual wrecks of a war they were told had made the world take notice of Australia, many of them counted the cost and wondered what it had all been for. A strong measure of rejection of the Empire that had brought Australia into the war filled those who resented the prominence of the Anzac in Australia.

The memory of the first world war also determined many of the activities and attitudes on the homefront when war broke out again in 1939. While some refused to take much interest, for fear of being duped, others responded as they had before. Women would knit once more, using the patterns for cholera belts and balaclavas that they had used last time. Patriots would expect an expeditionary force and before long demand that conscription be introduced and sport curtailed. Gradually these preconceptions began to be replaced by a more realistic assessment of the new situation but it was not until the Japanese challenged Australia that the first world war model was seen to be quite inappropriate.

In seeking to chart the developments on the homefront I have concentrated on the beliefs and behaviour of those ordinary Australians who worked in

factories or offices, who aspired to the good life as Australians knew it and who achieved little prominence in their lives. I found these people in newspapers but rarely on the news pages; in magazines where they contributed recipes rather than analysis; and in government files where they wrote honestly about pressing problems or issues. Their perceptions of the war differed from those of their leaders, but if they proved isolationist and complacent, interested largely in their own wellbeing, should we not, in part at least, place the blame on those leaders who had given them so little guidance in the years before the war?

By war's end in 1945 Australians emerged a much more complex and aware people. They had faced danger alone and they knew the world to be far more complicated than they had imagined. The acceptance of a mass, non-British, immigration programme symbolised this change. Indeed the second world war changed Australian attitudes and beliefs far more substantially than had the first world war as this study of the homefront demonstrates. A hitherto isolationist, Empire-oriented people who had lived carelessly under the protection of the British confronted, under the stimulus of war, the realisation that they must assume responsibility for their own destiny.

CHAPTER ONE

BUSINESS AS USUAL

Australians watched war approaching in 1939 and drew on their memories of the first world war – the great war – to prepare themselves for the conflict. They remembered, with some horror and even guilt, how joyously they had welcomed war in 1914. In 1939 the dominant passion was not bellicose excitement but rather regret tinged with disappointment that war must come again.

In the last days of peace there were strange coincidences which may have alarmed those people alert to such things. On 31 August 1939 R. G. Menzies, prime minister for only a matter of weeks, reported to federal cabinet that he remained optimistic about events in Europe and then set off on a tour of Victoria's Western District. In Colac he learned of the final tensions that were to lead to war. In Colac, five days before war in 1914, Andrew Fisher had made his careless but apparently patriotic pledge that Australia would support Britain 'to the last man and the last shilling'. This had become the most celebrated Australian comment on that war. In 1939 Menzies's Colac speech, though little remembered, echoed those imperial sentiments: '[Australians] were a British people ... fitted to face the crisis with cheerful fortitude and confidence'. Like Fisher, Menzies then cancelled his tour and returned to Melbourne to await events. He had already assured Australians that 'Everything that can be done is being done' and had asked them to go about their daily activities with 'quiet but resolute confidence'.[1]

Menzies and his cabinet could do no more than wait for news – they had no opportunity at all to influence the decisions that would involve Australians in war. They had little direct information about what was happening in those tense days, indeed the best source of news proved to be officers from the newly formed External Affairs department who had been instructed to 'listen in' to short-wave radio in the hope of picking up information.[2]

Aware that hope for peace had faded almost to extinction, Australians went about their daily activities in a subdued spirit. Normal radio programmes were frequently interrupted by special news broadcasts but even so newspapers rushed out special editions throughout the day, just as they had

done in 1914. Newsboys, acting almost as town criers, forced the bad news before city people and recreated the excitement and menace of 1914. This time, however, the crowds seemed 'numbed by the news'. Snatching the special editions eagerly and not bothering to wait for their change, people scanned the few pages of news. They were 'strangely silent crowds, thinking about the present and trying to search the future', as one journalist observed. Many, no doubt, were also thinking about the past, of the useless sacrifice of sons and brothers who had died or had been maimed in the 'war to end all wars'.[3]

Federal cabinet sat in Melbourne almost continuously for 48 hours, ministers taking rest only briefly. They had little to do but wait and to put into operation the preliminary provisions of the Commonwealth war book. At 3.15 a.m. on Saturday, 2 September 1939, Menzies broadcast to the nation, warning Australians that a 'danger of war' existed. It is unlikely that many people heard him; few would have left their radios on in the hope of news. Menzies then drove through Melbourne's deserted streets to call on the acting Governor-General, Sir Winston Dugan, who learnt in person what the Prime Minister had just committed to the air waves.[4]

On Saturday the news had seemed too bad for ordinary activities, and race meetings and football matches experienced a sharp drop in attendances. In Melbourne frequent rain squalls may have been partly to blame. News remained grim throughout Saturday. At the Car! Thomas Club, a popular nightspot in Sydney, the management placed a radio on the bandstand and the band stopped playing whenever there was a news broadcast. Dancers listened with great attention and at 9.30 p.m. joined in singing 'God Save the King'. At cinemas patrons were kept up to date by messages flashed across the screen during the movies. Again, the bad news was received quietly, without alarm.[5]

Australians celebrated Sunday, 3 September 1939, as Father's day but many family gatherings seemed forced as older members reflected on the enormous cost of war to the family. Church congregations were somewhat bigger than usual and those Australians who turned to God in time of crisis heard clergymen appealing for calm and Christian fortitude. At St Andrews Anglican Cathedral in Sydney Archbishop Mowll preached from the text 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble', a favourite text also in 1914. Mowll asked for prayers for the king, for the British prime minister and cabinet, for the army, navy and air force and, finally, for 'all those on whom responsibility of any kind should fall'. Presumably this last category included Australia's own leaders but the archbishop's list showed how British-centred were some Australian spokesmen. His sermon, in which he called to mind the 'traditions of the race', could have been preached in 1914 as in 1939, as if the first world war had never occurred. The congregation was asked to 'thank God for the past, and trust in Him for the future'.[6]

By tea-time on Sunday Australians knew that the British government had delivered Hitler an ultimatum, due to expire at 8 p.m. Australian (eastern) time. Those with short-wave radios persistently twiddled the dials, picking up a great deal of static but also instant news from Berlin, London and Paris. It was from this unofficial source that Menzies and his ministers, closeted in the Defence building, Melbourne, learned that a state of war existed between Britain and Germany. This placed cabinet in a quandary. Should the prime minister authorise 'state of war' procedures immediately and broadcast to the people, or should he wait until he had received official notification from London? Apparently no minister argued that Australia stay out of the war or weigh the issues independently of Britain.[7]

Menzies's dilemma soon resolved itself. Within an hour of the expiration of the deadline the Australian government received its telegram from the British Admiralty and at 9.15 p.m. Menzies spoke on every national and commercial radio station in Australia. His huge audience heard the prime minister deliver his ominous message in sombre tones. Speaking of his 'melancholy duty', he emphasised his regret that war had once again broken out and reinforced his message with a deeply serious presentation. There was not a trace of jingoistic excitement, a mood matched by his listeners who turned to war with heavy hearts.[8]

Despite the gloom surrounding the announcement, Menzies made no concession to those who believed that Australia could stay out of this war. Australia was at war because Britain was at war and there was no question in the prime minister's mind but that the British decision implicated Australia. Many of Menzies's listeners resented his total rejection of the possibility of an independent assessment by Australia and some of them would contest his position over the coming weeks. But Menzies never wavered. Speaking in Britain in 1941 he reaffirmed his commitment to the integrity of the Empire, declaring that 'the statute of Westminster has never meant much to me'. Other Empire statesmen took a different view. The Canadians, for example, declared war on Germany on 10 September after they had had the opportunity to examine the situation.[9]

Despite Australia's prompt declaration of war there was little chance of immediate involvement because Australian defence forces were in a shockingly depleted state. Perhaps because Australian volunteers had performed so heroically during the first world war, successive governments had seen no need to maintain a strong professional army. In time of crisis it was hoped volunteers from all walks of life would provide the fighters Australia needed. So governments retained only a small cadre of professionals and, to ensure that some Australians would know something about soldiering, concentrated most effort on training the reserve forces – known, for the army at least, as the militia.[10]

The militia comprised part-time soldiers who maintained some efficiency and enthusiasm by meeting on one night each week at a local drill-hall, or in

a park, or even by the roadside. There they exercised, handled rudimentary weapons and learned enough to survive the annual eight-day camp that was required of them. Members of the militia were all volunteers.

As war tensions in Europe became more insistent from 1938 onwards, defence planners in Australia had concentrated on expanding the militia. In November 1938 Defence minister G. A. Street had authorised the creation of an additional 35,000 places in the militia to bring its strength to 70,000 men. But so low had the militia or 'chocolate soldiers' (chocoes) fallen in public estimation that recruiting proved difficult.

The Defence Act gave the government power to conscript men for home defence once war had broken out and the Menzies government at first concentrated on expanding the militia compulsorily. It was a source of confusion that the old part-time force and the new, full-time conscript force shared the same name. In November 1939 the prime minister announced that a full-time conscript militia would have a strength of 75,000 men and from 1 January 1940 these men began pouring into the camps. Called militia or 'chocoes' like their part-time predecessors these conscripts should not be confused with the pre-war volunteers. The new militia could only be used for the defence of Australia on Australian soil unless the Defence Act was changed, and this later became a cause of great controversy.[11]

People reacted to Menzies's declaration of war calmly, but within hours the first Australian gun fired in anger. As in August 1914 this signal event occurred at Queenscliff fort, at the entrance to Port Phillip. Then the Queenscliff gun had fired a 'shot across the bows' of a German ship seeking to escape Australian waters. Now the fort halted an Australian ship leaving the Bay without the clearance war regulations required.[12]

Such weird echoes at Colac or at Queenscliff might have inclined Australians to expect a war like the last, enormously costly in terms of casualties and destruction. It is not surprising, therefore, that most public figures greeted the news of war with sadness and regret. No-one captured this mood more truly than William McKell who had only just wrested the leadership of the New South Wales Labor party from Jack Lang and who would win the premiership of Australia's most populous state in 1941. Speaking in parliament McKell said:

> I find it difficult to realise, while the memories of 1914–18 are still with us, and every day leads us into contact with the maimed and the blind of the last war, and our military hospitals still contain men who have never been discharged since their return from war, that the world should be precipitated into another war. The war to end war is followed in a short space of years by another, perhaps even more calamitous than the last.'[13]

On that Sunday evening after Menzies had announced that Australia was at war, 4,000 Melburnians gathered 'under the clocks' at Flinders Street

railway station, many clutching the special editions of newspapers that had been churning out through the day. The mood of the crowd was neither celebratory nor bombastic. A journalist reported that 'Their demeanour was one of resignation, tinged with satisfaction that in the circumstances Britain had done the right thing'. There were no flags, no impromptu demonstrations, no spontaneous singing of Empire songs, no speeches.[14]

In seeking to understand the war, many of the old clichés returned. The issue, so a reporter discovered from overheard conversations, was not 'the Polish or German ownership of pieces of eastern Europe' rather 'the cause of justice and freedom' for which many Australians had already died. Many identified Hitler's Germany with the old foe and recycled their concepts of the 'Hunnish' love of war and quest for world domination. Clergymen revived simplistic moral judgements reminding people that as all that happens comes from God it must be that He had allowed a second war to draw the nations to the paths of righteousness. Bishop Feetham, an Anglican still working in the North Queensland diocese to which he had been appointed in 1913, put the doctrine succinctly: 'God is at work in the midst of this turmoil to bring out of it a good issue'. Other preachers reassured their congregations that, as the war was not of Britain's choosing, it was permissible to pray for the success of British arms.[15]

The news affected some adventurers more profoundly than the mass of the people. Ken Clift, a young man of spirit who had recently returned from a working holiday in South America and New Zealand, recalled later that a 'tremendous sense of excitement ran through me'. With hundreds of others he rushed to Sydney's Victoria Barracks early on Monday morning, anxious to secure a place in the expeditionary force that he was sure would be raised. But his high hopes were dashed. The few regular soldiers were indifferent and apathetic: 'no one in charge seemed aware that war had been declared, let alone what they would do with us potential recruits'. Newspapers were full of the story of a recruiting rush and reporters dwelt lovingly on the returned men who were offering their services once again. Some of them were 'men with artificial limbs who nevertheless protested that they were fit for some national work'. There was also an 83-year-old retired major-general who wanted to lend a hand. Boer war veterans, the lame and the aged – hardly the best types for an army. This mattered little, for the important element in such reports was the sense of gallantry evoked. Australians had a proud military history and some eagerly welcomed the chance to renew it.[16]

The weight of history hung heavily on Australians in the first days of the second world war. Australians now knew about war. If before there had been a rush to enlist, now there must be another. All sorts of traditions were revived. In 1914 petty criminals received suspended sentences if they promised to enlist in the expeditionary force and so now judges and magistrates began to offer this inducement to patriotism. Two days after Menzies announced war, a Carlton labourer, convicted of larceny, admitted that he had enlisted in the

militia the evening before his court appearance and that 'he was prepared to join an expeditionary force if needed'. Newspapers reported that military barracks were being swamped with potential recruits who applied in person or by telephone or telegram. To arouse enthusiasm various organisations published war maps on which, as before, patriots could plot the movement of troops. Radio station 3AW, for example, offered its listeners a war map of Europe (20 × 30 inches) which showed every town of size in France and Germany, the frontiers and the Maginot and Siegfried lines: all this for 2s and postage.[17]

Women's roles seemed little altered from the last war, too. The *Australian Women's Weekly* offered its readers sober advice: 'Men must fight and women must work so that peace may come again. Mouths must be fed, beds made, socks darned ... The majority serve best in keeping the family cheerful and happy, in keeping the doors of the home bolted against uncertainty, panic or nerves.' Red Cross branches immediately called war meetings and sought recruits to cope with the new crisis. At its highest levels the Red Cross had always attracted the social elite and now Lady Dugan, wife of Victoria's governor, threw herself into the cause. Announcing that she would take her place beside the workers, she confessed that, as she could neither knit or sew, she would give some other form of practical service.[18]

Knitting became an early focus of Red Cross activity. First war patterns reappeared but those who sought official advice waited. When sixty 'matured voluntary workers' wanted to make 'socks, balaclava helmets, cholera belts and sweaters', they sought official help: 'They were told that any old sock would be alright, and when the question of balaclava helmets was raised the official was stumped, and went away to ascertain what this mysterious accessory was ... after some minutes hanging on, the telephone was hung up and that was that.'[19]

Australians looked to sportsmen to lead the way to the recruiting sergeant's table although, of course, no recruiting had yet commenced. But in time of war, they remembered, sport should be relegated to a minor place. Drawing almost exactly on 1914 rhetoric the *Australasian* announced in 1939 that 'the training and development of athletes are invaluable in peace, 'but when sterner issues had to be decided the implements of war had to take first place'. The St Kilda Football Club in Melbourne whose colours in 1914 had been identical with those of imperial Germany, had fixed union jacks to players' jumpers as a mark of patriotism. Caught again in 1939, by Germany's change, St Kilda, making a rare finals appearance, debated wearing Polish colours, red and white, but stuck to their traditional jumpers.[20]

Many sportsmen refused to be ruled by the memories of the last war. The football finals continued normally in all states while cricketers, whose game had a special place in imperial mythology, began to look forward to the coming season. Canon Hughes, the long-serving president of the Victorian Cricket Association, observed that he could not imagine Hitler

As soon as war was declared, women around Australia resuscitated old pattern books and began again to knit the socks, balaclavas and cholera belts they believed Australian troops would need

and Stalin 'doing things they had done if they had played cricket'. Patriots in other spheres cancelled entertainments including the Melbourne spring festival while others either awaited government advice or made their own rules. Bravely the theatrical entrepreneurs, J. C. Williamson, determined to continue with their season of the comedy-mystery, 'I Killed the Count': people needed 'bright divertissements in these dark times', a spokesman argued.[21]

Experience of the earlier war also prepared Australians to expect massive economic dislocation now that the nations were at war once more. Housewives watched anxiously for the first signs of 'war profiteering' as had broken out spectacularly in 1914, and everyone feared substantial increases in unemployment, already unacceptably high as a result of the economic dislocation of the early 1930s. With official unemployment at around 9–11 per cent of the male workforce, war-caused lay-offs would throw Australia back to the worst days of the great depression. The Retail Traders Association of New South Wales resisted any panic moves. In a full-page newspaper advertisement the association announced its determination to 'stand firm'. A resolution, printed beneath pictures of Neville Chamberlain and Menzies, declared that members of the association 'irrespective of trading conditions' would keep staff on for at least four weeks. Should 'adjustments' become necessary at the end of that period, every attempt would be made to ensure 'an even distribution of the burden'.[22]

In areas such as recruiting, economics and even sport, therefore, many people approached the new war with ideas formed by experience of the first world war. But in one area previous experience seemed largely irrelevant. Western nations had concentrated on advanced technology in the rearmament years and citizens everywhere had learned to fear that war now would inevitably cause large-scale loss of civilian life. People expected holocaust from the skies just as the nuclear generation perceive another global war as leading to unimaginable destruction.

Australians shared these fears despite their country's geographic isolation and the consequent difficulty of mounting aerial warfare against Australia. If the fears seem exaggerated, they were nonetheless real. As war tensions had mounted, state governments accepted responsibility for 'air raid precautions' and the ARP had been born. Armed with shovels, buckets and explanatory leaflets, ARP wardens had tried to interest residents in matters such as shelters, blackouts, decontamination and incendiary bombs. Wardens met indifference and apathy, at first perhaps because the enthusiast often demands too much of the subjects of his enthusiasm. But when war broke out, the ARP experienced greater popularity. On 4 September 2,000 potential wardens jammed the Sydney town hall to learn how to protect city buildings. Interest was also intense beyond the cities. At Brighton, a seaside suburb about 15 kilometres from Melbourne, wardens established a first-aid post and decontamination squad, while at Penrith, in the foothills of Sydney's Blue Mountains, 65 kilometres from the city, residents attended lectures on gases and other ARP matters. The Royal Automobile Club of Victoria formed a volunteer motorist corps to carry messages in the event of an air raid when 'existing lines of communication might be destroyed'.[23]

Many of the air-raid anxieties related to children and schools. The New South Wales Education department had estimated £30,000 would be required to provide first-aid equipment for all children in government schools. When

war broke out, there was not even one gas mask per school. When the New South Wales Teachers' Federation convened a meeting in late September to demand more ARP equipment and awareness in schools, some progress had already been made, much of which was, however, rudimentary and somewhat tentative. The New South Wales Director of Education had advised teachers on 4 September that community singing would be an effective precaution against panic should children have to be evacuated. Suggesting that children practise some well-known songs, he listed tunes identified with the great war, 'It's a Long Way to Tipperary', 'Keep the Home Fires Burning' and 'Pack up Your Troubles'.[24]

The public learned that teachers would 'intensify emergency training in war work' but the department had, in fact, reminded teachers that 'any action of an alarmist character [was] to be deprecated' and therefore that 'Newspaper publicity of any kind with respect to courses for pupils should be avoided'. Teachers with first-aid certificates instructed their colleagues in after-school classes three times a week until all teachers understood basic first aid and air-raid precautions. School windows were made shatter-proof and pupils practised evacuation drill. In October the principal of one large school reported that three surprise alarms had been rung and, while on the first occasion the 1,200 pupils had taken thirteen minutes to disperse, by the third practice this had been reduced to seven minutes.

A special course of instruction in gases became a part of the curriculum of all post-primary pupils in New South Wales but again the department resisted sensationalism.

A makeshift air-raid shelter in a Melbourne kindergarten. The children seem happy enough, but it is hard to believe this shelter would have provided much protection against any air-raid

Sea-scouts drilling in Perth in September 1939. Such enthusiasm early in the war soon waned when it became apparent that places like Perth were unlikely targets for German bombers

> Principals were told that the course will be introduced and developed along the formal lines of pure science up to the stage of considering the properties of some poisonous gases. When this point has been reached, it is assumed that the pupils will seek more information about gas warfare. This natural curiosity can be easily satisfied by what might be regarded as informal talks on topics indicated.

The instruction concluded that the point of the course was to correct 'many ideas of possible devastation that are gaining currency throughout the community'. Obviously it was hoped that children would allay their parents' anxieties by giving them precise information about gases and air raids.[25]

Even from the beginning some sceptics poured scorn on the whole ARP business, suggesting that preparations would increase fears rather than allay them. A. G. Healing, a prominent Melbourne manufacturer and importer, contended that 'For every life which may be saved by taking such precautions

at this stage ... a thousand persons will be made nervous wrecks, particularly amongst our womenfolk, many of whom are unable ... to retain their sense of proportion'. Healing highlighted the government's dilemma. Clearly there was a heightened public expectation for action that could not be fulfilled unless other war work assumed a lower priority. Given the woeful lack of preparedness in Australia, it would have been unwise to authorise massive expenditure on bomb shelters and gas masks while neglecting munitions and the services. But in minimising the danger from the skies the government risked turning enthusiasm into apathy for the ARP was the one area of war that had caught popular imagination.[26]

As people's ARP expectations were not fulfilled, their general expectations based on first war memories collapsed too. This was a strange war, to be sure, in which nothing happened. Deliberately the federal government played down fears and suppressed enthusiasm and war fervour. Menzies's one aim seemed to have been to avoid alarm and to inculcate cheery optimism as if he hoped that appeasement could still prevail. In the first weeks of the war he preached a comforting doctrine of 'business as usual' but this was a dangerous game because apathy at this stage might prove impossible to counter later.

Returning to his electorate of Kew at weekends after particularly busy working days in Canberra Menzies repeated his theme whenever possible. On successive weekends in September he opened the seasons of lawn bowling clubs within his electorate. It is difficult to envisage anything more placid than a suburban bowling club in a Melbourne spring with leisurely bowlers in neat, exact uniforms typifying calm and security. Menzies talked easily to such people: clearly he felt on home territory. Even so, he urged his listeners to remain calm and he encouraged them to continue their games. At the Canterbury Bowling Club he said:

> The man to display fortitude was he who preserved as far as he could his all round daily life in time of uncertainty. Australians must not become victims of obsession, or give themselves up to any form of hysteria, however popular ... Thank God there is plenty of room in our life for laughter and games, as well as for serious things.[27]

The minister for Defence, Geoffrey Street, produced the most telling demonstration of 'business as usual'. He stunned those clamouring at the barrack gates and amazed all war enthusiasts when he announced that the government would make no plans for an expeditionary force at present, therefore recruits were not needed. Both Menzies and Street stressed that the dangers that faced Australia in 1939 differed from those of 1914. The government's first responsibility was to secure Australia's own defence and priority would therefore be given to building up the home forces, the militia, before an expeditionary force for service overseas could be contemplated.

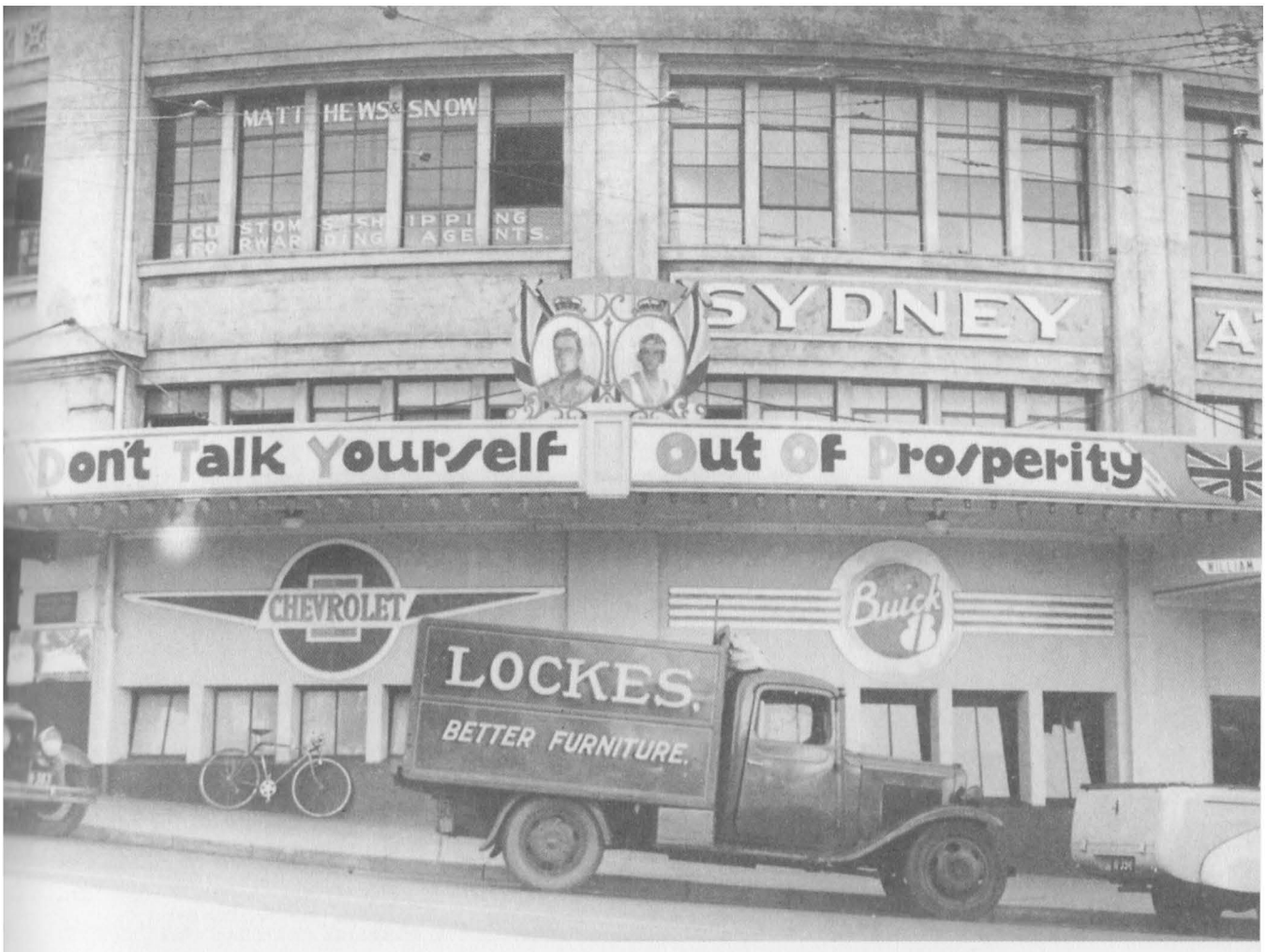
Menzies reiterated that Australia would best help the Empire by taking responsibility for her own security.

The impact of this cautious policy was reinforced by inactivity at the front. People who had bought war maps and displayed them in living rooms or kitchens soon found that there were no flags to move, no lines to be redrawn. Scanning the papers eagerly for reports from the front, Australians soon grew accustomed to the 'phoney war'. The *Bulletin*, a Sydney journal which had cultivated a close Digger connection, expressed the common sentiment: 'Why have things been so quiet on the Western Front?'[28]

This question may seem somewhat perplexing because few could seriously expect news of momentous battles within days of the declaration of war. But time seems to slow down during a crisis; such is people's preoccupation with news that each fresh moment in a drama receives great attention. In early September many Australians gave the war exaggerated attention, turning to news bulletins several times a day to hear 'the latest'. They expected so much to happen and certainly the newspapers and radio broadcasts catered for this appetite for news. Within a few weeks most Australians had read and heard a great deal about the war; they had debated the issues and what part Australia should play and they had begun to suspect that all this attention was rather misplaced. Heightened concentration when nothing had happened soon led to disinterest. The first few weeks of the war set the pattern for Australia's response to the European conflict.

Circumstances, then, and deliberate government policy combined, convincing Australians not to invest the war with the seriousness that their memories and myths demanded. Menzies prevailed: 'business as usual'. Journalists delighted in summarising the mood of people: 'Yesterday in [Sydney] was much the same as ever – crowds in the theatres, night spots, restaurants. In fact, just for experimental purposes I tried to get into three cinemas in the city at 8.30 p.m. – and in all cases was unsuccessful'. By Show week in Melbourne – late September – the war seemed forgotten. Large crowds flocked to the Show and to the races, picture theatres and football and all was justified by reference to the prime minister's sense of wellbeing. People seemed happy 'to carry on in their usual way and leave worry about the war to the nation's executives or until it appear[ed] to be necessary for Australians at home to worry'.[29]

The prime minister made no apology for his position nor did he try to hide it by resort to standard imperial rhetoric. He explained his stance clearly in speeches and broadcasts throughout September. To the Australian Women's National League, for example, he showed that whereas in the last war 'Russia and Italy and Japan were our allies, [in this war] we are up against an enormous problem in which Australia's own security must be attended to'. John Curtin, who had led the Labor opposition in federal parliament since 1935, gave Menzies solid support on the question of an expeditionary force. There were two issues to which Labor was pledged, he



Businesses, while needing to demonstrate patriotism by displaying somewhat idealised portraits of the king and queen, nevertheless found it advisable to encourage people to take an optimistic view of the war. This display in Perth epitomised Menzies's doctrine 'Business as usual'

told federal parliament, the first was opposition to conscription, the second was opposition to an expeditionary force. Both Menzies and Curtin feared Japan, an uncertain friend of the Empire in the 1930s, and Menzies spoke as plainly as diplomacy would allow: 'This was not 1914 when there was no real problem of Australia's security from attack'.[30]

Many Australians were horrified by the government's inactivity. They argued that 'business as usual' meant a rejection of imperial links and also reflected on the spirit of thousands of Australians who, they believed, were anxious to enlist. Australia's oldest newspaper, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, an eloquent exponent of Empire loyalty for many years now, led the cry against Menzies. 'This Commonwealth was the first of the Dominions to range itself with Britain in war against Germany', 'Granny' thundered. 'The action was surely meant, as it was accepted, to be an offer of military help, and in honour it behoves us to calculate the measure of such help with all speed'. Let the people decide for themselves, continued the *Herald*, by opening

Business as usual in a Perth department store three days after the announcement of war. The profusion of sweets and chocolates is obvious, but within a few years such luxuries would be unobtainable on the homefront

enlistment for two forces, one for service abroad, the other for service at home, and allow recruits to vote with their feet. The *Herald* had no doubt that Australians would enrol under the Empire's banner.[31]

The advocates of an expeditionary force had a simple case to argue. Supported by the only tradition Australians had wholeheartedly embraced, the Anzac legend, they could pour scorn on the weak-kneed shirkers and pacifists who wanted Australia to enjoy the benefits of imperial protection while not being prepared to pay the price. Menzies's opponents organised meetings and petitions and encouraged people to write letters to the newspapers. Austin Laughlin, a Melbourne businessman, reported in mid-September that he 'was approached ... by a gentleman who wished [him] to join in a public movement intended to persuade the Government to organise an expeditionary force'. Patriots flooded the newspapers with letters contesting the government's position, a few of which will show the type of arguments used:

> To all intents and purposes, Australia in its present role is of no more use to England in the prosecution of hostilities than any alien nation which has goods for sale at war prices.

> There are thousands of men in Australia, who are not only willing, but keenly anxious, to offer their services to Great Britain – not in six months time, but now.
>
> We used to be told that Australia found her soul at Anzac. It may be well to remember that a soul can be lost, and that there is no profit in gaining the whole world and losing one's soul.
>
> [If nothing is done] enthusiasm will wane, too much opportunity will be given to slackers to prepare funk-holes and pacifists to spread their propaganda.[32]

Coming under such pressure from his traditional supporters, Menzies soon capitulated, announcing in a broadcast on 15 September 1939 that his government had decided to create a 'special force' of 20,000 men, distinct from the militia, for service at home or abroad 'as circumstances permit'. This represented a very grudging concession to the Empire loyalists. Menzies continued:

> At present the prime necessity is to ensure the defence of Australia itself. But it would be wrong to assume that throughout the duration of the war our duty would continue to be as circumscribed as that ... It may be that, under some circumstances, Australian forces might be used to garrison some of the Pacific islands ... Under other circumstances it may be practicable to send Australian forces to Europe.

So there were to be two forces, much as the *Sydney Morning Herald* had suggested, but it was as yet far from clear that the 'special force' would serve abroad. As if to emphasise its lowly status, Defence minister Street insisted that the recruitment and training of the 'special force' must not interfere with the militia's programme, and so set back the date for acceptance of recruits until 9 October.[33]

Despite the remarkably negative approach of the government to the 'special force', ministers nevertheless seemed confident that recruits would easily be found. Newspapers, recycling their first world war ideas, encouraged the complacent mood. Journalists found a high level of enthusiasm among the nation's youth for the 'special force' and reported rushes to enlist in all states the day after Menzies's announcement. The *Age*, for example, reported that 5,300 men had rushed the recruiting depot in two days but all, of course, were turned back as recruiting would not commence for nearly four weeks.[34]

Unfortunately for the patriots, recruiting proved to be a great disappointment. Instead of a flood there was a trickle in all centres. Organisers had hoped that recruiting could be completed within a day or two but so slow was it that it appeared that recruiting would still be in progress in November when the 'special force' was to go into camp. L. M. Long, a potential recruit from outback New South Wales, detailed some of the difficulties he

encountered when after a 270-kilometre journey he arrived in Coonamble to enlist. The town, he wrote with enormous understatement, 'had not been thrown off its balance by the war . . . There was not a throng at the Town Hall . . . the general atmosphere of unconcern, the Prime Minister's speeches telling everyone to "carry-on"' worked against recruiting. Long did enlist, but with some difficulty because he belonged to a 'reserved' occupation from which recruits could not be accepted. To prevent dislocation to industry the government had 'reserved' certain jobs before enlistment began and had published lists of categories of employment 'reserved' which ran to three columns of small type in the newspapers.

Tradesmen such as shearers or carpenters would not be accepted if they were over 30 years old, brewery leading hands over 25 were reserved, as were engineers holding a degree or diploma. Such exaggerated lists must have deterred many potential recruits.[35]

It quickly became apparent that a central problem in recruiting lay in the decision to reserve half the places in the 'special force' to members of the militia. Despite predictions, members of the militia – part-time soldiers – could see no point in transferring to full-time duties with the special force. The failure was dramatic. On the first day of recruiting only 180 of the draft of 10,000 men in Ingleburn camp sought to transfer; an officer confessed 'this response is regarded as poor'. The army offered every inducement to militiamen to become full-time soldiers, emphasising, for example, that 'they had an excellent chance of promotion'.[36]

Part of the explanation for the 'failure' of recruiting lay in the rates of pay offered recruits. One woman wrote that she had encouraged her husband to join the militia, thinking that he would be off work for only a week or two. Before enlisting he earned £4 15s (14s above the basic wage); she found his wage 'just enough to keep the family in bare necessities'. As a militiaman his allotment to his wife amounted to only one-third of his previous wage. Because of the war his few days as a full-time soldier would now stretch to two or even three months as the government hastened to train Australia's only home defence force. Such a dramatic reduction of income for such an unexpectedly long time worried this militiaman's wife: presumably there was no question that he might transfer to the 'special force'. Another woman wrote that her husband allotted her £1 2s 9d per week from his army pay although her rent alone was £1 5s. She continued 'the cost of living (no luxuries included) is so high that it is hard to understand how any sensible person can imagine that respectable people can possibly manage on such a pittance'.[37]

Sensible people did, in fact, imagine just that. Government ministers, who had set service rates of pay, defended them as adequate and won support from 'Patriotic Woman' who explained to opponents that the soldier's pay was 'all found' – that is, he had no food, board or clothing costs. Reminding people that 'the envious Tommies called the fortunate A.I.Fs in the last war'

'six-bob-a-day tourists', the writer concluded: 'Taxpayers have some right to protest against exorbitant rates'. The government seemed determined to protect the taxpayers which shows how much attitudes to recruits had changed since 1914. Then nothing was too good for the troops; but in 1939 soldiers' pay rates were still at 1914 levels although the basic wage had jumped from £2 10s to £4 1s. The soldier who made the maximum allotment to his wife, and few could hope to do anything else, discovered he had a shilling a day left for himself, about enough to keep a moderate smoker in tobacco and to buy an airmail stamp for a weekly letter to his wife.[38]

Uncertainty over the use of the special force and rates of pay influenced some 'eligibles' not to enlist, but the status of the force itself affected others. No longer idolised as imperial heroes, recruits were looked down on by many people who branded them 'five-bob-a-day murderers' or 'economic conscripts', men who had no hope of any other job. These terms angered Australian soldiers but they stuck because the force lacked a clear identity and a name. Some people referred to it as the 'second AIF' but this was officially resisted, particularly by Defence minister Street who insisted on the pedestrian title 'Proposed Special Force'. 'Even the A.I.F.', he said, straining history and logic, 'did not become an Imperial force until it embarked on

While one man completes his application form for the proposed special force, his mates look on, no doubt offering advice as at least one was a returned soldier. It is not clear whether all these men were intending to enlist, but the comment that the special force attracted more older men than might have been expected is demonstrated by this scene

Recruiting Street's proposed special force in Perth, October 1939. Each recruit was required to give his age and occupation and only those who were not in reserved occupations were accepted. It is interesting to note that two potential recruits in this picture are wearing RSL badges indicating that they served overseas with the first AIF

Prime Minister Menzies and Defence Minister Geoffrey Street examining a Lewis gun in 1939. Street, who was responsible for the raising of the second AIF, was later killed in the Canberra air disaster, 1941

Volunteers at Victoria Barracks, Sydney, putting their names down for the 'proposed special force' in September 1939. The special force of 20,000 men officially began recruiting in October

active service abroad. No man can say at this juncture whether the new division would go abroad or not.' The *Age* added its support: 'Membership of the A.I.F. in 1914–18 was won in the crucible of blood and fire, and its members ... are entitled ... to something better than the diminutive appellation of the old A.I.F.' But some, at least, of the old diggers were less niggardly; the new batch is 'facing a bigger problem than we did. Good luck to them.'[39]

It is not easy to determine to what extent this uncertainty over name and status interfered with enlistment but it is true that it was not the army, this time, that had fired popular imagination. Young men realised that, if this was to be a technological, aerial war, then the air force would be the centre of attention. There was a rush to the air force as soon as Menzies had conceded that Australian troops would be used overseas. While the Royal Australian Air Force only wanted between 157 and 170 men in its initial intake, it was swamped by applications, over 2,000 men in Melbourne alone. The harassed recruiting depot staff processed the first thousand applicants and told the others to go away and apply in writing. By March 1940, 11,500 men had applied for enlistment as aircrew, of whom 184 were in training and a further 1,789 had been placed on a waiting list. A further 56,777 had sought enlistment as ground staff, of whom 5,346 had been enlisted with

2,548 on a waiting list. Little wonder that the official historian condemned the government's policy as producing 'acute frustration' amongst thousands of enthusiastic volunteers. Unfortunately for recruiters in the other services the romance of war focussed on the inaccessible service which had already won for itself an elitist image by late 1939.[40]

The refusal of the RAAF to accept even a fraction of the men offering and the confusion about the role and even the name of the 'special force' diminished enthusiasm for the services. People believed that those who enlisted did so from motives not unlike those who joined the French Foreign Legion. It became a popular myth that Australian recruits were irresponsible adventurers or misfits, usually with the stigma of unemployment attached. Many of the early recruits testified that their army pay was the first wage they had ever received, moving from school to the dole to the army. One recruit was so overjoyed when he entered the pay office for the first time that he gave the Nazi salute and shouted exuberantly, 'Heil Hitler'. When the bewildered officer asked him what he meant, the man replied: 'I've been out of a job for two blinking years. This is the first blinking pay I've had in two blinking years.' Hitler, it seemed, had done him a favour.[41]

Certainly many of the unemployed must have been tempted to enlist. At the most basic level, pay and conditions in the army greatly surpassed life on the dole. A single unemployed person received 5s 6d a week which would just permit one meal a day. The prospect of three meals a day, uniforms and accommodation all found, and a wage, must have appealed to many. But there was more to it than that. Enlistment would give a man a sense of purpose and allow him the self-respect that unemployment denied him. As one man put it, enlistment would give him a 'chance to become a useful citizen again'. Many radicals resented this macabre solution to the unemployment problem and counselled men to consider carefully the consequences of enlistment. Eddie Ward, the fiery Labor member for East Sydney, had referred to recruitment as a form of 'economic conscription' and the term 'economic conscript' became a familiar way of describing these early recruits.[42]

It is very difficult to determine how many men were recruited from the ranks of the unemployed. Attestation papers showed a high percentage and rumours confirmed these bare statistics. But the attestation papers cannot be taken as a reliable guide. On the one hand, many men, holding good jobs, described themselves as unemployed because they belonged to a reserved occupation which, had it been revealed, would have prevented them enlisting. On the other hand, many a genuinely unemployed man entered a previous job on his papers, unwilling to have the stigma of 'economic conscript' attached to him throughout his service. In any case the actual number of unemployed amongst the first recruits is not important here. What is important is that later the myth grew up that Australia's forces were flooded, not with adventurers and men with a passionate attachment to Empire, but rather with economic conscripts.

Recruiting in 1939 was, therefore, utterly different from the wild, excited scenes enacted outside army depots in 1914 although newspapers laboured to recreate the old atmosphere. Readers learned that a Geelong man, knocked back because of a 'foot disability', had entered hospital to have two toes removed in the hope that he would qualify. Another report told of a man who had walked from Bacchus Marsh to Melbourne to enlist, a rather singular reminder, perhaps, of the famous recruiting marches of 1915 when country men would set out from some distant place to march to a recruiting depot, hoping to pick up additional men on the way. The Brisbane *Courier-Mail* reported that four men had arrived in Darwin from the 'remotest parts' of Australia to enlist. One was at Finke on the Adelaide–Alice Springs railway when news of the war reached him. To cover the 1,760 kilometres between Finke and Darwin, he 'jumped the rattler' to Alice Springs, rode mail lorries and got other lifts before rejoining the train for the last 480 kilometres to Darwin. But despite these brave attempts to recreate the old recruiting mood and to manufacture war fervour, Australians remained remarkably cynical about the troops and their reasons for enlisting.[43]

The failure of recruiting, particularly the indifference of the militia to full-time overseas service and the indifference of the public to the forces raised, alarmed the government. That cautious slogan 'business as usual' and government inactivity in the first days of the war had created a casual and apathetic atmosphere. It became obvious that the government must stimulate greater enthusiasm. First, then, Menzies and Street relented about the name 'Proposed Special Force'. Despite rhetoric that the inheritance of the AIF must be won in action, on 8 October 1939 Street announced that the force would be known as the 'second A.I.F.' which was now born in camps at Liverpool and Seymour. To encourage pride and a sense of military tradition the Defence department deliberately reintroduced the old battalion numbering too, adding the prefix 'second'. Thus members of the second Fourth Battalion, for example, would be encouraged to learn the history of the Fourth Battalion, first AIF, and would discover what mighty traditions they had to uphold.[44]

Two of the most famous names associated with the first AIF were despatched to record their impressions of the second. W. M. Hughes, first world war prime minister and still a member of cabinet, reported that 'These men are true sons of their fathers – and their fathers were one of the finest bodies of men the world has seen'. C. E. W. Bean, who had spent twenty years writing the history of the first AIF, a task not even then completed, also visited the camps: 'I had never seen a body of troops that were more formidable to meet ... [they were] the most wiry, the keenest, and the lithest body of young men we had ever seen'. But those who had insisted that the new AIF could only win its spurs in action had a point: fine words alone would not dissipate apathy and indifference.[45]

Examining a recruit for the second AIF in Perth, October 1939. The high physical standards demanded of the first AIF were not as strenuous in 1939 because of the small number of men offering themselves

Members of the Australian Country Women's Association reconditioning army tunics. Although this picture was taken in 1944, this type of work was done in 1939 to remake first AIF tunics for members of the second AIF

At last on 29 November 1939 – nearly three months after the war had commenced – Menzies announced that the Sixth Division, AIF, would be sent abroad. Men in the camps rejoiced believing that the decision gave some point to their enlistment and training, that they were not, after all, the 'mugs' people had thought them to be. Menzies's change of heart had been made as much with an eye to lack of war enthusiasm in Australia as to the British need for a hastily trained division. Certainly Menzies sweetened his announcement with a heavy dose of imperial rhetoric, observing that if Britain was lost Australia was lost with her. 'Our real frontiers were not only here', he said, 'but on the Rhine and on the east coast of England ... Great Britain was fighting our battles as well as her own' he added, although, in fact, few battles had yet been fought.[46]

John Curtin and the Labor opposition remained convinced that the best contribution Australia could make to the Empire was to secure home defence. Others condemned the 'violent hurry to transport a force without sufficient training, guns and equipment' as a 'theatrical exercise'. People asked what urgent necessity justified this reversal of policy in this 'phoney war'. Was it wise, they wondered, that Australia should be deprived 'of the flower of her young manhood in what shortly may be the hour of her direst need'. The Melbourne *Age* quietly stuck to its guns, despite Menzies's new imperial concerns: 'it would be imprudent to assume that some of the possibilities visualised at the beginning of the war have altogether vanished'.[47]

Some opposition relied not merely on an assessment of Australia's future danger but on a scepticism bred in the bitter years of depression. One critic asked 'why should [we] defend a system that has so failed [us]' while another confessed: 'I am becoming bitterly cynical of a system that can readily find millions for war and yet in times of peace does little or nothing to alleviate unemployment, with the excuse that money is not available'. While Menzies might appeal to Australians to abandon 'sectional partisanship', 'personalities', 'class or individual selfishness', 'hatred or malice', it was clear that many in Australia rejected involvement in war or, at least, remained apathetic and indifferent.[48]

The Air Raid Precautions movement lost direction after an enthusiastic beginning. A few missionaries remained, eager to convert the public and they organised demonstrations and exercises, but many of the wardens regarded the organisation with either wry amusement or with annoyance that they had allowed themselves to be trapped into such demanding activities. A warden from Nowra, a sleepy town on the south coast of New South Wales, surely an unlikely target for the holocaust, advised people not to worry about the ARP: 'Neither the G.P.O. Sydney nor our gum trees appear to be in any immediate danger'.[49]

A great deal was expected of wardens, particularly in the cities. One explained that he was required to attend a lecture one night a week to study various topics and to acquaint himself with the 280 householders in

A realistic air-raid precaution exercise conducted in Melbourne under air-raid conditions. The ARP wardens are rushing to assist a 'mental casualty', that is, a man simulating the effects of hysteria. Such realistic exercises became part of homefront life from September 1939 onwards

his sector. This man called on each household to introduce himself and to stimulate interest in the ARP. His foot-slogging resulted in twenty enquiries 'several, I am sorry to say, being merely mischievous enquiries which took up considerable time'. Later the council required him to distribute questionnaires: more foot-slogging – indeed on this occasion he was on the beat each evening from Wednesday to Saturday. Only a quarter of his householders bothered to return their completed forms. The poor warden sounded, as he signed himself, 'Fed-Up'.[50]

The government had misled such enthusiasts. Having initiated ARP awareness in the first place, ministers were now confronted with demands for all sorts of elaborate measures, costly and time-consuming, which would only distract the people and commit them to a cause that was peripheral at best. Ministers, therefore, had constantly to resist demands for air-raid shelters or gas masks for the entire population or evacuation plans or whatever was the latest novelty. In doing so they emphasised how minimal was the risk to Australia. This led to charges that, from the start, 'the whole [ARP] business has been a piece of amateurish political window-dressing'. The few who had devoted themselves to the ARP felt foolish, the majority ceased to pay much attention. 'The position is Gilbertian', wrote 'Citizen', 'it is also a poor estimate of the intelligence of Australians'. Perhaps not, because they now

stayed away from the ARP in droves. Richmond Council, in Melbourne, pointed to the dearth of volunteers: only one citizen had approached the ARP office at the town hall 'in the last few weeks'. Some began to see the ARP as something of a joke. A resident of a nine storey block of flats in Darlinghurst, Sydney, reported that 'the instructions I have are that, in the case of a bombing raid all are to walk down to the ground floor. In the case of a gas attack all are to go up to the top floors. What happens in the event of a bombing raid with gas is best left to the imagination ...' Nevertheless the organisation persisted, holding practices most weekends, trying to interest people in gas-proofing a room in their homes, or constructing an air-raid shelter in the back garden or, at least, making their windows shatter-proof. But it must be admitted that the air of unreality engendered by all this gave the war a bad name.[51]

People got on with the business of living with an extra confidence created by an observable beginning of a return to economic prosperity. 'Who said depression, recession or gloom', asked a journalist, noting that 63,000 people had trooped to Randwick to watch Feminist win the Metropolitan handicap. A record crowd of 67,500 watched the running of the Caulfield cup and tote investments for the Melbourne cup carnival were £332,442 15s or £1,115 more than in 1938.[52]

In this atmosphere people looked forward to a very merry Christmas. Although it hardly seemed necessary, Menzies, broadcasting in early December, appealed to people to preserve their traditional Christmas customs, emphasising that 'There is an industrial, as well as a social background of this season of gifts'. He urged people to buy Australian-made goods and hinted strongly that he wanted a bumper Christmas, 'business as usual'.[53]

Shopkeepers rejoiced in the response. The New South Wales Retail Traders Association anticipated a record Christmas; employees need have no fear for their jobs. Even so, unemployment remained high as the impact of the growth of war industries had yet to be felt. The secretary of Victoria's central unemployment committee, H. H. Lees, estimated that there were between 30–40,000 unemployed men in the state although official figures recognised only 24,000 – about the same number as last year. Many of them needed assistance; in fact, 12,000 Victorian families received the government's special Christmas grant – 9s 6d for a single man, 14s 6d for a husband and wife, with an additional 5s for each child. There was self-help too. Collingwood's unemployed raised £10 for a party for their children and the council matched their efforts.[54]

Encouraging people to spend to prevent further unemployment seemed the least of the government's responsibilities but certainly people took this advice to their hearts. Australians seemed to have forgotten the war; there was no news from the front. Australia seemed specially favoured: 'Prosperity flows from a bountiful season, and there are halcyon days in which we may almost delude ourselves into the belief that "all's well with the world."' In

Sydney the big department stores and the specialist shops were jammed with people so that it was almost impossible to move. Shoppers showed no sign of swinging from luxury goods to useful or economic gifts: 'the pleasant foolishnesses inseparable from the Christmas season have obstinately refused to be ousted'. Towards the climax of this orgy of spending, which easily surpassed recent Christmases, a reporter noted that the 'lightheartedness of the crowds was more noticeable than for many previous years'. Australia also experienced one of the greatest travel booms recorded with almost all holiday accommodation fully booked out from mid-December to late January. To explain this, as did one paper, by the unavailability of overseas travel seems far-fetched.[55]

Either people were confident that war would guarantee jobs and increase employment or they were having a 'final fling' in anticipation of the hard times to come. The mood of the people favours the first explanation. The war seemed so unlike what they had feared that it was hard to take it seriously except that it would generate employment and good times. This Christmas spree arose from a sense of relief that war would not be, after all, too bad.

The sight of so many Australians at leisure might have pleased and alarmed, in varying proportions, those charged with responsibility for the direction of the war effort in Australia. Certainly there was no evidence of panic or depression. Concentration on keeping spirits up, on 'business as usual', had either been spectacularly successful or quite unnecessary. The prime minister, holidaying with his family in the Grampians, might have pondered a very disturbing question: having dismissed the war so casually, would Australians accept sacrifice and discipline when these became necessary? With what rhetoric and by what other means would it be possible to bring people to a sense of realities once this twilight war ended?

CHAPTER TWO

RAISING AN ARMY

Crowds welcomed the New Year of 1940 as enthusiastically as they had celebrated Christmas. In Sydney thousands of people danced and sang in the streets of Kings Cross; many shopkeepers left all their store lights blazing to add to the party atmosphere – no blackout here. The post-Christmas sales surprised retailers who had expected the recent extravagance to exhaust most shoppers. It became a commonplace to marvel that 'people seem to be spending more money than ever'.[1]

The cricket ritual, hallmark of Australian summers, convinced people that the world was safe and pushed the war far out of mind. The 'outer' at Melbourne symbolised the peaceful state of Australian life:

> With what judicious precision they select their seats; with what delicious sense of 'all's right with the world', coats are removed, collars loosened and air cushions inflated to the perfect resilience for comfort. Pipes are stoked with care, and by the time the umpires put in an appearance, there is a smokescreen wafting across the field ...

Bradman remained the hero of the Australian public and even overcame parochial loyalties. 'Who cares who wins the Shield?' asked one Melburnian as he trudged into the Melbourne Cricket Ground, 'I want to see Bradman get going'. Bradman did not disappoint on this occasion, scoring his 90th century and 34th double century in first-class cricket and helping South Australia to a first innings total of 610. (Victoria had scored 475 in the first day and a half of the match.)[2]

Meanwhile, footballers turned their attention to deals, offers and counter-offers as they began to think of the approaching season. The Victorian Football Association, tired of its second-class status, in part a legacy from its patriotism during the first world war, decided to raid the Victorian Football League and by securing top class players to steal the League's thunder. Some of the deals indicated a new era of professionalism in Australian sport. Austin Robertson, a South Melbourne star, received a transfer fee of £100 to cross to Port Melbourne and was to be paid £6 a match, probably double what

he had earned at South. Bob Pratt, a legend in League football, received a 'special' contract from Coburg which was guaranteed 'not to be withdrawn if Hitler decides to make things very unpleasant overseas'. This contract and others like it shocked those Australians who doubted that the war would remain stagnant indefinitely.[3]

The politicians now strove to overcome the indifferent spirit which they had done so much to encourage earlier. Menzies described the war as 'the slow beginning of a great and vital struggle' and warned people that just because nothing had happened it did not follow that nothing would happen. Hughes blamed the Australian lack of spirit on the 'peculiar way' the war had developed. 'After five months', he reported, 'the casualties by land, air and sea are less than the death roll from motor accidents in Great Britain'. Part of the reason for the stalemate lay in the atrocious weather experienced in that European winter. While Australians enjoyed one of their finest summers, Britons shivered under the coldest weather experienced for forty-five years. The Thames froze hard for twelve kilometres of its length and main-line express trains were sometimes a day late. With the coming of the spring thaw greater activity might have been expected but Neville Chamberlain, the British prime minister, still encouraged complacency. On 4 April 1940 he told the Central Council of Conservatives that Hitler had had his chance in September but had 'missed the bus'. With such messages from Britain, little wonder that Australians had apparently lost all interest in the war.[4]

Some Australians tried to awaken the people, not because they had a better insight than most into the likely course of the war but because they remembered the fervour and unity of 1914–15.

> 'What's the matter with the spirit of this nation [wailed 'Crem'] has patriotism gone out of fashion? 'The Empire is in deadly danger' means nothing to Bill Smith with his safe job in the city, his surf over the weekends and 'pitchers Sat'dee night' ... Young Brown who joins up is a 'mug'; young James who says he is not going to 'rush into anything' is regarded as shrewd and steady.

The difficulty, of course, was to convince Australians of that central proposition, 'the Empire is in deadly danger', and its implications.[5]

In seeking to explain apathy and indifference, some began to blame Menzies. What was needed, one of his critics wrote, is 'for a leader to tell us, "We're up against it"'. But how could Menzies make such alarmist talk sound plausible? Unless the European situation worsened, it seemed impossible to arouse drowsy, sun-drenched Australians to any sense of danger. Speeches and letters from disgruntled patriots attacking normal, innocent pleasures merely antagonised people.[6]

Leaders hoped to encourage some awareness of the war by focussing attention on the AIF, now in the training camps. Rather than keep the

soldiers hidden from view, better to bring them into the cities to remind people that some Australians were preparing for battle. For this reason a series of marches was organised in the Australian capital cities six weeks after the troops had begun their training. Australians were quite unused to military displays. The Anzac day march was a parade by civilians, struggling to recall their previous acquaintance with drill while Australia's peacetime forces had never been large enough to mount marches of any substance on occasions of national celebration. Even the first AIF had been seen only in relatively minor groupings, usually as battalions marched to the troopships.

Sydney witnessed the first of the marches in early January 1940. Pre-march publicity tried to drum up enthusiasm. People were encouraged to demonstrate their affection for the soldiers who had been 'recruited from among the flower of our manhood' and publicity emphasised the Anzac inheritance and the close links between the two forces. As all Australians were believed to venerate the memory of the old soldiers, it was hoped that the new force would acquire reflected glory by association with the old. The soldiers themselves were quite nervous about the march. Conscious that they were still 'rookies', they drilled hard in camp, eager to measure up to AIF standards when they passed before the critical gaze of bystanders. The troops also remembered the jibes about unemployment and wondered how they would be received.[7]

The Sydney march was a triumph. Half a million people waited patiently for hours to witness it. Jubilant crowds gave the troops a noisy welcome, throwing confetti and paper streamers and darting under barricades to pin miniature Union Jacks on the sombre khaki jackets. The press wrote of the soldiers in language reserved for heroes. '[They] came by in sixes, every face browned by camp life, every body trained and fit ... young, bronzed, clear-eyed, and so obviously conscious in their demeanour of their high responsibility.' Commentators concentrated on establishing the links between the old AIF and the new. 'The A.I.F. lives again' was reported as 'the unanimous comment of the watching crowds'. Every account of the march highlighted memories. From the itinerant musicians and flagsellers whose AIF badges had been brightly polished, to the women who fell silent thinking of earlier marches, to the troops themselves in their first world war AIF uniforms, 15,000 of which had been found unused and were remade and recycled. One reporter watched the march with a veteran from earlier campaigns:

> 'Cripes there's good stuff there' [he commented and fell silent]. I looked round. His eyes were full of tears. Was it for lost youth? Old mates? Youngsters going to strange battlefields? He caught my look. 'Damn cheap tobacco', he mumbled looking gravely at his home made cigarette, 'stings y'r eyes'.[8]

By 1941 advertisements of an emotional and sentimental kind tried to interest Australians in the European war

It was the same in Melbourne, in terms of preparations and associations. A huge crowd watched the march, spurred on by newspaper publicity. One account subsequently described the men: 'Fine, strapping types they were; manly of bearing; exuding health and determination; thriving under military discipline'. But amidst the cheering and the celebration there was sadness too. One woman commented 'I never thought I should see another war ... This is the third I have lived through.'[9]

Others were more enthusiastic, even boisterous, and the march degenerated into a fiasco. Not content to cheer from behind barricades, thousands of people, mostly women, broke free and mobbed the soldiers. What was designed as an awesome display of military precision and discipline became a disorganised struggle on the part of men trying to find a way through the crowds. Troops passed single-file, bandsmen carried their instruments above their heads. There was no malice in the demonstration and no panic, though the crowd was 'uncontrollably excited'. Perhaps the soldiers enjoyed the rearrangement: 'troops were kissed by women, garlanded with paper streamers, confetti, decorated with flags and other favours'.[10]

This reaction from Australian crowds surprised the troops who had resigned themselves to jibes and to pity from people who regarded them as 'mugs'. It delighted those who hoped that a new spirit was abroad. A week after the Sydney march the first troops left Australia, destination unknown. Their departure was meant to be a secret but the Sydney *Sun* ruined that when it published, on the day before departure, a cartoon farewelling the troops. Taking the hint, thousands lined every vantage point around Sydney harbour, small boats accompanied the troopships and there were flags and bands and, no doubt, tears.[11]

The 'news' of the troops' departure first appeared in Australian papers in February when it was reported that the Australians had reached Egypt, a destination familiar to the first AIF which had also landed there for further training. So closely did the composition and history of the new force mirror that of the old that people began to campaign to abolish the distinction between the two forces, to drop the prefix 'second'. As one campaigner wrote: 'The A.I.F. has unfurled its banner and is marching again. It is not a Second A.I.F., a sort of Second XI but the same A.I.F. reinforced by sons of the Old Brigade, inheriting and inspired by the old traditions, brave and eager to emulate the deeds of their fathers.' The government moved quickly to accommodate these demands, anxious to arouse some war fervour among Australians. Before Anzac day 1940 Street announced that henceforth Australia's overseas troops would be known simply as the AIF, although battalions would retain the prefix to avoid confusion. The RSL warmly supported the change: 'After all', said the New South Wales state secretary, 'the Australian forces of today are merely continuing the work which, apparently, the men of the original A.I.F. left unfinished'.[12]

A transport with members of the 6th Division AIF pulls out from the wharf in Sydney in January 1940. The departure was meant to be conducted in secret but a Sydney newspaper hinted that the men were leaving and the shores of the harbour were lined with many thousands of well- wishers

This was symbolised, in Sydney at least, by a ceremony devised for an Anzac Night Carnival when, before a hushed crowd, returned soldiers and new troops enacted a changing of the guard ceremony. Men of the old AIF, in uniform, were relieved by a guard of the new, young force. The ceremony, amongst a people deficient in symbolic occasions, illustrated the transfer of traditions: 'The A.I.F. of the last war handed over its flags to the A.I.F. of this war'. Henceforth the AIF lived again, not as some diminutive collection of the unemployed, but, it was hoped, as a real force in its own right.[13]

The departure of the troops had stimulated, however briefly, some kind of war fervour but how could that be maintained with the troops abroad but not yet in action? The manufacture of war enthusiasm in Australia depended on events but no battle or campaign had yet roused the people. In the first war the lack of immediacy and real danger had been overcome by witch-hunts against 'enemy aliens' – often Australian-born people with German

Troops from Bathurst boarding their transport ship in November 1940 destined for the Middle East. All are well laden and apparently looking forward to the chance of overseas service

parentage. These 'spy scares' had convinced Australians that someone had noticed their country; that Australia had some strategic value. The alarms were mostly absurd and vicious but they fulfilled a real need. In 1939 there had been a brief flurry of excitement as state police rounded up potential saboteurs and interned them but many people seemed reluctant to believe spy stories the second time around. Most 'enemy aliens' were free to come and go as they pleased, subject to a few restraints such as reporting their movements to local police.[14]

Nevertheless Australians easily succumbed to fear, even hatred, of foreigners and it is true that the level of immigration from Germany in particular had increased immediately before the outbreak of war. Even so, the number of refugees from Nazi Germany was small. In the year to 30 April 1940 only 3,002 German immigrants had been admitted to Australia compared with 9,669 Britons. These German refugees would have had the best reasons to

Registration of aliens at the Torrens Drill Hall in Adelaide. All aliens were required to register and could be interned if authorities believed them to be dangerous. Most, however, were allowed to go free subject to the restriction of reporting movements to police. Many aliens lost their jobs because of an anti-foreigner prejudice and some sought internment as the only means by which they might survive

hold anti-Hitler sentiments, particularly as many of them were Jews who had experienced at first hand the brutality of the German regime. Australians, however, traditionally isolationist and probably anti-semitic, remained suspicious and certainly casual about the rights of a minority.[15]

People blamed many of their society's ills on 'foreigners', who would not, apparently, ever be accepted as Australians. 'Foreigners' appeared mean and unscrupulous, took work from Australians, and allegedly took advantage of the enlistment of Australians. A newspaper correspondent hiding behind the nom-de-plume 'Australia Fair' wrote: 'The employment of foreigners in certain large city stores is to be deplored, while there are still Australians in need of work walking the streets'. Or, in the words of a returned first war soldier, formerly a member of the Seventh Battalion: 'I went to the front in 1914 to fight for the protection of the British Empire and freedom of Australia and my children, not to have this country taken possession of by foreigners'. Some of the stories drew on anti-semitic stereotypes. A Red Cross flagseller described how on a Melbourne street corner where she had stood all day: 'Not one foreigner gave to me for the Red Cross. One offered me a half-penny which I refused. Another well-dressed foreigner put a half-penny in the box. Fortunately I saw the coin

and stopped him from taking a 1/- flag.' There was nothing in these mean stories to encourage 'spy scares' but some people needed to inject a sense of excitement into the war.[16]

Even after seven months of war no danger had materialised. The dramatic decline of the ARP provided an indication of the futility of trying to manufacture a threat, while those responsible for the ARP only made matters worse by that streak of Gilbertian farce already noticed. With great advance publicity Sydney prepared for its first air-raid siren test in February 1940. Sirens had been installed on public buildings throughout the city and had also been erected, often on free-standing posts, at strategic points in the suburbs. In theory, at least, every Sydney citizen should have been alerted, instantly, to any danger from the skies. The test proved a great disappointment. In the city comparatively few people heard the sirens, in fact only those adjacent to one, as the roar of the traffic drowned out the warning blast for everyone else. In many suburbs no sound at all disturbed the usual calm although all sirens were sounded for three minutes. The minister responsible for the

ARP wardens and home defence forces conducted many exercises to familiarise themselves with ARP procedures. Here they have discovered an unexploded bomb' and are loading it on to a truck for transport to a safe area. These exercises were conducted with great realism to prepare the volunteers for real war should it ever come to Australia

ARP did not help matters when he announced that the test had been both 'a failure and a success'. Elaborating this cryptic remark he explained that the test had failed to capture popular attention but had succeeded in showing what needed to be done.[17]

Clearly war fervour would depend on progress at the front but, perhaps taking their cue from British ministers, Australian spokesmen seemed determined to encourage a sense of security and of British superiority. J. V. Fairbairn, minister for Air, returned to Australia from a tour of inspection of the 'battle front' and reported that the Maginot Line could not be passed. Whatever else happened the Germans would be held up there. And a senior naval officer announced in Melbourne that 'Germany's Navy is limited ... if we have sunk anything like the number of cruisers and destroyers reported, we have crippled their capacity for action'.[18]

When the German troops at last began to move, many Australian leaders made light of the danger or laughed at Hitler who was regarded as something of a joke in Australia. The armchair strategists, particularly journalists, put the most optimistic gloss on every item of news. Hitler's Scandinavian excursion was depicted as a 'colossal blunder' while the fate of the German army in Norway was never in doubt, in Australia at least: 'either extermination wherever they are caught or ignominious expulsion'. So complacent had Australians become that Menzies found it necessary to counsel them that there could be no peace by negotiation; some people apparently believed that this war would simply fade away.[19]

Suddenly and dramatically all this changed. The static war in which nothing happened gave place to a war of frenzied activity as the Germans routed the French and British armies and pushed them to the sea. To the minister of External Affairs, John McEwen, a young man then at the beginning of a distinguished political career, fell the task of explaining to the Australian people what was happening at the front. McEwen retained the optimistic note in his reports, deliberately no doubt, although his cheeriness was no tribute to the intelligence or the tenacity of his audience. But McEwen followed Menzies's lead and seemed anxious to avoid alarming or unsettling the Australian community.[20]

In mid-May 1940 Australians learned that the assault on the Low Countries had been checked and while this was 'heartening news ... there is no justification for any elation'. There was elation, however, amongst those Australians who welcomed the beginning of the real war because at last, perhaps, would other Australians come to their senses. 'The agony of suspense is over', reported the *Australasian*, 'the British and the French armies went on their way north singing. Can there be a happier augury for victory?' McEwen described the German advance as a 'colossal gamble', 'an attempt by Germany to shoot her way out of a deadly predicament', although Hughes, a much more experienced politician and strategist, took the situation more seriously. He spoke of 'this supreme crisis' as a testing

time of national character and called upon Australians to prove themselves 'worthy of our breeding and heritage'.[21]

Hughes's assessment of the danger proved more realistic for suddenly the Germans achieved a remarkable string of successes. Newspapers printed the grim facts but managed to make them palatable by maintaining the optimism that had, for so long now, dominated war news in Australia. People in Australia seemed unable to believe what was happening. Menzies led the chorus. Speaking at an Empire day rally in Melbourne he declared that 'No-one should believe that the great French armies could be brushed aside in a week or two' and he advised his audience that they 'should not have to wait very long for a counter stroke by France'.[22]

No counter-stroke emerged. The British and the French were on the run, trying desperately to mount some resistance to delay the German avalanche. Apparently fearing a collapse of nerve in Australia, ministers now concentrated on the wonderful morale of the Allied troops and their gallantry in the face of an enemy vastly superior in numbers. McEwen's optimism bordered on the absurd: 'Man for man, and machine for machine, the superiority of the R.A.F. over the enemy fliers is daily being demonstrated ... the enemy's superiority is only in numbers'. A factor, it might have been presumed, likely to be decisive. McEwen even managed to turn the evacuation of British troops at Dunkirk into some sort of triumph: 'The British troops have been driven into the sea, it is true, but the sea is the natural element of our race'. Few Australians, surely, took this aquatic nonsense seriously when in the same paper they could read Churchill's comment: 'what has happened in Belgium and France is a colossal military disaster'.[23]

Smooth words could not disguise the fact that Britain hovered on the brink of defeat. Suddenly Australians, until recently so hopelessly optimistic, appreciated that an invasion of the British Isles was not just a possibility, but appeared almost certain. An intense affection for Britain remained an important emotion for thousands of Australian patriots who now gave expression to their love of the land their parents had called 'home'. Win-the-war rallies emerged from the gloom of bad news. At one such meeting Menzies, borrowing Fisher's words, pledged that Australia would stand beside Britain 'to the last man and the last shilling', a highly symbolic phrase but one in keeping with the mood of the time. Britain now stood alone before the 'Frankenstein monster', the prime minister continued, '[and] as long as Great Britain is unconquered the world can still be saved, and that Britain can or will be conquered is unthinkable'. The royal family became the focus for this renewed Empire loyalty as pictures of the king and queen and their two daughters appeared frequently in Australian newspapers and magazines alongside reports that Britons could 'take it'.[24]

Some imperialists relished the crisis, arguing that only in times of crisis was the Empire at its greatest. Preachers, editorialists, politicians, all concentrated on concepts such as the 'British spirit', 'breeding and heritage' and the 'proud

traditions' which they believed set the Empire apart from other 'races'. These imperial platitudes stirred many Australians and dissent seemed unthinkable. Frustrated patriots who could find no other outlet for their enthusiasms rushed into print in the letters columns, hoping to stir their fellows. 'The British character', wrote Thomas Donaldson of Brunswick, a Melbourne industrial suburb, 'had been built on such trials ... It would not be the spirit of anyone born of British stock to admit that we are being beaten.' A true patriot could even find reverses encouraging: 'Like a rich man beset by an army of poor relations', wrote Arthur Chanter of Melbourne, '[Britain] has tried to help them all, to her own disadvantage. Now she is absolved from these obligations and will be free to concentrate on her own defence.'[25]

Such imperial patriotism expected and encouraged a higher rate of enlistment. The government had already decided in March to form another division of the AIF, the Seventh, and in May, just as recruiting began again, Menzies announced that yet another division would be raised to meet the emergency. Recruiters approached their task nervously, the failure of the first campaign a vivid memory. The existence of the new divisions placed heavy demands on recruiters: New South Wales, for example, was required to provide 800 men a day to meet its quota – a tall order indeed. At first, everywhere, the response was disappointing. A low key recruiting campaign centred around radio talks and newspaper advertisements which lacked any humanity. Critics demanded the reintroduction of public rallies, such a feature of Australian life in the first world war, because the direct appeal was thought to have a much greater chance of success.[26]

The government agreed, stepping up recruiting with lunchtime rallies, information booths on street corners, leaflets explaining conditions of service, and bands and singers and radio stars to draw a crowd. Volunteers belted out a specially written recruiting song 'March Australia'. A new recruiting depot at the Melbourne town hall considerably raised earlier standards. Instead of a draughty hall, bare boards and an undecorated trestle table, recruits now experienced 'enlisting de luxe', with carpet on the floor, magazines on coffee tables and tea and biscuits for each recruit. The new approach proved successful: 750 men enlisted on the day the depot opened.[27]

As the news from Europe deteriorated, the number of recruits increased. On 21 May in Martin Place, Sydney, over 1,000 men offered their services, causing an officer to remark, 'Even in the last war I've never seen a keener crowd'. By 23 May half of Victoria's quota – 4,000 men – had enlisted for the Seventh division and when, a day later, numbers were counted for the two-day-old Eighth, it was found that 1,200 had joined. On 23 May AIF recruiting figures in New South Wales reached a new daily record when 1,300 men joined up. Recruiters could not cope with the rush which was, understandably, at its greatest during the lunch hour. This led observers to conclude that recruits were no longer the unemployed who looked to the army for three meals a day, but men in jobs who had concluded that the

Empire's crisis demanded their attention. As recruitment proceeded, the militia was expanded greatly, with large drafts of men called up for service for home defence. As before, the militia showed little interest in transferring to the AIF.[28]

Observers in Adelaide noted the cheerful demeanour of these recruits who threw in good jobs to defend the Empire, in contrast perhaps to the unemployed who had shuffled in from dole queues – at least in popular imagination. No-one now doubted that South Australia's quota of 2,200 would easily be filled and there was a first world war flavour to recruiting stories. The *Advertiser* reported 'an atmosphere of cheerfulness and camaraderie' amongst men from 'a score of different occupations'. A recruit from Morphett Vale, a small town twenty kilometres from Adelaide on the main south road, applied at the Adelaide depot but was rejected because he did not have his parents' consent. So keen was this man that he jumped on his motor-cycle, obtained the consent and returned to the recruiting sergeant, all within 45 minutes. A train from Townsville brought sixty recruits to Brisbane, the most travelled of whom was a stockman from 480 kilometres west of the Diamantina. The bugles of England had sounded throughout Australia once again.[29]

No-one bothered about the refusal of militia men to transfer because the rush had filled the AIF, for the time being at least, and indeed the government examined ways to slow recruitment down because recruits could not be accommodated in the camps. On 20 July Street suspended enlistment in the AIF, temporarily, to allow for a draft of 250,000 militia to be trained. In a four-week period to 11 July 1940 41,400 men had joined up and, as recruiters proudly observed, this bettered, by 5,000 men, the best recruiting period of the first world war. 'On all sides', a commentator noted, 'there is evidence of a great national awakening' with 'Scenes of enthusiasm recalling the spirit of our volunteers in the last European war'.[30]

Even so, in a reaction remarkably reminiscent of the response to crisis in the last war, influential Australians began to appeal to the government to introduce conscription. People contended that conscription represented the only fair way of meeting the crisis because voluntarism exacted sacrifices from the best people leaving alone the selfish or the apathetic. Conscriptionists pointed to married men with families who had enlisted and suggested that single men should have been the first recruits. Some employers adopted their own form of conscription. The directors of Dennys, Lascelles, a Geelong firm of wool-brokers, issued a notice to employees stating that they expected 'every single man of military age to offer himself for military service'. 'As far as humanly possible', the directors continued, 'a position will be found for all permanent employees able and desirous to come back to the service of the company' on return from war.[31]

The crisis also impelled some patriots to demand the imitation in Australia of measures adopted in Britain to show, presumably, that Australians were

'serious' about the war. Calls for a national government fell into this category. At a meeting of 21 'representative', that is to say influential, Melbourne men, there was much discussion about measures to meet the 'grave national situation'. The meeting demanded that Menzies place Australia on a 'total war footing' and that he take steps to form a national government that would embrace all acceptable shades of political opinion. A meeting of 2,000 citizens at Sydney town hall adopted two proposals for immediate implementation to place Australia on a war footing – the formation of a national government and the internment of all enemy aliens.[32]

The call for a national government was an unimaginative and unnecessary response to the crisis and represented a simple-minded desire to follow Britain's lead. Menzies enjoyed a healthy majority in the House of Representatives and led a reasonably united government, while the opposition under Curtin gave him loyal support on most matters of policy. The union movement, too, was largely co-operative except for the small number of radicals who followed Russia in opposing the great imperialist war. A national government would have upset such harmony in Australia, destroying workers' faith that Labor protected their interests and would have caused equal division amongst conservative politicians. And yet ardent patriots, ignoring political reality, continued to press for a national government to fulfil their own needs for resolution and determination.

Some of the impetus for a national government, however, arose from dissatisfaction with Menzies as a wartime leader for he still attracted a great deal of attention and criticism, especially in Sydney. Part of the reason for this lay in traditional Sydney-Melbourne jealousy. Menzies was essentially a Melbourne man and, while he became an ardent supporter of Canberra in later years, at this stage of his political career he made his preference for Melbourne obvious. He rarely visited Sydney, complaining of the 'dreary train journey' from Melbourne. Most government departments remained in Melbourne and the *Age* did nothing to improve relations between the two cities when an editorial suggested that federal parliament should sit in Melbourne for the duration of the war to be close to the departments. A Sydney resident saw slights everywhere, complaining that 'even the B.B.C. announcers have, while giving items of news, stressed Victorian achievements'.[33]

While Menzies suffered, in Sydney at least, from this close association with Melbourne, critics also found him uninspiring, and even timid. He would have nothing to do with the conscription lobby, declaring that there was no need at all for compulsion for service outside Australia. People found Menzies curiously detached, particularly in his speeches, which even today seem unduly ironic and full of self-mockery as if Menzies had trouble taking himself seriously as a war leader. Almost every time he broadcast his performance generated criticism not with the content of the broadcast, but with the tone. People complained that Menzies lacked 'vigour, fire

and conviction', surprising accusations in view of his intense emotional commitment to Britain. He had his supporters, too, of course, one of whom observed that 'now is no time for the leader of our country to indulge in jingoistic, flamboyant rhetoric' but this, it appeared, is just what the patriots did want.[34]

Other cries for action were as desperate and as psychologically understandable as the calls for a national government. In the first world war patriots had elaborated all manner of exaggerated responses, even persuading the government to place an armed guard at the small country town of Murray Bridge to protect the Victorian–South Australian railway connection. Now equally excited persons dreamed up similar schemes. One enthusiast suggested that the militia provide a guard for the Bunnerong power station in Sydney, as a protection against saboteurs. The president of the British Empire Union elaborated a four-part strategy to meet the crisis. Parliament should sit as a whole, without political parties; and ministers should be chosen on ability alone regardless of previous political allegiance. All persons over sixteen, invalids and lunatics excepted, should be required to swear an oath of loyalty at the local police station. And the whole of Australia's manpower and wealth should be conscripted to save civilisation from extermination. This was not a practical plan but it certainly would have given Australians an emotional involvement. 'Recruit', from Sydney, concentrated on practical issues. He wanted the government to introduce conscription, to impose 'drastic penalties' on those who encouraged strikes, to mobilise completely all industries for wartime production, to train women for munitions work and to introduce severe restrictions on aliens in Australia.[35]

Australians demonstrated their growing contempt for 'enemy aliens' in a variety of ways. There was a manifest revulsion for anything German or Italian which led to demand for changes of name. Thus the Collingwood council discussed changing that part of Heidelberg Road that ran within its boundaries to 'Churchill Parade', while prominent businessmen with foreign-sounding names found it necessary to advertise to establish their patriotism. The proprietor of a substantial Melbourne menswear store, Fred Hesse ('Be snappy, be dressy, be clothed by Fred Hesse') offered a large reward to anyone who could prove him to be disloyal. Hesse advertised that, despite his name, he was British-born.[36]

Individuals believed they proved their patriotism by insulting aliens, or by beating them, or by damaging their property, and courts took a lenient view of such behaviour. Stanley Phillips, for example, a 59-year-old member of a voluntary defence corps, charged with attempted shopbreaking with intent to steal, explained why he had smashed a shop window with an iron-bar: 'some-one told him the shop was a German's'. The jury acquitted Phillips without even leaving the jury-box. At the St Kilda court Amada Capadona alleged that he had been assaulted by James Gilligan. Capadona told the court that, while he was working on his car, Gilligan had asked him 'Why

don't you get Musso[lini] to help you' and had then punched him in the face. Gilligan claimed he had punched the Italian when he had said 'now we will see who rules the waves'. Capadona consistently denied having made such a remark. Police described Gilligan as a man of good character and when the magistrate had fined Gilligan £1 10s he warned Capadona against making provocative remarks in the future. The fine was hardly severe. An adjacent court report shows that a Footscray man was fined £4 for having driven his motor-cycle between 45–50 miles per hour.[37]

Another Italian, Joe Gelsi, was charged with intent to do grievous bodily harm. He explained that four men had attacked him with pieces of wood in his fish shop and while he had not intended to hurt them he had been anxious to remove them from the shop. The judge, Mr Justice Macindoe, does not seem to have been sympathetic. Summing up for the jury he said: 'Although Australia is at war with Italy, enemy subjects have the right to the protection of the law ... in this community young men were not allowed to smash the windows of Italians; If they did this, in the exuberance of their spirits, they might be called upon to answer for it.' The jury found Gelsi guilty of unlawfully stabbing one of his assailants, while acquitting him of attempting to do grievous bodily harm. Sentencing, Mr Macindoe conceded that Gelsi 'had been grossly attacked by a band of larrikins' but emphasised that knife attacks would not be allowed in Australia. He sentenced Gelsi to twelve months imprisonment.[38]

These attacks on aliens became quite frequent as the situation in Europe worsened although there were some people who protested at such hooliganism. The terrible hate campaign typified by Norman Lindsay's Hun cartoons in the first world war had left some Australians feeling foolish and even repentant, so that in this war there were those prepared to speak out against mindless hatred. When the headmaster of a New South Wales high school told his pupils that 'the only good German is a dead one' he stirred up controversy. A Sydney writer asked 'are' we going to plant the seeds of hate in the minds of young children today so that they too will live to fight with Germany yet a third "War to end war"?'.[39]

Despite such pleas, attacks against aliens continued. The Italians bore the brunt of these, because they were the largest group of aliens in the community, because their entry into the war only when Hitler started winning was regarded as particularly treacherous, and because Australians had an almost complete contempt for Italian fighting qualities. Some Italians were interned as soon as their country entered the war but most remained free to carry on their businesses. Prudently enough, many shut up shop, for fear of attacks. As soon as war with Italy was announced, 400 Sydney university students marched down Broadway to the city singing patriotic songs and shouting slogans against Mussolini and Italy. They intended to invade the markets but police turned them back at Central station. Despite appeals against lawlessness the windows of at least twenty Italian shops

were smashed in Sydney over two nights. In vain did police explain that the Italians did not have to pay for repairs, rather insurance companies suffered; nor did police stop the vandalism when they announced that many of the Italians had been naturalised Australian citizens for years. In a Sydney fruit shop a woman who had just made a purchase was asked by another why she bought from Italians. In the excitement someone seized a basket of berry fruit and hurled the contents about the shop. So dense did the crowd become and so heated the argument that fifteen police struggled for some time to restore order. Such incidents finally convinced the state government that there was a serious risk to persons and to property. The government ordered all Italian fruit shops in Sydney to close (there were about 140 of them) and, after a few days delay, offered to buy the fruit in the shops and distribute it to metropolitan hospitals.[40]

As a temporary measure this succeeded in restoring the peace but when the shops reopened after about a week, it appeared that tempers had not cooled. A squad of determined patriots in the Bondi area organised hostile demonstrations against Italian shops, warning owners if they did not close permanently the shops would be wrecked. One hapless man posted his naturalisation certificate in the window but it availed him nothing. The women ordered him to close with the others. He complied but the police required him to reopen. The poor man then sold the shop to a Chinese. Police tried to break up the demonstrations, instructing the women to go home to 'spend their energies in their housework', but without success. Six fruit shops closed permanently in three days.[41]

Italians and Germans in the workforce seem to have fared little better. An Algerian who boasted that he could speak ten languages applied to join the AIF because he was sick of the abuse he received from his workmates who called him a 'Dago' and who drew him into fights 'two or three times a day'. He reasoned that he would be much safer and more contented in khaki. Workmen in the Victorian Railways demanded that the Commissioners dismiss all aliens 'whether naturalised or not' because of the possibilities for sabotage. The Commissioners replied that they employed only fifty aliens of whom five were unnaturalised. At least one of the fifty was a first world war digger, others had sons with the AIF, one was an American and others from countries not at war with Australia.[42]

Elsewhere sackings became normal. A Collingwood firm dismissed twelve Italian women on the declaration of war 'to avoid any industrial trouble'. At the Bendigo mines workmen insisted on the dismissal of Italians there even though they were all members of the Australian Workers Union. A union organiser pleaded with the men: 'As far as he could see the Italians were just as good citizens as himself'. When workers on the afternoon shift refused to go below with Italians, a meeting of police and company management was called, and when the company decided to dismiss the Italians immediately, the union acquiesced.[43]

Even as eminent a person as the Apostolic Delegate, the Pope's representative in Australia, found it wise to explain his position. Archbishop Panico declared that he was a citizen of the Vatican, not of Italy, and that he 'owed his allegiance to the Holy Father'. He said nothing of his Italian birth. Other Italians tried to show their loyalty and goodwill and so win approval. They passed motions of loyalty to the king and they raised money for patriotic causes. At Griffith, New South Wales, for example, Italians subscribed £956 to Australian war funds as soon as Italy entered the war.[44]

Much of the enmity sprang from a deep-seated dislike of foreigners and from a desire to make the war real in Australia. So there was little the Italians could do to placate Australians. Spy stories flourished in this atmosphere. Members of Parliament recklessly suggested that various groups and individuals had Nazi sympathies branding, for example, Dr T. Strehlow, a distinguished anthropologist at the Hermannsburg mission in central Australia, as a Nazi sympathiser. Swastikas, Mr Blain, member for the Northern Territory alleged, had been painted on rocks at Alice Springs. Strehlow and his family bitterly resented the accusation but in such a climate of contempt and hatred there was no counter to even the most baseless charges.[45]

The federal government acted to limit facilities available to spies, displaying a naivete that appeared quite ludicrous. Every enemy alien, for example, was denied a radio licence and therefore, in theory, a set. As one victim reminded the government, 'Spies are usually not expected to obey the laws of the country they spy on ... Despite the Postmaster-General's prohibition it is to be feared that they will remain spies.' So urgent had the spy issue become, apparently, that a bureau was established at the Melbourne town hall to record complaints about subversive activities. Some of the complaints were 'considered sufficiently important to be referred to the Intelligence authorities for investigation'. Others, presumably, were vicious, frivolous or exaggerated.[46]

In this climate people began to clamour for the wholesale internment of aliens, a campaign that had also gathered pace during the first world war. Leading the campaign was the New South Wales premier Alexander Mair, the member for Albury, an area with a substantial German population. Mair abolished free English classes for adult migrants organised by the Education department, but conceded that migrant children might still attend state schools. Defending his petty action Mair said that all aliens should be interned anyway and won great support for this view from many public figures who spoke at rallies organised to press the case for universal internment.. At a meeting of 600 ex-servicemen captain Frederick Aarons said that, while this was a different war, 'we know a good deal more about the Hun than [federal politicians] do. The passing of a generation has made no difference to him.' The state president of the RSL, L. A. Robb, agreed: 'We have looked the enemy in the face and we are not afraid. If the call should

come, every one of us will march down to the beaches to defend our country against the invader, but when that time comes we ... who have wives and little ones dear to us are not going to see those loved ones struck down by the enemy within.'[47]

Much of this hatred of foreigners fell squarely on the refugees, those victims of Hitlerism who had fled Germany and who might have been welcomed as dedicated opponents of Nazism. Australians speculated about these foreigners in their midst: 'They may be anti-Nazi but they are still German', decided a Williamstown woman. Others feared them as collaborators and fifth columnists sent from Germany to penetrate Australian security. One man reported that he knew many refugees and that he had never heard an expression of loyalty from any of them since the war began: 'Their attitude was almost always guarded, and in a few cases decidedly critical, revealing obvious Nazi influences'.[48]

The debate about them raged as Britain was pounded, nightly, with bombs. N. Nairn of Randwick argued that all refugees should be interned:

> This is not the time to feel sorry for these people: we all realise that most of the refugees from Hitler's gangsters have been badly and even inhumanely treated; and while in peace-time we should deplore their plight ... in war-time we must recognise their potential danger to our country ... generally your refugee is harmless enough and if he is a German his overbearing manner does not alter this fact, but it only needs a few more temporary triumphs for Hitler and your harmless friend turns into a lord of creation ready to die for the Fatherland ... If we intern 5,000 enemy aliens and trap only one spy I say we have done a great service to ourselves.[49]

Although statements such as this may seem extremely callous in the light of what we now know of the terrible sufferings of the Jews under Hitler, it is only fair to add that certainly very few Australians had any knowledge of the barbarity of the Nazi regime. Representatives of the Allies who visited the death camps at the end of the war could scarcely believe the evidence they found before them and only film footage convinced the world that the appalling stories were true. Australian fear and loathing of these refugees, immensely regrettable in hindsight, proceeded from traditional responses to foreigners and bewildered the refugees.

Occasionally these double victims of war made pleas for tolerance: 'We the, victims of Hitler are being treated as you would treat his instruments of destruction ... There is no answer to your criticisms ... whether Germany wins or loses, and we feel and hope that it will lose, we refugees must also lose if Australians maintain the present state of mind.' But Australians remained antagonistic, drawing on an anti-semitic tradition, strongly represented by the Sydney *Bulletin*, a weekly which even found some excuse for Hitler's treatment of Jews. 'What has made these people refugees?' asked

a correspondent. 'May there not be more than a grain of truth in Germany's statement that these people by their sweated labour, employer and employee alike, had brought down the standard of living to a race of slaves'.[50]

As in the first world war, while agitation against aliens fulfilled the need of some Australians to be involved, cries against the apathy of all around them satisfied others. To some it seemed inconceivable that Australians should continue to enjoy life while in Britain people suffered the nightly pounding from the skies, resulting in the most appalling loss of life and property. Frank Bell, of Sydney, provided a most comprehensive catalogue of the ills of Australian society, asking the authorities to curtail

> our drinking facilities, suspend our horse and dog-racing, with their powerful inducements to gambling, dissolve the State lottery, exercise strict surveillance over those picture shows and places of entertainment, together with such periodicals as present incitements to laxity, abolish organised Sunday sport and frown upon the commercialisation of the addiction to superstitious practices ... In the last analysis this war is a conflict between the two great empires of good and evil.

Sporting bodies counterattacked, trying to show their loyalty. The Victoria Racing Cub had devoted the entire profit of £13,318 from its 1939–40 season to the war funds. The Victorian Football League interrupted its scheduled programme to sponsor a knock-out competition of all clubs which played twenty-minute games against each other until the champion team was decided, all in one day. The entire proceeds, £2,500, went to the war funds. The public school associations in Sydney and Melbourne abandoned competitive sport as a lead to other groups, but few took the hint. Patriotism, they had already discovered, could be mixed with sport successfully. Thus at Randwick racecourse and the Sydney cricket ground bands played the *Marseillaise* before fixtures as a tribute to France.[51]

Such tributes might be well meant but some people believed that it was simply wrong for Australians to enjoy themselves while Britons suffered. Australians should make some vicarious sacrifice, they argued. Percy Wald resigned as the South Australian delegate to the Australian Lawn Tennis Association explaining that it was quite inappropriate for able-bodied men to play championship tennis while women and children in England were being killed. The Victorian premier, Albert Dunstan, argued that sport interfered with people's commitment to the war because it prevented people from realising that the war was a serious matter. To those who suggested that Australians needed some recreation, the *Bulletin* had a stinging reply: 'Recreation while the dead are being piled in heaps in the German onrush! In Germany there is no recreation!' While others believed that the continuance of sport in Australia distracted the actual protagonists in the heat of battle: 'How can we expect French and British troops to fight our battles to the last

man when we have the best physical specimens in our country preferring sport to their real duty?'[52]

Sport's defenders concentrated on the need for some simple distraction from war worries, a point their opponents would never concede. As one writer put it, 'It would be silly to walk about in a constant state of morbidness and depression'. Others supported sport because of the contribution it might make to Empire spirit. Mr Justice H. V. Evatt, a judge of the High Court and vice-president of the New South Wales Cricket Association, wanted to see cricket continue: 'cricket is not merely a game, it is one of the institutions that bind the people of the British Empire'.[53]

Evatt's view did not prevail. The state associations voted to abandon interstate games and some states even dropped competitive district matches. Rugby union cancelled interstate fixtures and concentrated on club matches. Some sporting bodies even discussed closing down completely. The Victorian Football Association only voted against this extreme step when it received an assurance from Mr Street, the Defence minister, that he believed the game should continue. The Victorian Football League determined that some sacrifice was in order and decided to cut payments to players by fifty per cent. No-one could then say that eligible players had deferred enlistment because of the money to be made from football. Henceforth players would receive a maximum of 30s a match, a reduction which the Richmond delegate to the League described as the worst kind of class taxation. The move might have been designed to encourage players to enlist but it also helped clubs at a time of falling attendances and gate receipts. With thousands of men in the camps the League expressed delight that receipts had only dropped by twenty per cent but even this reduction must have strained club finances.[54]

As in the last war, some of the opponents of sport demanded that the federal government legislate to reduce the amount of competitive sport played but while ministers like Street believed that recreation was desirable, such legislation could not be expected. The New South Wales government, however, moved to curtail racing, convinced that there was 'a tragic, even shameful incongruity in the spectacle of commercialised sport still flourishing in our midst'. A cabinet sub-committee proposed that horse-racing be reduced from 171 meetings per year for the state to 99. Sydney was to have 52 Saturday meetings, seven holiday and ten Wednesday meetings. Mid-week country racing was cut drastically as the committee believed that workers should not be distracted by racing during the week.[55]

No group felt the pressure to become more involved in Britain's struggle more strongly than the men who had fought in the last war but were now too old for active service. Ex-servicemen believed that previous war service admitted them to a patriotic elite which obliged them to make sacrifices for the Empire but they were also conscious that they had acquired skills and mental discipline that might be put to some good use if only the nation's leaders would make provision for them. Early in June 1940, 4,000

ex-servicemen attended a rally at the Sydney Domain and then marched to the Cenotaph in Martin Place where they pledged themselves to carry on the fight. With right hands raised these survivors from Gallipoli, the Somme, Pozières and Palestine promised to serve 'with all our strength, with all our zeal, the national war effort, until the enemies of the King, and of the British Empire and its Allies, have been overcome, in the name of justice, liberty and democracy'.[56]

Already some of these ex-diggers had formed themselves into groups and had begun training and drilling, in anticipation that some task could be found for them. A unit in Hawthorn, Victoria, came into existence in July 1940 in response to the terrible threat hanging over the British people. Meeting at the Hawthorn Returned Soldiers Hall, these first world war men elected their leaders and then began exercises to become fit again. But without government support they had no access to weapons or to uniforms and, despite their enthusiasm, many members must have wondered if their training had any point.[57]

So intense was the lobbying of these returned men that the following month the government announced that it had agreed to establish a Volunteer Defence Corps consisting of first AIF men to 'act to preserve law and order, to guard public utilities and to prevent subversive activities by aliens or disaffected persons'. Australia was to have its own 'Dad's Army'. One of the reasons, no doubt, for the establishment of the VDC was simply to give official recognition to what had already occurred. It was better that these private armies be officially controlled and be given clear powers and functions than that enthusiastic returned men take the law into their own hands. The government quite deliberately specified that no member of the VDC could also belong 'to any unauthorised organisation which also had the same objectives'.[58]

Now officially recognised, the Hawthorn unit emerged from the privacy of their own hall and organised public events such as displays and marches through local shopping centres to gain recruits. They moved into the Hawthorn drill hall, government property, put on the uniform designed for them, and followed the instructions of their appointed, not elected, leaders. In the first weeks hopes were high that the VDC might really contribute to Australia's war effort and recruits poured in. But the government had no real work for the VDC. There was no equipment, save what they made themselves, and nothing to do except exercises and drill. No wonder, then, that the enthusiasm of many soon waned and men dropped away, overcome by boredom and frustration. Even so, the VDC struggled on.[59]

At least these volunteers had won government recognition, giving some status and meaning to their activities. Women were not so lucky, although the desire to help was every bit as strong amongst many women. But the government, with the support of thousands of Australians, could still see no role for women beyond traditional comforts work. Many women rejected

Early recruits to the Volunteer Defence Corps at Mount Hawthorn in Western Australia. These men preceded the government's decision to use the services of returned men and organised themselves into their own corps, electing their own officers and designing their own drill. All of them had seen service with the first AIF but it was not until 1941 that the government recognised the Volunteer Defence Corps as part of home defence

this feminine, caring role and demanded work that would employ a wider range of skills, as this poem, published in 1940 demonstrated:

> We want to do more,
> To help win this war,
> Than sit with our knitting.
> This business of sitting
> While Hitler is hitting
> Our men is a bore.
> WE WANT TO DO MORE.

Women, like the ex-servicemen, formed themselves into units and practised useful war skills in the hope that the government would eventually relent and would make use of them. But these unofficial armies threatened the government less than squads of drilling men and they were allowed to grow

Thousands of Australian women joined volunteer organisations and learned skills that it was hoped would be useful should the war come to Australia. This recruit is learning something of first aid with the help of a printed sling showing how it should be used. Controversy arose about the variety of women's uniforms in the voluntary services and the various markings

unchecked; literally, as one woman wrote 'new auxiliaries for this and that [are] being formed every day'.[60]

No-one kept a central register of these organisations so it is impossible to give an accurate picture of the extent of them. Each, of course, was organised on a state or regional basis, adding to the multiplicity but some examples will show the range of the groups and give some idea of the skills the women developed. The Women's Transport Corps admitted women who had passed fairly severe driving tests administered by the National Roads and Motorists Association. Members learned how to handle trucks, lorries, ambulances, motor-cycles and cars. They offered their services to the federal government in April 1940 but, of course, the offer was refused and so they volunteered to help any organisation requiring drivers and even had their own lorry, donated by a Sydney firm. They ferried soldiers around Sydney and delivered goods to canteens volunteers had organised.[61]

The Women's Emergency Signalling Corps consisted of nearly 300 Sydney women prepared to release men from post offices and other places where Morse code and other forms of signalling were used. The men would then be free to enlist. Although the corps trained intensively in all forms of signalling in 1940, they could find no use for their skills. The Women's Flying Club in Sydney also had about 300 members. The training programme aimed at equipping members to take over 'men's jobs in the Air Force should the necessity arise'. While women learnt all aspects of aircraft maintenance, few of them actually learnt to fly.[62]

These para-military organisations drew ridicule from many in the community who laughed at women 'playing soldiers'. The women themselves would never concede that military work should only be available to men but many of them were concerned that the variety of organisations brought women's war work into disrepute. In New South Wales where the problem was most acute a central organisation tried to introduce some order and organisation. Under the patronage of Lady Wakehurst, wife of the governor, women formed the Women's Australian National Services to co-ordinate the work of hundreds of different groups. As its title implied, the founders intended to extend the WANS throughout Australia, giving it immense status and influence but Menzies vetoed this, reluctant to allow a powerful women's military lobby to emerge. However the New South Wales government co-operated enthusiastically, opening school grounds to the women for training and refusing to acknowledge any women's group not affiliated with the WANS.[63]

The inaugural meeting at the Sydney town hall on a cold, wet night attracted an estimated 10,000 women, most of whom, of course, could not be accommodated in the hall. They stood listening to the speeches in the rain outside. On the first day of enlistment, 4,331 women, aged between 17 and 60, enrolled at twenty-four metropolitan centres encouraged by Lady Wakehurst's promise that the WANS would prepare women to take real jobs in the services if the government ever relented and opened enlistment to women. Basic training consisted of drill, physical exercise, first aid, home nursing and Air Raid Precautions. Then, after passing this preliminary course, women were drafted into one of the specialised units where they studied army intelligence, field telephone service, signalling, radio, cooking, map-reading, driving, rifle-shooting, mechanics or some other useful skill. Training classes were conducted on Saturdays but there were some night classes as well. Only women who completed courses successfully earned the right to wear the uniform.[64]

One of the most important aims of the WANS had been to co-ordinate women's groups and to halt the formation of new groups. Confronted with the formation of the Women's Army Corps, an organisation almost identical in aims and methods to the WANS, and with a proliferation of other groups, it was clear that in this one hope the WANS had failed. Mrs Preston Stanley

Most women's magazines devoted considerable attention to women's voluntary war work. Women were encouraged to take part in some kind of voluntary activity and war work was portrayed as attractive and glamorous

Vaughan, honorary secretary of the WANS, conceded that 'the sight of so many women in uniform in Australia is becoming almost ludicrous'. Mrs F. V. McKenzie, president of the Women's Emergency Signalling Corps, complained that some of the new groups were nothing more than breakaway units from established organisations, formed when personal differences led to arguments and resignations. She feared, too, that the new groups would 'make women's war work look ridiculous'.[65]

The multiplicity of women's organisations meant an extraordinary variety of uniforms which the women designed for themselves. This proliferation of uniforms brought the women's organisations into disrepute and made it easier for the government and the services to resist their legitimate demands for real war work. Writing in the *Sydney Morning Herald* a critic, Alister Greer, observed:

> For many months we have noticed a large part of the feminine population bedecked in what has seemed a multitudinous variety of uniforms ... when so many different uniforms appeared, and when many of us after experiencing heavy military socks and boots, were confronted with feminine uniforms which included sheer stockings, a doubt began to arise whether some of these organisations existed for utility or for mere show.[66]

Other critics concentrated on the cost of the outfits. There were, for example, about 10,000 women in New South Wales in the WANS. The winter uniform cost £2 17s 6d and the summer £2 10s. For her money each woman received a 'French blue worsted tailored coat and skirt, with peaked cap and tie to match, to be worn with grey blouse, grey stockings, black shoes and gloves'. The accessories were an additional expense. This was undoubtedly a neat, sensible uniform and there were sound reasons why members of a corps should wear one as the Australian Women's Service Corps reported that after twelve months 'experience had proved that better work, co-ordination and discipline was obtainable from uniformed workers'. And as the *Australian Women's Weekly* observed, if the women did not spend their money on uniforms, they would probably spend it on other types of clothing. But expensive uniforms restricted membership of the various organisations to women with a solid financial and social background. 'Ordinary working girls' could not afford to join.[67]

Beyond the variety of the uniforms and the cost of them, many people complained about the tokens of rank women awarded themselves. Lilias B. Dow, president of the Younger Feminists, described the situation as farcical and suggested that women would do better to get on with the job. Mrs McKenzie commented that the women should have to earn their rank and that they 'should do something before putting all the gold braid on. None of this "captains" business either. I just get "Mrs Mac".' Supporters of rank might have argued that they were simply following the male services although

the men liked to think that rank had been earned. Men seemed bemused when confronted by a highly decorated woman whose epaulettes and gold braid often testified more to her wealth than to her ability or length of service.[68] Attention to uniforms and rank disguised the real achievement of thousands of women in these organisations who had taught themselves useful skills and in many cases performed useful work of a para-military type. They gave their time and often their money generously. While a small number of frivolous women decked out in braid opened the way for male taunts that tarred all women's organisations with the same brush, little allowance had been made for the dedication and generosity of the majority. No-one dared sneer at the 5,400 Voluntary Aid Detachments of the New South Wales branch of the Red Cross who gave full-time service of a highly skilled nature. The VADs wore a very simple uniform and avoided bewildering gradations of rank but critics ignored them and concentrated, instead, on the easy targets in their anxiety to prove that women had no place in the armed services.[69]

The other branch of women's war work, the comforts business, generated no controversy because people accepted this as part of women's traditional role in war. In November 1939 the AIF sent out an appeal for socks – 6,000 pairs of them – and women devotedly sent them in, apparently not bothering to ask why the army was unable to supply this one item of uniform. The RAAF indicated that gifts of polonecked sweaters, scarves and socks would be particularly welcome and then discovered that knitters objected to working with black wool, the regulation colour for RAAF socks. The chiefs modified the uniform allowing 'air force blue' or 'mottled grey' to be worn.[70]

By 1939 very few women knitted socks for their own family and it might have been asked why the services insisted on hand-knitted rather than machine-made socks. Was this a case of simply finding something for patriotic women to do – to give them a sense of purpose and identification with the fighting men? Carrie Petersen, president of the Central Western group of the New South Wales Country Women's Association organised her members to respond to the appeal for socks. The women collected money and sent off twenty dozen pairs of machine-knitted socks, bought from a local knitting mill. The socks met CWA specifications and Mrs Petersen purchased them 'at a very reasonable cost'. The group soon learned that the Lord Mayor's Fund refused to accept machine-made socks while appealing urgently for 1,000 dozen pairs. The CWA women demanded to know why 'organisations like the Lord Mayor's Fund always defeat their own ends by proceeding to spin around themselves a cocoon of red tape'. Stung to reply, the authorities conceded that some types of machine-made socks would be acceptable if they met certain requirements relating to size and 'stretch'. In view of this concession it is hard to understand why women would continue to knit socks at all.[71]

Despite the confusion about knitting, women themselves continued to put this forward as a desirable ideal. One woman reported that three of

her men had joined up and only one of them had received a correct issue of socks: 'there is a great need still, and will be for the duration of the war, for socks'. Magazines published stories praising women who had made substantial numbers of goods. One drew attention to Mrs M. S. Henderson of South Australia who had knitted, on average, one pair of socks per week throughout the first world war. By early January 1940 Mrs Henderson had already completed eight pairs of socks, two scarves and a cardigan and had directed that one of the scarves be given to the 'youngest sailor serving'. Mrs Henderson provided the wool herself for all the items she knitted.[72]

A new and large task awaited women in this war, namely the provision of canteens and entertainment for troops on leave in Australia. In the last war this was not a difficult undertaking because few troops had remained in Australia for long. It was left, largely, to the churches. Now, with a home force based permanently in Australia, women found new work in ensuring that troops were adequately and cheaply fed while on leave, that they had somewhere to sleep and that they could dance, read or listen to music to while away long hours in a strange city.

The biggest of these canteens in Sydney was the Anzac Buffet in Hyde Park which opened in early 1940. A ladies' auxiliary raised funds to buy food to provide the thousand on-average meals that were served at the buffet daily. The Women's Transport Corps delivered the goods to Hyde Park free of charge. At the other end of the scale of these canteens was Air Force House, also in Sydney, which provided accommodation, on a quite luxurious scale, for air force officers. The lounge, for example, boasted 'comfortable arm chairs in dark red leather, with couches and lounges to match'. Society women adopted this concern with Mrs Warwick Fairfax helping with the cooking.[73]

Fund-raising became an important outlet for patriotism, although not one restricted exclusively to women. The Red Cross and other charities moved quickly to organise fairs and button days on behalf of the victims of war and Australia's troops. Individuals sought to encourage others by spectacular donations such as that of Sir Thomas Buckland who gave the government £10,867, the cost of an Avro Anson bomber. An anonymous New South Wales public servant promised to donate five per cent of his salary every month, writing when he sent the first instalment of £3: 'It is quite unlikely that I could give personal service as in the 1914–18 war. Many men have given life, others have sacrificed health or reason. None of this can be repaid, therefore citizens who give wealth should not expect repayment.'[74]

Such generosity found few imitators and indeed early fund-raising appeals met considerable resistance. Twice in one month Melbourne's Lord Mayor, as chairman of the Victorian division of the Red Cross, voiced his disappointment at the response to appeals. The public, he said, was 'decidedly apathetic' when it came to making goods for the troops and he noted that they 'would not come across with the cash' when approached by fund raisers.

Later more successful fairs and button days encouraged a carnival spirit more in keeping with peace celebrations than with a sober response to war. For the Lord Mayor's Patriotic Fund appeal day on 1 December 1939 a section of Sydney was decked out as a fair-ground. Vast crowds attracted by the gaiety wandered about all day, chancing their luck on chocolate wheels and raffles. The crowd, 'a solid mass of humanity' in Martin Place from Macquarie Street to George Street, was boisterous but affable – everyone interested in having a good time. There were many pranks: 'A young militia officer, ably seconded by two N.C.O.s formed a platoon of young women, armed them with gay balloons on sticks and proceeded to put them through a complicated "drill" i'n the middle of the street.' Everyone thought this was a pretty good joke, little dreaming that within a couple of years Australian women would be drilling in earnest.[75]

Fund-raising techniques were traditional but no less effective for that; big street fairs and bazaars raised huge sums of money. In Melbourne, for example, normally sober citizens put on a carnival spirit when the Comforts Fund took over the city for a day to raise £50,000. Social barriers were lowered as worker and boss both tried their luck on chocolate wheels and raffles and some enjoyed the novelty of watching a prominent businessman eating 'hot dogs outside the Post Office ... or a society lass spruiking beside a spinning wheel on the Block'. Predictably, these displays of gambling aroused the ire of evangelical clergymen but the Victorian premier condemned this as trivial moralising and introduced a new law to make charitable gambling legal. He also directed clergymen to turn their attention to serious social problems such as 'the slum evil, the hospital question and the tremendous problem of unemployment'.[76]

Clergymen, in fact, had responded to Britain's crisis with a spate of war sermons but, at least in the major churches, the theology of war had not progressed during the inter-war period. Clergymen still placed the whole issue with God, suggesting that He would favour the side whose people conformed most closely to His morality. Rev. George Judkins, for example, asked Australians not to forget that 'the righteous God has the last word in this struggle, and that the last word will be determined by our relation to Him and His laws'. Christians also remained alert for miracles and signs as with the 'Angel of Mons' in 1914. One earnest person believed that the day of prayer held at the time of Dunkirk had been particularly efficacious: 'Can we not see more than co-incidence "in the English Channel, frequently lashed by gales, becoming as smooth as a mill-pond" and the fog coming at the critical moment on May 29th?'[77]

While many Australians concentrated on Britain and the German threat, in wonder at God's providence or more soberly for fear of German victory, others wished greater attention to be given to Australian concerns. Unemployment remained a serious problem throughout 1940 with New South Wales leading the way with 11 per cent of workers unemployed.

Stereotyped view of an Australian woman writing to her soldier overseas. Many Australian women, it was alleged, contrary to this image, broke off engagements with men who suggested that they intended to enlist

Victoria, which had snatched the lion's share of war industries, suffered only about 5 per cent unemployment. Fund-raising days and other patriotic carnivals embarrassed those out of work because no group had made such efforts on their behalf and even to be in town on such days presented a risk:

> Being unemployed I was gazing in a tuck-shop wondering whether to spend my last tuppence on a stamp for an 'application' or on a pie for my appetite, when I was accosted by a young lady armed with a ravishing smile and a tray of 'medals'. When I touched my hat and said 'No, thank you', the smile vanished and was replaced by a look of scorn that made me blush for my meanness. From under lowered eyelids I rapidly but expertly assessed the sweet young things wearing apparel – the visible parts – at somewhere around £100.

Even people in jobs felt some embarrassment at the regularity of the appeals and collections. While the King's School patriotic fête raised £2,000, a Brunswick woman confessed that 'With prices soaring every day and economic conditions becoming worse, women feel that, when they have provided for the wants of the household and paid the tradesmen, they have little spare money'.[78]

The situation in Europe had stimulated some Empire patriotism for the first time in this war. The patriotic middle class rallied as they had done in the last war. Women designed uniforms and jobs for themselves, theatre parties raised money for the troops and it became fashionable to help. More intense frustrations led to the reappearance of some of the worst features of Australia in the first world war. 'Enemy aliens' suffered, as did people presumed to be apathetic. But still for many Australians the war was of little more than passing interest. They flocked to the cities to cheer the troops on gala occasions but they still wondered if this war should concern Australia. Many people concentrated, instead, on the difficulties of life in Australia – the battle with rising prices and the still large pool of unemployed men. Others could not be stirred because they had not sensed the danger in the air.

CHAPTER THREE

CRISIS ABROAD

The Australian constitution stipulated that an election must be held every three years which meant that there would have to be a general election before the end of 1940. The prospect of an election horrified patriots who believed that it would distract Australians just as the European crisis had begun to force people to take the war seriously. So anxious were the patriots that Australians should throw off their apathy that they suggested the election be postponed, as had been done in Britain with the formation of a national government.

On 13 August 1940 three of Menzies's cabinet ministers, Street (Defence), Fairbairn (Air) and Gullett (Information) and the Chief of the General Staff, Sir Brudenell White, were killed when their aeroplane crashed as it tried to land at Canberra. The news of this air disaster stunned the nation and 'tore a great hole in the fabric of government'. Impressive funeral services for these leaders, and for the airmen who died with them, distracted the nation from the political problem confronting the prime minister. By-elections in three seats so close to a general election would focus attention on politics for too long. After briefly flirting with the idea that he might appoint non-elected men to cabinet, Menzies faced reality and on 20 August 1940 announced that a general election would be held on 21 September.[1]

Labor looked forward to the election with some optimism. A by-election earlier in the year at Coria had resulted in a substantial swing against the government, giving the seat to Labor's John Dedman. Since February the war had changed dramatically and Menzies had been the subject of considerable criticism that he had failed to give firm leadership. Labor's federal conference, meeting in June, had adopted a realistic war policy that reflected the national sentiment for a more energetic effort. A major conservative newspaper examined Labor's defence policy and declared: 'There is not a single principle in Labor's war programme which cannot be subscribed to wholeheartedly by every loyal Australian'.[2]

The election campaign, though brief, lived up to the best Australian traditions. Harmony between the leaders did not inhibit the usual slanging matches, and party propaganda concentrated on denigrating opponents.

Menzies's United Australia party adopted the slogan 'Labour fiddles while London burns', while Labor concentrated on the prime minister's personality. Menzies became one of the major campaign issues. He generated considerable doubts, many of them contradictory. Was he strong enough to lead, asked some. Was he domineering, asked others. Could he lead the nation or would he divide it? These were strange doubts, surely, after nearly a year of war. The prime minister encouraged this attention, apparently seeing himself not just as the leader of the government, but almost as the only member of the team. At a rally for national unity in May he had said: 'I appeal today to the hundreds of thousands of trade unionists – loyal and patriotic men – and say at this moment of crisis, "Let us postpone our differences. Come in and help me."' This emphasis on his own importance disturbed many traditional conservatives.[3]

The most surprising aspect of this wartime general election was the refusal of one of Australia's most conservative newspapers, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, to endorse conservative candidates. It was suggested that a strong personal animosity had arisen between Menzies and the *Herald's* proprietor, Warwick Fairfax, which influenced the paper's position. The *Herald* advised readers to disregard party affiliations and to vote for the best man in each electorate, and it published a list of such men which included several Labor candidates. In Barton the Labor candidate was H. V. Evatt who had stepped down from the High Court believing that his country's crisis demanded more from him. Evatt won the *Herald's* support, as did J. B. Chifley, a parliamentarian from 1929–31 and a trades union official who now contested Macquarie for Labor.[4]

If the *Herald's* support for Labor was curious, so too was the result of the elections. Labor polled well in New South Wales winning three seats from the government, including Barton and Macquarie. Elsewhere the electorate moved very little except in Fremantle in Western Australia where John Curtin's previous majority of 8,000 votes was decimated. A swing to the government in Western Australia threatened to unseat Curtin and while the result remained in doubt for many days loyal supporters offered to stand down for him, believing it to be crucial that Curtin remained in federal parliament. Curtin rejected these offers, apparently happy to abide by the decision of the electors of Fremantle. After days of uncertainty Curtin began to outpoll his opponent F. R. Lee in the absentee votes and eventually won the seat by 600 votes. It is intriguing to contemplate the consequences if he had been defeated. The final state of the parties in the new parliament ensured instability and uncertainty. Having lost five seats overall, Menzies required the support of two independent members, A. W. Coles who won the Melbourne suburban seat of Henty at this election and Alexander Wilson who had represented Wimmera since 1937.[5]

The election campaign had provided a diversion from depressing war news. The fears of those who believed that Australians would lose interest

in the war seemed to have been confirmed. Soon after the election, the great spring racing carnivals began and Christmas appeared on the horizon. Australia's love of holidays and lack of seriousness about the war led to an absurd situation in Melbourne. Despite the cancellation of the annual show as a war measure, Melburnians insisted on taking the traditional show-day public holiday. Other traditions suffered, however. For many years ships of the Australian Navy had managed to time an appearance in Port Phillip Bay with Cup week. This year they were on duty elsewhere. Both federal and Victorian cabinets ignored the running of the Cup. Indeed Menzies kept federal parliament sitting throughout Cup week and professed to know the name of only one of the runners. The *Age* excused such indifference: 'In times of peace such an occurrence would be almost unthinkable, but in these world-shaking times members of all political parties recognise that even the greatest event in Australia's sporting calendar must not be permitted to interfere with the work of Parliament'.[6]

Even so the meeting was a great success. About 100,000 people watched the running of the Cup and the on-course tote took £127,376 15s on the race, an Australian record amount for any one race. Even the most eminent people found excuses to join in the fun. As 'Felicity', a 'women's correspondent' observed: 'G[overnment] H[ouse] hasn't declared itself on the vexed question of racetime entertaining. Oh yes, I know it declared last year, but times have changed a bit and now we simply have to entertain the boys on leave.'[7]

Christmas was celebrated at least as enthusiastically as in 1939. In the days before Christmas hotel bars were packed from opening time and by midday good-humoured queues waiting for service stretched out into the city streets. The managing director of a department store described business as 'astonishing'. The tourist trade was brisk, too, despite the first attempts at petrol rationing which had been introduced after the election. Guest-house owners reported the best bookings for many years. Critics suggested that people seemed oblivious to war and were content to enjoy themselves while they had money in their pockets. Others argued that a holiday was a necessity, not a luxury, because people had worked so hard throughout 1940.[8]

Revellers greeted the new year optimistically. At St Kilda the council had provided decorations and illuminations and two dance bands played light music – at midnight the whole of the foreshore was lit up by a brilliant display of fireworks. There were 'thousands of coloured rockets, cascades of fire, Roman candles' and every other variety of firework. With 'Rockets soaring into the air and star shells dissolving with beautiful patterns into the darkness of the sky' it must have been hard for the excited spectators to remember the blackout conditions in Britain and the terrible night visits of hundreds of Nazi bombers. On the radio Menzies tried to recall holiday-makers to a sense of the dangers they faced:

> We are fighting, it is true, for our temporal freedoms, for our native lands, for our homes, for the future of our families gathered about us tonight, or keeping watch and ward on the world's battlefields. But truer it is that we are fighting for the future of the human race and for the independence of the human soul.[9]

Perhaps there was an element of false gaiety in this holiday exuberance, a recognition that Australians were living on borrowed time. For it must be admitted that there was a tendency to panic whenever the war news worsened, particularly when international events seemed to implicate Australia. In mid-February 1941 newspaper headlines announced a 'War Council Warning to Australia', explaining in slightly smaller type that Australia faced threats of 'Utmost Gravity'. Spender, minister for the Army, condemned 'a tendency to think everything is going to collapse around our ears' and reminded people that it was 'rather important to keep our heads'. Rumours of Allied disasters had circulated freely in early 1941 and there was a constant whispering campaign suggesting that Japan would soon enter the war. The navy office asked people to have nothing to do with this rumour-mongering but in wartime even the most amazing stories seem credible. A single report might alarm at least a section of the public and a gloomy headline might set off panic. The 'warning to Australia' suggested that the Japanese might soon attack and a large crowd gathered outside the Commonwealth offices in Sydney to watch members of the war cabinet arrive for what was presumed would be a 'crisis meeting'.[10]

Newspapers fuelled the speculation. One imaginative report suggested that W. M. Hughes, the Navy minister, had burst into tears when he read the most recent cable from London and had rushed from the room crying 'this is too much for me'. It is difficult to imagine any action less characteristic of Hughes for, emotional though he was, he remained a determined fighter. Surprised by the mood of hysteria so easily aroused, Curtin with Fadden, the acting prime minister because of Menzies's absence overseas, moved to reassure people. They denied that the situation in the 'far east' had changed dramatically and Fadden explained that it remained 'critical but not alarming'. Even the Japanese consul-general in Sydney tried to reduce tensions by emphasising that there was no grievance between Australia and Japan which could not be solved by peaceful negotiation.[11]

Confusion abounded, however. In Australia newspapers seemed determined to whip up hysteria with headlines such as 'Storm Clouds Lower'. Fadden and Curtin continued the anti-alarmist line but then rounded on Menzies in London when he expressed hopes for continuing peace in the Pacific and for friendly relations with Japan. War cabinet regretted Menzies's statement and the absent prime minister was condemned as being out of touch with local developments and the mood of Australians. Menzies's London statement was described as 'liable to induce in some types of Australian mind a return to the complacency from which they had been

shaken'. Ross Gollan, an experienced Canberra correspondent, suggested that Menzies behaved 'Prime Ministerially like a professor of mathematics asserting that two and two make five, like a balletomane confidently arguing that Pavlova was a racehorse ...' With contradictions apparent between war cabinet and the prime minister and with newspapers sensationalising 'far east' uncertainties, it is little wonder if there was confusion and alarm in the minds of many Australians.[12]

It was a piece of fortuitous timing, therefore, that a squadron of seven American warships visited Sydney and Brisbane in late March. Crowds greeted the Americans with an emotional fervour perhaps never before witnessed in Australia and welcomed the visit as evidence that American 'neutrality' leaned heavily in the Allies favour. It was also an assurance, most people hoped, that the Americans would fight beside Australians should the Japanese enter the war. Perhaps it is fair to add, too, that the cordiality derived in part from the novelty of the event. Australians had become accustomed to the stereotyped American because of Hollywood's dominance of Australian cinemas but few Australians had seen an American, let alone met one.

The ships remained in Sydney for three days and during that time the sailors marched through the city, received an official welcome at the town hall, and were taken on all sorts of tours and to all sorts of parties. The march was unlike anything previously seen in Sydney. The crowds were enormous; the enthusiasm overwhelming. Commentators who had recently been complaining about Sydney's restrained response to parades of Australian troops found the welcome on this occasion quite different:

> People who can remember every big Sydney procession for a generation were astounded by the enthusiasm displayed by the crowds during the march yesterday ... The most striking feature of the demonstration by the crowd, and one which was new to Australia, was the use made of coloured streamers, confetti, flower petals and torn paper ... these were showered ... until the air was thick with them and the tall buildings were festooned with colour.

The reporter noted that Sydney took the American visitors to its heart with 'fervency, with overwhelming, crushing cordiality'. After the march, officers were entertained to lunch at the town hall while the men looked after themselves. This proved fairly simple. They were mobbed by autograph hunters and 'by persons anxious to offer private hospitality'. About 175 ex-AIF members of the New South Wales Police Force had been designated as a 'Goodwill Patrol' to look after the Americans but they were not needed. Private citizens were only too eager to act as guides. Every precaution had been taken to ensure the Americans felt at home. Shopkeepers had even been given permission to change American currency at published exchange rates so that the sailors could buy what they liked or go as they pleased.[13]

At the lunch for officers Fadden said that the American visit was 'a symbol of practical co-operation, valuable friendship and evidence of determination from our sister democracy to assist us'. At dinner there was a similar round of toasts and speeches and on this occasion proceedings were broadcast nationally by the Australian Broadcasting Commission. C. Simpson, an ABC employee, created an 'Australian song-writing record' with his song 'Stars of Liberty'. He began work on the song at 8 a.m. as the American ships passed through Sydney Heads. He had completed the words by noon and an hour later W. Redstone, federal music director of the ABC, had set the words to music. By 3 p.m. copies had been made for singer and pianist.[14]

Meanwhile the sailors moved around the city and beyond. At the Margaret Reid Home for Crippled Children Americans told yarns about the wild west and 10-year-old June Waiters revealed: 'I'm so thrilled I shall never forget it. I heard the march on the radio and I wished I could have been there. Now, after all, I have seen the American sailors – I think they're wonderful.' Another party of Americans took a trip to Katoomba on a special train and all along the route, at stations or just over fences, people cheered and celebrated. When the train reached Katoomba pandemonium broke out: thousands of people mobbed the Americans and marched arm-in-arm with them through the town.[15]

Clearly America meant many things to Australians but it was significant that this visit occurred just as fears about Japanese intentions became common. Almost as soon as they had arrived, however, the Americans departed. They were given a glorious farewell. Seventy-five thousand people crowded the Domain, the best vantage point as the ships steamed down the Harbour. Thousands more crammed every part of the foreshore which became a 'human ant-bed'. As the cruisers moved out to sea, the band on the *Chicago* played 'Auld Lang Syne' and across the water the huge crowd joined in. Over 500,000 had watched the march, at least as many again joined in the farewell. In Brisbane, the next port-of-call, the welcome was no less enthusiastic. There 250,000 people watched the march.[16]

The Japanese consul-general, now a regular commentator in the newspapers, described the reception as 'very amazing'. He explained that 'the Oriental does it differently ... it is the men who take the leading role in public demonstrations of joy, and the women and children automatically keep in the background'. On an even more sour note, one Sydney man had been foolish enough to steal £2 from one of the American sailors. The sentencing magistrate was appalled, describing the thief as 'a disgrace to the country'. He then imposed an extreme penalty of six months imprisonment.[17]

In one sense the American visit had simply provided an excuse for a huge city-wide party. There were several reasons for celebration. For the first time there had been a significant national decrease in unemployment. Figures showed that from September 1939 to May 1940 aggregate employment had increased by 312,000 and was escalating rapidly. Other figures indicated

increased prosperity. Beer consumption broke all records. In New South Wales, for example, beer expenditure per head of population had grown to £6 11s 6d, an increase of 10s 7d over the previous year: consumption increased by 2½ million gallons.[18]

Professional sport appeared to be booming. Victorian League footballers successfully negotiated the restoration of their £3 match fee and leading players won unprecedented contracts. Two Carlton players each received £300 to transfer to the Association. Other leisure industries also prospered. Melbourne cinemas found business so brisk that eight successfully applied to the health authorities for permission to sell standing room tickets at the back of the stalls. Dancing had become so popular that the *Age* introduced a monthly supplement containing illustrations of new steps, articles on dancing and recommended 'discs for dancers'. Marriage, too, had become increasingly popular, indicating new confidence in continuing prosperity. In 1940 there had been 77,890 marriages throughout Australia, an increase of 13,641 over 1939 and represented the highest annual marriage rate ever, at 11.08 per 1,000 of the unmarried population, clearly exceeding the previous record rate of 9.62 in 1920. In 1941 the rate fell back slightly from this peak but still remained very high at 10.58 per 1,000.[19]

Some members of the AIF viewed these signs of prosperity with disgust because they believed that they had shouldered most of the burden of war, leaving civilians in well-paid jobs and quite indifferent to the fate of the troops. One soldier wrote: 'Having just returned from the Middle East, I am bewildered by the tragic atmosphere of complacency which exists in Australia . . . Conversation reveals that not only are people indifferent, but apathetic. The common attitude is that the British Empire cannot fall . . .' Some of the soldiers' complaints sounded quite priggish and boastful: 'Twelve months ago when the war was regarded as serious, and before the fall of France and Belgium, I sensed my full responsibility as an Australian, and sacrificed everything to answer the then urgent call of the Prime Minister.' It irked these soldiers that the sacrifice seemed so unequal. Poor pay, spartan conditions and little freedom was the price of enlistment. The worker on the homefront enjoyed high rates of pay and plenty of opportunity for fun and was told by a government anxious to secure his co-operation that his part in the war effort was just as vital as the soldiers'. No wonder, then, that the civilian regarded the soldier as a 'mug'.[20]

The department of Information aimed to improve productivity on the homefront by encouraging workers to see themselves as vital cogs in the war machine. One poster produced by the department suggested that the fighting line and the production line were comparable, a view condemned by the soldiers. '[The poster] does not tell me', a soldier wrote, 'that I will get a much better pay envelope in one of these lines than in the other. Nor does it tell me that I am not likely to be killed if I join one force, but I am risking my life if I join the other.' Gaiety on the homefront was, therefore,

deeply divisive, demonstrating to the patriots that there was no equality of sacrifice and that many Australians simply wanted a good time. Such generalisations were unfair, no doubt, but they remained a major cause of dispute in Australia throughout the war.[21]

Australian troops had been in action in the Middle East for many months now and had renewed their reputation as disciplined and determined fighters. Desert warfare had demanded a great deal of them; but lacking the drama of the Gallipoli campaign, the fighting had not made a great impact on people at home. The area was unfamiliar and seemingly remote and no great issue seemed to depend on the outcome. Even so, the homefront could not ignore these battles particularly when the wounded began to return. Arguments about equality of sacrifice, for decency's sake, ceased in the presence of men mutilated by war.

Parades of wounded men were designed to shake Australians from their apathy by reminding them of the tragic cost of war. In Sydney 150,000 people waited for up to three hours to welcome home the first 160 men wounded in the campaign in Libya. Driven to the showground from the hospital ship the men entered the main arena, no doubt dazed by the sight and sound of the Sydney show in full swing. 'Fresh from those African triumphs, the men stood in the centre of the arena in the glare of arc lights' and received the cheers of the crowd. Some balanced on crutches, others had eyes shielded, heads bandaged, and arms in slings, but all were smiling. Fourteen of the men, stretcher-cases, were too ill to take part in this pageant. Instead ambulances took them directly to the Randwick Military Hospital where the 'wounded of the last war welcomed the soldiers of another generation'.[22]

In Melbourne the parade of the wounded illustrated two extremes of the Australian response to war. On the one hand a report notes that 'Now and then a woman, tears running down her cheeks, burst through the barriers to wrench open the door of a car and kiss her man – son, husband, brother or sweetheart'. On the other hand, authorities were so concerned about the lack of an enthusiastic crowd to welcome the heroes that they organised 'strong posts' – knots of enthusiastic, trained cheer leaders who, by their example, would stimulate the crowd to shout and cheer. Even the most noble wartime emotion must be manufactured. In Brisbane there were no arrangements at all for the reception of the wounded. Queensland's war victims were sent by train, second-class, from Sydney and on arrival were ignored. The men were required to sit up for the entire journey, one soldier rising from his sick-bed for the ordeal.[23]

The arrival of the wounded alerted Australians to expect, increasingly, lists of casualties at the front. Casualty lists had been one of the horrors of the first world war. Published almost daily and displayed at churches, railway stations and wherever people gathered, they served as a constant reminder of war's terrible cost. Casualty telegrams, delivered by clergymen, inevitably produced shock and clergymen never forgot the awful experience of walking

suburban streets, as unwelcome intruders, because everyone feared the delivery of the dreaded message of death. Following representations from the churches the government decided that in this war casualty telegrams would be delivered like any other, by a post office messenger boy. As these boys were riding about the streets all the time, it was hoped that they would attract less notice and thus not cause such alarm when one rang at the front door. Some of the recipients of bad news appreciated this change. One woman wrote that she had wanted to be left alone with her grief; another predicted that 'Privacy would be the most important thing for a few hours. I should certainly hate to have anyone trying to break the news gently'.[24]

The telegrams themselves went straight to the point. Next-of-kin read that 'It is with deep regret that I have to inform you that ... was killed in action [or died of wounds, etc.] and desire to convey to you the profound sympathy of the Minister for the Army and the Military Board'. Sometimes the new delivery method seemed callous. Telegrams were sometimes delivered in 'the dead of night'; there was the story of one family being roused at 3 a.m. to receive the news. No account could be taken of family circumstances. One family had been out all day at a picnic, and, returning home at about 11 p.m., a neighbour told the father that his son had been killed in action – the telegraph boy had told the neighbour, as he pushed the message under the door. Few people bothered about the agonies the messenger boys themselves must have experienced although they often had to deal with cases of fainting or hysteria. Were boys of fourteen or fifteen any better equipped than clergymen to handle such an uncomfortable task?[25]

Some clergymen insisted that they should resume the work, at whatever personal cost, because people deserved spiritual encouragement at such a moment. The Methodist general conference, sitting in Brisbane, accepted the work as one of a clergyman's duties and asked the government to reconsider. Some dissented. 'By reverting to the former practice', wrote 'Pretre' from Prahran, 'clergy will be regarded as "birds of ill-omen"' while 'Clericus' of Kensington, Melbourne, suggested that the clergyman could only assist those people who knew him as a pastor: 'To the outsider his words of sympathy cannot mean any more than those of any other stranger'. Others regretted the secularisation of Australian society implied in this type of remark with its implicit recognition that the church played no part in the lives of many Australians. One writer asked: 'Are we becoming so hardened to the cold, relentless fact of war that we do not need spiritual comfort when our dear ones are taken for the cause?' A survey in *Woman* magazine indicated that 40 per cent of respondents favoured the post office delivery and 30 per cent wanted the clergyman.[26]

The government accepted a compromise in a dispute that could yield no clear answer, proposing that a local committee of clergy and postmasters might reach agreement about the best method for particular areas. As might have been expected the various committees elaborated many different

solutions. At Richmond, Victoria, the postmaster would advise clergy of the despatch of a telegram allowing a clergyman to visit the family if he thought this necessary. At Northcote and Moorabbin, two other Melbourne suburbs, the clergy took over completely from the post office. Many other suburbs opted for post office delivery. All these different schemes created a great deal of confusion and in October Fadden announced that the various experiments had failed and that the post office would resume total responsibility for the delivery of the telegrams. This method prevailed for the remainder of the war.[27]

Many Australians remained deeply concerned about the fate of Britain and they took pride in the knowledge that their own prime minister had been invited to sit in on the meetings of the imperial war cabinet. Menzies was little known in Britain before his visit; he had met Churchill only once before, casually. Introduced to British readers as 'a biggish man, bulky with a tanned face and dark-grey hair' who 'pronounces his own name in an un-English (or at any rate an un-Scottish) way', he quickly made a good impression. The strength of his Empire loyalty was soon apparent as he took Britons to task for remarking how gratifying it was that Australians were lending a hand in the war. 'This is our fight just as much as yours', he insisted; 'it had never occurred to him, or, he believed to any other Australian, that they were independent... the Statute of Westminster... had never meant much to him'.[28]

Menzies's four-month stay in Britain gave him first-hand experience of many of the hardships of war. Staying in Plymouth with Lord and Lady Astor, he experienced an extremely savage air raid but insisted on making a tour of the city in spite of the danger. Between 20–30,000 incendiary bombs fell on the city in that raid. Meanwhile in Australia the British crisis stimulated imperial fervour. At the Box Hill mayoral ball, for example, there was a portrait of Winston Churchill on the stage and 'a replica of the cliffs of Dover with a lighthouse flashing out a message, symbolising Britain's invincibility'.[29]

But symbols and rhetoric were no real measure of Australia's response which was fragmentary and even contradictory. While Australian casualties in Africa and then in Greece and Crete increased enormously, recruiting in Australia slowed down. Street's decision to halt recruiting in 1940 reduced enthusiasm for the war as had the complaints of the AIF men stationed in Australia. Some of these men had been in training camps for nearly a year and there were cases of men who had re-enlisted from the camp to win a better chance of overseas service. Continuing dissatisfaction with pay and the widespread view that soldiers were 'mugs' further depressed recruiting. In April 1941 the Army minister, Percy Spender, appealing for 8,000 men per month, said that 'Every blow that the A.I.F. strikes at Hitler and his men in the Balkans, or the Middle-East, or elsewhere, is a blow struck in defence of every quiet home in Australia'. Spender authorised a recruiting campaign to secure the men the army needed.[30]

In New South Wales the campaign opened on 21 April; organisation appeared impressive. There was a recruiting committee in most areas, 300 full-time recruiting officers, five mobile recruiting units and a central command in close contact with all these people. Despite innovations such as recruiting films and radio appeals, traditional methods predominated, particularly the recruiting rally which had worked so well in the first world war. Stunts, too, had a big part, devised to counteract the lack of interest that recruiters believed was quite universal. The mobile unit's visit to Orange, New South Wales, shows how recruiting was managed. All day a sergeant drove around the town interviewing 'prospects' and securing, as a result, thirteen signatures including that of a father of five. Meanwhile the van cruised up and down the main streets, playing patriotic songs and broadcasting invitations to join the AIF. The music of Grade Fields and George Formby, and the appeals, resulted in several more signatures.[31]

In the evening recruiters organised a 'picture show' at the Strand theatre and community singing 'which became progressively more and more patriotic'. The highlight was the exhibition given by Corporal W. Lyons ('Don Athaldo') of 'strong man stuff'. Athaldo's show was impressive. First he tied a fourteen-inch piece of steel into knots, remarking 'I wish this was Hitler's neck'. Then a burly member of the party swung a sixteen-pound sledge-hammer to break up a hundred-weight of rocks on the strong man's chest while 'Don Athaldo' lay on a bed of nails. 'Athaldo' then rose from his 'uncomfortable couch' and turning his bare back to the audience, pointed to the 'punctures' which covered it: he asked for an equal number of recruits. No doubt the audience was diverted and amused; no doubt some of the men present thought about enlisting. Poor 'Don Athaldo' and the rest of the mobile unit drove off for an assault on the next town on their itinerary. Many observers found such stunts tactless and demeaning, asking whether side-shows should really be used to fill up the AIF of 'imperishable renown'. Soldiers particularly found the antics degrading, making nonsense of any high motives that might have influenced earlier recruits. A soldier's wife wrote of the 'extreme disgust' she felt when she saw the recruiting circus, remembering how her husband had 'quietly enlisted without any fuss'. As a report to war cabinet disarmingly had it: 'all recruiting "stunts" staged in the last war have been tried, together with additional "noyelties"'.[32]

Advertisements in newspapers and at the cinema and posters displayed in post offices, town halls, shop windows and railway stations, constituted another part of the campaign. Many of these were directed deliberately at women, acknowledging the part a woman might play in influencing her man's decision. Some women suggested that the poster 'Mister, here's your hat' represented another version of the white feather campaign of the first world war but such sensitivity made no impact on those who designed the themes. An open letter from the director-general of recruiting to the 'men and women' of Australia suggested that the weakest excuse for staying

behind was the desire to defend one's family should the enemy ever reach Australia: 'One look at the devastation and destruction in England will show the calamitous absurdity of such a thought'.[33]

Most of the speeches at rallies, however, relied on mateship and the overwhelming odds that the AIF faced. One such emotional appeal from Lieutenant Earl Gerard, MC, recently returned from the fighting in Libya:

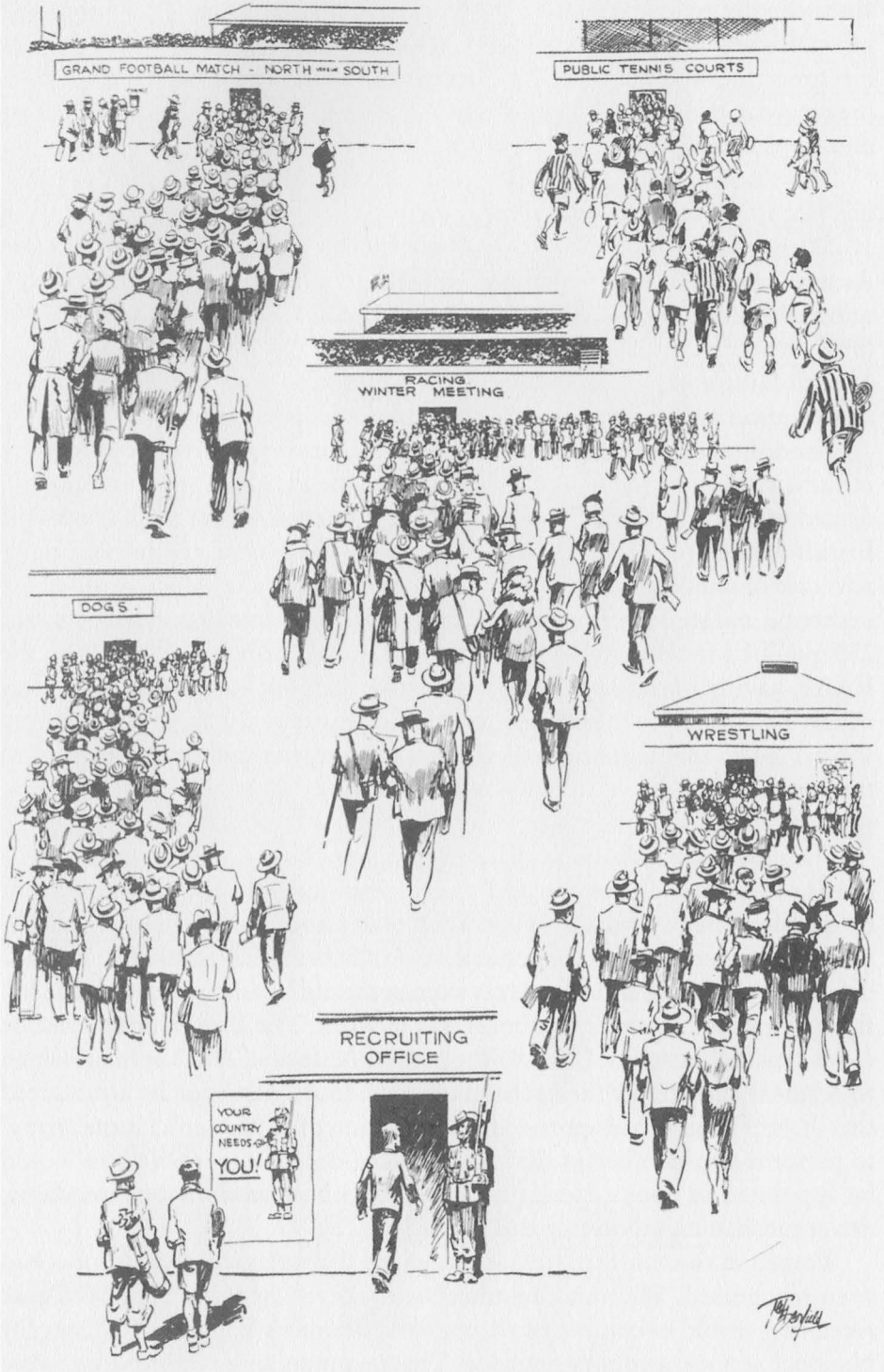
> It is an appeal from my mates, and you cannot hear it – you can only see it. You don't hear it on the lips of the boys over there: you read it in their eyes. Every wound, every limb, every life lost is a cry for help. We are trying to stop a terrific force and when some of our men crash and lie dying in our arms this is what they say: 'Is what we've fought for going to be lost again? Is the life I've given going to be thrown away?'
>
> Those lives will be thrown away unless every man here who can carry a rifle and can use that rifle goes to help his mates and prevent the ground from being lost.

This eloquent cry won twelve recruits at Martin Place.[34]

Other recruiters fell considerably below this high standard. A Dubbo crowd heard a recruiter appeal to men to join up 'to have a good feed'. He promised them 'ice-cream, bacon and eggs' and other such delights and threatened that, unless another three men enlisted immediately, the 'show' promised to the crowd would be cancelled. Such sensitivity was nearly equalled by a newspaper which ran two advertisements in parallel columns: 'One In – All-In: Join the A.I.F. Now' and 'Worry over my son's enlistment made my stomach trouble worse' – an endorsement for a well-known indigestion powder.[35]

Despite all these efforts – sensitive and subtle or brazen and offensive – the campaign failed. At first recruiters enjoyed some success although they lamented that many recruits were quite old. The average age of seventy recruits at Martin Place early in the campaign was 29 years and 30 per cent of them were married men with families. The oldest recruit that day was 43, two years short of the upper age limit. Labourers predominated amongst the employed in this group but a surprising 37 per cent declared themselves unemployed.[36]

There were some spectacular failures during the campaign. When the Victorian Football League conducted another patriotic, 'knock-out' carnival, recruiting assumed a prominent place on the programme. The governor, Sir Winston Dugan, made the main speech, appealing for team spirit to carry Australia through. The Empire could only survive 'if they all pulled as a team. So far the enemy has not succeeded in kicking the ball through our goal and the day will come when we shall carry the ball into the enemy's country.' Sir Winston, a rugby man no doubt, seemed in great danger of confusing the football code his hearers favoured. He finished by exhorting the crowd 'still



THE DINKUM GAME 'AIF recruiting vans are visiting sports grounds in NSW appeal to young men to enlist.' *Bulletin*, 14 May 1941

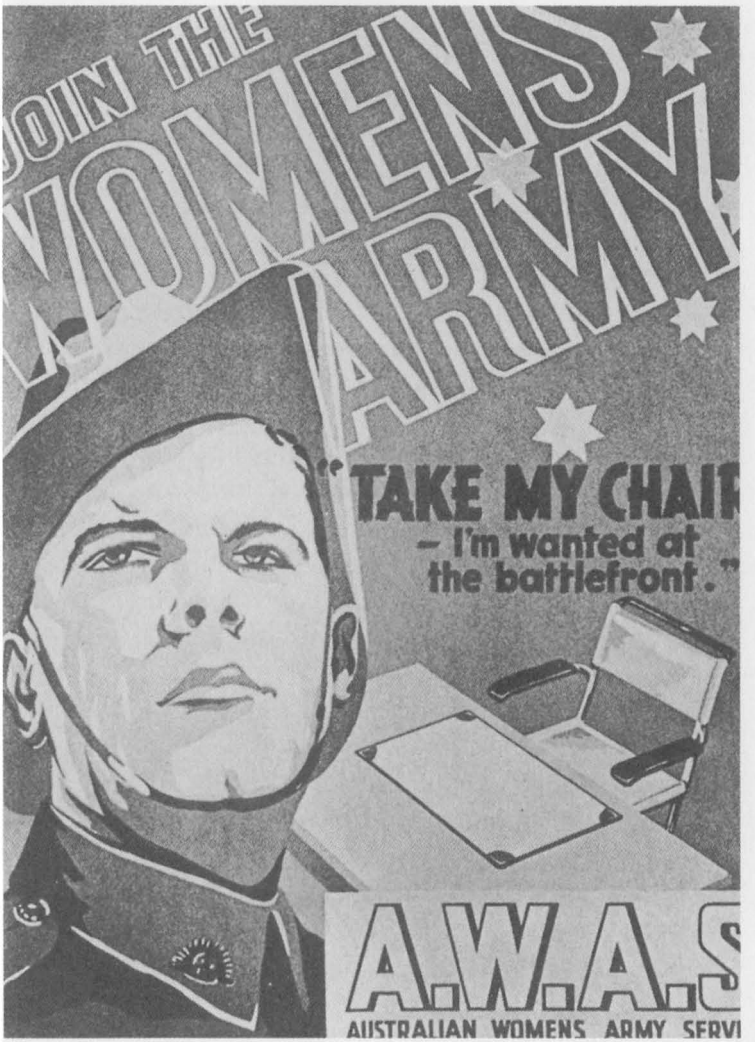
sitting on the ground ... to join the great band of adventurers ... Victory will be ours when we all play together.' Whether or not this elaborate sporting metaphor merited the criticism directed towards 'stunts', it failed to move the crowd. Of the 19,572 supporters at the ground only a handful of young men approached the specially constructed recruiting booths.[37]

Patriots scanned the monthly quotas in vain for signs that the campaign had begun to 'take'. In June, for example, when the target had been set at 10,000 men for all Australia, only 7,094 joined up. Every state except Western Australia failed to meet its target: New South Wales netted 2,465 (3,910 – quota), Victoria, 1,469 (2,630), Queensland 1,465 (1,550), South Australia 484 (850), Western Australia 992 (730) and Tasmania 219 (330). Whenever news of such failure appeared, the papers were flooded with letters demanding conscription as the only equitable means of raising an army.[38]

The difficulty of securing recruits caused some imaginative people to look in the direction of those uniformed women, drilling and training, but still denied useful war work. Menzies had been amazed by the contribution of British women to the services and to war work in general and he became an advocate of women's units when he returned to Australia. After considerable hesitation and second thoughts the government had already decided to accept 250 qualified female wireless and teleprinter operators for service with the RAAF, having been assured that exhaustive searches had failed to find any males. The duties were not thought to be onerous as the cabinet discussion shows: 'Men are seldom satisfied with these duties and invariably try to transfer to other duties ... These duties can be competently carried out by women.'[39]

The concession clearly had been grudging. The women received two-thirds of the male rate of pay and would serve 'until they could be replaced by qualified men'. Even so, in parliament the Labor party had opposed this modest Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force scheme. Makin, Labor's defence spokesman, argued that no woman should be employed until the full strength of the country's manhood was in work. The first priority must be to see that 'full justice is done to the men of Australia'. But the men helped to decide the matter by their refusal to enlist. In August Spender announced that the war cabinet had approved the formation of a 'Women's Home Army' to perform non-combatant duties then being done by men. Women would be appointed as cooks, clerks, orderlies, telephonists, canteen attendants, driver mechanics, tailoresses and so on.[40]

Women in the voluntary services rejoiced that at last their usefulness had been recognised. Without consultation, however, Spender explained that recruiting would be conducted through the Women's Volunteer Register for National Service, a voluntary group. These women, quite unprepared, were suddenly rushed by applicants. All day hundreds of women poured into the Sydney office demanding application forms – which the Volunteer Register had not received – and seeking details about qualifications and training



Prime Minister Menzies in Britain saw the extensive war work of British women and returned to Australia convinced that women must be tempted to join the services. There were thousands of eager recruits when enlistment began, but this poster indicates that women's role in the forces would be subsidiary and restricted to traditional female activities

'Why don't you salute your superior officer?'
'We're not speaking.'
Bulletin, 30 April 1941

required. Despite such a casual and dismissive start, eventually women could be enrolled in the army."[41]

The enthusiasm of the women speaks well for their patriotism in view of the demeaning regulations which surrounded the grudging decision to admit women into the army. As in the WAAAF, they were to be paid no more than two-thirds of the male rate for equivalent work. There was no provision for a dependant's allowance although many single women were solely responsible for the support of their mothers or, perhaps, both parents. Their branch of the army was designed to be completely separate from the men and even the names proposed for the various ranks emphasised the distinction. Suggested terms included Worker (the equivalent of Private), Second Leader (Corporal), Group Leader (Sergeant), Assistant Commandant (Lieutenant), all the way up to the top position of Controller (the equivalent of Lieutenant-General). Women particularly objected to the term 'worker'. Mrs F. V. McKenzie of the Women's Emergency Signalling Corps found the term 'tactless' while the president of the Feminists' Club argued that a woman private should be called a private; 'After all, everyone in the army is a worker', she added, optimistically. The army soon dropped these absurd titles, having made the point that the women's forces would be distinct from the men's.[42]

The newspapers treated the creation of women's services with satisfaction, approving a move that made sense because of the shortage of men. There were stories about the eagerness of women to enlist and of how readily they adapted to service life. There was a great deal of surprise at the competence of recruits and when the women began to parade in city streets journalists made merry with remarks about punctuality and sense of direction. The appointment of leaders of the various branches attracted comments that would not have been made about senior male officers. It is difficult to imagine as close an interest in General Blarney as was devoted to the head of the WAAAF, Squadron-Officer Clare Stephenson: 'Dark-haired, with an enviable complexion and brown eyes, [she] combines tact with charm, and the result is personality plus. She has had a thorough business training, having held an executive post with Berlei Ltd.'[43]

Meanwhile events in Europe had changed dramatically yet again. On 22 June 1941 Germany invaded the Soviet Union despite the Nazi-Soviet Friendship Pact which Hitler and Stalin had signed in 1939. Suddenly Russia became an ally and it was a commonplace that communists who had derided the 'capitalist's war' for the past two years now made a complete about-face and loyally supported the 'people's war'. Such instant conversion attracted derision but no less bewildering was the sudden acceptance of Russia by Australian conservatives although Catholics remained wary of embracing the Russian bear. For years Catholic leaders had taught that communism represented the gravest danger facing mankind. Now the church strove to remind people that the basic aims of communism were unchanged. 'The

A typical recruiting advertisement for the WAAAF. Women were asked to consider how essential their jobs were and to move into the forces if they felt they could make a more important contribution

struggle between Russia and Germany', warned the *Catholic Press*, 'is a struggle between two utterly godless and totalitarian regimes ... Russia is our ally only in a negative sense in that we share common enemies.' Menzies was pragmatic. Dismissing concern about Russia's political system as a 'domestic matter' for the Soviets, he explained that 'it is quite obvious that anyone who kills Germans for us is doing good work'.[44]

Communists, in particular, reflected on Menzies's sudden conversion. Always an implacable opponent of communism, his government had

exercised increasing controls over Australian communists. By May 1940 communist newspapers were forbidden to mention the war, strikes or the Soviet Union. The last number of the *Communist Review* issued legally appeared so circumscribed by the regulations that the editors printed the Sermon on the Mount in bold type. On 15 June 1940 the government had declared the communist party an unlawful organisation, meaning that police could confiscate property or prosecute persons possessing communist publications. Members of the party could no longer meet. Raids enforced these provisions and communists were driven underground."[45]

Editorial writers, skilled in a regular portrayal of the evils of the communist system, now shifted ground and patiently schooled Australians in the new realities. There would be no compromise with communist ideology but Australians made common cause with the Russians because in defending their homeland they showed an instinct common to all humans, regardless of ideology. 'Communist Russian or primitive African, caveman or Christian', all would naturally *seek* to repel an invader. It was a difficult distinction to ask the common man to accept. Allies had always been treated as friends, their leaders venerated, their soldiers loved, their anthem sung and their countries toasted. Confusion reigned in Australia at this level. The Australian Broadcasting Commission had no recordings of either the 'Internationale' or the 'Red Flag' and made no plans to include either anthem in their regular 'hit parade' of songs of the Allies. 'We live from day to day', the general manager, Mr Cleary, explained as if hoping that Russia might soon be lost to the allied cause.[46]

The Sydney City Council, in August 1941, approved the flying of the Soviet flag at the town hall on ceremonial occasions while the Melbourne City Council refused to hire its hall to the Friends of the Soviet Union. When put to the test, though, the Sydney town clerk, Mr Hendy, refused permission for the Russian flag to be flown on 'Russia Day'. Similarly, at the Victorian Football League finals in Melbourne, the Russian flag was the only emblem of the Allies not flown. But the red flag, hammer and sickle, was flown over the Melbourne town hall, between the Union Jack and the Greek flag, during an AIF march in September. By the time of Russia's national day in November most authorities had reconciled themselves to the 'negative ally'. The prime minister requested that city buildings fly the red flag and many owners complied. In Melbourne the symbol of socialism was seen over the town hall and parliament house and it made 'a vivid splash of colour against the grey pile of Victoria Barracks'. In Canberra the red flag flew from the Senate flag-pole at parliament house causing even the 'least conservative' members to look 'pensive'. In view of the Menzies government hard line against communists in the first two years of the war which had led to the internment of 'subversives', the dismissal from public office of suspected 'fellow travellers' and discussion of the banning of the communist party, this new enthusiasm was bewildering, if not comic.[47]

How Moscow's heroic women keep the home fires burning

SOVIET WOMEN stepping out to their latest job, the felling of forests to provide coal-less Moscow with firewood for the winter.

They're felling birch forests to save the city from freezing this winter

By GODFREY BLUNDEN
Our war correspondent in Moscow

I have read the history of this year in Moscow in the hands of Moscow's women. They like to have dainty hands. The manicure shops here are always crowded. I've seen as many as ten manicurists in one shop paring, polishing, tinting, varnishing finger-nails of young and old women. Factory women wear gloves to protect their hands in the workshops.

But during recent months the standard of grooming of women's hands has fallen off a great deal. You notice blunt, broken finger-nails, calloused palms, blackened knuckles.

The women of Moscow have been working on the Labor Front.

LET me explain what that means. The Labor Front here is the total labor resources of Moscow mobilised for war work.

War work doesn't mean working in factories and munition plants, knitting comforters or making bandages.

In Russia it means hard, digging, pick and shovel work.

Last year the women of Moscow went out into the fields west of Moscow and dug tank-traps, trenches, fortifications so that the advancing Nazi Army would have prepared positions.

Probably their work helped to save Moscow as much as General Zukov's famous counter-attacks.

This year they are cutting wood. You see, there's precious little coal in Moscow. The Germans have taken or destroyed the coalfields which used to supply Moscow, and while there is much coal in the Ural Mountains it is needed for urgent war industries, and there is not much to spare for domestic consumption.

So now in Moscow during the winter you must have heat.

Sometimes the temperature drops to thirty degrees below zero, and if the rooms of your apartment aren't heated you will form on the inside walls.

There are few men left in Moscow (all except the full-time essential war jobs in fact), this one few who aren't in the Army or Navy.

So women have to do the job.

Last week I went out to see them doing it. We drove fifty miles outside Moscow to a forest of silver birch where the women were felling and sawing.

It was a lovely wood of tall, young trees standing far apart from one another, except near the edges of the forest. There was little undergrowth, and the ground was carpeted with soft, grey-green moss.

What had been a problem in peacetime, explained how the whole thing worked.

No woman was exempt unless she was physically unfit or had a child or children under five years of age.

In view of the fact that practically every woman in Moscow is doing some work connected with the war, and very few women are described as housewives, I asked how the women were recruited without depriving other services of war activity.

He explained this work of obtaining fuel for the winter was so essential that it took first place.

Every big concern and co-operative factory or Government department was given a quota of workers it had to supply.

It had to get on without these workers as best it could. The Commissar said the labor was organised along military lines. There were brigades, battalions, companies, platoons and groups.

A group was composed of ten or three workers who teamed together in the forest.

'Each worker had a certain amount of work to do every day called her "norm." This consisted of two cubic yards of timber. Many workers exceeded this "norm." They returned to their city jobs when they'd produced their total "norm," generally within two months.

While away from their regular jobs they got twenty-five per cent. of their usual wage, or if they had dependents fifty per cent. In addition they received the ordinary workmen's wage of seven and a half roubles per day.

The particular area under the charge of the Commissar had to produce in all 50,000 cubic feet of timber before the end of October.

In company with the Commissar I walked through the wood, stopping to talk with groups of workers on the way.

There was a five-and pine at the edge of the wood, with a fresh complexioned young woman standing by.

There are very few aristocrats I was told, even though many workers were bourgeoisified and had never used axes before.

Former bus driver

THAT was mainly because they didn't use axes enough to chop off limbs but fell the trees with crosscut saws.

They are small saws about a yard long, which is convenient to measure the lengths into which the logs are cut.

One young woman I met there obviously hadn't any difficulty making up her daily "norm."

Anna Kirshkova Melnikova was her name. She was twenty-two, and was a bus driver.

With her overalls rolled down to her waist, and wearing a light silk blouse, she was attacking a log with the careful vigor of an experienced woodcutter. She had arms like an oarsman and the face of an unbearably handsome young man. But when I spoke to her she blushed like one half her years.

She said she was doubling her "norm" so that she could get back to Moscow.

Further on we met two young women in neat blue overalls and wearing gloves.

Elena Osipova Tarshish and Godova Davidovna Usak were typists who worked together in the Department of Public Health.

Both were married.

"How do you like this work for a change?" I asked.

"It's a pleasure to do anything for our country," Elena said quickly.

I asked them to take off their gloves and show me their hands, which they did with a certain amount of embarrassment. I noticed their nails were still polished.

"This work is no good for the manicure," Godessa said, laughing. "But we are happy to work because we know how necessary it is that we should have local fuel supplies."

In another glade where the recently-sawn timber was stacked I met Alfeya Tyshina. Grekina, a grey-haired woman who was sawing away at a log.

When I asked her if she didn't feel the competition of the younger women, she laughed and said: "I'm forty-eight, but I can do as much work as well as any of these young things."

Alfeya Elychina explained that it was because of a mistake on her passport which said she was 40 that she was here.

"But will someone find you out," she said. "When people young like yours women are so few as these. Elena she went on to say she had a son fourteen, and that her job in Moscow was obtaining office buildings.

Her husband had been killed at the Dnieper last year.

"The Government took me further into the forest and I found a dear young woman singing. Romantic love in song. This was a war song I'd never heard before.

ENGLISH GIRLS, like these Russian allies are leading timber for. These are members of the British Timber Corps, a special section of the Women's Land Army.

MOSCOW WOMEN sheltering with their babies in the city's underground railway station.

Investigating we found a young woman wearing a print frock and red kerchief, gathering logs and stacking them in a heap.

"What's your name?" I asked.

"If you please, Zora Alexsiyeva Veraskimova," she said.

It was like a motion picture setting of a romantic story. She was one of the prettiest girls I've seen in Russia.

She had perfect white teeth and dark blue eyes. She was slender and said she worked in a government department. I asked whether she had any boy-friends in the Army and she laughed as though I were a silly question to ask.

"If you please," she said. "Yes," and she held up her hand with the fingers spread.

Then suddenly seeing me poking at her nails she stretched them out before her and frowned.

"The polish is coming off," she said.

"Does the work tire you?" I asked, wondering how that slight figure could stand up to the heavy work.

"For the first two days," she said. "It was awful, but now I am to do 'norm' like everyone else."

Leaving us she went back to her sawing, singing.

We visited many other groups working in the forest, but the women I've mentioned were typical of all big cut fellings, one of many.

They work well and willingly, they're working for their country.

I visited their quarters at a forest village. Appetising meals and cosy bedsteads were laid to rest.

There was a village hospital full every week for the sick to rest.

In the week-end dances they had a wonderful time. I heard of one group, between overtime and the dance, who walked and ran 70 miles.

I began to think that after all Moscow doesn't need much heating if these girls can keep up that pace.

It was good cheer work in a good cause, but of course they have to the equivalent

A page from the *Australian Women's Weekly* showing the enthusiasm that was being built up in Australia for the gallant Russian allies. Australian women read of the crucial war work Soviet women were performing to assist the defence of their country

These surprising events provoked a steady debate about the rights and wrongs of Russia and the motives of its supporters in Australia. Goulburn's Anglican bishop, E. H. Burgmann, sometimes portrayed as the Australian equivalent of the 'Red Dean' of Canterbury, stirred up considerable passion when he announced that the Soviet attitude to religion 'has changed, is changing and can change still more'. The member for the Northern Territory in federal parliament, A. M. Blain, who had already enlisted in the AIF, wanted to intern the bishop for such statements as they paved 'the way for grave fifth column activity'. Others wondered whether the Friends of the Soviet Union could be called, more realistically, the enemies of the British Empire, so singlemindedly did they support the Russian cause.[48]

Nevertheless people supported the Russian appeal day generously which showed some measure of public acceptance. The Sydney organisers were delighted, announcing that the sale of buttons alone had raised over £3,000, a sum which Rupert Lockwood, spokesman for the organising committee, believed 'constituted a record'. There had been special sales to factory workers, and at the Eveleigh railway workshops 2,000 buttons were sold. A fair at King's Cross attracted a large crowd and every time the main speaker, Lady Halse Rogers, wife of a Supreme court judge, mentioned the heroic defence of the Russian homeland there were prolonged cheers. Even so, two days after this warm testimony of public support, 'Fair Deal' complained of 'apathy, indifference, levity and complacency' amongst his class of people. Describing himself as no friend of communism, indeed as a person who 'at every opportunity, year in and year out, in private and on public platform [has] denounced Communism', nevertheless he believed people should recognise what the Russians were doing for the Empire's cause. At the restaurant where 'Fair Deal' lunched, 'not two per cent' of people wore a Russian button and they ignored sellers on the pavements.[49]

As the year progressed Australians received another shock to their traditional ways of viewing the world. In April and May 1941 war cabinet had discussed expanding job opportunities for women, in the public service and elsewhere, because of the serious manpower shortage that was emerging. As the munitions industry grew, so women increasingly won jobs in areas previously dominated by males. But jobs in the public eye drew most attention and comment at first, although the real increase in women's employment was in the factories and offices.[50]

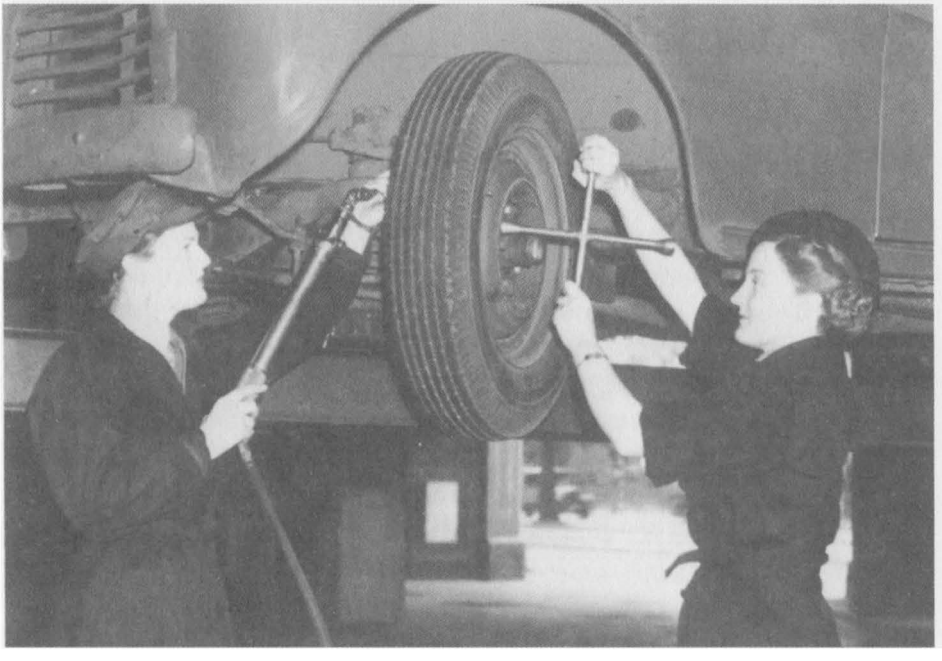
In April the Tramways Board in Melbourne had promised that it would not substitute women for men but by August, so rapid had been the deterioration in manpower, the Board announced that, through necessity, it would receive applications from women between 25–35 years of age, giving preference to the wives of employees on active service. The women would be engaged as 'assistant tram conductors' and would only work in the city area. Within hours of this announcement there was a rush to apply; by the end of the day the Board had received over 500 applications. The Tramways Employees

Association opposed the innovation, claiming that women were 'physically and psychologically unsuited' for the work.[51]

The first thirty-two women accepted by the Board received very thorough training, lest through inexperience they antagonise the public. The first practical training session required the women to be at the depot at 6 a.m. 'to accustom them to early calls which are the lot of shift employees'. Of course it is likely that most of them had considerable experience of early rising for, as the wives of former employees, no doubt they were often out of bed early to prepare the cooked breakfast their shift-working husbands would have demanded. As well as being drilled in an early start, the recruits learned the 'theory and practice' of maintaining a foothold and of manipulating money, tickets and passengers. The public welcomed them warmly, urging the Board to engage more and more women but the wives of some of the drivers remained uneasy. One, at least, rode the trams as 'guard' to oversee her husband and to prevent romance blossoming. A meeting of male tramway employees to protest about the employment of women attracted only 250 people from a workforce of 3,500; women had come to stay.[52]

The numbers of female factory workers increased significantly during 1941 as employers realised that women could do the work and at about half the wage paid to men. The rapid expansion of the Australian munitions industry from nine factories in 1939 to twenty in 1941 with another sixteen

As the manpower shortage worsened, women in the services moved increasingly into male occupations. These two AWAS drivers are servicing an army vehicle in Melbourne. Their appearance indicates that the photographer caught them at the beginning of their job



One of Melbourne's first female taxi drivers pictured at a cab rank outside the Flinders Street railway station. The uniform is an elaborate one in keeping with a time when almost everyone was in uniform

under construction guaranteed a place for women. Helen Crisp, a social worker at a small arms ammunition factory, studied these women as they were drawn into the munitions workforce. She discovered that most of them had worked before, the majority in domestic employment, although 190 of the 900 surveyed had worked in a factory of some kind before. Women domestic servants found munitions work attractive because, apart from giving them a sense of contributing to the war effort, their wages increased dramatically. The previous wages of eighty women selected at random by Crisp averaged 27s 6½d as against 63s earned at the factory. Admittedly they worked long hours – a six-day week – but domestic servants were used to such hours. Crisp reported that a high proportion of the domestic servants had received less than £1 a week and board, working from 8.30 a.m. to 3 or 4 p.m., seven days a week.[53]

Fatigue and boredom were typical complaints by women about their new jobs. The tasks were repetitious and undemanding and women needed considerable stamina to keep on going. Crisp linked absenteeism, not yet a serious problem, with 'fatigue, ill-health or inconvenience consequent upon working long hours'. She estimated that productivity might actually decrease after a certain number of hours had been worked. Her report, a sensible early insight into the demands factory work placed on women, might have been used to mitigate conditions that were to cause considerable trouble in the long run.[54]

Women, understandably, made light of the strains involved in the work because they were so delighted to have found such well-paid jobs. There

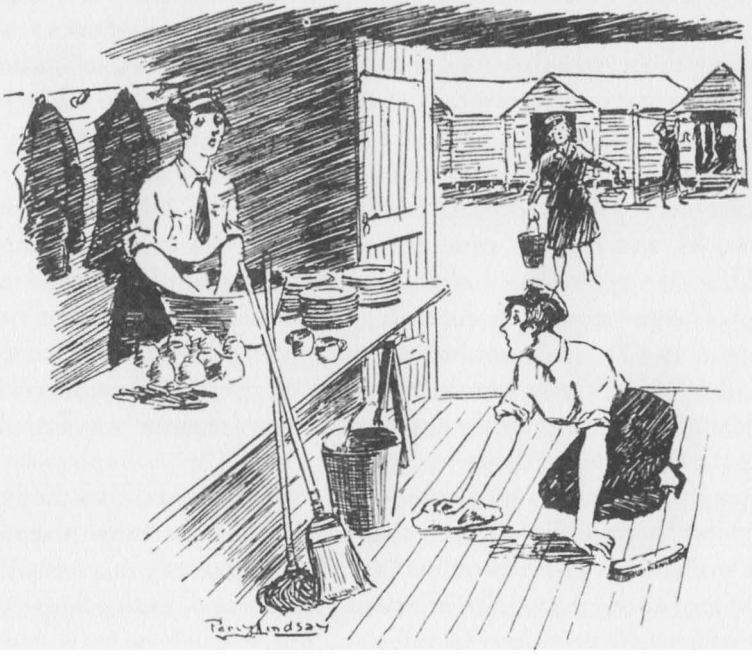
Women's role in wartime increased rapidly during 1941. Here one of the first female porters at Flinders Street railway station checks the ticket of a member of the RAAF. This sight was sufficiently unusual to capture the interest of the cameraman

were many more applicants than jobs in 1941 but by June there was a marked shortage of domestic servants, so bad that men were employed – an unusual reversal of roles. Some men resented female factory workers, particularly those who believed that the male 'bread-winner' must always be given priority over women who were not supposed to be responsible for providing for a family. A middle-aged married man 'unemployed with many obligations' complained when he was placed on a waiting list at a munitions factory. He had heard 'that many married women are employed at the works, and in most cases their husbands are in good remunerative jobs'. This man wrote early in the year when unemployment remained a problem. The government had decided that women would not be employed before men and the main reason for the employment of women from the middle of 1941 onwards was the severe shortage of male workers. Indeed men adjusted to women in the workforce because there was little element of competition between them.[55]

Stories about the female factory workers emphasised that they retained their femininity and also stressed that patriotism had drawn these women into the workforce. These elements came together neatly in a story Dorothy Drain wrote for the *Australian Women's Weekly* as a result of a government sponsored tour of munitions factories:

Employment opportunities for women expanded rapidly in late 1941 and 1942. These women were employed at the Adelaide station to clean interstate trains, though why care for trains in wartime was a priority is uncertain

'I don't think I could ever go back to housework after this.' *Bulletin*. 6 January 1943



A researcher who interviewed women in munitions factories found that high wages and regular hours attracted many women but that women also wanted to do something important for the war effort. The Australian munitions industry expanded rapidly during 1941 and men could not be found to staff the new factories. Women of all ages became munitioneers and adapted to the work rapidly

> From them all I gained a picture of Miss Munitioneer ... She is surrounded by the whirr of machinery, her pretty face set in intense concentration (her hair and complexion just so) and her deft fingers capably, ceaselessly engaged on some small part of the enormous and complex job of munitions making ... They really feel that they are doing something tangible towards helping to win the war ... Pretty brunette Winifred Atkinson ... gave up a good job at a confectionery factory. 'I could go back there and I liked it. But I have a brother overseas. I feel somehow I'm helping him.'[56]

Propaganda such as this became necessary to counteract some male antagonism towards women workers, found more often in offices than in factories. The *Bulletin*, a journal at its lowest ebb in a long and otherwise distinguished history, printed many letters belittling women workers and it encouraged its correspondents by publishing anti-women cartoons. Two contributions give some idea of the tone of the 'debate'. One correspondent reported: 'I have worked in a crowd of mixed employees, and I have seen women powdering their noses, doing their hair, painting their cheeks and their fingernails, reading and writing love letters ... and, above all during their working hours'. To this a woman replied that she had seen male clerks spending the firm's time making calculations with a racing paper, having a hair-cut or shave while in town 'on business' or just sitting around smoking and yarning.[57]

Women's fight to gain acceptance in the workforce was not a once-only battle, rather every extension of women into traditional male areas generated controversy. Teachers, for example, debated with spirit the employment of married women in their ranks at the Victorian Teacher's Union Conference in January 1941. Males warned of the 'race suicide' in the proposal and finally agreed to accept only those women married to servicemen who, presumably, would not be able to have children immediately. The premier, Albert Dunstan, agreed with these teachers, contending that women should 'devote their full attention to making a home'. Nevertheless the employment of married women had proved necessary as a wartime measure because of the severe shortage of male teachers. These arguments occurred industry by industry and state by state until the manpower crisis became so severe that it proved pointless to wail about the employment of women.[58]

Part of the propaganda on women's behalf consisted in highlighting their traditional roles. If some women were in factories and offices, thousands of others were busy raising money and making comforts. A new enthusiasm was organised by Alice Jackson, editor of the *Australian Women's Weekly:* 'Bundles for Britain'. Disturbed by continuous stories of the sufferings of British families caught in the blitz, women responded generously to the campaign to send them warm clothes. Within two months of the opening of the appeal, 40,000 garments had been sent to Britain. Parcels could be left at any newsagent or Hoyts theatre and women seemed anxious to send only the

A receiving station outside the Melbourne Town Hall for the Lord Mayor's Food for Britain Appeal. Many Australians believed that they should support the British particularly as the news of the devastation caused by German bombers reminded them how fortunate they were to be so far from the battlefield

best quality garments. One bundle contained six stiff white shirts, a woman's overcoat that seemed new, three pairs of boy's pants and a woman's dressing-gown. Alice Jackson personally supervised the distribution of the bundles in Britain and sent back harrowing accounts of the sufferings of the British.[59]

Women were also encouraged to care for their own troops by the publication of stories of dedication amongst knitters and fund-raisers. Again the *Women's Weekly* it was anxious to display the diversity of women's contribution. Typical of this aspect of its reporting was the account of Mrs H. W. Iverson of Brighton, Victoria, who knitted four pairs of gloves a week to help the Red Cross to reach its target of 5,000 pairs of gloves for sick servicemen. Mrs Iverson explained that 'As soon as I finish my housework in the afternoon, I start knitting and continue every spare moment until bed-time'. She supplied her own wool and had lost count of the number of items she had made.[60]

The confusion over knitting had never been resolved and perhaps only those who found solace in concentrating on women's caring role continued to knit, more for sentimental reasons than for the need of knitted goods. Major Eugene Gorman, Commissioner of the Australian Comforts Fund, might have sounded knitting's death knell when he returned from the Middle

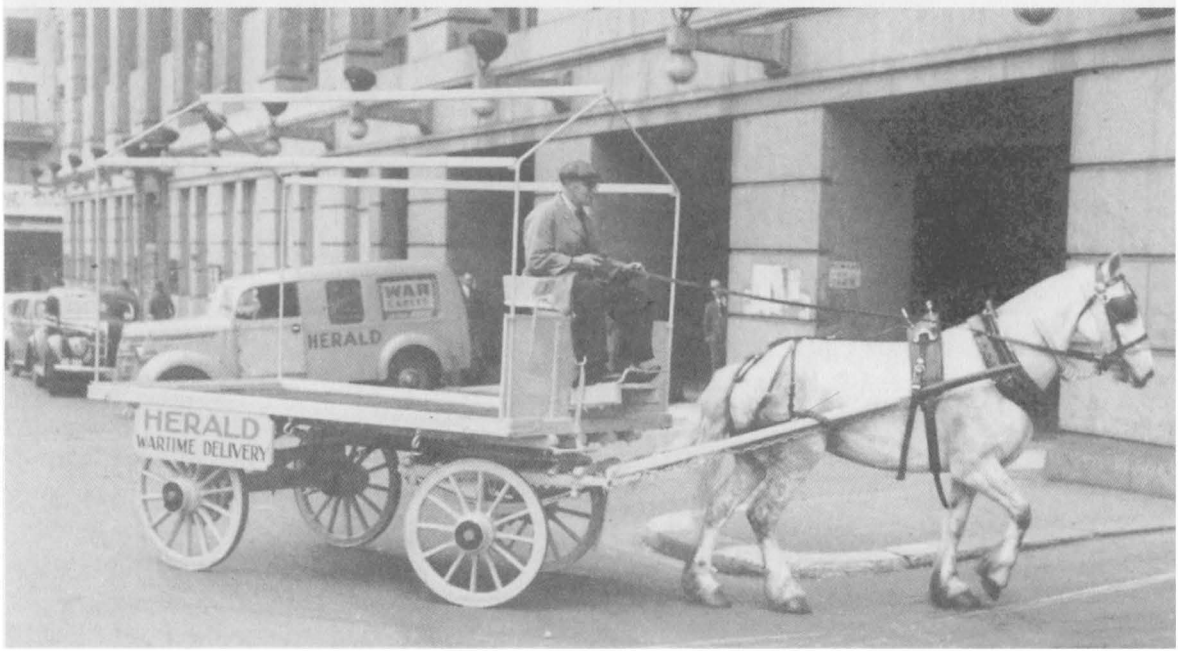
Appeals became a fact of life on the homefront almost from the outbreak of war. These women have dressed in a version of Russian peasant clothing to encourage people to help the Sheepskins for Russia Appeal

East and asked the *Women's Weekly)* to tell 'the women of Australia that they are wasting their time hand-knitting socks for men overseas ... The men are in shorts most of the time.' Major Gorman asked for direct cash giving to enable the ACF to buy cigarettes and tobacco, writing paper, sports equipment, and so on. But there was no sentimental inducement simply to give money. Indeed people seemed wary to part with their cash, particularly at the fairs and appeal days that were a constant hazard for city workers: 'people are learning to dodge Martin Place. It is commonly referred to as a "death-trap". Every day for weeks it has been filled with the blare of

loudspeakers, politicians and others urging the tax-payer to invest in the war loan . . . nobody can maintain interest in a continual carnival . . . Buttons and raffles can't win this war!'[61]

By mid-1941 people began to feel the effect of shipping restrictions as certain goods became very scarce. Perhaps the major impact of the war for most Australians was the severe shortage of petrol. Petrol rationing, introduced after the election in 1940, had not achieved impressive results. Country people resented the sight of streams of cars jamming the roads at weekends and holidays, understandably when efficient farming depended on petrol. Where was equality of sacrifice, they asked, if city people, with plentiful public transport at their disposal, could burn petrol in private cars for leisure while farmers had to ration their fuel carefully? The *Bulletin* described the situation as a 'farce'. Rationing had aimed to reduce consumption by a third but figures released in April showed that only half this target had been achieved. The minister for Supply, Senator McBride, warned that unless motorists imposed voluntary restraints the government would be forced to impose stiffer restrictions. Voluntarism had no chance of success. The car owner who patriotically walked to his destination would feel considerable anger as cars swept by, no matter what business their drivers might have

Newspapers were eagerly read throughout the war despite reductions in size caused by lack of newsprint. As petrol became scarcer older methods of transport were brought into service to bring the papers around the cities. The Melbourne *Herald* building, once jammed with trucks and vans as editions of the paper poured from the press, by October 1942 became accustomed to the leisurely pace of horses who then moved around the city pulling carts with bundles of papers on them



been transacting. Government rationing, alone, could achieve some degree of equality.[62]

In June the government announced further cuts. Private motorists were now allowed only 2,000 miles a year (from 3,000), a ration that placed them on the same scale as motorists in the United Kingdom. Business lost 20 per cent of its previous allocation of fuel and taxis were reduced from 75 per cent of pre-war petrol to 66⅔ per cent. These cuts saved neither as much petrol nor as much foreign currency as the government had hoped and in July and August the minister announced further cuts. Use of cars for private purposes was virtually outlawed as a ration of less than 1,000 miles a year made running a car uneconomical. Taxis were restricted to 40 per cent of the original ration, forcing many cabs off the road. This reduction represented 70 per cent less petrol for taxis compared with pre-war figures.[63]

Apparently the government's third attempt at a proper rationing system within as many months failed to attract initial public attention. People reasoned that as early attempts at rationing had made little difference they could safely ignore the new restrictions. Cab-drivers, limited to 22 gallons a week, took a different view and 'late night revellers' in Sydney suddenly found themselves without transport. None of the taxis in Sydney dared cross the bridge late at night for fear of not finding a return fare. There was as a result an unaccustomed horde of pedestrians on the bridge.[64]

Petrol rationing forced a massive shift to public transport and threatened the city systems with collapse. Australians adjusted to 'queueing' introduced in Sydney in November to overcome the worst effects of the 'charge' for trams and buses which put women and children last. Every inducement was offered to people to travel outside peak hours to reduce the load and, in Melbourne, some offices introduced staggered working hours to help overcome the crush. By July 53,402 people were passing through Melbourne's main railway station between 5 p.m. and 6.15 p.m. The government forced cinema matinees to end by 4.30 p.m. to send the leisure crowds home before the workers and Hoyts introduced continuous programmes at all their city cinemas 'to banish transport worries'. In Sydney the government reserved buses for special classes of travellers, mainly workers, which added even more to the crush on the trams. Outraged travellers jammed into the trams watched in fury as often half-filled buses drove by. Again they wondered about equality of sacrifice. It now seemed that the decision to replace the last of Melbourne's cable trams with petrol-guzzling buses had been most unwise.[65]

Petrol rationing made hoarding more attractive although this practice was potentially very dangerous. The secretary of the Motor Traders Association in Sydney reported that hoarding was widespread and gave as an example the case of the man who had 'laid down' 200 44-gallon drums of petrol. A black market developed with people trading in coupons, either genuine or forged. Melbourne police revealed a racket involving a million gallons worth

As the petrol shortage increased drivers looked to alternate sources of fuel and one of the most popular was that known as a gas producer. Charcoal was burned and gave off a gas which was enough to drive even a heavy car such as this for several kilometres. The process was dirty and dangerous and many people preferred simply to put up their cars for the duration

of coupons which would have provided the black marketeers with a profit of £12,000. Australians had their first taste of two of the apparently inevitable consequences of rationing – hoarding and the black market.[66]

The only other commodities rationed at this stage were tobacco and newsprint, both imported items that accounted for a great amount of shipping space, now so precious. The shortage of newsprint meant that the papers became smaller, but only slightly. All papers tried to retain the same

'mix' between news, sport and advertisements, and the conservative papers, the *Age* in Melbourne and the *Herald* in Sydney, still reserved their front pages for classified advertisements. The *Age* surrendered in December 1941 but the *Herald* remained loyal to the old traditions until severe shortages in newsprint forced a change on 15 April 1944.

Tobacco rationing maintained supplies at 93 per cent of previous levels but rumours of further restrictions led to a great deal of hoarding. There was also a shortage of cork for 'cork tips' which hit female smokers hard. Shortages of other goods did occur but only to a limited extent. In Melbourne, for example, early in 1941 there was a sudden, unexpected shortage of eggs which lasted only a few days. Kelloggs, striving to overcome the Australian passion for a cooked breakfast, advertised that one plate of 'Corn Flakes' equalled three eggs in goodness. Compared to the terrible food shortages experienced in Britain, Australians could consider themselves very fortunate.[67]

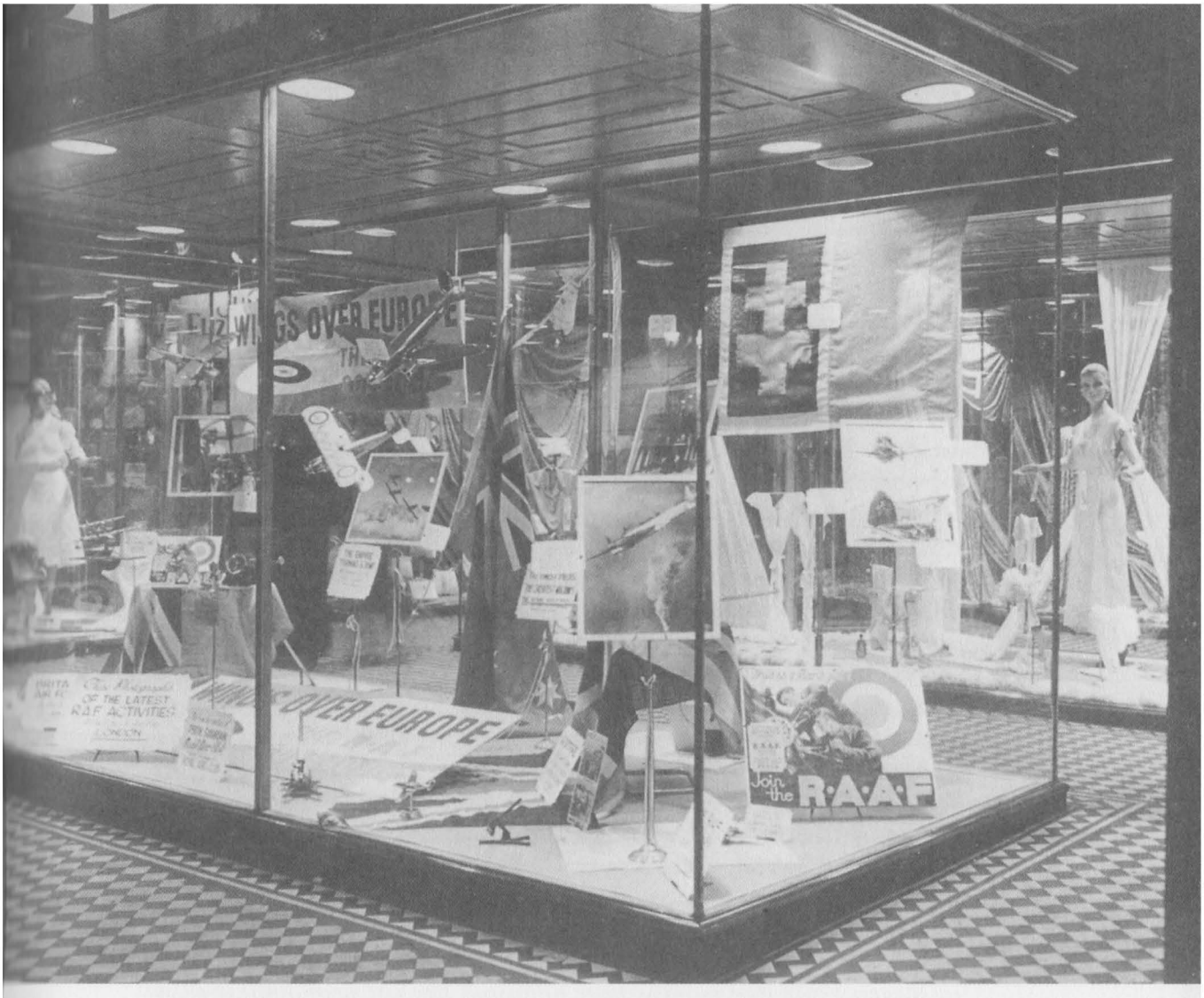
Ministers hoped that voluntary restrictions would make widespread rationing unnecessary. They appealed to people to limit their purchases of new clothes particularly as manufacturers were diverted from fashions to drab khaki. In June 1941 Britain introduced clothes rationing and Australians, so closely attuned to every British initiative, rushed the department stores, fearful that the Australian government would follow. Retailers had never known such busy trading with people using the lay-by system extensively to build up reserves. Senator McBride appealed to people to remain calm. 'Hoarding', he said, 'by means of which the more prosperous are able to "buy forward" against a famine at the expense of the less fortunately situated' was unfair and unpatriotic. It could, of course, be overcome by rationing.[68]

While this turmoil continued in the nation's department stores, there was also considerable confusion in Canberra. Menzies finally returned to Australia on Empire Day, 24 May 1941, but he seemed to have become convinced that he could serve the Empire better in London than in Canberra. The London *Daily Express* encouraged him in this view, campaigning with the slogan, 'the place of Menzies is in our War Cabinet'. Under a headline 'this grand man' the *Daily Express* argued: 'We want in the War Cabinet the foremost, the ablest, most competent brains that the Empire can produce ... We want such a man as Menzies helping right at the top.' The London papers conceded that there might be domestic political difficulties for the prime minister if he remained permanently in London but asked simply 'Will Australia make the great gesture?' – one more sacrifice for the imperial cause.[69]

As tension had mounted in the Pacific and the 'far east' in March and April 1941, it had seemed inconceivable that the prime minister would want to stay away any longer. The *Age*, a great supporter, suggested to Menzies that 'he owes it to his high office to return with all possible speed ... his clear duty is to supply with his own person that authoritative leadership which Australia meantime lacks'. When Menzies returned after five months abroad he met, at first, a hero's welcome. Honoured with a reception at the Sydney town hall,

With imports restricted, Australian manufacturers increased their share of the fashion market. Magazines in 1941 encouraged women to continue their pursuit of fashion and this illustration shows how far Australians were yet from clothing shortages and rationing. The suit modelled here has the unlikely name of the Mavis Ripper suit

The patriotic woman found herself in uniform by day but at night returned to traditional clothes. Advertisers encouraged women to do their bit but also encouraged them to continue to use beauty products despite increasing shortages



Among tastefully presented consumer goods, this Perth department store has found space for a display on the RAAF and RAF. The air forces were undoubtedly the most popular branch of the services during the war because combat often centred on an individual pilot. Australian heroes such as 'Bluey' Truscott were the best-known fighting men in Australia

he was driven through Melbourne streets before another civic reception in his home town. But he angered even his own most loyal supporters when he told parliament of the place he had won in British opinion and then complained that it was 'diabolical that anyone should have to return to Australia and play party politics'.[70]

Feeling against Menzies was strongest in Sydney, largely for those parochial reasons that bedevilled Australian politics. While Fadden was acting prime minister, cabinet had occasionally met in Sydney and the *Herald* exulted: 'Since Mr Menzies left Australia the fetish that Melbourne must be the real head-quarters of war-time government has been swept from its niche and had its nose rubbed thoroughly in the dust'. Indeed so rare had been cabinet

meetings in Sydney that the first four held there in 1941 had had to occupy four different locations, including the Amalgamated Wireless of Australasia boardroom at Wynyard.[71]

Menzies's return threw Australian politics into disarray. Cabinet members remembered somewhat nostalgically the calm, consensual days of Fadden's leadership and Menzies, sensing the mood, returned to suggestions that he might go back to London to continue the real work while his colleagues managed Australian affairs. So Empire-centred had Menzies and some of his supporters become that this breathtaking suggestion at first won some support. The *Age*, anticipating that parliament and the Labor party would support the proposal, argued the case: 'The nation is at war; it would seem, therefore, that the Prime Minister should be here. But Australia is also a member of the great Commonwealth of Nations and entitled to a place at its war counsels. It is not so much a matter of exercising a right as rendering a service.'[72]

Such noble sentiments disguised the fact that many people wanted to be rid of Menzies. He could not command the loyalty of many of his own party and it was clear that the question of his return to London was seen as a means of avoiding sacking him. The Labor party perceived this and would have no part in solutions convenient to the conservatives' internal disputes. Reluctantly Menzies resigned the prime ministership after extraordinary tension in Canberra but announced that he would be willing to serve in a reconstructed ministry. The majority coalition partner, the United Australia party, then watched Fadden, leader of the minority Country party, snatch the leadership. Fadden's rise was spectacular. Elected to parliament in 1936, he had become an assistant minister in 1940 and had only entered the cabinet in March 1941; five months later he found himself prime minister. All Fadden's colleagues had been in cabinet longer. His team was disorganised and uncertain and seemed likely to be a stop-gap government. Menzies might sneer at Labor which, he said, 'would find it much easier to throw stones at the driver than to drive, service and repair the machine' but increasingly Labor appeared the only party capable of providing stability and leadership.[73]

Following his defeat, Menzies returned to Melbourne, welcomed at the railway station by his parents and about 300 of his supporters who gave him three cheers, twice repeated. Speaking at Wesley church a few weeks later still somewhat numbed by his humiliating dismissal, Menzies complained that Australians did everything possible to discourage men of quality and character from serving in public office. He had led Australia for the first two years of war and if he had failed to ignite a passionate enthusiasm for war that might have been no disservice to his nation. Events had taken such a curious course that a headstrong, hysterical embrace of war in 1939 could have rendered Australia impotent for later conflicts. Menzies deserved recognition for his caution, unpopular though it was with his own bellicose supporters. The *Sydney Morning Herald* described Menzies as the 'Victor

Trumper of Australian politics with almost all talents except captaincy'. Perhaps Menzies drew some satisfaction from the defeat of the Fadden government within a month of taking office, Curtin led the Labor team to the treasury benches pledged to give that unity and stability the deteriorating situation demanded.[74]

Outwardly little seemed to disturb the placidity of Australian life, despite these political changes. The Melbourne show-day holiday was again celebrated without the show and, in the spring, sport dominated the agenda. The second highest aggregate crowd ever attended Melbourne's football finals and when Curtin's ministers wanted to travel to Melbourne for a cabinet meeting in early October they were unable to do so because the *Spirit of Progress* was fully booked by racing crowds. Tourist agents reported a 'record invasion' from the country and interstate for the spring racing carnival and 'investment' on the tote again set new records. This outward gaiety was not the whole story, however. People seemed aware that a terrible trial was at hand but gave only the most fleeting indication of their fears. A journalist in Melbourne captured this sense of doom, writing about the Armistice day observation. The usual two-minute silence was announced by Melbourne's air-raid sirens:

> [The city] lay silent, incredibly silent ... as if the pulse of the city's life had stopped beating ... And when the shriek of the sirens summoned the city back to work the pall of silence was not thrown off suddenly, as it had descended. For a few seconds the stirring to life was slow; the weight of memory, the sense of responsibility the two minutes hush had awakened, lingered on.[75]

All looked set for another prosperous, happy Christmas. When bookings opened at the Victorian travel bureau for holiday travel, thousands of people rushed to secure tickets and six policemen were needed to restrain the crowds. Soldiers from the battlefronts regretted this merry atmosphere. They recalled their mates slogging it out on far-distant battlefields and they won support from their chief General Blamey who accused Australians of a 'carnival spirit'. Australians reminded him of 'a lot of gazelles in a dell near the edge of the jungle'. Blamey's remarks antagonised Australians rather than alerting them to the danger. A *Bulletin* correspondent recalled the story of the boy who cried wolf: 'In this year alone the press, backed up by the Government, has reported a crisis in the Pacific no fewer than 11 times. The first of these reports was received by the country at face value; the second and third with suspicion; the rest with apathy, if not with downright disbelief.'[76]

CHAPTER FOUR

PANIC

December 1941 was a black month for Australians. First came the news of the loss of the *Sydney*. A light destroyer, *Sydney* had won fame in July 1940 by chasing and crippling the Italian cruiser *Bartolomeo Colleoni* in the Mediterranean. In 1941 *Sydney* had been deployed in the Indian ocean because of the presence of German raiders and on 19 November 1941 had engaged the *Kormoran* off the coast of Western Australia. *Sydney* was hit and apparently blew up but the only trace ever found of the famous ship was a solitary, badly damaged life raft. The entire crew of 645 men was lost. The news, when it was released on 1 December 1941, stunned Australians, representing for them the greatest single disaster yet in a war that had seemed so remote. Newspapers published the names of all the crewmen in long columns edged with black borders and also provided pen-portraits of some of the men who had been killed. So intense was the public reaction to the news of the tragedy that a fund was established and people began donating very generously to build a new *Sydney* as a tribute to the men who had died.[1]

Hard on the heels of this disaster came the news that many Australians had been expecting and fearing throughout most of 1941. On 8 December Australians learned of the savage and successful Japanese attack on the American fleet at Pearl Harbor and of simultaneous raids on Malaya, Singapore, the Philippines, Guam, Hong Kong, Wake, Midway and Ocean islands. At Pearl Harbor, the American Pacific base, 360 Japanese aircraft sank four of the eight battleships riding at anchor, while another ran ashore, destroyed 120 aircraft and killed 2,403 American servicemen. The Japanese lost 27 aircraft. The Australian government received this terrible news within an hour and a quarter of the event, early on 8 December eastern Australian time. War cabinet met soon after.[2]

The news broke in the cities as men and women returned to work on Monday morning. Once again, crowds surged around newspaper offices, grabbing the extraordinary editions as they came off the presses. The streets resounded to shouts as the news travelled. 'The Japs are at us' a cyclist yelled as he made his way through Melbourne. In a broadcast speech, Curtin

announced 'This is the gravest hour in our history' and he appealed to Australians 'to go about their allotted task with full vigour and courage'.[3]

Australians were not surprised by the Japanese attack; that had been feared, indeed expected, for some months now. But they were profoundly shocked by the treachery and deception of the Japanese who had made no formal announcement of their intentions. Curtin reminded Australians that even as the Pacific ocean 'had been reddened with the blood of Japan's victims' Japanese diplomats were still negotiating at the White House. Japan had 'struck like an assassin in the night'. Always suspicious of 'orientals', Australians saw their new enemy as particularly devious and treacherous.[4]

Curtin showed no interest in trying to place a favourable gloss on the news. He forced Australians to face the full implications of the Japanese threat and he made no concessions to concern for morale.

> This is our darkest hour [he repeated] for the nation itself is imperilled. These wanton killings will be followed by attacks on the Netherlands East Indies, on the Commonwealth of Australia and on the Dominion of New Zealand, if Japan gets its brutal way ...
>
> Men and women of Australia, the call is to you for your courage, your physical and mental ability, your inflexible determination that we as a free people shall survive. My appeal to you is in the name of Australia, for Australia is the stake in this contest.

Curtin had concluded this broadcast speech with an appeal to his listeners that could not have failed to rouse them. Suddenly he appeared as a man of strength and determination, a real war leader, although prime minister only for a few weeks. Curtin established himself immediately as the man who could lead Australia through the crisis.[5]

Curtin and his cabinet accepted 'the existence of a state of war' even before war could be declared. 'We are at war', the prime minister told the people, 'because our vital interests are imperilled.' There was no reliance here on British decisions, no waiting for a lead from London. Curtin acted because Australia was at risk. Indeed the prime minister was at pains to make it clear that the king, in authorising the declaration of war, acted solely on the advice of his Australian ministers. This independent action may have been a small part of the drama of those intense days but it signalled, nevertheless, a substantial change from the approach Menzies had adopted. Then Australia had reacted to a British initiative; now, under Curtin, Australia acted on her own to protect and defend her own interests. Britain, embroiled in Europe, already began to seem remote.[6]

The war with Japan provoked a fresh burst of activity from those who wanted to do something. Recruiting depots reported their busiest days ever as men and women clamoured to join the fighting forces. The poster 'This is Serious' took on new meaning. In Perth hundreds of men overwhelmed

recruiting staff in the rush to enlist. 'I've been meaning to join up for some time, but the war has come so close that a man must get into it now', was a typical comment in Perth streets. At Martin Place, Sydney, 500 men joined the AIF and another 500 indicated that they wanted to join as soon as possible. During the lunchtime rally, an emotional occasion, men came forward in groups, some enlisting together from work, and they learned that they would be called up within a week, leaving them little time to adjust their affairs. In Adelaide more men enlisted in three hours than usually came forward in a week, while in Melbourne a crowd had assembled at the town hall depot waiting for the doors to open at nine o'clock. War cabinet decided. to call up 114,000 men for home service, bringing the militia total to 246,000. Only 32,000 men of the AIF remained in Australia, 120,000 were fighting the Empire's battles overseas.[7]

War cabinet also announced that women's services would be expanded by 1,600 in the army and 2,000 in the air force. Ironically, only a few weeks before, the incoming Labor government had decided not to proceed with an expansion of women's services. The Japanese emergency overthrew the decision and a great number of women sought to register. The applicants were mainly 'business girls' and domestics, eager to help the nation. The voluntary service groups also experienced a rush of recruits.[8]

The *West Australian* reminded readers of the strategic importance of Australia's western third in the coming battle with Japan. Fremantle, only 3,200 kilometres from Singapore, was approximately half the distance from 'that Far Eastern stronghold' than was Sydney. Assuming that Singapore would be held, the paper wanted Fremantle built up to act as the Australian supply base for the east. Further, the paper called for a massive increase in Australian forces in Western Australia for 'the maintenance of Australia's outer defences'. Ignored by the Menzies government until early 1941, many people in the West felt vulnerable and isolated and, although the new prime minister was a West Australian by adoption, there remained a widespread belief in Canberra that the defence of Australia related almost exclusively to eastern Australia.[9]

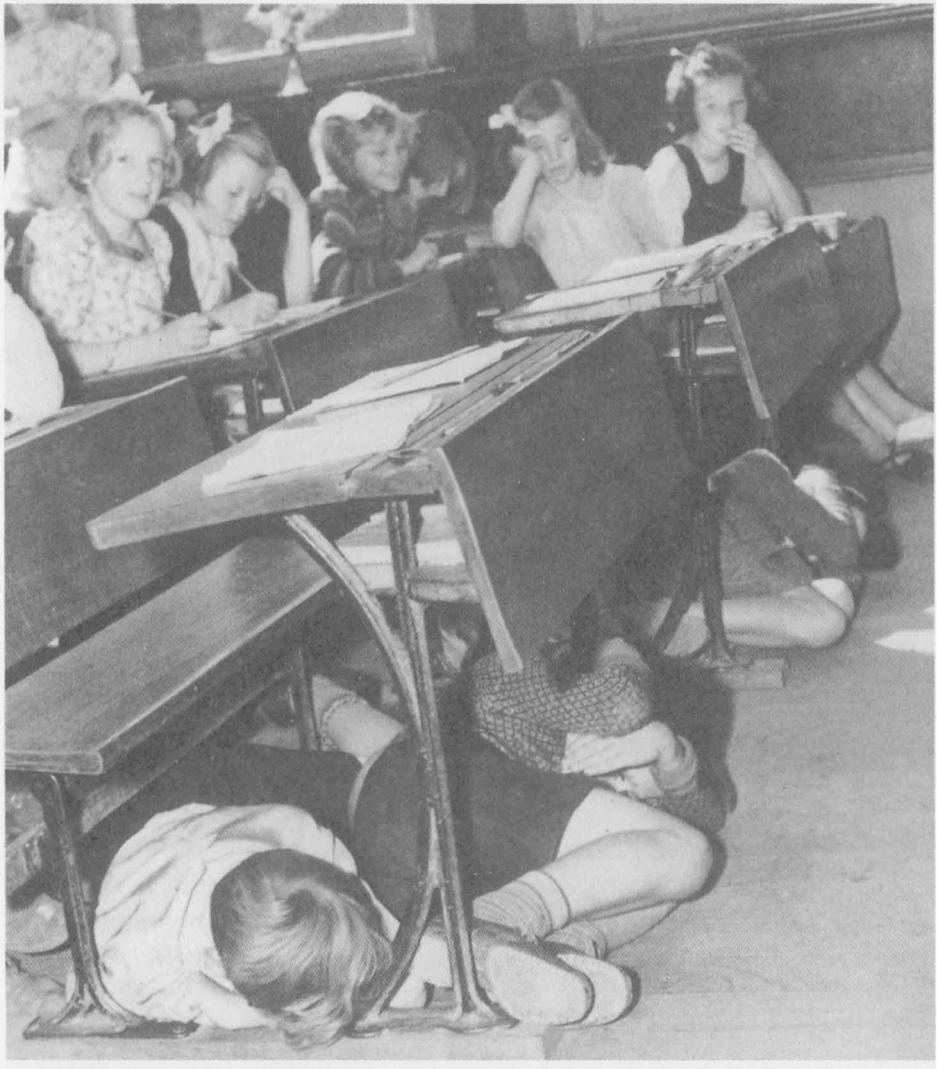
National leaders discovered a new stern mood in the community and they determined to build on this by a full, even an exaggerated, presentation of the danger Australia faced although emotional language may well have stimulated unnecessary anxiety. Frank Forde, member for Capricornia in Queensland, and now deputy prime minister and minister for the Army, warned Australians of the 'dark and evil days' ahead. The people should 'be ready to bear any blows which may suddenly be struck' so that, even if Newcastle became 'another Tobruk' and Sydney an 'unconquerable Leningrad', the national spirit would not be dimmed. Curtin announced that the government could no longer afford to waste time appealing to people; instead, decisions would simply have to be accepted. The government could not wait upon debate when the situation demanded urgent action. Most

Australians welcomed this display of resolution: they had looked to the government to act. [10]

After Pearl Harbor the news remained grim. On 10 December Japanese aircraft attacked and destroyed two British battle cruisers, the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse*, off the east coast of Malaya. No major Allied ships now remained to dispute Japanese domination of east Asian waters. With woeful lack of sensitivity the Australian Broadcasting Commission followed the news of this disaster with music; the first record played was 'Life on the Ocean Wave'. Rhetoric remained one of the few activities open to ministers while they waited for the recruits to be trained and the munitions plants to come into full production.[11]

Governments, both federal and state, did work to protect people should war reach Australia. Air-raid precautions once again assumed prominence. Workmen began placing sand-bags around city buildings and in some cases they erected brick shields for the buildings. State governments organised trench-digging to provide additional public air-raid shelters and enforced blackout provisions as tested in earlier trials. In Sydney every second street light was turned off while in Melbourne there were no street lights at all. Lights on cars were shielded so that only a fraction of the normal headlights guided motorists as they crawled about the streets. National emergency services ordered the evacuation of hospitals in city centres and required schools, colleges and convents to build or dig air-raid shelters for their pupils during the holiday period just beginning. Municipal councils began dumping sand in the streets and parks which residents would use to fight the fires caused by incendiary bombs. Air-raid wardens reported for duty every night to man control centres continuously throughout the night. Once again, this tested the determination of the wardens. 'These stout hearts' wrote one of the wardens 'who have faced ridicule and have spent months in preparing themselves for what most people thought could never happen here' in some cases now gave three eight-hour shifts to the ARP each week. The Director of Civil Defence in Western Australia, L. E. Shapcott, warned parents not to permit children to dig trenches without proper supervision. He advised that because of the sandy nature of much of the soil found throughout Perth, there was a danger that children might suffer serious injury from trenches caving in.[12]

Governments, by their actions and their rhetoric, encouraged the people to expect air raids soon. The Victorian government, for example, decided that all stores would have to close by 6 p.m. to fit in with blackout requirements, encouraged cinema owners to 'stagger' hours to prevent a concentration of people on city streets at one time, and eventually banned cars from city streets before 11.30 p.m. to keep people away. The New South Wales government banned late night shopping and even prohibited people from lighting matches in the open, after dark. The federal government introduced a compulsory war-risks insurance policy which made destruction from air raids seem



Children from the Brompton school in Adelaide taking part in an air-raid precautions drill. The routine seems fairly unimaginative and one girl even seems quite bored

almost inevitable. Property valued at less than £1,000 was excluded from the compulsory scheme but, together with personal effects, could be insured voluntarily. State governments also published plans for the evacuation of women and children from cities to country districts in the event of air raids or invasion. In December 1941 the federal government requested state premiers to prepare plans for evacuation, but cautiously. The instruction concluded: 'anything which may have the result of interfering with the productive effort of the men, such as wholesale evacuation of their wives to country areas, is not in the best interests of Australia'.[13]

The New South Wales government announced that 100,000 people could be moved under a plan already approved. Children under eighteen

A 65-year-old Adelaide woman digging an air-raid trench in her suburban back yard

Archives officers removing documents from the South Australian library and packing them for storage. Such was the fear of air raids that it was believed that these documents should be sent to a safe place to ensure their preservation. Similar activities took place all around Australia in early 1942

These Adelaide children are doing their best to build an air-raid shelter in the back yard of a suburban home. In January 1942, when the threat from the Japanese was real, thousands of people all around Australia made some provision for safety against bombs. This shelter, though rudimentary, gave the boys something to do and might have been of some use in the event of an air raid

and accompanying parents could purchase rail fares at one quarter of the normal price and in certain circumstances they would not be charged at all. The plan existed but people clamoured that it be put into effect immediately, rather than waiting for disaster to occur first. Jessie Donovan of Woolloomooloo reported that the delay worried thousands of women who wanted their children evacuated to guest houses and hotels before the emergency broke. British experience suggested that premature evacuation created enormous problems and was inefficient and wasteful and certainly no Australian government moved to implement evacuation despite mounting public pressure. People in Western Australia, too, agitated for evacuation. At a citizens' committee meeting in the Fremantle town hall the mayor,

F. E. Gibson, stated that Fremantle was the most vulnerable part of Western Australia. The meeting unanimously agreed to a motion calling for evacuation plans to be drawn up as a matter of urgency.[14]

Thousands of people, rejecting what appeared to be government complacency, began evacuation on their own behalf. There was a large measure of panic in these moves, no doubt stimulated by the horrifying accounts of the blitz on Britain that had dominated Australian news for at least a year. It is impossible to know precisely how many people fled the cities, mainly Sydney, in the days after Pearl Harbor but it would seem that thousands were involved. House prices and rents in towns such as Katoomba, Bowral, Bundanoon and Bathurst increased dramatically and journalists reported that 'bomb dodgers' became the talk of Sydney. A Katoomba house agent declared that house prices had risen by as much as twenty per cent in the

'Large numbers of refugees from Germany and other European countries have left Sydney for towns such as Bowral, Katoomba, Mittagong and Bathurst. They are paying high rents, and houses have been sold at boom prices in these centres.' *Bulletin*, 24 December 1941

days after Pearl Harbor, while at Bundanoon, in the southern highlands of New South Wales, cottage rents jumped to about five guineas a week. Other people arranged to lease a room in the mountains 'just in case'. A North Sydney resident took a six-month lease on a room at Katoomba but had told the owner of the house that he did not expect to occupy it. As pressure on the available supply increased, a guest-house owner found himself able to lease rooms for £8 a week without the inconvenience of actually having the guests installed.[15]

Most comments about the 'bomb dodgers' were highly unfavourable and many accounts emphasised that a high proportion of these people were European refugees. It is possible that this impression owed more to the general antagonism toward the refugees than to reality because, as a Sydney barrister observed, regulations prevented aliens from moving without informing the police and from buying property. Therefore, he concluded, it was far more likely that the evacuees were people who 'by virtue of their wealth, are seeking for their unworthy selves safety and advantage over their less fortunate fellow Australians'. Jessie Donovan, who had wanted a government plan, read the reports of the flight of the wealthy with increasing anger. She asked whether 'Able-bodied people well able to help in some way the war effort [were] to take precedence over children's lives'.[16]

Evacuation or 'bomb dodging' was one sign of the panic that gripped at least some Australians in the first days of the Pacific war. The federal minister for Home Security, H. P. Lazzarini, member for Werriwa in New South Wales, described Sydney as 'almost panic stricken' at a conference of ministers called to discuss ARP matters. The *Bulletin* also noticed the tension, reporting that 'There was more than a touch of panic in the Sydney air'. Even in Tasmania war measures were taken very seriously indeed. The Treasurer, E. Dwyer-Gray, suggested that Australia could not be made safe unless Tasmania was safe because if the Japanese overran Tasmania then they could attack Sydney or Melbourne from a northern air-base. The government sponsored plans for evacuation to the centre of the island and also began moving rare books, documents and zoological specimens from the Tasmanian Museum and Royal Society in Hobart to less bomb-prone areas. However Tasmanian schools were not provided with slit trenches because of the greater likelihood of rain but the Education minister promised that schools would be closed 'if it was known that an air raid was imminent'. Part of the cause of the panic must have related to emergency precautions taken. Australians had to adjust to the sound of practice artillery shots, blasts from air-raid sirens, visits from air-raid wardens with warnings about impending trouble and the appearance of trenches and sand-bags. Alarmist statements from ministers and other national leaders also played upon frayed nerves. Responsible people spoke of air raids and even invasion as inevitable.[17]

For two years Australia had been at war and, despite terrible predictions in the early days of 1939, nothing much had happened. Japanese aggression

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ARP wardens were anxious for individual householders to supply themselves with ARP equipment and this Sydney store helped the cause by making a variety of goods available. The advertisement indicates that even in June 1942 people were still worried about dangers from the skies

directly involved Australia to be sure, but the government feared that Australians might talk themselves out of a sense of danger, laugh at the 'bomb dodgers', congratulate themselves that Singapore remained the invincible bastion against serious Japanese advance, and turn to the traditional Australian celebration of Christmas. Whether Australians would ignore the danger from Japan is not at issue here; certainly the government believed there was need for constant encouragement and a presentation of the dangers.

Christmas particularly concerned Curtin and his ministers for, as the prime minister remarked, 'the war is not ceasing at Christmas time'. He appealed to Australians to give fewer gifts and to make them as practicable as possible. It would be preferable, he argued, to give war savings stamps or certificates rather than expensive, elaborate gifts. But, of course, the definition of luxury differed from person to person. When a *Women's Weekly* reporter sought views on the question, she found a variety of answers. One man interviewed believed luxuries included 'All those cosmetics' but certainly not 'a man's beer and his tobacco'. A young woman confessed that cosmetics and silk stockings were luxuries: 'I'm painting my legs', she admitted, '2/3 a bottle – and leaving my face alone'.[18]

Two weeks before Christmas war cabinet decided that the emergency made impossible the traditional shut-down of factories which lasted from Christmas eve to 2 January and often longer. Instead Australians would have three days off. Christmas day, Boxing day and New Year's day, and would be paid at holiday rates for the other days they worked. This was certainly one of the decisions people did want to debate before workers would surrender accrued holidays. Union leaders sought to convince ministers that productivity might indeed suffer and argued that workers needed holidays to recharge their batteries for the coming year. The government was unmoved and convinced the majority of union leaders that the sacrifice of holidays was in the national interest. H. V. Evatt, federal attorney-general, reminded workers that 'The Japanese are attacking with ferocity. They are not observing any holidays whatever.' Even firms without urgent work were encouraged to remain open and use the time to install air-raid shelters and teach workers ARP.[19]

The government wished to establish that there could be no distinctions between front-line troops and workers on the homefront. War was no longer a matter of soldiers going away as an expeditionary force to do the fighting. All were now involved and to give holidays to one section would encourage people to think that only soldiers had a real contribution to make. Workers, however, particularly in Melbourne, so strongly resented the government's decision that thousands resigned their jobs as the holiday season approached, with the expectation, and probably certainty, that they would be re-employed in the new year. Four thousand men working in civilian boot and shoe factories gave themselves leave in this way, in many cases defying union leaders who had accepted the ban on holidays. Others loyally accepted

government directives and, while shopkeepers found that turnover remained comparable with the previous Christmas, it was clear that many people avoided 'luxuries' and gave one another practical gifts. Traditional foods were in great demand, however, particularly poultry, despite a recipe for 'mock goose' made from 'boned leg of lamb' and served with apple sauce and brown gravy which the *Women's Weekly* loyally published.[20]

The collapse of the holiday season proved a disaster for guest-house owners and owners of holiday cottages who had to refund the deposits they had already taken. Holiday trains had been banned so those people lucky enough to be going away found travelling conditions very difficult. For those forced to stay at home there was little sport to capture their attention. First-class cricket had finally collapsed before the Japanese onslaught so the Melbourne Cricket Ground lay silent and, taken over as a military camp early in 1942, it remained a stranger to sport until after the war. Race meetings went ahead as usual but, as governments prohibited race train or tram 'specials', regular services were dreadfully over-loaded. At Randwick an impasse developed when thousands of people attempted to board the very few trams running. Conductors refused to allow trams to move while passengers stood on the footboards, and racegoers, sick of waiting, refused to get off. Only when police restored order did the trams move and some people waited two hours to make their way from the course.[21]

To reinforce the impact of these Christmas restrictions government spokesmen concentrated on 'realistic' broadcasts that kept the dangers of the time before Australians. For example, Curtin broadcast to the nation at 8.45 p.m. on Boxing day. He explained that the Japanese had won a tremendous advantage through their long period of preparation and through the treachery of their undeclared aggression. 'Britain has lost two capital ships and the Allied forces in Malaya are fighting, so far, against the air superiority of the enemy. United States losses in aircraft and also navally have been considerable.' Curtin described *the* enemy as 'very efficient and highly organised ... a fanatically brave foe'. This part of his broadcast was simply by way of explanation. The prime minister then moved into the realm of prediction, seeking to show the people what they may have to face. He warned Australians not to think that Allied reverses had ended: 'There will be more'. He prepared the people for direct attacks.

> If Australia be attacked by Japan, it is certain that our populous centres will be bombed or shelled and that we shall have casualties and material losses, but we must steel ourselves to look at such losses in their proper perspective and consider whether these losses are going to have any real effect in bringing victory to the enemy.

Curtin then called on Australians to show courage in adversity and to work, each to his utmost capacity, for the good of all.[22]

The prime minister's broadcasts gave little comfort to those Australians inclined to believe that 'it could never happen here'. Some Australians were guilty of clutching at straws. Relying on the soothing noises made throughout the 1930s, they believed that while Singapore remained Australia was secure and that Singapore could be taken was unthinkable. Even as the Japanese advance gained momentum Australians read that their safety was guaranteed:

> despite all the disadvantages we may continue to suffer as a result of Japanese surprise and treachery, there would seem to be reasons for recalling, not boastfully, but reassuringly, how powerful a stronghold Singapore is. For there is becoming current among some groups in Australia facile talk to the effect that Singapore is likely to fall . . . this is the spirit of defeatism in subtle disguise.[23]

ARP wardens tried to overcome this belief that 'it could never happen here' but they still met a degree of indifference. A survey of 60 Sydney waterfront homes indicated that half had no permanent blackout provisions. Twenty householders had bought the necessary material but had not fitted it, only four had treated windows to prevent injuries from flying glass. Thirty-three houses had sand and shovels for fires, 25 had sand but no shovels while 14 had made no preparations at all. One householder confessed her indifference saying she did not intend to do anything 'unless Singapore falls'. The Director of Civil Defence in Western Australia, L. E. Shapcott, reported that many people's indifference had been summed up by the statement: 'We do not intend to black-out the house; we'll turn off the lights and go outside if there is an alarm'.[24]

While Britain's contribution to Australian defence remained vital, Curtin turned increasingly to America to convince Australia's newest ally that Australia must be preserved if the Japanese were to be driven back from territory already won. In a famous statement Curtin explained that, because Britain had lived under the threat of invasion for a year, most British resources, naturally, were directed towards Europe. The war in the Pacific was of secondary importance. From a British point of view it was clear that 'Australia can go and Britain can still hold on'. But Australian priorities centred on Australia; it was the duty of Australian patriots to ensure that Australia would not go. Therefore, Australian and British priorities were in conflict. For this reason, Curtin wrote that 'Without any inhibitions of any kind, I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom'.[25]

This unexceptional analysis of Australia's situation created a storm amongst those who clung to notions of Empire loyalty. Menzies argued that the prime minister made 'a great blunder' if he believed Australian ties with Britain were merely 'traditional'. According to Menzies they

By comparing Australian home defence measures with those of Britain, the *Australian Women's Weekly* makes the point that Australia's risk is as serious as Britain's. In this Australian home on Sunday morning, mother prepares the midday meal while father and son check their weapons ready to repel the invader

were 'real and indissoluble', whatever that might have meant. Newspapers received hundreds of letters contesting Curtin's realism. Most writers reminded readers of Britain's heroic struggle and Australia's continuing debt of gratitude to the mother country. For example, the secretary of the New South Wales Quarrymen's Union, G. Foster, wrote: 'Who lives if England dies? England is recognised the world over as the bulwark of democracy and freedom' and concluded that Britain had done all that was possible for the defence of Australia.[26]

While this debate raged, events began to overtake it. Singapore, the symbol of British might in the far east, appeared under some threat. In Australia, in mid-January, there were those who misread the signs and maintained that Singapore could not be lost. But even in October 1941 an item in a Japanese newspaper had suggested that the island fortress was far from impregnable if a landing were made from any of a number of points on the northern shores. British strategic planners had missed this simple point; in fact their fortifications, while costly, were far from imaginative. On 15 January 1942 Churchill discovered, to his great amazement, that 'there were no permanent fortifications covering the landward side of the naval base and city'. Strategists had concentrated all their attention on repelling an attack from the sea. Given this glaring strategic mistake, the British considered the evacuation of Singapore to prevent troops and armaments from falling into Japanese hands. Curtin and the war cabinet strenuously opposed evacuation and demanded that the island be defended for as long as possible. Curtin told Churchill that evacuation 'would be regarded here and elsewhere as an inexcusable betrayal'. Churchill, with an eye more to American opinion than Australian, ignored purely military considerations and abandoned plans for evacuation. In the event more troops were sent to bolster the defence, including six Australian battalions.[27]

On the homefront commentators observed growing 'anger and consternation' as the threat became more pronounced. People wondered how the British could possibly have endangered an 'impregnable' fortress: the myth of the inter-war years crumbled before their eyes and admiration and respect for British strategic thinking suffered heavily in Australia as Singapore succumbed to the Japanese invaders. By early February it was apparent that the gravest possible crisis confronted Australia. Even so, Singapore's defenders 'toughed it out' with brave statements. On 9 February 1942 General Percival, the officer commanding British forces, said there could be no retreat: 'We intend to hold Singapore'. Editorials took up this cry: the troops must fight doggedly for as long as possible to hold up the Japanese advance and give strategists time to plan the defence elsewhere. Even days before the end it was predicted that the Allies could hold on for a few months at least.[28]

Then dramatically on 15 February 1942 it was all over. British troops surrendered in the face of a fierce bombardment and thousands of soldiers

were marched into captivity. The Japanese victory, swift and stunning, was enormously demoralising to Australians. Australia lost 1,789 men killed, 1,306 wounded and 15,395 captured. In terms of total losses the defence of Singapore proved to be the most costly Australian campaign of the war. Almost one third of those captured died in captivity.[29]

No-one bothered to put a brave face on this defeat. The *Sydney Morning Herald* predicted that 'All Asia will reverberate to the loss of this bastion of the British Empire'. In all the analyses and explanations a strong anti-British feeling intruded. It was all very well for Menzies to pronounce loftily that 'the bulk of Australians are utterly and soundly British and nothing is further from their thoughts than to appear to be reproaching the Government or people of Great Britain', but he misread the popular mood. A Briton who had lived in Australia for six years wrote that he had had to listen to some talk that was hard to take: 'Some of us British people are looked on as if we belong to a race with the same fighting qualities as Mussolini's "Navy"'. Journalists stimulated public anger. The Sydney *Daily Telegraph* played on the 'guilty men' theme. The *Bulletin*, a journal which had never forgiven Churchill for his part in the Dardanelles disaster, now found fresh cause to complain: 'Mr Churchill may be the world's great spellbinder, but he has proved himself the world's worst campaign planner. The direction of strategy and the disposition of forces, weapons and munitions, must, once and for all, be taken from his guilty and incapable hands.' The *Sydney Morning Herald* claimed that 'there have been few more serious miscalculations in all British history' and the *Age* announced that 'It is impossible for the Australian people to pretend they have confidence in those directing Far Eastern war policy ... the results continue to be tragedy after tragedy ... based on blunder after blunder'.[30]

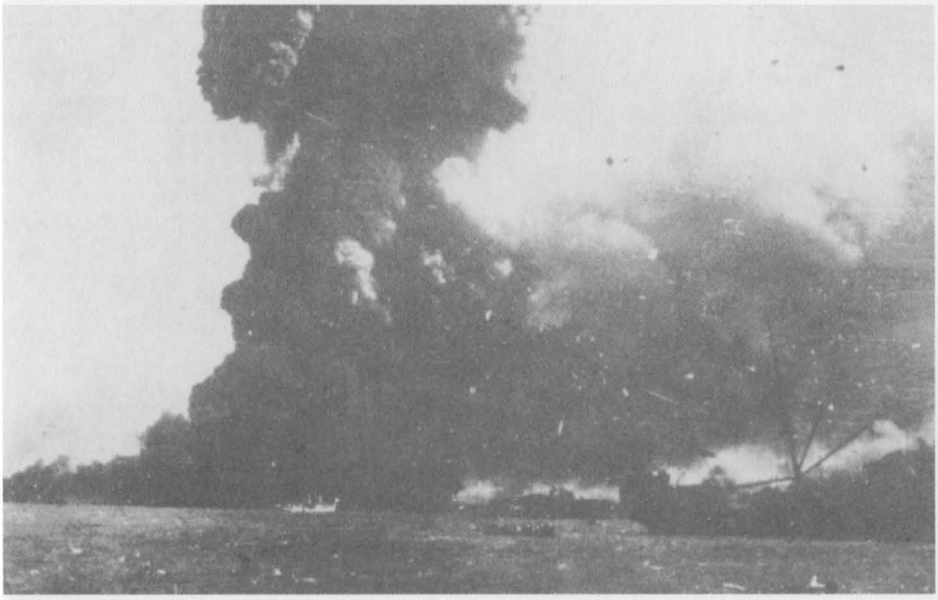
If Singapore was Australia's Maginot line, it seemed sensible to presume that its collapse would herald an attack on Australia. Events confirmed people's expectations for four days after the surrender at Singapore, bombs fell on Australian soil at Darwin. The Japanese determined 'to annihilate the enemy strength in the Port Darwin area' to prevent northern Australia being used as a base for attacks on Timor and New Guinea, the next Japanese targets for invasion.

On the morning of 19 February 1942 Catholic missionaries on Bathurst Island watched the awesome sight of a huge formation of aircraft passing overhead apparently making for Darwin. One priest, Father John McGrath, hurried to the mission's radio and informed the RAAF control room at Darwin that the planes were on their way. Although his message was received at 9.37 a.m. no-one took McGrath's warning seriously, preferring to believe that the missionaries had mistaken American planes for Japanese. Darwin townspeople observed a flight of aircraft approaching from the south-east at 9.58 a.m. but the direction led them to believe that the planes must be friendly. The town was thus totally unprepared for its first raid, and the Japanese, unopposed, created tremendous havoc. The first wave of aircraft

The Bank of New South Wales in Darwin, damaged by the Japanese air raid, gives an indication of the extent of the devastation which the government tried to conceal from people in the south

concentrated on the harbour and the town, while a second raid, which began at 11.58 a.m., almost totally destroyed the airfield. Many of the ships in the harbour were destroyed as were the Hudsons, Wirraways, Kittyhawks and other aircraft of the United States and Australian forces. The city itself was ravaged, as if flattened by a most ferocious cyclone, and 243 people were killed – twenty-one of them waterside workers, gathered on the wharf for their 10 a.m. 'smoke-oh' and mug of tea. Darwin suffered another 62 raids during the war and there were also attacks on Broome, Wyndham and Port Hedland in north-west Australia and on Townsville on the north-east coast.[31]

Servicemen and civilians panicked, fleeing the port by any means available, even on foot. Most feared that the raid was but a preparation for full-scale Japanese invasion. In breaking the news to people in the south the government grossly and deliberately understated the loss of life and the severity of the attack. Curtin maintained that his statement which conceded that eleven people had died was 'official and authoritative'. 'Nothing has been hidden', he said, 'there is no ground for any rumour.' But rumours about the destruction of Darwin and the flight from the town abounded and these rumours, eventually acknowledged as true, affected morale far more adversely than an honest presentation of the facts would have. 'Eye-witness



Among the targets in the Japanese attack on Darwin were the ships in the harbour, both merchant navy and United States and Royal Australian navy. Several ships were damaged; this huge column of smoke came from *Neptuna* which blew up during the attack

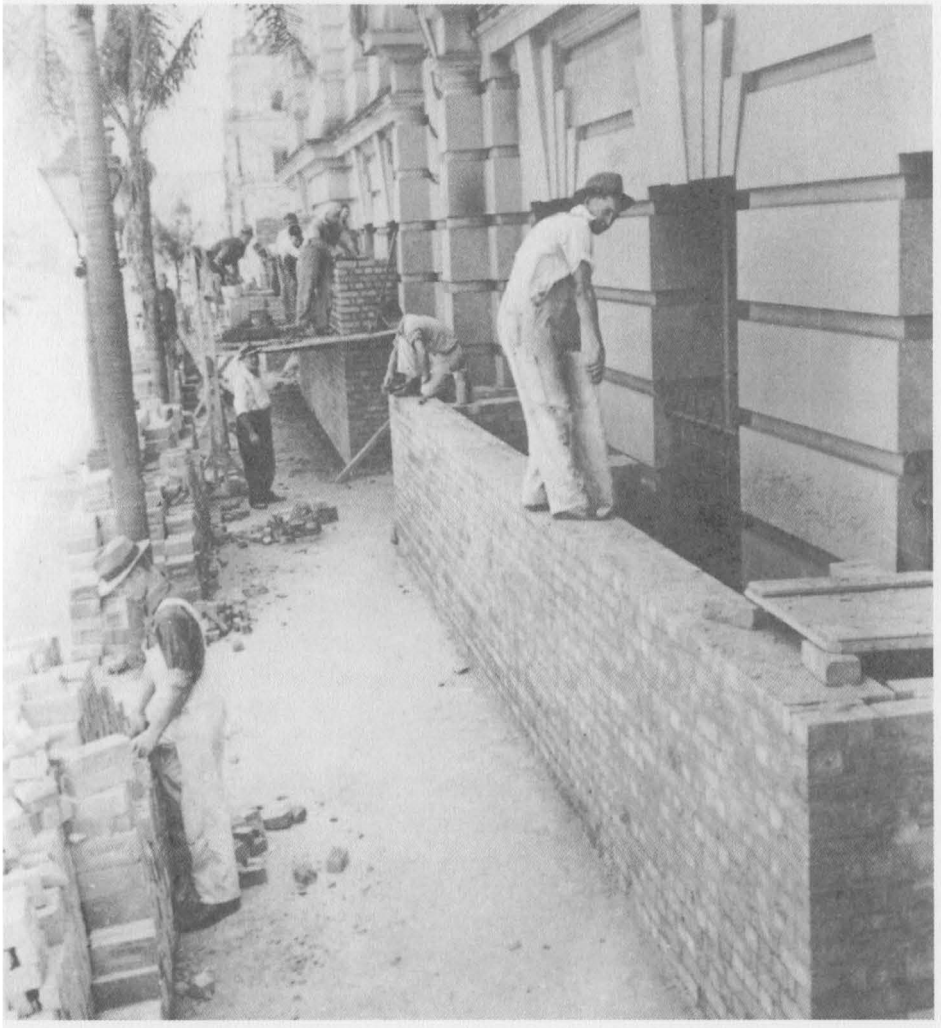
Australian troops in Darwin surveying the damage caused by the Japanese air raid, 19 February 1942

A refugee from Darwin arriving at the Adelaide railway station in early 1942. The government's hopes that the extent of the raids could be disguised were dashed by the arrival of refugees who told more realistic stories

accounts' aimed at giving southern readers a real taste of war described the raid 'as a blitz of the most ferocious kind, worse than anything people had experienced in London'. But while this nonsense could be published, officials still stubbornly insisted that there had been little loss of life.[32]

While panic paralysed the north, in the south people accepted the news calmly enough. Australians had expected their country to be invaded; the Japanese had merely confirmed that Australia would be a target. The *Sydney Morning Herald*, drawing on all the imagery associated with the battle of Britain, announced baldly that 'the opening shots in the Battle of Australia were fired on the mainland yesterday'. Australians now steeled themselves for a full-scale Japanese assault. The surprising mobility the Japanese had shown indicated that the fighters and bombers over Darwin had been launched from aircraft carriers. Raids on the southern cities were not, therefore, as implausible as some strategists had believed.[33]

The fall of Singapore and the Darwin raids gave point and purpose to many of the preparations begun in Australia since Pearl Harbor. Trench-



Workers in Brisbane in December 1941 erecting a brick screen to protect this government building

digging squads intensified their activities so as to provide some rudimentary shelter in the event of air raids. Melbourne municipalities supported these endeavours as best they could. Collingwood provided £9,000 to dig trenches for half its 28,000 inhabitants while in Essendon people formed 'working bees' on a street-by-street basis; the aim was to provide one trench for every four households. In Malvern the council left matters to residents, confident that they would be able to provide their own. The beautiful parks and gardens that surrounded the city of Melbourne were surrendered to the trench-diggers who even dug trenches around the Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne's colossal tribute to the dead of the first world war. The number of air-raid wardens in Perth had doubled since the start of the Pacific war and trenches had been dug around the city. In New South Wales the government

The GPO Melbourne, the windows of which were bricked up and boarded as an air-raid precaution. Conditions for workers inside the building must have been very unpleasant without any daylight

Sand-bagged offices at the *Herald* building in Melbourne. The sand bags were introduced early in 1942 as a precaution against Japanese air raids

released 1,200 men from the public works department to dig trenches. They concentrated on Sydney, as far as Parramatta, and also on Newcastle and Port Kembla. Every area, however, demanded protection and complained that government priorities differed from local ones. Even people in Wilcannia in the far west of New South Wales, determined not to be caught napping; they dug a slit trench around their public school. Sydney's first ARP casualties were three lions, a leopard and a tiger, property of Cell's Circus, which Waterloo Council had ordered to be destroyed because they could be a danger if they got loose during an air raid. Because of travel restrictions the animals could not be taken to the country.[34]

The bulletins issued by the National Emergency Services now assumed more importance and were probably read more closely. In the thirty-third bulletin, published in early February, the New South Wales minister R. J. Heffron suggested what people should do in an air raid. Obviously if there was a shelter near at hand they should enter it, otherwise they should go into the nearest modern building and follow the instructions of the building warden. If bombs were falling and a person was caught in the open, he should lie down but keep his mouth open to reduce the effects of the blast. The premier, W. J. McKell, ordered that flags not be flown from public buildings: 'it is thought that the flags would show the importance of the buildings to the enemy'.[35]

At Dubbo, in central New South Wales, air-raid precautions assumed considerable importance. In February wardens warned householders to dig slit trenches in their backyards 'while there is still time to do so' and when the council called a meeting to discuss local protection there was a very good attendance. People demanded the construction of an air-strip and slit trenches in the town. G. D. Bassett MLC, speaking at the Dubbo Chamber of Commerce, said he was alarmed that Dubbo had been neglected: 'Australia is likely to be invaded any day and at present there is no aerodrome here for the nation's fighting planes'. A trial blackout in Dubbo secured the co-operation of almost all townspeople with only minor breaches of regulations reported; only days before the council had approved the purchase of a double-headed siren to sound the alarm throughout the town. Weekly ARP lectures at the Roxy theatre attracted good attendances throughout February and March. Such measures in an isolated country town may seem exaggerated but they were repeated in hundreds of other towns and were a measure of fears about the coming invasion.[36]

People paid particular attention to the plight of children, especially after the federal government abandoned plans for mass evacuation. The New South Wales government set back the date of the reopening of state schools after the Christmas holidays by two weeks to allow better trenches to be built. At private boarding schools even greater care was needed. Schools conducted evacuation drill until children knew exactly where to go and could leave their classrooms or dormitories speedily. Some preparatory

private schools transferred to the country, setting up in large guest houses or hotels. Sydney Church of England Grammar school ('Shore') transferred juniors to Mt Victoria but kept senior pupils in Sydney. The senior students became so adept at evacuating their buildings that they could finish the task in three minutes 'without either confusion or running'. At Shore the open trenches were 'reasonably comfortable in space and seating accommodation, and well dispersed' but the school planned to provide covered trenches by second term to give protection against everything except a direct hit. Senior boys attended ARP lectures and learned first aid and fire fighting.[37]

Many of the government-directed precautions seemed slipshod by comparison. Although the Army minister, Frank Forde, had promised that every ARP worker would have a helmet, wardens continued to complain of lack of equipment and official parsimony. At one post of twelve men there was one tin hat between them, and only one telephone; at least there was an armband for each warden. Wardens were required to provide their own meals while on duty, pay their own fares when travelling to and from their posts, use their own telephones and pay for the postage of official letters. Only the sense of crisis kept many wardens going. To some people the contrast between a warden's concern for his work and official and public indifference still seemed comic. Slit trenches, as one critic remarked, required the continuance of the drought to be in any way useful.[38]

Australian reliance on volunteer effort is well illustrated by the saga of camouflage net-making. W. J. Dakin, professor of zoology at Sydney university discovered that camouflage nets were not machine-made. He learned the art whilst in Britain and then taught it to 'the girls in his department', telling them that they would be useful if the war ever came close to Australia. He raised money himself to buy the netting string but eventually managed to interest the army in camouflage nets and received £1,000 from headquarters when he finally admitted that 'he had soaked all his friends to the limit'. Dakin then interested women's groups in net-making and before long an entire cottage industry was in operation. At one stage, later in the war, a Victorian firm tried to manufacture the nets on a commercial basis, making it difficult for the women's groups to purchase the string they needed. Eventually the firm was cut out and the industry remained firmly in the hands of volunteers. Women and children made prodigious numbers of these nets. When Shore school reported that in one year the boys had completed 1, 356 nets, a mathematician amongst their number calculated that this involved 600 miles of twine and 7,725,000 knots.[39]

The threat of air raids had remained uppermost in people's minds immediately after the fall of Singapore, but was supplanted by ideas of invasion as the Japanese established their supremacy everywhere in Asia. Wardens insisted on strict compliance with the blackout regulations; householders were required to cover their windows so that no light could be seen. A typical family home could be 'blacked out' by a handyman with

Workmen outside the Woodville Town Hall in Adelaide painting the kerbs white to help motorists and pedestrians in the blackout when all street lights were extinguished

blinds and battens in two nights for a cost of about £1 1s. So dark had streets become that driving a car was a considerable strain on nerves. One driver called for severe penalties for motorists who parked their cars on the side of the road without a tail-light and for cyclists who travelled with no lights at all. He demanded that pedestrians be compelled to wear white clothing and he contended that 'it should be made perfectly plain to [taxi-drivers] that bombastic and arrogant driving would not be tolerated'. Fortunately, there were only a few cars on the road. In Melbourne even the trams were unlit and the Tramways Board issued conductors with special bags fitted with an interior light to prevent 'dud' coins from being passed in the dark.[40]

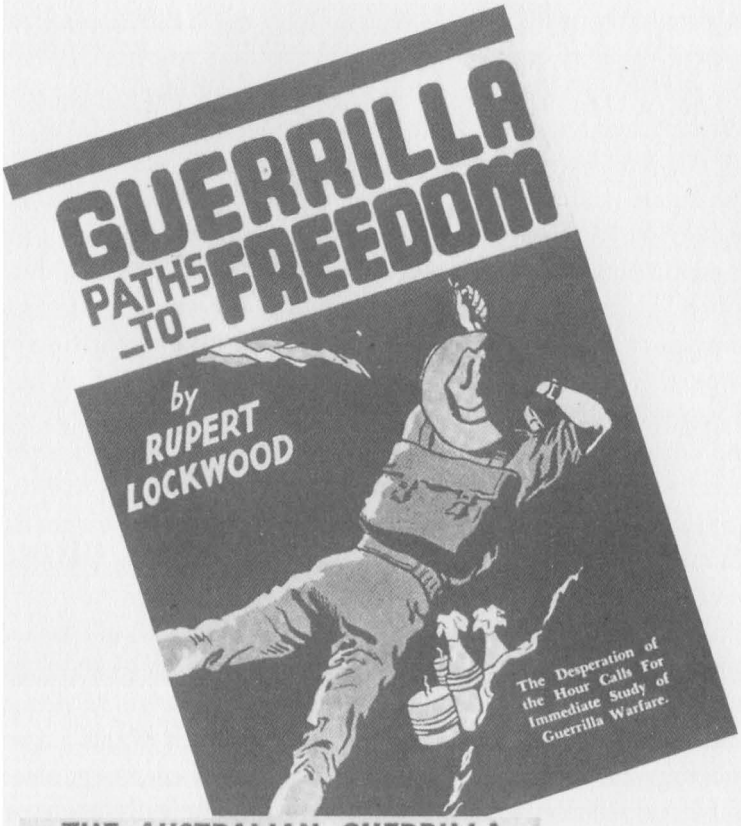
Those who yearned for greater interest in ARP tried to convince the authorities to conduct a full-scale air alert complete with blank anti-aircraft barrage and low-flying planes in order to accustom the public to the noises they would hear in a real air raid. This proved impracticable but in the larger cities there were frequent siren practices. In early March, for example, in Melbourne a day-time air alert forced shoppers and office workers into basements and people on the streets into air-raid shelters. Collins Street cleared quickly but the crowds coming from the station slowed procedures in Flinders Street. These practices taught people what to expect when real raids began. People looked at the coming raids from many angles. One man counselled everyone to make a duplicate will, properly signed and witnessed,

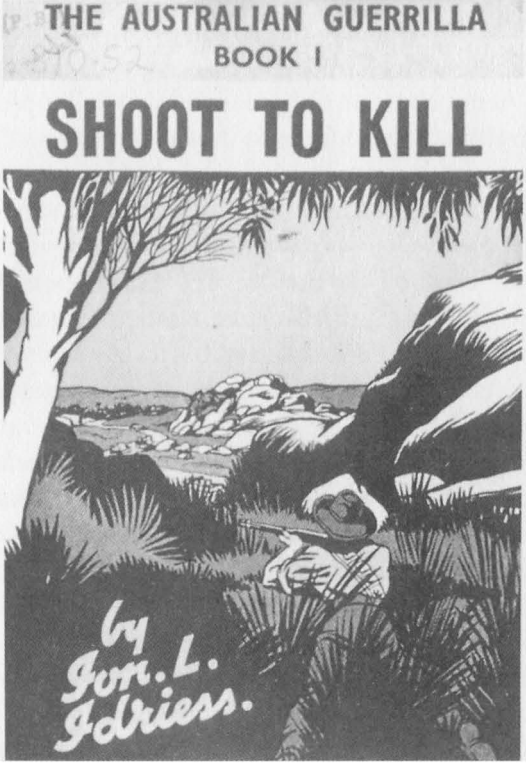
to be sent for safe-keeping to the country. Arguing that the public did not realise 'the risks run in trusting to a single document now threatened by rapid destruction, this cautious man predicted that many estates would be 'saddled with the inconveniences and hardships of intestacy'.[41]

There was much advice about what to do in the event of invasion. A defence correspondent explained that civilians did have a job to do, unexciting though it seemed. They should stay put and report troop movements and numbers calmly but accurately to either the army or the 'guerilla forces'. Citizens should be prepared to hinder the enemy as effectively as possible, largely by destroying in advance whatever might be of use to him. Australians would find Japanese officers 'polite and cajoling' and able to speak very good English. Everyone, therefore, should be aware of the danger of passing on any information. The Japanese, the correspondent reported, had a healthy respect for the Australian soldier but contempt for the civilian who was considered to be lazy and apathetic. As an illustration of this he recounted the story of a conversation which took place when one of the last Japanese ships left Sydney before war broke out. A passenger boasted to an Australian on the wharf '"We'll be back". "We'll be here to meet you", returned the Australian. "No you won't, you'll be at the races."'[42]

In February the department of Home Security issued a booklet containing instructions for civilian behaviour during an invasion. The public must give every possible assistance to Australian troops and deny the enemy information and help. There should be 'widespread confusion'; to this end road and railway station signs had already been removed. Civilians should stay put as attempts to move would clutter up the roads and impede movement of troops. In the event of battle civilians should 'Keep indoors, or in your shelter until the battle is over'. People should obey orders given by police and wardens and should not assume that the presence of the enemy in any district meant that they had control; troops might be no more than an advance party.[43]

Some Australians hotly contested this advice. Ion Idriess, a prolific Australian author who had drawn on his first world war experience when writing one of his most popular books *The Desert Column*, had formed a People's Defence Auxiliary later to become the People's Army. He wrote that the government's advice left his group 'aghast'. To tell people to keep indoors while a battle raged was cowardly and unworthy, Idriess complained. Instead of giving them a booklet the government should tell people 'where to line up for rifles, bombs, any weapons, when the time comes ... We want to fight, not to cower in a dug-out in a garden.' The only order Australians wanted was: 'Arms are ready for you at the police station, boys, and at the town hall. Quick and lively now! The enemy are coming! Get into them!' Idriess produced at least six substantial training manuals for Australian guerillas, published by Angus and Robertson. He called the first one of the series *Shoot to Kill.*[44]





Two in the series of Angus & Robertson publications to be used as textbooks for the people's defence of Australia. Clearly the authors meant business

Idriess's group was only one of several to spring up when the threat from Japan became urgent. As with many aspects of Australia's response to war the inspiration for the People's Army came from overseas. Amazed by stories of the enormous contribution ordinary Russian men and women had made to the defence of their country and aware of the impact of guerillas in the Spanish civil war, hundreds of Australians began to hope that they could fight the Japanese on their own doorsteps. The People's Army also attracted thousands of men who had seen service in the first world war but could find no outlet for their military skills now. The Sydney *Daily Telegraph* adopted the idea and campaigned strenuously to have People's Army units officially recognised. An editorial entitled 'Learn How to Fight in the Streets' argued that Australian morale was good but it could be improved by showing ordinary men and women how to resist the enemy. The *Telegraph* demanded that Australians be taught 'how to handle dynamite, how to make and use the simple Molotov cocktail bomb, how to blow up bridges, block roads, improvise defences, how to impede the enemy and keep the way clear for their own troops'.[45]

This was strong stuff but it drew widespread support. Mrs Lilian Fowler, member of state parliament for Newtown and a prominent identity in the local ARP, wrote 'We're all ready to help, whether it be with Molotov cocktails, dynamite, picks or rolling pins'. The New South Wales Lawn Tennis Association agreed. Reporting that they had '200 women organised to sell buttons', the Association advised, somewhat optimistically perhaps, 'We can soon organise them to handle dynamite and rifles'. H. B. Chandler, general secretary of the New South Wales Labor party, congratulated the *Daily Telegraph* on the People's Army concept and predicted that 'a People's Army prepared to fight street by street and house by house, will turn the scale, should invasion come, just as it has done in Madrid and Moscow, and will do in London'.[46]

Testimonials poured into the *Daily Telegraph* and the paper kept the campaign lively with a series of articles on how the People's Army could be organised and trained and what work it might do. Norman Bartlett, a Sydney journalist, wrote many of these articles, deliberately appealing to the remnant of the bush legend that encouraged Australians to think of themselves as practical and resourceful battlers. The People's Army would not be a 'spit and polish parade ground exhibition which gets into arguments about who salutes who' but an army of 'men and women in dungarees and slacks'. Bartlett quoted Curtin who had said that 'Australia will in no circumstances surrender to Japan. The only Australian who would co-operate with Japan would be a dead Australian.' Clearly if these brave words were to mean anything the people would have to be trained. The *Daily Telegraph* also published articles and messages from Tom Wintringham, a 1914–18 veteran, who commanded the British Battalion in Republican Spain's International Brigade. He reported that with six weeks' training the International Brigaders

This picture, taken from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, illustrates the practical training given to members of the People's Army. The caption suggested that Kuringai Shire had a guerilla force of a thousand men and women in training. These members of the Turramurra force were advancing from ambush after surrounding the enemy. Shortage of all types of weapons meant that only these rods could be used

successfully covered the last road into Madrid against tanks and an enemy four times greater in manpower and twenty times greater in fire power.[47]

Independently of each other guerilla groups had begun to train and drill towards the end of January when people believed an invasion might be imminent. One Sydney group drew members from Pymble, Gordon, Killara, Lindfield and St Ives who would be joined in the field by miners from Cessnock. A co-ordinating committee was appointed which showed the range of people attracted. Alongside Lieutenant-Colonel Hyman, president of the RSL, and Lieutenant A. R. Cutler VC, an enormously popular Australian who had only recently returned from the Middle East, were the president of the Miner's Federation and the secretary of the Waterside Workers Federation. The committee planned a state congress for the end of February to which it would invite delegates from organisations such as churches, trade unions, political parties, youth groups, local councils and women's groups. A central office was established with secretarial staff.[48]

Figures indicated an impressive acceptance of the People's Army in some areas. In Kuringai on Sydney's North Shore, for example, the troops consisted of 1,000 enthusiasts, including 300 women. But only government

approval and encouragement could provide the force the co-ordinating committee envisaged. A *Daily Telegraph* survey indicated that while 84 per cent of people favoured the idea few of them were actually members of a unit. If the government called them to arms in a People's Army, 63 per cent of respondents would join immediately. Training proceeded anyway. In *Guerillas for Australia*, the training manual of the Queensland Political Rights Committee, there were clear instructions on ambush, camouflage, weapons and ammunition, and descriptions of how explosives could be made using materials at hand. The Australian 'Molotov cocktail' used petrol, kerosene and tar 'removed from the edges of the road'. All this was placed in a bottle of thin glass such as a sauce bottle: 'beer bottles are thick and do not break so easily'.[49]

The idea that unused 'Molotov cocktails' and amateur land-mines might be lying around in the sheds and garages of suburban Australia worried the government. So too did the notion of a private army outside firm government control. The New Guard, a collection of ex-AIF men formed to protect 'law and order' in the early 1930s reminded Curtin and his ministers of the dangers. As the People's Army attracted such support on Sydney's North Shore, it may have been suspected, quite reasonably, that some of the New Guard had found their way into the People's Army. In any case, the regular army believed that enthusiastic amateurs would be more of a nuisance during an invasion than a help. The bridges blown up might be just the ones the Australian army needed for advance or retreat.[50]

Opposition to the People's Army might have had a harmful effect on morale so the government and in particular, Frank Forde, the Army minister, moved very carefully. Not so the Sydney *Bulletin.* Pouring scorn on the whole idea the *Bulletin* observed: 'No Australian worthy of the name wants any Australian woman to fight for him. There are hundreds of other things Australian women can do and are doing, from working in munitions factories and hospitals to making camouflage nets and knitting socks.' The government tried for greater subtlety. Forde announced firmly that the government would not tolerate a private army but, conceding the real desire of many Australian men to serve, he announced the expansion in numbers and functions of the Volunteer Defence Corps. Only in the VDC would men have access to regulation weapons, to uniforms and to purposeful tasks, he said. The VDC would grow to 80,000 men and would concentrate on four key roles: the static defence of localities, the protection of vulnerable and key points, guerilla warfare and the warning of enemy movements. The last two functions, of course, presumed invasion.[51]

Known as the 'Retreads', the VDC blossomed in this period of growth. Men wanted to do some 'real' war work but they soon discovered that the expansion of the VDC was more a ploy to siphon off support for the People's Army than a desire to create a third defence force. Access to regulation weapons and uniforms proved almost illusory and for the most part the VDC

Members of the Volunteer Defence Corps loading an anti-aircraft gun during training on Kensington golf links in Sydney. Members of the corps were civilian volunteers, all of whom had served with the first AIF

One of the standard defence measures taken around Australia was the placement of barbed wire on beaches as a deterrent against invasion. These members of the South Australian Volunteer Defence Corps are helping to put the barbed wire in place. It might have hindered the Japanese had they landed on Australian beaches, but it also made swimming very difficult for Australian bathers

was officially ignored. Gavin Long observed that the training reminded him 'of the Punch cartoons of the Volunteers in England in the eighties' and even the VDC marching song reflected a great deal of cynicism.

> Thumbs up, thumbs up, we are in the VDC
> The old and the bold who stormed Gallipoli
> They used to call us heroes of the A.N.Z.A.C.
> But we're too bloody old for the Army.
>
> All week we toil like hell to get munitions made
> Whether its a-freezing or a hundred in the shade
> Then we spend our Sundays on a Volunteer Parade
> But we're too bloody old for the Army.[52]

Civilians might not fight the Japanese if they landed in Australia but they were encouraged to make sure that goods which might assist them were destroyed. Drawing on images of Napoleon's terrible march across Russia, Australians eagerly embraced the idea of a 'scorched earth policy'. A defence expert reported that 'In every moderately large Australian town there are enough motor vehicles to transport a small army . . . There is petrol in the bowsers of every village which will be almost as valuable to an invader as his arms and ammunition.' The idea behind the destruction of these goods was to disrupt Japanese supply lines as seriously as possible.[53]

Towards the end of January when, if Singapore fell, invasion looked imminent, discussion of a scorched earth policy grew, informally amongst country people and formally in government circles. Russia again provided the inspiration. Russians had made the German advance difficult by destroying crops, bridges and goods likely to assist the Nazis. Eddie Ward, minister for Labour, commended the scorched earth policy at a dinner held to celebrate the anniversary of the formation of the Red Army. He encouraged Australians to emulate the Russians as part of an all-in effort to resist the enemy. Advisory war council had discussed and approved the general concept of scorched earth on 18 February 1942.[54]

Clearly scorched earth demanded sacrifices by property owners who, for the most part, entered willingly enough into these plans. Banana growers at Mooball near Murwillumbah did ask their local member of federal parliament, H. L. Anthony, to secure compensation for them should they be forced to destroy their crops but the standard answer to requests such as these was that compensation could only be determined after the war. Most property owners, however, did not trouble too much about compensation. Stock-owners would fare slightly better because there were plans to evacuate as much stock as possible to inland Australia to ensure that the civilian population could be fed. The movement of huge numbers of cattle would, of course, raise enormous problems; some graziers doubted if it were feasible at all.[55]

Plans and discussions received official endorsement when the federal government requested the state governments to set up committees to organise the policy thoroughly. The aims of scorched earth were defined as preventing the enemy living off the country and 'using *our* property against *us*'; to force him to use 'his own precious shipping'; to deplete his country of supplies; to attack him through fire and destruction; to slow up his advance and leave him nothing to loot. The policy envisaged three stages: tactical demolition of jetties, bridges, railways and roads; 'parched earth' destruction of oil supplies, coastal craft, motor vehicles and foodstuffs; and the third phase, scorched earth, referred to as the destruction 'of everything'.[56]

In New South Wales a subcommittee of the State War Effort Co-ordination Committee assumed responsibility for planning scorched earth and investigated the best methods of destruction of a variety of goods. Petrol and other liquid fuels would be destroyed by wastage or contamination; fire and explosives were regarded as a 'last resort'. Mines would be closed by explosives once all moveable goods have been removed – a policy designed, obviously, with an eye to the future. Ten designated ocean jetties and ninety estuary jetties would be drilled for explosives which would allow them to be destroyed as quickly as necessary. The committee prepared detailed plans but found the army a stumbling block when the committee decided to implement some of these plans. The army wanted to hasten very slowly. General Gordon Bennett, fresh from Singapore and soon a controversial figure because of charges that he had deserted his men, applauded the planning taking place but wanted no other action. Actual destruction, he believed, could be accomplished very quickly when needed and should be handled by the army. The chairman of the scorched earth sub-committee commented: 'I view with extreme disquiet this lack of positive action'. Fortunately for many property owners matters drifted on in this way until the course of the war removed scorched earth from the agenda in Australia.[57]

In Britain the outbreak of war had been followed by the mass evacuation of hundreds of thousands of children from congested cities to rural areas where they were billeted with families. Because of fear of the terrible consequences of air raids this policy seemed reasonable enough but it caused enormous dislocation and, by the time air raids did eventuate, most of the children had drifted back to the cities and their parents anyway. The scheme was pronounced a failure. Even so as soon as the Japanese threat materialised, many Australians began to agitate for evacuation sponsored by the government. Ministers, sensitive to criticism that only those who could afford to were fleeing the cities, offered subsidised rail fares and some administrative support to enable as many as possible to leave the cities.[58]

State governments made plans even before the Christmas 'break-up' of schools in 1941. In Victoria every child received a form which required parents to decide whether to evacuate the child or not. The response proved difficult to interpret. The Education department estimated that about 200,000

children would be eligible for evacuation but forms for only half that number were returned. Officials presumed that other parents were making private arrangements with relatives and friends 'on the land'. When registration closed only 49.4 per cent of eligible parents had applied for the evacuation of their children; the heaviest demand (56.4 per cent) centred on the least vulnerable part of the city, away from the industrial areas. Apart from registering children the Education department took no further action because evacuation had become a matter of disputed responsibility between the states and the federal government.[59]

The threat of invasion led to exaggerated fears. Implausible though it may seem, the Grafton council deputed a committee to draw up evacuation plans although Grafton was a long way from the nearest industrial centre. As a first step, the committee made a complete census of all families in the area. Other country towns, more sensibly, prepared to receive children rather than despatch them. At Griffith the council arranged a practice evacuation, using local children as evacuees, to test plans for reception, transport and billeting. Hay organised an accommodation register and discovered that while there were already 150 evacuees in the town there was room for another 1,000. At an early stage, state governments were enthusiastic about evacuation and envisaged grandiose plans. The New South Wales minister, R. J. Heffron, announced that he would seize agricultural showgrounds, halls, hotels and even 'graziers' homesteads' to accommodate the children.[60]

Because of government confusion and inaction, voluntary efforts which favoured the wealthy remained the main form of evacuation. Booking a child into a country boarding school remained the simplest solution and, indeed, these institutions boomed. For example, at the Armidale School, an Anglican boys' school, enrolments jumped from 130 in 1941 to 250 in 1942. The headmaster modestly conceded that the record increase reflected no particular merit on the school or its policies. Nevertheless he rejoiced that 'a great many young Australians who previously have known only city life will now know something of their own country'. Other schools simply transferred from a city to a country site; parents happily paid the additional fees.[61]

AIF men, serving abroad and more subject to rumours about Australian conditions than to news, frequently requested their wives to evacuate their children. Thus Sergeant S. Scott wrote to his wife who lived in Cremorne, a Sydney harbour-side suburb: 'I would like you to take the children to the country as I think Sydney will be unsafe. One in the family is enough to have bombs falling around him.' Mrs Scott sent the children, aged 12 and 9, to Moree but could not accompany them as she was a Voluntary Aid in Sydney. Moree, 500 kilometres from the coast, was blacked out every night and had received about 480 evacuees in three weeks. Dependants of men serving with the 2/1 Pioneer Battalion were evacuated to Harden and accommodated in hotels. The unit's comforts fund organised and paid for the move which

involved 500 women and children and subsidised accommodation at £1 per week for mothers and 1Os for children. Doubtless the men regarded this as a better use of the fund than more traditional uses such as purchase of sports equipment. By February 1942 over 4,000 women and children had voluntarily left Sydney, again the leader in these preventative actions. But the closure of schools until 17 February 1942 meant that the authorities had no clear idea of the numbers of people involved. When schools reopened 20,000 pupils fewer than expected enrolled in city schools while enrolments at some country schools showed large increases. At Katoomba, a centre for voluntary evacuees, 1,750 children enrolled compared to 1,200 in 1941. City teachers were not unduly perturbed by the 'missing' pupils, expecting that the delayed start to the year had led to confusion. Pupils drifted back to schools but clearly an important evacuation policy had been implemented almost behind the government's back.[62]

Ministers appreciated that widespread evacuation might cause morale problems and, as Australia's prospects looked worse, they retreated from their earlier enthusiastic support. The minister for Home Security, H. P. Lazzarini, appealed to women to stay at home with their men 'and keep them in good fettle for this arduous work'. War cabinet and the State premiers agreed in February that emphasis on evacuation would affect morale. Instead of supporting schemes for movement of women and children from cities to the country, they accepted only limited evacuation from suburbs of extreme risk to other parts of the city. They defined risky suburbs as those close to munitions factories or service installations. By May most of those who had fled the cities began drifting back, feeling, perhaps, a little foolish. Nevertheless, country towns, even then, were still evolving and refining plans for the relocation of large numbers of city dwellers.[63]

Concentration on scorched earth and evacuation indicated a somewhat fatalistic spirit in Australia; invasion seemed likely, air raids certain, and there did not seem much that Australians could do to prevent it. Some feared that morale – an essential factor in fighting the war on the homefront – was low. An ex-clergyman and now professor of anthropology at Sydney university, A. P. Elkin, almost singlehandedly tried to focus government attention on the morale problem.

'Away with all this talk of "scorched earth" and "evacuation"', he wrote to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'not only to rid ourselves of a defeatist and retreating attitude but because if we have to scorch the earth and evacuate the coast we shall already be defeated'. Elkin pointed out that whereas the Russians could fall back from the German army onto useful, productive land, in Australia away from the coast there were no towns or land that could support a large population. 'Could the people and armies of Perth and Fremantle exist in Kalgoorlie', Elkin asked, '[since Kalgoorlie] depends for its water supply on one pipeline 350 miles in length?' The prospects for mass evacuation were little better in the east. How could the million and a

half inhabitants of Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong exist if they fled to the sparse country on the other side of the mountains?[64]

Elkin had become concerned about morale shortly after Pearl Harbor. He wrote to Curtin that morale was subjected to 'much strain' because of Japanese successes and also because of plans for evacuation. He revealed that he had assembled a team of forty voluntary helpers who sampled the mood of the people. His researchers reported that Australians believed, well in advance of the event, that Malaya and Singapore would be lost; that Britain gave little indication of concern for Australia's predicament; and that America remained an uncertain ally, with an untested navy. Inadequate air-raid precautions and plans for evacuation depressed people even further. Elkin's team found that Australians were readily affected by newspaper stories. When the *Daily Telegraph* highlighted the 'bungling' that had led to defeat in Malaya, the survey found immediate responses characterised as 'heartburnings and fear'. Elkin believed that anti-British feeling was widespread.[65]

It is notoriously difficult to sample something as elusive as 'morale' even with the assistance of computers and professional pollsters. Elkin and his amateur team were pioneers in the field in Australia. Nevertheless, his conclusions were confirmed by the ready acceptance of policies such as evacuation and scorched earth and by many other reports that Australia faced a morale problem. The *Bulletin*, champion of the myth of the unflappable, ironic Australian, the descendant of the phlegmatic bushman, rejected such forebodings: 'There is no defeatist spirit in the real Australian', observed the *Bulletin.* Intellectuals, like Elkin presumably, misjudged 'the Australian humour that talks sardonically about betting in yen at the races, working for the Japanese, or growing rice to feed the new population'.[66]

Elkin rejected this complacent attitude. 'Unless', he wrote to the prime minister in March, 'positive measures are taken to rally people's morale against the enemy a feeling of frustration is going to be so widespread that we shall not be able to make the resistance that is essential'. Towards the end of February the editor of the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* sampled morale and discovered that 'a lot of people in Australia are frightened. In various ways they have told me so. We have just lost Singapore. Darwin has been bombed. For the first time in our history an enemy has killed Australians on Australian soil.' The *Daily Telegraph's* survey asked people if they thought Australia would be invaded; 54 per cent thought that the Japanese would invade, while 37 per cent believed that they would not. In the light of this statistic it is little wonder that Elkin pleaded with the prime minister to drop talk about scorched earth and civilian evacuation which, in the circumstances, must have seemed defeatist.[67]

As a response to Elkin's warnings Curtin asked A. A. Conlon, a man described as a 'perpetual student' at Sydney university, to form a provisional committee to enquire into civilian morale. Conlon's career had been far from

distinguished but somehow he had established direct links with Curtin and he found him a very supportive patron. Conlon set about his task with great enthusiasm – drawing onto his committee, among others, C. E. W. Bean, the official historian of the first world war; Professor Ian Clunies Ross, a veterinarian and president of the New South Wales branch of the Australian Institute of International Affairs; and Professor Julius Stone, an academic lawyer of high repute.[68]

The committee was to study the question of morale and to advise the government about ways to keep people on the homefront confident and determined. Conlon took his duties very seriously and seems to have forced his committee to work hard but the scientific study of morale and the effect of enemy propaganda seems to have ceased. Elkin stopped writing to the prime minister, angry perhaps that Conlon and a number of other professors had been appointed to deal with the problem that he had first identified. By late 1943 even the prime minister was beginning to wonder what his morale committee was up to and, when Arthur Calwell, by then minister for Information, replied that 'its discontinuance ... would not mean any loss', Curtin began the slow process of dissolution. An assistant-secretary in the prime minister's department summed up Conlon's achievements thus: 'In April 1942 morale in Australia was bad. In June 1943 it was good. Was this due to the pushing back of the Japanese or the work of the Committee? ... Its work was not published. Prime Minister's [department] has none of its results, and it is hard to see just what it has accomplished.'[69]

Talk of mass civilian evacuation and scorched earth had clearly created a climate of tension, even panic, but events, as the Japanese threat receded, and firmer leadership which rejected the panic moves combined to improve morale. Conlon drifted into other areas of intrigue and remained one of the shadowy figures on the edges of power, hoping to advise politicians and the military on a variety of matters. Fortunately for Australia the morale crisis seems to have been solved by external factors.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE REAL WAR

In mid-January 1942 a South Australian woman, describing herself as 'Casualty', complained to *Woman* magazine about the flood of morale-boosting articles and broadcasts that had become commonplace since the entry of the Japanese into the war. 'Casualty' found that the war had become 'almost insupportable to ordinary people', who were:

> fed up to the back teeth with being told what we are feeling ... Many people have told me that the nervous strain of being forced to listen to such words as 'war effort', 'unity', 'democracy', 'liberty', 'blitzkreig', 'our Australian way of life' (whatever that may mean), 'new order', 'realism', 'very existence at stake' many thousands of times over is almost more than they can stand ...
>
> If I live to be a 100, I will never be able to hear even the first 2 bars of 'British Grenadiers' [the ABC news theme] without bringing up my breakfast.[1]

'Casualty's' response to war and patriotic rhetoric may have been extreme but she reminds us how difficult it is to generalise about a people's reaction even to an event as apparently absorbing as world war. The European war from 1939 to 1941 had left many Australians indifferent and apathetic. Reaction to the Japanese threat could not be so casual. Australians, for the first time in the history of white occupation of the country, lived under the fear of invasion and war on their own soil. While that threat remained real, there was a great burst of patriotic activity and of acceptance of all sorts of government controls and restrictions. There must have been times when many people, like 'Casualty', became fed-up with the constraints and regulations but, with the Japanese at the gates, they did what was required of them.

Experience of the European war did not prepare Australians well for the Japanese war. Events in Europe engaged them only halfheartedly – a response derived in part from their extraordinarily unrestrained embrace of war in 1914 and in part from the impact of the depression which had caused so many people to concentrate on their own wellbeing and that of their families.

Governments and patriots had puzzled over this indifference but ignored it for the most part, taking comfort from the generosity and enthusiasm of the patriotic elite. But no leader could dismiss the possibility that the people might be indifferent towards the Japanese war, for Australians would have to stretch every resource to the limit to make the guns and munitions and to support the troops necessary to repel the enemy. Government ministers played on fear to awaken people and to concentrate all their efforts on the war.

For months the news remained grim, so it was little wonder that few switched on the radio news broadcasts with much enthusiasm. The Japanese had bombed Darwin and other northern towns in February and had landed large numbers of troops in Papua New Guinea and adjacent islands. From February to May 1942 invasion seemed imminent. In May, in the Coral Sea off Australia's north-eastern coast, part of the Japanese invasion fleet, whose objective was Port Moresby, was intercepted by the Americans. A naval battle ensued in which for the first time the participants were never within sight of one another and, after three days, the Japanese withdrew, suffering a strategic reverse. Australians treated the battle of the Coral Sea as a great victory, with Curtin speaking of Australia's deliverance and equating it with the rescue of the British at Dunkirk. Thereafter Australians celebrated 'Coral Sea Week' as the anniversary of the occasion of Australia's salvation from invasion. Shortly afterwards at the battle of Midway Island, 4–7 June 1942, the Japanese lost four aircraft carriers and the possibility of an invasion became even more remote. But the government, afraid perhaps that anxiety and concern would give way to apathy and complacency, continued to place the Japanese threat squarely before the people. Launching the second Liberty Loan immediately after Allied success at Midway, Curtin explained that 'The Australian Government was convinced that there was more to come and that what was to come would leave lasting scars on the country and the people'.[2]

The Japanese themselves assisted this propaganda ploy of the Curtin government by illustrating graphically that they could bring war to Australia. On Sunday 31 May 1942 the enemy launched three midget two-man submarines from a mother ship off the New South Wales coast. The aim was to penetrate Sydney Harbour and to cause as much damage as possible to Australian and American shipping, particularly to American warships. The raid achieved very limited success. The first submarine became entangled in the protective net deployed at the entrance of the harbour and its crew destroyed it. The second fell victim to depth charges in the harbour but the third managed to release its two torpedoes, striking a ferry used as a floating barracks and killing nineteen men. Although they failed in their primary objective, the Japanese nevertheless scored a significant propaganda victory as the raid galvanised Sydney and terrified harbour-side residents who had watched in fascinated horror as search-lights and gun-fire from shore batteries swept over the water.[3]

Prime Minister Curtin speaking in Martin Place, Sydney, in February 1942 at the opening of the £35 million Liberty Loan. Behind him on the extreme right sits A. W. Fadden, prime minister briefly in September–October 1942, and in the next row behind him, W. M. Hughes, prime minister during the first world war and leader of the United Australia party after Menzies's eclipse

A week later the enemy shelled Sydney and Newcastle from the sea. Five shells fell on the Sydney suburbs of Bondi and Woollahra, causing minor damage. To people unused to any kind of bombardment the craters in the streets and the damage to houses were, naturally, a cause of wonder and alarm. People feared that worse was to come. Newspapers filled many columns with stories of shells that 'just missed' and of miraculous escapes. House prices and rents had already plummeted in Sydney's hitherto prestigious eastern suburbs and these raids and bombings hastened the process.[4]

Japanese submarines waged a serious campaign against Australian shipping throughout 1942 and 1943 with particularly damaging effect on the east coast from Brisbane to the Victorian border. Twenty-two ships were sunk and another seven were badly damaged by Japanese torpedoes. The most famous victim of these raids was the hospital ship *Centaur* sunk early in the morning of 14 May 1943. Although the *Centaur* was illuminated in accordance with international regulations covering hospital ships, she was attacked without warning and sunk even before lifeboats could be launched. The disaster cost 268 lives and outraged public opinion in Australia. General MacArthur expressed the universal feeling when he said that the sinking was an example of the enemy's 'limitless savagery'.[5]

The likelihood of the Japanese invading and dominating Australia had the effect, for much of 1942, of bringing Australians together, encouraging them

Slit trenches were dug everywhere in Australia in 1942 as a precaution against Japanese air raids. But, as many people observed, their usefulness depended on the continuance of the drought. This picture, taken in Adelaide, indicates how pointless such trenches were after rain

all to work hard in unity and harmony. Indeed some Australians still look back to those days of consensus and national purpose with a great degree of affection and nostalgia. For many, John Curtin, the new, untested prime minister, symbolised this sense of national unity. His passion for Australia's security was obvious to all and he was not afraid to tackle Allied leaders in Australia's interests as he pressed the case for more men and munitions to be thrown against the Japanese to preserve Australia.

When the Japanese attacked, Australian forces were on duty in North Africa and in Britain, and Curtin determined to bring home as many fighting men as possible. The prime minister, supported by his war cabinet, passionately believed that every attempt should be made to save Australia. Curtin argued with his senior Allied partners, explaining that, in his view, if the Japanese were to be pushed back from the territory they had won, Australia must be the base from which the Allied counter-attacks would be made. Churchill ignored the Australian position and personally countermanded Curtin's direction that the Seventh Division should not go to Burma but should

return immediately to Australia. Curtin withstood enormous pressure from Churchill and from Roosevelt. He had become convinced that they accepted that Australia could be lost but he never wavered in his conviction that every effort should be made to protect Australia. By strength of will, Curtin prevailed, the Seventh Division changed course and the prime minister then spent an agonising few days as the troops steamed home in considerable danger from Japanese attack. No Australian was more relieved than Curtin when he learned that the troops had landed safely. Even so, thousands of Australian soldiers remained with Montgomery in North Africa and thousands of Australian airmen remained in Britain to continue the attack on Germany.[6]

Curtin spoke to Australians only of hardship and sacrifice, and of ultimate victory. He asked a great deal of them: a massive build-up in the number of troops and an economy totally directed towards the war. Civilian needs received little attention with the result that there was a great shortage of all types of goods and services, from a chronic lack of decent housing to a constant undersupply of beer. Beyond the lack of goods and services, Curtin asked Australians to accept other sacrifices such as the close supervision of the workforce so that people worked harder and longer and lost many hard-won freedoms. His government introduced controls and regulations into almost every area of life. Australians, accustomed to minimal interference from governments in their ordinary lives, now accepted an extraordinary growth in central government power. New federal departments organised and regulated every aspect of economic activity and myriad boards and commissions assumed oversight of almost every part of ordinary citizens' activities.

In the years of real crisis, 1942–3, most people accepted government interference cheerfully enough, while reserving their right to grumble. They admired a government that was energetic and forceful, contrasting it with the indecision and caution that had characterised Menzies's administration. Curtin had the mantle of wartime greatness thrown over his shoulders and it fitted him well enough. He spoke directly and plainly to the people in their language but he always managed to express his love for Australia and his determination that Australia would be saved. People perceived that Curtin would not leave anything undone that was vital to Australia's cause. He appeared to be consumed by a desire to preserve Australia and, if at times he preached a doctrine of sacrifice that was too demanding, for the most part he won loyal and ready acquiescence. He unified Australians as no other prime minister had done before him. People believed that he was above politics or personal advantage and that he worked only for what was best for Australia.[7]

Curtin's greatest test came just over a year after he had assumed office when he determined to re-examine the deployment of the militia force. Since 1939 Australia's army had been in two parts – the militia, since the outbreak of war a conscript force reserved for service in Australia, and the AIF, a

All Australians became very familiar with Prime Minister Curtin's voice during the war years as he broadcast regularly about events at the front and on the homefront. But he also spoke to small groups whenever possible to encourage people on the homefront to maintain morale and to keep on working

Children making a camouflage net at the Adelaide Town Hall in January 1942. The work required concentration and dexterity and women and children made an enormous number of these nets from 1942 onwards

Junior Red Cross associates and their friends sorting used stamps at Red Cross House in Melbourne during the school holidays. The Red Cross classified and sold the stamps and in the first eight months of the operation made a profit of £6,000. Stamps were sent in by people all around Australia

volunteer expeditionary force able to serve in any part of the world. Under the threat of invasion the militia had been greatly expanded but it remained in Australia, highly trained but with no part to play in the fighting. Australian tradition, reinforced by two referendums in 1916 and 1917, prescribed that no conscript could be forced to fight overseas; conscripts would defend Australia only on Australian soil.

This division of forces was illogical and sense required the fusion of the two wings to create one Australian army capable of opposing the Japanese anywhere in the world. The presence of American troops in Australia reinforced this argument. The Americans were all conscripts who had travelled far from their homeland to fight the Japanese and they puzzled over a policy which meant that huge numbers of Australians would remain behind to mind the store when an aggressive campaign against the enemy began in earnest. Curtin saw the sense of this argument and it concerned him that Americans had begun to send home reports that the 'Aussies' were not pulling their weight. Why should American lives be lost, Americans asked, when trained Australian troops languished at home, refusing to fight in their own defence.

Labor's opposition to conscription during the first world war had cost the party dearly so Curtin stunned delegates in November 1942 at the Labor conference when he asked approval to extend the boundaries of Australian home defence to include the south-west Pacific area. In effect, he sought approval to send the conscript army away from Australia to fight the

Japanese anywhere in the Australian region. His plan represented a limited breach of Labor tradition only but it upset the guardians of party orthodoxy who resolved to contest the issue, in the state branches of the party, every step of the way. Curtin, however, fought from a position of considerable strength, for not only was he Australia's most loved and most trusted prime minister, but he had also distinguished himself in the fight against conscription in 1916 and 1917 so that his loyalty to the party tradition could not be challenged.[8]

Despite his standing in the country and in the party, the prime minister found he had a fight on his hands. His most strenuous opponent was Maurice Blackburn, a gentle Victorian socialist with a deep-seated revulsion for conscription, who was eventually expelled from the party for his ideals. Within the federal parliamentary party Curtin encountered most consistent opposition from Arthur Calwell, a strident Labor careerist who had recently inherited the safe seat of Melbourne, having transferred from the Victorian parliament. Calwell concentrated on party orthodoxy as expressed in its traditional rejection of conscription and sought to fight again the battles of 1916–17 when the issue had been so different. Attending meetings all around the country, Curtin managed to win his case. His personal triumph was considerable. Not only had he won acceptance for a policy he believed to be in Australia's best interests but he had also avoided a split in the Labor party he loved so well. More, he had avoided any great personal rancour, however much he suffered himself from Calwell's bitter invective.[9]

Such a quiet rejection of one of the great traditions of Australian politics indicates how deeply the impact of the crisis had penetrated. Australians, it seems, would accept quite fundamental reappraisals of old ideals and beliefs in the interests of the security of their nation. But the use of conscript troops outside Australia in the end made little real difference to Australia's military effectiveness for by the time they reached the combat zones of New Guinea and the Pacific, Australia was playing a comparatively minor role in the war. Militiamen fought alongside men of the AIF and their efforts were watched closely. One of them, Frank Partridge, won a Victoria Cross but the volunteers decided that they lacked the fighting qualities and sense of tradition of the AIF.

The Australian constitution gave the federal government very broad powers in time of war which Labor used extensively from 1942 onwards. Many of Labor's actions resulted in challenges in the High Court, enriching lawyers, particularly a rising star on the legal scene, Garfield Barwick. In May 1942 Labor introduced uniform taxation, undoubtedly the most important of the new powers the federal government assumed. Under uniform taxation the federal government became exclusively responsible for the imposition and collection of all direct taxes and reimbursed the states which had previously levied their own income taxes. J. B. 'Ben' Chifley, the federal treasurer and one of Curtin's closest allies, introduced the change

in taxation on the grounds of efficiency, as a limited wartime measure. He argued that, as the war cost Australia huge sums of money, the federal government must have first call on every available resource while ensuring that the burden of taxation fell equally on all. State premiers and treasurers rejected this argument claiming that uniform taxation would make them beggars, beholden to the federal government.[10]

While individual taxpayers probably welcomed the new system because it simplified their accounting, the states remained firmly opposed. Four of them, two Labor, two conservative, challenged uniform taxation in the High Court, but unsuccessfully. Australians, overwhelmed by the peril then facing their country, accepted the change as a vital war measure, but, of course, the taxing power was not regained by the states at the end of the war. Henceforth the federal government was not just one among equals but the dominant partner with almost total control of the purse strings, a necessary change in a world far more complex than that envisaged by the provincial lawyers who had written Australia's constitution in the nineteenth century. Some federal Labor politicians hoped that uniform taxation would bring about a complete rewriting of the constitution.[11]

Radical changes such as the introduction of conscription for service overseas and far-reaching administrative reorganisation passed smoothly in traditionally conservative Australia because a sense of crisis gripped the country. But news of improvement at the battlefront led to demands for relaxation at home. Australians would accept sacrifice and inconvenience only so long as was necessary in the fight against the enemy. Few were prepared to tolerate wartime hardships for a moment longer than seemed justifiable.

As the war moved further from Australia by 1943 Australians realised that they would be spared the terror of nightly bombing or the invasion of their homeland. Many of the air-raid precautions which even at the height of the crisis seemed slightly melodramatic became increasingly ludicrous and irksome as the threat receded. The heavy demands placed on air-raid wardens could only be maintained while a realistic chance remained that Australian cities would be bombed. One warden complained that he was required to be on duty one night in three, working at his office in the city from 7.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. after which he returned home, put on his warden's hat (if he had one) and manned a post until 6.00 a.m. Fire-watchers at St Paul's in London cheerfully endured such conditions, conscious of the heritage of history that they guarded and the terrible risks German bombing involved. But a warden in Sydney must have lost heart eventually. Everything related to the warden's service had been makeshift and amateur – deliberate policy when scarce materials had to be reserved for the fighting services. But it was a cruel deception of men and women who had generously devoted themselves to protecting their fellow citizens from bombs. In early July 1943 the government lifted the brownout which had darkened all Australia

since Pearl Harbor. Henceforth, except in northern Australia, lights could blaze out as before and as the threat of danger from the skies evaporated, the ARP withered away.[12]

Turning on the lights in streets, on public transport and on motor cars was the clearest indication yet that the crisis was passing. Now the government faced the extremely difficult task of maintaining war fervour and a sense of national unity as pressures for relaxation mounted. In October 1944 there was an even stronger demonstration that the war was receding when the weather map – prohibited in December 1941 – returned. As the *Age* reported, barbers reverted to their pre-war standard topic.[13]

If fear was to remain a powerful force in keeping Australia's war effort at a keen pitch, then, increasingly, it would have to be manufactured. Government ministers continued to goad people with talk of enemy action within Australia long after this had become unrealistic, on a large scale at least. The department of Information ran a propaganda campaign which reminded Australians that 'we've always despised them – now we must smash them'. A series of talks on the ABC on 'The Jap as he really is' or 'hate talks', as they were known, sought to incite Australians against the enemy. Speakers portrayed the Japanese as cruel and vile, vicious, unscrupulous fighters who were extraordinarily treacherous:

> The Japs have been educated to hate you from infancy. They have been preparing for a war like this ever since they were old enough to understand. We, as children, were taught the Golden Rule. But that is not the Japanese way ... For years, the Japanese have been taught by power-crazed militarists to hate. Even when they smiled on us and treated us ever so politely they hated us in their souls. For hate is at the base of Japanese militarism. It is not just the natural hate of the victim for the aggressor. It is not the hate that is engendered in us when we hear that 50 British officers and men were bound hand and foot and then bayonetted by these demons at Hong Kong. No, the hatred of the Japanese for us is a cold, calculated hate, which has been fostered for generations ... As Japan has sowed, so shall she reap, and her harvest shall be a harvest of hate. For we, prepared from birth in the ways of peace, have been aroused to a cold fury far surpassing this deliberately nurtured hate product of war-crazed Japan. For ours is a righteous anger, bred from authenticated stories of the atrocities perpetrated on the British at Hong Kong and the Chinese at Nanking. It is not the kind of synthetic hate that is deliberately bred in the Japanese youth ...[14]

Despite this propaganda, people began to look around themselves to assess how widespread was the sacrifice each had accepted. They began to ask if they should deny themselves 'luxuries' such as beer or cigarettes while the other fellow bought them on the black market and they wondered if they

should surrender holidays and annual leave while the chap down the street evaded 'the Manpower'.

Labor had taken office in Canberra just as the crisis had begun and had aimed to be a government of national unity working in the interests of the whole nation under threat rather than in the interests of a section or class. Equality of sacrifice was an admirable but impossible ideal and, while some groups or individuals gave less than others, people appreciated that Labor was trying to exact fair shares from all. Rationing, progressive income tax and the careful management of the workforce were the means which Labor used to make sacrifice as nearly equal as possible. All these will be explored in subsequent chapters. Few people grumbled so long as these policies seemed to be working. But as the war progressed and some people cheated on the ration or evaded labour regulations and still had large sums of money in their pockets, then the consensus that these policies produced equity began to break up.

The most important challenge to the concept of equality of sacrifice came from servicemen who pondered conditions of service and asked how their sacrifice could be equated with that of war workers whose free-spending lifestyles attracted comment everywhere. This emerging debate turned on the meaning of patriotism as it was popularly perceived. Servicemen tended to dismiss homefront sacrifice, ignoring the tremendous efforts being made by workers. Workers who endured arduous working conditions, long hours and few holidays, as well as the deprivations of the rationing system, shortages and the housing crisis, should have won more respect from servicemen who noticed only workers' high pay and the carnival atmosphere of Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne.

There remained a great gulf between servicemen and civilians. Australian airmen and soldiers knew about war in Europe where, nightly, thousands were left homeless or bereaved by bombing raids whose ferocity could hardly be imagined by those who had not witnessed them. Australians in Greece had seen the starvation of an entire population and the horrors of invasion and counterinvasion and the Russians had become a by-word for stoical endurance in the face of the most appalling calamities. So Australian servicemen considered the people at home amongst the luckiest inhabitants of a world embroiled in war. They deplored the panic evident in 1942 and the pursuit of pleasure evident after 1943. Civilians resented the tendency of servicemen to belittle the sacrifices being made on the homefront and so the gulf between Australian civilian and serviceman widened as each lost sight of the other's contribution to the war effort.

Undoubtedly the war experience of Australians varied. The serviceman or woman in great danger or in appalling physical circumstances or locked away for years in a prisoner-of-war camp obviously suffered a great deal more than a member of the services in an office job in one of the Australian cities. A worker, securely housed, may well have enjoyed the wartime

prosperity which critics condemned, while the person next to him at the workbench might have been living in sub-standard housing, unable to find relief regardless of the rent he paid. In these circumstances equality of sacrifice became an impossible ideal. Despite rationing and tightly controlled wage rates, the government could not ensure 'fair shares for all' and as the war progressed the inequalities attracted increasing attention and criticism.

The indications of prosperity, full employment, a flourishing black market and record gambling investments provoked a 'middle-class backlash' because it seemed obvious to some people that the working class had benefited most from the war. Arguing that Labor favoured the workers excessively, middle-class campaigners strove to restore their traditional superiority over the workers in terms of income and housing. The Sydney *Bulletin*, once the champion of working-class causes, led this campaign and in 1944 its columns were choked with lamentations about the plight of the middle class and the unequal sacrifice demanded of Australians. In the *Bulletin's* view the middle class enshrined all patriotic virtues while workers got on with the job of enriching themselves. People seemed to forget the unity and consensus of the earlier years when Australia was under threat, and letters to the *Bulletin* expressed with great force deeply felt beliefs. One campaigner from Neutral Bay wrote: 'People of the middle class . . . believe that inferiority should be recognised as such and rewarded relatively. People of the middle class do not feign superiority in the social sense, but claim, and rightly, recognition of, and proportionate recompense for, their greater contribution to the social order.' Already, it seemed, this writer at least, had forgotten the vital 'contribution to the social order' made by munitions workers, for example, often working up to sixty hours a week in an unpleasant job in a primitive and dangerous factory. A correspondent from Wollstonecraft, another favoured suburb on Sydney's inner north shore, believed that 'There is no class in the community with greater loyalty, higher ideals or greater self-reliance, and it is these traits which have made him an easy mark for political parties like those in power in Canberra and Sydney'.[15]

Party politics were resumed in Australia as the Japanese threat receded, the return heralded by the controversy over what became known as the 'Brisbane Line'. E. J. Ward, minister for Labour and National Service in Curtin's government and a man with little love for the upper classes, claimed that the Menzies and Fadden governments had formulated a defence plan that would have surrendered northern Australia to the Japanese without a shot being fired. Speaking in October 1942 Ward alleged that the previous governments had drawn a 'Brisbane Line' and had agreed to defend only the populous parts of Australia – Brisbane and the south. Ward repeated his charges, to Curtin's evident embarrassment, until finally in June 1943 the prime minister instituted a royal commission, not into the truth of the allegations, but into the cover-up Ward suggested had occurred. As Hasluck has shown, it is highly unlikely that Menzies or Fadden, still sheltering behind

the illusion of the invulnerability of Singapore, would have made detailed plans to counter an invasion. Until Singapore fell, Australians expected to fight the war abroad. In the hectic weeks after the fall of Singapore all kinds of wonderful plans were formulated, including scorched earth, civilian evacuation and the concentration of defence in some key areas. Discussion of a 'Brisbane Line' would seem to fit more readily into this mood of panic, or exaggerated response to the threat. Ward's allegations found no resolution but he succeeded in smearing the opposition as 'guilty men'.[16]

So consumed had parliament become with the 'Brisbane Line' and other scandals that Curtin determined to clear the air by holding a general election in August 1943. Labor campaigned with the image of Curtin as a national leader, publishing pictures of him above the text 'Too busy for bitterness'. The opposition, led by A. W. Fadden, tried to build on middle-class frustrations and portrayed Labor as the party of sectional, not national, interests. Labor went into the election with a tremendous advantage, selling itself as the party which had saved Australia from the Japanese. Moreover Curtin was widely admired, even loved, by a broad range of Australians – a remarkable achievement for a man who had only just managed to retain his seat at the first wartime general election. Labor appeared united, confident and firmly in control while the opposition, with Menzies lurking ominously in the background, seemed uncertain of direction and policies. In such circumstances a Labor landslide might have been expected but at least one otherwise shrewd observer, Frank Packer, proprietor of Sydney's *Daily Telegraph*, convinced himself that the result would be close and that Fadden might win.[17]

Packer was not given to idle daydreams. He sensed, rightly, that Australians were tired of wartime restrictions and that they resented not only the controls but the bureaucratic fussiness that accompanied them. Labor had introduced so many rules designed, no doubt, to save resources and equalise hardship, but in themselves often petty and irksome. Shoppers, for example, discovered that only parcels above a specified size and weight might be delivered while even the butcher's boy on his pushbike could make deliveries only on approved days. Almost every area of homefront life suffered from similar regulations and rules, the cumulative effect of which had become very wearisome indeed.[18]

This wartime election did not depart in any way from what Australians had come to expect from their political leaders. Each side sought to entice the voter with a shopping list of promises. The opposition offered a new tax system known as pay-as-you-earn, a single Australian army available for service anywhere, a scheme of life insurance for members of the forces, prohibition of strikes and strict penalties for strikers, and – most contentious – a scheme of post-war refunds of part of the income tax levied during the war. The package promised something for everyone but clearly aimed to entice the middle class with the policy on strikes and the offer of a

return of part of the extremely high income tax paid by top wage-earners. Opposition advertisements appealed to voters to 'Look behind the Curtin', to watch 'Communist-riddled Trade Unions' pulling the strings to force the government to favour union interests. Another advertisement promised that 'Fadden will free you from Regulation Mania'.[19]

The campaign provided evidence of real divisions returning to Australian life. Gavin Long, the official historian, visited army camps in Australia to discover how the troops would vote and found, among the officers at least, a 'humorous cynicism' about the competition for votes and a great envy for the benefits enjoyed by the civilian population. Officers were very caustic about strikes and well-paid munitions workers, suggesting that Labor valued the sacrifice of workers more highly than that of soldiers. Long observed general bitterness amongst officers that servicemen and women were doing 'the hard work, while the militia and the civilians, many of them, are "bludging"'. He discovered that the fear about inequality of sacrifice and the belief that Labor favoured workers above the middle class was as common in officers' messes as in the pages of the *Bulletin*.[20]

In the event the election was something of a boil-over as Labor won a very handsome victory indeed. Before the election Labor had held 36 of the 74 House of Representatives seats; when counting finished it emerged that Labor would have 49 seats in the new parliament, gaining five in New South Wales, four in South Australia, three in Western Australian and one in Tasmania. Labor even won control of the Senate, giving the party dominance over both houses for the first time since 1916. The election showed some of the pressures that were building up for relaxation of regulations and middle-class disquiet at the prosperity of workers, but it also indicated that voters still preferred Curtin's government to the factionalism and confusion of the opposition.[21]

Throughout 1944 and 1945 the determination to prosper out of the war grew and, if some people still worked devotedly for patriotic causes, others turned to racecourses or the black market. Commentators were dazed by the pursuit of pleasure and the large sums of money some people would spend for poor quality alcohol or still dreary meals. The great questions about the conduct of the war hardly bothered Australians – perhaps because Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin seemed so firmly in charge, and Australia's leaders, however energetic Evatt may have been in foreign affairs, seemed remote and powerless.

The question of relative merits and relative reward was central to Australia's response to war. Rationing and austerity, strict regulation of the workforce and questions of morality all turned on perceptions of how well-off the other fellow was. People measured sacrifice against their neighbour's situation and only 'mugs' missed out. In the midst of all these calculations many other people simply got on with the job, believing that patriotism required them to give their best for their country. In that distinction lay the reality of Australia's response to war.

CHAPTER SIX

JOHN CURTIN'S RECIPE

Compared to the peoples of Britain and Europe Australians lived very well even after the entry of Japan into the war. Some goods were in short supply and the extreme shortage of petrol prevented the private motorist from using his car except on rare occasions. Public transport was crowded and unpredictable and the journey to and from work became something of an ordeal. Shortages of various goods occurred from time to time; a rumour about a coming scarcity of matches, for example, provoked a rash of hoarding and a real shortage. But most of these crises were short-lived and most Australians until mid-1942 could buy what they wanted whenever they chose.

There were strong pressures to cut back on consumer spending. In part these derived from that puritan demand for sacrifice so constant an element in Australia's response to war. Aroused by stories of the suffering and sacrifice of Australian servicemen, many people regarded the pursuit of ordinary pleasures as indecent and unfair. They demanded that Australians on the homefront discipline themselves by going without ordinary, modest 'luxuries' to develop a sense of equality of sacrifice. A similar impulse during the first world war had created a solid campaign against drink, dancing and sport. Eventually many of the popular recreations of the working man suffered at the hands of legislators, inspired by patriotic puritans. From 1939 onwards some Australians had railed against the apathy of the majority who continued to take holidays, or to spend money on clothes and luxuries, or to relax in theatres, bars or cinemas. With the enemy at the gate these puritan cries seemed more reasonable.

At the same time, too, the crisis gave greater urgency to a reduction in civilian consumption. The arrival of tens of thousands of American troops placed a great strain on limited resources and substantially reduced the availability of goods for civilian use. To the end of August 1943 Australia had provided the United States forces with eight million articles of clothing and 146,298 tons of food. Government, naturally, gave highest priority to the manufacture of the weapons of war and war-related goods and sought workers from among the employees of factories producing strictly civilian

requirements. From January 1942 regulation of the workforce received official endorsement by the creation of a Directorate (later Commission) of Manpower. Officials now had the power to supply workers to all employers on the basis of the economy's needs rather than regulation through wages and conditions of work. As the manpower authorities cut the workforce drastically in civilian industries, shortages of goods increased. Furthermore, the government supported the puritan attacks on consumer spending because ministers wanted people to save their money to invest in war loans to pay for all the weapons of war so badly needed. Loan campaigns became a constant part of life on the homefront. Put simply, expenditure on civilian 'luxuries' limited government expenditure on munitions and armies.[1]

Curtin justified shortages of goods and services by emphasising that all Australians had to make sacrifices if the nation was to survive. He appealed for an 'all-in' war effort, that is, one where there were no distinctions between the soldier at the front and the factory-worker; all were in it together. 'We cannot all be soldiers', he said, '[or] munitions workers ... But we all must have a part ... The less demand for goods for civilian consumption, the more men will be freed for war service.' As part of the 'all-in' campaign he asked people to accept that the range of products and goods available would diminish as more and more resources were diverted to specific war tasks. Limitations on shipping had already created scarcities, most notably in the supply of petrol. This had been rationed in a rudimentary way to ensure that some petrol was available to as many motorists as possible. Rationing appealed to Curtin's Labor government as the most effective way of providing equality. Without rationing, the wealthy would have experienced little hardship as shortages pushed up prices and prevented a large number of people even from competing for the limited supply of goods. In Britain most people had accepted rationing cheerfully enough because it ensured 'fair shares for all' and the sense of equality improved morale. Australians, already unhappy about the rate of price increases since 1939, would also accept rationing as the most equitable method of providing goods – or so the government hoped.[2]

Japanese victories in Malaya, the Netherlands East Indies (Indonesia) and Java threatened Australia's supply of tea because alternative producers – India and Ceylon – could not meet demand nor could shipping be found to bring the tea to Australia. Early in 1942, therefore, severe shortages of tea were experienced. Australians drank prodigious quantities of tea, consuming several cups at all meals and pausing during the day for a 'cuppa' at frequent intervals. Tea, an indispensable lubricant of national life, had no serious rival, unless from beer, as the most important drink to Australians. As many American servicemen found to their surprise, Australians drank little coffee and had no understanding of how to make it when they invited an American home to 'tea'.

In March 1942, faced with a crisis in the supply of tea, the government introduced rationing of this one commodity. Every Australian over nine

years of age was to register with a supplier, grocer or corner-store, and would receive one ounce per person per week which could be purchased in fortnightly or monthly lots. This ration represented a substantial reduction in consumption and would cause some hardship for many people. But the system was extremely inefficient as there was nothing to stop any consumer from registering with a number of suppliers. To achieve widespread support, rationing had to be seen as fair and effective. The temptation to cheat would be greatly strengthened if people suspected that others were beating the ration. No-one in Australia wanted to miss out, or be thought a mug. Clearly, registration with a supplier would not do.[3]

In May Curtin and John Dedman, minister for War Organisation of Industry, announced that clothes rationing would be introduced as soon as possible. Curtin's broadcast made it plain that the government hoped for a dramatic restriction of sales. Rationing, he explained, would allow only for the minimum requirements of the civilian population and would be organised on the principle of 'not how little we can reduce peace-time essentials, but to what extent we can obtain a bare minimum'. Curtin, who liked to quote snatches of poetry in his broadcasts to the nation to give them a homely touch, used the words of Thomas Carlyle: 'Not what I have/But what I do is my kingdom'. The prime minister pleaded with his listeners to delay purchases and to make do with what they had. 'The darning needle is a weapon of war these days', he said, 'use it on your old clothes.' Because of administrative problems the government was not in a position to introduce rationing for about two months. Rationbooks and coupons must be printed and distributed and all stores and shops prepared for the changeover. Therefore, Dedman announced, because of the severe shortage of clothing, sales would be restricted to 75 per cent of average weekly sales for 1941. Once a store or department reached its quota sales must cease. Most stores decided to institute a daily rather than a weekly quota to cater for each day's customers.[4]

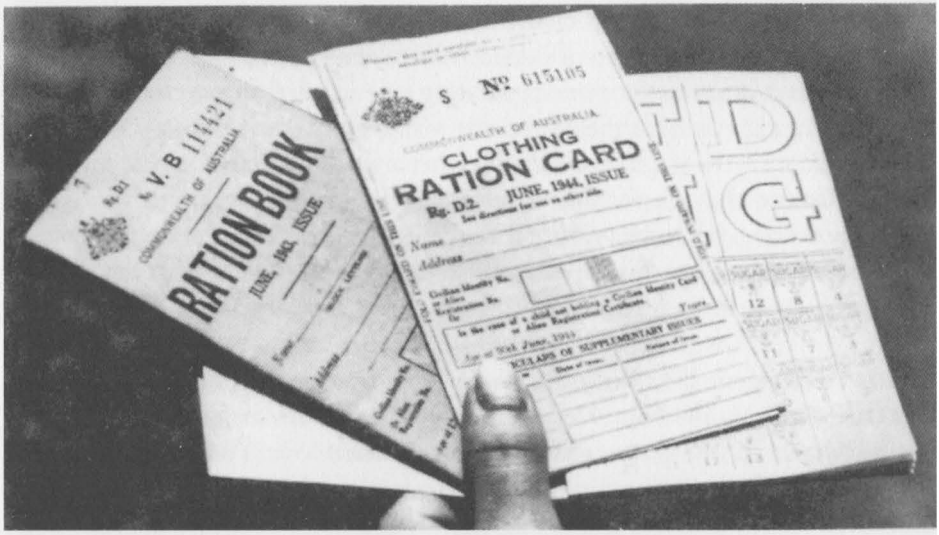
Clothes rationing had been discussed as early as 1941 but, when it became essential to introduce it, ministers found that there had been no pre-planning at all and they were forced to accept this two month delay before full-scale rationing could be introduced. Despite Curtin's high-minded appeal, the administrative delay offered every inducement to panic buying as people fought for goods which would soon be unobtainable – if supplies ran out – or rationed. Emphasising, somewhat theatrically, that national survival depended on the measures his government had taken, Curtin suggested that Australians choose between the situation of conquered France or 'a degree of economic sacrifice'. He hoped that people would so take his message to heart that sales would fall, not by 25 per cent, but by 30 or 50 per cent. For two months, it was hoped, a sense of duty, aroused by the prime minister's rhetoric and fed by an understanding of the crisis facing Australia, would overcome the problems caused by administrative unpreparedness.[5]

Never before had Curtin been so clearly rebuffed. He had broadcast on Saturday night. When shops opened on Monday morning, sales assistants watched a stampede of shoppers, grabbing and fighting for any of the clothes available. It was apparent that Australia would endure a shopping orgy of the kind usually restricted to the last days before Christmas. City department stores became the centre of attention for the hour or two each morning before the daily quota was reached. Then assistants drew up the dust covers over the counters and displays and settled into boring inactivity for the rest of the day, amazing one another, no doubt, with tales of the extraordinary sights they had just witnessed.[6]

At a Melbourne Bourke Street store a salesgirl remonstrated with a woman who had just snatched up £35 of goods from one department: '"You'll have enough here to last you eight years", she said. "Well, supposing I have, I prefer to spend the money on myself instead of on Mr. Curtin".' Shop assistants noticed that the buying orgy was almost totally indiscriminate as people grabbed up goods without bothering about price or fit. The Victorian premier, Albert Dunstan, condemned the stampede on the first hectic day complaining that it was 'a bad advertisement for the self-control of Melbourne people'. His parochial concern was quickly overtaken by events. Australians everywhere, not just in Melbourne, rushed the shops in a nation-wide display of panic and greed.[7]

It was ironic that, while these wild scenes dominated people's attention everywhere in Australia, a most serious battle was taking place in the Coral Sea, off Queensland's north-eastern coast. Many Australians believed that the Japanese force was the spearhead of an invasion fleet aimed at Australia and that the battle represented a most significant moment in the security of the nation. Australians were ashamed to imagine that at the moment of potential invasion shoppers were frantically stocking their wardrobes against threatened shortages. The shopping orgy continued, as did the threat from Japan. On 20 and 30 May 1942 Japanese aircraft flew over Sydney; on 31 May three Japanese midget submarines penetrated Sydney harbour and caused some minor damage. More serious was the campaign against merchant shipping along the east coast of Australia. Several large ships were sunk off Newcastle and Sydney in late May and early June and on 3 June Japanese submarines fired ten shells into the Sydney harbourside suburbs of Rose Bay and Vaucluse, Bondi and Woollahra. War had come south.[8]

Despite the national peril the shopping orgy continued. 'At such a time, how dare we think of hats and gloves, of trinkets and tablecloths', demanded the *Women's Weekly*, commenting on a woman who had carried off enough clothing for three or four years. Women bore the brunt of the newspaper outrage generated by the sales rush; they had revealed themselves as greedy, insensitive, selfish and remarkably apathetic to the serious issues at risk. As one woman wrote: 'This week must surely cast a shadow on Australian



Rationbooks were issued to every Australian yearly from 1942 onwards

women, stripped of any veneer, like a lot of wild animals pushing and shoving ... What good would be a pretty dress if a lover be lost?'[9]

This unrestrained shopping spree showed how necessary rationing was. Under the quota system those with leisure could buy up all the goods for sale before the lunch-break when office and factory workers would have their first opportunity. As 'Business Girl' complained: 'Are we to risk losing our positions by shopping between 9 and 10am? So far as I can see this is our only way to compete.' It was obvious, then, why women predominated amongst the shoppers, earning the ire of all commentators: only women had the 'leisure' needed to take part in the stampede. Rationing would reserve goods for all categories of person, allowing them to choose their goods in their own time: there would be 'fair shares for all'.[10]

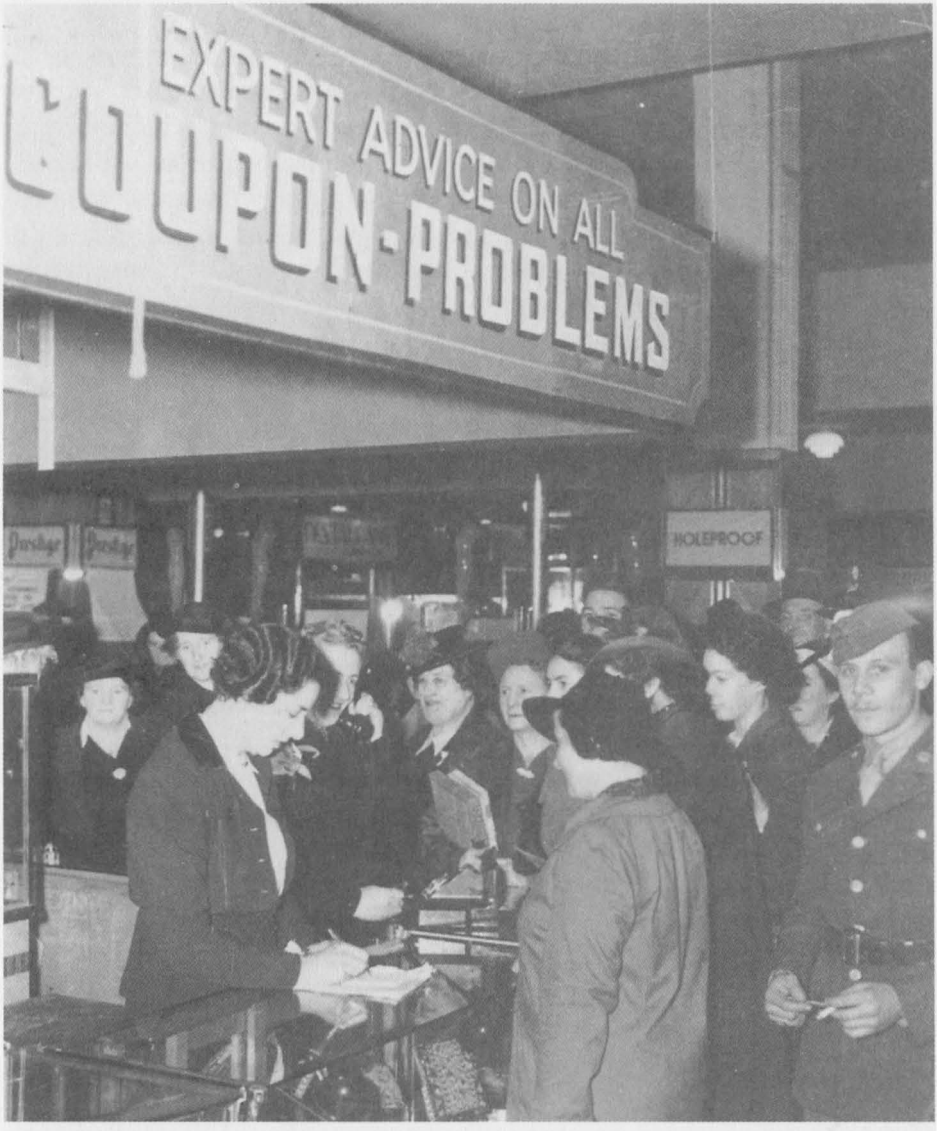
Confronted by this frenzied, unedifying stampede that threw patriotism into question, the government rushed to introduce full-scale rationing even earlier than had been planned. Most of the administrative procedures were borrowed from Britain where rationing had been running smoothly since June 1941. Each Australian, for example, received a rationbook with 112 coupons – no-one could explain why this number had been chosen except that it was the number used in Britain. Every item of clothing received a coupon-value and people had to juggle their purchases to stretch the 112 coupons over the whole year. The value of any item related roughly to the amount of material used and the complexity of the manufacturing process; thus to buy a suit required 38 coupons but only four for a pair of socks. For his 112 coupons a man might buy a suit, one pair of shoes, three shirts, four pairs of socks, two singlets, two underpants but this would completely exhaust his ration.[11]

People were warned to shop cautiously and not to 'blow' their coupons all at once; some unforeseen emergency might find them lamenting the loss of coupons later. In effect coupons were like a limited sum of money available for clothing for a whole year. The person accustomed to operating a rigorous clothing budget would have no difficulty with coupons but the impulse buyer would have to acquire self-discipline. It was not simply a matter of having the requisite coupons, however. Potential purchasers had still to find the money and the goods available in the shops.

The rationing commission which the government created to oversee all this determined that adult males could afford to suffer a more substantial reduction of clothing replacements than any other section of the community. Their quota, through coupon value, was set at slightly more than half of estimated annual pre-war purchases. Men, apparently, did not mind wearing the same suit day after day until it fell to pieces. Women placed greater emphasis on vanity, in the commission's eyes, and so were allowed two-thirds of their estimated pre-war purchases. Children from 5 to 15 years would have to reduce by 20 per cent, while infants, understandably, would receive almost full pre-war allowance.

The justice of all this depended on what was already in the wardrobe. A family hit by economic hardship before the war with father out of work might have been in no position to make 'annual average purchases'. Now restricted to a few items each annually, such people might have been severely embarrassed. On the other hand, a woman with a generous dress allowance before the war was in a good position to wield Curtin's 'weapon of war', the needle, as she altered old but serviceable clothes in imaginative ways. No system could have satisfied such different needs but these comments help to place the doctrine of 'fair shares' in perspective. Reassuring articles of the kind which showed clever women how to convert a husband's dinner jacket into a smart afternoon suit with the use of a little braid would appeal only to those women whose husbands had the necessary items and reasonably compatible figures.[13]

Australians were not told that the coupon value of goods had been determined to impose greater hardship on adult males than on others; men might have resented their disproportionate sacrifice. Nor were they told that the ration was determined 'with little regard ... to the actual supplies in sight'. Publication of this might have started another stampede. Clearly it would be stupid to space purchases judiciously to conserve coupons for some emergency if there were no goods available later. The rationing commission had no way of knowing if supply would meet demand but, because of unprecedented sales in May and June, it seemed likely that there would be great shortages. Furthermore this system of rationing was in no way prescriptive – people were not required to buy particular goods. Senseless then for the rationing commission to order the manufacture of one suit for every Australian male if most men's coupons would be



An enquiry counter at a Melbourne department store where staff advised on rationing procedures. This picture was taken shortly after rationing was introduced in June 1942. Clearly the counter was an early success

spent on shirts and socks. Manufacturers had to guess who would buy what, when.[14]

Rationbooks were printed and ready for distribution even earlier than the government had anticipated and clothes rationing was introduced in mid-June 1942, five weeks after Curtin's first announcement of intention. Tea coupons had been included in the rationbooks, too, as the system of registration with a supplier had proved quite inefficient. The electoral office undertook the distribution of rationbooks, using electoral rolls and halls in

An official of the rationing commission measuring the height of schoolchildren to determine whether thay were to be classed as oversized. Oversized children were entitled to extra clothing coupons

local shopping centres as if for a general election. The booths remained open on both Saturday and Sunday, 13 and 14 June from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and few people had to queue. Some women, apparently, were shocked to discover that the rationbook contained personal details, including the owner's age. Since the book had to be handed to the shopkeeper to effect a purchase, they feared that this confidential information might become a matter of gossip.[15]

People queueing for the rationbooks in June 1942 when rationing began. The electoral office distributed rationbooks using electoral procedures to avoid issuing more than one book per person. This picture taken at the Central Richmond Public School shows that there were delays greater than those admitted to by the rationing commission

The introduction of rationing brought the shopping orgy to a quick fullstop. There were few shoppers in evidence and, once again, sales assistants found time hanging heavily. People quickly grew accustomed to the procedures and became adept at obtaining full value for their coupons. Indeed crafty people found loopholes which they exploited until these were closed. Sheets and curtain material were coupon-free and could be made up into clothes at home forcing the commission to place all manchester and household drapery on the ration in June 1943. Even wool was rationed, as 'Constant Knitter' found to her consternation. She had already made 300 pairs of socks for the comforts funds and estimated that the wool in them would have cost her 800 coupons. One pair of socks a week henceforth would cost her 100 coupons a year, she complained, leaving very little over for herself. Fortunately the commission had anticipated this problem and had decided that wool purchased from the comforts funds, to be made up as gifts for them, would be coupon free.[16]

It seemed unfair to many people that goods of quite different quality should attract the same coupon value. Manufacturers of cheaper goods feared that the public would prefer better quality, longer lasting clothes which, while more expensive, represented better coupon value while no distinction was made between the two classes. The rationing commission accepted this

argument and decided that women's dresses below 15s in value (15s 6d in country areas) would be rated at six coupons instead of thirteen. Clearly this division could not be applied to the entire range of clothes but it was sensible to recognise the greater differences in dresses when compared with men's suits, for example. Working women complained that they could not afford to wear expensive stockings to work for fear of ruining them and resented the ration that rated stockings at four coupons regardless of cost. Obviously women should have stopped wearing stockings to work but, many employers refused to allow women to wear slacks, and women wanted to wear stockings. Melbourne's tram conductresses, forced to wear skirts as part of their uniform, spent miserable days with bare legs exposed to the bleak winter, unable to find any more coupons for stockings. The rationing commission remained unmoved by this plea although some other classes of workers, particularly miners and people who required special clothing for safety reasons, received their work clothes coupon-free.[17]

The impact of clothes rationing quickly showed up in statistics supplied by retailers. They experienced a drop of 19.1 per cent in total sales in June 1942 compared with June 1941 but in the rationed areas the fall was even greater. Sales of men's and boy's clothing declined by 34.9 per cent, women's fashion goods fell by 34.1 per cent and dress materials dropped by 45.6 per cent. To offset these savings, rumours of rationing in April had meant that sales increased by 25.6 per cent compared with April 1941.[18]

Clothes rationing remained in force throughout the war, unaltered in its essentials, although modifications were required from time to time to meet new circumstances. The severe shortage of clothes in mid-1942 forced the government to seek novel ways of saving cloth. Again men bore the brunt. The rationing commission introduced a 'Victory Suit', modelled by the minister, a rather glum-looking John Dedman, which did little for its popularity. It consisted of a two-button coat, single-breasted without waistcoat and trousers without cuffs and no more than nineteen inches wide at the bottom. The designers allowed only four pockets and even limited the number of buttons: there were to be no buttons on the sleeve. The 'Victory Suit', mandatory from July 1942, saved cloth and manpower. Dedman's department estimated that 113 suits could now be made from cloth previously used for 100 but tailors disputed these savings arguing, for example, that only about two inches of cloth would be saved by abolishing cuffs. Even so the 'Victory Suit' prevailed for about a year.[19]

'Fashions for Victory' also imposed restrictions on women's clothes, although not in as regimented a way as with men. Certain items were prohibited outright. Luxury items such as 'evening wear', 'evening cloaks', 'bridge coats', 'dinner gowns' could no longer be manufactured. And fashion houses received detailed instructions that might have made sense in department headquarters but seemed remarkably confused to non-bureaucrats: 'fabrics reduced from normal width and/or length by all-over

tucking, shirring and pleating, except in skirts when said fabric after tucking, shirring or pleating operations shall not contain more material than permitted for sweeps as specified ...'When he introduced the new range, Dedman was at pains to emphasise that there would be no uniformity in clothing, merely standards. In fact, it might have been much simpler to have issued an all-purpose uniform or series of uniforms which might have eliminated a great deal of regulation and supervision. Instead people continued to dress individually within a defined limit. Ironically only school uniforms suffered. The department prevented schools from requiring pupils to wear a uniform as they were thought to be too expensive of raw materials. Private schools appealed to past pupils to donate sports uniforms such as football jumpers and boots, athletic singlets and shorts, as the manufacture of these was now prohibited. No longer, either, could swimming costumes be made but Dedman believed that swimming as a pastime would continue as most people had a costume that could be made serviceable with a darning needle. The prohibition would save enough material to make 500,000 knitted garments such as pullovers and cardigans.[20]

All these regulations seem to have been obeyed by the vast majority of the population: indeed over-zealous compliance sometimes proved embarrassing. When the torpedoed survivors of an Australian merchant ship reached an Australian port, they had to wait for hours barefoot and scantily clad until 'the question of clothing coupons had been settled to official satisfaction'. The rationing commission reported a low level of claims for lost rationbooks, lower than the rate for lost savings banks passbooks. Comparatively few cases of cheating reached the courts. Clothes, with the exception of silk stockings, seem to have been an inconvenient or unprofitable line for the black market.[21]

Trading in coupons might have taken place on a small scale but the system of presenting the rationbook intact to the retailer prevented large-scale abuse. Of the few cases to reach the courts most involved minor breaches of the law. A Toorak woman, fined £5 in the magistrates court, had been charged with using coupons to which she was not entitled. Her maid had given a parcel of used clothes to her niece's children and had received, in return, eighty coupons which she passed on to her mistress. The woman used these to buy clothes for herself and children. The poorer woman surrendered her coupons because she did not have the money to use them; no doubt she was grateful for the 'gift' of used clothing. But the operation infringed the principle of 'fair shares', at least in the magistrate's opinion: 'It did not seem to be right [he commented] that a grown person, because she could afford to buy clothing, should use the coupons of people with children who could not afford to buy clothing for them'.[22]

In general, compliance with the law was so exact that when the end of the first year of rationing approached the commission mounted a campaign to encourage patriotic people to return unused coupons rather than spend them

recklessly before they passed out of currency. The commission wished to avoid another shopping orgy. The campaign was a low-key affair indicating that few people had many coupons left but it aimed to create a climate against a last-minute rush. Some remarkable results during the short campaign indicated that for a few, at least, rationing had been no hardship at all. In Sydney daily tallies of returned coupons kept some interest going. On a day when an early record of 1,312 coupons was set, two women handed back 112 coupons each, another returned 357 while a Goulburn woman returned 443 coupons belonging to herself and her seven children. She observed that she had used the sewing needle to keep the children neat.[23]

As changeover day approached there was a mild rush on the stores but nothing to parallel the wild scenes of pre-rationing days. The stores had little surplus stock on sale anyway and 'quota sold' signs soon appeared. Again some shoppers bought indiscriminately, taking dresses and coats without even bothering to try them on. The rush lasted only for a few days until the new coupons came into use. Then the whole business of juggling 112 coupons to last out the year began once again.

Food rationing was a minor intrusion into people's lives compared with clothes rationing. Tea had been limited since April 1942 but when it was coupon rationed in July the commission increased the allowance per person to 1.6 ounces (about 45 grams) per week, enough for at least three cups a day. In October, when supplies improved, the measure was further increased to 2 ounces per person. The commission granted special concessions to invalids, aged people and people living in remote areas where general hardship and the lack of good drinking water made tea an almost essential item of diet. The Lord Mayor of Sydney received twelve pounds (almost 5½ kilograms) of tea a month as an 'entertainment allowance', a concession granted his counterparts in the other capitals on a reduced scale, indicative of their lowlier status. The Lord Mayor of Melbourne received ten pounds a month while the civic leaders in the remaining capital cities made do with only four pounds. Tea consumption everywhere in Australia fell substantially; in 1939–40 an Australian civilian population of 6.9 million drank 50.3 million pounds of tea, while in 1943 the civilian population of 5–4 million gulped only 38.3 million pounds as they hurried to their war work.[24]

By 1943 they drank their tea unsweetened, too, because sugar rationing had been introduced in August 1942. Each adult Australian was entitled to one pound of sugar (almost a half a kilogram) a week – a figure which gives an insight into Australian diet and passion for sweets and puddings. Generous as this ration may seem, it was increased in the summer months, on request, to allow for jam making and preserving. Apparently Australians regarded only a pound of sugar a week as a serious hardship because there were complaints and many recipes published showing women how to prepare attractive food without sugar. Again the Lord Mayors received special dispensation from the 'spartan' regime: Sydney and Melbourne received thirty pounds a month,

while the Lord Mayor of Brisbane made do with twenty and the remainder apparently survived on twelve pounds of sugar per month.[25]

Less highly placed citizens found entertaining somewhat of a strain; even so, many people seemed to enjoy the experience of adversity. A South Yarra woman reported that the tea ration upset her at first but she soon adjusted and found ways of making her allotment last. 'We have two cups every other morning, we often have afternoon tea, and I have approximately six guests to tea per week'. Real tea addicts might well have admired such discipline but how many would have supported this woman's call for more rationing? She wrote: 'After this experience, I feel it is a pity that other items are not controlled by the Government, then we would all have sufficient, and know that we were being treated on the same fair basis'.[26]

Gradually the government did extend the scope of food rationing. In June 1943 butter rationing came into force, not because of any shortage in Australia, but to ensure that people in Britain received as much as possible. The Australian ration of eight ounces per person per week (226 grams) ensured that Britons should each receive two ounces (only just over 50 grams) per week. In 1944 the Australian ration dropped to six ounces per week but only after careful consultation of the Nutrition Committee of the Australian Food Council, which conceded that six ounces was a healthy diet so long as energy could be obtained from other foods. The rationing commission

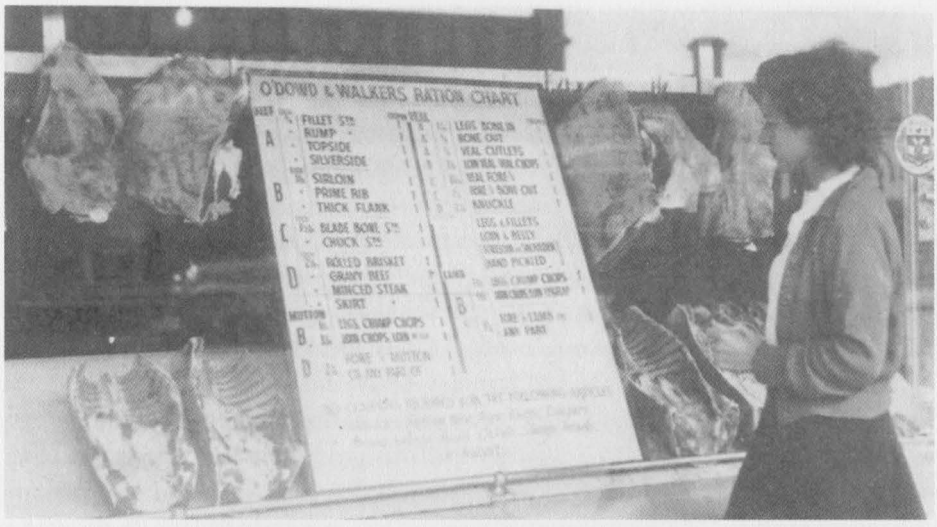
The storekeeper in this suburban grocery store is removing the tea coupons from a customer's rationbook to enable the purchase to be effected. Australians drank a great amount of tea and many of them found tea rationing a considerable difficulty

received more complaints about the butter ration than about any other aspect of their operations, indicating, as the commission believed, that 'without doubt many people had been in the habit of using much more than 8 ounces weekly'. An impressionistic survey of Australian diet indicates that people ate bread heavily coated with butter at all three meals. In addition housewives used butter liberally in preparing vegetables, soups, grills and when frying food. It was also a principal ingredient in cakes, scones and puddings.[27]

Traditionally, too, Australians consumed huge quantities of meat. Since the nineteenth century they had boasted that they ate meat three times a day and for many Australians, even during the war, this remained the norm. Meat rationing came into operation in January 1944, again to permit more meat to be exported to the United Kingdom. The rationing commission hoped to reduce consumption by about 140,000 tons from an estimated civilian consumption of 700,000 tons. Meat rationing became the most complex of the rationing procedures because of the variety of products and there was a great deal of confusion at first. Sausages were not rationed at all because of the 'variable meat content' and because butchers could dispose of their scraps in sausages. Nor were poultry or fish rationed, in an attempt to encourage Australians to eat more of these. Rabbit and offal, perishable goods, were also coupon-free.[28]

Nutritionists advised that adults could survive on 2.2 pounds of meat per week per person (just under a kilogram) so long as they had available to them a sufficient quantity of other protein-rich foods. The meat ration could be made up of beef, lamb, veal or mutton, each of which had different coupon values. Butchers quickly learned to help their customers to obtain full value for their coupons and a visit to a butcher's shop became a much more complicated, and leisurely, affair. In the early days of meat rationing there was a substantial increase in the consumption of horseflesh which apparently was not all consumed as pet food. Pets in fact suffered. Many owners destroyed their dogs, fearing that the meat ration would prevent them from being fed. The government encouraged the production of meat-meal biscuits which sustained many dogs for the duration. The rationing commission published a pamphlet *Feeding Dogs in Wartime* which advised owners to vary their pets' diet. Dogs, the pamphlet suggested, needed meat as only 25 per cent of their diet, with vegetables and cereals making up the balance. Scraps from the table should provide enough nourishment for smaller dogs, the commission decreed.[29]

A committee of inquiry into the rationing of food in Australia and the United Kingdom found that in both countries total food supplies were sufficient 'to meet nutritional intake requirements on a restricted basis without impairing health, morale and working efficiency'. In other words, Australians and Britons had enough to eat. But the report noted deficiencies in Australian diet, particularly in the supply of calcium 'which appears to be marginal'. Britons drank much more milk than Australians,



Meat rationing introduced in January 1944 was by far the most complicated of the rationing procedures. Each type and cut of meat had a particular ration value and shoppers had to design their menus cautiously to make full use of their ration. Before long, of course, butchers became invaluable guides in helping the shoppers to choose wisely

largely because of the United Kingdom's national milk scheme, free milk to schools and a publicity campaign. Indeed the comprehensive nature of the British rationing scheme which embraced almost all foods ensured that Britons enjoyed a balanced diet, which was probably more nutritious than the average Australian diet. Although Australians consumed more milk and milk products in 1943 and 1944 because of 'increased wartime spending power of the public', their diet remained low in calcium and in the vitamins provided by fresh vegetables throughout the war. The report concluded that, for Australians, 'sugar adds very considerably to the attractiveness of a diet and is an inexpensive and relatively non-bulky source of energy'. But this high sugar consumption accounted for the 'characteristic' dental caries amongst Australians.[30]

Because rationing affected only a few products in Australia the supply of many goods fluctuated subject to demand and availability. Shortages of a variety of goods became commonplace and was probably more frustrating because so unpredictable. Gavin Long, Australia's official historian, kept a full diary throughout the war years which provides information on a wide variety of subjects. At one stage, he summarised the various shortages he had observed. By June 1941 he found blankets unobtainable; by October he listed bag blue (for washing), waxed paper for lunches, tinned tomatoes, olives and olive oil, picture wire and key rings. A mixed assortment, certainly, but likely to cause inconvenience rather than real hardship.

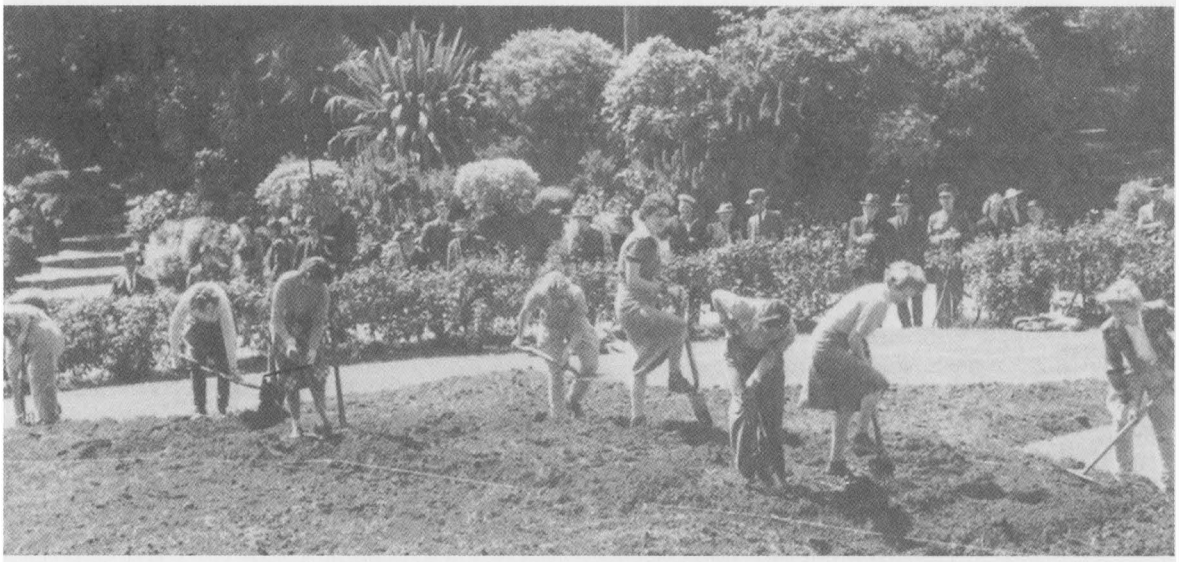
In 1942 rationing accounted for some of the goods on Long's list but there were widespread shortages as well. The rubber shortage, consequent

A householder from Alphington, a Melbourne suburb, converting his front flower garden to a vegetable patch. The government encouraged people to grow their own vegetables as part of a drive to reduce pressure on growers and to make as much produce available as possible for the troops

on the Japanese occupation of Malaya, meant that there were 'no more hottys!' (hot water bottles). In July margarine and coffee crystals disappeared from grocers' shelves and rice, prunes and even potatoes proved difficult to find because they were reserved for the army. In fact during 1942 fruit and vegetables were always in short supply because of the American 'invasion', and prices, consequently, remained high. Many an Australian turned lawn, and even flower beds, into vegetable patches. In September, Long remarked with horror, oranges were 6d each.

Fruit and vegetables continued to fluctuate in price throughout 1943. In March new, non-essential furniture was unprocurable, as were fountain pens and face tissues. In June there was a milk shortage and no cream; there was also an egg famine. However, as the manpower commission released workers from war industries from 1944 onwards, many of these shortages were overcome.[31]

For many Australians the beer shortage caused the greatest inconvenience and annoyance. In 1941 the government had directed that production be reduced by one-third which the Customs minister, R. J. Keane, later



Melburnians loved their gardens but a great shortage of farm produce forced the conversion of many public parks into market gardens. Here women from the Australian Garden Army turn over a part of a Yarra Bank flower garden into a Victory Vegetable Garden. Whether the crowd has been attracted by the presence of the photographer or was a standard accompaniment to the work of these women is not clear but certainly there seems no lack of moral support

described as a 'colossal blunder' because drinkers switched from draught beer to spirits, thus increasing the level of drunkenness. Beer, indeed, became a prized commodity. Drinkers grew accustomed to their favourite 'pub' drying up suddenly and often they combed a suburb to find an hotel where the beer was still 'on'. Mournful reports of beer droughts occasionally included a brighter note. Thus when the *Age* remarked on Melbourne's 'driest beer Saturday ever' when 60 per cent of hotels were closed because they had no beer, the paper also noted that 'there were fewer calls on police to quell street brawls'.[32]

Bottled beer was virtually unobtainable from hotels, leaving the way open for a black market operation that was comprehensive and efficient and came to be accepted as the normal method for the distribution of beer. The black market also dealt in spirits, again virtually unobtainable at regulation prices. Frustrated drinkers looked for scapegoats and were particularly galled to see Americans consuming huge quantities of Australian beer and spirits, provided through their own canteens. The ease with which Americans obtained supplies, officially and unofficially, accounted for much of the bad feeling between Australians and Americans.[33]

Seasoned drinkers were also shocked and discomfited to find women increasingly resorting to bars, traditionally an Australian male preserve. A *Bulletin* correspondent lamented the invasion:

Queueing outside an Adelaide hotel for a few bottles of beer. Such queues became very common in Australia from 1942 onwards as governments cut the production of beer. Note that many of the men have kit bags in which to take away their purchases, and many seem to have arrived on bikes. The absence of young men was a feature of wartime life

'Let's 'ave a cream de mong while we're waiting.' *Bulletin*, 7 June 1944

> I wonder if the fixers of beer quotas took into consideration the quantity being consumed by women these days.
>
> Once upon a time a bottle or two would be taken home for Mum and the girls or for the little wife, and it was appreciated, but things are different now. As no bottles can be bought for love or money Mum and the girls and the little wife go to the hotels. And do they drink from nice dainty little glasses? Not on your life – from handles and schooners and some will order pints if they can get them.
>
> The chap who leaves his work or office at 5 p.m. and wants his two or three handles before going home often has to fight his way into a saloon or front bar and stand and wait in a queue, because all lounges and such places are full of females.

In New South Wales the government had acted to prevent alcohol being sold to women under 21 years when the age limit for men was 18, and there were calls to deny it to women of all ages.[34]

Other shortages might have attracted less comment but they undoubtedly caused more widespread suffering. The most important of these in 1942 was the Melbourne winter fuel famine. About 200,000 of Melbourne's 270,000 private dwellings relied on firewood in winter for heating, cooking and washing. Manpower restrictions severely limited the number of timber-getters at work and so, in the winter of 1942, firewood had to be rationed. Householders would receive only one hundredweight of wood per week, delivered in three week lots. Denied firewood, thousands of people resorted to gas, a scarce commodity in Melbourne because of the distance from reliable supplies of black coal. Quickly, as winter advanced, gas supplies dwindled and the government introduced severe restrictions to prevent the city from running out of fuel altogether. On weekdays people could use gas only between 6.30 a.m. and 9 a.m. but they were given an extra two hours on weekends (11 a.m. to 1.30 p.m.) to enable a hot midday meal to be cooked. These draconian measures lasted only a few days to impress Melburnians with the severe nature of the crisis. A cold dinner and no heating at night must have been a forlorn experience for weary war-workers in the depth of a Melbourne winter. The fuel crisis also represented a threat to the community's health. Housewives found it virtually impossible to use coppers to wash their clothes and their bath hot water was restricted to a few inches. Even when wood was delivered it was often so green as to be unusable for several weeks.[35]

A solution lay in obtaining more labour to cut wood to build up reserves for 1943 but manpower regulations prevented the diversion of labour from essential war industries. The Victorian government engaged 'friendly aliens' and set up wood-cutting camps. By the end of September 1942 there were 416 aliens working in these camps but their output was meagre. Cutters averaged less than four tons per man per week, leading the *Age* to comment that 'the

Children with their prams and billycarts lining up for the meagre wood ration in the Melbourne fuel crisis of winter 1942

average suburban housewife would cut much more than that'. As camps became more efficient, output rose but even so by the end of November total output was only 30,000 tons. Schoolboys were pressed into service as soon as the Christmas holidays commenced with camps established at Anglesea, Noojee, Alexandra and Macedon. Inexperienced boys in most unfavourable weather made little impression on the forests. The premier questioned the value of such camps because, frankly, wood-cutting was

such hard work. The crisis in the winter of 1943, while not quite as severe, nevertheless indicated that no solution could be expected until manpower controls were eased.[36]

Sydney experienced its fuel crisis in 1943 when together strikes and manpower problems combined to dry up coal supplies on which the city depended for electricity and gas. Fortunately the shortage did not become severe until October but even so the government had to impose restrictions and encourage householders to economise as much as possible. People were advised to ensure that all gas jets were as clean as possible, to plan cooking so as to use the oven only once each day, to take a warm shower instead of a bath, and to wash dishes in a basin, not in the sink. When the government ordered a 20 per cent cut in consumption housewives complained that this penalised those who had already tried to be frugal. Once again, 'fair shares' seemed largely a matter of perspective. Government advertisements appealed to people to save coal in a variety of ways, many of which hit at simple pleasures such as a warm, soaking bath. Five inches of water in a bath hardly encouraged relaxation.[37]

Rationing and shortages accounted for real changes in people's diet, habits, comforts and standards of living. A whole range of government regulations further contributed to this. For example, from 1 April 1942 the government banned the manufacture of a wide range of cosmetics and from 1 May Dedman regulated the home delivery of goods from shops and stores as wasteful of man-power. Under this order, butchers might deliver only to those customers who lived more than one mile from the shop and then no more than three times weekly. As most housewives expected the 'butcher's boy' to call daily – as a guarantee of freshness in those pre-refrigerator days – they now themselves faced a daily trip to the butchers. For general goods no parcel weighing less than four pounds or measuring less than three feet in length might be delivered and stores could make deliveries only once a week. As the government had already restricted trading hours, many smaller suburban stores whose attraction depended on being 'open all hours' lost their competitive edge and closed. This increased the distance shoppers had to carry their parcels home.[38]

Many of these regulations appeared haphazard and unco-ordinated and each had to be explained to the public in terms of the overriding demands of the war. By mid-1942 the government decided that it needed a philosophy that would give coherence to all these changes and justify the sacrifices on the homefront. Petrol, clothing and food rationing, shortages of essential goods and manpower restrictions all tended in the same direction of giving absolute priority to war needs. Curtin decided to bring these sacrifices together, to emphasise the home-front contribution to the war effort in one campaign. He called it an 'austerity' campaign.

The idea was to encourage people to accept the sacrifices already imposed and to submit to new demands in a spirit of 'doing without', not unlike the

Queueing at Wynyard station in Sydney for cigarettes. Queues became a familiar part of homefront life. These people seem to be expecting to queue for a considerable time because many of them are reading

joyful spirit of penitence early Christians imposed on themselves in the liturgical season of Lent. People would be encouraged to sacrifice a meal here, a night out there, a drink or a cigarette, to conserve manpower and, more importantly, to save money which could then be invested in the war loans. A cabinet submission in August listed areas where restrictions might be imposed. Racing and coursing would be reduced by 50 per cent and newspapers would remove the glamour from their coverage of sport. Beer production would be reduced to 50 per cent of pre-war levels, hotels would be closed between 2 and 4 p.m., mixed drinking in hotels would be abolished and drinking with meals prohibited. Having dealt with the two passions of the Australian male, sport and alcohol, a series of detailed propositions followed. Restaurant meals would be standardised and three courses only permitted. Newspaper advertisements would remove any 'enticement appeal' from their copy; there would be no radio advertisements for dress, fashion, holidays and other luxuries. Newspapers would omit social gossip from their women's pages unless referring to a function connected with the war or wartime charity. Employers would be prevented from requiring women to wear stockings to work.[39]

As a basis for discussion this document electrified cabinet. Close consideration had already been given to the question of alcohol and a proposal that the alcoholic content of beer be reduced had been rejected because of 'technical difficulties and repercussions on barley and hop-growers, malting industry, manufacturers of vegemite etc.' Senator Keane, reported that his department had received 19,468 representations against further restrictions on alcohol, including 6,083 letters and 8,150 telephone calls. Wisely, perhaps, cabinet accepted his advice that beer drinkers had already suffered enough. On the whole, however, ministers agreed with Curtin's proposals and left him

to add the finishing touches before embarking on his crusade. John Curtin would become the preacher of Australia's secular Lent.[40]

Speaking on a national broadcast on 3 September 1942 Curtin appealed to Australians to live as austerely as possible and to save money to invest in the £100 million Austerity Loan which would be opened. He explained that the nation needed to divert to war production all resources 'not essential to the community's minimum living requirements' because the war was costing Australia £50,000 an hour. He added that every 2s saved would free a man to work for the war for an hour – thus giving an incentive to everyone to begin a personal savings drive: 'we need a great number of people saving hard and saving all the time'. People would be required to cut all unnecessary expenditure; the point, as ever, was to define what was unnecessary. Curtin's broadcast was an emotional one and he preached a lofty doctrine: 'Austerity calls for a pledge by the Australian people to strip every selfish, comfortable habit, every luxurious impulse, every act, word or deed that retards the victory march'.[41]

There would have been no need for an austerity campaign if people had already eliminated extravagance from their lives; apparently, despite rationing, shortages and government regulation, they had not done so. They

A subscriber in Adelaide invests in the third Liberty Loan. Banks and post offices were the usual places of subscriptions but in 1942 cinemas also accepted Loan money to enable people to invest outside working hours

saved a great deal of money on routine purchases, particularly food and clothing, but Curtin feared they would waste this money on unnecessary items unless they were convinced of the need to save. The recent shopping orgy had demonstrated that some people had a compulsion to spend but, when rationing thwarted that, they apparently disposed of huge sums of money on gambling, on black market liquor and on entertainment.

Racing, the most expensive of the spectator sports, had enjoyed an enormous boom throughout 1942. In Sydney attendances increased every week and record crowds set new records for investment on the tote. For example, at the Tattersall's Club meeting at Randwick in May punters invested £56,423 5s on the tote, compared with £37,760 10s at the same meeting in 1941. In August, at the opening meeting of the Victorian Amateur Turf Club's new season at Caulfield, gamblers set a new tote record of £101,446 10s which exceeded the 1941 figure by a staggering £42,746. Bookmakers, on-course and the illegal off-course SP, experienced a comparable boom. Some people seemed to have money to burn. At times the racing industry seemed almost oblivious of the war. When a flight of sixteen planes passed over Randwick in April the jockeys complained bitterly because the horses were upset and 'official complaints were lodged immediately by telephone'.[42]

The racing boom symbolised the carefree spirit that Curtin had determined to challenge. He appealed to people to change their ways, reminding them that Australia was still at risk; the war close at hand. Port Moresby and Darwin were Australia's new Singapores: if they fell then, inevitably, Australians would face 'a bloody struggle on our own soil when we will be forced to fight grimly, city by city, village by village, until our own fair land may become a blackened ruin'. Forgetting the panic that had gripped 'bomb dodgers' and evacuees in February, these words struck many of his listeners as exaggerated. Some Australians seemed to take the war seriously only for those few months when invasion appeared possible; to stir them again Curtin must resort to language that reminded people of the drama surrounding the fall of Singapore.[43]

Curtin wanted more than a savings drive. He envisaged his austerity campaign as 'a virility and morale course' because he worried about the apathy and complacency settling once again on some, at least, of the people. As in Lent when penitents forego pleasures to toughen willpower to repel future temptations, Curtin wanted people to practise self-denial 'to improve the quality of the nation'. Some privations would be voluntary, others obligatory. The most significant of the required penances was the abolition of racing on the first Saturday of each month, henceforth 'raceless Saturday'. Regulations also imposed restrictions on drinking hours, restaurant meals, shopping, clothing and many other aspects of daily life.[44]

The prime minister prepared a list of the kind of voluntary sacrifices he expected. He asked people not to hoard goods liable to fluctuations in supply and to atone for previous 'anti-social behaviour' of this kind by giving

away superfluous goods to people in need. He suggested that people make their own clothes instead of using up factory and manpower resources. He asked them not to buy cotton and silk because these were in short supply: 'we want silk to make parachutes, not to make your legs beautiful'. He called for new social attitudes: people should 'despise' others who showed off new possessions – 'practically everyone can make do with what they have in the house now'. Finally, Curtin asked people not to travel unnecessarily and not to take a holiday unless 'you feel you can't carry on properly without one'.[45]

There is no doubt that John Curtin had adopted this austere lifestyle personally. He worked extraordinarily long hours, lived frugally – almost shabbily – and was an inspiration for everyone who came into contact with him. He had dedicated himself singlemindedly to his country's cause and no sacrifice seemed too great to this most intense of prime ministers. His speeches and his example won many converts. The Catholic leader in Sydney, Archbishop Gilroy, seized on the Christian and penitential spirit of Curtin's campaign: 'our co-operation with the Government's Austerity campaign', he said, 'will be penance that may accompany our prayers and render them more efficacious'. Good works, it seemed, had been enshrined in Australian government propaganda.[46]

Newspapers and journals quickly fell in with the campaign. Women's pages in particular deluged readers with hints on ways to save and tried desperately hard to convince people that it was 'chic' to save. The *Australian Women's Weekly* began to publish 'austerity recipes' and planned 'austerity menus' showing readers how to organise 'meatless' days. The magazine organised a competition for the best 'meatless' recipe submitted by a reader and the judges awarded first prize to a recipe for 'mock sausages':

> Boil 1 cup rolled oats in ¾ cup salted water for 15 mins. then add finely chopped onion to flavour. Mix well, empty into basin. When cool add 1 beaten egg, pepper and herbs to taste, 1 cup breadcrumbs. Shape into sausages, roll in flour and fry in deep boiling fat until golden brown.

Other concoctions deemed worthy of mention included honey fruit cake, baked turnip dumplings and stuffed leg of rabbit. The *Women's Weekly*, encouraged by this success, then organised competitions for the best ideas for converting old clothes into new designs. A November winner explained how she had made a twin-set for her daughter from two worn singlets, a frock from an old tennis dress, and a playsuit from a worn woollen frock. The *Weekly*'s hitherto 'Intimate Jottings' became 'Jottings on the Home Front' and then, finally, 'On and Off Duty'.[47]

In Melbourne the War Loans and National Savings Campaign Committee organised an austerity cooking demonstration at the town hall where 3,000 enthusiastic savers acquired a whole new range of recipes. Heartened by this

success domestic science teachers toured the suburbs showing women how to feed their families cheaply and nutritionally. At Preston, for example, women learnt how to prepare liver casserole, wholemeal loaf, oatmeal biscuits, fish parmesan and silver beet. All kinds of recipes found their way into print. Thus a menu might consist of 'potato and cheese cakes' or 'an eggless pancake' followed by 'austerity icecream'.

POTATO AND CHEESE CAKES

One lb. cooked potatoes, 2 oz. cheese, pepper and salt, 2–3 oz. flour, 1 tablespoonful rolled oats.

Mash the potatoes very finely, add the cheese and seasonings and work in sufficient flour to bind. Form into a flat cake, sprinkle with rolled oats, pressing them on well and cut into six or eight sections. Place on a baking tin and bake in a hot oven for about 20 minutes. Serve hot.

AN EGGLESS PANCAKE

A delicious eggless pancake can be made from wholemeal flour (self-raising) and a pinch of salt, mixed with sour milk to a thick-cream consistency.

Heat a little fat in frying pan, and, when it is smoking hot, pour in the mixture. Fry on both sides and serve with syrup, jam or marmalade.

AUSTERITY ICECREAM

4 tablespoons powdered milk, 4 tablespoons water, ½ cup sugar, 1½ teaspoons gelatine in ½ cup boiling water, 2 cups milk, 1 teaspoon vanilla.

Mix all together and freeze.[48]

Dedicated gourmands would not have found much relief in the best restaurants. The government set maximum prices for meals which severely limited a chef's options: no-one might spend more than 4s on lunch or 5s on dinner. In effect this limited diners in the more expensive restaurants to two courses. For example, at Usher's Hotel in Sydney the menu consisted of consommé fermière, crême asparagus or chicken mulligatawny for 1s each; poached fillet of snapper mornay, young chicken and risotto or grilled rump steak for 4s each; coupe St George, apple tart or vanilla icecream for 1s each. Undoubtedly all this was a relief from 'mock sausages' but a long way from 'haute cuisine'. But Australians knew little about fine food before the wave of post-war immigration. As Jimmy Tonkin, an Adelaide entertainer, remembered things, in Adelaide there was only 'one eating place open after six o'clock... If you were lucky, you had three choices – steak an' eggs, snags an' mashed spuds, or corned beef an' cabbage.'[49]

Government propaganda encouraged people to be proud to save with

suggestions which repeated Curtin's advice and, if followed, must have produced a slimmer, healthier population. People were told to smoke less ('burn less money'), to drink less ('satisfy a need not a habit'), to plan meals for their food value and to do most of their own chores like the family wash or the gardening. The advertisements advised women to set their own hair and to give up cosmetics ('it's smart to be natural'). They were to save money on 'the pictures', the universal form of Australian family entertainment, by going to an early show at the local cinema. Propaganda directed towards middle-class men suggested that they do their own odd jobs such as 'fixing the tap washer' or 'mending that chair' and, if a man worked his garden himself, he would 'benefit in health' and release his gardener for work on a vegetable farm. The message was 'Save ... and save Australia'.[50]

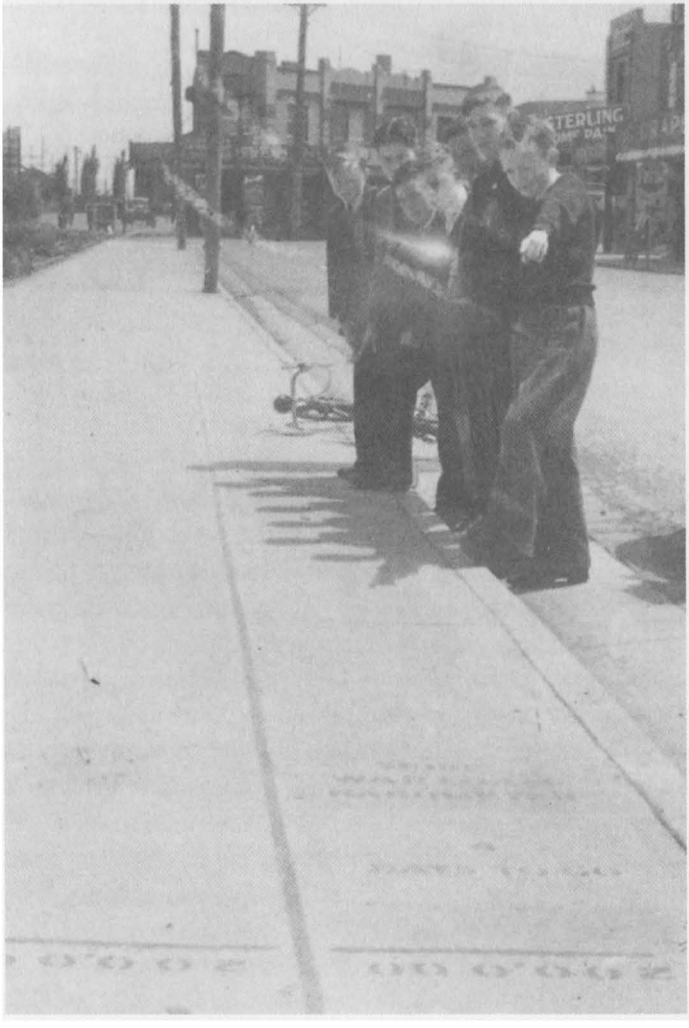
The Austerity Loan, designed to soak up all the results of this frugality, opened in November. The treasurer, 'Ben' Chifley, wanted £100 million and 500,000 subscribers, making the loan by far the biggest yet attempted, particularly in terms of public participation. The first and second Liberty Loans in March and June 1942 had each sought to raise £35 million and, while both had succeeded, the number of subscribers, around 100,000 for the second loan, had been lower than the government expected. The Austerity Loan clearly represented a most ambitious aspect of the whole austerity campaign. As before, the government advertised the loan extensively in the press and on the radio, but principally at city and suburban rallies and by marches of troops. The suburban campaigns featured speakers from all political parties sharing the same platform. To make subscription easier picture theatres throughout Australia became night offices for the loan, with volunteer staff drawn from the banks. Speakers at rallies emphasised sacrifice, the need to support Australian troops at the front, and in their emotive language and use of gimmicks echoed, in a disturbing way, the recruiting campaigns of the first world war. Then the appeal was for men; similar arguments sounded less convincing when the call was for money.[51]

One of the main tricks used during the Austerity Loan was the harnessing of Australians' competitive spirit with inter-state rivalry. A number of Sydney suburbs 'challenged' Melbourne counterparts to see which could raise the most money; the organisers showed a fine sense of social status in matching the suburbs. Thus St Peters confronted Port Melbourne (the target for both – £60,000), Randwick attacked Caulfield (£425,000 apiece) and Kogarah faced Preston (£160,000). After a rather sluggish start the Austerity Loan proved a great success. It was over-subscribed by £4.2 million within the allotted time of six weeks and attracted 420,000 subscribers. Chifley believed the result showed that Australians had embraced the austerity campaign wholeheartedly but it was difficult to know how far a new spirit permeated Australians. The campaign affected the private choices and decisions of millions of people and what seemed a sacrifice to one might have appeared indulgence to another.[52]

Cosmetics manufacturers had a difficult task following the introduction of Curtin's austerity campaign. Beauty aids might be advertised, but only in the context of necessity. The happy couple in this Ponds advertisement are both members of the forces, while the advertisers found it necessary to encourage women to use the products as economically as possible

A fashion page from the *Australian Women's Weekly* which encouraged women to ingenious uses of remnants in the interests of austerity. With coupons scarce, women became very adept at dressing themselves imaginatively and cheaply

To encourage people to buy war savings stamps, the government asked department stores to offer stamps to customers instead of change and many people complied. This store in Melbourne gave the campaign prominence. People invested money in war savings stamps which they eventually redeemed with interest



Young residents of Sunshine, an outer Melbourne suburb, examining the War Loan barometer which showed how far the shire had succeeded in reaching its target

'Raceless Saturdays' remained the most tangible manifestation of austerity. The first of these occurred on 3 October 1942, after the end of the football season and before the beginning of cricket – a time, traditionally, when the public gave a great deal of attention to the spring racing carnivals. In Melbourne wide-eyed reporters detected an 'unprecedented rush' to buy vegetable and flower seeds and seedlings which indicated that people would heed Curtin's advice to use the day of enforced leisure productively. The *Age's* racing correspondent envisaged trainers, jockeys, stable hands and bookmakers devoting the day to raising money for patriotic funds, planting vegetables and clearing gardens and helping to package comforts funds parcels. 'It is generally estimated', he wrote, 'that only a very small proportion of those actively engaged in ordinary times at race meetings will not be usefully employed.' [53]

In Sydney, hot weather lured many people to the beaches or to the harbour where police reported a great deal of betting on the Sydney Flying Squadron's sailing race. Police expected and found a marked increase in attendance at two-up schools and there were several raids and many arrests. The majority of punters, however, seem to have spent the dreary day at their local 'pub'. Publicans reported heavy trading in both Sydney and Melbourne without the traditional 'after-the-last-race' rush between 5 and 6 p.m. Police made almost double the number of arrests for drunkenness. Indeed resort to the pubs became something of a tradition on raceless Saturdays. By February 1943 a doctor at the Royal Melbourne hospital complained that he had begun to dread the first Saturday of each month because of the increase in injuries from drunken brawls. A Sydney newspaper rather complacently celebrated the March raceless Saturday with a revealing headline: 'Quiet Raceless Saturday. Six Arrests at Only Brawl'. The cause of this admirable restraint was a police order closing the pubs earlier than usual; only at North Sydney and Coogee were hotels still open at 5.30 p.m. and 'large crowds went to each place'.[54]

The race clubs, making the best of things perhaps, observed that the ban on racing had done them a favour, weeding out 'undesirables' from the courses. Apparently racing on only three weekends in four prevented these people from earning a living. L. G. Frazer, supervisor of the Australian Jockey Club, reported that many men who had formerly 'lived by their wits' had been forced into useful employment. When one of his staff approached a well-known 'con-man' to order him from the Randwick course, the man pleaded that he was now a reformed character, doing vital war work. Displaying newly calloused hands he commented, 'These will back me up in what I say'.[55]

The clubs accepted the raceless Saturday so readily because it appeared to make so little difference to racing. Crowds and 'investment' remained at record levels. At the Christmas meeting at Randwick in 1942 the tote turnover on six races was £66,691, compared with £43,180 on seven races in 1941. Records continued to be made during 1943. In January a crowd of 38,000 at Randwick invested £81,553 on six races compared with £37,879 in 1942. Randwick claimed the Australian tote record in October 1943 when

punters plunged £155,207 on seven races. Most of them saw little of the races, standing in long queues to reach the tote window because the tote was understaffed due to manpower restrictions. The record was short-lived, however, snatched by Flemington the following week when people invested £161,862 on seven races.[56]

Expenditure on gambling should not be taken as proof that the austerity campaign had failed – even the large sums mentioned represented only a fraction of public spending. Thousands of people did cut back on luxuries and pass up pleasures that had formed a normal part of their peacetime lives. But few people could attain the high, even saintly ideals the prime minister placed before them and each had his own idea of what constituted austerity. A man who cut back on cigarettes might feel justified in 'having a flutter' on the horses only to incense his neighbour who neither smoked nor gambled. Individual prescriptions of austerity justified individual consciences but 'hard-liners' began to ask for some measure of equality of sacrifice. A visitor to Sydney who had read of austerity wrote:

> I expected to find Sydney toeing the hard and dreary road. I was amazed to find it almost impossible to get a room – hotels crowded out. Weekenders were still packing every train, while every cafe was being rushed. On to Newcastle, arriving on a Friday. It was the nearest thing I could imagine to Christmas Eve 20 months ago – crowded shops, long lines of cars parked in the streets, hotels rushed, people spending lavishly, money flowing in rivers.

The writer was a countryman for whom life was hard: 'taxes and more taxes, mails cut down, trains cut out and work laid on, dawn to dark, week after week'. He concluded that only country people were taking austerity seriously.[57]

Many soldiers experienced similar bitterness when they returned to Australia on leave. They, too, had read of sacrifices and homefront restraint but they found racecourses full, pubs overflowing and shops crowded. They reflected on conditions in New Guinea and concluded that soldiers were 'mugs'. Munitions workers earned much higher wages and retained their freedom and their leisure. Servicemen began to feel that they formed a patriotic minority, making a real sacrifice for their country while the rest of the nation concentrated on the pursuit of pleasure.

Such conclusions were unfair. Individuals embraced austerity relative to their previous standards and idealism – not every soldier lived up to the highest ideals of the AIF. Even the most grudging observer would have to concede that Australians, on the whole, accepted a decline in living standards cheerfully enough. Short of food, of beer, of heating, forced on to crowded inadequate public transport, subject to the frustrations of unpredictable shortages and to queues and, above all, to working very long hours indeed

with little prospect of holidays, people's lives in wartime Australia were far from easy. If their lives did not bear witness to the monastic simplicity Curtin had depicted, nor were they passed in a constant riotous carnival. In the acceptance of the drab, dreary monotony of wartime Australia lay much of the homefront sacrifice.

In the army itself the measure of sacrifice depended to some extent on previous conditions. The man who had been unemployed found that his living standards improved when he joined up. For the man in a well-paid job with wife and home to enjoy, impelled into the army by idealism, the sense of sacrifice, of loss, remained acute. There were degrees of sacrifice, not equality, in all of this. So it was on the homefront. Fair shares for all advantaged some and penalised others.

When John Dedman instructed the manpower commission to 'comb out' domestic servants and place them in more productive work, he won the approval of a majority of Australians for whom the employment of 'help' was a distinct luxury. But he aroused the anger of others who saw 'help' as a necessity. The debate which ensued brought the variety of living standards on the homefront into sharp focus. In June 1939 142,000 people, mostly women, worked as domestic servants in Australia; by June 1942 only 90,000 remained, the others enticed into factories where pay and conditions were far better.

When the government required an additional 80,000 war workers Dedman turned to domestic servants, one of the few remaining areas from which war workers might be recruited. Unionists encouraged him. The Shop Assistants and Warehouse Employees' Federation suggested to the minister on 7 October 1942 that domestic servants should be 'manpowered' before any further reductions be made to the ranks of the shop assistants. In December Dedman imposed a ban on the employment of servants and required them to report to manpower offices. The edict aroused a ferocious outcry from

'Now, before you leave us, Sarah, I must know how you peel the eggs before frying them.' *Bulletin*, 3 February 1943

employers but won Dedman a tremendous ovation when he appeared at a loan rally at Geelong.[58]

The opposing viewpoints seemed quite simple. 'One of Many' put her case for retaining a servant:

> I have quite a large home in Toorak and am mother of two (not three) young children. I have now only minimum help and have to carry in all foodstuffs. Will Mr. Dedman advise me whether to neglect my children and husband, give up my home or break down – for one person cannot do impossibilities. Most women are prepared to assist the war effort in every way, but this is going a step too far.

She was answered by 'Another of Many' from Brunswick.

> I am the mother of eight, not two, and up to the last twelve months have done everything, including making bread, preserves, jam and clothes. We have never had tradesmen calling except with milk and ice. I am continually being complimented on the children, husband, meals and home and I am in the best of health myself. If your correspondent did her own work cheerfully, she would be better, feel better and have no thought of breakdowns.

A common subsidiary argument used by those who wished to retain their servants was that the comforts business would collapse if women did not have the leisure to undertake charitable work. Some employers even protested about the heartlessness involved in turning a domestic servant out of the home where she was loved and valued just at Christmas time.[59]

The government battled the employers, marshalling a fairly sound case. Dedman spoke of the factors which contributed to the nation's morale, explaining that no aspect of the community's life was too remote from the conflict to deserve exemption from the 'far-reaching measures which are necessary for the organisation of the Commonwealth on a "total war" basis'. Curtin repeated, again, how essential was homefront production to the total war effort but eventually Dedman had to agree to allow some servants to retain their posts, depending on the circumstances of employer and employee. Dedman lost this battle because of the political strength of the employers but the dispute shows clearly how relative were perceptions of sacrifice. Austerity had a variety of definitions.[60]

The government anticipated Christmas 1942 with a good deal of anxiety. Ministers feared that the savings encouraged by the austerity campaign might be lost in one big blow-out and they also feared that the traditional holidays would cause a shut down government determined to encourage an 'austerity' Christmas of few presents and almost no interruption to normal working patterns. In November John Dedman announced an advertising

ban on enticement to Christmas giving. Words such as 'Christmas', the 'festive season', 'Yuletide' could not be used in advertising copy. Advertisers were not to decorate displays with borders of holly or representations of Christmas trees or Father Christmas. Dedman explained that he had no wish 'to interfere with gifts to members of the forces or to children' but he aimed to prevent a serious waste of manpower and materials. In the eyes of retailers and many of the public he became 'the man who killed Santa Claus'. Christmas had been 'Dedmanised'.[61]

When the secretary of the New South Wales Retail Traders' Association depicted Dedman as the man who tried 'to assassinate the dear old white-whiskered gentleman and all the goodwill among men he represents', the minister was stung to reply. In quarter-page display advertisements headed 'The Government and Your Christmas – a message to every Australian family from the Hon. J. J. Dedman' the minister contended that recent Australian Christmas celebrations had been 'commercialised'. Through heavy advertising pressure Australians had been urged to buy many and varied gifts. In curtailing spending, Australians would return to the true spirit of Christmas – 'Children would still receive their presents and still have their Santa Claus either in the home or in the shops but adults would observe Christmas with simplicity'.[62]

Curtin supported his harassed minister, calling on people to spend Christmas 'soberly, confidently, realistically'. He suggested that adults exchange war savings stamps and certificates but these appeals met only partial success. During the first weeks of the normal Christmas rush traders reported sluggish conditions and an unenthusiastic public. Without the tinsel and the Christmas displays in shop windows perhaps people failed to realise that Christmas was upon them. Furthermore, no-one could afford too many coupons, and shortages of non-rationed goods, particularly food, plagued the Christmas shopper. Only the canny or the far-sighted had put away the nuts and fruits necessary for Christmas cakes and puddings; shortages of meat, beer, fruit and vegetables dominated everyone's conversation. There were valiant attempts to 'make-do'. The *Australian Women's Weekly* encouraged people to surprise the family with 'goose with one leg'. The ingredients consisted of 'one small, plump leg of mutton' cut with a thick end and neatly boned by the butcher. The mutton was parboiled and then stuffed with breadcrumbs, onions, minced ham and kidney. Served with roast vegetables, gravy and red currant jelly, this 'mock goose' provided some distant memories of the traditional Australian Christmas. Other suggestions included 'Christmas rabbit' and 'Piquant mock ham' which was in fact pumped leg of lamb.[63]

In the days immediately before Christmas the rush began in earnest with large and small stores exhausting their quotas long before closing time each day. In Pitt Street, Sydney, women rushed from one store to another desperately trying to obtain some kind of gift. Jewellery, books and cosmetics

When Christmas had been 'Dedmanised', it was no longer possible to use the names Santa Claus or Father Christmas or to encourage people to spend to excess. This advertisement neatly circumvents the regulations by speaking of the children's 'old friend', while a fairy coach has temporarily superseded sled and reindeers

These little girls are decorating their austerity Christmas tree at a suburban school in Melbourne. An ingenious teacher has devised a tree that is made entirely from cut paper with a timber support

proved popular as were handkerchiefs and ties which had the bonus, amongst clothing, of being 'coupon free'. The aim seemed to be, simply, to have something to give: truly the thought, not the gift, counted.[64]

Christmas day fell on a Friday in 1942 and the government decided to concede a four-day holiday only – Monday 28 December 1942 would become the New Year's holiday and there would be no further interruptions to work. New Year's day 1943 would be a full working day. Travel restrictions and the ban on mid-week sport gave point to these arrangements – even with time off there was little for people to do. But workers felt they deserved some kind of a break, or at least substantial bonus payments, so the government's directive was deeply resented. Although New Year's eve passed quietly and soberly in all capitals, there was widespread absenteeism the next day – a far cry from 'business as usual'. In New South Wales alone officials estimated that at least 35,000 war workers gave themselves an unpaid holiday. This meant that about a hundred factories producing war materials lay idle. As it was feared that few of these workers would report for work on Saturday the factories suffered two consecutive long weekends – just what the government had hoped to avoid.[65]

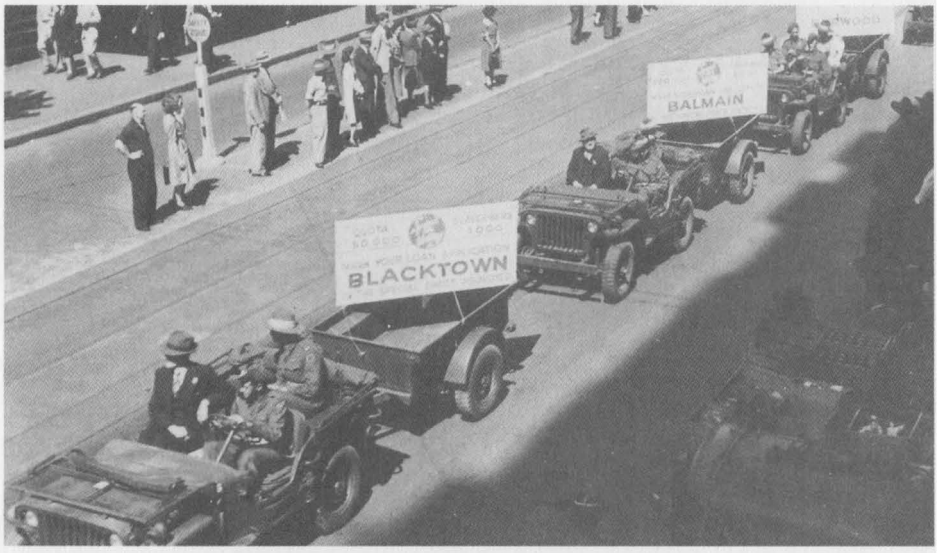
While the newspapers berated the 'homefront deserters', the government put the workers into the courts to assert its authority over the absentees and to emphasise its commitment to the austerity campaign. In New South Wales within two days 223 workers had been charged, including five women, all

of them from the Sydney area, although absenteeism was also pronounced in New South Wales provincial industrial centres and in the country. When the cases came to trial many simply pleaded guilty and were given a bond of £20, having promised to observe regulations in future. Others, pleading 'not guilty', produced valid reasons for being absent such as illness or, in one case, 'acute sunburn'.[66]

Speaking on behalf of a number of plumbers a Sydney barrister, A. Landa, explained that only about 12 per cent of union members had failed to report for work. One absentee had a son fighting in New Guinea, evidence enough of his patriotism, and where he worked no sick leave or annual leave was granted. The man felt entitled to a few days off. As the cases dragged on through January the Crown tired of the prosecutions and began to withdraw charges. The point had been made and repeated court appearances became just as great a drain on manpower as the original holiday. The fact that the prosecutions did not provoke strikes or industrial confrontation shows how devoted most war workers were.[67]

Austerity remained one of the government's main weapons of war throughout 1943. The government encouraged frugal living and opened two big 'Liberty Loans', the first for £100 million in April, the second for £125 million in October. Both loans witnessed rallies and marches, massive advertising campaigns and gimmicks such as competitions with pennants and badges for groups and individuals. A pattern of 'scare tactics' emerged. Towards the mid-point of the loan period a senior government spokesman, Curtin or Chifley, would condemn the 'loan lag', showing how the response fell far below the target. There would be talk of compulsory saving or further cuts in expenditure but within days of the loan's close officials would report a rush of applications and reveal triumphantly that the loan had been filled after all. The April loan netted 380,000 subscribers of whom 90,000, apparently, applied in the last two days. Ross Gollan, a senior Canberra political correspondent, pondered the same tactics at the close of the second campaign and suggested that the government might have cried wolf once too often. Would the 'honest patriot' decide that there was no further need of his self-sacrifice when each time the loan was filled?[68]

Many people viewed the loan campaigns, and politicians' prominent part in them, with distaste recalling the stirring recruiting campaigns of the first world war. Servicemen and women made speeches that seemed undignified or demeaning to many in the audience. Flying-Officer Prime, addressing a rally in Martin Place, Sydney, explained that New Guinea was the worst theatre of war in the world. 'If you want to get your fathers, husbands and sons back', he said, 'you must give them good weapons to fight with and that means giving your money now.' A soldier who had fought in New Guinea described the appalling conditions the men endured and appealed for more equipment and munitions. The single most important contribution Australians could make to the war would be to hand over their money, he added.[69]



Raising money for the war effort was a constant task for government and a new loan opened every six months or so from 1942 onwards. The federal treasury became skilled at devising new gimmicks to interest people in a loan. In this first Victory Loan in March 1944 each suburb in the cities was allocated a quota. This parade in Elizabeth Street, Sydney, included the mayor of each municipality and a soldier from the district

Advertisements reinforced this message. During the April Loan one full-page advertisement featured the crumpled body of a dead Australian soldier and below the message, 'Today, at the front, he died ... What will YOU do TODAY for Liberty?' 'Quick facts about the loan' completed the message. Reminding subscribers that 'Liberty Loan Bonds are the safest place in the world for your savings' seemed just too incongruous a way of celebrating frontline heroism and sacrifice. A woman wrote condemning the advertisements, saying she was 'seized with a deep and red-hot indignation at ... the callousness' of this message with its drawing of a soldier 'who could have been my dearly loved only brother who was killed in action'. She demanded to know if 'their dead bodies have to be dragged before our eyes before we will do our duty'. Better perhaps the advertisements which began 'Strange things go into planes' and had people listing various items: 'there goes this year's holiday', 'there goes my new carpet', 'there goes my spring coat', 'there goes my new cricket bat'.[70]

For investment did involve sacrifice, however different in scale from that of the man or woman who risked injury or death. Loan campaigners delighted to provide stories of individual generosity such as that of the woman potato-peeler with two sons at the front who invested £400 in the Fourth Liberty Loan. Her investment represented spending foregone and testified to an austere life. There were many Australians who had followed John Curtin's recipe.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PACIFIC PARTNERS

The emotional, almost hysterical, welcome given to the United States naval squadron in Sydney and Brisbane in March 1941 indicated that Australians had a particular affection for Americans which derived, largely, from the 'Hollywood' image. In the inter-war years Australians watched an enormous number of movies; indeed in one twelve-month period admissions to cinemas exceeded 68 million while, in comparison, combined racing and theatre attendances amounted to slightly less than 16 million. Most of the movies exhibited were imported, overwhelmingly from the United States, and it became common for moralists to complain that Australians suffered from over-exposure to American 'supermen and super-heated women'. Movies and popular songs highlighted appealing aspects of American society – material prosperity, chivalry, romance, good humour and, above all, enterprise. There was little opportunity for this 'Hollywood' image to be tested by reference to other aspects of American culture which remained firmly beyond the reach of most Australians for in every aspect of life, except the movies, Australia remained firmly within the British political, cultural and social framework.[1]

Australians did not read American books – in their first editions, anyway – because an extraordinary 'imperial' publishing agreement meant that Australia would only import books published in Britain. As there was no direct air link between Australia and the United States, American newspapers and periodicals were hopelessly out of date by the time they reached Australian newsagents or libraries and were, therefore, largely ignored. American history and literature found almost no place in Australian schools where teachers still concentrated on Britain and the Empire. Little wonder, then, that Australians knew little more about America than the clichés and stereotypes that poured out from Hollywood.

Curtin's dramatic appeal to the United States in December 1941 galvanised Australians. Never before had Australia seemed so helpless and isolated, so remote from Britain, the former protector. Australians looked to the United States to rescue them from the Japanese, drawing on those images of power, strength and chivalry that the movies had so assiduously cultivated.

Such was the enthusiasm for the American ally in the early months of the Japanese war that the American national anthem and the American flag received great prominence in Australia. This employee in a Melbourne factory is busily making United States flags in June 1942 to enable as many business houses as possible to fly them on 4 July

Curtin's words, quoted so frequently in early 1942, became part of Australia's folk memory: 'without any inhibitions of any kind', he had written in the Melbourne *Herald*, 'I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links of kinship with the United Kingdom'. While some devoted Empire loyalists expressed their disapproval of the new direction this statement foreshadowed, most Australians agreed with Curtin that their nation would be spared the horrors of a Japanese invasion only if the Americans intervened. The might of the United States alone could save Australia.[2]

Pre-war images about Americans and an awareness that the United States must be Australia's only protector, combined, therefore, to stimulate the warmest welcome for American troops who began arriving in Australia from early 1942 onwards. The build-up by American forces was impressive and stunned Australians unused to such dramatic changes. By June 1942 there were 88,000 Americans stationed in Australia and by early 1943 there were about 250,000 American servicemen in camps and bases in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne and also in smaller towns throughout Australia. The presence of these men profoundly affected the homefront and was the most remarkable aspect of the war for many Australians who noted considerable

differences in American ideas on food, dress, manners and customs, and, of course, accent and speech. Many Australians began to fear that their country would be permanently 'Americanised' and that they were witnessing an invasion much more subtle than the one they had feared.[3]

For security reasons the arrival of American troops in Australia could not be celebrated with speeches or parades in imitation of the reception given to the naval squadron in 1941. Instead, the troops came unannounced and for some months the newspapers could not even comment on what was taking place before their readers' eyes. Huge camps sprang up in the parklands close to cities and the American uniform became almost as common as the Australian in the streets but no hint of this could be published. Finally in March 1942 the Australian press announced the 'American invasion' to the world:

> One morning the people in a quiet suburb had their sleep disturbed by the sound of drills at work in the nearby park. That night there was the skeleton of a regular town sprawled out over the acres of land where horses and cattle used to graze. Within a fortnight the new camp city was complete down to its cook-houses and canteens – every square inch of it under American occupation ...
>
> The Americans are really exemplary guests. They are quiet, well-behaved, orderly, yet full of high spirits and quick on the draw with their wise-cracks, their officers eager to be friendly in spite of the hurry they are in most of the time ...
>
> The Americans have been staggered by the warmth of the welcome and the volume of hospitality extended to them, even through those difficult days when they could not admit that they were here at all ...[4]

A grateful host society opened their hearts and their homes to the Americans. particularly when they learnt that 'first and foremost [the boys] want to get acquainted with the cities and their people'. Deliberately, accounts of the troops concentrated on their friendliness and their interest in Australia although there was much gentle laughter at the Americans' ignorance of the land and people they had come to defend. People competed with one another to invite a 'Yank' home for a meal and many real friendships sprang up between Australian families and Americans. Far from home, and slightly dazed by the speed with which they were thrown into the Japanese war, American troops were genuinely delighted by the warmth of their reception in Australia. Women's magazines hoped to make home visits more successful by publishing recipes and menus that would remind guests of their homeland. One of five menus suggested by the *Women's Weekly* listed fish chowder, breaded veal cutlets, green peas, shoestring potatoes, parsnip fluff, browned tomato sauce, mixed green salad with radish fans and cheese sticks, butterscotch ice-cream cake, and coffee. A grateful Australian government

encouraged private generosity and matched it, reserving the biggest hotels and the best facilities for the Americans. Nothing, people reasoned, should be denied these heroes who had come to Australia's rescue.[5]

Some of the manifestations of this ready welcome were over-generous and perhaps demeaned the hosts who seemed in danger of sacrificing their own customs and traditions in favour of the 'American way'. It became smart, at least amongst the young, to adopt an American accent and to substitute American words wherever possible. An indignant listener detected American inroads on the Australian Broadcasting Commission's radio network, an institution hitherto slavishly British. Announcers now spoke, the listener complained, of 'Centeenial Park', 'Boolgaria' and 'Empress Agoosta Bay'; 'Perhaps anything is considered good enough for "we Australians"', he concluded. On the other hand, another listener who had tired of 'Advance Australia Fair' as the ABC news theme which had replaced 'The Grenadier Guards' in early 1942, suggested that it, in turn, be replaced by 'The Star Spangled Banner'. This, he considered, would be 'a grateful act of courtesy to our American brothers in arms'.[6]

Although this bizarre suggestion was not adopted, nevertheless the American anthem received considerable exposure. Cinemas had readily accepted the practice of playing both 'The Star Spangled Banner' and 'God Save the King' at the beginning of sessions and commercial radio needed little incentive to play the American anthem. It became common, too, to fly the American flag from public buildings and offices, as a grateful tribute to Australia's ally. Indeed so devoted had Australians become to their 'Pacific partner' that they celebrated, with enthusiasm, America's national day, the 'Glorious Fourth' of July, the anniversary of the defeat of the British in colonial America. John Curtin fostered the observance, appealing to people to fly the American flag and to entertain American troops.[7]

American independence day became a high spot on the Australian calendar with balls and parties in the cities and all sorts of treats for children. In 1942 American servicemen visited Australian schools and provided cakes and 'cookies', American flags, and other aids to parties. They also explained the significance of the day to the children. Department stores decorated their windows with special Fourth of July displays and bunting and streamers adorned counters and shop fittings. At Princes Park in Melbourne, the home-ground of the Carlton Football Club, 6,000 Australians watched a demonstration of American baseball and 'gridiron', games which were quite unfamiliar to them. Theatres and radio stations provided special 'Independence Day' programmes and there were thanksgiving services in some city churches. Few Australians, apparently, noticed the irony of celebrating the end of British rule over the American colonies.[8]

As the numbers of American troops in Australia grew, so Australian awareness of America increased too. Newspapers strengthened their coverage of American politics and life, naturally, and even American sports results

appeared in the papers, eagerly read, no doubt, by United States servicemen anxious for news of home. Australians learned of the 'World Series' in baseball and became familiar with the names of the stars of American football. Commercial radio stations broadcast American news on relay and also carried descriptions of major American sporting events. The *Sunday Telegraph* in Sydney made an arrangement with *Time* magazine and published a full summary of *Time's* news and opinions for its Sydney readers under *Time's* own banner.

Gratitude prompted these displays of pro-American sentiment, for Australians genuinely believed that the American victory in the battle of the Coral Sea had prevented a planned Japanese invasion of Australia. In 1944, Arthur Calwell, recalling the battle, said: 'Had the Americans not won the Coral Sea battle the 27 Japanese transports would have landed at Port Moresby, Townsville, New Caledonia, Sydney and Melbourne' and the Australian loss of life would have been 'too horrible to contemplate'. The prospect of invasion had caused great alarm on the homefront after the fall of Singapore so it is hardly surprising that Australians looked on their apparent saviours with so much affection and enthusiasm?[9]

While the United States navy thus won acclaim, Australian gratitude focused on General Douglas MacArthur, who symbolised for Australians the unconquerable spirit of the American people. The general, supreme commander of Allied forces in the South West Pacific Area, had a theatrical side to his personality and clearly enjoyed the limelight. In a starring role, he took Australia by storm, attracting enormous publicity wherever he went in the manner of the pop stars who visited Australia in the 1950s and 1960s. MacArthur established his headquarters first in Melbourne, then in Brisbane to be closer to the fighting forces, and every detail of his household arrangements attracted attention. His young son Arthur and his Chinese nursemaid were constantly photographed, as was the general himself, and his opinions carried more weight than those of any other person in Australia, Curtin possibly excepted. In public MacArthur displayed a great willingness to co-operate with Australians and his frequent consultations with Curtin gave the impression that the Australians and the Americans were working very closely together at the very highest levels. In fact, MacArthur had little time for Australians and increasingly denied them any effective voice in the management of the war.[10]

Throughout 1942 gratitude and even adulation characterised the Australian response to the American invasion but these sentiments were by no means universal. Australian servicemen resented the praise heaped on the Americans because it belittled, they believed, their own contribution to the nation's defence. To some Australian servicemen the Americans were, yet again, 'johnnies-come-lately' who had left Britain stranded while Hitler overran Europe. Members of the first AIF recalled that American isolationism had prevented commitment to the first world war until 1917 when the seasoned

Soon after their arrival in Australia, the MacArthurs became real celebrities and press photographers followed them everywhere. This page from the *Australian Women's Weekly* puts a human face on the somewhat austere American general who had arrived to save Australia

Australian troops scorned the 'doughboys' as immature soldiers, reckless of the lessons that had been learned at such cost on the Western front.

Australian troops were proud of their prompt response to the Empire's call in 1939 and also took justifiable pride in their fighting in north Africa, Greece and Crete in 1941. They resented, therefore, the attention the Americans attracted in Australia and the Americans, wisely, recognised that any tendency to boastfulness represented a possible source of conflict. A pocket-guide, issued to United States' troops, warned: 'There is one thing to get straight right off the bat. You are not in Australia to save helpless people from the savage Jap. Maybe there are fewer people in Australia than in New York City but their soldiers in this war and the last have built up a great fighting record.'[11]

While Australians might salute the Americans as their saviours, they required the Americans to observe the Australian ethic which forbade boastfulness and Australian troops, in particular, wished due recognition to be given to their own efforts. The American pocket-guide reinforced the message by quoting a snatch of dialogue from a King's Cross bar. An American soldier opened: 'Well, Aussie, you can go home now. We've come over to save you', but the Australian countered, 'I thought you were a refugee from Pearl Harbor'.[12]

If the welcome Australian troops gave to the Americans was, from the start, less warm than that offered by civilians, other factors soon contributed to the growing antagonism Australian servicemen felt for Americans. The United States government provided for its troops on a much more lavish scale than the Australian standard and there was considerable difference in rates of pay. An American private had roughly twice the spending power of his Australian equivalent and this disparity increased with rank. An American lieutenant received £63 per month compared to an Australian's £29 15s, while a major received £106 (£44 15s) and a lieutenant-colonel £141 (£51). An exchange rate which favoured the Americans further increased the disparity putting the American troops in a position to corner the market of just about every item in short supply.[13]

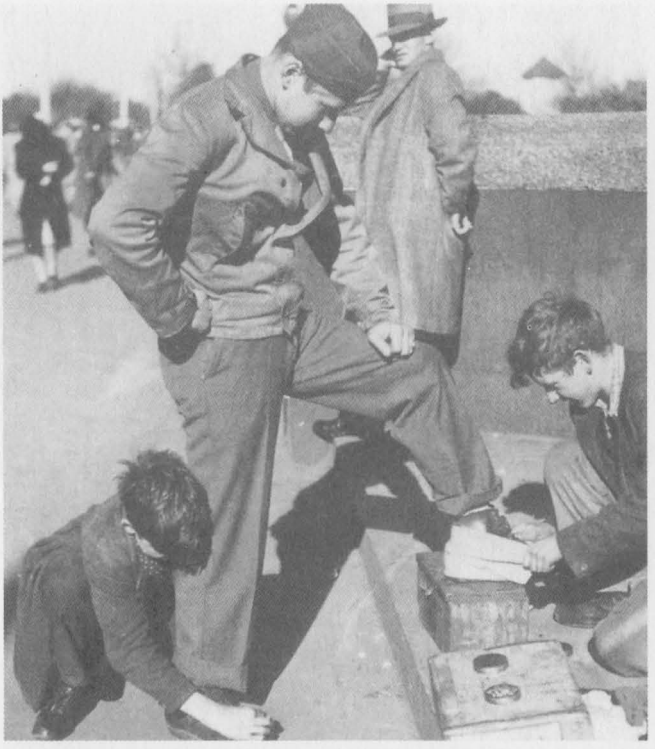
Taxi-drivers and shopkeepers quickly learned to give preference to Americans in the expectation of big tips so that before long Australians began to be treated as second-class citizens in their own country. It was not unusual for taxi-drivers to refuse to pick up Australians, so anxious were they for American custom. One frustrated party of four, including a man in AIF uniform, hailed nearly two dozen empty cabs in North Bondi as they tried to make their way home after a party. The men wondered if regulations could be framed to give 'taxi-drivers the necessary permission to pick up and transport Australian Servicemen during the same hours as they transport Allied Servicemen'.[14]

The great inequality in purchasing power suffered by Australian troops soon became such a serious problem that the Federated Chambers of

Commerce in Queensland asked the federal government to insist that Americans' pay drop to Australian levels. Arthur Fadden and W. M. Hughes, the opposition leaders, suggested that American servicemen's pay above the Australian level could be deferred or compulsorily saved by the United States government for their men in the interests of Allied harmony. Hughes declared that the Americans' excessive pay 'imperilled the stability of our price structure', 'reacted unfortunately' on the pressing shortage of accommodation, and created bad feeling among the troops. Every day, as examples of American liberality came to light, that bad feeling increased. In Brisbane, Americans paid between £5–£10 for a bottle of whisky and around £3 10s for a dozen bottles of beer when the Australian expected to pay only about £1 for these goods, at least on the open market. A Sydney judge observed that by their 'excessive spending' American servicemen upset the even distribution of controlled goods such as liquor and tobacco and added that their free-spending ways also 'undermined the steadfastness of some young women and encouraged disturbances'.[15]

American authorities rejected the call for deferment of part of their troops' pay, arguing that it would be unfair to penalise those men who happened to be serving in Australia. Any scheme of deferred pay tailored to meet Australian

Members of the Ninth Division AIF who had recently returned from the Middle East made for their camp's 'wet canteen' where they enjoyed their limited allowance of beer. American facilities, replete with all sorts of comforts and much more generous liquor allowances, were the envy of Australian troops. It infuriated Australians to see the quantities of Australian beer consumed by the Americans



All types of services sprang up in Australian cities in response to the American invasion. These boys became bootblacks and attracted American custom. Such a sight would have been most unusual in Australia before the Americans arrived. The scene is Princes Bridge in Melbourne in 1942

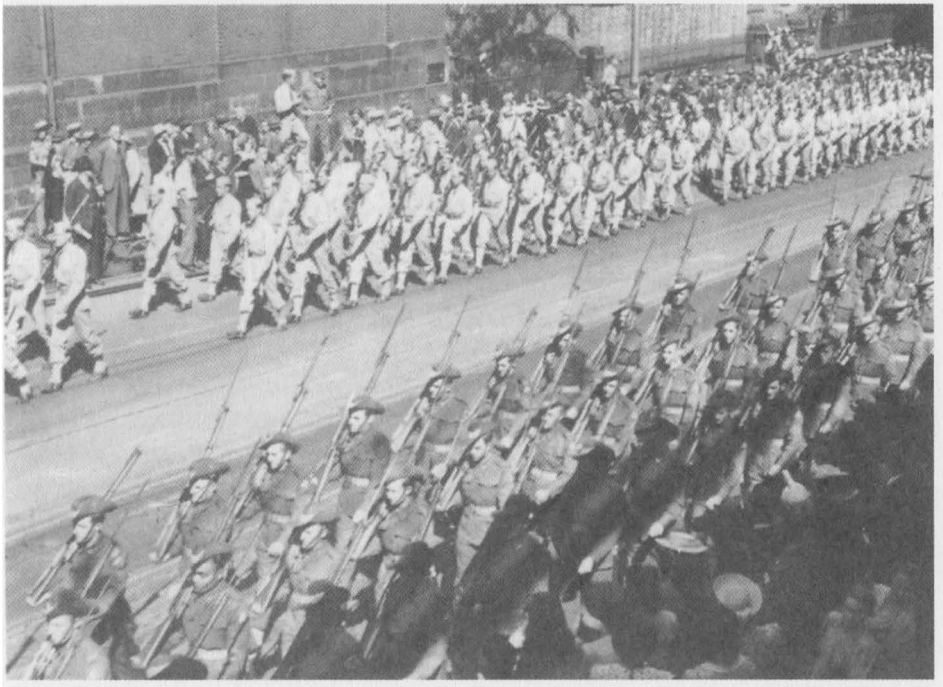
requirements would only make the men resentful and increase antagonisms on the American side. The *Philadelphia Record* described the Australian case as particularly ungracious because American troops 'probably helped to save the continent from invasion by the Japanese', reminding Australians that they might have to make sacrifices or to swallow their pride in the cause of harmony and gratitude.[16]

Pay was not the only cause of grievance between the two bodies of troops, however. Amenities provided for American troops by their government clearly surpassed Australian standards and added to the sense of injustice the Australians felt. At first Australians had simply marvelled at the American camps, replete with almost unimaginable luxuries. Every tent, for example, boasted a wooden floor and a coal stove while the standard of food served in the camps seemed very high by Australian standards. Australians consumed huge quantities of mutton and tinned foods in their camps but Americans refused these, despising mutton, and insisted, instead, on beef, particularly steaks. The officers were treated even more lavishly being billeted in the best hotels available in the cities where they worked. Despite harmonious relations with MacArthur and other senior Americans, even Curtin's war cabinet

An officer of the American Red Cross prepares a list of entertainments at the United States Hospitality Bureau for visiting American troops. The aim was to keep the troops fully occupied to prevent unpleasant scenes in the cities

paused to reflect on the disparity of officer accommodation. Australians lived in camps with their men while United States officers occupied the Chevron, Windsor and Menzies hotels in Melbourne and Lennons and the Bellevue in Brisbane – the best either city could offer. The United States government paid rents appropriate to such luxury establishments – £3,500 per month at the Chevron, for example.[17]

The American government also assumed responsibility for the provision of what Australians termed 'comforts'. That vast volunteer army of knitters, fundraisers, buffet cooks and waitresses found useful work in Australia because the Australian government provided only the essentials for its troops. But the American government followed its troops everywhere,



American and Australian troops marching together in Elizabeth Street, Sydney, during a loan rally. American uniforms when compared with Australian were so much smarter and many Australian soldiers began to resent their traditional garb

almost to the very field of battle, with 'luxuries' such as cigarettes and icecream, comfortable leisure centres replete with sports equipment and the latest magazines from home, and also provided elaborate entertainment to keep the troops happy. Within a few weeks of the troops' arrival the first of the American entertainers had also arrived. Denied admission to the shows which were for Americans only, Australians heard reports that they were on a scale unimaginable in Australian camps. A steady stream of the biggest movie stars arrived in Australia in 1942 and 1943, answering a few questions for the Australian press or posing for a picture, before being whisked away to an American camp. It was only in the post-war years that Sydney and Melbourne were added to the itineraries of American entertainers – in wartime, Australians simply wondered at the generosity of a government that would arrange such spectacular concert tours.[18]

Even the American uniforms indicated how much more generous was the American government with its troops. Every American soldier wore a tie, setting him on a level with Australian officers, and, by comparison, the Australian army uniform, in particular, was dull and unimaginative. Heavy woollen tunics, baggy and ill-fitting, and equally unimpressive trousers stood no comparison beside the Americans' well-tailored uniforms; the jaunty American cap even made the digger's famous 'slouch hat' seem old-fashioned. American officers enjoyed decently cut coats, ties, smart colours and a great

deal more decoration than was allowed to their Australian equivalents. In joint parades of troops through Australian cities, Australians began to feel uncomfortable about their own uniforms.

Most of the factors which caused resentment between Australians and Americans also contributed to the success Americans achieved with Australian women and this, in turn, increased the ill-feeling between the troops. It should have come as no surprise that Australian women would be attracted to the Americans, particularly in view of the movie-star image they enjoyed but also because visiting soldiers in wartime inevitably benefit from a sense of excitement and glamour. Australian troops in Britain and France during the first world war had certainly benefited in this way. In addition, the Americans seemed more courteous and attentive to women than was the norm amongst Australian men and this, combined with their fulsome compliments and expensive gifts, made them appear very attractive escorts indeed to many Australian women.

At first, dating an American serviceman was seen as a kind of patriotic duty to boost the morale of lonely men who had travelled so far to defend Australia, and social contacts were encouraged. In Melbourne at the start of the American build-up, girls were recruited from businesses, insurance offices and the public service to act as hostesses at dances arranged for the visitors. Known as 'Victory Belles', the girls wore small silver bells which gave their first name only. They were forbidden to leave the hall during the evening and could not be escorted home by an American. Such strict supervision promoted a favourable image which was wonderful publicity for the Americans and, as their chaplain-general remarked: 'Healthful entertainment, with supervision such as was exercised at last night's function,

Guests relaxing between dances during the American Independence Day ball at the Melbourne Town Hall. Coca-Cola was the universal drink

was the ideal way of keeping men off the streets, and made them more contented in their camp life'.[19]

This image of happy, healthy relations between Australian girls and American boys was shattered in May 1942 by the news of a series of brutal murders of young women in Melbourne. The first murder, of Ivy McLeod in Albert Park, horrified a city where murder remained relatively infrequent. A second murder, similar in every detail to the first, this time in Spring Street in the city itself, followed within days. The brutality of both murders astonished people and the normally discreet morning newspapers hinted that not only had the women been assaulted but their bodies mutilated. Ivy McLeod, for example, had been found in a shop doorway, with all her clothing torn off, 'lying on her back with her legs folded back under her body'. When a third victim, Gladys Hoskings, was found close to the main American camp in Royal Park, suspicion fell on the American troops. Fear gripped the city and women sensibly refused to venture out at night without an escort. A few days after the third murder police arrested Edward Leonski, a twenty-four-year-old private in the American army.[20]

Having found their man, the Victorian police handed Leonski to the American authorities for court martial, surprising those Australians who believed that Leonski should be tried under Australian law. But as Archie Cameron, a Country party member in federal parliament, commented, would Australians be happy to allow one of their own men in Egypt to be tried under Egyptian law? The court heard of Leonski's loneliness and of his extraordinary consumption of alcohol and after American psychiatrists had declared him sane the officers of the court martial sentenced him to be hanged, a sentence carried out at Melbourne's Pentridge jail.[21]

This unpleasant affair temporarily disturbed friendly, easy relations between American men and Australian women but within a few weeks most people had put Leonski out of their minds. Some Australians suggested that the women not make too much of the Americans and that they remember their own soldiers fighting in the various theatres of the war. Alan Marshall, a regular contributor to *Woman* who was to become a very popular Australian writer, pleaded with women to wait for the return of their own men, for, he suggested, women should 'Stick to your Digger boyfriend':

> Our boys overseas are doing a job that is made possible only by the knowledge that back home things are flowing smoothly. Their lives are made happier by the knowledge that their girls still love them, their wives are still as devoted, their parents still as loyal ...
>
> Absence, unfortunately, doesn't always make the heart grow fonder. In such circumstances it is easy for an engaged girl to imagine she is in love again ...
>
> Only a foolish girl will break an engagement because of an infatuation for a man on the spot.[22]

But Marshall's article generated considerable opposition. 'Glencoe' from Newcastle, New South Wales, adopted a sensible approach to the question:

> Now what is this superiority the Digger has? I married one, and can assure you, he is no better, or worse, than the male of any English-speaking race. So don't give him wings; in any event the Digger would hate to wear them. Do Alan Marshall and his supporters expect the American lads to keep to their own barracks and knit socks or play patience?[23]

The excitement of wartime and the glamour surrounding the Americans combined to ensure that American lads would definitely not be confined to barracks. Very soon after their arrival, marriages began to take place between Australians and Americans and this process accelerated throughout 1942; 'war brides' became an important part of the homefront. With the heading 'It's On! Yankee Soldier Weds Australian Bride', *Woman* celebrated what it believed was the first Australian-American war wedding. The bride, nineteen-year-old Jean, married twenty-three-year-old Peter, an army cook, on 19 February 1942, a month before the Australian press could even announce that the Americans had arrived! The couple married two weeks after first meeting in Swanston Street, Melbourne, when, on his first morning in Australia, Peter had introduced himself to Jean with the words 'Hello, babe, comin' truckin'?' Although the wedding took place at short notice, Jean did not suffer a 'glory box problem' as she had been collecting items for three years, 'just as a matter of course'.[24]

Many of these marriages were hasty affairs although authorities on both sides urged caution. Severe legal impediments stood in the way of Australian women, most of whom assumed, wrongly, that marriage would automatically confer American citizenship on them. An American Red Cross official explained that war brides remained aliens who had to apply for permission to enter the United States and take their place in the immigration process regardless of their husband's status. Once admitted, the woman must be a resident in the United States for two years before she was entitled to apply for citizenship and investigation by authorities would have to ensure that the applicant had 'no coloured blood' as this would create 'grave difficulties'.[25]

Few Australian women bothered with these 'technicalities' in the excitement of the time but, until representations were made from Australia, the new bride was not entitled to an allotment from her husband's pay nor had she any right to his deferred pay and pension should he be killed. Clearly these marriages, particularly where children were involved, represented a risk. There was always the possibility, too, that the union was bigamous, a pleasant interlude for the American before he returned to his wife in the United States, or that the marriage was treated as a casual affair and that the woman would hear nothing more from her husband once he had left Australia.

As early as March 1942 Brisbane's Archbishop Duhig called for a ban on American-Australian marriages, arguing that such unions distracted soldiers from their main duties. Other clergymen agreed that there must be grave doubts about the chances of success of such hasty unions. As the chairman of the New South Wales Congregational Union said, 'precipitate marriages are always to be discouraged, and when they involve girls linking with men whose stay in the country was likely to be short or uncertain, there seem to be special reasons for fuller consideration'. One Victorian clergyman, who refused to marry an Australian-American couple, told them: that he had their best interests in mind and when the couple reminded him that he was legally obliged to marry them he agreed, setting his fee at £150; the couple went elsewhere. Yet despite official and clerical discouragement there was a steady stream of marriages almost from the first day the Americans landed; indeed within the first ten days of their arrival in Sydney, the registrar of marriages had received four applications to marry.[26]

By January 1945 between 1,200 and 1,500 Australian war brides and fiancées had already made their way to the United States, while an estimated 10,000 women waited in Australia to be reunited with their husbands in America. By then, most American troops had left Australia and all of them would be repatriated to their homeland when the war ended. Their wives would be allowed to join them, but only when shipping became available. There were, however, a few places on each ship even while the war was in

A meeting of wives and fiancees of American servicemen to discuss allowances and problems relating to American citizenship. All these women hoped to travel to the United States as soon as possible and to rejoin their husbands there, but many of them would have to wait until the end of the war and then for some time after that. This picture shows how young many of the war brides were

progress and Mrs Elsie Curtin talked with some of the lucky few war brides aboard the ship that took her husband and party to America for his first visit there as Australian prime minister. Mrs Curtin later told a press conference that she was very worried about the future of the women with whom she had talked because they seemed to have very vague ideas about the life each would be making. Most had expected to live in New York or one of the other big cities so familiar to Australians from the movies but Mrs Curtin found that many of the women were destined for the 'back blocks'. 'If they are city girls', she commented, 'they will have a rude awakening.'[27]

It was apparent that many of these marriages were hasty and ill-considered, born of images of America derived from the movies and of concern for a lonely soldier soon to face the Japanese. Senator Dorothy Tangney, a Western Australian elected in the Labor landslide of 1943 and the first woman to win a Senate seat, made the plight of the hundreds of women deserted by American servicemen one of her first concerns. She discovered that divorce could only be granted under United States law so that the Australian woman must travel to America to secure a divorce. Senator Tangney campaigned to change Australian law to allow these cases to be heard by Australian courts as few of the women could afford the trip to America. Although she encountered bitter opposition from clergymen and others who accused her of trying to make divorce easier, she introduced her bill into federal parliament in July 1945 and was relieved to see it pass both houses.[28]

Many Australian women, of course, had no intention of marrying an American but were content merely to have a 'good time' while the Yanks were in town. An American boyfriend represented a break from work and worries and a relief from the loneliness women endured in the absence of their Australian husbands or boyfriends. The Americans were novel, fun, unusually courteous and ready to spend their money recklessly on wartime luxuries – drinks, a good meal, and black market goods such as stockings and other expensive clothes. Many of these affairs, lightly entered into, caused some anxiety and unhappiness to the women as the problem columns of women's magazines testified. Australian servicemen in New Guinea, reading of the married woman who had fallen in love with an American in one of hundreds of combinations the magazines printed, must have begun to wonder if a virtuous woman remained in Australia. Japanese propaganda concentrated on reminding the soldiers that the Yanks had carried Australian women by storm. In a very short time the happy socialising of the 'Victory Belles' had given way to innuendo and suspicion so that to date an American was seen by some as an act of betrayal to Australian boyfriends and husbands. Women who went out with Americans risked opprobrium and a bad name and some thought them to be immoral, unpatriotic and grasping. Gavin Long noted in his diary in July 1943 that 'the girls who go out to dinner with US officers, though decorative are generally not "ladies" – not of the class which would normally eat at the better hotels. The girls in the upper layers

generally go out with Australians, and girls in uniform are almost invariably with Australians.'[29]

Such comments were unfair as much of the socialising between Americans and Australians observed the standards common in Australia at the time. Yet, as the Americans had almost no access to private homes where they might conduct their love-making decorously they were forced to act more openly in public than was usual and this gave rise to the charges of immorality. The parks, beaches and even streets of Australia witnessed all manner of intimacy between Americans and Australians and provoked an outcry from those unused to such sights. As 'G.D.' from Northcote commented:

> I am a munition worker and necessarily pass through the city at all hours – early and late. In the early morning I have witnessed heart-breaking scenes between mostly Allied soldiers and our so-young Australian girls in doorways. These young girls are the future mothers of Australia. The soldiers will pass on to other fields, leaving tragedies behind them in many cases.[30]

Parties of Australian soldiers often acted as 'moral police', separating embracing couples and giving the 'Yank' a clear idea that such public spectacles disturbed Australians. Seeking to reduce these tensions, the American authorities issued instructions which forbade United States servicemen from walking in the streets with their arms around girls, nor were they to hold hands with them, to carry their handbags, to stand in shop doorways or to sit in parks at night. Provosts could cancel a man's leave if they observed him provoking Australians in these seemingly innocent ways. The instruction also required Americans not to rush for taxis ahead of civilians, not to demand dishes in restaurants that were unavailable to civilians and not to be conspicuous when carrying liquor through the streets.[31]

Orders such as these indicate how the level of tension grew as the importance of Americans to the safety of Australia diminished. Nowhere was the tension greater than in Brisbane where, since MacArthur made his headquarters there, the number of American troops had grown very rapidly. In July 1943 Gavin Long learned that the population of Brisbane which in 1938 had been 325,890 had been increased by about 90,000 American servicemen, a figure that left out of account the many thousands of men on the outskirts of the city who flooded into Brisbane on leave. The city could not cope with the influx. Soldiers packed into restaurants and hotels, fought for the few places available, and then wandered aimlessly about a *city* where, in fact, there was little entertainment or diversion. Bars opened only between 12.30 p.m. and 1.15 p.m. and again between 5.15 p.m. and 6.15 p.m. and by April 1942 pickets had been placed on hotels and dance halls to prevent trouble. Within months military police forced Australian troops and Americans into strict segregation; each had clearly defined areas where they might drink

or dance but other parts of Brisbane had become 'no-go' areas to them.

With too few facilities catering for so many men the strain became intolerable and even the best restaurants imposed barbarous conditions, encouraging bad behaviour. Long wrote of an acquaintance who dined at a 'presentable place' and was amazed to find his meal served on an enamel plate and his tea in an enamel mug. 'When he asked for a teaspoon he was advised to stir his tea with the handle of his fork.' Long also reported that 'some cafés are chaining the teaspoons to the table, or tying them with string to the handle of the sugar basin'. In such primitive conditions, Brisbane became notorious for brawls and riots between Australian and American troops. The most notable riot, 'the battle of Brisbane', led to several deaths and caused a great deal of damage to property.[32]

Long's view of Brisbane's transformation was by no means unique. In the first phase of the American invasion of the Queensland capital observers had delighted in reporting how the sleepy city had been awakened. In an article entitled 'Brisbane is Australia's Most Colourful City at Present', Neville Smith, a journalist with the *Argus* claimed that 'Brisbane is one of the most vivid places in the Southern Hemisphere today'. He noted that Brisbane suffered greater shortages of goods than in southern cities so that shops closed daily at either 3.30 p.m. or 4.30 p.m. and that hotels were mostly closed, nevertheless he found Brisbane 'a cheerful and lively place'. It was 'so youthful and strong and brimming with the energy of the superbly fit'.[33]

A year later a war correspondent and former member of the AIF, John Loughlin, also writing in the *Argus*, complained that 'It is not much fun living in Brisbane today. Candidly it's no fun at all.' Shortages that had earlier been laughed off had now become chronic. There was not enough transport, accommodation, entertainment or food and there was a great deal of competition between American and Australian servicemen for the little that was available. Shortages, as elsewhere, produced black marketing and profiteering which seemed to be rampant in Brisbane. So great was the shortage of beer that it was 'not uncommon to see a cosy little party of 3 or 4 with up to 40 glasses of beer lined up in a corner while latecomers are turned away to wait for next day's quota'. Women were in short supply too; Loughlin estimated that there were 'hundreds of men to every one girl'. Many of the girls refused to go out with Australian servicemen and the tensions between Americans and Australians were very great.[34]

It would be a mistake, however, to concentrate on Brisbane as if clashes and riots were confined to that one, over-crowded, steamy city. Problems arose wherever Americans were stationed. Fanned by sexual jealousy, by boasts that the Yank alone saved Australia from invasion, by counter-boasts that the Australian fighting man excelled all others in prowess, and by resentment that the Americans grabbed most of the available drink and food, riots became commonplace in Australia in 1943 arid 1944. At first magistrates had punished severely Australians convicted of crimes against

the American heroes but later, as clashes became more common, no special penalties were meted out. But in Melbourne in April1942 an Australian who fractured an American's jaw in a brawl which he claimed the American had started received a three-year jail sentence. Another Australian who assaulted an American and robbed him of £11 was sentenced to eighteen months' hard labour and 'ten strokes of the birch'.[35]

Given censorship and an understandable desire not to antagonise Australia's guests, the newspapers adopted a very cautious approach to the growing conflict on the homefront and gave no prominence to reports of clashes. If an American soldier broke the law in any way, the newspapers invariably referred to him as an 'Allied' serviceman, hoping to deflect some of the ill will by the use of such an anonymous term and yet until 1945 there were few representatives of the united nations in Australia, except Americans. Despite this general caution, it is apparent just how extensive the conflict had become.

In February 1943 the *Age* reported one of the biggest street brawls Melbourne had ever known. Soldiers, sailors, airmen and civilians all joined in – an estimated 2,000 of them – and they held up traffic for over an hour. Police arrested only two soldiers, an airman and two civilians and the report in Melbourne made no mention of the cause of the riot, nor did it identify the nationalities of the protagonists. Only in Sydney was it thought safe to mention that this had been another American-Australian conflict. The police admitted that they had had great trouble in controlling this riot because of the interest of the spectators and their tendency to prevent police from making arrests, always in the interests of the Australian cause. In Sydney a riot at the intersection of Goulburn and George Streets brought a big crowd of spectators who were particularly angered whenever an Australian was arrested – indeed they threatened to overturn the police van removing the ringleaders. As such incidents became more commonplace, newspapers accepted more openly that battle-lines had been drawn up. By March 1944 the *Sydney Morning Herald* prominently reported a wild brawl between Americans and Australians which had been watched by a thousand people and had delayed traffic for twenty minutes.[36]

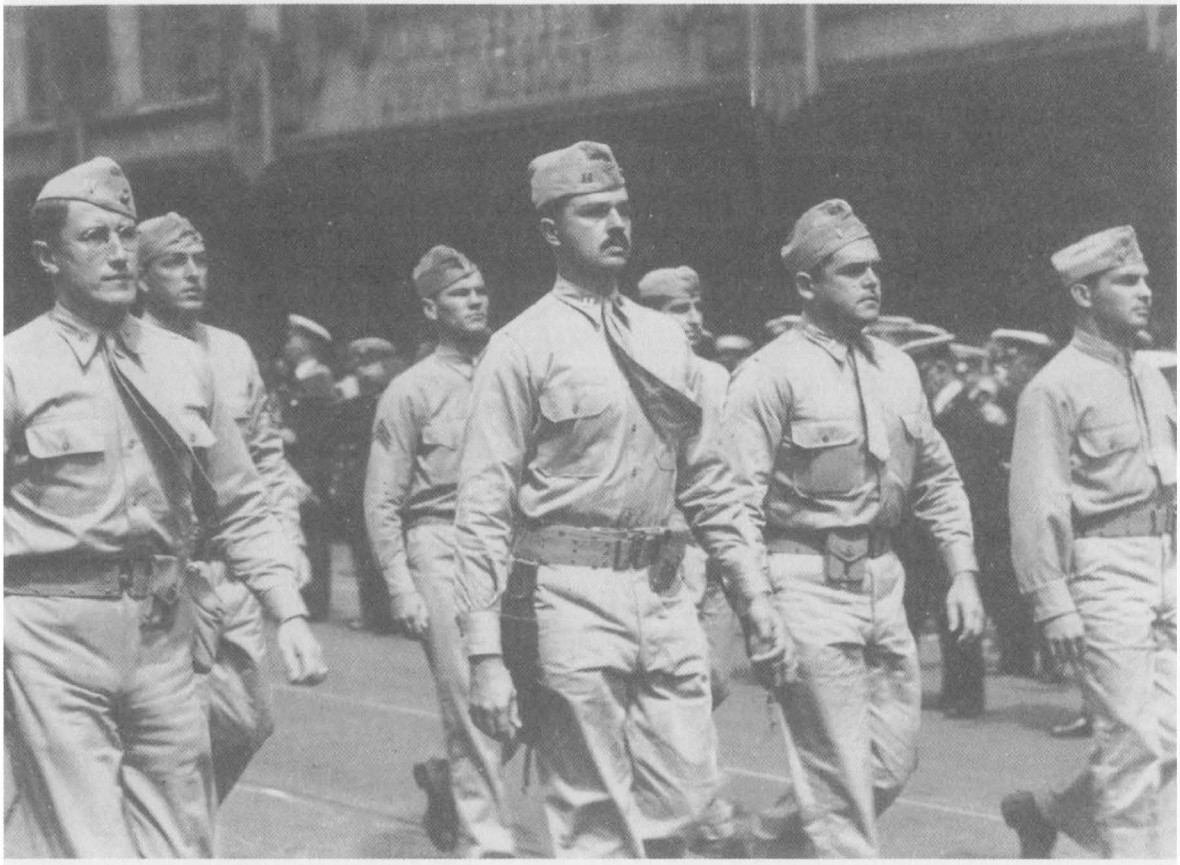
In Perth, too, antagonisms between Americans and Australians led to riots and at least one death. As in other newspapers, reports in the *West Australian* were sketchy with the censor seeking to minimise conflict by refusing' it publicity. But in a city the size of Perth no newspaper could pass over a riot involving more than 1,000 people as occurred in January 1944. Hay Street became completely impassable as 'Allied' and Australian servicemen gave expression to their feelings. The *West Australian* patriotically noted that few Australians were involved and that most of them were concerned with 'quelling the disturbance'. Police arrested two Australian civilians, however, and later claimed in court that they had 'endeavoured to incite the contending factions'.[37]

There was also a great deal of violence at the personal level as individuals picked one another off. Sydney police admitted in May 1944 that they were worried by the number of stabbings involving American servicemen and they suggested that troops should be prevented from carrying knives. The concern grew out of a 'night of violence' when an American stabbed a young Sydney private during an argument and a civilian was attacked and stabbed by a gang of three American soldiers. A hotel owner, in court because she admitted Americans only, defended herself by claiming that hers was the only sensible policy. If Australians and Americans drank together she claimed, 'there would be trouble, and we would have fights in the house every night'.[38]

At the first signs of this friction American authorities had tried to smooth over differences with carefully staged public relations ventures such as sporting contests and other entertainments where the proceeds would be donated to an Australian charity, such as a children's hospital. At the Richmond cricket ground, 20,000 people watched a game of American football between the 'Redskins' and the 'Golden Bears' and although neither side managed to score, the match raised £1,130 for charity. In March 1943 the Americans acted as hosts at a free party for Australian troops held at the Melbourne Cricket Ground – an American base. The aim was to improve relations between the troops and to allow them to mix together in casual circumstances. The Americans served beer (in limited amounts), hot dogs and hamburgers and also provided a military band, community singing and innocuous competitions such as a 'tall story' contest which, happily, an Australian and an American won jointly. Gladys Moncrieff sang but the highlight proved to be an entire Tivoli show of vaudeville. The United States commander explained that he hoped the party would improve relations.[39]

Conflict should not be blamed solely on Australian jealousies and resentment at American swagger. Americans found elements of Australian behaviour puzzling and began to wonder if Australians were pulling their weight in the war effort or were leaving all the hard work to 'Uncle Sam'. Certainly they remarked on the large number of Australian troops retained in Australia for local defence long after the threat of invasion had receded and this prompted Curtin's eagerness to send the conscript militia outside Australia. Many Americans had complained that their government required American conscripts to fight anywhere in the world, on Australia's behalf, while members of the Australian militia remained far from the fighting. Even when Curtin won a compromise on this policy Australian conscripts could only be deployed within a defined area outside Australia and this policy continued to puzzle the Americans.

The Americans also complained that from 1944 onwards Australians were withdrawn from the fighting services to overcome manpower problems in industry. In six months to April 1944 the government transferred 39,000 Australians back to civilian life to boost production of essential goods so desperately needed on the homefront. Few Americans, probably, realised the



American troops marching in Melbourne to celebrate George Washington's birthday in February 1943

extent of Australian sacrifice involved in placing such a high proportion of men and women in uniform, and they resented what they saw as an undue reliance on the American fighting man. American troops feared that they were being asked to accept more than their 'fair share' of the heat of the battle, as if the Australians were 'squibbing' it. Of course such jibes immediately provoked Australians, serviceman and civilian alike, so passionately jealous were they of Australia's fighting reputation.[40]

Americans were bewildered, too, by the frequent strikes and stoppages that plagued Australia's industrial output particularly in the later years of the war. Americans seemed astonished that unions threatened the production of essential war materials and they were infuriated when their own military efficiency was jeopardised by strikes. Relations between American authorities and Australian wharf labourers were rarely satisfactory and on many occasions the Americans used their own troops to unload their ships. There were also numerous accusations of inefficiency on the wharves, and of pilfering, and these charges embittered relations between Australian wharf labourers

and the Americans. As might have been anticipated the Americans found difficulty in understanding or sympathising with Australian workers' culture and traditions and sometimes they provoked confrontation unintentionally. As informal relations between Australians and Americans worsened, labour relations also deteriorated.

Much of Australian-American tension can be blamed on wartime conditions and much of it, too, depended on mutual ignorance. At first it amused Australians to hear Americans expressing wonder at the cities when they expected to find backward rural communities, but in the end such ignorance was infuriating. Americans traded on their Hollywood image but it annoyed them to find Australians so naive about their country and so ignorant of its history and culture. When the Americans arrived in January 1942 it might have been anticipated that they would change Australian attitudes and customs but Australians, eventually resentful and dismissive of Yanks, proved remarkably resistant to change. Superficial changes in dress, accent and food occurred and many Australians remained as avid for American films and entertainers as ever, but the partnership went no deeper than that. Indeed many Australians deliberately turned with enthusiasm to their British heritage and when Curtin appointed a Royal Duke, Henry, Duke of Gloucester, as Australia's governor-general in 1943, there was general satisfaction with the choice. The Americans had completed their task and many Australians were not sorry to see them go.[41]

CHAPTER EIGHT

AT WORK

Manpower was a word few Australians had heard or bothered about before the war with Japan but from 1942 onwards it became a household expression. Manpower, which now sounds naively sexist, referred to the supply of labour at the government's disposal. Of all the items in short supply in wartime Australia, labour was the most acute and the implications of the redirection of labour were profound. The Victorian fuel famine during the winter of 1942 proceeded directly from the government's decision to redeploy timber-getters in industries directly related to the war – but a shortage of fuel might have had a disastrous impact on the maintenance of munitions production – so directly interrelated were sections of the economy.

The ultimate size of the Australian labour force was, obviously, finite and as more and more men and women were recruited for the fighting services the total number of workers actually decreased. At the same time there was very considerable pressure for an increase in the production of essential war supplies. Women were recruited to jobs previously held by men but eventually even the pool of unemployed female labour dried up. To meet the demand workers had to be moved, by force if necessary, from 'non-essential' to 'essential' industries. Thus while the number of persons employed in Australian factories increased from 565,106 in 1938/39 to 766,506 in 1943/44 there was a marked decrease in employment in industries not directly connected with the war effort. The clothing, furniture and brick-making industries, for example, all lost workers to the chemicals, metals and food industries.[1]

The number of factories increased as did the value of production in both primary and secondary industries. In 1937/38 the value of primary and secondary industry respectively was £214 m. and £197 m.; by 1944/45 this had jumped to £277 m. and £362 m. To achieve such increases in production while at the same time placing about one million Australian men and women in uniform required considerable planning and very great sacrifices on the part of workers. Put simply, men and women had to work harder and for longer hours to make up for the drain on the labour force represented by

servicemen and women who were, in the economic sense, unproductive. The great achievement on the homefront from 1941 onwards was the great increase in output at a time of very great competition for scarce labour resources.[2]

The utilisation of labour involved a series of choices about priorities – many of them difficult to determine. Many of the shortages experienced in Australia's homes related directly to government decisions about manpower but the homefront accepted these decisions well enough seeing the consequent inconvenience as a part of the price of total war. After the Japanese attack, war in Australia was no longer a matter for an expeditionary force sent abroad while the people at home continued 'business as usual'. All Australians were now involved, as John Curtin said:

> Behind the fighting men in the front line is a second line of men and women engaged in the production of supplies and equipment for the forces; behind these again are those engaged in producing, processing, transporting and commercially organising the innumerable items of supplies and essential services without which the nation's resistance would collapse ...[3]

Before 1942 the only attempt to structure the shape of the workforce lay in the exercise of some control over the competing needs of industry and the services. From the beginning, some jobs had been 'reserved' which meant that people in them were not free to enlist. British experience, particularly in the first world war, had demonstrated that skilled tradesmen were clearly more useful at their workbench than as cannon fodder at the front. In January 1942 the Curtin government announced the formation of a manpower commission to oversee the composition of Australia's workforce. The commission would ensure 'that the resources of manpower and womanpower in Australia would be organised and applied in the best possible way to meet the requirements of the defence forces and the needs of industry'. In the black days when invasion seemed imminent the creation of the commission caused little comment at all but it was indeed a revolutionary intervention in the labour market – traditionally left to the play of market forces.[4]

The director-general of Manpower and his staff moved urgently but cautiously into the field of labour manipulation. When the regulations were being drafted, some had argued that the commission should be given the power to direct individuals to particular jobs as some form of conscription to industry. The government backed away, at this stage, from such a minute oversight of the economy. Instead the commission proceeded by establishing priorities and encouraging workers to transfer from jobs of lower to those of higher priority. Throughout 1942 the commission concentrated on identifying problems and seeking to solve them by encouragement rather than by force.[5]

Workers at a Perth munitions factory listen intently to N. J. Makin, minister for the Navy and for Munitions, speaking at a loan rally

The major objective throughout 1942 was to entice women to enter the workforce as they represented the largest pool of new labour available. Old traditions and shibboleths about the employment of married women impeded the commission's objectives but gradually women found work in all kinds of jobs hitherto reserved for men – in factories, in commerce, in transport and in the public service. The chief stumbling block remained men's fear that women would permanently depress wages in any particular industry. If employers discovered that women could work as well as men for half or two-thirds of the male wage then, reasoned the men, the jobs would not be handed back to them at the end of the war. The solution might have been to pay men and women equal wages for equal work as was done in America but this conflicted with deeply held (male) beliefs about the best way to organise Australian society. As 'bread-winners' men should receive more money than 'girls' who had no family responsibilities. Married women, with children, would stay at home to provide for all. Only war might reverse these deep-seated views about society.

The manpower commission encouraged women to work, whether married or not, because of the desperate need for labour. Male-dominated trades unions opposed the entry of women into the workforce, fearing that a pool of cheap labour ready to serve the nation for patriotic purposes, regardless of rates and conditions of work, would depress standards won during peacetime. The Australian Council of Trade Unions supported male unionists, insisting that if women did replace men, then they should be paid at full male rates. Of course employers refused to put on a woman for the

price of a man and the ACTU stand therefore made entry of women into the workforce much more difficult. No-one bothered to confirm whether or not women workers actually performed at less than the male standard.

After negotiations with the government the ACTU abandoned its claim for equal pay by agreeing to the creation of a Women's Employment Board to fix wages for women doing work usually done by men. The Board, in setting wages, could not go below 60 per cent of the prevailing male rate and must not, of course, exceed it. Effectively, therefore, women workers were removed from the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court which, historically, had determined, through wages cases, the conditions and wages of all Australian workers. The creation of the WEB encouraged speedier decisions as women moved into a great number of industries hitherto reserved for men and for this reason women accepted the different status implied in removing them from the deliberations of the Arbitration Court. The WEB treated women slightly more generously than had the Court but, even so, refused to concede equality, declaring in a formal document: 'The Sexes are not equal – heaven forbid'.[6]

Creation of the manpower commission and the Women's Employment Board caused some to hope that work in wartime would be thoroughly organised, planned and made efficient but the whole area, the most vital on

Australian women moved into all sorts of jobs previously reserved for men. This picture of a female bread carter was taken in St Kilda Road, Melbourne, in June 1943

the homefront, remained haphazard and ill-conceived. Almost callously, the government demanded more of workers but, when long hours and poor facilities led to illness, accidents or unrelieved frustration, there was an outcry against the consequent absenteeism. Absentees were branded 'deserters on the homefront' and, as statistics showed that women were more often absent than men, employers argued that female wage rates should be lower because of the greater likelihood to 'desert'. Profound social change occurred in the workplace during the war but this aroused hardly a flicker of interest amongst commentators who turned a blind eye to the homefront to concentrate on the battlefield – in their view the only dimension of Australia at war. This indifference affected women more seriously than men.

When Melbourne's Archbishop Mannix complained about the government's policy of drawing young women with children into the workplace, he identified an important emerging social problem. But his solution was traditional and, in the circumstances, inappropriate. Australia needed women in the workforce to maintain war supplies and when Mannix told the government to send women home he ignored the changed reality. At the same time the government ignored its responsibilities to the women it recruited and to their children. Having encouraged women to enlist in the homefront army, no government department or agency gave serious thought to the special problems they might encounter. Men experienced new circumstances, too, although largely they were asked to work harder and longer – the effects were extremely wearing but they did not lead to profound social upheaval.[7]

The most urgent problem was for women to gain admittance to a particular industry. Acceptance proceeded on an industry to industry basis, often state by state, wasting a great deal of valuable time and labour. Women had won a working place on Melbourne's trams in 1941 but, when in 1942, faced with over 500 vacancies, the New South Wales transport department proposed to employ women, they encountered stiff union opposition. Despite very long hours and appalling conditions caused by the cancellation of services, members of the Tramways and Omnibus Employees Union voted to reject women workers. When the department applied to the WEB for permission to employ women, the union president promised to contest the issue 'by every means possible'. Union opposition existed although women had been working the trams in Melbourne for almost a year, but Sydney unionists argued that Melbourne was irrelevant because 'Traffic conditions in Sydney are known to be the worst in the world'. Eventually the WEB ruled that women could work in Sydney, if the department granted equal pay. By mid-October the first conductress was plying the city streets and the 'concession' worked well, as it had in Melbourne. But as each case must be argued laboriously either in the arbitration court or before the WEB, no time remained for attention to the problems women might experience in adjusting to the workforce.[8]

A woman conductress on a Tramways bus in Melbourne

Employers showed little awareness of these problems and little flexibility. There was hardly any attempt to restructure the working day to fit in with other responsibilities many women already had. Thus one patriotic woman, stimulated by the constant appeals for women workers on the radio and in the newspapers, complained that she was quite unable to find any employer prepared to accept her for the hours 8.30 a.m. to 4 p.m. which she could work while her children were at school. 'There are hundreds of women like myself', she wrote, 'energetic and strong, sitting at home brooding over the war ... We cannot help until given the proper opportunity.'[9]

Employers complained of a high rate of absenteeism among women without realising, apparently, that many women had to take time off simply to keep their households going. John Dedman's restrictions on shop hours and on the delivery of certain classes of goods, designed to save manpower, frustrated many shoppers and made shopping almost impossible for others. Logically, given the great extension of hours spent at work, Dedman might have examined much more flexible shopping arrangements. Instead, reductions greatly inconvenienced many thousands of working women. An apparently trivial example might have drawn the attention of imaginative planners to the dimensions of this problem.

'Woman War Worker' wrote to explain that she would be forced to surrender her important job in the office of a munitions factory if ice could not be delivered earlier. Her husband and a son were abroad with the AIF, another son and daughter worked in the city, while the youngest child was

still at school. All left home by 8.30 a.m. at the latest, forcing the woman to leave out a special container for the ice, delivered later in the morning. By the time the first person returned home in the afternoon much of the ice was 'wasted away' and the food in the house 'left unprotected' and in danger of 'going off'. Writing in November, 'Woman War Worker' observed that the position would deteriorate as summer advanced. Unless ice could be delivered by breakfast-time she would have to give up her job.[10]

This example highlighted part of the problems involved in working and in organising a home. Neither employer nor workmates would sympathise or indeed tolerate this woman 'clocking-on' late simply to cater for an ice delivery. The war would not stop for ice! So instead, she might have been obliged to resign. Increasingly, employers and managers identified absenteeism as the greatest problem facing Australian production while generally people regarded the absentee as a 'slacker' who gave herself a holiday as whim dictated. Since surveys consistently showed that women were absent from work about twice as often as men, many concluded that women were unreliable and inefficient, justifying the prejudice that already existed against employing women. More than any other factor, female absenteeism confirmed long-held beliefs that women's proper sphere was in the home where rests and breaks did not interfere with important national business.

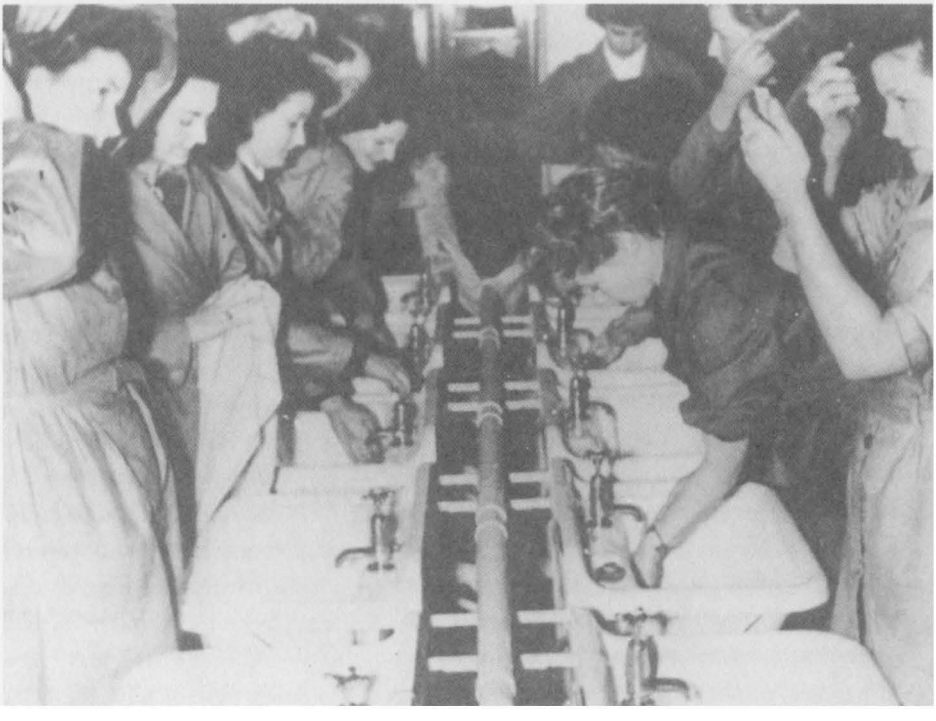
Men used absenteeism to justify differences in wages paid to men and women. In some industries women received about half the male rate because, as the director of Manpower in New South Wales, C. J. Bellemore, said, women were subject to 'limitations of strength'. He claimed that, while engaged in work of great national importance, women because of their 'greater susceptibility to fatigue' were less useful to employers. Investigation into the causes of absenteeism failed to go beyond this kind of simplistic explanation. Weekday sport snared men, while laziness and 'weakness' prompted women to take days off. Significantly, on this account, most absenteeism occurred on the day after pay-day, 'proving' that 'good times' explained many absences from work. Occasionally a case reached the court reports in the newspapers which, while touching, showed how women could not be relied upon to stick at their jobs, come what may. In Geelong a twenty-one-year-old woman was fined £4 when found guilty of being absent from work from 13 November to 4 December 1942. She explained that her boyfriend had two weeks final leave which she wanted to spend with him. Then, in the third week, she was 'too scared' to go back to work.[11]

Gradually, officials began to perceive that the causes of absenteeism were complex; too late, however, for the damage to the reputation of women as workers had already been done. A department of Labour report blamed absenteeism on long hours, bad working conditions and lack of co-operation between employers and unions. Doctors, who saw many of the effects of excessively long hours of work, began to support this view. The *Medical Journal of Australia* advised that it was useless to 'fulminate' against

absenteeism which was partly, at least, a medical problem. Doctors asked for recognition of the fact that 'to increase working hours did not necessarily increase production'.[12]

Problems common to all workers hit female workers harder. Few women had worked in factories before and therefore facilities were poor and sometimes even non-existent. In one factory twenty women shared one washbasin, at another cockroaches were often found in lockers and washrooms. Such depressing conditions hardly encouraged women to clock on and to them must be added a variety of personnel problems. Few foremen were experienced in supervising women so there was often a great deal of tension. Women worried about their homes and families and needed a sympathetic personnel officer to relate to. Very rarely did companies recognise these problems. Even had crèches, kindergartens and schools been available, there would always be times when a woman might have to stay home to care for her children. Foremen, conscious that the absence of one or two key workers could disrupt a production line, resented interruptions to women's work. In addition, when husbands came home on leave they expected their wives to share all their available time even if leave from the factory could not be arranged. There were good, even compelling, reasons for female absenteeism.[13]

Primitive factory conditions at a Melbourne munitions plant. Such facilities were used by some to explain women's absentee rates. It must have been depressing indeed to have to face up to these low standards six days a week



The haphazard arrangements made for female workers often meant that the supervision of children was not as close as before the war. No factories or government agencies tried to establish child-care facilities at the workplace, though this was common in the United Kingdom. Women who worked had to leave children unattended or in the general care of a neighbour. This fact alone could not explain the increase in juvenile delinquency so much commented upon after 1942. The absence of fathers, the insecurity and uncertainty provoked by the war, and the partial breakdown of the school system were factors of equal, if not of greater, importance. But people searching for simple explanations ignored these complicated issues. Australians had always held that a mother must stay home to care for her children. Now mothers were at work and unruly, rebellious children roamed the streets. This established, in many minds, the wisdom of the traditional doctrine.[14]

Some women recognised the implications of these general views about women at work and some campaigned for proper facilities for children to allow mothers to concentrate on their work. As a Victorian research group observed: 'no woman can settle down to a good day's work if she is worried about domestic problems or knows that her children are left hungry to play in the streets once school is out'. Yet many Australians, male and female, seemed so antagonistic towards working mothers that they opposed the introduction of proper facilities as an unnecessary inducement to women to leave the home.[15]

The kindergarten movement had barely yet become established in Australia. For example, in Victoria with a pre-school population of 118,000 children in 1943, there were only 26 government kindergartens. Independent groups had established kindergartens in five Melbourne suburbs but clearly demand exceeded supply. A 'Committee for Child Care in War Time', though assiduous, showed the limits of voluntary efforts: after much effort, the committee had managed only to extend one crèche and kindergarten in an industrial area by providing hot meals and after-school play and supervision. In New South Wales the private Kindergarten Union tried to extend opportunities and also accepted responsibility for after-school clubs. One centre, the Eveden Free Kindergarten at Chippendale, stood out as a model but, unfortunately, found no imitators. The centre contained a modern nursery school for 2–3-year olds, a kindergarten for 4–5-year olds, a playground for children up to 10, a children's library and, by arrangement with the City Council, clubs for folk-dancing, craft, music, puppets and dramatics. The centre also provided classes in parent education.[16]

Too often, however, children received minimal supervision and as the war dragged on people began to observe the ill-effects. Thousands of children in the cities suffered from neglect and under-nourishment. Magistrates noted a marked increase in delinquency, truancy and vagrancy, and respectable people were shocked by under-age drinking and sexual promiscuity among very young girls. The blame fell squarely on parents, particularly mothers,

who were accused of abandoning their children and failing to arrange for adequate care. Women who had been enticed into the factories with a combination of high wages and high-blown patriotic rhetoric soon found themselves condemned as greedy and selfish when some of the social costs became apparent. The determination to expel women from the factories when the crisis passed proceeded as much from recently confirmed views about women's proper role as from a desire to reserve the best jobs for the returning heroes.

These criticisms of women in the workforce blinded many Australians to the startling achievements of women in the war years. In hundreds of factories and other workshops they entered where no woman had been before and they encountered antagonism, hostility and even open opposition. Despite having to learn their jobs virtually from scratch and with little previous experience to guide them they adapted quickly to their new positions. Thousands of women used to the decorum of office or home found themselves on assembly lines in huge, noisy factories. Many managers admitted that they adapted very well. At a munition factory making Owen guns women comprised 13 per cent of the workforce but management sought to increase their number as their output was 15 per cent higher than men's. As the plant supervisor explained: 'A man stops now and then to make a smoke and to talk ... but a woman talks while she works. It must be a legacy from knitting.'[17]

People accepted that women could do work hitherto reserved for men. Jobs that involved contact with the public protected many women from the pressures of the factories where male jealousy dominated. In Melbourne, for example, the Tramways Board found a 99 per cent acceptance of female staff who in February 1942 numbered 210 women, with 20 new recruits accepted each week. The public also accepted women taxi-drivers, railway porters, telephonists at police headquarters, bread carters, and so on. In these jobs women were judged efficient and 'as good as any man'. As workers they succeeded, always allowing for female 'weakness', and a real question developed whether they should be allowed to remain fulltime workers once the emergency had passed. Some employers remained adamant that women would be dismissed as soon as there were men available to take the jobs. The New South Wales Education department, for example, advised all its married female teachers in November 1942 that their employment would be terminated when the schools closed for the Christmas break but the women could reapply for their jobs when the schools reopened.[18]

While the director-general of Manpower believed that the success of working women had broken down many prejudices against them, moralists and others worried about the long-term implications of the 'experiment'. House-bound women feared that female workers would lose interest in domestic tasks, spurning as dull the daily round of cooking, cleaning and sewing. One woman, concerned that 'Too many of our young business-girls are to be seen frequenting hotel lounges', feared that they were idling valuable

Brisbane women delivering ice in Kedron, a suburb of Brisbane. They are apparently working without gloves

time away when many of them 'have only the scantiest knowledge of running a home'. She suggested that every young woman should be 'compelled to do . . . some form of domestic training by service in a house or institution'. Similarly, the Moderator-General of the Presbyterian church, the Rev. R. W. McAulay, wondered how women who had experienced the 'excitement and thrill of earning' would ever quit their jobs when the war was over. Would they be prepared, he worried, to go back into the kitchen and become unpaid workers again?[19]

Women also won a larger part in the services as the Japanese crisis developed. At first the Curtin government threatened to retreat from the gains women had already extracted from the Menzies government. Labor's innate conservatism on social issues, and the belief that women would absorb too much of the scarce military resources properly reserved for men, prompted Curtin and Forde, the Army minister, to halt any growth

One of Melbourne's many female bread carters enjoying the assistance of her husband on his thirty days leave in Melbourne

Women using traditional domestic skills at a parachute manufacturing plant in Sydney in 1942

in women's services. Manpower shortage appeared to convert the Curtin government as it had earlier converted Menzies. In mid-January war cabinet authorised an additional 500 women in the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force and 1,600 in the Australian Women's Army Service. By August 1942 there had been spectacular growth – 10,000 members of the WAAAF and 5,000 in the AWAS. Both services continued to grow – the WAAAF reaching a peak in 1945 at about 18,000 and the AWAS in January 1944 at 20,023. Thereafter both declined slowly. The women's branch of the Navy never grew beyond about 2,500 members. The rapid increase in Army and Air Force was explained almost completely by the need to release men for frontline service, although gradually women began to be accepted in their own right.[20]

Women adapted to military life as readily as they had adapted to the factories. Treated at first as a novelty, they won prominence whenever they appeared in public. In September in Melbourne, for example, when 600 WAAAFs marched with 1,200 RAAFs, the women 'stole the show', performing with 'snap and precision' they won the applause of the crowd. More impressive was the much repeated story of the woman who topped a class of 400 men and women taking an RAAF administrative course.[21]

In general women's work in the services remained more domestic than military. WAAAFs acted as chauffeurs for Australian and American officers, and as general drivers; they undertook all types of clerical work in offices around Australia and they even worked as domestic servants in officers' clubs. Many women enlisted expecting something more exciting. Helen Frizell, later a distinguished literary editor, dreamed of overseas service when she joined up but, after training, she worked as a cipher clerk, first at Victoria Barracks in Sydney and then in Brisbane. Despite good friends and some excitement she found service life monotonous. Occasionally women undertook more onerous tasks but largely as a novelty. By February 1943 New South Wales boasted its first women's searchlight unit. The brainchild of Lieutenant Don Picone who almost idiosyncratically believed that AWAS members should be allowed such responsibilities, the unit was dubbed 'Picone's Chooks'. Apparently there was little scope for these novelties.[22]

Life in the WAAAF might have been slightly more challenging because women had more technical training and they performed work which the RAAF itself regarded as vital. Women operated much of the communications network within Australia on which the RAAF depended, but they also performed menial tasks too. When, in early 1945, the WAAAF celebrated its fourth birthday, of the total strength of 18,000 about 4,000 were engaged in various forms of signals and communications work. Next to them in number were cooks and mess stewardesses, about 3,000, while about 1,500 worked on aircraft in both technical and unskilled jobs. While women dreamed of overseas service and real war work, recruiting posters, on the whole, emphasised that women would be subservient to men. As an AWAS poster stated: 'The Army will be one *man* short unless you join'.[23]

Wage rates reflected this humble assessment of women's contributions to the services. Women received approximately 57 per cent of the male rate, as a rough average of the different services. They were not entitled to a dependant's allowance although many single women were responsible for parents and a single man in the same situation did receive a dependant's allowance. From January 1944, however, women could claim an allowance for any children solely dependent on them. Disparities in pay demeaned servicewomen. A man and a woman, both under 21 with less than twelve months service, working together as telegraphists, for example, received 10s and 5s 4d per day respectively. A difference over six months which amounted to £42 11s 8d. A female colonel in the AWAS or a group captain in the WAAAF received 50.5 per cent of the male rate, a difference of £419 15s per year. A survey established that 'With most women in the services it is not actual money she is worrying about; it is the affront to her self-esteem'. Only women doctors received the same pay in the services as their male equivalents; the doctors' union, the British Medical Association in Australia, insisted on maintaining pay rates regardless of sex.[24]

Officers in charge of the women's units emphasised that members retained their femininity and were not 'hardened' by service life. Major Eleanor Manning, for example, told a Sydney luncheon club that people had no reason to fear that women would lose their 'home-making instincts' in the services. Reporters, sent to give readers an insight into the life of women in camps, stressed how even in huts women were able to establish their individuality and 'feminine touch'. At a WAAAF depot women lived in long barracks, curtained off to form cubicles for "two, but even so they had introduced many 'homely touches'. Curtained windows were common, material covered the box dressing-table while the women adorned common rooms with curtains, flowers and posters.[25]

When Gavin Long visited the AWAS camp in Fawkner Park, Melbourne, the biggest in Australia, he found the women living either in tents for three or huts for 50 or 100. They slept on iron hospital beds and while equipment was basically the same for men and women, the AWAS were permitted to have vases of flowers on the cupboards by their beds. The army made little difference, either, in the food provided for men or women, except that women received less meat and more fresh vegetables and milk.[26]

Observers also concentrated on 'romance' in the camps, a polite term that disguised widespread suspicion that a great deal of sexual freedom existed for both male and female members of the forces. Ignoring the men or even congratulating them on their good fortune, Australians seemed disturbed that, free from parental restraint, women might 'fall pregnant'. Bar talk confirmed the rumours about train-loads of pregnant women being sent 'down south' from North Queensland – many people claimed to have seen the trains and, incredibly, some people had even seen hundreds of pregnant women in uniform. 'E.N.' wrote to *Woman* magazine that

she would not let her daughter join the Army because of rumours 'that the girls were put in certain camps to keep the soldiers there, and raise the population'.[27]

At first the services attached no importance to these wild rumours but gradually attitudes hardened. In October 1942 the Army proposed to place married pregnant women on an unemployed list, to be maintained by their husbands until they were able to resume their duties. Similar action was proposed for single women whose parents would care for them while the Army would take responsibility if parental care was not available. The Army expected that single women would seek to have their children adopted immediately after birth. The women were required to return to active duty within six weeks of the birth of the child.[28]

These reasonable provisions were never enacted, however, because while discussions between the services and the Treasury took place, statistics demonstrated that more and more women might be involved. Therefore penalties were introduced to overcome any 'carelessness' or the hint of an inducement to immorality. The plan ultimately approved proposed that the servicewoman be discharged when pregnancy was determined and placed entire responsibility for the care and maintenance of mother and child on the department of Social Services. Recruiting officers were also required to exercise particular care to prevent pregnant women from joining the women's services.[29]

Pregnancy in fact was dreaded by the majority of women – faced with the embarrassment of an immediate, and therefore obvious, discharge. Coyly the services avoided the word 'pregnant' on discharge papers, referring instead to 'cyesis' but the reason for an unexpected discharge would not be hard to discover. How many women resorted to 'backyard' abortionists cannot, of course, be discovered but certainly this was the remedy chosen by one of the characters in the realistic novel *Come In Spinner* by Dymphna Cusack and Florence James – with tragic consequences. Figures suggest that something like 16 per cent of members of AWAS secured medical discharges – the majority for 'cyesis'.[30]

A great deal of thought centred on how servicewomen would adjust to civilian life when they eventually received their discharge. Emphasis on their femininity was designed to placate people who imagined that these women, perhaps like those in the factories, would be poorly equipped for simple domestic life and would prefer something more exciting. The *Women's Weekly* interviewed many of the women in the camps and discovered that, while some believed that they had 'found their feet' in the services and had experienced a sense of achievement they had never known before, many others were simply anxious to marry after the war. One woman must have reassured the magazine's most nervous readers: 'I'm getting married as soon as I can. I'm tired of trying to be independent. I'm one of those people who likes someone to lean on.'[31]

Schoolboys checking and packing eggs as part of school holiday employment

Despite the unprecedented mobilisation of women and the long hours and excessive overtime that all workers accepted, Australia remained dangerously short of manpower. The target figures set for the recruitment of new war workers were not unlike the recruiting targets set during the first world war. Then the nation learned that it must supply 32,000 men a month; now the

Schoolboys register for holiday work at the Manpower city office in Melbourne in August 1943. So severe was the shortage of labour that by 1943 schoolchildren remained virtually the only untapped source of labour

government explained that it urgently required, say, 219,000 war workers, as in September 1942. Manpower officials set targets for 'comb outs' in various industries, that is, the number of workers who could be transferred from an industry without causing catastrophic results. Thus in the September 'comb out' 20,000 men were to leave the retail trade, 10,000 from the government service, even 5,000 from the building trades, already denuded of men. 'Comb outs', understandably, increasingly produced fewer war workers as there was a limit beyond which efficiency would collapse. The only remaining available pool of workers was that of women who were still 'unoccupied'. The September target of 219,000 workers consisted of 80,000 women, of whom 52,000 would have to come from the 'unoccupied' sector. Accordingly the government appealed to single women and married women without children and at the same time threatened compulsion. As John Dedman said, 'At this stage we see no necessity to resort to compulsion to get female labour but if the necessary numbers of women do not offer their services the question of compulsion will have to be considered'.[32]

By October the government conceded that compulsion alone could provide the labour force required. Curtin authorised the compulsory call-up of women when appropriate facilities for their employment were provided and he also gave the director-general of Manpower much wider powers over

A group of over-aged and retired men called back to work to help alleviate the manpower shortage in 1943. They are working in an aircraft factory

the transfer of labour. Manpower officials could now compulsorily transfer workers from one industry to another not by negotiating with employers and appealing to employees, but by direct orders issued to individual workers. Officials could now demand of workers, apparently idle or under-employed, that they work in a specific job and the individual could be punished if he refused. The new provisions applied to all men aged between 16 and 65 and to all single and divorced women in that age group.[33]

Those most obviously at risk under the new regulations were workers in 'non-essential industries' but, again, the problem revolved around the definition of 'non-essential'. The women working in a fashionable beauty parlour in the novel *Come In Spinner* remained constantly anxious about their jobs for the remainder of the war, fearing at any moment to be despatched from the refined conditions of a salon in a large city hotel to the horrors of a factory. Such redirection would also have meant a considerable loss of pay. Redirection represented a real prospect for thousands of Australian workers should an official decide that beauty salons, for example, were non-essential. Often these decisions seemed quite haphazard. In April 1943, for example, employees of one beauty salon in Sydney, Christy's were 'redirected' but women in other similar establishments escaped unscathed. The powers were wide and a director of manpower might have become tyrannical. In New South Wales C. J. Bellemore stated that he was 'not prepared to supply staff to luxury restaurants or coffee salons. I am only prepared to supply staff to restaurants serving meals to workers' and officials in other states adopted similar principles. But could officials apply such distinctions fairly in all cases? Few people, probably, disputed the transfer of twenty typists 'conducting a correspondence course of figure development for women', but not every case was so clear-cut.[34]

While the transfer or redirection power had the greatest potential for disrupting individual lives, Manpower officials won their greatest notoriety for the raids they conducted on clubs, restaurants, sporting venues and elsewhere searching for the lazy and the unemployed. To people working long hours, six days a week, these raids probably seemed fair enough. As with many other sacrifices required of Australians during the war, the best way of ensuring compliance was to try to demonstrate that the burden fell equally on all. The woman transferred from beauty parlour or department store to factory would accept her fate a little more readily if she observed her fellow citizens subject to similar discipline. Were she, however, to observe too many 'spongers' or 'lounge lizards' pursuing pleasure unhindered, then she might become very dissatisfied indeed.

Manpower officials instituted raids, therefore, which were designed to check the identities of people not at work and, as a publicity exercise, to prove that Manpower remained ever vigilant and that no Australian could 'get away with it'. As the director-general encouragingly explained the raids: 'Nobody who was fully and gainfully employed should worry about being

interviewed by manpower authorities'. A raid proceeded, quite simply, from the viewpoint of the authorities. Police would close all the exits of a club or hotel and Manpower personnel would check the identification papers of everyone inside, for, as a Manpower measure, every Australian had been issued with an identification card showing the name and address of the employer and, for women, marital status and the number of dependent children under sixteen. Thus everyone's status could be easily established. Persons not carrying identity cards had two days to report to a Manpower office with full details, although after June 1943 a person without a card could be detained until his identity had been determined.[35]

As might have been expected, the first raids created considerable excitement and agitation but before long Australians seemed to regard them as just another of the myriad inconveniences occasioned by war. The first raids took place in Sydney in leading hotels and restaurants. On 9 April 1943 Manpower officials interrupted the afternoon tea dances at Prince's and Romano's and questioned about 300 men and women. Certainly few of the thousands of overworked Australians who had sacrificed even their traditional Christmas break would shed too many tears about raids on these symbols of Sydney's 'high society'. Most of those interviewed claimed to be either shift workers in war industries or married women with family responsibilities. At least 60 per cent of them were required to report for further interviews. Perhaps fearing the worst, some of Romano's patrons sought refuge in the cloak-rooms only to emerge, somewhat sheepishly, when the officials made it clear that they would not depart until they had interviewed everyone. One of these 'dodgers' was a 74-year-old woman who seemed relieved to discover the official was being facetious when he had said 'For trying to dodge us we'll put you in an anti-aircraft unit'. One woman said: 'I'm cooked now; I'm not employed, so it looks like a factory for me'. Although the music resumed soon after the raids had begun, many patrons departed after they had been interviewed, too worried for further dancing.[36]

Other raids disturbed drinkers in some of Sydney's most fashionable hotels, the Australia, the Carlton and Ushers. Customers were asked if they were 'gainfully employed' and why they should not be placed in essential war work. The manager of the Carlton suggested that about 75 per cent of drinkers there were 'Allied soldiers' (that is, Americans) and their female friends. Despite criticism from people who said Manpower officials would find more work dodgers at the beaches or the races, Mr Bellemore declared that the raids would continue. Comfort and convenience of dancers and drinkers must give way to the needs of the war industries: Mr Bellemore promised 'a complete and thorough examination of public places where people who should be working for the war are serving their selfish interests'. 'Eddie' Ward, the minister responsible for the Manpower Commission, defended the officials who conducted the raids and seemed to take a special delight in the raids on upper-class establishments.[37]

No doubt the raiders were condemned in private by many of the people they caught but in public only the innocent complained. A grazier drinking at the Carlton promised to give Manpower officials a strong blast when he presented his identity papers.

> I've got 10,000 sheep to look after on my property, and I haven't had a break to visit the city for two years. These Manpower blokes have taken nearly all my jackeroos and boundary riders and even the station rouseabout. I've been slaving to keep the place together almost on my own, and as soon as I reach Sydney some fellows come up and practically tell me I'm doing nothing for the war effort.

Similarly, a Wahroonga man complained that he had visited his club for a business interview with a client and had to break another appointment to attend the Manpower office as directed.[38]

New South Wales officials had other targets beyond the watering holes of the elite. In May they turned their attention to racecourses. Mr Bellemore personally directed the interviews at the barrier trials at the Ascot racecourse in Sydney when over a hundred people were detained. When Manpower officials identified themselves there was a rush for the gates but the surprise may not have been as great as it seemed because people claimed that rumours of an intended raid had been circulating for some days. Indeed Bellemore expressed disappointment that he had caught only a hundred people, not the 500 previous weeks' attendances had led him to expect. Interviewees asked officials to hurry as they had to be at work by 9 o'clock and one of the few genuinely surprised people at the course, a Campbelltown dairy farmer, complained that he had not had a holiday for years. Giving himself a few hours off, he wasted most of them with Manpower officials because he had forgotten his identity card. Mr Bellemore reminded him that 'his proper place, in these times, was on his farm'.[39]

Racing people had perhaps placed a 'mole' at the manpower commission because when officers raided the Newcastle race-train soon after it left Hornsby they found far fewer travellers than they had expected. On this occasion, a Saturday, they sought absentees from work rather than those without a job at all. Officials found that the 217 people interviewed co-operated splendidly and that only 37 of them lacked identity cards. A doctor informed the *Sydney Morning Herald* that when he arrived at Central station to board the train he had been told by four different people that Manpower officials would join it. The doctor added that the train, usually packed, had empty seats on this occasion.[40]

In Melbourne 'the Manpower' concentrated their raids on racecourses and the hotels which attracted big crowds. On the first Saturday in May, a raceless Saturday, officers, assisted by the civil and military police raided several Richmond hotels looking for absentees and men who were AWL

from the army. They interviewed 600 people on that occasion. A subsequent report that, of the 4,000 people questioned, only 215 were without identity cards and twenty AWL raised doubts about the efficiency of the whole enterprise. The purpose was to stimulate publicity and perhaps to make people think twice before they took the day off. A Manpower official confirmed that the raids would continue until people became aware of their obligations to the nation.[41]

After the first few weeks, 'checks' by Manpower lost their novelty and began to seem almost ordinary. People grew accustomed to justifying attendance at a sporting fixture or other entertainment. Even standing in a queue for the movies on a Friday afternoon could merit Manpower attention. One such raid early in February 1944 outside Sydney's Regent and Liberty theatres netted 70 women. Friday was traditionally a day of high absenteeism.[42]

People attempted various ruses to avoid a direction to work. When Manpower called up 2,000 Sydney women for work in fruit canning factories, 800 failed to attend the interview. One woman arrived carrying a baby and, of course, easily secured an exemption. When another young 'mother' also produced her baby as an excuse to avoid direction an alert official noticed the connection: the same baby. Both women were sent to the cannery. It is easy to understand the reluctance of these women to undertake boring, repetitive jobs which were not well-paid, especially as for many young women, wartime involved excitement and adventure. Work competed powerfully with social life, particularly in the capital cities.[43]

The least well-paid and most uninteresting jobs fell to middle-aged women whose sense of duty kept them going. An article on a Melbourne onion-peeling 'factory' showed that all the workers were older women who worked from 7.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. peeling, by hand, onions which were then dehydrated before being sent to the troops. It is hard to imagine a more monotonous job. One of the onion-peelers revealed that she lived at Murrumbeena and rose at 5 a.m. every morning, cycled two miles to the railway station, to reach the factory in Fitzroy by 7 a.m. She arrived home at 7 p.m. and then turned to her other job, the care of her family and home. Such extraordinary dedication could not be presumed in all Australians: absenteeism and Manpower raids had become a fact of work.[44]

If long hours, poor facilities and few holidays were responsible for much of the absenteeism, they were also the cause of many of the strikes which disrupted Australian production, particularly from 1943 onwards. Patriots often described absentees as deserters; strikers they labelled traitors. Clearly strikes won little sympathy from the Australian middle classes or from the spokesmen of patriotism who regarded production, increasingly, as Australia's most vital contribution to the war. A report in October 1944 claimed that since early 1943 strikes had deprived the 'neutral citizen' of 'meat, bread, laundry, newspapers, car tyres, theatrical entertainment,

hospital attention, buses and trams, cigarettes, coke for stoves, potatoes, restaurants, hot baths, country and interstate travel, and other amenities too numerous to mention'.[45]

The New South Wales coalfields were the most notorious places of dispute where numerous and lengthy stoppages deprived industry and domestic users of power, with the most serious consequences. At first the federal Labor government and particularly the Labour minister, Eddie Ward, sympathised with workers. In a report to war cabinet in April 1942 Ward explained that miners had been misrepresented in the past, that mine owners had not been operating their mines at full capacity and that disputes arose often because mine owners violated arbitration court awards. Labor hoped to limit strikes by negotiation with union officials and employers but it became apparent to government and union leaders that many strikes were 'unofficial', condemned by union leaders, by employers and by government. The issue causing the strike often seemed trivial; the basic cause of unrest on the coalfields and elsewhere remained simply that everyone expected too much of workers. As the *Medical Journal* had warned, there came a point when longer hours did not increase productivity and may in fact have led to a decline. Unofficial strikes became a means of securing a few hours or a few days of much needed rest. There were, of course, other causes. On the coalfields in particular, relations between miners and owners had been particularly bad during the inter-war years, culminating with the infamous

Female munitions workers checking rounds of .303 ammunition at a Melbourne factory. Munitions work was in general repetitive and boring, and high absentee rates were understandable

Rothbury strike where one man was shot dead. The sacrifices demanded of workers in wartime exacerbated these tensions.[46]

Few Australians, other than those involved, could believe that exhaustion constituted sacrifice of such an order to justify strikes to improve conditions. The suffering of frontline troops remained the measure of sacrifice and few would concede that workers endured anything equivalent to the hardships of members of the AIF. All Australians, the enthusiasts contended, must work hard and put up with long hours and weariness until the war was won. Citizenship demanded no less. Many of the strikers' most vehement critics, however, had little understanding of the sacrifices demanded of industrial workers, unacquainted as they were with factory life and blinded by their obsession with the greater sacrifice being made by the troops.

It is hardly surprising, then, that whenever a major strike erupted the correspondence columns of newspapers became choked with writers expressing their anger and demanding that the government stand up to the strikers. To these patriots no penalty seemed too great for the 'saboteurs' of the national war effort. Options suggested included sending strikers to the front, abolition of unions for the duration, imprisonment of ringleaders and fines for all participants. Everyone apparently, had their own version of the hell that should be created for these traitors. Few people had any conception of the hell they already inhabited.

E. H. Burgmann, Anglican bishop of Goulburn, a man who consistently looked at the other side of every issue and who enraged conservatives almost every time he spoke, tried to put the workers' case. Seeking to place strikes in perspective, Burgmann asked people to concede that probably 95 per cent of all workers co-operated keenly and loyally in an 'all-in' war effort. The bishop argued that industrial relations would be a great deal happier if the middle classes remembered to pay tribute to the enormous contribution workers were making to the defence of Australia. He asked the outraged patriots to concede that it would be the workers who would win the war, or it would not be won at all. 'People who write letters about strikes', Burgmann suggested, 'make very few guns or bombs. We can at least give our gratitude to those who do.' Further, workers provided the great majority of recruits to the services. Recognition of these sacrifices would restore discussion about strikes to a realistic level.[47]

Workers needed a champion such as Burgmann because few of them were articulate or newsworthy enough to take the fight to their critics. Even so, those workers who did try to give an impression of working conditions had a pretty grim tale to tell. One writer,'1,200 Times an Hour', described his situation. He and his fellows worked a seven and a half hour shift with only one refreshment or rest period permitted. The company made no provision for rest or refreshment facilities in the annexe where he worked. He argued that the wages, even if twice as high, would not have compensated for what 'in time inevitably becomes physical, mental or nervous torture'. The horror

of the job lay in the noise and vibration of the factory and the high-speed performance required to keep up with the machines. '1,200 Times an Hour' concluded:

> I use three machines, on one using both hands, both feet and eyes, treading the pedal 6,600 times, 1,100 motions (both hands and eyes) on each of two other machines – total, 8,800 motions or operations in 7½ hours, nearly 1,200 an hour. The rate is actually higher, for temporary rests must be stolen on some excuse.

Finally, he begged any of his critics to take his job so that he could escape to the battlefront: 'I feel I could enjoy that'.[48]

A worker at one of the biggest munitions factories in Sydney painted just as harrowing a picture of conditions where he worked:

> With the combing out at the works of the majority of the fit young men for the Army, the majority of the workers are middle-aged men, retired elderly men and physically unfit younger men. At the lathe or bench these men in the main give an honest day or night's work, as is evidenced by the fatigue written on their faces when coming off shifts, especially after the 'dog watch' (11 p.m. to 7 a.m.). An extension of their hours would render many of them unfit for any work at all ... No-one who has not worked twelve-hour shifts six days a week, week in, week out, without leave or let-up knows what it means. Our earnest hope that a short burst of all-in work might mean the early conclusion of the war may not be justified ...[49]

Exhaustion and frustration contributed to the high incidence of strikes, particularly as it became apparent that the war would drag on for years yet. Even so, critics refused to concede that these hardships could be compared to the sacrifices of the men of the fighting forces, while many workers seemed to believe that they would be better off in the services. This was an impossible dream, for most workers were subject to Manpower directions.

When the predominantly female workforce at a Sydney textile factory struck in March 1943, critics, as ever, attacked their disloyalty and their indifference to the course of the war. Their factory supplied uniforms to the Army: the women, therefore, played a part, however remote, in the defence machine. The strikers found an eloquent champion in M. Harvey of Marrickville who contrasted life in the army with life in the factory. Mrs Harvey had close experience of both: her husband fought with the AIF in the Middle East and her son (a lad of nineteen) had recently been sent to Britain as a bomber pilot with the RAAF. Being left alone, Mrs Harvey had applied for work at the textile factory.[50]

When a serviceman attacked these strikers, remarking that he soldiered on for only 6s 6d a day in difficult circumstances, Mrs Harvey reminded him

that he had forgotten to include many of the other benefits he enjoyed. Men in the services, she showed, received free board and lodging, clothes, parcels from the comforts funds and other incidentals. A female textile worker over 21 years received £2 19s 9d per week or 14s 3d more than the 'pocket money' of the men of the forces. Out of her wages she must pay her keep, her clothes and her fares. She faced a nine-hour shift daily, with only half an hour off for lunch, in an uncomfortably hot factory. She stood for the entire shift on a concrete floor, no seating accommodation being provided. Finally, the textile worker had no leave or vacation with travel passes to anticipate.[51]

A serviceman's wife replied, unable to believe that Mrs Harvey seriously meant to contrast the two contributions, serviceman and worker. To her, it was beyond question that the serviceman gave so much more:

> It may be hot where M. Harvey works; would the desert and the tropics be a little warmer, and would there be seating accommodation there, and would they be able to have a shower and rest their weary bodies on a good soft clean bed at night? Would not concrete be better to stand on than being knee-deep in mud with mosquitoes and the trying heat? Yes, they do get parcels occasionally, and just recently my husband received comforts from the Red Cross – he was in hospital.[52]

This appeal to the traditional and romanticised version of service life might have silenced a less determined person than Mrs Harvey who replied that many textile workers wanted to join the services but were prevented either by Manpower or physical disability. She questioned the romantic view of service life, asking whether all the troops suffered the extreme hardships claimed for them: 'Judging by the appearance of our returned men, sleeping on the hard ground, plus their diet, is beneficial to their health, rather than injurious, and at least they work in the fresh air'. Clearly this argument could not be resolved but, though few servicemen seemed willing to admit as much it should have illustrated that not all Australian heroes were in uniform.[53]

Servicemen wrote many of the letters which attacked strikers and most confessed that they were sickened by homefront selfishness. A gunner with the AIF in Egypt wrote that 'it made his blood boil' when he read of strikes in Sydney. He asked workers to realise that strikes prolonged the war and suggested that they should consider nothing too hard, no sacrifice too great, to bring the war to an end as soon as possible. Another writer, 'Amazed Airman', a unionist himself before enlistment, wrote that 'It deeply hurts to read of a friend being killed in action in one column of the paper and strikes right alongside in the other column'.[54]

A Boer war veteran advised servicemen who wrote in this vein 'to drop the "hero" language and not to moralise too much' but he flew in the face of public sentiment. Deeply ingrained tradition gave Australian servicemen a special place of honour so that any suggestion of equality of sacrifice would

fall on unresponsive soil. But Cortin's view that without workers 'the nation could not have continued to wage war' deserved wider recognition. Too few people in management and in the public service thought enough about the strains of war work. There would be no pensions or free hospitalisation for these war workers, no matter how deep the scars caused by oppressive conditions and excessive hours.[55]

Antipathy to strikers derived in part from the enormous commitment of thousands of people to the various voluntary causes. When women worked so hard for the Red Cross or comforts funds or at one of the many canteens they gave little sympathy to strikers or shirkers. Many of these volunteer workers already had a fulltime paid job so their enthusiasm for extra work was all the more remarkable. After a full day at the factory or office these women then turned to charitable work, motivated by their great love and admiration for the men they helped. They gave an intense, personal commitment to these Australian heroes in uniform.

The Red Cross with 400,000 members in 1944 remained the biggest of all the funds and in many ways it had taken on the appearance of a business. With paid employees working in various industries, the Red Cross raised substantial sums of money as, for example, the Victorian division's Waste Products department, which earned £35,000 in less than three years.[56]

Red Cross funds assisted Australian wounded at home and abroad and also war's civilian victims as need dictated. By June 1943 annual expenditure had reached £2 million. By January 1943 the Red Cross had given £450,000

Red Cross volunteers sorting into types and grades manufacturers' cuttings for re-use

A Red Cross worker taking details from a woman whose husband has been reported missing in the Middle East. The Red Cross ran a huge prisoner-of-war and missing persons bureau and gave considerable help to the families of such men in Australia

worth of goods to Australian servicemen overseas, operated 195 ambulances, set up a blood transfusion service, assisted in camp hospitals and had sent £236,273 to British and Allied Red Cross societies. The Australian Red Cross supplied Australian prisoners of war in Europe and in Asia and also organised exchanges between the prisoners and their relatives. By October 1943 more than one million letters had passed through the Red Cross mail department in Melbourne – on one memorable morning 9,000 letters had arrived. Volunteers counted and sorted the letters, then each was opened to ensure that it conformed with regulations. Before despatch, someone checked each letter against the prisoner's most recent address to enable it to reach him quickly. Such detailed clerical work required the help of thousands of volunteers.[57]

There remained a place for cottage industry beside this bustle and professionalism. In South Australia 44 Red Cross shops each raised about £15 weekly from the sale of cakes, jams and other home-made goods and from second-hand clothes. Country areas dominated Red Cross fund-raising because in the smaller communities a charitable event could attract everyone's attention. To encourage smaller branches managers established the practice not simply of publishing each town's total, but of grading it on a per capita basis so that Adelaide would not always swamp Murray Bridge, for example.[58]

The New South Wales division organised a state-wide baby competition, the idea of which was that every baby in every branch would be entered and

the sponsors would solicit penny 'votes' by the traditional methods, card afternoons, sale of goods and street collections. The winning baby in each branch would receive the votes of all the others and then the competition became a question of inter-branch rivalry until a state champion was announced. The baby competition, which ran for five months from April 1943, raised £70,613 11s 9d and the highest per capita contribution came from Croppa Creek, near Moree, where 116 inhabitants raised £1,119 1s 8d – the equivalent of £9 12s 11d per person. A Miss South Australia Red Cross title showed a similar country dominance. The competition earned £198,700, an Australian record for this kind of venture; the organisers had hoped for £114,000. At Grace Plains on the Yorke peninsula people raised £14 10s per head, while in Glenelg, an Adelaide suburb, the local beauty queen attracted 14s 11½d per head.[59]

The accumulation of statistics can disguise the extraordinary devotion of thousands of individuals who, week by week, contributed to the cause. Presumably Miss Grace Plains and her supporters worked very hard indeed to raise their money and probably they enjoyed themselves a good deal at the same time. The women who each week sent the local shop a couple of cakes, some knitted goods and some reworked clothing made just as valuable a contribution but presumably they had less fun. Stories of heroic commitment fill the pages of Red Cross journals. A woman in Oakleigh, a Melbourne suburb, made and bottled 8,000 pots of jam for the Red Cross between 1941 and 1944 and in addition every week she baked cakes and biscuits, made nine dozen custard, fruit and meat pies and supplied her own brand of mayonnaise, pickles and sauces. She seemed to be a factory in her own right.[60]

The Victorian country town of Dargo in east Gippsland boasted a population of 187 of whom 100 belonged to the Red Cross branch. At a bazaar in January 1944 they earned £50. The Adelaide flower shop, which depended entirely on donations of flowers grown by members in their own gardens, raised £935 between July and December 1943. A tiny school of fifteen pupils adopted the Red Cross in earnest, contributing £418 to funds. The children picked blackberries and sold them, grew and sold vegetables, sold flower seedlings, mushrooms and household items such as pot-holders which they made in their spare time. Their teacher reported that if she had not been firm with them the children would have sold her.[61]

All over Australia teachers encouraged schoolchildren to raise funds believing that such work stimulated pupils to a higher understanding of the civic virtues of the value of giving, of working, of team spirit and self-denial, which the schools existed to inculcate, while patriotic work would help ease the strains of war which burdened children as well as adults. Children were as susceptible to fears of invasion as adults and they were distressed by separation from parents or by the absence for long hours of parents at office or factory. Miss Adelaide L. Miethke, a remarkable woman who organised

South Australian schoolchildren to a high pitch of patriotism during the second world war as she had done in the first, recognised the wisdom of involving children:

> with fathers, brothers, neighbours and friends leaving for camp ... with ARP calling to the home-folk to prepare for invasion and home defence, with the enemy at our gate and shelters in the school grounds, with sirens shrilling for 'air-raid practice' ... the children found themselves part of a war-conscious world of excitement and apprehension ... The best way to help a child during such a time of strain is to keep him busy with new interests, to comfort him with the idea of helping.[62]

Children in South Australia, and elsewhere throughout the country, salvaged materials in short supply such as rubber, paper and firewood; they knitted goods for Australian servicemen and for the victims of air raids overseas. They supported the war loans by starting up savings groups at school or among their home friends. They made goods for sale while others made ARP equipment, buckets, spades, sand mats and rakes. South Australian children raised £193,453 11s 1d through direct giving and the sale of handicrafts and salvaged goods. In Victoria 45,000 children joined the Young Workers' Patriotic Guild, 4,723 of whom raised more than £5 each, while 114 raised £20 or more. Beryl Blair of East Kew primary school and later University high school raised a staggering £281 through the sale of her home-made

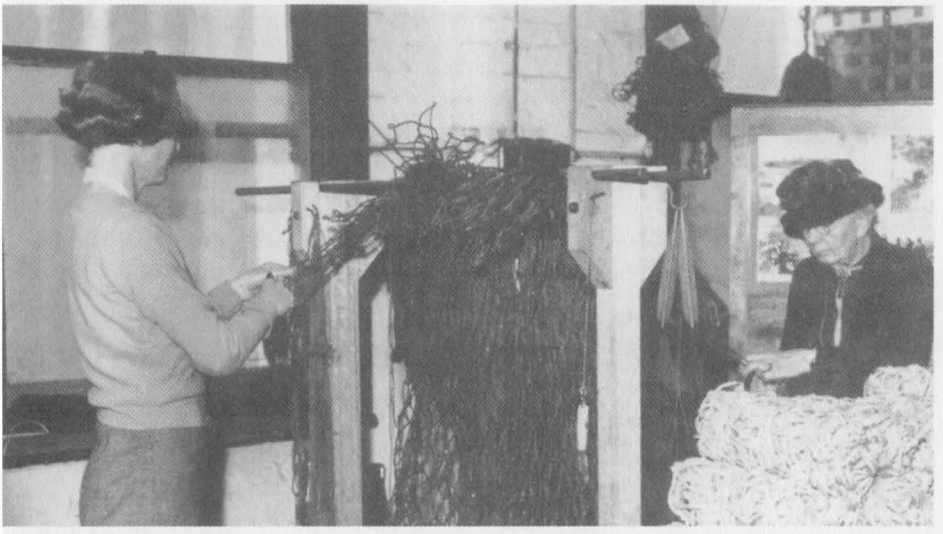
Boy scouts salvaging used rubber tyres and lengths of hose in Perth

Collection of salvage and materials of all kinds became very common in Australia in the years of crisis, particularly the collection of rubber and wastepaper. These boys, however, have been rounding up old pots and pans in an optimistic campaign to collect scrap to be used in the manufacture of a Spitfire. A similar scheme concentrated the minds of Britons on the war effort but both schemes proved unrealistic

sweets and cakes at bazaars and tuckshops. The Young Workers' grand total amounted to £59,536 19s 2½d and Victorian children also contributed £428,067 5s 7d to the war loans.[63]

Few tasks can have been as boring or as repetitious as camouflage net making. Accepting the assurance that camouflage nets saved many lives, the women stuck to their job and made a prodigious number of nets: in twelve months to May 1943, the peak period of this activity, they made 509,200 nets, using 365,065 miles of twine. All sorts of organisations took up netting. The National Defence League (Women's Auxiliary) made 400 nets a week at 119 centres and amassed a grand total of 265,000 nets. Women estimated that they required eight hours to complete one net – an indication of the long, long hours spent in netting around Australia. For many women netting must have been as much a part of daily chores as bed-making or cooking.[64]

The Australian Comforts Fund, the other large charitable organisation apart from the Red Cross devoted to the needs of Australian servicemen, had been dissolved at the end of the first world war. It was not re-formed until January 1940 although state-based comforts organisations had come into being immediately after Menzies declared war. Knitting remained a major



Members of the Country Women's Association making camouflage and other nets at the Association's headquarters in Melbourne

preoccupation for the ACF, despite the scepticism of some. Periodically the ACF would appeal for knitted goods to remind women that not all Australian servicemen sweltered in the tropics. In July 1943 the ACF asked women to remember the men in the Air Force and Navy, about to endure another winter in Europe. The ACF wanted warm, heavy, polo-necked pullovers.[65]

Once again the ACF kept remarkably detailed statistics and could point with pride at the end of the war to the heroic efforts of thousands of people who had made 1,139,087 balaclavas, nearly six million handkerchiefs, 582,610 pairs of mittens or gloves, 374,677 pullovers and 3,085,776 pairs of socks. In addition there were many thousands of other items made. The various state divisions had raised £7 million to enable the fund to buy modest luxuries such as cigarettes, shaving cream, letter paper and sports equipment for the troops. Fund-raising followed all the methods the Red Cross used, shops, appeals, direct giving, bazaars and so on. Much as Australian servicemen appreciated this generosity, they looked in amazement at the care the United States lavished on its troops and many Australians wondered if voluntarism was the best method of organising the comforts business.[66]

With large numbers of troops stationed in Australia, the ACF provided accommodation and entertainment for thousands of men on leave, establishing soldiers' clubs and hostels. Three thousand women had enrolled as helpers at the Anzac Buffet in Hyde Park, Sydney. They worked on a roster system so that each woman donated about one day every two weeks to the Buffet. There were always between 100–150 women on duty, divided into three shifts. They prepared the three meals served each day as well as morning and afternoon tea, all of which were free. From 6 to 10 each evening the Buffet held a dance, the women workers partnering servicemen as there was a rule

against other women going to Anzac Buffet dances. In addition to the dance floor and dining room the Buffet contained billiard tables and a writing room. As the focus of Sydney service life, the Buffet was always active and there was a waiting list for women eager to work there.

The ACF also established an emergency sleeping hostel which could accommodate 300 men in bunk beds. The hostel guaranteed men a clean bed, a shower and early morning tea; an annexe housed a modern prophylactic clinic. When the hostel closed at the end of 1945, half a million servicemen had slept there. Other hostels around Australia also gave servicemen somewhere to go. One of them, in Marcus Clarke's store near Central station in Sydney, catered for 500 men and 80 women each night and charged 1s for the bunk beds in dormitories which the manager described as 'comfortable enough'. Private homes also offered men accommodation and a central bureau in Sydney kept a list of these places, as well as of dances and other entertainments for servicemen. The manager of the Marcus Clarke hostel described how four girls had applied to the bureau for men to entertain: 'they appeared to be about 16 and ... they said shyly "Nothing over 19, if you please"'.[67]

Servicewomen received far less generous treatment than the men, perhaps because the expansion of the WAAAF and the AWAS caught everyone by surprise, and because the women lacked heroism and romance, in women's eyes in particular. Perhaps, too, servicewomen on leave might have been expected to make for their own homes, and were not given as much freedom as men. Not until 1943 was hostel accommodation made available for women. Then the *Women's Weekly* sponsored a club which occupied three floors of David Jones's George Street building. The club contained dormitory accommodation for 100 women and a dining room seating 240. The women paid 2s for overnight accommodation and it remained one of the few places catering for women.[68]

The tremendous range of voluntary work undertaken by women during the war remained outside the scope of the Manpower Commission which made no allowance for this work in the allocation of labour. All this activity was additional to the other job every Australian was presumed to hold. Whether caring for a family or working in factory or office, the women in the comforts industry came to their cooking, knitting or fund-raising only when they had finished their other work. Such labour threatened no-one; it accorded with almost every view of women's place in society. The experiments and departures were different; men resented women's high wages and their demonstration of efficiency and productivity and concentrated on charges of absenteeism and the dangers of leaving the kids unattended. Australia was witnessing a social revolution but seemed anxious not to notice.

CHAPTER NINE

MORAL CONCERNS

War aroused a repressive moralistic instinct amongst some Australians, particularly among those who could not participate directly in the fighting. Many of the issues and the campaigns depended on memories of social reform victories during the first world war. Then Australians, frustrated by their isolation from real action, manufactured causes which demonstrated, they thought, that the whole people treated the war seriously. Legislation against drink and sport encouraged these middle-class patriots to believe that everyone was making some sacrifice. Ironically, when war broke out a second time Australians still suffered archaic drinking laws introduced for the first world war emergency.

Because few soldiers were stationed in Australia during the first world war, people on the homefront perceived only dimly the extent of 'wartime immoralities' so evident in cities such as London. Horrified, often priggish, accounts of the prevalence of prostitution confirmed readers in the view that such licentiousness belonged to the old world. Spared the sight of thousands of drunken soldiers wandering the streets with nothing to do, Australians congratulated themselves that a better spirit prevailed in their country than in Britain or France and they determined to keep it that way. The AIF in particular believed that British women had been demeaned by work and other wartime conditions and they vowed that 'their' women at home would never sink so low. Some innocent illusions remained to Australians even after the first world war.[1]

In the second world war Australians learnt that their society enjoyed no immunity from the ills they had only previously read about. Soldiers and their girlfriends promenaded nightly through the cities and the expressions of outrage and shock at the loose behaviour they displayed indicated just how innocent many Australians were. Middle-class moralists blamed apparent changes of behaviour on the new circumstances, such as the increase in the female workforce and, as the war progressed, these people grew more determined that the old standards and practices would prevail when peace returned. Australians became backward-looking, longing for a return to the old certainties.

Much of the 'immoral conduct' reformers complained of was no more than the consequence of high wages and scarcity of goods. For the first time for years workers had money to spend but not much which they might buy – so people spent more money than usual on leisure. War bonds competed with bookmakers for the worker's pound. It mattered little that many Australians gave equally to both. Moralists condemned the gambler for lacking patriotism and for selfishly diverting scarce resources into non-productive areas. The drinker, denied an assured supply of beer, turned increasingly to the black market, apparently awash with beer and spirits. The patriot deplored this as treasonable. Yet people who worked so hard and so long deserved some release from their labours.

Many of the causes championed by the moralists demonstrated only a lack of a sense of proportion. The debate about morality might have centred on the rights and wrongs of bombing raids directed at civilians or the total destruction of whole cities but, in Australia at least, such issues aroused little interest. Content to uphold traditional standards, churchmen and their allies concentrated on such apparently trivial matters as drink, sexual freedom and even, absurdly, Sunday observance.

Australia proudly followed Britain in a strict observance of the Lord's day, forbidding work, organised play and anything that hinted of 'commercialism'. Drinking, dancing, eating in a restaurant – even selling a newspaper in Melbourne – remained illicit. Sunday was a very dull day. The influx of American servicemen tested this tradition because American commanders would not tolerate enforced idleness which often led to trouble. They wanted sports in the afternoon, and theatres, movies and concerts in the evening. As American bases operated outside Australian law, the men might enjoy Sunday in their own camps but, of course, the troops wanted leave and friends and they deserted the camps to wander the cities aimlessly. Senior American officers applied great pressure on the state governments for a relaxation of Sunday laws while the moralists argued just as strongly that Australians retain the sacred Sunday they had always known.

Protestants contrasted the British ideal with the laxity of the 'Continental Sunday', closely associated with the 'errors of Rome'. One stalwart asked people to recall 'the low value placed on Sunday in Europe, and ... the awful plight of that Continent today'. The canteens and clubs run by Protestant church groups observed a strict Sunday. At St Andrews in Sydney, for example, a canteen served about a thousand men daily throughout the busiest years of the war. But workers there packed away all games and other amusements on Saturday night so that the soldier with Sunday leave could find no billiards or table-tennis to distract him. 'The men seem to prefer a quiet day', observed a spokeswoman. Across Hyde Park, however, at the Catholic hut at St Mary's cathedral games continued in the Continental fashion on Sunday.[2]

Even churchmen had to admit that their cause suffered from the sight of thousands of men with nothing to do, wandering the streets or sitting in the

gutters and parks drinking and grappling with girlfriends. In Melbourne, where Sunday observance had ever been more rigid than elsewhere, the Council of Churches drew up a list of suggestions and concessions which, clergymen believed, would satisfy the troops without infringing traditional observance too grossly. They accepted that shows might be staged provided that 'no entertainment be permitted out of keeping with the sacred character of the day'; that 'commercial interests' be debarred from making a profit and that legislation remain unchanged; that only men in uniform be admitted; and, finally, that no entertainment be permitted during the time of evening services.[3]

Such concessions hardly met the need. More than anything else, soldiers wanted to relax with their civilian friends rather than be herded into a theatre reserved only for them, as if on some kind of orphans' picnic. The Americans fought on. Major Cowan of the Special Service Organisation declared that 'we are going to alter [this] state of affairs'. The history of Sunday observance in Melbourne indicated that the major had a real battle on his hands.[4]

Sydney, ever more lively or 'sinful' to the citizens of Melbourne, soon threw in the towel. As a quick and temporary solution the Lord Mayor organised free concerts in the town hall, arranging for the current Tivoli vaudeville shows to be staged. The Tiv. had become famous for daring, naughty shows which were definitely not family entertainment, so this first 'concert' proved to be highly popular. Only men in uniform, and one girlfriend each, could gain admission but when the doors opened a rush of people soon filled the 2,000 seats. The audience whistled, stamped and clapped its approval, demonstrating, if this were necessary, that soldiers did want something to do on Sundays. The Australian Broadcasting Commission provided the next concert in the series, giving patrons a radical change of diet. A smaller audience proved that the ABC's 'stuffed shirt' image was not what the men wanted.[5]

The demand for entertainment existed, as the New South Wales government readily conceded. After experiments the government agreed to allow one picture palace and one theatre to operate each Sunday and this seemed to meet demand. Only munitions and other war workers felt aggrieved. Their long hours denied them access to regular entertainments but their Sundays remained as dull as ever.[6]

At first Melbourne followed the Sydney experiment. A town hall concert for soldiers and their friends proved popular but the second, as in Sydney organised by the ABC, illustrated the limits of the troops' tolerance. The ABC aimed at what people described as 'middle brow' but the concert reminded the audience of those enforced trips to the town hall for the ABC's school concerts where education dominated entertainment. Early in the programme some of the soldiers began to treat the affair as 'a promenade concert' and those who wanted to listen suffered the annoyance of the noise of 'shuffling of feet through the hall doors and the sound

of laughter and conversation from the impromptu congregation in the lobby'.[7]

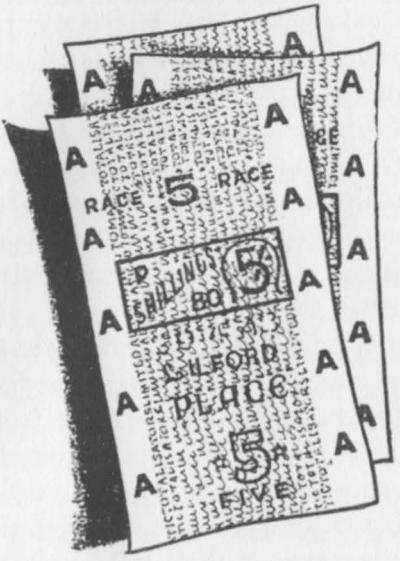
Movies would have overcome these entrepreneurial difficulties but discussions foundered on the shoals of commercialism, so detested by churchmen. The government decided that cinemas might open to servicemen and women only and that only half-price should be charged for the Sunday programme. Understandably cinema owners were reluctant to open their doors to civilians at half price. But the troops refused to be segregated and this experiment failed when the Capitol, the one cinema licensed, failed to attract anything like a full house; 98 per cent of the audience were men.[8]

After this fiasco Hoyts announced that the Regent cinema would show a programme for soldiers at half-price and civilians at full-price. The Country Party premier, Albert Dunstan, vetoed this arrangement at once: he forbade 'commercialism'; on Sunday everyone must pay half-price. So great was cabinet's abhorrence of 'commercialism' that ministers assured Hoyts that the government would make up any losses incurred in admitting people for half-price. But Hoyts, and others, rejected the guarantee. They refused to scuttle their market by offering such a concession as half-price on Sunday. And there the matter rested.[9]

Occasionally a free concert enlivened a Melbourne Sunday and these always proved popular, as in February 1943 when 3,000 men, accompanied by one friend each, enjoyed a mixed programme. The arguments continued about Sunday recreation always collapsing on the subject of money. Despite pleas such as that from the soldier who observed that 'half, probably more, of the drunkenness or vice in Melbourne was caused by lack of something else to do', Sunday remained sacred. Norman Cowper, a spokesman for the movie industry, tried to awaken consciences by branding the stalemate as evidence of 'inhospitality, narrow-mindedness and intolerance' but his words achieved nothing. Melbourne's dreary Sunday was, he charged, 'the negation of practical Christianity ... I venture to say that there is not another city in the world of the size of Melbourne where such intolerance prevails'.

The campaign against sport showed a similar lack of awareness of the needs of men and women on whom the war effort depended. It might have been expected that governments would encourage sport to ease the hardships and frustrations on the homefront in the spirit in which Menzies had opened the bowls season in 1939, observing that people at war deserved recreation. But the patriots argued that the sportsman, fit and young and a hero, had a special responsibility to enlist. This argument, inherited from the first world war when the recruiting drive remained the only patriotic exercise of value open to most Australians, appeared quaint in 1942 and 1943 when the government prevented thousands of fit 'eligibles' from enlisting because of their manpower worth. To deny these war workers recreation made no sense.

Even so, many sporting organisations succumbed to patriotic pressure and abandoned their fixtures. In South Australia racing ceased entirely; in



Tote Tickets

or...

Owen Guns?

Before you make a bet on the tote, think! You are gambling with men's lives and with Australia's future! The money you waste—for in the long run you must lose more often than you win—would buy arms and ammunition for our fighting forces. If you must bet . . . bet on Australia to win!

SAVE all you can . . . and buy

• 6D. WAR SAVINGS STAMPS •

£1 WAR SAVINGS CERTIFICATES FOR 16/-

£10 NATIONAL SAVINGS BONDS

Or make an Advance Subscription to the next War Loan through any Bank, Savings Bank, or Stockbroker.

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Victoria the Football Association abandoned activities from 1942 onwards; and in other sports, such as tennis and cricket, local bodies compromised while major competitions were suspended. Part of the trouble lay in securing playing fields and in obtaining manpower for administration and ground preparation. The Victorian Football League lost several of its best grounds, including the Melbourne Cricket Ground which had become an army base, housing American troops. At the height of the Sunday observance controversy, an American officer suggested that the United States forces might organise their own sports spectacles, remarking that the Melbourne Cricket Ground would make 'a fine ball park'.[11]

Travel restrictions also threatened competitive sport, indeed the Geelong club withdrew from the VFL in 1942 and 1943 because of the impossibility of obtaining travel warrants for players. Despite opposition from some clubs Geelong rejoined the League in 1944 even though the train timetable to Geelong was so restricted that footballers who worked on Saturday mornings, as most did, had to scramble to catch the only available train which left Melbourne at 12.30 p.m. Early in the season, with all the South Melbourne players aboard the 12.30, the train was hopelessly late reaching Geelong at 2.25 p.m. The game began at 3.12 p.m. and ended in 'semi-darkness' so that spectators could not even see the scoreboard, let alone the play.[12]

Most sportsmen were war-workers in jobs which allowed them to train and play. Others were servicemen, liable to transfer at very short notice. Often commanding officers treated 'higher duties' sympathetically as in the case of Darby Munro, one of Sydney's leading jockeys, who had leave from the army each Saturday. Nevertheless coaches could never be quite sure that all their regular players would appear as a sudden emergency in factory or camp would throw selection into confusion. Collingwood's legendary coach, Jock McHale, admitted in his annual report to members that, because in 1943 he had been forced to use 49 different players in the senior side, 'the traditional team-work of the club was thus made impossible'.[13]

When a top player returned from a battle zone, even if only for a few week's leave, clubs gave him back his place in the team, as a remembrance of all those other men still on service. One such happy occasion occurred in May 1942 when Australia's leading air ace 'Bluey' Truscott DFC returned to captain Melbourne in their match against Richmond. Every Australian rejoiced in the bravery of Truscott and his mate 'Paddy' Finnucane who, with 'Killer' Caldwell, had captured popular imagination. Truscott admitted that he had kept himself fit and was eagerly awaiting the match and 'relishing the opportunity to be back again in the thick of the "best football game in the world"'. Truscott's appearance attracted a great crowd, including many American troops, and he was given a tumultuous welcome. John Wren, ever anxious to win the notice of the sporting public, sent Truscott a cheque for £1,000 to be shared with Finnucane; both men soon lost their lives.[14]

Despite the uncertainties of team selection and the difficulties of transport that the public faced, attendance at major sport held up well during the war years. The Sydney Rugby League enjoyed a boom, particularly in 1943, the best year on record for the League since its inception in 1907. The 1943 grand final between Newtown and North Sydney set a new record attendance of 60,992 – an impressive figure considering the many thousands of men on duty with the services. The VFL attracted a total attendance of 838,000 people during 1943, an increase over 1942 of 175,000 – despite the uneven number of teams, eleven, and the absence of 525 senior players who were on active service.

In 1944 the VFL again enjoyed great success. A severe coal shortage in mid-winter forced the railways to cancel trains and to advertise in all the papers that VFL fans should not rely on trains for transport to and from the grounds. Attendances on the worst weekend of the strike actually increased, setting the highest VFL aggregate attendance for years. Perhaps people wanted diversion when strikes and shortages overwhelmed them.[15]

The federal government did move against sport – particularly racing, as we have seen, prompted more by concern to limit gambling than with the puritan dissatisfaction with popular entertainments. Curtin wanted Australians to understand how resources devoted to gambling could be used more productively. At the height of the Victorian fuel crisis when housewives could only use their stoves for an hour or two a day, he observed that 'It surprises me that a State, such as Victoria, which is short of firewood, due to the absence of manpower ... can expect me to release men from the Army while ... a great number of people are devoted exclusively to the training and racing of horses and dogs'.[16]

The federal government enlisted the services of personalities prominent in other sports to create a climate against racing. Arthur Mailey, a former Australian international cricketer, broadcast an appeal to sportsmen over the ABC's national network. He wanted them to enjoy manly sports: 'Instead of sports and games which develop physical fitness and mental alertness ... there is a strange, frenzied desire for sports associated with gambling'. Mailey denied that racing gave amusement and recreation to a hard-pressed people. He had once been to Randwick, he confessed, and he came away 'tired, depressed and unhappy ... After going to the races and seeing the sea of sad, depressed faces on the tram coming home, I felt that a trip to the morgue would have a much more cheerful effect.' Despite Mailey, people still flocked to the courses. The introduction of the raceless Saturday passed without too much recrimination from racegoers who also accepted other moves to make racing less popular, such as fewer races and within a limited time, fewer bars at racecourses and the prohibition of 'track talk' and tips in newspapers. None of these moves had any appreciable effect on the gambling passion. Raceless Saturday lasted just a year – a full calendar of Saturday racing was permitted again from November 1943.[17]

With that slight stigma against racing removed, the sport boomed. Reporting a tote turnover of £148,568 in April 1944, the *Bulletin* observed that betting with on-course bookmakers had been extremely heavy: '£100 notes being as plentiful as "fivers" in pre-war days'.[18]

While the papers kept an accurate tally of the money invested with the tote, no-one knew what money passed into the hands of the SP bookmakers. Contemporary accounts suggest a massive boom in that segment of the market too. Curtin realised some of the dimensions of the problem when in the dark days of 1942 he was unable to place an interstate call from Canberra because the SP network had taken all available lines. His government, with limited rights in an area controlled by the states tried to use the post services to reduce the SP trade. He directed postal officials to examine private postboxes, to forbid telegrams containing race information and to monitor the telephone service more closely. The ban on telegrams was ineffective. Officials soon became aware that 'information regarding starting prices is being conveyed by messages worded in seemingly innocent terms'. A fully determined effort on the part of state or federal governments might have limited the growth of SP betting, but in the long run no-one seemed to have the will. Politicians, even at the highest level, seemed to accept SP as part of the Australian tradition.[19]

The excise on beer and spirits had risen throughout the war years and there had also been progressive cuts in beer production. Ministers wanted to transfer workers from breweries to war industries and they also believed that less drinking would increase the efficiency of the workforce as a whole. But the ready cash workers now had negated these efforts. Statisticians produced figures which showed a constant increase in the drink bill. In New South Wales in 1941 drinkers spent £20,970,000 on their favourite tipple, an increase of 19s 11d per head of population on the figures for 1940. Of course these figures indicate that drinkers would absorb increased excise charges but do not, necessarily, indicate an increase in consumption. However, for Australia as a whole, beer consumption increased substantially during wartime. In 1935–36 Australians drank 8.23 gallons of beer per head of population; by 1940–41 this had grown to 12.14 gallons and to 13 gallons in 1944.[20]

Beyond raising the price and cutting production, governments took various other steps to limit consumption, often acting after strenuous campaigns of critics of the 'liquor interests'. In Victoria 95,000 people signed a petition demanding action to limit alcohol and thousands crowded parliament house steps when the premier, Albert Dunstan, received the petition. Churchmen, in particular, condemned the increase in consumption, likening alcohol to a 'dangerous fifth column' impairing production and weakening the armed services. Several of the states did impose tighter controls over drinking, often at the instigation of the federal government as well as in response to pressure from reformers. Publicans were not permitted to open before 10 a.m., losing an hour off the morning trade, and still closed

at 6 p.m. Legislators introduced stiff penalties for publicans who served intoxicated or even 'partially intoxicated' men in uniform and there were various restrictions on serving drinks to women. But the states thwarted some of the federal government's plans. They refused to close hotels for two hours each afternoon or to outlaw mixed drinking in lounge bars.[21]

Some of the restrictions proved quite ineffectual. There was, for example, a ban on the sale of 'schooners' (16 ounce glasses) in New South Wales during certain hours on weekdays and on Saturdays. The idea, of course, was that, if forced to take a smaller glass, drinkers would consume less. Instead, however, bar staff were rushed off their feet as drinkers returned more frequently for a refill; consumption appeared unaffected. Observers also found that bar 'stalling' became more common: 'Drinkers take up a position at the counter for considerable periods, especially towards the closing hour, and latecomers have little chance of getting a drink'. Barmaids found a significant increase in the range of tips: 'Customers find that a tip saves perhaps a long wait'.[22]

Much of the impetus in the campaign against alcohol derived from the increase in public drunkenness and in brawls and riots between drunken mobs. Increased consumption should not be blamed for this widely observed phenomenon. Lonely men on leave, with no home and family to return to and little in the way of entertainment to divert them, threw caution to the winds, drinking recklessly, before staggering to park bench or hostel dormitory to 'sleep it off'. Many of the manifestations of high spirits by servicemen on leave or in training camps imposed quite a strain on the tolerance of the civilian population. A St Kilda woman complained when a shortage of beer in other suburbs sent drinkers flocking to St Kilda for a Saturday spree early in 1943: 'Soldiers and girls under the influence of liquor could be seen embracing in shop doorways. Women also under the influence were fighting in the street and when the hotels closed groups of drink-crazed men and women crowded the foot-path, while decent people had to walk on the road.'[23]

Many of these riots occurred between drunken groups of Australian soldiers on the one side and Americans on the other. Australians particularly resented the ready access Americans had to 'their' liquor, particularly when beer was in such short supply. A Sydney Labor member of federal parliament, Dan Mulcahy, brought the issue to official attention when he complained that it was wrong that Australian servicemen, fresh from the battlefield, could not buy a drink while 'Allied servicemen' and drunken women paraded the streets, flourishing bottles.[24]

Much of this liquor came from the black market so it is doubtful that the government could have overcome this source of conflict. For just as an account of gambling which ignored SP would greatly understate the situation, so an account of alcohol which disregarded the black market would tell only half the story. Again, high wages accounted for the extent of the

black market. Men and women paid very high prices to buy beer and spirits, often because there were few other goods which they might purchase.

The illegal sale of liquor took different forms, the most common being after-hours trading at hotels, 'sly-grogging', where the publican was compensated for his risks by charging much higher than the fixed bar prices. Prices were often 25–50 per cent higher and the practice was widespread. At a few hotels door-guards kept undesirables out but at most sly-grog places entry was easy: servicemen comprised the majority of drinkers. A few enlightened reformers suggested that restricted hours encouraged sly-grogging and that the remedy would lie in extending hotel trading hours. Otherwise honest citizens became law-breakers. Most reformers, however, concentrated on reducing trading hours even further. Sly-grogging remained a traditional Australian pastime and merited no special attention from police or customers during the war years.

The black market was a wartime phenomenon encouraged by the shortage of liquor in hotels. Black marketeers acquired their supply illegally and sold through a variety of 'outlets'; taxi-drivers, in particular, seemed to know how liquor might be bought. Prices justified risks. A bottle of Australian whisky which would normally sell for 25s would fetch £2 10s on the black market. As production dropped because of manpower restrictions, fewer and fewer bottles reached their destination on the hotel shelf but, if publicans endured a drought, black marketeers seemed to enjoy a flood.[25]

The possibility of huge profits attracted big investors and by 1944 the whole market was thoroughly organised. The racketeers would purchase huge consignments of spirits, mainly whisky, which they would transport from one city to another, paying lorry drivers as much as £25 for a trip. Having 'stretched' the whisky by adulteration, it would be rebottled to be sold by street pedlars at £4 to £5 a bottle. An offshoot of the main business was the trade in empty bottles bearing well-known labels; apparently dealers paid up to 5s for bottles with 'mint condition' labels. The authorities advised consumers to deface the labels before putting out their 'empties'. Later the black market reached such a peak of sophistication that labels were specially printed to imitate those of well-known products. The printers were so good that even the most experienced drinker needed to be very careful before buying any spirits. Anyone foolish enough, at a time of drastic shortage of shipping space, to believe a label proclaiming whisky 'bottled in Scotland' deserved what he received.[26]

Eventually even the black marketeers could not meet demand and towards the end of the war the trade entered a new phase as 'moonshine' began to dominate the illegal market. Prices remained high but the quality dropped alarmingly. Most of the whisky came from molasses, the lees or dregs of wine which would otherwise be converted into power alcohol, or some other unusual ingredient. Occasionally a distiller who took pride in his product used malted barley or wheat from which he manufactured a wash which on

distillation bore a genuine whisky flavour. However most of the stills were crude contraptions, temporary or readily transportable, so as to avoid the police and the final product was far from pure.

Indeed the minister for Customs, Senator Keane, reported that when police seized 500 bottles of illicit spirits at a Sydney hotel the publican could not identify which was rum, brandy, gin or whisky. 'Some essences had been mixed with the spirit', he reported, 'which was almost raw, in an effort to provide it with some sort of character.' The minister also warned wine drinkers to accept only reputable brands. His department had discovered that 'bombo' and 'hooch', sold on the black market, were so dangerous that a number of servicemen had been poisoned. Indeed police were seeking to establish whether these 'wines' were being prepared by fascist sympathisers.[27]

As Christmas 1944 approached, newspapers reported that liquor black-marketeers had never known better times. Customers, either in hotels or lanes outside, paid 70s for a dozen bottles of beer although the fixed, legal price was just 19s. It was pointless to complain when cuts in production and 'social reform' crusades made the black market inevitable. Australians would drink; to shut hotels and to limit the beer supply only drove them to buy a dangerous brew at inflated prices. As the *Bulletin* reported, 'The fact that bottled beer is always available "at a price" is evidence of the ramifications of the liquor racket, and the price at which it is sold is evidence of the fortunes being made out of it'.[28]

Clearly many people made a great deal of money. The lounge bar trade proved a bonanza for publicans because, while prices were set in the public bar, they were not fixed in the lounge. At one Sydney hotel a gin cost 2s in the lounge and 8d in the public bar; a small beer cost 1s as against 7d in the bar. Gavin Long, on holiday in Sydney's Blue Mountains, discovered that he could drink in the lounge at his hotel, reserved for 'guests', until 11 p.m. The hotel management had closed off the public bar trade opening only from 5 to 5.30 p.m. each evening, to conserve supplies for the lounge. There he paid 1s for a small beer or 1s 3d for a whisky and there were all the customers 'the 3 or 4 barmaids can cope with'. This he wryly observed was 'not black marketing but sound business practice, and you are likely to be knighted for it after the war'.[29]

The black market soon extended to other goods in short supply, although not with the same turnover as experienced in the liquor industry, nor with the same profits. As soon as the government introduced rationing the possibility of avoiding controls arose. Everyone seemed to know someone who could help in an emergency – at a price. The police found few people willing to inform on black marketeers because no-one wanted supplies to dry up. Politicians and moralists appealed to people's sense of fair play but the fear that someone else might be 'getting away with it' seemed to haunt people and negated the force of these appeals. 'The operators of black markets are engaged in treasonable activity', thundered the *Catholic Weekly*, 'in that they

are sabotaging the nation's war effort. Those who buy from them are guilty in only a slightly lesser degree.' The paper called on people to learn to live with shortages and 'to practise self-denial'. Many people denied themselves most of the time. The black market catered for the special occasion when husband or son came home on leave, or for a wedding or some other celebration.[30]

Such a climate induced a certain tolerance for the black marketeer, a figure often no more sinister than the local butcher or greengrocer. Rather than inform on him, most people regarded him with gratitude as a friend who would help out when possible. This tolerance, which was natural enough, spread to all black marketeers, including the racketeers and gangsters who supplanted local tradesmen to exploit the enormous profits in liquor, petrol and some areas of retailing. The owner of a city restaurant who complained to police that his bill was padded with goods he had neither ordered nor received found supplies cut off and his business facing bankruptcy. In this predicament many people gave in to the racketeers, and tried to pass the costs on to customers.

The government's response was draconian. With bitter memories of war profiteers from 1914–18 Labor ministers identified black marketeers as a similar type of criminal and prepared to hit them very hard. In September 1942 the Attorney-General, H. V. Evatt, introduced legislation that imposed a minimum three month prison sentence for black marketing and a fine of not less than £1,000 if a company were involved. Offenders were required to display a notice of their conviction prominently on their premises for three months and they might also be forced to print particulars of their guilt on invoices and letterheads. In introducing the legislation Evatt referred to the number of companies already convicted of war profiteering and the derisory fines imposed. He confused black marketing with breaches of company law. Black marketing usually involved individuals – largely small men in the early years and criminals later.[31]

The severity of the penalties defeated Evatt's intentions. Since most offences involved local tradesmen, doing a favour for someone in need, neither magistrates nor juries would convict. Evatt criticised magistrates who gave black marketeers suspended sentences but the alternative often seemed far too harsh. The rationing commission called for a fine of £50 to replace the jail sentence so that 'courts would be more willing to convict'. This tolerance for the petty criminal suited the larger fry who often, too, slipped through the net. Police found it difficult to discover the organisers and usually presented the street operators to the courts – men who, in appearance and background, seemed very similar to the tradesmen also coming before the bench.[32]

As the situation at the battlefronts improved in 1944 and 1945 it proved difficult to frighten Australians with words like 'invasion' and 'treason' and increasingly in their own lives they began to look for some return to normality. Even greater profits could be made from the black market as people's resentment of rationing and controls grew. Observers reported that

BLACK-MARKET DIALOGUE
'But I can't pay those prices on my husband's service pay.'
'Then get out and make room for those who can.' *Bulletin*, 10 November 1943

there was now little place for the amateur as the criminal element had almost completely taken over. In Sydney particularly there was much talk of the growth of gangsterism with newspaper articles such as one entitled 'Is there a Crime Wave in Sydney?': 'confronted by blatant black marketing and the stark facts of several recent murders, citizens can be excused for wondering uneasily'. Statistics revealed a drop in major crime during the war years – fewer murders, attempted murders, aggravated assault and armed robbery. Police suggested that this had occurred because criminals had moved into the black market where 'the money is bigger, easier and safer'. They feared that,

when normal conditions forced the black market to close, criminals, richer and with more elaborate networks, would be very well placed to resume their traditional activities.[33]

The tolerance accorded many criminals who could supply whisky or cigarettes which had 'fallen off the back of a truck' left many people wondering if the community had undergone an extensive re-education in morality. There were so many areas in wartime where deception seemed warranted. Evasion of a manpower direction or cheating on the ration had become part of the game – everyone was in it and it seemed stupid to stand aloof. Even a Victory Loan poster raised the question: 'What do honest people make out of the war?' as if only a 'mug' made nothing. In the first world war every appeal had been to sacrifice and to duty, now the ideal was to be smart, to do well – even if only by investing in victory bonds.[34]

Those who believed they had made nothing – many servicemen, no doubt, and thousands of honest patriots – began to suspect that while virtue may be its own reward, many others had won greater returns. The patriots felt cheated. Gavin Long, who, since his appointment as official historian, had used his post to visit many Australian frontline camps and battle sites, had developed a strong respect for the heroism and integrity of the men and women he met. He also moved freely around the homefront, noting a very different spirit, particularly in the war's last years. A brief holiday in the mountains west of Sydney in May 1945 opened his eyes to how the wealthy had waged war:

> War brings prosperity to the majority. We are considered fortunate to have been able to book a room here only 2 months ahead ... The train in which we arrived had passengers standing from Central onwards ... The buses and teashops here are crowded at popular hours and all shops do a roaring trade ...
>
> At Lithgow I had a dozen oysters at a cafe where oysters and eggs seemed to be a specialty and in unlimited supply. My lunch cost 5/-, which was 1/- over the legal maximum, and I could have had more. The pubs are open all day and on the station were troops and women with bags of bottled beer – there's a brewery at Lithgow. The hutments that house munition workers are better than those at any RAAF station I've seen ...
>
> Nowhere here does one see any shortage of man or woman power in the highly profitable tourist trades – the hotels, the cinemas, the shops, the buses, the cafes. Perhaps a dozen of the 300 people [in his hotel] are airforce or army men on leave; the rest are civilians with a preponderance of women and an undue number of Jews. There are crowds of cars and they are used every day ... I noticed some cars with gas bags at Lithgow, but none here. I fancy gas bags and gas producers have become a badge of shame. You are not a wise guy if you have to use them. Nor is there any visible lack of golf and tennis balls and tennis shoes.

Most of these goods would have been unobtainable by the majority of Australians, few of whom could even manage a holiday so strict were manpower regulations. But that indifference to war and pursuit of enjoyment that had characterised Australia's response to the distant war before 1942 had apparently resurfaced, at least in parts of Australia.[35]

Serious as all these moral problems were, they paled into insignificance in most people's eyes before the apparent change in sexual morality the war had provoked. Many Australians seemed remarkably naive about sex – a subject rarely discussed in public, avoided by newspapers and banned from schools. The influx of large numbers of troops into the cities and towns created new conditions. Denied the privacy of homes men and women were forced to use the streets and parks for their love-making, shocking 'decent citizens' profoundly. Such sights encouraged rumours about huge increases in illegitimate births, abortions and venereal diseases and Australians perceived that a profound change in sexual morality was taking place. Certainly rates of divorce and of venereal diseases increased, as might have been expected at a time of great social instability and uncertainty. Nevertheless it is difficult to determine how profound was the sexual revolution. On the one hand the social reformers gave much evidence of shock and anxiety, on the other the advice columns in popular magazines revealed a widespread ignorance of sexual matters that indicated the limits of any revolution.

Anxiety about sexual immorality arose only from 1942 onwards when large numbers of servicemen were stationed throughout Australia. People worried about the hordes of young girls who roamed the cities at night, looking for a good time. Blackout regulations lent the cover of darkness to love-making; in Perth during the first blackout test in January 1942 a reporter noted 'soft laughter and voices' drifting from darkened lanes and alleyways. Melbourne's Lord Mayor, Sir Frank Beaurepaire, with his wife, toured the city one Saturday night in June 1942 to assess the situation for themselves. It is probable that this was the first such tour Sir Frank had undertaken, during or before the war; naturally he discovered things he had not noticed previously. Claiming to be broadminded, nevertheless he admitted to being shocked at what he had seen: 'it was not a pretty sight'. He demanded that something be done 'for the reputation of the city and the welfare of the girls themselves'.[36]

The police replied that although many men and women were about the streets no conduct of an indecent nature had been detected. Apparently it all turned on what the observer understood as 'indecent'. While the Victorian cabinet increased the number of policewomen by four to twelve and demanded more patrols around the city, the police reported that they had little power to act. Few of the girls were vagrants or prostitutes, instead, most of them held good jobs and were simply after a bit of fun. Catholics, in particular, blamed the prevailing conditions on the free distribution of contraceptives to the troops. Noting that every camp in

Australia made them freely available, the *Catholic Weekly* complained that the federal government 'actually subsidises an infamy that is the very antithesis of Christian ideals'. Catholics also objected to films on venereal diseases which were shown to the troops because they 'disregarded the moral dimensions of the disease'.[37]

Availability of contraceptives and lack of moral training seemed to some adequate explanation of the sexual revolution; others blamed alcohol and the collapse of parental discipline in the home. The New South Wales Health minister, Mr Kelly, suggested that many girls under sixteen years received no guidance or restraint from their parents and were 'throwing themselves at soldiers'. He urged a crusade against the 'Commonwealth-wide wave of immorality'. Others, again, blamed ARP measures, particularly the blackout or brownout which gave some privacy to public embraces.[38]

One move taken by the federal government seemed extremely unrealistic but perhaps was dictated by the considerable influence of the Catholic church over sections of the Labor party. In September 1942 the federal minister for Health, under National Security Regulations, banned the advertising of contraceptives and any propaganda about them. The *Catholic Weekly* believed he deserved the 'congratulations and heartfelt thanks of every decent Australian'. Arthur Calwell, that staunchly loyal Melbourne Catholic and senior Labor politician, supported the move, suggesting the slogan 'self-control instead of birth control'.[39]

Women resented the government's action, particularly those women who had contracted a venereal disease and who had been advised to wait a few years before having children to ensure that any child would not be affected. An 'RAAF Wife' wrote to Dr Wykeham Terriss the *nom-de-plume* of a progressive doctor who gave medical and sexual advice to readers of *Woman* magazine. She explained that she was determined not to have children for at least two years and protested at what she understood was the government's ban on contraceptives. Her chemist had advised her that the 'XYZ chemical contraceptive' would be unobtainable. Dr Terriss assured her that the ban only related to advertising she must now visit a doctor or a hospital for contraceptives and for treatment for venereal disease. He observed that 'It now becomes urgently necessary to ensure that every medical practitioner receives a training which will render him competent to diagnose and treat venereal disease ... and to advise on contraception where contraception is necessary'.[40]

Rumours and reports from shocked observers continued to fuel fears that Australia was experiencing a transformation in sexual morality. In February 1943 the Victorian premier asked the police commissioner for a report on allegations of immoral behaviour in the city's parks. 'Lack of parental control', he sighed, 'was becoming more apparent every day.' A St Kilda councillor referred to shocking scenes on the beaches where girls of twelve and fourteen could be seen on seats and rockeries with men in uniform as

late as 1 or 2 a.m. 'Such a state of affairs should not happen in Australia', he commented.[41]

It was hardly surprising that the rate of venereal diseases should increase but the problem was not of 'plague proportions' as some reports suggested. Fears and uncertainty fed on the contradictory figures and statements from time to time by various state authorities. The director of the division of Social Hygiene in New South Wales, for example, stated that there had been a 20 per cent increase between mid-1941 and mid-1942 but hinted that the real figures might be far worse because not all cases were reported. Because there was so much ignorance about venereal diseases, their causes and symptoms, such statements inevitably caused alarm. When Dr Terriss began to write frankly about venereal diseases *Woman* received many letters of thanks and praise. One woman admitted that she had tried to find information in a library without success, while another wrote that 'The younger generation of men and women are crying out for such enlightenment'.[42]

Various groups and organisations discussed the question of venereal diseases, alarmed by the various statistics. One report by Dr Cooper Booth, of the NSW division of Social Hygiene, noted a 41 per cent increase in the first three months of 1943 compared with 1942 which stimulated a great deal of discussion about causes and remedies. Investigation revealed that 10 to 12 per cent of the men who reported their disease had been infected by professional prostitutes; the remainder by 'amateurs' as Dr Cooper Booth described them, although 34 per cent had been infected by their wives. The United Association of Women assembled representatives from a wide range of women's organisations, from the churches, the medical profession, the defence forces and the trade unions to consider ways of dealing with the problem. Medical officers from the various branches of the Allied forces met the federal minister for Health to express their 'great concern' that infection amongst the civilian population represented an added risk to servicemen. And yet a report of the medical sub-committee of the Victorian Parliamentary Social Security Committee found no notable increase in the incidence of venereal diseases in Victoria. There was a low rate of infection amongst the troops and only among girls aged between 14 and 17 was there any pronounced increase.[43]

People swept such evidence aside, preferring alarmist tales to calm statistics. By 1943 it had been generally accepted that venereal diseases were widely prevalent and the search for causes indicated considerable unhappiness with conditions and standards in wartime Australia. While alcohol, the blackout, the glamour of the uniform and the uncertainty of war were all accepted as reasons for immorality, increasingly people agreed on two main causes, the lack of parental control and the innate tendencies of women. Immorality was seen as women's fault.

Collapse of parental discipline was associated in many people's minds

with the novelty of mothers in the workforce. 'If women work, who will mind the children?', asked the *Australian Women's Weekly*, demanding more centres where children could be supervised. Others dismissed this solution, arguing that the situation would improve only when women gave up their jobs. The federal minister for Social Services, E. J. Holloway, said that 'there was ground for the fear that many women had been enticed to go into war work when they should not have been allowed to do so', although he did not balance this statement with a recognition of the urgent shortage of labour Australia suffered. A correspondent suggested that women 'should be enlightened as to the significance of the fact that motherhood is a way of life and not an occupation'.[44]

The Victorian premier, who had begun to distinguish himself as a most conservative moralist, deplored the fact that in many families there was no home life at all. Children roamed the streets all day while both parents worked or slept off the rigours of a night shift. The nation, Dunstan told a gathering at Wesley church, Melbourne, 'could not allow mothers to remain at work a day longer than was absolutely necessary'. Teachers complained of the consequences of mothers' working, noticing a 'great deterioration' in children's general cleanliness. 'Impetigo, a skin complaint, scabies and verminous heads were too often caused by carelessness and neglect.' If such physical diseases ravaged younger children, what moral diseases went unchecked amongst their older brothers and sisters?[45]

Wartime permitted circumstances which removed many of the traditional constraints on women and girls. They travelled freely, often alone and at night, they mixed with men unknown to their parents and they organised their own social life. In vain did the president of the Sydney Feminist Club protest against 'the whole drift of propaganda implying that there is not a moral woman left in Australia'. Moralists watched women in the company of soldiers and concluded that traditional moral standards had collapsed. Archbishop James Duhig of Brisbane, a city that had become virtually a garrison town, reported that 'many girls associating with Allied soldiers have shown a spirit of greed and selfishness that does little credit to Australian womanhood'. Commentators sympathised with servicemen who had no resistance to 'certain types of women and girls'; it was the fault of the women offering themselves that the men succumbed.[46]

In pre-war Australia marital fidelity, particularly on the part of the women, was believed to be the norm. Now women demonstrated a disregard for marital bonds that previously had seemed unthinkable. Women choked the advice columns of magazines with many varieties of the age-old problem. 'Undecided' wrote to Dorothy Dix:

> I am 25 and married to an AIF soldier. I have fallen in love with an American who has a wonderful position in his own country and is very

> wealthy. He wants to give me expensive presents which I cannot accept. My husband has never been very kind to me. What shall I do?

More difficult was the dilemma of 'Desperate Wife':

> I am a married woman of 20 and my husband is serving in the RAAF. For the last 4 or 5 months I have been keeping company with an American serviceman. I have lately discovered he does not love me, as he said, and that I am going to have his child, but he does not know about it. Should I tell him and should I tell my husband. I want very much to keep the child.

Much of the tension between Australian and American servicemen had its roots in reports that while Australians fought in the jungles of New Guinea and elsewhere, Americans were at home seducing their wives. A chaplain, writing from abroad, appealed to Australian women to remember their obligations. 'It is difficult to describe adequately', he reported, 'the suffering of the man who learns, while serving overseas, that his wife is unfaithful'.[47]

Occasional cases reached the courts which showed how confused wartime entanglements could become. A man who had fought in Libya, Egypt, Syria and Greece returned to Australia to find his wife living with his best friend. The Army refused the man any of his deferred pay to meet the costs of a divorce and, rather than break a promise he had made to his new girlfriend, the unfortunate man went through a form of marriage with her. Charged and convicted of bigamy he received a six months prison sentence. Sympathy in such cases always went to the wronged serviceman and nobody paid much attention to the loneliness and unhappiness of the wife, denied male companionship possibly for years.[48]

It is not surprising, therefore, that the divorce rate climbed steeply. In 1937 judges granted 2,759 divorces, a figure which increased more than three times by 1947 to 8, 791. While increases were recorded each year of this period, the most dramatic increases occurred from 1942 onwards with annual jumps of over a thousand divorces in each of the years of the Japanese war. Throughout the period adultery and desertion remained the most common causes of divorce. Because divorce demanded a court hearing, cases tended to be sensationalised; the Sydney *Daily Telegraph*, for example, published a weekly column placing the most scandalous cases before readers so that divorce remained a sordid, public event for many of the thousands involved.[49]

Most people placed the blame on women, indeed one magazine suggested that 'habitual neglect of domestic duties' by the wife was a common cause of divorce. Such theorists sought the remedies, too, in restricting the freedoms allowed to women, often regardless of the rights of women as citizens. The National Health and Medical Research Council, for example, suggested several means for controlling venereal diseases, the first of which was 'a severe restriction on the sale of alcohol to women'. Police asked for the

compulsory examination of women suspected of being infected with a venereal disease. This power was available to police in Queensland; indeed if examination confirmed the police suspicion the woman was detained at a government hospital until she received a certificate that she was cured. Or Cooper Booth rejected these demands because of the great risk of a mistake being made. His division had been informed of 2,000 women suspected of being infected. Eight hundred of them were not investigated because there was insufficient basis for suspicion and, of the remainder, a mistake had been made in one out of three cases.[50]

More liberal, and therefore more unlikely, were calls for the establishment of prophylactic centres in the major cities, such as the government provided for the AIF. While the Australian Natives Association supported such a move, 400 Christian women, meeting in Sydney, firmly opposed what they regarded as an incentive to immorality. The women also opposed 'sex hygiene instructions' in schools and the widespread employment of women in wartime jobs. They demanded, instead, the establishment of hostels for delinquent girls, under the direct control of the churches, 'where offenders may be reasoned with from a moral viewpoint'.[51]

To counter the rapidly rising divorce rate several government agencies offering counselling services were opened. Concerned people also tried to help. Mrs Hettie Templeton who opened her own 'family guidance bureau' was one. She remarked 'We are faced with disaster unless something is done to stop the growth of divorce'. Sex education might have helped for, despite the 'sexual revolution', there seemed to be a great deal of ignorance on sexual matters. Indeed Dr Wykeham Terriss generated such a response from his readers because he explained, however cautiously, what many of them previously had not understood. As one woman wrote: 'I was one who knew nothing of such matters ... till after my marriage, the first year of which was unhappy on that account'. Another woman wrote of the 'revulsion' she felt for Wykeham Terriss's description of the sex act: 'Assuredly, he has made one spinster, at least, a bit more contented with her single state'.[52]

Education might have overcome some of the problems in the long term. Fortunately doctors found that the recently discovered wonder drug, penicillin, brought a cure for venereal diseases within about 48 hours in most cases. This was good news for the 85 inmates of the women's reception centre at Long Bay jail, Sydney, who could anticipate release in a matter of weeks rather than from 6 to 12 months as had previously been the case for those seriously infected. Yet in spite of great anguish about the effects of venereal diseases on women and unborn children, some moralists did not hail the application of penicillin as a life-saving advance. In removing the risks involved in promiscuity, had doctors also removed one of the most important restraints?[53]

W. G. Coughlan, director of the Christian Social Order Movement in Sydney, studied with alarm reports suggesting that girls, now quickly

cured by penicillin, immediately returned to their promiscuous ways. This confirmed fears, he wrote, 'that the discovery and application of quicker and more certain cures of V.D. would be for many an incitement to sex adventure'. Women with low moral standards needed, he believed, 'a rude shock': 'The hair shaving treatment might well be tried here, as it had been in Europe. But it should be followed by a period in a hostel – preferably in the country – where the girls could live healthy and useful lives, have wholesome recreation, and be helped morally and spiritually, as well as medically while the hair grows again.'

Perhaps Mr Coughlan was known as a crank because this letter did not provoke the storm of protest that might have been expected. It showed very clearly, however, the wide divergence in views about what constituted acceptable behaviour in Australia. If Christian moral standards required reinforcement by such barbarous means then it might be suggested that they were already largely irrelevant. People other than declared Christians recognised a wider range of moral problems than drink, gambling and sex which remained central to Australian Christian moral concerns. When W. A. Dowe, director of the Australian School of Social Science, replied to Mr Coughlan he suggested that delinquents should be treated with more sympathy, even love, than with a 'rude shock'. 'These delinquents are already suffering from rude shocks', he wrote, 'shocks arising from maladjustments which they cannot avoid or control, shocks from being thrown into the path of war and unprecedented social conditions.' The second world war threw up huge moral problems but in Australia moralists busied themselves elaborating conditions that would defend and maintain the Australian way of life.[54]

CHAPTER TEN

TOWARDS A NEW AGE

In 1944, as Australia's role in the frontline fighting declined, the government began to tackle the problem of the demobilisation of Australian servicemen and women. Conditions on the homefront continued to deteriorate because so many resources, of manpower and materials, had been reserved for the troops. Demobilisation would place great strains on these scarce resources and would have to be handled with skill and sensitivity to avoid large-scale unemployment or inflation.

One great lesson had been absorbed by Australians in December 1941 when, apparently, they stood alone, a mere seven million of them, before the populous Japanese. Arthur Calwell, minister for Information, had coined the slogan 'populate or perish' and it neatly captured the essence of that lesson. Unless Australians expanded and developed, in population and with an economy to support greater numbers, there could be no guarantee that the victory being won over the Japanese would be permanent. To make sense of all the suffering and sacrifice Australia must be developed. This meant that the family would assume central importance in post-war Australia as planners in Canberra encouraged people to have larger families. Women's magazines took up the theme, introducing a critical note into articles which examined the low birth-rate. Readers might have replied, with feeling, that minimal government provision of crèches or after-school centres prevented working women from even contemplating children. *Woman* magazine pondered the low birth-rate and suggested a variety of reasons for it: wartime shortages of essential supplies, shopping difficulties, reduced finances, fear, absence of husbands and the housing shortage.[1]

With the return of men from abroad planners anticipated a 'baby boom', which they welcomed. The housing crisis, however, threatened their projections. By 1944 the dimensions of the crisis should have been apparent to anyone and, if Australia was to prosper, houses would have to be supplied for the families needing them. The economic depression of the 1930s had left a backlog in housing construction and when home building all but ceased from 1942 onwards the crisis intensified. By 1944 the problem had reached alarming proportions as thousands of Australians lived in foul,

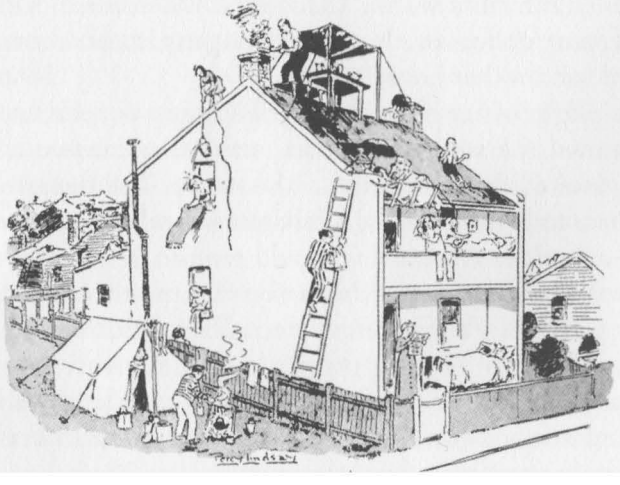
damp, crowded conditions or moved in with relatives, giving rise to all the tension and discomfort of that solution.

An Australia-wide survey of housing needs, published in September 1944, revealed a shortage of 257,521 houses composed of an 'actual shortage' of 175,940 homes and an additional 82,031 to replace structures which were 'unfit for human habitation'. The report branded a further 154,899 houses as 'sub-standard' but suggested that, with repairs, these places could be made decent. Melbourne experienced the greatest shortage of houses, while Sydney suffered the worst slums. The government responded to such statistics by releasing enough manpower and materials to enable 1,215 homes to be built around Australia, showing how slowly the crisis would be overcome.[2]

Stories confirmed the findings of the survey. When a house owner in Highett, a southern Melbourne suburb, advertised his house to let, he received 194 applications and commented that 'there is heart-break in every one of them', while in Randwick, Sydney, a crowd of a thousand people applied for a cottage to rent. One prospective tenant offered six months rent in advance and another claimed to have come from the premier who said he was to have preference. The owner let the cottage to a relative. The government embarked on a crash course of 'sleep-out' construction to overcome Sydney's problems. Bungalows, 12ft by 9ft, built by the government could be hired for 15s a week and were available to householders who would give board to one or more persons engaged in a war industry or for the accommodation of servicemen and their dependants. Many marriages began in these sleep-outs.[3]

People grew increasingly angry as the dimensions of the housing crisis became more apparent, particularly as it affected ex-servicemen. The AIF

'TO LET. Portion of roof, with own chimney. Good view.'
Bulletin, 29 September 1943



Women's Association publicised the plight of many ex-diggers who simply could not find adequate housing for their families. The Association told of one returned soldier, his wife and three children living in the front of a disused shop in Richmond, Victoria. Because of poor drainage the yard was permanently flooded and after a few months one of the children had died of tuberculosis while another had been taken to hospital for observation. At that point the Association intervened and moved the family to the country. Other cases which attracted the Association's attention included that of the wife of a serviceman abroad forced to raise her four-month-old twins and two other children in a dilapidated weekend shack. A partly enclosed verandah served as a kitchen and there was no water laid on. The Association also reported the circumstances of the wife of an Australian prisoner of war who lived in two extremely damp rooms behind a butcher's shop. She had no cooking facilities other than a simple gasring.[4]

Evictions became common, too, as the housing shortage pushed up the rents landlords could demand, often illegally. One eviction story nearly destroyed the conservative government in Victoria, so angry did members of parliament become. The victims, a family with the alien name of de Campo, in fact had good loyalist credentials. The father had fought with the AIF in the first world war and his stepson, William Missen, had recently been discharged from the AIF after a year of under-age service in New Guinea. The de Campos sublet a terrace house in Fitzroy, an inner Melbourne suburb, paying £2 a week to the legal tenant who paid 22s 6d to the landlord. The tenant regarded the de Campos as unsatisfactory and, because landlord and tenant regulations did not affect dealings between tenants and subtenants, she served the family with an eviction notice. Two members of the Brotherhood of St Laurence, a Melbourne welfare agency, the Rev. F. W. Coaldrake and G. A. Bishop, championed the de Campos' cause and barricaded themselves and the family in the house. Police eventually broke down wooden beams and took the front door off its hinges to remove the family. Mrs de Campo was expecting her eighth child within a few days. When the unfortunate family disappeared from public view, they were living in a Brotherhood hostel while they searched for another house to rent.[5]

While the plight of families like the de Campos or returned men living in hovels alarmed the welfare agencies, many Australians, encouraged by government, looked optimistically to the future. The department of Post-War Reconstruction published a questionnaire which sought to establish what sort of amenities Australians would require in their new homes. The questionnaire asked if potential home-buyers preferred 'an entrance hall or more space in living/dining' area; 'a small kitchen and a dining room or an eat-in kitchen and no dining room'; 'a separate store room or a larger laundry'; 'a single or two storied house'? People were later asked about their furnishings and fittings: would they prefer moveable wardrobes or 'built-ins'; would they prefer heating by gas, electricity or fuel?[6]

Such questions and surveys apparently encouraged a great deal of day-dreaming. One correspondent, writing to *Woman* magazine, suggested that 'the planners are overlooking the fact that the five or six roomed cottage or flat is not big enough for the average family'. It would be intriguing to know if the writer squatted on the edge of the bed in a 'sleep-out' as she penned these optimistic lines. *Woman's* readers all around the country responded enthusiastically to the department's questionnaire. Sixty per cent of respondents, for example, required a separate dining room because this was 'an Australian tradition' while seventy-one per cent wanted an entrance hall even though 'Americans don't have halls'.[7]

For most Australians such a questionnaire was quite a meaningless exercise. Few people could afford a 'dream home' and, because of a shortage of materials, particularly bricks and tiles, and of skilled workers, even the most rudimentary dwelling was beyond the hopes of most. Servicemen returned with their wives not to 'homes fit for heroes' but to the room in their parents' house which had always been theirs. Eventually one or even two children might share that room with their parents. The 'nuclear family' had no place in immediate post-war Australia, despite the propaganda of Calwell and the Canberra planners.

Although the housing crisis had become prominent in 1944, people greeted the new year, 1945, with considerable optimism. The European war seemed almost won and the Pacific war, while still bitterly contested, at least had moved far from Australia's own shores. Concentration on domestic matters increased – on housing, principally, and on demobilisation and post-war policies. People had grown increasingly tired of the war and of the regulations which had almost seemed to become Australia's main weapon of war. A. K. Stout, professor of Moral and Political Philosophy at Sydney university attacked the 'regulation mania'. Since the war had started, he claimed, the federal government had issued over 8,000 regulations, an average of five per day, including Sundays. In addition, 150 boards and committees had been established to administer all the regulations and rules. People yearned for release from petty and fussy bureaucracy and this seemed increasingly likely as 1945 advanced.[8]

The defeat of Germany provided the first opportunity for the release of tensions built up over the last few years. But as the final victory in Europe grew closer that confusion about the European war which many Australians had felt, at least since the beginning of the Japanese war, became increasingly apparent.

Curtin suggested that Australians should not celebrate victory in Europe too enthusiastically but should get on with the job of defeating the Japanese. Many people agreed with him. 'Since when has it been customary to celebrate victory halfway through a contest?' asked a correspondent to the *Sydney Morning Herald.* Others, though, still yearned for the closest possible ties with Britain and wanted Australians to embrace Victory in Europe day

wholeheartedly as evidence of the unity between the two countries. 'Does it not behove us to spread our hands spiritually across the sea to England', asked Robert Mitchell of Fivedock, a Sydney suburb, '[England] who bore the brunt of the day, who held the fort and saved Christianity for the world.'[9]

The news of the German surrender reached Australia just before midnight on 7 May 1945. Most people were in bed but some were enticed out on to the streets by the car horns and the shouts of people awaiting the news. At Prince's ballroom, Sydney, servicemen lifted their partners above their heads and there was an almost hysterical note in the voices of the Australians, Britons and Americans who joined the singing when the band played 'Auld Lang Syne'. Ben Chifley, acting prime minister because of Curtin's continuing illness, announced the defeat of Germany to the nation over the Australian Broadcasting Commission network and he repeated his news to the House of Representatives on the following day. He also announced a public holiday to allow people to participate in the services of thanksgiving and other celebrations. The national thanksgiving service took place in Canberra at the Australian War Memorial, a building designed to commemorate the dead of the first world war, but opened in 1941 when Europe had become engulfed by the new German quest for domination.[10]

The public holiday was a quiet affair. A Melburnian complained that 'There was no air of celebration about the [V-E] holiday, and its drabness had a depressing effect on people'. In Melbourne, as elsewhere, there were few facilities open and very little to do. Hotels were closed by those with long memories who recalled the riotous scenes that had engulfed the cities and towns after 11 November 1918. In any case, it might have seemed somewhat indecent to engage in exuberant celebrations while Australians were still fighting and dying in the war against the Japanese which, most estimated, would involve bloody fighting, even on the Japanese homeland, before victory could be won.[11]

In Sydney V-E celebrations were marred by a strike of railwaymen and also by the fact that hotels, cafes and restaurants, cinemas, theatres and retail shops were all closed. The only entertainment offered in Sydney was a piano recital at the town hall in aid of the Red Cross. An observer noted, however, that Sydney's daytime celebration of V-E day was the kind of celebration that 'goes with Sunday and the things of the home' but at night revellers searched for joy 'the kind of joy that goes with Saturday and the things of New Year's Eve'. At midnight police ordered people to go home.[12]

Victory in Europe increased impatience for victory in the Pacific and the return of peace throughout the world. People looked forward with hope to the new Australia that the end of the war would bring. Sadly, though, Curtin's closest advisers realised, there would be a new prime minister presiding over peacetime Australia. John Curtin, never a man of robust health, had pushed himself beyond endurance in the years of crisis, 1942–3, and by late 1944 was a very sick man. Absent from his duties from November 1944 to January

1945, he had recovered sufficiently to take up the cares of office again but, by June 1945, it was apparent that full recovery from his heart condition was unlikely. Curtin died on 5 July 1945 denied, like Roosevelt, the satisfaction of witnessing the victory over the Japanese that he had worked so hard to achieve.[13]

Curtin's death shocked the nation and his passing was genuinely mourned by Australians of all classes and persuasions who recognised that he had given his all for the country he loved so well. A journalist sent out to sample the mood of the people, found that 'Through the tapestry of conversation in street and shop, cafe and office, bus and tram, the sombre thread of reference to the dead leader was woven endlessly'. Everyone spoke well of Curtin and most people, generally cynical about politics and politicians, spoke of the prime minister as if he had been above it all. One man overheard in a cafe captured the nation's mood:

> I always thought his real trouble was that he didn't have a shell hard enough for a politician. He couldn't shrug things off. He seemed to make everyone and everything his personal responsibility. He always appeared to think he had to answer to the country for everything – and everybody, too. Just couldn't ease up. Anyway, he did a good job.

Curtin was succeeded, not by his deputy Frank Forde, but by Ben Chifley who became prime minister on 13 July 1945.[14]

With the war against Germany at an end, the full resources of the Allies, or the United Nations as they were now called, could be deployed against the Japanese and it was expected that bloody fighting would ensue before the enemy could be convinced to surrender. However, the prospect of a difficult and costly invasion of Japan became irrelevant when the Americans unleashed atomic bombs against the Japanese, showing them that complete annihilation would take place unless there was an immediate surrender. The first bomb, dropped on Hiroshima on 6 August 1945, caused immense physical destruction and killed approximately 64,000 people instantly. The second bomb, dropped three days later, killed fewer people, approximately 29,000, but caused enormous destruction, too. Over the coming months many more thousands of people died as the result of injuries sustained in these two attacks. Thousands more people were horribly mutilated and the long term effects of the radiation were felt for many years.[15]

Australian newspapers ushered in the atomic age with banner headlines, groping to explain the enormity of the damage the bombs had caused. Bare statistics failed to convey the extent of destruction. Thus while the newspapers boasted that the atomic bomb was more powerful than 20,000 tons of TNT and produced a blast 2,000 times greater than that of the largest bomb previously used, these statistics seemed meaningless in themselves. So most newspapers resorted to local examples, printing aerial photographs

or maps of Australian capital cities and indicating the extent of damage that would be caused. Thus the *Age* indicated that, if a bomb had been dropped on the centre of Melbourne, the city itself would have been reduced to rubble and complete destruction would have encompassed South Yarra and Toorak to the south and Brunswick to the north. The shock waves would have been so extensive that windows in Echuca, on Victoria's border, would have rattled. People obviously had difficulty comprehending this, and little wonder, as the atomic age had burst on them unheralded. As an indication of the leap in technology involved, on the day the Americans dropped the first bomb on Hiroshima, the *Sydney Morning Herald* coincidentally published a feature article, 'Is the future of the sailing ship doomed?'[16]

The Australian response to the atomic age was subdued almost to the point of non-involvement, perhaps because Australians simply could not understand what had happened. The newspapers printed the stories the censors released to them. These emphasised how the bombs would bring about a speedy end to the war. They also published explanations about the bomb provided by Australian scientists and 'human-interest' stories about the people who had developed it. Almost without exception Australian newspapers drew comment and opinion about the bomb from British and American sources, as if Australians could have nothing of significance to say about the moral and ethical implications of this most awesome weapon. Politicians and clergymen likewise kept their own ideas to themselves and gave no lead to their fellow citizens. The sole exception was provided by three Methodist clergymen in Sydney, the Revs R. F. Sutton, B. R. Wyllie and Alan Walker, who contested the general mood of congratulation. In a joint statement these three men sought to initiate discussion of the moral implications of the atomic bomb, the use of which, they claimed, was 'a devastating blow' to the Allies' claim 'to the moral leadership of the world'.[17]

This sole public attempt to assess immediately the use of atomic weaponry from a moral viewpoint attracted some attention but generally Australians were too excited by the prospect of peace to examine the means by which it had been achieved. A few people bothered to write to the newspapers about the clergymen's statement but generally it was ignored in the excitement of the time. One writer found the statement difficult to understand in view of the many 'authentic cases of Japanese atrocities and acts of outrageous conduct'. Another described use of the new weapon as 'the most human act of either war. It saved countless lives and untold misery.' Others supported the ministers and called for an immediate agreement that atomic weapons should never be used again but there were not many of these letters and they took their place alongside other pressing issues of the day such as 'book problem in the country', 'orange prices' and 'airport for Sydney'.[18]

At other moments of crisis or drama during the course of this most destructive of wars journalists had sought to sample the mood of the people and had filled columns of newsprint with the opinions and ideas of the

'man-in-the-street'. Absorbed now in describing the peace celebrations as word of Japanese surrender was awaited, journalists hardly bothered with the response to atomic warfare. A *Daily Telegraph* reporter, however, made a foray into Sydney's streets and provided a brief glimpse of the response of some people. A chemist from Vaucluse admitted that 'The consequences are frightening ... It will end this war all right, but we shouldn't feel so sure that it won't bounce back on us one day in another war.' On the other hand, a housewife from Balmain was unable to look beyond the day. 'Good', she said, 'we'll be able to wipe out every Jap now. It's a pity we didn't have it for the Germans.' But another housewife, from Wauchope, gave voice to a view that would grow in strength as the world moved closer to complete annihilation: 'it's a pity scientists ever discovered such a terrible weapon of destruction'.[19]

Australians expected peace almost from the moment they learnt that the first atomic bomb had fallen on Hiroshima – they did not believe that the Japanese could withstand such destruction. The mood of anticipation grew with the news of the second bomb dropped on Nagasaki and the ultimatum delivered to the Japanese government. There were many false alarms and almost a constant mood of rejoicing until at 9.30 a.m. on 15 August 1945 prime minister Chifley broadcast to the nation that the Japanese emperor had accepted the surrender conditions. Chifley thanked Australia's fighting men and women, the troops of the United Nations, and particularly those of the United States. He asked people to offer thanks to God and to remember those whose lives had been given in the cause of freedom. He suggested, too, that the nation owed 'a great debt to those men and women who performed miracles of production in secondary and primary industries so that the battle of supply could be won'. He recalled that Australians had won battle honours in every theatre of the world war: '[they] stopped the Japanese in their drive south, just as they helped to start the first march towards ultimate victory in North Africa. Australians fought in the battles of the air everywhere, and Australian seamen covered every ocean.' Australians had every reason to rejoice.[20]

Chifley announced that 15 and 16 August would be public holidays as 'peace delirium' broke out all over the country. In Sydney 'an entire city felt the burdens of six weary, war-laden years roll from its shoulders' while in Melbourne there was 'a battle against any show of dignity, of austerity and gloom'. In Dubbo, in a display of mass emotion, girls, young men and even 'grave and reverend seniors acted in a manner that would be deemed incredible in normal life'. And so it was in every town and city in Australia. There were 'conga lines' and 'hokey-pokey rings' and flags and torn paper everywhere; police turned a blind eye to two-up schools and riotous behaviour that would otherwise have merited arrest. The hotels and cinemas were again closed but no-one cared as most people wanted to be outside, in dance lines and processions, making as much noise as possible.[21]

Jubilant crowds celebrating the end of the Japanese war outside the Flinders Street railway station. British and Australian flags are in evidence but there do not seem to be any American flags

On the second day there were victory marches in the capital cities which were watched by enormous crowds of people. The celebrations were less spontaneous and more formal than the previous day's but there was more drunkenness and rowdyism too as hotels opened in the afternoon. In Sydney half a million people watched a parade of 60,000 veterans of the first world war and men and women still serving, while aircraft of the RAAF flew overhead. The Duke of Gloucester, governor-general, on behalf of his brother, the king, congratulated all Australians on their 'splendid achievements' and, answering those who complained that Australian troops had been devoted to 'side-shows' in the last years of the war, said that 'not everyone can play centre-forward in a team and have all the glamour of brilliant success'.[22]

Australians turned to peace in a mood of gaiety but aware nevertheless that the world had changed radically because of the six years of war. Atomic bombs might make the world safe but there was also the danger that they might fall into the hands of an enemy. Communism remained to challenge the western nations and even as peace was celebrated the Russian bear lost much of the glamour of an ally and began to take on a threatening appearance.

Britain, victorious in Europe, could never again assume the importance in Australian eyes that had been hers before the fall of Singapore. The need for a firm American alliance now seemed paramount.

On the homefront Australians wanted a return to normality but so absorbing had the years of crisis been that few could recall what that involved. Commonwealth wartime regulations would be terminated; there would be an end to rationing, to manpower restrictions and to large-scale female employment but these things would take time. Women would return to their homes to have the children the nation needed but many of them, too, would remain in the jobs to which they had won grudging admittance as labour shortages had grown. In offices, factories and even on the trams, women retained a permanent place in the workforce. The slogan, 'populate or perish' won widespread acceptance and prepared Australians for a massive immigration programme that would double their population within a generation. Few could envisage how profoundly immigration would change Australian society and those who sponsored it acted bravely in the face of a hatred of foreigners that the war had demonstrated was a common Australian characteristic. Immigration was tolerated because of the high proportion of Britons, because of the need for rapid population growth and because

everyone expected that non-British migrants would conform to white Anglo-Saxon standards and eventually become 'good Australians'. Without the stimulus of war which demonstrated how insecure was Australia's hold on the continent, it is doubtful if large-scale non-British immigration would ever have been attempted.

The immigration programme required a great expansion of employment and this was achieved by building on the industrial base created by the war. Troops had been supplied with bullets and bombs, cars, trucks and even aeroplanes. Steel-making had become a major industry, turning sleepy, seaside villages such as Whyalla, in South Australia, into massive, smoke-belching industrial complexes with a large workforce. Such places would continue to expand in the years of peace until Australia faced its next great economic challenge. When prime minister Chifley watched the first Holden car to be produced by the American giant, General Motors, roll off the assembly line he said that the event heralded a new dimension of the Australian economy. Australians took great pride in the manufacture of their own car, minimising, as they had during the war, the importance of American contribution.

The excitement of a new age overwhelmed Australians and the war was quickly forgotten in the frenzy of building and expanding the cities and towns that had been so neglected during the war. The returned servicemen and women won no exalted place in Australian society and, while Anzac day continued to *be* celebrated, the men of the second AIF never won the place in the affection of the nation that had been achieved by their fathers. Perhaps the reason for this lay in the fact that all Australians believed, rightly, that they had contributed to the national effort in this second great war. War had not been a distant event, fought amidst the drama and unreality of the Dardanelles or France. This war had come to Australia's own shores and had engaged the full co-operation and hard work of all adult Australians. While the RSL only admitted to membership those who had fought overseas, most Australians, civilian and service, believed that they had played an important part in the defence of their nation. Frontline fighting alone had not won the war for Australians: the homefront had been crucial too. The European war, to 1941, had engaged the attention of only a few and had seemed to many Australians a somewhat subdued replay of the earlier war. The Japanese emergency had galvanised all Australians into action so that servicemen achieved no preeminent position. The atomic age warned that any future world war would render meaningless a distinction between soldiers and civilians.

NOTES

Introduction

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Chapter One: 'BUSINESS AS USUAL'

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32 *Age*, 15 September 1939 (Laughlin); *SMH*, 16 September, 11 September, 15 September and 13 September 1939.
33 Long, *To Benghazi*, p.39; *SMH*, 20 September 1939 (Street).

34 *Age*, 19 September 1939.
35 Long, *To Benghazi*, p.55 (L. M. Long); p.40 for discussion of reserved occupations.
36 *SMH*, 13 and 14 October 1939.
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53 *Age*, 8 December 1939.
54 *Age*, 17 November 1939 (Lees) and 21 December 1939 (unemployment relief) and 19 December 1939 (Collingwood).
55 *Australasian*, 16 December 1939; *SMH*, 23 December 1939 (Sydney scenes); *SMH*, 21 December 1939.

Chapter Two: RAISING AN ARMY

1 *SMH*, 1 January 1940; *Bulletin*, 10 January 1940.
2 *Age*, 3 January 1940 and 2 January 1940 (Bradman).
3 *Age*, 29 April 1940 (Robertson); *Age*, 9 April 1940 (Pratt).
4 *SMH*, 22 January 1940 (Menzies); *SMH*, 23 February 1940 (Hughes); Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain 1939–1945*, London, 1969, p.74 (Thames) and p.76 (Chamberlain).
5 *Bulletin*, 24 January 1940.
6 *Bulletin*, 7 February 1940.
7 *SMH*, 4 January 1940; Ken Clift, *The Soldier Who Never Grew Up*, Sydney, 1976, p.26; Long, *To Benghazi*, Canberra, 1952, p.67.
8 *Bulletin*, 10 January 1940; *SMH*, 5 January 1940; *Australasian*, 13 January 1940 (AIF lives again); Ken Clift, *The Saga of a Sig*, Sydney 1972, p.4 (memories); *SMH*, 16 February 1940 (uniforms); *Bulletin*, 10 January 1940 (veteran).
9 *Age*, 25 January 1940.
10 *Age*, 25 January 1940.
11 Long, *To Benghazi*, p.67; *Sun*, 8 January 1940.
12 *SMH*, 13 February 1940 (Egypt) and 27 January 1940 (second eleven), and 9 April 1940 (name change).
13 *SMH*, 6 May 1940. The ceremony had been planned for 25 April but was transferred because of bad weather.
14 McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, pp.150–77; *SMH*, 5 September 1939 (reports of arrests of aliens) and 11 September 1939 (most had been released).
15 *Age*, 24June 1940; between 1926–30, 224,010 permanent new settlers arrived in Australia. This number dropped dramatically because of the depression: 1931–5, 54,444; 1936–40, 84,169. Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, *Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia*, no. 35, 1942 and 1943, Canberra, 1944, p.309.
16 *Age*, 18 April 1940, 27 May 1940 and 1 April 1940 (flagseller).
17 *SMH*, 23 February 1940.
18 *Age*, 3 January 1940 (Maginot line); *SMH*, 12 April 1940.
19 *Australasian*, 20 and 27 April1940; *Age*, 12 April 1940 (Menzies).
20 McEwen entered parliament as member for Echuca in 1934 and became minister for External Affairs in March 1940, Joseph A. Alexander, *Who's Who in Australia* 12th edition, Melbourne, 1944', p.544.
21 *Age*, 14 May 1940; *Australasian*, 18 May 1940; *SMH*, 20 May 1940 (McEwen); *Age*, 20 May 1940 (Hughes).
22 *Age*, 25 May 1940.
23 *SMH*, 31 May (RAF) and 5 June 1940 (Dunkirk).
24 *SMH*, 6 June 1940.
25 *Age*, 28 May (Donaldson) and 20 June 1940 (Chanter).
26 *SMH*, 16 May 1940.
27 *Age*, 28 May 1940.
28 *SMH*, 22 May 1940; *Age*, 23 and 24 May 1940; *SMH*, 25 May 1940.

29 *Advertiser*, 23 and 25 May 1940; *Courier-Mail*, 23 May 1940.
30 *SMH*, 20 July 1940; *Australasian*, 8 June 1940.
31 *Australasian*, 15 June 1940.
32 *Age*, 27 May 1940; *SMH*, 1 June 1940.
33 Travelling to Sydney by train Menzies sought to lighten the 'dreary journey' by reading *They Found Him Dead* by Georgette Heyer and *The Free Fishers* by John Buchan, *Age*, 31 July 1940; *Age*, 22 May 1940 (federal parliament); *SMH*, 25 July 1940 (BBC).
34 *SMH*, 20 May and 22 May 1940.
35 McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, p.157; *SMH*, 1 June 1940 (Bunnerong) and 16 May 1940 (British Empire Union and 'Recruit').
36 *Age*, 30 June and 1 June 1940 (Hesse).
37 *Age*, 27 June 1940 (Phillips); *Age*, 2 July 1940 (Gilligan).
38 *Age*, 4 and 10 July 1940.
39 *SMH*, 1 May 1940.
40 *SMH*, 12 and 13 June 1940; 15 June 1940.
41 *SMH*, 21 June 1940.
42 *Age*, 13 July 1940 (Algerian) and 1 and 2 July 1940 (Victorian railways).
43 *Age*, 12 June 1940 (Collingwood) and 13 June 1940 (Bendigo).
44 *SMH*, 12 June 1940; *Age*, 24 June 1940 (Griffith).
45 Commonwealth of Australia, *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 163. p.1220. 'Mr Blain: ... Our own Commonwealth Anthropologist, Dr Strehlow, ... is another Nazi.'
46 *SMH*, 25 December 1940: *Age*, 13 June 1940.
47 *SMH*, 11 November 1940 (Mair); *SMH*, 25 July 1940 (Aarons and Robb).
48 *Woman*, 12 August 1940; *SMH*, 5 August 1940; see also Benzion Patkin, *The Dunera Internees*, Sydney, 1979, for the treatment of some German refugees in Australia.
49 *SMH*, 1 August 1940.
50 *SMH*, 11 July 1940; *Bulletin*, 28 August 1940.
51 *SMH*, 21 June 1940 (Bell); *Age*, 30 July 1940 (VRC); *Bulletin*, 7 August 1940; *SMH*, 20 July 1940 (Sydney public schools); *Australasian*, 29 June 1940 (Melbourne public schools); *SMH*, 17 June 1940 *(Marseillaise)*.
52 *SMH*, 28 September 1940 (Wald); *Age*, 17 July 1940 (Dunstan); *Bulletin*, 5 June 1940; *SMH*, 18 June 1940.
53 *Age*, 6 April 1940; *SMH*, 30 July 1940 (Evatt).
54 *SMH*, 30 July 1940 (cricket) and 28 May 1940 (rugby); *Age*, 13 June 1940 (VFA); *Age*, 15 June 1940 (payments reduced) and 30 September 1940 (receipts).
55 *SMH*, 19 June 1940.
56 *SMH*, 3 June 1940.
57 *The Babbler: Unofficial Organ of Hawthorn-Richmond-South Hawthorn VDC* June-July 1943, 'How Hawthorn Began'.
58 *SMH*, 17 August 1940.
59 *The Babbler*, June-July 1943.
60 *SMH*. 18 June 1940 (poem); *Australasian*, 19 October 1940.
61 *SMH*, 19 March and 9 April 1940.
62 *SMH*, 14 February 1940 (Women's Emergency Signalling Corps); *SMH*, 6 June 1940 (Women's Flying Club).
63 Elsie Bective (the Countess of Bective) had written to the prime minister, 11 June 1940, urging him to support the WANS, but even this support won no concession from a government which could see no need for women's services. War cabinet agendum 185/1940, CRS A2671, Australian Archives, Canberra.
64 *SMH*, 8 July 1940.
65 *SMH*, 23 October 1940 (Mrs Vaughan and Mrs McKenzie).
66 *SMH*, 14 December 1940.
67 *SMH*, 7 November 1940 (cost of WANS uniform); *Australasian*, 16 August 1941 (Australian Women's Service Corps); *Australian Women's Weekly)*;, 18 January 1941.
68 *SMH*, 7 November 1940 (Lilias B. Dow); *SMH*, 23 October 1940 ('Mrs Mac').
69 *SMH*, 6 November 1940.
70 *SMH*, 29 November 1939.
71 *SMH*, 10 November 1939 and 23 November 1939 (reply).
72 *SMH*, 31 August 1940; *Australian Women's Weekly*, 6 January 1940.
73 *SMH*, 2 May 1940 (Hyde Park); *Australasian*, 9 November 1940 (Air Force House).
74 *Age*, 6 October 1939.
75 *Age*, 18 October and 14 November 1939; *SMH*, 2 December 1939.
76 *Age*, 3 August 1940 and 10 August 1940 (Victorian premier).
77 *Age*, 3 August 1940 (Judkins); *Age*, 5 June 1940 (miracles).
78 *Age*, 10 December 1940 (unemployment figures); *Bulletin*, 28 August 1940 (unemployed man); *Bulletin*, 21 August 1940 (the King's School); *Age*, 3 April 1940 (Brunswick woman).

Chapter Three: CRISIS ABROAD

1 Paul Hasluck, *The Government and the People 1939–1941*, Canberra, 1952, pp.244, 245.
2 Hasluck, *The Government and the People 1939–1941*, p.205. Dedman had a majority of 3,000 in a seat previously held for the United Australia party by R. G. Casey; *SMH*, 20 June 1940.
3 *Age*, 27 May 1940.
4 Cameron Hazlehurst, *Menzies Observed*, Sydney, 1979, pp.266–70, reprints Warwick Fairfax's own political portrait of Menzies, published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 August 1943. Hazlehurst suggested Fairfax's account was inspired by personal offence or clash of interest.
5 Hasluck, *The Government and the People 1939–1941*, pp.258–60.
6 *Age*, 10 October 1940.
7 *Age*, 6 November 1940; *Australasian*, 12 October 1940.
8 *SMH*, 25 December 1940.
9 *Age*, 1 January 1940.
10 *Argus*, 14 February (headlines) and 15 February 1941 (Spender and war cabinet).
11 *Argus*, 15 February 1941; *Age*, 18 February 1941 (Curtin, Fadden and Japanese consul).
12 *SMH*, 21 February 1941 (war cabinet's disagreement with Menzies); *SMH*, 10 March 1941 (editorial and Ross Gollan).
13 *SMH*, 21 March 1941.
14 *SMH*, 21 March 1941.
15 *SMH*, 22 March 1941.
16 *SMH*, 24 March 1941 (farewell) and 26 March 1941 (Brisbane).
17 *Age*, 25 March 1941 (Japanese consul) and 22 March 1941 (thief).
18 *SMH*, 2 May 1941 (unemployment figures) and 30 August 1940 (beer consumption).
19 *Age*, 18 March 1941 (footballers), 19 February 1941 (cinemas) and 1 April 1941 (dance supplement); Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, *Official Yearbook of the Commonwealth of Australia*, no. 35, 1942–1943, Canberra, 1944, p.327 (marriage rates).
20 *SMH*, 21 and 22 April 1941.
21 *Bulletin*, 17 December 1941.
22 *SMH*, 14 April 1941.
23 *Age*, 12 April 1941; *SMH*, 14 April 1941 (Brisbane).
24 Michael McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, Sydney, 1980, pp.72–3 (first world war); *SMH*, 7 March 1941 and 14 February 1941.
25 *SMH*, 21 January 1941 (wording); *Age*, 8 February 1941 (family returning from picnic); *Bulletin*, 5 February 1941 (messenger boys).
26 *Age*, 29 May 1941 (Methodists), 6 February 1941 (Pretre) and 10 February 1941 (Clericus); *SMH*, 12 February 1941; *Woman*, 7 April 1941.
27 *Age*, 12 August 1941 (Richmond) and 8 August 1941 (Northcote and Moorabbin); *SMH*, 1 October 1941 (Fadden).
28 *Manchester Guardian*, 26 February 1941 (Churchill); 22 February 1941 (description of Menzies); *British-Australian and New Zealander*, 10 April 1941.
29 *Manchester Guardian*, 24 March 1941 (Plymouth); *Australasian*, 31 May 1941 (Box Hill).
30 *SMH*, 10 April 1941 (Spender).
31 *SMH*, 17 May 1941.
32 *SMH*, 17 May 1941 (Don Athaldo) and 19 August 1941 (soldier's wife); Report from Minister for the Army to War Cabinet, 2 July 1941, CRS A2671, Australian Archives, Canberra.
33 *Australian Womens Weekly*, 2 August 1941; *SMH*, 10 July 1941.
34 *SMH*, 16 July 1941.
35 *SMH*, 2 June 1941 (Dubbo) and 5 June 1941.
36 *SMH*, 25 April1941.
37 *Age*, 26 May 1941.
38 *SMH*, 3 July 1941.
39 War Cabinet agendum no. 197/1941, CRS A2671, Australian Archives, Canberra.
40 *SMH*, 26 February 1941; Commonwealth of Australia, *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 166, p.149 (Makin); *SMH*, 18 August 1941 (Spender).
41 *SMH*, 26 August 1941.
42 *SMH*, 18 August 1941 and 29 August 1941 (Mrs McKenzie and Mrs Cameron).
43 *Australasian*, 21 June 1941.
44 For detailed treatment of Australian communist changes see Robin Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformers Communism and the Australian Labour Movement 1920–1955*, Canberra, 1975, pp.79–143; *Catholic Press*, 10 July 1941; *Age*, 26 June 1941 (Menzies).
45 Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformers*, p.96.
46 *Age*, 25 July 1941 (editorial); *SMH*, 25 June 1941 (Cleary).
47 *SMH*, 6 August 1941; *Age*, 6 August 1941; *SMH*, 18 October 1941 (Russian day); *Age*, 15 September 1941 (football); *Age*, 6 September 1941 (AIF march);

Age, 8 November 1941 (Melbourne and Canberra).

48 *SMH*, 14 October 1941 (Burgmann); *Age*, 19 September 1941 (Blain). A. M. Blain, who served with the first AIF had enlisted again on 6 July 1940, arrived in Singapore 26 January 1942 and became a prisoner of war on 15 February 1942. He was recovered from the Japanese on 5 September 1945 and returned to Australia ten days later. Personal biographies Australian War Memorial Library; *SMH*, 2 July 1941 (enemies of British Empire).

49 *SMH*, 18 October 1941 (Lockwood and King's Cross); and 20 October 1941 (Fair Deal).

50 War Cabinet agendum 149/1941 CRS A2671, Australian Archives, Canberra.

51 *Age*, 2 August 1941, 5 August 1941 (500 applicants) and 9 September 1941 (union opposition).

52 *Age*, 27 August 1941; John Barrett, 'Living in Australia, 1939–1945'; *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 2, November 1977, p.117; *Age*, 21 October 1941.

53 Sydney *Daily Telegraph*, *You, Me and this War, A critical account of some problems in Australia s organisation for defence*, Sydney, 1941, p.21; Helen Crisp, 'Women in Munitions', *Australian Quarterly*, September 1941, pp.71–3.

54 Crisp, 'Women in Munitions', p.75.

55 *Age*, 21 January 1941.

56 *Australian Women's Weekly*, 31 May 1941.

57 *Bulletin*, 1 and 15 January 1941.

58 *Age*, 24 and 25 January 1941.

59 *Australian Women's Weekly*, 12 July 1941.

60 *Australian Women's Weekly*, 4 January 1941.

61 *Australian Women's Weekly*, 1 February 1941 (Gorman); *Bulletin*, 28 May 1941.

62 *SMH*, 14 October 1941; *SMH*, 19 April 1941 (petrol consumption figures).

63 For a complete treatment of petrol rationing see S. J. Butlin, *War Economy 1939–1942*, Canberra, 1955, pp.280–92.

64 *SMH*, 4 August 1941.

65 *SMH*, 1 November 1941; *Age*, 11 July 1941 (Flinders Street); *Age*, 18 July 1941 (cinemas); *SMH*, 11 July 1941.

66 *SMH*, 2 August 1941 and 15 July 1941 (black market).

67 *SMH*, 19 April 1941 (tobacco rationing) and 9 April 1941 (cork tips); *Age*, 17 January 1941 (eggs).

68 *Age*, 6 June 1941.

69 *Daily Express*, 8 May 1941 and 6 May 1941.

70 *Age*, 6 Aprill941 and 30 May 1941.

71 *SMH*, March 1941.

72 *Age*, 20 August 1941.

73 The best account of Menzies's downfall is in Hasluck, *The Government and the People 1939–1941*, pp.491–505; *Age*, 7 August 1941.

74 *SMH*, 22 September 1941 and 25 August 1941 (Victor Trumper).

75 *Age*, 29 September 1941 (football), 11 October 1941 ('Spirit of Progress'), 5 November 1941 (tote) and 12 November 1941 (sirens).

76 *Age*, 18 November 1941 (holiday bookings); *Argus*, 17 November 1941; *Bulletin*, 3 December 1941.

Chapter Four: Panic

1 G. Hermon Gill, *Royal Australian Navy 1939–1942*, Canberra, 1957, pp.184–94 *(Bartolomeo Colleoni)*, pp. 451–9 *(Kormoran)*; see also Michael Montgomery, *Who Sank the Sydney*, Sydney, 1981, for a slightly melodramatic version of events.

2 Gavin Long, *The Six Years War*, Canberra, 1973, p.127; *Age*, 9 December 1941.

3 *Age*, 9 December 1941; Long, *Six Years War*, p.128.

4 *SMH*, 9 December 1941.

5 *SMH*, 9 December 1941; Lloyd Ross, *John Curtin A Biography*, Melbourne, 1977, p.243.

6 *SMH*, 9 December 1941; for Australia's declaration of war see Paul Hasluck, *The Government and the People 1942–1945*, Canberra, 1970, pp.6–10.

7 *West Australian*, 10 December 1941; *SMH*, 10 December 1941; Long, *Six Years War*, p.128.

8 Hasluck, *The Government and the People* 1942–1945, p.19.

9 *West Australian*, 15 December 1941.

10 *SMH*, 10 and 12 December 1941.

11 Long, *Six Years War*, p.132; *Age*, 13 December 1941.

12 *Age*, 13 and 15 December 1941; *SMH*, 17 December 1941 (wardens); *West Australian*, 15 December 1941.

13 *Age*, 15 December 1941 (shop hours and theatres); *SMH*, 13 December 1941; Commonwealth of Australia, *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, no. 15, p.19 (insurance); Advisory war council, minute 716, 'evacuation of children from vulnerable areas', CRS A2684, Australian Archives, Canberra.

14 *SMH*, 31 December 1941 (rail fares) and 17 December 1941 (Donovan); Calder, *The Peoples War Britain 1939–1945*,

pp.35–50; *West Australian*, 31 January 1942.
15 *Daily Telegraph*, 24 January 1942.
16 *SMH*, 22 December 1941.
17 'Conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers on Air Raid Precautions', Canberra, 20 December 1941, Australian War Memorial file 357.7 (Lazzarini); *Bulletin*, 16 December 1941; *Mercury*, 24 February 1942 (Dwyer- Gray), 24 December 1941 (evacuation) and 26 February 1942 (trenches).
18 *SMH*, 17 December 1941 (Curtin) and 3 December 1941 (war savings stamps); *Australian Womens Weekly*, 15 November 1941.
19 Commonwealth of Australia, *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, no. 11, p.11 and no. 12, p.4 (Evatt).
20 *SMH*, 24 December 1941; *Australian Women's Weekly*, 13 December 1941.
21 *Age*, 9 January 1942 (guest houses); Commonwealth of Australia, *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, no. 11, p.12 (holiday trains banned); *Daily Telegraph*, 27 December 1941.
22 Commonwealth of Australia, *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, no. 13, pp.7–10.
23 *Age*, 14 January 1942.
24 *Australian Women s Weekly*, 17 January 1942; *West Australian*, 19 December 1941.
25 Commonwealth of Australia, *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, no. 13, pp.11-13.
26 *SMH*, 30 December 1941 (Menzies) and 31 December 1941 (Foster).
27 *SMH*, 20 October 1941; Lionel Wigmore, *The Japanese Thrust*, Canberra, 1957, p.284 (Churchill) and pp.285–7 for the Curtin-Churchill debate; see also John Robertson, *Australia at War 1939–1945*, *Melbourne*, 198l,pp.77–82; Long, *Six Years War*, p.148 ('inexcusable betrayal').
28 *SMH*, 9 February 1942 (Percival); *Age*, 11 February 1942; *SMH*, 12 February 1942.
29 Robertson, *Australia at War*, p.89.
30 *SMH*, 14 February 1942; *Bulletin*, 26 August 1942 (Briton); *Daily Telegraph*, 14 February 1942; *Bulletin*, 18 February 1942 (Churchill); *SMH*, 17 February 1942; *Age*, 13 February 1942.
31 Tim Hall, *Darwin 1942*, Sydney, 1981, p.20; Hasluck, *The Government and the People 1942–1945*, pp.139–43; Douglas Gillison, *Royal Australian Air Force 1939–1942*, Canberra, 1962, pp.424–32.
32 *SMH*, 20 February 1942 (first accounts); later the minister for Air (Mr Drakeford) insisted that there were 39 casualties (15 killed and 24 injured). On 3 March 1942 the government appointed Mr Justice Lowe of the Victorian Supreme Court to enquire into all circumstances of the Darwin air-raids. See Newman Rosenthal, *Sir Charles Lowe A Biographical Memoir*, Melbourne, 1968, pp.102–17; *SMH*, 21 February 1942 (blitz).
33 *SMH*, 20 February 1942.
34 *Age*, 3 January 1942; *West Australian*, 16 December 1941; *SMH*, 6 January 1942; *Western Grazier*, 27 February 1942 (Wilcannia); *British-Australian and New Zealander*, 8 January 1942.
35 *SMH*, 5 February 1942 and 2 April 1942.
36 *Dubbo Despatch*, 27 February 1942, 23 March 1942, 13 March 1942 and 20 March 1942.
37 *SMH*, 30 January 1942; *The Torchbearer*, May 1942 (magazine of the Shore school).
38 *SMH*, 21 January 1942.
39 Gavin Long, Diary, book 1, pp.15–16, Australian War Memorial Library (Dakin); *The Torchbearer*, May 1942.
40 *Australian Womens Weekly*, 20 September 1941; *SMH*, 3 March 1942; *Age*, 11 December 1941.
41 *Age*, 13 March 1942; *SMH*, 20 February 1942 (wills).
42 *SMH*, 26 February 1942.
43 Department of Home Security, *Advising the Public in the Event of Invasion*, Canberra, 1942, p.5.
44 *SMH*, 7 March 1942; Ion L. Idriess, *Shoot to Kill The Australian Guerilla Book*, Sydney, 1942. This book, and others in the series, consisted of 90 pages.
45 *Daily Telegraph*, 26 January 1942.
46 *Daily Telegraph*, 27 January 1942 and 29 January 1942 (Chandler).
47 *Sunday Telegraph*, 1 February 1942. Wintringham was described as an 'indefatigable military theorist with little actual experience of war'. Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, London, 1977, p.591.
48 *SMH*, 30 January 1942; *Daily Telegraph*, 2 February 1942.
49 *SMH*, 2 February 1942; *Daily Telegraph*, 5 February 1942; Queensland Political Rights Committee, *Guerillas for Australia*, Brisbane, 1942, p.9.
50 See Keith Amos, *The New Guard Movement 1931–1935*, Melbourne, 1976.
51 *Bulletin*, 4 February 1942; Commonwealth of Australia, *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, no. 17, p.23.

52 Long, Diary, book 9, entry for 6 September 1942, p.26, Australian War Memorial Library; *The Babbler*, August 1942. The song was set to the tune 'Marching through Georgia'.
53 *SMH*, 26 February 1942.
54 *SMH*, 24 February 1942; Advisory War Council, minute 768 2(c), CRS A2684, Australian Archives, Canberra.
55 *SMH*, 5 February 1942.
56 'Scorched earth strategy and purposes', typescript in Hasluck papers, Australian War Memorial Library.
57 *SMH*, 24 February 1942; Archives Office of New South Wales, Premier's Department, Special Bundle, Scorched earth operational plan, file 9/2510.
58 Calder, *The People's War Britain 1939–45*, pp.35–50.
59 *Age*, 1 and 5 January 1942.
60 *Daily Examiner* (Grafton), 31 January 1942; *Riverine Grazier*, 17 March 1942 (Griffith); 20 February 1942 (Hay); *Daily Telegraph*, 28 January 1942 (Heffron).
61 *Armidalian*, July 1942; *Church Standard*, (Sydney), 23 January 1942.
62 *Daily Telegraph*, 11 February 1942 (Scott) and 21 February 1942 (Pioneer Battalion); *SMH*, 6 February 1942 (4,000 evacuees); *Daily Telegraph*, 18 February 1942 (school numbers).
63 *Home Security Bulletin*, January 1942; Commonwealth of Australia, *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, no. 17, p.5.
64 *SMH*, 14 March 1942.
65 A. P. Elkin to John Curtin, 17 December 1942, copy of letter in Hasluck papers, AWM.
66 *Bulletin*, 18 March 1942.
67 A. P. Elkin to John Curtin, 5 March 1942, copy of letter in Hasluck papers, AWM; *Daily Telegraph*, 26 February 1942.
68 Richard Hall, *The Real John Kerr his Brilliant Career*, Sydney, 1978, p.37.
69 Prime minister's committee on national morale, copy of papers contained in Hasluck papers, Australian War Memorial Library, box 8/2/6.

Chapter Five: THE REAL WAR

1 *Woman*, 19 January 1942.
2 *Age*, 9 June 1942.
3 Long, *The Six Years War*, p.193.
4 *SMH*, 9 June 1942.
5 George Odgers, *Air War against Japan 1943–1945*, Canberra, 1957, p.148.
6 Robertson, *Australia at War 1939–1945*, pp.96–7.
7 Curtin, like Menzies, still lacks the solid, fully detailed biography such as those devoted to Hughes or Chifley. For the best account of his life see Lloyd Ross, *John Curtin: A Biography*, Melbourne, 1977.
8 For full treatment of the conscription debate see Hasluck, *The Government and the People 1942–1945*, pp.326–53.
9 Calwell's official, and generally sympathetic biographer, concedes that Calwell was in error in opposing conscription. See Colm Kiernan, *Calwell: A Personal and Political Biography*, Melbourne, 1978, pp.72–3.
10 David Marr, *Barwick*, Sydney, 1980, pp.32–51; L. F. Crisp, *Ben Chifley: A Biography*, Melbourne, 1963. pp.156–7.
11 Hasluck, *Government and the People 1942–1945*, p.320.
12 *SMH*, 15 January 1942 (warden); *SMH*, 3 July 1943 (brown-out).
13 *Age*, 10 October 1944. Melbourne's first weather forecast since 1941 probably aroused no great enthusiasm: 'a cool change late in the morning or early afternoon followed by occasional light showers'.
14 'The Jap As He Really Is', Talk no. 2 'How the Japs were prepared for war' broadcast from 2FC, Sydney, through all ABC transmitters, 25 March 1942, CA 251, Australian Broadcasting Commission, Head Office, Talk Scripts General 1937–50, file SP 300/1 box 7, Australian Archives, Sydney.
15 *SMH*, 1 May 1944 (Neutral Bay) and 10 April 1944 (Wollstonecraft).
16 Hasluck, *Government and the People 1942–1945*, pp.711–17.
17 Cameron Hazlehurst, *Menzies Observed*, Sydney, 1979, p.270.
18 Hasluck, *Government and the People 1942–1945*, pp.246–7.
19 *SMH*, 23 July 1943 (Fadden's policy), 30 July 1943 and 11 August 1943 (advertisements).
20 Long, Diary, book 2, 30 July 1943, p.56, Australian War Memorial Library. Long was at Heberton camp.
21 Hasluck, *Government and the People 1942–1945*, p.368.

Chapter Six: JOHN CURTIN'S RECIPE

1 *Age*, 12 January 1944 (American supplies); Commonwealth of Australia, *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, no. 15, pp.22–4.
2 Commonwealth of Australia, *Digest of*

Decisions and Announcements, no. 25, p.14 (Curtin); Paul Addison, *The Road to 1945: British Politics and the Second World War*, London, 1975, pp.18–19.

3 Commonwealth of Australia, *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, no. 24, p.11.

4 Dedman announced clothes rationing to parliament on 8 May 1942: Commonwealth of Australia, *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 170, pp.1063–4; Curtin amplified Dedman's four minute speech in a national broadcast on the same day: Commonwealth of Australia, *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, no. 28, pp.17–20.

5 Departmental History of Rationing of Clothing and Food, bound typescript, Australian War Memorial Library, pp.3–11 (departmental unpreparedness); Commonwealth of Australia, *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, no. 28, p.19 (Curtin).

6 *Age*, 12 May 1942.

7 *Age*, 12 May 1942.

8 Robertson, *Australia at War 1939–1945*, pp.132, 133.

9 *Australian Women's Weekly*, 23 May 1942; *SMH*, 13 May 1942.

10 *SMH*, 12 May 1942.

11 'Departmental history ...', pp.37, 38.

12 'Departmental history ...', p.37.

13 *Australian Women's Weekly*, 30 May 1942.

14 'Departmental history ...', p.36.

15 *Age*, 16 June 1942.

16 'Departmental history ...', p.49 (manchester); *SMH*, 18 June 1942 (Constant Knitter) and 24 June 1942 (solution).

17 'Departmental history ...', pp.57–8 (dresses); John Barrett, '*Living* in Australia, 1939–1945', *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 2, November 1977, p.117; 'Departmental history ...', p.41 (special *issue* to workers).

18 *SMH*, 26 August 1942.

19 *SMH*, 27 July 1942 (*victory* suit) and 12 August 1942 (tailors).

20 *SMH*, 27 July 1942 (fashions permitted); Hasluck, *Government and the People 1942–1945*, p.278 (regulations); *The Torchbearer*, May 1943 (school uniforms); *SMH*, 8 August 1942 (swimming costumes).

21 *SMH*, 8 May 1943; 'Departmental history ...', p.28.'

22 *Age*, 9 July 1943.

23 *SMH*, 8 May 1943.

24 'Departmental history ...', p.85 (tea ration); pp.86–7 (special categories); p.93 (official entertainments); p.102 (statistics).

25 'Departmental history ...', pp.110 and 119.

26 *Woman*, 8 June 1942.

27 'Departmental history ...', pp.128 and 142. Mrs L. Moore, Canberra, lent me her recipe books which she compiled from newspaper cuttings during the war which confirm how frequently butter was used.

28 'Departmental history ...', p.150.

29 'Departmental history ...', pp.197–8; *Daily Telegraph*, 19 January 1944 (dogs).

30 'Food consumption levels in Australia and the United Kingdom', advisory war council, agendum no. 794, CRS A2700 vol. 14, Australian Archives, Canberra.

31 This list was compiled from various entries in Gavin Long's diaries by Paul Hasluck and is in the Hasluck papers, Australian War Memorial Library, box 4/2/1.

32 Advisory war council, agendum no. 301, CRS A2700, Australian Archives, Canberra (Keane); *Age*, 1 March 1943.

33 Anecdotes supplied by Rev. E. Campion, Sydney.

34 *Bulletin*, 14 April 1943; *SMH*, 12 August 1942.

35 *Age*, 30 July 1942 and 21 July 1942.

36 *Age*, 22 October 1942, 27 November 1942 and 19 December 1942.

37 *SMH*, 20 October 1943 (fuel saving hints); 21 October 1943 (compulsory reduction); 25 October 1943 (complaints); 11 December 1943 (advertisement).

38 Commonwealth of Australia, *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, no. 24, p.10 (cosmetics); *SMH*, 5 May 1942 (deliveries); *Age*, 25 August 1942 (parcels).

39 War cabinet agendum no. 315, CRS A2700, Australian Archives, Canberra.

40 Copies of files in Hasluck papers, Australian War Memorial Library, box 2, file 2/1/6.

41 Commonwealth of Australia, *Digest of Decisions and Announcements*, no. 39, pp.17–22.

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