

In the Beginning . . .

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In the Beginning . . .

In the March 1978 issue I indicated that Sir Norman Cowper would this year be contributing to the AQ his recollections of the early days of the AIPS. Since then I have been privileged to read in manuscript portions of Sir Norman's memoirs covering the foundation of the Institute and its progress under the first two Chairmen — Kim Mackay and Norman Cowper himself. It is the unanimous feeling of the AIPS Board that it would be unfair to try to compress Sir Norman's writings into the small compass required for an AQ article. Instead, we have asked Sir Norman to continue his story to the early years of World War II and we shall then add the recollections of G.S. Reichenbach and A.G. Lowndes in an attempt to record the history of the first 30 years. The AIPS is fortunate to have three of its first five chairmen and a fair sprinkling of its early membership still available to contribute to such a history, which will be of considerable interest and value to research students of political science. Meantime, to mark the completion of the AQ's fiftieth year of publication, here is a brief preliminary note on the establishment of the Institute.*

The moving spirit and founder of the AIPS was a young Sydney solicitor, R.W.G. Mackay, known as "Kim". Son of a master mariner in the islands trade who later became governor of Bathurst Gaol, Kim Mackay had been deeply involved in public affairs from his student days at Sydney University. He led for the University Union in the 1924 debates against the visiting Oxford Union team, founded the Public Questions Society at the University, lectured for the WEA, wrote for the AQ, and in 1929 published his first book on some aspects of State education. The catalyst which led to the foundation of the AIPS was almost certainly the election held at the end of 1931, when the young Norman Cowper, also a solicitor, had the temerity to stand for North Sydney against the redoubtable and irascible William Morris Hughes. Cowper was supported by a group of young men, mainly professional,

** For one view of the AIPS role in the 1930s see Tim Rowse: Australian Liberalism and National Character (Kibble Books, 1978), especially Ch. 4.*

who carried on lively open-air debates at Crows Nest with crowds sometimes numbered in thousands. The depth of feeling about the Great Depression, the widespread ignorance of its causes, and the inability of the political establishment to blueprint a recovery were forcibly brought home to this small band of brothers. As one of them wrote:

Much of the political discussion in Australia is so clouded by ill-temper, so cluttered by misrepresentation, so obscured by sheer ignorance that people may be excused for concluding that they are spectators and auditors not of "the grand dialectic of public debate" but of a common dog-fight.

So, at the age of thirty, Kim Mackay decided to establish, with the core group of Cowper's supporters, an organization to help educate the community towards a better understanding of and a more rational approach to public questions, and the Australian Institute of Political Science was formally incorporated on 12 September 1932.

The signatories to the Memorandum of Association were Mackay, Cowper, G.S. Reichenbach, G.C. Remington (all solicitors), J.D. Fell, R.E. Lucowici (both accountants), and W.F.L. Owen (barrister). In Cowper's words, the "Memorandum is not a masterpiece of the draftsman's art. When I look at it now it horrifies me... Nevertheless, by ruthless pruning the following statement of the objects of the Institute may be derived..."

To promote the study of political, social, economic and educational matters and for that purpose to form study groups and classes, hold public lectures and conferences, disseminate information, publish magazines and books, and conduct research."

On 19 September, one week after incorporation, the first Board meeting of the original nine directors named in the Articles was held with Kim Mackay as chairman. Cowper, was a director, as was another signatory to the Memorandum, J.D. Fell. John Dyneley Fell was a son of David Fell, MLC for Hunters Hill in the early 1900s, who enlisted as a boy of seventeen following his brother's death on the Somme in 1916. After service as an artillery officer in Palestine he graduated from Jesus College, Cambridge, and became a partner in his father's accountancy practice in Sydney. In 1932 he was President of the Constitutional Association of NSW and was also prominent in the Institute of Chartered Accountants and the Chamber of Commerce as well as being a founder-member of Legacy.

There were another six directors. Harold Harris was then senior

Lecturer in History and Economics at the Teachers' College of Sydney University and was to become Deputy Director of Manpower in World War II. He was Director of Youth Welfare in NSW for many years and remained on the AIPS board until the 1950s. F.A. Bland was Lecturer in Public Administration at the University of Sydney and was soon to be appointed to the first Australian chair in that subject. Armand Bland was elected to the House of Representatives in 1951 and, as Chairman, made the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee a forceful and formidable body. His son, Sir Henry Bland, was also to become a good friend of the AIPS in later years. R.C. Mills was perhaps the most distinguished director as Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Economics at Sydney University. He was already a leading educator and economist and played a prime role in the establishment of the Australian National University. Garnet Vere Portus was a colleague of Mills, being Lecturer in Economic History and since 1918 Director of Tutorial Classes. He was then nearly fifty and it was largely from Portus that Kim Mackay had drawn his ideas and aspirations. A Rhodes Scholar and Rugby International, he had been ordained in the Anglican Church and served as a parson in NSW until a crisis of faith diverted him into adult education. Portus was a director of the AIPS only for eighteen months, being appointed Professor of History and Political Science in the University of Adelaide in 1934, but he continued a deep involvement in Institute affairs with papers at Summer Schools and contributions to the AQ. He was an inspiration to the founders and his influence on the AIPS and, indeed, on Australian political education merits the highest praise.

Of David Campbell I wrote at some length in my March 1978 article on the 50th year of the AQ. Then a woolbuyer, he was the main editorial assistant on the Australian Quarterly and was later to become Editor when the Institute took it over from H.S. Nicholas in 1935, a post which he retained until 1959.

The remaining director was Walter George Keith Duncan who had been a pillar of strength in Mackay's efforts to found the Institute. W.G.K. Duncan, or "Dunc", was assistant director of Tutorial Classes at Sydney University, where he was soon to take over the posts held by Portus when the latter moved to Adelaide (much later, in 1951, Dunc repeated the process in Adelaide, succeeding Portus as Professor of History and Political Science). Dunc had graduated from Sydney and gained his Ph.D. after four years at the London School of Economics before spending two years as a Commonwealth Fellow in USA, mainly

at the Universities of Chicago and California. His years at LSE were during its inter-war heyday when debate centred on the conflicting theories of Beveridge and Lionel Robbins and Dunc there fell under the abiding influence of Harold Laski.

These nine directors set a cracking pace at their first meeting. They appointed as Secretary David McLelland, a Scot who had arrived in Australia in 1912. He was secretary of the Blacksmiths Union until in 1930 he became MLA for Drummoyne in the Lang government but lost his seat in the 1932 election following Lang's dismissal by Governor Game. His son Charles later became Chief Judge in Equity of the NSW Supreme Court until he retired in 1972. David was, in Cowper's words, "an admirable secretary: prompt, meticulous and resourceful . . . he stopped us going off the rails". He held the post for more than a decade, until his resignation in 1943.

The directors made another key appointment — that of Duncan to the post of Director of Studies. He was to commence at once a class of about twenty "to study political and economic science". Within six months he was to prepare a prospectus of study in political theory, philosophy and institutions and in Australian economic problems, and was also empowered to compile a roster of lecturers on these topics who would be available to interested organizations. A monthly bulletin was also envisaged together with an information and research department. Dunc was indefatigable: the first class was established before the end of 1932 and ran for a year, attended by most of the early AIPS members. In 1933 he issued the "Syllabus of Lectures covering twenty-five courses of five lectures each" which almost resembled a full undergraduate course in politics and economics, and listed eighteen lecturers available to community groups, political parties, church guilds and others. He produced a few issues of a bulletin but lack of funds inhibited this development until the AIPS took over the AQ in 1935. Duncan's study groups continued, except for the war years, until he left for Adelaide in 1951.

The first Board meeting also appointed an Executive Committee which consisted of Chairman Mackay, Secretary McLelland, Portus, Duncan and Cowper. The Committee was to meet weekly. It was immediately charged to consider the feasibility of a Summer School at the end of January 1933 — only four months away.

Apart from the directors there were three members (by virtue of their having subscribed to the Memorandum) who were themselves shortly to be appointed to the Board. The barrister Owen was 34 and in his teens had served in the 1st AIF. He gave great service to the AIPS

until he was appointed to the NSW Supreme Court in 1936. He was later to become a Privy Councillor and widely known as Chairman of the Royal Commission on Espionage 1954-55 (the Petrov case). Gabriel Reichenbach, known as Rikey, was a lawyer friend and later partner of Cowper deeply involved in public affairs. He gave long and notable service to the Institute and succeeded A.E. Symons as Chairman in 1947. Geoff Remington was also a solicitor, then in partnership with Rikey. Inspired by his membership of Duncan's first class, he subsequently went on to remarkable achievements. He was to be responsible for the success of the Free Library Movement of which he was executive chairman and he became a Trustee of the Public Library of NSW. Though himself unconnected with government, he persuaded leading public servants to form an Australian branch of the (English) Institute of Public Administration and became chairman of its NSW regional group. He was a founder and Chairman of the Executive of the Australian Administrative Staff College and from 1942 he was Assistant Director of Personnel for the Allied Works Council. He was also Chairman of Rolls Royce of Australia and was made a CMG in 1960.

New members were also elected at the first Directors' meeting and of these several played a prominent part in AIPS affairs. Edward Masey, an accountant, was an AQ contributor and a lecturer for the Institute. He became a director in 1937 and so remained until 1975. He still works hard in assisting the Board and holds the record for attendance at our Summer Schools. W.J.V. Windeyer, a young barrister, was to have a distinguished military career. Better known as Major-General the Rt. Hon. Sir Victor Windeyer, he became a Privy Councillor and a Justice of the High Court. He contributed papers at Summer Schools and articles to the AQ, as did another of the newly-elected members, Ian Clunies-Ross, a veterinary scientist later to be knighted and to become Chairman of CSIRO. A.C. Gain was a public-spirited solicitor whose brilliant career was to be cut short in the 1938 Kyeema air disaster. W.E.R. Francis was a solicitor who lectured for the Institute and contributed to the AQ; he was to become President of the Law Council of Australia but continued his staunch support of the AIPS at Summer Schools until a few years ago. V.J. Flynn was also a solicitor, and a former Rhodes Scholar; he, too, lectured for the Institute and was a key enthusiast in the early years.

Thus the first Directors' meeting had discharged a heavy workload, achieved much, and pointed the way ahead. One month later, their second meeting approved plans for the first Summer School to be held

in January 1933 at the Hotel Ranelagh at Robertson in the southern highlands of NSW. So by the end of 1932 the main activities to be subsequently undertaken by the Institute had been initiated (though the taking-over of the AQ was to replace the proposed bulletin) and Mackay had much cause for self-congratulation, even though he still faced the daunting task of wheedling from his commercial friends the cash needed to fund AIPS activities.

In the next few months, especially after the first Summer School when the rising Bob Menzies was at his brilliant best, membership increased rapidly and many well-known names appeared in the roll. Among others were John Metcalfe, later Public Librarian of NSW; J.A. McCallum, later Senator; A.S. Watt, now Sir Alan, a most distinguished diplomat; E.H. Burgmann, later Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn; A.E. Symons, chairman of the AIPS from 1939 to 1947; John F. Mant, still a power in the Institute; Stuart McPhee, later to be a Director; David Drummond, later NSW Minister for Education; Rev. R.S. Lee from Morpeth; Colin Badger and K.C. Wilson (later Senator) from Adelaide; H.D. Black, now Sir Hermann, Chancellor of the University of Sydney; R.F. Holder and W.S. Sheldon, who both assisted Campbell on the AQ; W. McMahan Ball, P.D. Phillips and F.R.E. Mauldon, who pioneered Institute affairs in Victoria; and Lloyd Ross who, as a puckish, kindly, witty revolutionary, was to star at the second Summer School in Canberra. At that 1934 School Mackay resigned prior to his move to England, where he had already established contacts with Laski, R.H. Tawney, G.D.H. Cole and Stafford Cripps. He stood as a Labour candidate for Frome in 1935 and was defeated (contrary to my March 1978 article) but later became MP for North-West Hull and subsequently for Reading North. He died in 1960, when Paul-Henri Spaak, the great Belgian statesman, wrote: "If Great Britain ... joins with Europe ... on that day men should have a thought of gratitude for R.W.G. Mackay, the tenacious fighter, the forerunner, heard at last and victorious". Mackay's vision of a United Europe has become reality and that is part of his monument. Another, though smaller, part is his creation of the AIPS which he set on the road it has followed for nearly half a century. There are many still among us who treasure his memory and think of him with gratitude as a founder of a truly liberal Institute which has contributed much to the intellectual life of Australia.

JOHN WILKES
Director
AIPS