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**The Allan Martin Lecture
2010**

John Maynard

A Ride Through Time

The Allan Martin Lecture
2010

School of History
Research School of Social Sciences
College of Arts and Social Sciences
The Australian National University

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John Maynard

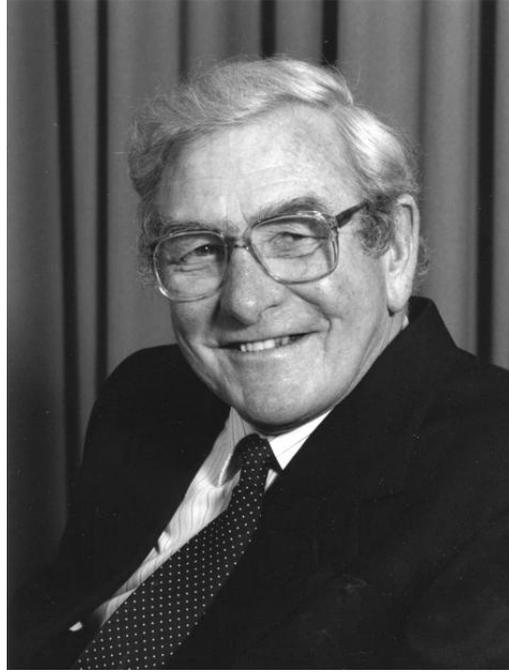
A Ride Through Time

School of History, Research School of Social Sciences
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Allan William Martin 1993

Photography by The Australian National University

The Allan Martin Lecture

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The Inaugural Allan Martin Lecture was delivered by Dr Inga Clendinnen in the Coombs Lecture Theatre, The Australian National University on 4 May 2004. It was the first of an annual series to honour the late A.W. Martin (1926-2002). The lecture series will bring a distinguished scholar whose work is relevant to Allan's intellectual, institutional and social interests to the History Program, Research School of Social Sciences, The Australian National University for at least a week to give a public lecture and one or two seminars of a more specialized kind, and to be available to staff, graduate students and other scholars in the Canberra area to discuss current intellectual developments. The History Program might, from time to time, combine the Annual Lecture with a small conference to which people from beyond Canberra might be invited. The Lecture will take place in April or May each year.

The Lecturer will be selected by a committee comprising the Head of the History Program, Research School of Social Sciences, a postgraduate student of the History program, and a former staff member or student. In choosing the Annual Lecturer, the committee will attempt to balance national and international scholars and scholars at different stages of their careers.

The Lecture will be an occasion for a reunion of current and former staff, students, and visitors of the History Program.

The Lecture will be associated with a brief summary of the scope of Allan's historical interests and activities to illuminate his professional activity over a period of fifty years.

Allan William Martin 1926-2002

Allan Martin was an intellectual, institutional and social pioneer whose career as a historian spanned the second half of the twentieth century. When most Australians went to England for their postdoctoral work, he chose the fledgling Australian National University, where he was the first doctoral student in History in the Research School of Social Sciences, graduating in 1955. When few historians wrote about Australia, his thesis focused on nineteenth-century New South Wales politics; and he insisted on the importance of cross-disciplinary work when this was unfashionable. His first major book, *Parliament Factions and Parties: The First Thirty Years of Responsible Government in New South Wales* (1966), was written with his longtime friend and collaborator, the political scientist Peter Loveday; and he edited *The Emergence of the Australian Party System* (1977) with Loveday and political scientist Robert Parker.

After serving his apprenticeship at the University of New South Wales, the University of Melbourne and the University of Adelaide, Allan Martin accepted the Foundation Chair in History at La Trobe University in 1966, at the same time as his wife Jean Martin became Foundation Chair in Sociology. The department he established at La Trobe was distinguished by its global reach, establishing strong programs in North and South American History as well as the more usual British and Australian fields. He and Jean Martin again moved together when he returned to the Research School of Social Sciences as a Senior Fellow in 1973 and Jean took up a position as Professor of Sociology. After Jean's death in 1979, Allan married Beryl Rawson, a distinguished Professor of Classics, providing once again a model of intellectual partnership to younger scholars.

Allan Martin became fascinated by the individuals who created and changed the political system, and his work increasingly became biographical. Beginning with the article, 'William McMillan: A Merchant in Politics' (1955), Allan subsequently wrote about two major lives of Australian politicians, *Henry Parkes: A Biography* (1980) and *Robert Menzies: A Life*, 2 vols (1993, 1999). He provided biographical material for the use of the profession in *Members of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales* (1959) and a number of entries in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and *Dictionary of National Biography*, and his *Letters from Menie: Sir Henry Parkes and His Daughter* (1983) made those valuable social documents more widely available. He came as close as he ever would to autobiography in his article on 'The Country' in *Australians from 1939* (1987).

Allan Martin was an innovative teacher whose most influential work was often in graduate and honours seminars. His only article on teaching, in *Teaching History*, is still much sought after. He reflected on his experience at La Trobe in an edited volume on *Universities Facing the Future* (1972) and contributed a chapter on Menzies and the Murray Committee to *Ideas for Histories of Universities in Australia* (1990), edited by F.B. Smith and P. Crichton.

A Ride Through Time

I would just like to begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians and their ancestral land within which I am once again most honoured to be a visitor. I also take this opportunity to thank and acknowledge the history department here at ANU for this great honour to be the 2010 Allan Martin lecturer, in particular Ann McGrath, Angela Woollacott and Karen Smith. I also thank Mandy Thomas for the kind introduction.

I want to state up front that the title of the talk, 'A Ride Through Time' does not reflect any long held ambitions to follow in my father's footsteps as a jockey. As he stated when I was about thirteen 'Son, if you want a career as a jockey, you best go to India and ride elephants'.

To begin, I think it important to reflect upon the man who is celebrated through this lecture, Allan Martin. Allan was an outstanding and much respected scholar whose legacy will continue to inspire current and future generations of historians. Unquestionably ahead of his time, he was prepared to go against the mainstream current. When the majority of Australian scholars went to Britain to conduct their postgraduate studies, he stayed home and when qualified, was adamant that it was Australian history that would deservedly warrant his attention, both in teaching and research. Allan noted 'most of the existing body of serious writing about Australian history has been done since 1945'.¹ In 1993 he perceptively commented in his book on the Menzies era that 'none of the areas of Australian history which today preoccupy many scholars – Aboriginal, environmental or women's are formally dealt with in this book because ... (at the time) they just weren't on the agenda'.² Allan's

1 Curthoys, Rowse & Martin, 1987:448

2 Martin, 1996:xii

work on Australian politics and politicians is noted as being rigorously researched, non-partisan in outlook and with a deep awareness of the social sciences.

Allan was a man interested in intellectual, articulate and visionary politicians from all sectors. As such I think he would be intrigued by the inspiring early Aboriginal activists (had he known of them) who were eloquent and articulate men and women decades ahead of their time. The sad reality though is that these Aboriginal heroes were quickly forgotten and erased from both memory and the historical page. Sadly this neglect continues and highlights the critical role Indigenous historians have to play. Only weeks ago we had the sad loss of the 'Fox' Uncle 'Chicka' Dixon. I attended his State funeral in Sydney. What shocked me that week was the numbers of young Aboriginal people who asked 'who was he'?

Of course the 'Fox' was one who acquired his fire and passion from lived experiences as an Aboriginal man at a grassroots community level; and also from his time on the Sydney docks as a wharf labourer and passionate member of the trade union movement. It was on the volatile Sydney wharf where he gained firsthand knowledge of political agitation, mobilization and strategy. He, unknowingly at the time, was following the lead of much earlier Aboriginal activists of the 1920s, including my grandfather Fred Maynard, whose political ideology was also forged on the docks in Sydney. During my grandfather's period of the 1920s the Sydney waterfront was no place for the faint hearted. It was described thus:

A ghastly, frightening (group) of men at times fighting and tearing each others clothes off in sweating jungle-like scuffles, for a starting docket to earn twenty three shillings for a day's work on the wharves. That was the bull system. Hundred's of men, lines of fear, pain and anguish in their tired faces, walking despondently and dispiritedly up the street.³

3 Williams, 1975:31

This horror workplace was known as ‘the hungry mile’. The men were savagely exploited ‘under the whip of hunger; a hundred tons of lead an hour, 1800 to 2000 bales of wool per gang per eight hours, eighty tons of bagged sugar to be unloaded per hour. There was an almost clan like mentality on the docks as men from Pymont, Sussex Street, Wolloomooloo and Millers Point fought to protect their turf and livelihood from outsiders. The wharf was a hotbed of political fighting with a long history of militancy. The Sydney waterside workers opposed Australia’s involvement in the First World War and opposed conscription, taking part in the conscription referendums and helping to defeat them’.⁴

In reading Allan Martin’s book on Robert Menzies, I was deeply interested that he saw the 1920s as a period marked by bitter social tensions and intermittent industrial conflict, which put the arbitration system under great strain and produced much litigation. Allan revealed that the conditions of the 1920s ‘encouraged unionists, especially seamen and wharf labourers, where work was arduous and circumstances harsh to step up their traditional strategies for better working conditions. For several years up to 1925 the seaman’s union carried out a kind of guerilla warfare over job control’.⁵ This was the arena within which my grandfather forged his steely will.

I now wish to take a slight detour and explore my journey to academia. I have always enjoyed ANU, and the history department has been a great supporter of my career. In 1996 I was the W.E.H. Stanner Fellow with the history department and spent six months in Canberra. Many close friendships were formed during that time period. When I came to ANU in 1996 I had only just graduated with a Diploma from the University of Newcastle and with only two years as a student under my belt, was

4 Ibid.

5 Martin, 1996:46-47

just setting out on my academic journey. I found the University of Newcastle environment so stimulating and supportive as opposed to my school years. I probably hold the world's record for the youngest ever incident of a school student whopping school. My mother took me to Adamstown infants and kindergarten in 1959 aged just five. I nearly ripped my mother's dress off when handed over to this woman deputy principal with dark glasses and hair done up in a bun on top. Your typical imagined tyrannical school-mistress! This woman proceeded to drag me off hollering for all I was worth down this timber floored hallway and depositing me into this classroom full of other little kids – all in open mouthed astonishment with my hollering arrival. At play lunch they let you out and I headed straight out the gate. Obviously felt I had learnt enough and headed down to the football oval at the end of the street where I passed the time by making little clay castles and soldiers. I was smart enough to realize that it would be best not to head straight home. After what appeared to be a considerable amount of time, I saw kids walking home and assumed school was over and it was now safe to head home. When I knocked on the door and my mother opened it, I could tell from her expression that she was somewhat surprised to see me. She said 'what are you doing here?' I was quick off the mark and replied 'I got an early mark?' My mother said 'Not this early'. Unfortunately for me the kids I had seen walking home were just going home for lunch so I was transported back, and this set in motion my low tolerance of school that would continue all of my school years. I have often heard people say school was the best years of your life. It wasn't with me. I had little support or encouragement from the school system. Teachers labeled me as an underachieving daydreamer, who spent most of his time looking out the window. I was caned a lot! Needless to say there was nothing of Aboriginal history or culture in the school curriculum during the early 1960s.

As such, I basically switched off from school and did not try at all. I have some funny incidents that do come back of my school years. I used to start studying for exams the night before. I remember sitting for a maths exam in high school and coming home and my mother enquiring ‘Well how’d it go?’ My response was, ‘easy as falling off a log’. When the results came out I scored 25/100; my mother said, ‘If you ever come home and say an exam is hard, we are going to be in serious trouble’. On the day I turned fifteen and was able to leave I headed straight out the gate and spent the next twenty-five years in a variety of jobs, none even remotely connected with academia. I was able to procure only one reference from high school. The history master at the school gave me a glowing reference and also said to me: ‘Son you have been the greatest disappointment I have ever encountered in my years as a teacher. You have finished up in the lowest classes possible in this school yet you have recorded the highest history marks for the three years you have been here’. In fact I never scored below 97% in history in my three years at the school. The big saviour for me was my insatiable appetite from a very young age to read. I loved to read history and consumed stories of the past, so in some sense I educated myself through my wide reading, and I continued to read after I left school and through years in a variety of jobs. I had unknowingly followed Mark Twain’s maxim ‘I have never let my schooling interfere with my education’.

I initially thought of calling this address ‘Black to the Future’. Time travel has been something that has fascinated me from an early age. H.G. Wells with the *Time Machine*, television series like *Dr Who* and the Tardus, the *Time Tunnel* down to the Steven Spielberg blockbuster *Back to the Future* with Marty McFly in Doc Emmett Brown’s Delorien. I have not as yet found a scientific means to construct my own time machine to take me back to the past. But I have always possessed that capacity

through books and history. Books have provided the quantum shift that has transported me through time and space. As earlier revealed, I was labeled at school a daydreamer but they did not recognize that I was a constant and addicted time traveler! Books would take me back to Thermopylae with Leonidas or at the Alamo with Davy Crockett. The question was always there however. Where were the blackfellas in the Australian historical story? The thought of going back in time to view history for me was never about going back as a detached observer but being part of it, feeling, seeing and sensing the time period.

Aboriginal people in a traditional sense utilised the Dreaming as a time machine. It was the channel within which Aboriginal people have connected past, present and future in a constantly moving fluid void. The Dreaming through spiritual ritual and ceremony made this time shift possible. A.P. Elkin observed that historical rites, initiation rites, and ‘increase rites, intended to maintain and renew the life of natural species, appeared in some sense to recapitulate some features or aspects of the founding drama’.⁶ Every aspect of life held as much relevance in the now as in the past. Stanner, ever the philosophical poet, described the Dreaming as:

one may thus say that, after a fashion – a cryptic, symbolic, and poetic fashion - the tales are ‘a philosophy’ in the garb of an oral literature. The European has a philosophic literature, which expresses a largely deductive understanding of reality, truth, goodness, and beauty. The black-fellow has a mythology, a ritual, and an art, which expresses an intuitive, and poetic understanding of the same ultimates. In following out the Dreaming, the black-fellow ‘lives’ this philosophy ... the black-fellow holds his philosophy in mythology attained as the social product of an indefinitely ancient past, and proceeds to live it out in life, in part through a ritual and an expressive art, and in part through non-sacred social customs.⁷

I believe that the Dreaming is a history portal to another historical dimension.

This quantum shift through time and space I call Yuraki. The word Yuraki is an

6 Charlesworth, 1986:147

7 Stanner, 1979:29-30

Awabakal word recorded by Reverend Lancelot Threlkeld between the years 1824-1842 in and around Newcastle.⁸ Yuraki translates as long since, formerly, past, long ago, or what we know as history. This concept of history fusion has held me spellbound since a young age. Not surprisingly it was history that brought me to academia.

My journey to the University was not a path that I had chosen by design or intent. I came to Wollotuka the Aboriginal Education Centre at the University of Newcastle in 1994 not to enroll, but just to gain some information on areas and archives I might explore in conducting a family history project. I had no greater vision at the time other than writing it up in an exercise book, sticking in pictures and newspaper files and presenting it to my father, uncles, aunts, cousins and extended family members. It was going to be about my grandfather Fred Maynard. But I was kidnapped into a Diploma course by the then Wollotuka Director, Murri woman Tracey Bunda. I will forever owe Tracey a debt of gratitude. I completed a Diploma, BA and then PhD all in seven years flat. Throughout all of that study I continued to research my grandfather and his organization the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association (AAPA). This continued research opened up Aboriginal political history as a panorama with so many missing pieces to be filled. Those years were of high importance especially having the opportunity of coming into contact with so many other families that were tied to this particular critical era in Aboriginal history. I was able to provide many with pieces to their own family jigsaw puzzle as they also helped me put the story of the AAPA back together. What was crystal clear was the importance not of individuals but the collective.

My published work on the rise of the early Aboriginal movement in the first

8 Threlkeld, 1892:45

decades of the 20th century is now well known. Recently I have unearthed some exciting new material on the AAPA, including confirmation that there were thirteen active branches of the organization operational between 1924 and 1928, with an active membership in excess of 600. I now know the names of many of the high-ranking office bearers of these branches. Whilst I have in the past concentrated on my grandfather Fred Maynard as President of this organisation and non-Indigenous supporters like Elizabeth McKenzie Hatton and John J. Moloney, further study will concentrate upon little known, Aboriginal members of the organization: John Curtis, Jim Doyle, Fred Buchanan, Lambert Whaddy, John Donovan, Percy Harvey, Jane Duren, Cora Ridgeway, Tom Brown, Eugene Miranda, Albert Woodlands, Edward Walker, Harry Mundine, Tom Donnelly and Dan Daley, to name but a few. These are Aboriginal names that have by and large disappeared from history, but I intend to restore these people to a well-deserved place of prominence.

I will be utilizing prosopography as a methodological tool to this historical study. The prosopographical research method collects, collates and analyses cumulative data on individuals, to reveal ‘the different types of connection between them, and hence about how they operated within and upon the institutions – social, political, legal, economic, intellectual – of their time’.⁹ Prosopography is described as an approach that uses ‘biographical material to construct group portraits; this kind of research is regularly done in social history to discover, for example, the professional or ethnic or residential characteristics that define a group’,¹⁰ in this instance exploring the commonalities of groups of Aboriginal activists, for whom, as individuals, large quantities of knowledge are largely obscure. However, as a group, their experiences of land loss, children being taken, locality, cultural connection, being returned

9 Keats-Rohan, 2000:2

10 Howell, 2001:56

servicemen from WWI, and their political influences, can and will be analysed for similarities and connection. In essence their lives will be an intersection of personal narrative and community connection grounded in place and location.

I strongly believe in the importance of my work and its relevance today. Keith Windschuttle has recently released his Volume Three of *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History – The Stolen Generations 1881-2008*. He argues that the ‘Stolen Generation’ does not exist and that the NSW Aborigines Protection Board was in fact a genuinely benevolent body whose policy had the best interests of Aboriginal people at heart. He does refer to my grandfather Fred Maynard and the AAPA. I quote ‘in the 1920s some Aborigines did identify child removal as a political issue. The lobby group, the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association, complained about the removal and exploitation of Aboriginal girls. It protested that “girls of tender age are torn away from their parents ... and put to service in an environment as near to slavery as it is possible to find”.’ In 1927 the association’s president Fred Maynard, urged the New South Wales Premier to recognize that the ‘family life of Aboriginal people shall be held sacred and free from invasion and interference and that the children shall be left in control of their parents’.¹¹ Despite this admission there is not one further reference to either my grandfather or the AAPA in the entire book.

I pondered, what would my grandfather have made of someone like Keith Windschuttle, and how would he have responded to such a book. I seek to answer that with the following letter of rebuke across time from Fred Maynard. The letter I have constructed in answering some of Keith Windschuttle’s claims is from evidence from the time period and in many instances are words my grandfather actually wrote

11 Windschuttle, 2009:62-63

in letters and petitions. So this in essence is a trip across time and bear in mind the following:

One God, One Aim, One Destiny

OFFICERS:

Promoter :
 Mrs. MCKENZIE HATTON
 President (Gen.) :
 F. G. MAYNARD
 Vice-President (Gen.) :
 J. JOHNSTONE
 Secretary (Gen.) :
 S W RIDGEWAY
 Treasurer (Gen.)
 L. LACEY
 Organiser :
 J. MAJOR
 (Gen.) :

 Trustees (Gen.) :
 B. ROUNTREE
 J. MATTO



Phone F.4580

A. A. P. A. Offices :

*Addison's Hall,
 Crown Street,
 Sydney,
 N.S.W.*

Dear Sir:

I write this response to you across the time and space of some eighty years. I note with some dismay your recent publication *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History – Volume 3 – The Stolen Generations 1881-2008*, which I deem not befitting the title or accolade scholar.

You write with some authority in reference to Aboriginal political activists and child removal ‘that none of these complaints amounted to a public campaign that put child removal in the forefront of Aboriginal demands’¹² adding further that there ‘has been no popular tradition among Aboriginal people that employed either the term or the concept.’¹³ You assert, ‘If, as the Human Rights commission claimed its origins went back to 1910, why didn’t earlier Aboriginal activists make a fuss?’¹⁴ and conclude ‘that the charge of genocide in Australia is unwarranted and so is the term ‘Stolen Generations’.¹⁵

I might direct your attention to the fact that in 1912 Aboriginal people at Rollands Plains and Burnt Bridge sent petitions of complaint to the NSW Aborigines Protection Board stating their objection to the action ‘of taking away young children from the reserves’.¹⁶ Whilst I agree that the term ‘Stolen Generation’ is a modern term I wish to make it perfectly clear that generations of Aboriginal people were exposed to government policy that sought to destroy the Aboriginal community and family structure. As for the assertion that no Aboriginal group mounted a public campaign against child removal let me be perfectly frank. At a three day conference held in Kempsey in 1925 and

12 Windschuttle, 2009:63

13 Windschuttle, 2009:29

14 Windschuttle, 2009:34

15 Windschuttle, 2009:17

16 New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board, minutes, 13 and 20 June 1912, 4/7108-7127

attended by over 700 Aboriginal people, our members discussed ‘the care and control of their children’¹⁷ and that the ‘unsatisfactory (government) method of dealing with our children, were matters absorbing all our thoughts’.¹⁸ The resolution we passed at the 1925 Kempsey conference was quite explicit:

That the homes of aborigines be free from molestation from the officers of the Board.¹⁹

As you state we did send a petition to Premier Jack Lang in June 1927 stating that:

The family life of the aboriginal people shall be held sacred and free from invasion and that the children shall be left in the control of their parents.²⁰

But you neglect the fact that this petition was part of a major public campaign and was published throughout NSW in dozens of newspapers across the state. This issue was not a modern concoction or invention. As early as 1915 in parliamentary debates on amendments to the Aborigines Act that would ‘empower the Board to take the place of the parents’ the sitting member for Murrumbidgee Mr Paddy McGarry responded:

Does this not mean to steal the child away from its parents? We have overrun their country and taken away their domain. We now propose further acts of cruelty upon them by separating the children from the parents.²¹

Our organisations promoter Mrs Elizabeth McKenzie Hatton wrote to Prime Minister Billy Hughes in 1921:

One of the saddest sights ever witnessed was the sorrow of an old man wailing for the loss of his little daughter, who, with no gentle hand, was being dragged off by the officer of the law.²²

She vehemently stated the obvious in a newspaper article in 1925: day after day letters come from the people, pleading for their children, asking me to find the girls, long lost to them – in service somewhere in this state – taken away in some cases over seven years ago and no word or line from them.²³

In 1924 the press, when alerted by us ran a campaign to draw the public attention asking that should the Aborigines Protection Board policy be one which accelerated the doomed and disappearing race thesis:

The answer of course must be no. Yet if the system introduced a few years ago... is allowed to continue, there cannot, very few years hence, be

17 *Australasian Natives Association Journal*, 7 January 1926, also *The Voice of the North*, 11 January 1926.

18 *Macleay Chronicle*, 7 October 1925

19 *The Grafton Daily Examiner*, 29 December 1926

20 AAPA petition to Premier Jack Lang, 10 June 1927, Premiers department Correspondence File, A27/915; *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 2 July 1927; *The Northern Star*, 6 July 1927

21 NSW Parliamentary Debates, 1914-1915, 1953

22 McKenzie Hatton, E 1921, National Archives AI/15 21/6686

23 *Wingham Chronicle and Manning River Observer*, 10 June 1925; *The Voice of the North*, 12 June 1925

many Aboriginal children... This system, which aims to segregate the sexes, is making it difficult for many more to be born.²⁴

It is quite apparent that you are under the delusion that contemporary academics are to blame for labelling Australia as a country with a genocidal past. Dictionaries are explicit that the term Genocide first coined by Raphael Lemkin in 1944 means the 'deliberate extermination of a people'. But this was twenty years after the AAPA formed therefore we had no knowledge of the word, but what did we say at the time? In a street rally in 1925 I declared that the Board had outlived its usefulness, and that it needed to be updated with Aboriginal people in control ... The objectionable practice of segregating the sexes as soon as they reach a certain age should be abolished for it meant rapid **extinction**.²⁵ Two years later I revealed that the Board's apprenticeship scheme was a thinly disguised attempt to **exterminate** the race'.²⁶ Aboriginal mothers were being denied the opportunity and right of keeping the family circle intact and was a real grievance that should not have been tolerated. In 1927 I found 60 Aboriginal men, women and children starving on the North Coast. The conditions were most horrible. The public did not learn about it because there was a hush policy.²⁷ That your so-called civilised society by the arts of war destroyed our more ancient civilisation is freely admitted, and that by their vices and diseases our people have been decimated is also patent. But neither of these facts are evidence of superiority. Quite the contrary is the case.²⁸ Make no mistake they are trying to **exterminate** the Noble and Ancient race of sunny Australia. What a horrible conception of so-called legislation, Re any civilised laws, I say deliberately stinks of the Belgium Congo.²⁹

You further argue that the NSW Aborigines Protection Board 'wanted to put an end not to the Aboriginal race but to Aboriginal dependency.'³⁰ This is an absurd statement with little or no understanding of the time period or the impact of government policy. The Board was the driver that accelerated Aboriginal poverty and confined our people to tentacles of state welfare dependency that still persist to this very day. What you fail to understand is that during the period 1883 to 1910 Aboriginal people were self-sufficient! Our people had petitioned for and regained some 26,000 acres of land that was held sacred to them and of high economic benefit. During this time period some 81% of Aboriginal people in NSW, through a mixture of wage or ration labour and more traditional subsistence foraging had made a productive and fulfilling life for themselves.³¹ We had prospered on land that had been earlier recorded by the Board as worthless

24 *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 October 1924

25 *The Voice of the North*, 10 December 1925

26 *The Northern Star*, 3 August 1927

27 *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 November 1927

28 Maynard, F 1927a, NSW Premiers Department, correspondence files, A27/915

29 Maynard, F 1927b, 'Letter to Aboriginal Girl', NSW Premiers Department, correspondence files, A27/915

30 Windschuttle, 2009:32

31 Johnstone, 1970:76; Goodall, 1988:8-9; Curthoys, 1982:33

heavily timbered scrub. Many families in back breaking conditions had cleared the land, fenced it, planted crops and built homesteads with livestock in place. Our people were demanding the same full right and privileges of citizenship as were enjoyed by all other sections of the community. They were demonstrating openly that they had overriding rights over and above all others in their own land!

I want to make clear that these farms were not the heavily congested reserves that would become a part of the Aboriginal reality during the 1930s but independent farms with no more than one or two families. I was able to travel widely during these decades and witnessed our people prospering on their land, as no one knew the land or seasons better. Some are recorded as winning blue ribbons at the agricultural shows for the quality of their produce. Some were clearing in excess of a £150 per annum. This was a considerable amount of money at the time.³² In 1915 two of our people James Linwood and Ted Moran were cultivating their land 'and the industry displayed in both cases, was most credible to these men'.³³ Even more telling are the reports from the Board itself that the 'Guri residents were farming the land effectively'.³⁴ Another report states that the Aboriginal land was 'all cleared and cultivated, maize being chiefly grown. On the whole the Aborigines are in a flourishing condition, having horses and sulkies of their own. They have also provided themselves with boats'.³⁵ On the Clarence River Aboriginal families were 'doing well with their plots lately and several have already secured substantial returns. Two families who cultivated under an acre of land shipped 30 bags of beans in three shipments, this returned them a cheque of £103 for their labour, and only for unsettled weather conditions they would have been able to ship a further 100 bags from the island'.³⁶ This is not a story of a people in a welfare dependent state, this is a story of a people on the verge of prosperity and independence. My good friend during those years Jimmy Doyle of Nambucca Heads is one striking example of Aboriginal success. Jimmy owned several properties, had a successful boat building company and had invested in war-bonds to such an extent that his wealth ran into four figures.³⁷

Sadly the Board in its infinite wisdom decided to step in and rip away all of this prosperity, built up over four and five decades and use police force to drive the Aboriginal occupants off their hard worked for land with no recompense. These families instantly became destitute with no means left to sustain themselves. Some of this land was handed to soldiers returning from Gallipoli and the Western front with the Soldier resettlement scheme and more was leased and sold to white farmers envious of our highly productive and cleared land. Aboriginal soldiers who had also fought overseas were told on return the

32 The NSW Register of Aboriginal Reserves, 2/28349

33 *The Australian Aborigines Advocate*, 30 September 1915.

34 NSW Aborigines Protection Board Minutes, 11 September 1918, 4/7108-7127

35 NSW Aborigines Protection Board Report, 1899:5

36 NSW *Coffs Harbour and Dorrigo Advocate*, 26 May 1926

37 *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 March 1922

soldier resettlement scheme did not apply to them. These damnable methods impacting upon Aboriginal land and children were the very catalyst that ignited our inflamed political response during the 1920s. You draw attention to the fact that the Board did have a policy of returning Aboriginal kids to their families and give some examples in the years 1937 and 1928. There are others during 1924 but what these dates highlight are the times when the alerted media put the spotlight on Board activities. At such times it was obvious that the Board instigated a concerted effort to convince the public everything was above board and that Aboriginal kids were being encouraged to go home. Evidence abounds that these were short-term Board actions and things quickly reverted once the public and media gaze was averted.

I will conclude this correspondence with a short reply to your suggestion that: 'The last thing anyone should do is take the word of the current generation of historians as definitive about (Inspector Robert) Donaldson's character'.³⁸ I will be blunt in my dismissal of your attempts to give credit to Robert Donaldson the Board inspector who gained the feared name and reputation across NSW within Aboriginal communities as the 'kids collector'! Shadrach James writing from Victoria in 1929 suggested that 'Mr Donaldson inspector of Aborigines in NSW be retired, and an educated Native placed in his position'.³⁹ The year before, in correspondence to a Commonwealth inquiry into Aboriginal affairs in 1928 I had this to say about Donaldson: As for the name of a certain inspector employed by the Aborigines Protection Board, it is passed from one end of New South Wales with all the invectives of a broken hearted despairing people.⁴⁰ This man had no redeemable qualities; any suggestion that his motives were honourable are laughable.

I am,
Yours faithfully,



President.

38 Windschuttle, 2009:163

39 *The Voice of the North*, 11 March 1929

40 National Archives of Australia (Canberra), CRS A659/1, 1943/1/1451

I am sure my grandfather would have been much sterner with someone like Keith Windschuttle. He had a vision for the future that encompassed understanding, equity and justice. He said as much in delivering a powerful resolution at the close of the 1925 Kempsey conference:

As it is the proud boast that every person born beneath the Southern Cross is born free, irrespective of origin, race, colour, creed, religion or any other impediment. We the representatives of the original people, in conference assembled, demand that we shall be accorded the same full right and privileges of citizenship as are enjoyed by all other sections of the community.⁴¹

I hope you have enjoyed my talk this evening, which is a journey in itself. We have covered some intriguing topics. One is left to dream, if only we could travel back in time and change history? If the demands of those inspiring Aboriginal activists some eight decades ago had been met all those years ago, for enough land for every Aboriginal family in the country, to stop the practice of removing Aboriginal kids from their families, to protect a distinct Aboriginal cultural identity and that Aboriginal people be placed in charge of Aboriginal affairs. This would have been self-determination in practice and what a different world we would live in today.

Thank you.

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- 1955 PhD, Australian National University
- 1967 Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia
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Positions held:

- 1955-58 Lecturer in History, NSW University of Technology
- 1959-64 Lecturer, Senior Lecturer in History, University of Melbourne
- 1965-66 Reader in History, University of Adelaide
- 1966-73 Foundation Professor of History, La Trobe University
- 1975-91 Senior Fellow, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University (formerly Senior Research Fellow)
- 1992 Associate Director, Research School of Social Sciences
- 1992-98 Visiting Fellow, Law Program, Research School of Social Sciences

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- 1957 Nuffield Dominion Travelling Fellow (London School of Economics)
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Professor John Maynard's 2010 Allan Martin Lecture reflects upon his journey to University as a mature age student, and argues that an Indigenous perspective on Australian history and its practice is of critical importance. Exploring the concept of time travel as a metaphor for history, Professor Maynard highlights his latest work on early Aboriginal political mobilization during the 1920s and considers the present day significance of these findings in the continued dispute of Australian history today.

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