

**With an Olive Branch and a Shillelagh:
the Political Career of Senator Paddy Lynch
(1867-1944)**

by

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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not been previously submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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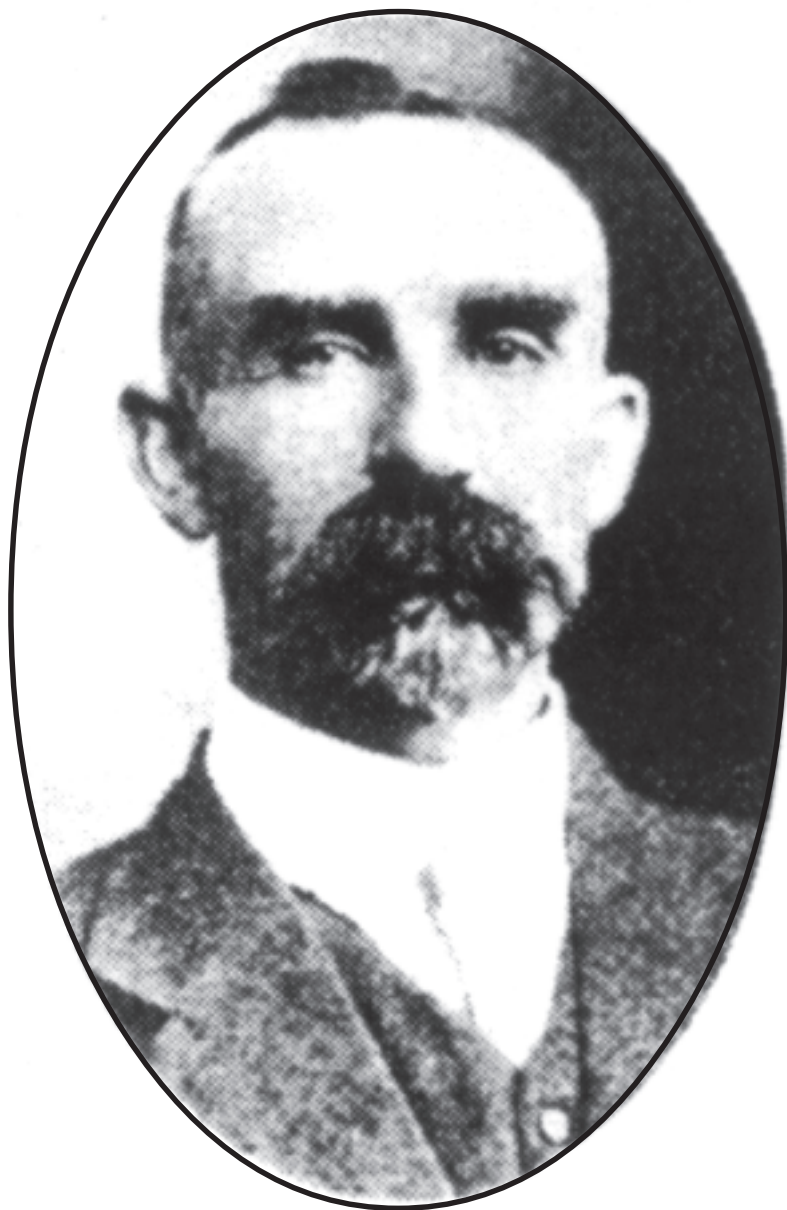
ABSTRACT

As a loyal Empire man and ardent conscriptionist, Irish-born Senator Paddy Lynch swam against the prevailing Irish Catholic Labor political current. He was one of those MP's who followed Prime Minister W.M. Hughes out of the Federal Labor caucus in November 1916, serving out the rest of his political career in the Nationalist ranks. On the face of things, he represents something of a contradiction.

A close examination of Lynch's youth in Ireland, his early years in Australia and his subsequent parliamentary career helps us to resolve this apparent paradox. It also enables us to build up a picture of Lynch the man and to explain his political odyssey. He emerges as representative of that early generation of conservative Laborites (notably J.C. Watson, W.G. Spence and George Pearce) who, once they had achieved their immediate goals of reform, saw their subsequent role as defending the prevailing social order. Like many of these men, Lynch's commitment to the labour movement's principles of solidarity and collective endeavour co-existed with a desire for material self-advancement. More fundamentally, when Lynch accumulated property and was eventually able to take up the occupation which he had known in Ireland – farming – his evolving *class* interest inevitably occasioned a change in political outlook. Lynch is shown to have been an essentially conservative Meath farmer whose early involvement in the labour movement in Australia can be largely explained as a temporary phase consequent on emigration.

A single-minded and robust politician, Lynch was able to reconcile first his Irish and then his Australian nationalist loyalties with the cause of the Empire as the best

guarantee of Australia's future security and advancement. He both *represented* and *reinforced* the more conservative Irish Catholic political climate which prevailed in Western Australia, compared to the more populous eastern states. The relationship of the Catholic Irish to the early labour movement in Australia was more complex and problematical than orthodox thinking has allowed. As someone who straddled both political camps, Lynch encapsulated many of the inherent ambiguities of the immigrant Irish. A study of his career allows us to gain a deeper insight into the complexities of the Irish-Australian experience.



PATRICK JOSEPH LYNCH (1867-1944)

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PREFACE

I first “discovered” Senator Paddy Lynch about twenty years ago when I stumbled upon his entry in an Australian dictionary of parliamentary biography. He originally struck me as something of an enigma. As a conscriptionist who parted company with the Labor Party in 1916 and served out the rest of his career in the Nationalist ranks, he defied all my preconceptions. Hitherto, I had shared the general perception that Irish Catholics in the Labor Party had been solidly anti-conscriptionist and had stayed with the party during the subsequent Split (making it a much more Irish Catholic party thereafter).

My own curiosity about Lynch was crystallised when in 1999, after fourteen years living in Ireland, I was presented with the opportunity of returning to my native city of Perth to take up a scholarship with the Centre for Irish Studies at Murdoch University. By the time of my departure, I had chosen Paddy Lynch as my thesis topic and completed research on his Irish background. He was a logical choice: the seeming paradox of an Irish Catholic Labor conscriptionist had long intrigued me and I was determined to unravel the mystery.

There is, however, another reason for my interest in Lynch: my own personal connection with the part of Ireland from which he hailed, the north-western corner of County Meath. My paternal grandfather, Hugh Cusack, and three of his siblings emigrated to Perth in the early 1900s from Kilmainhamwood, the adjoining parish to Lynch’s home parish of Moynalty. Yet another sibling, my late grand-aunt Helen Cusack, married Michael Finnegan of Petersville, Moynalty, in which locality they farmed for many years before retiring in the mid-1960s. Their location at Petersville found them at the Newcastle end of Moynalty parish and hence neighbours of the Lynches of Skearke (Paddy’s homeplace). Furthermore, an exact namesake of the senator—Patrick Joseph (Paddy) Lynch, of Meath Hill, barely ten miles distant from Skearke—married Lizzie Cusack, sister of the aforementioned Helen, and one of the four Cusack siblings who emigrated to Western Australia. This Paddy Lynch, my grand-uncle, died (aged 52) in July 1944—coincidentally only six months after Senator Lynch—when he was knocked off his bicycle in Fremantle. Paddy Lynch, lumper, died leaving an estate with a gross value of £536; Paddy Lynch, farmer and ex-senator, died a relatively wealthy man leaving an estate worth some £67,000.

To be able to undertake a study which linked Ireland and Australia in this way offered much promise; the fact that it involved a specifically Meath-Western Australian connection was indeed a bonus. During my years in Ireland, I had come to spend a considerable amount of time in north Meath, particularly in the parishes of Kilmainhamwood and Moynalty. This bond was cemented when, in 1998, I wrote the history of Kilmainhamwood for the centenary of the parish church. I came to share in the community life of these rural parishes and in some of their private joys and sorrows. I developed an affinity with the people and, I believe, at least some understanding of the mindset of the farming community which spawned Paddy Lynch. Moreover, I retain a deep affection for north Meath.

Unlike many such political biographies, this study was *not* motivated by an ideological affinity with the subject. However, far from being a handicap, this lack of affinity served to produce a creative tension which actually furthered the process of discovery and understanding. Further, while sympathy may not always be possible, I believe that a certain *empathy* for the subject is always desirable in a study of this kind. As I discovered more about Paddy Lynch, so I came to recognise in him some familiar inherited characteristics of the Meath farmer. Not only did I see Lynch the *immigrant* through the eyes of a West Australian, I came to follow the career of Lynch the *emigrant* with all the curiosity of an honorary Meathman.

Only after my return to Perth in mid-1999 did I become aware of yet another personal connection. Ex-senator Paddy Lynch died on 15 January 1944 at *Killowen*,* then part of the well-known St. Anne's Hospital and Nursing Home, overlooking the Swan River at Mt. Lawley in Perth. As it so happens, in this very same building, and only a few yards from where Lynch last drew breath, this writer entered the world a decade or so later. The circle was complete.

**Killowen*, a fine old double-storey red-brick edifice, which formed the original St. Anne's Nursing Home before being progressively surrounded by a complex of modern hospital buildings, was acquired by the Sisters of Mercy in 1937. It was built in 1911 as the residence of yet another Irishman, R.T. Robinson, a Protestant native of Ballybay, Co. Monaghan, prominent Liberal politician and sometime Attorney-General of Western Australia.

GLOSSARY

ABBREVIATIONS

ACEDA	Amalgamated Certificated Engine-Drivers Association
ACTS	Australian Catholic Truth Society
ADB	Australian Dictionary of Biography
ALF	Australian Labor Federation
ALP	Australian Labor Party
AMA	Amalgamated Miners Association
ANA	Australian Natives Association
ARA	Alluvial Rights Association
AWA	Amalgamated Workers Association
ANU	Australian National University
CAA	Catholic Archdiocesan Archives (Perth)
CPD	Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates
CPP	Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers
EGDC	Eastern Goldfields District Council [ALF]
FPLP	Federal Parliamentary Labor Party
IWW	Industrial Workers of the World
LISWA	Library and Information Service of Western Australia
MHA	Member of the House of Assembly
ML	Mitchell Library (Sydney)
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
MLC	Member of the Legislative Council

MHR	Member of the House of Representatives
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NLA	National Library of Australia
NSW	New South Wales
PLL	Political Labor League
SROWA	State Records Office of Western Australia (Alexander Library, Perth)
TLC	Trades and Labor Council
UAP	United Australia Party
WA	Western Australia
WAA	Western Australian Archives (Battye Library, Perth)
WAPD	Western Australian Parliamentary Debates

SPELLING: Labor/Labour

This is a vexed and a perennial problem. In this thesis the following practice has been adopted: **Labor** (capitalised) has generally been used to refer to the political organisations using that name, e.g. Australian Labor Party, Political Labor Leagues; **labour** (uncapitalised) has generally been used to refer to the broader “labour movement”.

For convenience sake, **Labor** has been used to refer to the Labor Party from the 1890s onwards, even though this spelling was not officially adopted until 1927. In reality, both **Labor** and **Labour** spellings were used from the 1890s. The exception to this practice of using **Labor** is direct quotations (e.g. from parliamentary debates): in these cases, where the **Labour** spelling was used in the original it has been retained. The **Labour** spelling has also been retained for the occasional references to the British and New Zealand Labour parties.

In Western Australia, the ALF did not officially become the ALP until 1919, but for convenience sake the political organisation (at both State and Federal level) is sometimes referred to as the ALP before that date.

FOOTNOTES: Newspaper page numbers

Relevant page numbers of newspapers are included wherever possible in the footnotes. However, there are numerous cases where this was not possible because page numbers either were not shown or could not easily be discerned from the microfilm copy.

DRAMATIS PERSONNAE

It is assumed that people such as William Morris Hughes (Prime Minister of Australia 1915-23) and Dr. Daniel Mannix (Archbishop of Melbourne 1917-63) will be well known to the reader. Other significant figures are generally introduced as they enter the story. There are, however, several key characters who re-appear frequently in the text and whose basic biographical details are included hereunder:

Hugh Mahon (1857-1931)

Irish-born journalist and newspaper editor. Land League activist in Ireland. Committed Catholic and Irish nationalist throughout his life. Arrived in Australia 1883, on the Western Australian goldfields in 1895. Labor MHR, first for Coolgardie then for Kalgoorlie, for most of the period 1901-20. Minister in several Labor governments. Stayed with the Labor Party during the 1916-17 Split. (In)famously expelled from the Federal Parliament on 11 November 1920 by motion of Prime Minister Hughes for “disloyal and seditious utterances”. It was alleged that Mahon, in a speech at a public meeting in Melbourne a few days earlier, had referred to “this bloody and accursed Empire”. Retired from politics after losing the subsequent by-election. Died in Melbourne in 1931.

Hugh de Largie (1859-1947)

Scottish-born Protestant. Arrived Australia 1887. Miner. Active in the Western Australian goldfields labour movement. An early colleague of Lynch’s. Labor senator for Western Australia 1901-16. Sometime assistant secretary of Labor Caucus. A conscriptionist, expelled from the Labor Party in 1916. Nationalist senator 1917-23. Government whip in the Senate 1910-13 and 1917-22. Died at Randwick, New South Wales in 1947.

Edward Needham (1874-1956)

Born in Lancashire of Irish Catholic parents. Arrived in Western Australia in 1901. Worked in various manual occupations. Labor senator for Western Australia 1907-20, 1923-29. Leader of the Opposition in the Senate 1926-29. MLA for Fremantle 1904-5, Perth 1933-50, North Perth 1950-53. A leading anti-conscription campaigner who stayed with the Labor Party in 1916. A devoted Catholic and Irish nationalist. Died in Perth in 1956.

George Pearce (1870-1957)

South Australian-born Protestant. Arrived in Western Australia 1891. Carpenter and active trade unionist. Labor senator for Western Australia 1901-16. An active conscriptionist, expelled from the Labor Party in 1916. Nationalist senator 1917-1938. Long-time parliamentary colleague of Lynch's. Minister in various Labor and Nationalist governments. Minister for Defence during the 1914-18 War and acting Prime Minister for a time in 1916. Died at Brighton, Victoria in 1957.

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Senator Lynch left a significant number of descendants in Western Australia and without their hospitality, cooperation and support this project would not have been possible.

I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to John Lynch, Celine and Kevin Pownall, Pauline Clune, Philip and Maureen Lynch of Geraldton, the late Phillip Lynch (who died tragically in May 2002) and wife Monica of Hyden, Paddy Lynch, Frank Clune (who generously devoted a large volume of material collected some years ago, much of it by his sister the late Marie Clarke), Bernadette Lindsey, Paul Clune and Bernard Clune (Mullewa). Thanks also to the many other Lynches and Clunes who offered information, comments and reminiscences. No formal interviews were conducted but numerous informal conversations took place. Needless to say, all the opinions expressed herein are my own.

Last but not least, I wish to express my appreciation to the Centre for Irish Studies at Murdoch University for the opportunity to return to my native Perth after a fourteen year sojourn in Ireland, courtesy of the special scholarship announced when Mary McAleese, President of Ireland, opened the Centre in September 1998.

INTRODUCTION

In undertaking a study of the life of Paddy Lynch, I set out initially to resolve the seeming paradox of an Irish Catholic Labor conscriptionist. The investigation set off on a journey of discovery to unearth as much material as possible on Lynch's life.¹ His life story proved interesting in itself. Because he had such a varied career before entering Parliament, each phase of his life constitutes a topic in its own right (and roughly corresponds to a chapter in this study). As the story gradually unfolded, so emerged the clues to his apparent political metamorphosis.

This, however, is as much a life and times biography as it is the story of Lynch himself. The usefulness of Lynch as a subject of study lies not in his limited significance as a politician in his own right but rather as a window onto that wider world of Irish Catholic and Labor politics in early 20th century Australia. In this regard, he makes an interesting study for at least four reasons:

- (i) His role as an Irish Catholic maverick in the conscription debate of 1916-17 broke the mould at least insofar as the popular orthodoxy regarding the labour movement in the eastern states was concerned.
- (ii) Contrariwise, his status in his home state of Western Australia fitted the local mould inasmuch as a more conservative and conformist Irish Catholic political climate made the conscriptionist cause much more amenable to the Catholic Irish.

¹ Armed with only the most basic biographical information: the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 10 (Melbourne, 1986) and the *Cyclopedia of Western Australia*, Vol.1 (Adelaide,1912).

(iii) Regardless of his role as an Irish Catholic, he was representative of the conservative Labor men of the first political generation who had achieved most of their reformist goals by 1913. (Moreover, the early Labor Party was such a broad church that it could readily accommodate conservatives like Lynch in its ranks).

(iv) He was an essentially conservative Meath farmer whose values were reinforced as he became a substantial property-owner in Western Australia.

There is yet another reason why Lynch provides a valuable subject for study: the frankness and forthrightness with which he expressed his opinions throughout his long political career. He always had the courage to push his arguments to their logical conclusions in a way which revealed his underlying assumptions. A close reading of his parliamentary speeches (and other public pronouncements) provides a keen insight into the thinking of a whole generation of early Labor politicians. Not only were his views on such matters as White Australia, European settlement, Aborigines, economic development, Australian nationalism and Empire loyalism generally representative, they were expounded in such a way as to allow analysis and critique.

This study of Lynch's political career is largely based upon the material supplied by the subject himself—primarily through his Senate speeches. It is *not* a psychological biography: it analyses Lynch's arguments in some depth and attempts to draw conclusions about his beliefs, but it does not delve into his deeper motives or his personal life. Nor, unlike Jim Gibbney's study of Hugh Mahon,² does it attempt to judge his character.

Irish-Australian historiography has traditionally divided Irish-Australian

² Whose introduction paints a most unflattering portrait of its subject. H.J. Gibbney, *Hugh Mahon: a political biography* (Masters thesis, ANU, 1969).

Catholics politically into two groups: the majority tendency represented by the Irish Catholic Labor anti-conscriptionists and the minority tendency represented by upwardly mobile middle-class Catholic professionals conforming to the Anglo-Protestant political orthodoxy. This owes much to the traditional academic and popular portrayal of the divisions of 1916-17 which has focussed upon the conflicting and counteracting influences of key players such as Archbishop Mannix and Prime Minister W.M. Hughes. John O'Brien, for example, in his study of Hughes and the Irish revolutionary movement,³ completely overlooks the fact that one of Hughes's most loyal supporters was Senator Paddy Lynch who was in many ways the quintessential Irish Catholic Labor politician. Some of the voluminous literature dealing with the conscription controversy has demonstrated an awareness of the complexities of these political divisions. McQueen and Withers, in particular, have effectively challenged the defining importance of the Irish Catholic dimension in this conflict.⁴ Most of this revisionist writing, however, has not yet been absorbed into the wider Irish-Australian historiography: there remains a gap which can be filled by studies of men such as Paddy Lynch who defied the stereotypes and perceived traditions. Arthur Lynch, the Australian-born Irish nationalist MP and Home Ruler-cum-British imperialist, provides another interesting and useful model.⁵

³ John O'Brien, "W.M. Hughes and the Irish revolutionary movement", *Irish-Australian Studies: Papers of the Ninth Irish-Australian Conference Galway, April 1997* (Sydney, 2000).

⁴ Humphrey McQueen, "Who Were the Conscriptionists?: Notes on Federal Labor Members", *Labour History* (May 1969); Glenn Withers, "The 1916-17 Conscription Referenda: a Cliometric Re-Appraisal", *Historical Studies* (April 1982).

⁵ See Pauric Travers, "Arthur Lynch: An Australian Republican and Ireland's Vital Hour", in Tadhg Foley and Fiona Bateman (eds) *Irish-Australian Studies: Papers of the Ninth Irish-Australian Conference, Galway, April 1997* (Sydney, 2000).

The general history of Irish Catholicism in Australia has been well-documented by historians, notably Patrick O'Farrell.⁶ The term "Irish Catholic", as O'Farrell has acknowledged, cloaks all kinds of political and other permutations.⁷ For all that, much of the writing about the role of Irish Catholics in Australian politics (especially the labour movement) has dealt only in crude generalisations. The Catholic Irish ought no longer to be discussed as a homogenized and undifferentiated group; more detailed and specific studies are called for. Many Irish Catholics, for example, had more in common with other individuals and groups within the labour movement⁸ than with their fellow countrymen and co-religionists. Case studies of individual Irish Catholic Laborites such as Paddy Lynch and Hugh Mahon will further our understanding in this area.

In the introduction to the third edition of *The Irish in Australia*,⁹ O'Farrell describes how some Irish (the Anglo-Irish and Ulster Scots in particular) were so keen to prove the respectability of the Irish—by English Tory standards—that they were in the vanguard of supporters of Crown and Empire. Indeed, Ireland of the late 19th and early 20th centuries was full of such people.¹⁰ In Australia, there were many middle and upper-middle class Catholics who fitted the same mould—people who would in Ireland have been referred to pejoratively as "West Brits" or "Castle Catholics". Paddy Lynch fitted neither of those categories. Certainly, he was to the fore in manifestations of loyalty to the Crown, but this was not due to

⁶ Patrick O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: an Australian History* (Revised edition, Sydney, 1985) and *The Irish in Australia: 1788 to the present* (Third edition, Sydney, 2000).

⁷ O'Farrell, *op.cit.* (1985), Chapter Six.

⁸ Apart from Irish-Australian Catholics, there were (for example) liberal reformers, radical nonconformists, outback populists and eclectic socialists.

⁹ O'Farrell, *op.cit.* (2000), p.6.

¹⁰ They were equally conspicuous in Australia: An excellent example is Sir William Irvine, Northern Irish Orangeman, ardent Imperialist and standard-bearer for the Liberal Party in the conscriptionist cause during the political battles of 1916-17.

any deference to these symbols and institutions; rather, it was born of a tough-minded and unsentimental appraisal of the advantages of proclaiming loyalty to the Empire in return for its protection. Many Irish Catholic nationalists were of like mind. In Lynch's case, his Irish nationalism—and later his Australian nationalism—was easily reconciled with his Empire loyalism. For him, as for many of the Catholic Irish, there was no contradiction.

This study commenced by focussing upon Lynch in a specifically Irish Catholic context, but it quickly became obvious that it would have to be extended to consider him within a wider context of early 20th Century Labor politics. In many respects, he was representative of all (including non-Catholic) conservative Labor men of the first political generation. In this, he probably had more in common with such 1916 Labor renegades as J.C. Watson, W.M. Hughes, George Pearce, W.G. Spence and R.S. Guthrie than he did with most fellow Irish Catholics in the Labor Party—notably his Western Australian colleague, Hugh Mahon.

Here John Merritt's unpublished biography of George Pearce¹¹—in its explanation of Pearce's political transformation from Laborite to conservative—provides a useful model for our study. Some interesting parallels emerge: Lynch and Pearce were both from the same stock of conservative Labor men of the 1890s. The study of the non-Catholic Pearce provides important clues for an understanding of Lynch; indeed, as least as many as does any study of Mahon.¹²

¹¹ John Merritt, "George Foster Pearce: Labour Leader" (Masters thesis, University of Western Australia, 1963). This is in fact a much better study than Peter Heydon's published biography *Quiet decision: a study of George Foster Pearce* (Melbourne, 1965)

¹² A detailed comparative study of Mahon and Lynch which was not able to be included here will be published in a forthcoming issue of the *Australian Journal of Irish Studies*.

Since the conscription controversy constitutes the climax of Lynch's political career—and the crux of our narrative—it deserves special attention in our survey of the relevant literature. Historians have long differed as to the emphasis which ought to be placed on particular factors in the defeat of conscription in Australia in 1916-17. For many years, conventional wisdom attributed a determining role to the women's vote, the farmers' vote, the trade union vote and the Irish Catholic vote in securing 'NO' majorities in the two referenda. Somewhat less attention was given to the 'YES' vote, but it was widely assumed that the bulk came from the British-born, from Protestants, from the professional middle-classes, and from political conservatives in general. The significance of the Irish Catholic vote has also been the subject of debate.¹³

In the 1970s and 1980s at least three historians—Alcock (1973), McGregor (1977) and Withers (1982)—conducted historiographical surveys of the conscription literature and attempted to evaluate the referenda data.¹⁴ Glenn Withers, employing what he calls a “cliometric approach”, completed what is probably the most valuable analysis to date. He concluded that, although the labour vote and the Catholic vote were—along with state of residence—significant factors on the 'NO' side, they were not nearly as decisive as the key determinants (women and primary producers) on the 'YES' side. Most significantly, the Catholic factor was seen by him as having only a relatively small bearing on the result.¹⁵

¹³ As summarised in Glenn Withers, “The 1916-17 Conscription Referenda: a Cliometric Re-appraisal”, *Historical Studies* (April 1982), p.37.

¹⁴ J. Alcock, “Reasons for the rejection of Conscription, 1916-17”, *Agora* (Vol.7, No.5, October 1973); Malcolm McGregor, “Historians and the Australian Conscription Crisis”, *RMC Journal* (Vol.6, No. 1, 1977); Glenn Withers, “The 1916-17 Conscription Referenda: a Cliometric Re-appraisal”, *Historical Studies* (April 1982).

¹⁵ Withers, *op.cit.*, (1982), p.45.

Humphrey McQueen conducted a study of the Labor “rats” in an attempt to deduce some defining characteristics of the defectors. In so doing, he compared the backgrounds of pro-and anti-conscriptionists in the Federal Labor Caucus.¹⁶ McQueen’s findings, when we apply them to Lynch, suggest that—as an Irish Catholic—he was not such an aberration after all.

In considering the conscription controversy, it may be useful to take Western Australia as a case apart. Western Australia had a higher proportion of British-born; it was isolated physically (and probably psychologically) and removed from many eastern states influences (including much of the anti-conscription propaganda). In fact, J.R. Robertson ultimately attributes the triumph of the conscriptionist cause in the West to an internally divided labour movement which failed—even on the Goldfields—to campaign in a unified way against conscription.¹⁷ Significantly, Robertson also observes, first, that Catholics in Western Australia were more favourable to the conscriptionist cause than their Eastern States counterparts and, secondly, that the strong personal influence of leading Catholic conscriptionists such as Archbishop P.J. Clune and Senator P.J. Lynch was decisive in this regard.¹⁸ The peculiar circumstances prevailing in the West and how they may have served to magnify Lynch’s influence on developments there will be examined in the final chapter.

With the exception of a few historians such as Ernest Scott, there is an overwhelming anti-conscriptionist bias in the literature produced on the major controversies of the 1914-18 War. Moreover, most of the recent literature reflects

¹⁶ Humphrey McQueen, *op.cit.* (May 1969), pp.3-5. See discussion in Chapter Ten.

¹⁷ J.R. Robertson, “The Conscription Issue and the National Movement in Western Australia, June 1916-December 1917”, *University Studies in Western Australian History* (Vol.3, No.3, October 1959), *passim*.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.45.

a strongly anti-imperialist/Irish Catholic/republican/Labor/left-wing bias. This presents the historian with a major problem of perspective: how to get into the mindset of the popular British imperial world-view of the early 20th century; more particularly, how to comprehend an Irish Catholic Labor man like Paddy Lynch embracing imperialistic attitudes. The temptation is to all too readily dismiss such Irishmen as “dupes” of British imperialism.¹⁹

It is a truism that Lynch can only be understood in the context of his time. Ironically, it is the fervently anti-conscriptionist pamphleteer Maurice Blackburn MHR who allows us to break through these contemporary prejudices and gain an insight into the popular thinking prevailing in Australian Labor circles during the 1914 -18 War. In his tract written some twenty years after the events of 1916, he articulated it thus:

With few exceptions, Labour supporters, Left and Right, accepted the war as inevitable and believed an Allied victory to be necessary. The war was, it seemed, a war against Imperialism, a war to bring liberation to the subject nationalities and to the working-class of the German and Austrian Empires, a war to avenge the rape of Belgium. *No difference of race, creed, or tradition weakened this Sacred Union.*²⁰ [my emphasis]

If we take Blackburn’s statement seriously, then we will be less inclined to dismiss as mere Imperialist “dupes” and “lackeys” Lynch and other Irish-Australian Catholic supporters of the war.²¹ We must explore more fully their underlying assumptions and motivations.

Secondary sources consulted for this study included relevant books, journal articles and unpublished theses (of which there were many). One drawback to our

¹⁹ This certainly reflected the attitude of the present writer before he began this study on Lynch.

²⁰ Maurice Blackburn, *The Conscription Referendum of 1916* (Anti-Conscription League, Melbourne, 1936), p.8

²¹ Although this statement allowed the writer another perception of the war itself, it did not ultimately change his unsympathetic attitude towards Lynch’s stance on the war and conscription.

study was undoubtedly the marked imbalance of source material—both primary and secondary—relating to the Labor Party to the detriment of the non-Labor parties (histories of the Country Party and United Australia Party notwithstanding). This made the earlier phase of Lynch’s political career (as a Labor politician) easier to research than his later years as a Nationalist. More recent histories of the Labor Party serve us well: Ross McMullin’s *The Light on the Hill* and *The True Believers* collection edited by John Faulkner and Stuart MacIntyre (notably John Iremonger’s essay on the Labor “Rats”).²² Bobbie Oliver’s forthcoming history of the Labor Party in Western Australia was unfortunately not available for consultation for this study. However, her earlier work, *War and Peace in Western Australia 1914-26*,²³ which successfully challenges the prevailing orthodoxies regarding the supposed lack of class conflict in that State, proved an invaluable resource for understanding the Western Australian dimension of the conscription split. With its analysis of the American Irish experience, Noel Ignatiev’s *How the Irish became White*²⁴ provided a useful reference point from which the Australian Irish experience could be evaluated.

This thesis is divided into two sections: the first tells the story of Lynch’s life; the second is a combination of the thematic and the interpretative, examining the subject in greater analytical depth. A concluding chapter locates Lynch in the

²² Ross McMullin, *The Light on the Hill: the Australian Labor Party 1891-1911* (Oxford, 1991); John Faulkner and Stuart MacIntyre (eds), *The True Believers: the Story of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party* (Crows Nest, New South Wales, 2001).

²³ Bobbie Oliver, *War and Peace in Western Australia: the social and political impact of the Great War* (Perth, 1995), especially Chapters 3-5.

²⁴ Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish became White* (New York, 1995).

context of the more assimilationist Irish Catholic socio-political ethos of Western Australia.

As the defining episode in his political career, the conscription controversy and consequent Labor Split must serve as the focus of our study of Lynch. For that reason, Chapters Six and Ten form the focal points in sections One and Two respectively, Chapter Six describing and interpreting the key events and Chapter Ten analysing the central issues in much greater depth. Chapters Nine to Eleven constitute the three core chapters of the thesis, analysing as they do Lynch's fundamental beliefs about Ireland and the Empire, war, defence and conscription, trade unionism, the Labor Party and socialism. Connecting links are made between all of these topics. There is inevitably a certain overlap between these three chapters and the first section of our study and this has necessarily added to the length of the thesis.

Chapters 1-3 are each largely self-contained chapters representing distinct phases of Lynch's early life prior to his entering Parliament. Most studies of prominent Irishmen in Australia have given little or no attention to the Irish background of their subjects: specifically, place of origin (county, parish, locality). Chapter One will attempt to correct that oversight by investigating the particularities of Lynch's background in late 19th century rural Meath. It will be argued that the significant degree of Anglicisation which had occurred in that part of the country—together with the resultant duality of Irishness and Britishness—demonstrably affected his later political development.

Apart from some school records, there is a lack of documentary evidence for his early life; there is, nevertheless, ample secondary source material with which to build a picture of the community in which Lynch grew up and to distinguish the formative influences on the young man. Other secondary sources such as Oliver

MacDonagh and Philip Bull²⁵ allow us place Lynch in the context of contemporary developments, notably the rise of the Land League and the growth of Irish nationalism.

Chapter Two considers Lynch's first decade out of Ireland, his brief interludes in the USA and in Queensland, followed by his seven years at sea (for some of which time he was Sydney-based). His early involvement with the labour movement coincided with the maritime strikes of the early 1890s. It will be argued that he witnessed and was much influenced by these formative events in Australian history. However, a lack of records for the early labour movement generally, especially the lesser lights, means that we are forced again to rely very much upon secondary source material. Here writers such as Bede Nairn, Ray Markey, Verity Burgmann, Brian Fitzpatrick and Rowan Cahill provide the context.

Chapter Three describes Lynch's years on the Western Australian goldfields at the turn of the last century. Thanks to such local newspapers as the *Kalgoorlie Miner* and the *Westralian Worker*, we have numerous references to his political and industrial activities. The records of the Amalgamated Certificated Engine-Drivers Association and of the early Arbitration Court further allow us to trace his involvement in the labour movement. It will be argued that Lynch's commitment to the movement co-existed with a desire for his own material advancement. Theses by Jim Gibbney, B.K. Hyams, Laurence McIntyre and David Mossenson provide useful contextual background material on the early history of the labour movement on the Goldfields.

²⁵ Oliver MacDonagh, *The Sharing of the Green: a modern Irish history for Australians* (Sydney, 1996); Philip Bull, *Land, Politics and Nationalism: a study of the Irish land question* (Dublin, 1996).

Chapter Four, dealing with Lynch's short career as a Western Australian parliamentarian, relies largely upon the State Parliamentary Debates, although Buttfield's thesis on the Dalglish government (1904-5)²⁶ provides useful background on the government of which Lynch was briefly a member. It will be argued that Lynch emerged as a moderate reformist Labor politician thoroughly committed to the values of state arbitration and constitutional parliamentarianism.

Chapter Five deals with Lynch's first seven years in the Senate. Together with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, it draws heavily upon the published minutes of the Federal Labor Caucus, which are particularly insightful with regard to the Fisher administrations of 1910-13 and 1914-15 and Lynch's own role within Caucus. It also sketches the events that occurred in Lynch's private life: the arrival of his brother and family from Ireland in 1909 and the purchase of land by them at Three Springs in the Western Australian wheatbelt. Family documents and the recorded memories of one of the senator's nephews provide invaluable personal impressions of these seminal events. It will be argued that during his early years as a senator, Lynch consolidated his role as a representative of the labour interest and of Western Australian interests in general. His emphasis upon moderate reformism was reinforced by his new-found role as a substantial farmer.

Chapter Six, dealing as it does with the conscription controversy and the Labor Split of 1916-17, forms the climax of our story. In terms of both primary and secondary sources, it is far and away the most generously endowed chapter in our story. The chapter describes Lynch's breach with the Labor Party over conscription and his subsequent absorption into the Nationalist Party ranks—in

²⁶ E.S. Buttfield, "The Dalglish Ministry 1904-5: Western Australia's First Labor Government" (Masters thesis, University of Western Australia, 1979).

permanent and bitter opposition to most of his old comrades. It will be argued that this was a natural consequence of his role as a leading conscriptionist from the outset, together his and other Western Australian colleagues' refusal to accept the "dictates" of the eastern states-dominated party organisation.

Chapters Seven and Eight cover the last twenty years of Lynch's political career (1918-38) and his six years in retirement (1938-44), a period of anti-climax. It will be argued that, following the traumatic events of 1916-17, Lynch quickly adapted to his new role as a Nationalist senator. As time progressed, he became increasingly anti-Labor and thoroughly absorbed into conservative political ranks. At the twilight of his long parliamentary career, his six-year term as President of the Senate (1932-38) provided some belated consolation for his failure to achieve ministerial rank after 1917. The surviving minutes of the parliamentary Nationalist Party for the years 1919-22 proved valuable but the primary source pickings thereafter are comparatively slim. Supplemented by parliamentary papers, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates become more than ever the major source. Together, the records of the Western Australian Secession League and the Pearce Papers reveal Lynch's behind-the-scenes role as a secessionist and his and Pearce's defeat at the 1937 elections.

Chapters Nine to Eleven form the core of the thesis. They attempt a deeper analysis of the evolution of Lynch's attitudes towards Ireland and the Empire; war, defence and conscription; trade unionism, the Labor Party and socialism. Through an examination of his career as a whole, certain continuities and discontinuities emerge. In these three chapters, his parliamentary speeches over a thirty-four year period provide the key insights into his fundamental beliefs and attitudes; more particularly, the evolution of his political conservatism. It becomes evident that these different areas of belief are interconnected. Chapter

Ten, in particular, unpeels the various layers of assumptions and reveals the suppressed premises in Lynch's arguments.

Finally, Chapter Twelve places Lynch in a distinctively Western Australian context. It will be argued that, due to the peculiar historical development of that State, the Irish have been more assimilationist than their eastern states counterparts and, consequently, the political climate of Irish Catholicism has been more conservative. Lynch did not create this situation, but he did *reinforce* it. It also made his political survival easier. Primary sources provide substantial evidence to support our argument concerning the late 19th century and early 20th century development of the politics of Irish Catholicism in Western Australia (most significantly, the correspondence in the Perth Archdiocesan Archives, which reveal a close political alliance between Bishop Gibney and Sir John Forrest). However, with the exception of a couple of items of correspondence, there is a dearth of empirical evidence which would allow us to extend this argument to include the mid-late 20th century. This subject requires further investigation.

In marked contrast to the voluminous private papers of Pearce and Mahon, no "Lynch Papers" survive as such. Some items relating to Lynch are to be found in the papers of some of his political contemporaries (Pearce, Mahon, Hughes, O'Malley, Lyons and Latham, for example). However, they amount to only eighteen items of inward correspondence (including telegrams) and twenty-eight items of outward correspondence (including telegrams): insubstantial in the main and relating for the most part to the latter part of his political career (that is, post-1917). A few useful items of correspondence survive through Lynch's family. The bulk of his correspondence and personal papers do not, however, appear to be extant. We can probably blame this on the fact that he chose to re-marry late in

life—to his personal secretary (Mary Brown). She was presumably the custodian of his personal papers but any that were preserved were not returned to Lynch's children (from his first marriage) after her death in 1959. Lynch and Mary Brown had no children, so it is difficult to determine what may have happened to any collected items thereafter. In any event, exhaustive enquiries have failed to locate any surviving papers.

This did not present an insurmountable obstacle to our study. It was possible to construct a picture of the man and the story of his life, utilising a multiplicity of other sources at our disposal. Primary sources consulted include the papers of Lynch's political contemporaries (located mainly in the National Library of Australia), government documents in the National Archives, political correspondence and other records in the Western Australian Archives and State Records of Western Australia, parliamentary papers, and state and local newspapers (especially the Goldfields newspapers). Occasionally these referred to Lynch by name but more often than not they provided useful contextual material relating to different phases of his life. The major resource, however, was undoubtedly the Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates for the period 1907-38, which not only recorded the development of Lynch's arguments and opinions over his thirty-year Federal parliamentary career, but also revealed significant biographical information.

In this way we were able to hear Lynch himself attempt to reconcile his Irish nationalism and his Empire loyalism, argue his case for conscription and explain his transition from Labor to Nationalist politician. In so doing, we unravel some of the threads of the enigma and resolve the seeming paradox of this ardently conscriptionist Irish Catholic Laborite.

PART ONE

Out of that childhood country what fools climb
To fight with tyrants Love and Life and Time?

Patrick Kavanagh

(From "Peace", Dublin 1943)

CHAPTER ONE

YOUTH IN IRELAND (1867-1885)¹

Patrick Joseph Lynch was born on 24 May 1867 at Skearke, Moynalty, Kells, County Meath, Ireland. His parents were Michael and Bridget (nee Cahill). He was the youngest of eight children, being preceded by John (b.1852), Philip (b.1854), James (b.1856), Michael (b.1858), Mary (b.1860), Ann (b.1863), and Bridget (b. 1865). His parents farmed a 17-acre property which the Lynches had occupied since approximately 1837.² He was born into a single-storey three-room thatched dwelling which stands to this day, although it now lies derelict and is used as an outhouse for farm animals. It has not been occupied since the 1950s: the present owners of the land, Margaret Flanagan and son Michael, descendants of the Lynches by marriage, occupy a modern bungalow built directly next door.

The surname Lynch was, and is, very prominent in this locality. Here as elsewhere in rural Ireland, family nicknames are often used to distinguish between families of the same surname living in the same area. The particular line of the Lynches to which Patrick belonged was well established in the townland of Skearke and in the neighbouring townland of Newcastle. During his boyhood, his grandfather and some of his uncles still farmed at the latter location. They were known as the “Pat Johnny” Lynches, while the Lynches in his homeplace at Skearke were known as the “Phil Micky” Lynches. However, the “Pat Johnnies”

¹ This chapter is developed at much greater length by the author in his article in *Riocht na Midhe: Records of the Meath Archaeological and Historical Society*, Vol.13, No.2 (Navan, Ireland, 2002), pp.139-64.

² House, offices and land with a rateable value of £12. *Griffiths' Valuation* (Dublin,1854) and information supplied by Margaret Flanagan, Skearke, 25 April 1999.

and the “Phil Mickies” were effectively all of the one stock. His mother, Bridget Cahill, came from the neighbouring townland of Greaghough. Like the Lynches, the Cahills had been present in the locality for generations. Consequently, Patrick was born into an established and moderately well-off farming family in what was a typical close-knit rural community.

Setting

The townland of Skearke is situated about ten miles north-west of Kells. It lies at the Newcastle end of Moynalty parish which is at the farthest remove from the village of Moynalty, site of the main Catholic chapel of the parish. However, common to most rural Irish parishes and reflecting the structures developed in the post-Famine era, the parish of Moynalty contains a second chapel. This is situated in the townland of Newcastle at the western end of the parish, immediately adjoining the townland of Skearke. Hence, a separate community developed at what was, and still is, known as the Newcastle end of the parish. This sense of separateness still exists in many respects, although it was even more so in those days of limited transport and restricted mobility. People in the locality associated more with Newcastle, especially its chapel and nearby cluster of shops, than with the more distant village of Moynalty. As a result, Newcastle evolved as a sub-community of the wider Moynalty parish.

Symbolically, Patrick was born at the intersection of two parishes, two counties and two provinces: his birthplace at Skearke lies only a couple of hundred yards from the border of Moynalty and Mullagh, Meath and Cavan,³ Leinster and Ulster. The Lynch homeplace also lies at an interface in the physical landscape;

³ The neighbouring townland of Killeeter is in Cavan.

here the flat and lush green pastures of Meath merge into the rolling drumlins of Cavan. The Lynches and their immediate neighbours lived in what could be described as a quiet and relatively isolated location. The ownership of the 312 acres of the townland of Skearke was divided between two absentee (albeit Meath) landlords, John Pollock of Mountainstown House and Colonel Barnes of Mahonstown. In 1837, the land was described as all arable, with a large portion of the soil being clay and gravel, but well cultivated with good crops.⁴

Like most rural Irish localities at this time, Skearke was dominated by a local Protestant landholding family—in this case, the Rathbornes who leased 30 acres from Pollock and sublet the remainder to tenants-at-will. The Rathbornes lived at *Annesbrook*, which would have been thought of as the local “big house” and was located only half a mile from the Lynches. However, it was not from Rathbornes but from Barnes, the other major landholder in Skearke, that Lynches originally leased their land (until Alexander Walker took over as lessor in 1860).⁵

The local place of worship for this predominantly Catholic farming community was Newcastle chapel, built in 1844 and situated about half a mile north of the Lynch farmhouse. Patrick was baptised in this chapel and would have attended Sunday Mass here until he left Ireland at 18 years of age. Along with the special Easter and Christmas ceremonies, annual missions, christenings, weddings and funerals, the weekly Mass ensured that much of the life of the community was centred at the chapel. Here Patrick would have met up with his uncles, aunts, cousins, schoolfriends and neighbours. Opposite Newcastle chapel stands an old stone brick building established by the Gargan family in 1826. Now disused, for

⁴ *Donovan's Ordnance Survey* (Dublin, 1837), p.1050.

⁵ Valuations Office of Ireland, Dublin (Land Records).

over 150 years it served variously as pub, shop and post office.⁶ In Patrick's boyhood it functioned as a shop. As well as performing an important economic function, it complemented the chapel as a place of social intercourse. Along with a cluster of smaller buildings and dwellings nearby, the shop and chapel served as the focal point for the Newcastle end of the parish.

Schooling

For the first part of his primary education Patrick attended the Cormeen National School, established in 1841 and located about a half mile north-west of his homeplace. The building itself, a rather spartan and forbidding grey stone structure typical of national schools constructed in mid-to late 19th century Ireland, has been demolished. There are no surviving records for Cormeen for this period, but it is likely that the young Lynch attended the school intermittently from his sixth until his thirteenth year. At that time there were no set rules and procedure for the attendance of children from rural communities, since seasonal factors such as the demand for labour invariably intruded.

What is known is that Patrick transferred to another national school at nearby Killeeter for the final two years of his primary education.⁷ Surviving records show that he attended Killeeter National School from 7 January 1880 until 5 August 1882. He was twelve years of age when he commenced and fifteen when he left. Having ceased to function as recently as 1982, Killeeter School stands to this day overlooking a quiet country back-road. It is recorded that Patrick was first enrolled in Class V, then later in Class VI, and that he paid five shillings a year to

⁶ Valentine Farrell, *Not So Much to One Side* [A history of the parish of Moynalty] (Moynalty, 1984), p.208.

⁷ It is not clear why he transferred. The schools at Killeeter and Cormeen were situated roughly equidistant to the Lynch homeplace, so distance was not a factor.

attend. In both classes (or standards) he studied the following subjects: reading, spelling, writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography and agriculture.⁸

He then attended the Baileboro Model School for two years whilst in his mid-teens. It is said that he often travelled the nine miles from his home to Bailieboro by donkey.⁹ The Model School was a kind of non-denominational finishing school for academically inclined pupils who had completed their National School education but had notions of going on to teach. Alternatively, they may have had ambitions towards a professional occupation in business or the civil service.

A number of such model schools were constructed throughout Ulster during the middle of the 19th century. Whilst run independently of one another, they were usually similar in design and purpose. Reflecting the early Victorian desire to encourage the self-improvement of the local populace, they were normally established by local Protestant landowners or professional people. These schools were open to the children of both Protestants and Catholics, townspeople and farmers, and, although the fees were varied according to parents' means, they would have precluded the poorest sections of the population from attendance.

By the time Patrick came to attend the Model School it had been established for over thirty years and had acquired a considerable reputation as an educational institution. In 1874 the school had been enlarged during the administration of Dr. Joshua Doherty, under whose reign it became "the best and most important model school in Ireland".¹⁰ In 1876 the *Report of the Commissioners of National*

⁸ Killeeter National School Roll Book, in possession of Mrs. Marie O'Reilly, retired national teacher, Killeeter, County Cavan (April 1999).

⁹ Despite the suggestion of Trinity College Irish-Australian historian, Professor David Fitzpatrick, that I emulate Paddy's feat, I did the next best thing and retraced the route by bicycle. On 24-25 April 1999 I explored thoroughly on bicycle and foot the Lynch property at Skearke and the surrounding community of Newcastle.

¹⁰ J.A.Coleman, *Bailieboro Model School* (Bailieboro, 1914). Coleman was a local historian who produced a small pamphlet summarising the school's history.

Education stated: “The Bailieboro Model school is an institution of which the adherents of the National system have every right to be proud...”.¹¹ Significantly, the same report emphasised that the school was pre-eminent as regards its pupils winning prizes in academic competitions and that it actually outshone some of the elite educational institutions in Belfast.

Despite their non-denominational status, the Model Schools did not escape the suspicion of Catholic authorities. Indeed, Patrick was one of what was to be the last crop of Catholic pupils to attend the Bailieboro Model School. Although it had long survived the hostility of the local Catholic bishop, in 1885 an edict was issued forbidding Catholics to attend. Catholic children were removed to a school of their own and, after 1887, no Catholic ever again attended the Model School.¹²

Patrick is recorded as having attended the school from 31 July 1882 until 26 April 1884 (just a month short of his seventeenth birthday). His academic record shows that he gained passes in reading, spelling, writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography, agriculture, bookkeeping, algebra and geometry.¹³ These two formative years at Bailieboro Model School widened Patrick’s horizons in important respects, and coloured his views, as we shall see. He was now being taught with boys and by men from a much more diverse range of backgrounds than he would have encountered around Newcastle. This opportunity to mix with and befriend Protestant boys may have encouraged a wider outlook in matters of religion. While sectarianism was doubtless encountered, some of the practical

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² One old Catholic teacher expressed it thus: “We were taken from the best school in Ireland and put in the worst.” [Quoted from material compiled for an exhibition on the history of the Bailieboro Model School and consulted at Cana House, Farnham St, Cavan, 16 December 1998]

¹³ Bailieboro Boys Model School register, consulted at Cana House, Farnham St, Cavan. While the notation for recording results is difficult to interpret, it seems possible that he received credit passes or distinctions in arithmetic and grammar.

tools of experience with which to combat it had also been acquired.

His formal education completed, Patrick spent his remaining time in Ireland—less than two years—working on his father’s farm. He turned eighteen years of age on 24 May 1885. By this time three of his four elder brothers had emigrated to the USA—John (aged 33) to Wisconsin, James (aged 29) to New York and Michael (aged 27) to Los Angeles. One elder brother, Philip (aged 31) remained and, failing his emigration, it could reasonably be expected that he would take over the farm. (This is in fact what happened when the father died in 1896, Patrick having emigrated a decade previously).

Had Philip, like his three elder brothers, also felt inclined to emigrate, then Patrick would almost certainly have stayed in Ireland. 18 years of age and with no sign of either his brother Philip (13 years his senior) emigrating or of his father passing on, it was only natural that he should contemplate emigrating himself. Many other restless and adventurous young men of his age had done just that. The patriarchal family structure then prevailing in Ireland afforded the father of the household considerable power and authority. Tension between father and son—rather than sheer economic necessity alone—often pushed the frustrated son to emigrate, especially when he had no prospect of inheritance. There is no evidence of this in Lynch’s case; it can only remain a matter for conjecture.

Early Influences

Among the most obvious influences upon the young Patrick were his family, the local church and local schools which he attended, and the wider farming community in which he grew up. The home environment was fundamental: not only was he the youngest of eight children, his nearest brother, Michael, was nine years his senior. Of his siblings, it was his three sisters, Mary (seven years his

senior), Anne (four years senior) and Bridget (two years senior), who were closest to him in age. Given the fact that three of his four elder brothers had emigrated by the time Patrick was in his early teens, it is apparent that he spent his adolescence in a predominantly female household. Given these circumstances, and the fact that he was the youngest child, it would hardly be surprising if young Patrick were spoilt by his parents and sisters. Certainly the fact that he was given the opportunity to pursue his education by attending the Bailieboro Model School suggests that, as the youngest, and perhaps the brightest, of the eight children, he was afforded a relatively privileged opportunity denied his siblings and most of his contemporaries.

The local church and schools complemented and reinforced the influence of the home. The church, symbolised by Newcastle chapel, and represented by the parish priest of Moynalty and his curate, embodied the conservative Catholic values of rural Ireland. The Cullenisation¹⁴ of the Irish church during the post-Famine years had strengthened the Roman at the expense of the Celtic influence. This in turn reflected the Victorian outlook of the wider contemporary society of which colonised Ireland was very much a part. The religious and educational institutions existed in a close symbiotic relationship and mutually reinforced the dominant Catholic ethos. In a small rural community, the local clergy and teachers fashioned to a considerable degree the outlook of their young charges like Patrick.

Specific geographic location could be equally important in shaping the character of a community. Significantly, the village of Mullagh (County Cavan), being only three miles away, is much closer to Lynch's homeplace than Moynalty,

¹⁴ A reference to Paul Cullen, Archbishop of Armagh (1849-52) and Archbishop of Dublin (1852-78), who was trained in Rome and was largely responsible for instituting Roman practices in Ireland.

some five miles distant. Even to this day, people at the Newcastle or “poor” end of Moynalty parish associate with Mullagh rather than Moynalty. It is to Mullagh rather than Moynalty that the Lynches and their neighbours would have looked for the necessities of life provided by stores and markets, not to mention their social activities.

Along with his farm duties, Patrick worked as a *cleever* (from *cliabhar*, the Irish word for a woven basket) selling eggs and poultry in the local community. This would have brought him regularly to Mullagh village for the Monday markets. Patrick would also have spent some time in Bailieboro and Kells, the two large market towns nearest to Skearke. These localities would have figured prominently in both his working and social life, and certainly constituted major landmarks in his mental landscape. On several occasions during his subsequent public career in Australia, Lynch strongly hinted that as a young man he had travelled widely within his native country. So it is safe to assume that his world extended outside his own region to farther geographic horizons such as the city of Dublin and beyond. Such travel opportunities, however limited, would only have served to encourage his juvenile wanderlust.

Social and Political Context

When Patrick was born in 1867, less than two decades after the Great Famine, the horror and privations of that terrible starvation were still uppermost in popular consciousness. He would have absorbed the local Famine folklore from a very early age.

During the Famine years, the parish of Moynalty, Skearke included, suffered considerable population loss—through starvation, but more particularly, through emigration. Between 1841-51 the population of Skearke declined from 156 to 94,

a drop of approximately 40%, roughly double the national average for the same period. This process of steady population decline continued unabated throughout the remainder of the 19th century. By 1901 the population had declined still further to 74 (69 Catholics and five Protestants) in 15 dwellings. By 1999, Skearke accommodated only 15 adults in a total of five dwellings.¹⁵

Since the poorest classes in rural society, the cottiers and labourers, had all but been eliminated by the Famine, tenant farmers like the Lynches, with their 17 acres, were left in a comparatively strong position, and with the prospect of being able to consolidate their holdings during the ensuing decades. They were, of course, still economically and politically dominated in turn by the larger tenant farmers and by the landlord class, not to mention the imperial authorities in Dublin and London. However, the rise of the Land League in the 1870s served to strengthen collectively the position of tenant farmers vis-à-vis the landowners. The Land Acts of 1881 and 1885 considerably improved the position of the tenant farmer, though it was not until the Wyndham Land Act of 1903 that wide-scale purchase of farm holdings by tenants was facilitated.

Closely linked to the rise of the Land League and the new degree of self-assertiveness of Catholic tenant farmers in post-Famine Ireland was the advent of the Fenians, a militant paramilitary brotherhood dedicated to challenging by armed force the British occupation of Ireland. The very year of Patrick's birth (1867) saw the abortive Fenian rising. All of these associated developments reflected the new tide of rising nationalism in Ireland. Although not as powerful or significant a force in the eastern part of Ireland as in the west, the Fenians and the Land League did nevertheless play a prominent role in Meath. Within that

¹⁵ *Census of Ireland* (1901), Electoral Roll for County Meath (1999).

county, few parishes were more active in that line of activity than Moynalty itself, along with neighbouring parishes bordering Cavan and Monaghan. A small group of Fenians and a branch of the Land League were active in Moynalty parish during Lynch's boyhood. Even though members of his own family were not directly involved, he would certainly have been aware of these activities—and have inhaled the rising spirit of nationalism which pervaded the air. No less a person than Charles Stewart Parnell was member for Meath in the British House of Commons for a short period from 1875.

Compared to other parts of the country, the brand of political nationalism practised in north Meath was generally moderate and less militant in tone. Moynalty parish, although lying just beyond the commonly perceived boundaries of the Pale, lay within that south-eastern portion of the country which had been considerably Anglicised and conciliated to British colonialism.

In addition, Irish had long before the Famine ceased to be the main spoken language in the Newcastle community. The Famine hammered another nail into the coffin of the Irish language by ridding the countryside of most of the poorer Irish-speaking remnants of the populace. Patrick would have heard very little Irish spoken during his youth and there is no evidence to suggest that he himself spoke any Irish. The attempted revival of the Irish language—symbolised by the founding of *Conradh na Gaeilge* in 1893—was part of that wider Irish national revival which did not occur until some decades later. By this stage, Lynch had left Ireland.

One salient feature of this heavy Anglicised culture was a certain deference to and acquiescence in things English by large sections of the Catholic professional and farming classes. Thus, any nationalistic impulses working within young Patrick would have been matched by the competing impulses of conformity and

assimilation.¹⁶ It is also worth noting that he grew up in an Ireland which was still half a century away from independence from Britain and, with that, the experience of partition. That artificial border which so shaped the mental landscape of Irish people after 1922 never existed during Patrick's youth. Located as they were at the junction of Meath and Cavan, of Leinster and Ulster, the Lynches and their neighbours were just as inclined to look northwards and see themselves as Cavan and Ulster people as to look southwards and see themselves as belonging to Meath and to Leinster.¹⁷ Considerations such as these contributed to the formation of that interior mental landscape which helped shape Patrick and his youthful contemporaries, a landscape fashioned in no small part by the physical landscape and the major historic events of the day.

Dominant Values

During the formative first eighteen years of his life in Ireland, Patrick Lynch absorbed most of the dominant values of the society in which he was nurtured and, as with any such process of socialisation, those acquired values would inform his worldview for the rest of his life. Foremost amongst these values was a deep attachment to the land, an attachment shared by all farmers in post-Famine Ireland. The land was neither romanticised nor valued merely for its own sake, but viewed in essentially utilitarian terms as the basis of survival. Coupled with this deep devotion to the land was an emphasis upon economic advancement through hard work. Patrick, as would become very evident in his later life, believed in

¹⁶ For an example of the practice of deference to one's superiors, refer to the story of Christopher Dunne who emigrated to Queensland from an estate at Norbinstown outside Kells in the 1870's, described in David Fitzpatrick, *Oceans of Consolation: Personal Accounts of Irish Migration to Australia* (Cork, 1994), Chapter Eleven, *passim*.

¹⁷ Only later did the 20th century development of towns and cities such as Navan and Dublin as primary economic centres create a kind of geographic pull southwards for the people of north-west Meath and south-east Cavan.

each man's responsibility to develop the earth's resources by the sweat of his brow.

Co-existing with this emphasis upon material advancement through individual endeavour was a recognition and acceptance of the values of communal solidarity. Farming families lived interdependently in a rural community strongly defined by its own expectations and sanctions. A strong sense of mutual obligation and social responsibility—reinforced by the church—cemented these bonds. The dominant Victorian values of thrift, hard work, self-advancement and social obligation were reinforced rather than challenged by the heavily Romanised Catholicism which prevailed in Ireland. When Lynch left his native land he took with him the beliefs and values of a culture colonised in mind as much as in any political or military sense. Remnants of an older Celtic culture may have survived west of the Shannon, but in County Meath were largely extinct.

The primacy of an ideology which we may call *developmentalism* clearly reflected this absorption by the colonised periphery (Ireland) of the dominant values of the colonising centre (England). Late 19th century post-Famine rural Irish society, whilst still in many respects traditional, was gradually undergoing that process of modernisation which would enable it to conform to the demands of a capitalist economy driven by industrial Britain rather than to the traditions of a more communal and autonomous pre-capitalist past.

The rural society which Patrick left behind was hierarchical and patriarchal in nature. Within this small farming community was to be found a definite social pecking order dominated by a few exclusively male powerholders: the local (mostly Protestant) landlords, a few “strong” farmers (both Catholic and Protestant), the parish priest, the local schoolmaster, publicans and shopkeepers, and the constabulary. Social improvement was achieved from the top down,

through the largesse or beneficence of the major power-brokers in the community, rather than by collective self-advancement or a process of empowerment from below. It was a society which encouraged the growth of the political culture of *clientelism*, so much a feature of the post-Independence era. This practice of politicians carrying out favours for their constituents—or “clients”—survives in rural Ireland. As a farmer/senator in Western Australia, Lynch would reflect this and other aspects of the “parish pump politics” of his native place.¹⁸ In the absence of inherited privilege, education—especially the tools of literacy—was both a valued key to self-advancement and an instrument of power. As consistently evidenced by letters surviving from his parliamentary career, Patrick had attained a high standard of literacy by the time he left for Australia.

Lastly, he inherited that deep and abiding sense of place which so characterises rural Ireland. With this, went a strong sense of roots and personal identity. Moulded into his mental landscape were all those features of the physical landscape of his native locality. Inextricably linked to place was a deep sense of history; informed by his reading, Patrick would retain a love of history for the rest of his life.

During his later public life in Australia Lynch rarely referred directly to his youth in Ireland. However, there were a few occasions on which he did so, and they are revealing for the way in which they implicitly acknowledge childhood influences. We will cite just two examples here.

When Lynch was briefly a Federal minister in 1916-17, he had responsibility for guiding through the Senate a government Bill which, as a special war-time

¹⁸ He frequently used his position to make representations on behalf of ordinary country citizens. He particularly looked after emigrants from the Mullagh area who arrived in Western Australia.

measure, provided for an increase in taxation on incomes and assets over and above a given amount. In his speech to the Senate justifying this measure and replying specifically to the criticisms of one Liberal senator, Lynch alluded to a childhood experience on the farm in Ireland. As he recounted it, two boys were regularly given eggs for breakfast in return for their labours on the farm—the younger boy (obviously himself) two eggs, and an older boy (plainly his older brother) four eggs, the differential reflecting their relative ages and work capacities. When the younger boy grew older he was rewarded with an extra egg, but the older boy was no longer satisfied—he now wanted five or six, in order to maintain the differential.¹⁹

This rather folksy tale was told in order to demonstrate how people demurred when they saw those less privileged than themselves improving their lot: human nature being what it was, men were inclined to want to maintain the differential rather than to surrender a little of their privilege and be satisfied with their comparatively well-off position. Given his youthful experience as a cleever, it was only appropriate that Senator Lynch (then in his fiftieth year) should dig into the recesses of childhood memory and draw upon this rural analogy from his Irish past.

On an earlier occasion Lynch revealed that he had neither forgotten nor lost his longing for some of the familiar landmarks of his native Meath. In a letter to T.P. McKenna, an auctioneer in Mullagh, written soon after the arrival in 1909 of Patrick's brother Philip and family in Australia, the Senator spoke somewhat wistfully of his native parish, and lamented that “the unfriendly hand of destiny wafted me into different paths in life, often involving longer journeys from

¹⁹ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 80, p.10263 (20 December 1916).

Australia than would have landed me back on Skearke Hill in sight of the Steeple of Loyd ...”²⁰

Conclusion

Patrick Joseph Lynch grew up with a stable family background in a close-knit rural community in late 19th century Ireland. As a farmer’s son, and indeed as a young farmer himself, he absorbed all the symbols and images of everyday farm life, dominated as it was by animals, seasons and harvests. A respect for learning was combined with a hard-nosed and tough-minded approach to ensuring the necessities of life. He imbibed the traditional conservative Catholic values of the society in which he was raised. He inherited the outlook of post-Famine tenant farmers and was influenced by the brand of moderate Catholic nationalism which prevailed amongst that class. He was keenly aware of the political events of his day and the developments which heralded a challenge to British rule in Ireland.

At the same time, the cultural environment in which Lynch was raised was a relatively Anglicised one, which in turn served as a countervailing influence upon Irish nationalist aspirations. At very least, it reflected a duality or tension between Britishness and Irishness. Notwithstanding the underlying processes gradually bringing about the modernisation of post-Famine Ireland, Patrick had grown up in a relatively stable, conservative and conformist rural society in which most of the dominant values remained unchallenged. That society ultimately fashioned Lynch the man, along with his most deeply held attitudes and beliefs. The mental baggage he carried with him to Australia contained all those formative and defining influences of his Irish boyhood.

²⁰ Letter by Lynch to T.P.McKenna (29 April 1909). Typed version of original copy in possession of D.Cusack. This McKenna would be a grand-uncle of the present T.P. McKenna, the distinguished actor.

CHAPTER TWO

EARLY LIFE IN AUSTRALIA (1886-96)

Little is known of the exact circumstances of Lynch's departure from Ireland or his arrival in Australia, other than that he landed at Maryborough in Queensland on a steamer from San Francisco¹ sometime in early 1886. We do know, however, that he spent a very short period in the United States en route. This would have made sense since he already had three brothers there—John (New York), James (Wisconsin) and Michael (Los Angeles).

We do know that he stayed long enough in at least one place in the USA to work as a day labourer and to become a member of the Knights of Labor,² a workingmen's association. His membership of the Knights was his first introduction to an organised labour movement. Its cooperative rather than class conflict-based philosophy was certainly an early formative influence on the young man. We also know from some of his later speeches in the Australian Senate that the USA had made a favourable impression upon him and left him more than well disposed towards that country.³

Having arrived in Australia as an eighteen-year-old, Lynch's first job was on the Kilkivar railway extension near Charleville in southern Queensland. Here he worked, hewing and laying wooden railway sleepers. After some months at this, he began the long trek 900 kilometres northwards to Croydon in north-west

¹ *Westralian Worker*, 17 August 1906.

² *Mount Leonora Miner*, 2 July 1904, p.2.

³ *CPD*, Vol.78, p.5476 (29 July 1915). Lynch and Senator Bakhap (Liberal) supported the promotion of relations with the USA. Lynch called for an Australian diplomatic presence in the United States.

Queensland where gold had been discovered in August 1885.⁴ Early in 1887, a rush set in and soon there were 2000 diggers at Croydon and, by the end of the year, 6500.⁵ It would seem that Lynch arrived as part of that influx. En route he familiarised himself with a large expanse of the Queensland outback, including such places as Charters Towers and Barcaldine, which were to feature so prominently in the labour troubles of the early 1890s. Thus, at a very early age, he had received an introduction to the Queensland outback and the Australian pioneering tradition, and a foretaste of his itinerant life to come. Apart from two receipts for pay dockets lodged in a post office account in Charleville,⁶ no records survive of this period in his early life in Australia.

Croydon peaked in 1890 but soon declined, and it was the last goldrush of any note in Queensland. During its early days, a combination of lack of transport, poor facilities and extremely unsanitary conditions made the Croydon field a most unpleasant place to live, despite the allure of easy wealth.⁷ Nonetheless, Lynch engaged in fruitless prospecting and other mining-related occupations on the Mark Twain and Croydon Queen sites, amongst others, for a period of up to two years. Beyond that, little is known of this episode in his life.⁸ What we do know is that some time in 1888, his enthusiasm no doubt fanned by news of a major goldstrike in the Kimberleys, Lynch proceeded as far as Port Darwin only to discover that the claims had been greatly exaggerated. Any plans of proceeding to Western Australia were quashed for the time being. Instead, his arrival in Port Darwin

⁴ *Westralian Worker*, 17 August 1906.

⁵ Ross Fitzgerald, *From the dreaming to 1915: a History of Queensland* (Brisbane, 1982), p.175.

⁶ Originals sighted 1 April 2001. Then in possession of Bernadette Lindsey, great-granddaughter of Lynch, Piesse Brook, Western Australia.

⁷ Fitzgerald, *op.cit.* (1982), p.175.

⁸ Information here largely based upon entry in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.10 (Melbourne, 1986), p.177.

marked the beginning of the second major phase in Lynch's Australian career—his seven years at sea from 1888 until 1895.

Sea-Faring Days

During the 1880s and 1890s a number of predominantly British-owned shipping lines ran steamers up and down the east coast of Australia, primarily for carrying freight rather than passengers. They operated out of ports such as Darwin, Townsville, Brisbane and Sydney. Several of the major lines also ran ships to the South Pacific islands, including Fiji. They played an integral part in the trading economy, not only between the eastern colonies of Australia, but also between those colonies and the South Pacific islands.

During his seven years at sea, Lynch worked on a number of these ships and for at least two different shipping lines, initially out of Darwin and Thursday Island, then from eastern ports, especially Sydney. For five years he worked as a stoker, one of the most arduous and demanding occupations imaginable, since it involved stoking boiling furnaces with shovelfuls of heavy coal in cramped and confined conditions, and for long periods. Later, having received his marine engineer's certificate (third-class) in August 1893, he was able to work as an engineer, a more prestigious and less arduous occupation.⁹ For most of his time at sea he appears to have been employed by the Australasian United Steam Navigation Company Limited (AUSNL), the major east coast and Pacific Island

⁹ In 1891 the minimum rate for a third-class engineer was £14 per month, considerably more than a fireman (£9) or an able-bodied seaman (£7).

shipping line,¹⁰ on ships such as the *Birksgate* and the *Rockton*, but also for the Pacific Steam Navigation Company on the *Manavi*.¹¹ It is not possible to be more specific about his places or dates of employment on account of the paucity of surviving shipping company records, but we can say that he travelled extensively.

Many years later, in 1937, Lynch claimed to have travelled and worked in every state in Australia—except Tasmania—before entering public life.¹² There is also reference to his “having visited all quarters of the globe”,¹³ implying that he had spent his seven years sailing “the seven seas”. We do know that at some stage he lived in at least four different countries—Ireland, the USA, Fiji and Australia. Beyond the nearby Pacific islands, it is, however, unclear where else he may have travelled in his seafaring days. Since the AUSNL was part of the British India Company, it is quite plausible that he had the opportunity to sail further afield at some stage. There are no records to prove this, although Lynch clearly implied that he had travelled afar when he later recalled how his sea-faring career had often involved “longer journeys from Australia than would have landed me back on Skearke Hill [his homeplace] in sight of the Steeple of Loyd [at Kells]...”.¹⁴

¹⁰ The AUSNL was one tentacle of the British India shipping octopus. In 1886, the Queensland Steam Company and the Australasian Shipping Line had merged into the AUSNL which had become the largest player on the east coast. It had an aggressive attitude towards trade and to its relations with its employees. In January 1890, only eleven of the 250 AUSNL wharf labourers in Sydney were unionists [Stuart Svensen, *The Sinews of War: Hard cash and the 1890 maritime strike* (Sydney, 1995), pp. 3 and 208].

¹¹ Letter from Maritime Services Board of New South Wales to Michael Lynch, son, 27 June 1975. Copy in possession of Frank Clune, grandson, Perth, WA.

¹² NAA CP 450/7/16 (Lyons Papers). Letter from Lynch to Prime Minister Lyons, 27 November 1937. It seems unlikely that he reached Western Australia until he headed for the goldfields in the mid-1890s.

¹³ *Cyclopedia of Western Australia*, Vol.1 (Adelaide, 1912), p.307.

¹⁴ Letter to T.P. McKenna, Mullagh, Co. Cavan, Ireland (29 April 1909). This statement could be explained if one or more of his sea journeys from Australia had totalled more than 13000 miles.

There is also reference to his “suffering shipwreck and other perilous adventures at sea”.¹⁵ Beyond occasional passing remarks by Lynch himself,¹⁶ however, we have no further details regarding these (mis)adventures. Clearly recorded, however, is a life-saving attempt by Lynch at Levuka harbour at Fiji, an act of bravery for which he was subsequently awarded a Royal Life-Saving Humane certificate. This particular incident occurred on 28 September 1891 when he was travelling on board the *Birksgate*. He dived into shark-infested waters on a pitch dark night in a vain attempt to rescue a fellow crewman, Thomas Taylor (also aged 24), who had fallen overboard. Lynch’s address at this time is recorded as 4 Jane Street, Balmain, Sydney and his occupation as “donkeyman”.¹⁷

Lynch does not appear to have publicised this particular act of bravery or the award that followed from it, although, many years later in the Senate, he did allude to the incident on a couple of occasions. On one such occasion, taunted by Labor senator Arthur Rae for his lack of service during the 1914-18 War, he defended himself by recalling the incident in question and proclaiming proudly that he had sprung into action whilst those around him had been loath to risk their lives.¹⁸ It would seem that Lynch—a young man of twenty-four at the time of the Fiji incident—suffered neither from indecision nor lack of courage.

Base in Balmain

In their study of the rise of Labor in New South Wales, Hagan and Turner set the

¹⁵ *Cyclopedia of Western Australia*, Vol.1 (Adelaide, 1912), p.307.

¹⁶ For example: *Report of Proceedings of General Council (Special Congress) 1916 of Australian Labor Federation (WA division)*, p.22.

¹⁷ Letter from Royal Humane Society of Australasia, Melbourne to Frank Clune, grandson, 4 October 1982. The letter included the relevant entry from the society’s 1893 Report.

¹⁸ *CPD*, Vol.134, p.1106 (19 May 1932). A similar incident had occurred in the Senate on 24 January 1918 involving Labor senator J.J. Long. See reference in Chapter Seven.

following scene:

In 1891, the area defined as Sydney by the Census had a population of about 382,000. Most of it lived within a mile or so of the ridge which runs between Circular Quay and the railway terminus, where most of the city's business offices and retail stores had located. To the west lay Darling Harbour and Pyrmont, their shorelines built up with wharves; there were more wharves at Millers Point to the north, and Woolloomooloo Bay, to the east; and to the south of Darling Harbour and of the commercial centre of the City were railway goods and repair yards. Around the wharves and the railway yards were warehouses, workshops and a few larger factories.

In all these areas, people lived close to their work, and commonly walked each day to and from their place of employment. Men who did a certain kind of work lived close by one another; from Millers Point round to Balmain, sailors, wharf labourers, dockers and draymen who worked together lived within a few yards of one another in tenements clustered around narrow lanes and alleys.¹⁹

Into this setting stepped young Patrick Lynch. Given his peripatetic life-style, it seems unlikely that he had a long-term address during his sea-faring days. However, insofar as he did have a fixed address, it appears to have been 4 Jane Street, Balmain. As noted earlier, the Royal Life-saving Society of Australia recorded him at this address in September 1891. His Marine Engineer's certificate was awarded at Sydney in August 1893.²⁰

During the 1880s and 1890s this harbourside suburb served as the most popular base for seaman and dock workers in Sydney. It was near to the wharves from which the coastal and Pacific Island liners sailed. With its profusion of boarding-houses and cluster of shops and pubs, Balmain served as the natural and ideal land base for sea-faring men.

¹⁹ James Hagan and Ken Turner, *A History of the Labor Party in New South Wales 1891-1991* (Melbourne, 1991), p.15.

²⁰ Letter from Marine Services Board of New South Wales to Michael Lynch, son, 27 June 1975. The letter states *inter alia* that, according to a publication entitled *Particulars of certificates of competency and of service which have been issued at Sydney to Masters, Mates and Engineers in the mercantile service*, certificate no. 1090, Third-Class Engineer, was issued to Patrick Lynch, 23 August 1893.

Number 4 Jane Street, still looking much as it must have done in 1891, is one of a row of a four terraced houses running from the rear of a major public house (now the London Hotel) which fronts on to the main street of Balmain. Here, in this boarding-house for itinerant seamen, Lynch was close to the hub of village life and within walking-distance of the ferry wharf. He imbibed much of the seafaring culture which defined the Balmain of his day.

Fiji Sugar Plantation

Directly across the harbour from Balmain lay the industrial area of Pyrmont which then housed the Australian headquarters of the Colonial Sugar Refinery (CSR) complex. Lynch had sailed to and from Fiji on the *Birksgate* (and possibly on other ships such as the *Rockton*)²¹ which carried sugar from the CSR plantations at Fiji to the Pyrmont refinery. After some six years at sea, Lynch elected to take a job on a Fijian sugar plantation. CSR records reveal that he was employed at their Rarawai plantation for a period of twelve months beginning 1 May 1894, a date just three weeks short of his 27th birthday.²² While published biographical sources²³ refer to Lynch as having been an “engineer” in Fiji, the CSR records have him in the more humble occupation of “fireman”.

Lynch, then, spent this year during a formative period of his life in the employ of a British-owned company, and in a colonial setting. Regardless of class or occupational status, as a white European employee he would have been integrated into those selfsame institutions and structures by which the British ruled the

²¹ ML Ms. 4528/214. The *Birksgate* was placed on the Fiji line on 29 August 1889 and the *Rockton* was recorded on the same line at 23 April 1890.

²² Butlin Archives (ANU, Canberra), CSR N74/51 (Fiji). Wage was 57/- per week.

²³ For example, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.10 (Melbourne, 1986), p.177

imported Indian labourers and the indigenous Fijians alike.²⁴ In these circumstances it was only natural for a young Irishman like Lynch to absorb the racial and cultural assumptions of his fellow Europeans, especially his fellow “Britishers”.

The long-term implications of this will be examined more fully in Chapter Nine. Suffice for now to observe, that some thirty years later Lynch would claim that his seven years at sea had altered his perception of the British flag from a symbol of oppression to one of protection.²⁵

Maritime Strikes

Lynch’s seven years as a seaman coincided with the most significant period in Australian maritime labour history, namely the great maritime strikes of 1890 and 1893. Taken together, these were defining events in the history of the Australian labour movement, both industrially and politically. As we shall see, Lynch, as a striking member of the Seamens Union, had a small role in both strikes.

The Federated Seamens Union (FSU) was founded in 1876, although local Unions were formed in Melbourne in 1872 and Sydney in 1874. The Union covered a wide variety of occupational groups: ordinary and able seamen who carried out a wide variety of deck duties, quartermasters, donkeymen (who tended the small engines used on winches), coal trimmers, firemen and greasers. When the Maritime Council was founded in 1885, the FSU, along with the other maritime unions, disaffiliated from the Trades and Labour council and joined the

²⁴ Indentured Indian labour was first introduced to Levuka in 1879 and thence to plantations elsewhere in Fiji.

²⁵ Address to the Argonauts Club, Perth, Western Australia, 1925. [WAA 948A/2 (Boas Papers). Clipping of report in unnamed newspaper (n.d.,1925)]

new body. By 1890, the FSU had 3000 members.

Gains by maritime unions during the 1880s had been minimal and conditions in 1890 were still harsh, especially for seamen. In Ray Markey's words:

Seamen also experienced a number of hardships at sea, for which even high earnings could not completely compensate. Discipline could be harsh, and it was claimed that 'crimping', or press-ganging, still occurred occasionally. Food and accommodation at sea were abominable. More generally, seamen were often isolated from the comforts of family and friends for long periods.²⁶

According to Svensen, firemen like Lynch had the most unenviable job of all:

Men of superhuman strength and endurance, they shovelled the coal to feed the insatiable appetite of the glowing steam fiend's iron bowels for two four-hour shifts a day, while choking on coal-dust and coal gases. Often they emerged from their shifts parboiled.²⁷

The great maritime strike of 1890 represented a coming together of three separate but related events during the course of that year. In March, the Marine Officers Association had elected to affiliate with the Melbourne Trades Hall Council. The Shipping Owners Association objected and this issue—freedom of affiliation—became one of the major causes of the subsequent conflict between employers and workers. Soon after, in July, the seamen had followed the wharf labourers in approaching the ship owners with a log of claims for better pay and working conditions. Once the strike had begun, the demands of shearers against pastoralists were pursued by the Shearers Union secretary, W.G. Spence, and, utilising such bodies as the Labour Defence Committees and the Intercolonial Labour Conference, the striking maritime unions were effectively co-opted into supporting the demands of the shearers.²⁸

²⁶ Raymond Markey, *The making of the Australian Labor Party in New South Wales, 1880-1890* (Sydney, 1988), pp.97-8.

²⁷ Stuart Svensen, *The Sinews of War: Hard Cash and the 1890 Maritime Strike* (Sydney, 1995), p.17.

²⁸ For a chronology of events, see Bede Nairn, "The 1890 Maritime Strike in New South Wales" in *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand* (Vol.10, No.37, November 1961), p.16 (footnote 12).

The FSU was officially out on strike from 20 August—15 November. On 23 August, the *Birksgate*, an AUSNL ship on which Lynch had previously been employed, sailed out of Cooktown manned by non-unionists. Other ships sailed from Brisbane and Sydney using non-union labour. The FSU was represented on the special Strike Defence Committee established in Sydney during the early days of the strike.²⁹ However, the seamen did not always see their interests as synonymous with their colleagues in other unions, such as the Marine Officers Association and the Wharf Labourers Union.

Cracks had developed within the framework of supposed labour solidarity. By 29 October the strike was virtually over when wharf labourers voted to return to work. Several other unions, including the seamen, returned to work the following month. The last strikers did not return to work until January 1891, but by that time the strike had been thoroughly broken. The employers and the governments had won.

Two years later, in 1893, the seamen were involved in yet another strike, although on this occasion it was much more limited in scope. Once again the employers emerged on top. In reaching a compromise through negotiated settlement, the seamen were forced to accept a partial reduction of wages (by £1 per week rather than the £2 originally proposed). Overall, seamen made few if any gains from the strikes of 1890 and 1893. If anything, they barely managed to hold their own ground in the face of employer demand for wage cutbacks.

²⁹ The Committee comprised 26 representatives from nine unions (including Tom Davis and Sam Smith representing the seamen).

Lynch's Role

These momentous events helped shape Australia's *and* Lynch's destiny. Curiously, biographical sources published subsequently—the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* included—make no mention of Lynch's participation in the maritime strikes. His involvement is revealed, nevertheless, by a brief reference in the *Westralian Worker* over a decade later: "Paddy was an ardent and prominent Laborist in the eastern states [and] fought side by side in the great maritime strike with Sam Smith, now member of the New South Wales Arbitration Court ...".³⁰

The *Worker* later credited Lynch with having moved a key resolution at Sydney during the 1890 strike: "[He was] mover of a motion during maritime strike, Sydney, 1890, for the rejection of the employers' proposal – 'That the leaders be ignored and the men make the best terms individually'. The motion was carried by a narrow majority, and a threatened disruption averted ...".³¹ It is likely that Lynch himself provided these details. Although it is unclear from the context of the report and the sparse information provided, it would seem that he was extolling the virtues of moderation rather than militancy. It would also appear that he was being accorded an active role in the culmination of events.

There is no specific mention of such a motion amongst the surviving strike records; nor is Lynch's name listed amongst the various elected officials and strike committee members at the time. We must bear in mind, however, that he was only twenty-three years of age at the time of the 1890 strike (and twenty-six

³⁰ *Westralian Worker*, 11 July 1902. Lynch confirmed his own involvement in the strikes in parliamentary speeches nearly thirty years after the events. As we shall see later, he implicitly acknowledged their formative influence on his early political consciousness [*CPD*, Vol.88, pp.10503-4 (9 July 1919); Vol.90, pp.12935-6 (2 October 1919), p.13823 (23 October 1919)].

³¹ *Westralian Worker*, 8 June 1906, p.2.

at the time of the later strike). It would have been possible for this young man to have been a strike activist without necessarily holding down a formal position, something which his transient lifestyle would have militated against. At the same time, it would be a mistake to dismiss too readily Lynch's absence from the surviving records or to explain away his apparent lack of prominence by way of his youth alone. Age of itself meant nothing. After all, some prominent contemporaries in Sydney's Labor circles were of a similar age. In 1891, for example, Lynch was only twenty-four, but then so was J.C. Watson. W.M. Hughes was still only twenty-seven, and W.A. Holman a mere twenty-two.³²

Given his Balmain address of 1891, it is almost certain that Lynch belonged to the New South Wales branch of the FSU. As a seaman travelling the eastern and southern coast, he would have come into regular contact with fellow unionists in other colonies, particularly Queensland, Victoria and South Australia. His membership of the Seamens Union marked his formal introduction to the cause of organised labour in Australia. His part as a striking seaman—albeit relatively small and insignificant—in the historic events of the early 1890s signified his full initiation into the movement.

At this time the Federated Seamens Hall stood at 172 Princes Street in the Millers Point area of harbourside Sydney. That hall is now long demolished and Princes Street itself no longer exists, erased by mid-20th century developments such as the construction of the Bradfield Freeway. In its day, the Seamens Hall served as a focal point, not only for seaman but for other maritime workers. It is not difficult to imagine the young Lynch meeting and socialising there with his

³² Bede Nairn notes that “youth *plus experience* in Sydney Labor circles was possessed by Watson, especially, and Holman and, to a lesser extent, Hughes. Lynch could not rival them ... he would have been a keen helper and an excited onlooker” [Notes to the author, 4 June 2002].

fellow unionists. The hall was frequently advertised as a venue for union meetings during the 1890s, and the vital third conference of the Labor Party was held there in November 1893 with over 200 delegates. We shall now turn our attention to that new political party which Lynch and his colleagues helped to create.

Labor Party in West Sydney

The Labor Party in New South Wales generally dates its inception from 1891. In that year, the unions, through the Trades and Labour Council, decided to establish Labor Electoral Leagues with the express purpose of running officially endorsed Labor candidates for the New South Wales state parliament. The election of that year saw Labor achieve a dramatic breakthrough with the return of no less than thirty-five endorsed candidates to the Legislative Assembly.

Nowhere was the emergence of the nascent Labor Party more evident than in the electorate of West Sydney where all four endorsed candidates were returned: Tom Davis (Secretary of the Seamens Union), A.J. Kelly, George Black and J.D. Fitzgerald. Consisting of an area that takes in the western part of the inner city, along with Millers Point and Pyrmont, the West Sydney electorate saw the Labor Party drawing much of its initial impetus and strength from the maritime unions' membership based in the vicinity. West Sydney and adjoining western districts such as Balmain constituted the hub of city labour movement activity—both industrial and political—in 1890-91. Lynch dated his original involvement in the Labor Party from this time.³³ This means that he would have become a member of either the West Sydney or Balmain branch of the Labor Electoral League established to run the 1891 election campaign. It is apparent that Lynch was

³³ CPD, Vol.81, p.10977 (5 March 1917).

involved in the Labor campaign in West Sydney in that year—that is to say, as a young rank-and-file seaman and trade unionist rather than as a union or party official. Since his union secretary, Tom Davis, was one of the Labor candidates, it was only logical that Lynch's union activity should extend into active political involvement.

Darling Harbour formed the western extremity of the West Sydney electorate and so Lynch's residential address was in the neighbouring electorate of Balmain. However, the Labor Electoral League successfully ran candidates here, too, and it is likely that he was also involved in this campaign. The four successful Labour candidates were W.A. Murphy, E.M. Clark, E. Darnley and J. Johnston. Murphy had been secretary of the Marine Officers Association during the 1890 strike, so Lynch would probably have been acquainted with him.³⁴ In any event, since seamen and other maritime unionists were numerous in their adjoining bases at Balmain and West Sydney, young activists like Lynch involved themselves in whatever location they were most needed. In his case, such involvement would have been greatly curtailed by his time at sea. He was, nonetheless, present for and part of these seminal events in the history of the Australian Labor Party. As a young man in his early twenties, he had been able to rub shoulders with men who would one day become doyens of the movement.

Influential Contemporaries

Amongst Lynch's contemporaries in the West Sydney of the early 1890s can be numbered some of the leading pioneers of the labour movement—J.C. Watson,

³⁴ Murphy later metamorphosed in Western Australia as a Liberal politician (MLA for Fremantle 1910-11) and Lynch almost certainly met him again there.

W.M. Hughes, William Holman, George Black and J.D. Fitzgerald. Less well known but more immediate to Lynch's circle were Tom Davis and Sam Smith, both of the Seamens Union. It is probable that Lynch met most, if not all, of the aforementioned at some stage during those years, along with W.G. Spence of the Shearers Union who also frequented these circles when in Sydney.

Tom Davis, New South Wales secretary of the Seamens Union during the strike of 1890 and subsequently Labor MLA for West Sydney, remained prominent in Labor circles until his premature death in 1898. Sam Smith replaced Davis as president of the New South Wales Political Labor League in 1898. He subsequently served as a judge on the New South Wales Arbitration Court 1901-5. It seems that he and Lynch kept in contact. At least, in 1903, Smith wrote to Lynch, by then a trade union advocate in Western Australia, supplying useful advice and information on the preparation of cases for Arbitration Court hearings.³⁵

J.D. Fitzgerald, who entered the State Parliament as an MLA for West Sydney in 1891, was a leading Labor thinker and activist. He was less connected to the industrial base of the labour movement and belonged rather to that group which sought to broaden the membership of the party to include middle-class professionals. He pursued an active parliamentary career in the New South Wales Labor Party well into the second decade of the 20th century, achieving ministerial rank and serving for a time as party leader in the Legislative Council. Along with Lynch, he was one of the few prominent Irish Catholic conscriptionists in the Labor Party in 1916.

³⁵ WAA 300/1704A/15/142. Minutes of the Goldfields Trades and Labor Council (30 December 1903)

William Holman, English-born and future New South Wales Labor premier, did not have a strong trade union pedigree and, like Fitzgerald, was a product of the political rather than the industrial wing of the movement. He was another conscriptionist in 1916: the ensuing split led to the downfall of his government, after which he served out the remainder of his parliamentary career on the Nationalist benches. As we shall see later, he, Fitzgerald and Lynch, were involved in behind-the-scene political machinations leading to the introduction of the Irish Home Rule motion in the Senate in March 1917.³⁶

J.C. Watson, first leader of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party and first Labor Prime Minister of Australia, was one of the leading figures in the birth of the party in 1891. He would certainly have known and worked with Lynch at that early stage. As Caucus colleagues, they would later have had considerable contact during Lynch's early Federal parliamentary career. Watson stayed on the scene for some years as an adviser and person of influence in Labor circles, even after his retirement in 1910.

W.M. Hughes, future wartime Labor Prime Minister, was someone who would loom large in Lynch's later political career, particularly during the conscription split of 1916-17. Having followed his leader out of the Labor caucus and (subsequently) into the Nationalist ranks, Lynch would remain a strong Hughes loyalist for the rest of his life. Much of this loyalty stemmed from their early days in the New South Wales labour movement. Hughes was a labour activist during the 1890s, his extensive involvement including a spell with the Wharf Labourers Union. His and Lynch's paths must certainly have crossed in Sydney harbourside

³⁶ One purpose of these manoeuvres was to shore up Irish Catholic support for Holman. See discussion in Chapter Nine.

Labor circles, not least in the context of the 1891 election campaign.

W.G. Spence, as we have already noted, played a prominent part in the maritime strike of 1890 as leader of the Shearers Union and as secretary of the Intercolonial Labour Conference. Later, as an MHR, Spence was a Caucus colleague of Lynch, who nominated him for the party leadership upon Watson's retirement in October 1907 (Andrew Fisher won the ballot). Spence and Lynch then served together briefly in the Hughes Government of November 1916-February 1917. In one of his Senate speeches, Lynch made it apparent that he had known Spence from the early days and been one of his strongest supporters.³⁷

R.S. Guthrie, whilst not based in New South Wales, was evidently another significant Labor figure in Lynch's political life. He had been South Australian secretary of the Seamens Union during the maritime strikes of the 1890s, so it is likely that their paths crossed at that early stage. He, like Spence, was a conscriptionist and followed Hughes in 1916. Lynch later revealed himself to be a great admirer of Guthrie, his Nationalist (and erstwhile Labor) Senate colleague.³⁸

It is safe to conclude that the aforementioned Labor figures strongly influenced the development of the young Lynch. They were certainly representative of that culture of early 1890s Sydney which nurtured both the nascent Labor Party and Lynch's own politics.

It is also interesting to note that two identifiable common features may be attached to each of these prominent Labor figures. The first is a solid commitment to the principles of arbitration. This is most evident in the case of Lynch's mentor,

³⁷ *CPD*, Vol.82, pp.410-16 (25 July 1917).

³⁸ *Ibid*, Vol.88, p.10503 (9 July 1919). He lauded Guthrie's leadership under which seamen's wages rose in 1894 from £7 to £14 per month, something for which Lynch had reason to be personally grateful. Guthrie died after being hit by a tram in Melbourne in January 1921.

Sam Smith, who subsequently became a judge of the New South Wales Arbitration Court. It is, however, equally as true of the more prominent Labor figures such as Watson and Hughes. The Federal Labor governments which they led in the early years of the 20th century demonstrated a strong legislative commitment to the principles of arbitration. The 1892 Arbitration Act in New South Wales, coming as it did in the wake of the 1890 maritime strike, represented for the most part a turning-away from the practice of militancy to the practice of moderation and to the principles of arbitration. The fact that seamen were refused negotiations in 1893 when wages were cut makes it all the more significant that men like Smith and Lynch should not waver in their support for arbitration, especially as their reaction did not appear to reflect the majority view within their own union circles.³⁹

The second feature common to all these 1890s contemporaries is support for conscription in 1916-17. To a man, everyone of this group of prominent Laborites who survived until 1916—Davis and Smith did not—were solid conscriptionists: Watson, Hughes, Spence, Holman, Black, Fitzgerald and Guthrie. Notwithstanding personal ambivalences, not one anti-conscriptionist is to be found amongst them. Whatever the explanation for this, the consensus alone demonstrates a defining like-mindedness amongst Lynch and his peers. These two common factors—support for arbitration and support for conscription—would have significant implications for Lynch's later political development.

³⁹ Markey, *op.cit.* (1988), p.280.

Long-Term Influence

Verity Burgmann has identified two major strands in the New South Wales labour movement in the wake of the maritime strikes—one *socialist* and the other *proto-Laborist*.⁴⁰ The former retained a radical commitment to trade union militancy and to the application of socialist principles in the extra-parliamentary sphere. The latter, following upon the groundbreaking Labour gains in the 1891 elections, became committed to reform through the parliamentary process and accompanying legislative measures such as the Arbitration Act.

It is clear that most, if not all, of the aforementioned group of Labor identities can readily be identified with the *proto-Laborist* strand. It will also become evident when we trace his later political development that Lynch himself was representative of this position. For him, a firm commitment to the parliamentary process and to the principles of arbitration quickly supplanted any tendency towards militancy or to the precipitate use of the strike weapon. The experience of the maritime strikes along with the contemporaneous development of the putative Labor Party had had a formative influence on Lynch. He was strongly influenced by the dominant thinking within those circles in early 1890s New South Wales Labor politics which he frequented. In the wake of the failures and disappointments of the maritime strikes, moderation rather than militancy prevailed.

Something of the enduring impact on Lynch of the 1890s maritime strikes can be gauged by two speeches he made to the Senate in October 1919. A national dock strike was then in full swing. On 2 October, he mounted a spirited defence of

⁴⁰ Verity Burgmann, “Premature Labour: the maritime Strike and the parliamentary strategy” in James Hagan and Andrew Wells (eds), *The Maritime Strike: a Centennial Retrospective* (Sydney, 1991), pp.84-5.

the arbitration system and of “loyalist” dock workers at Fremantle who had been accused by striking unionists of “scabbing.” He condemned the victimisation of “loyalist” workers. Whereas once he would not have apologised for assaults on blacklegs, times had changed. The workers now had arbitration, so there was no excuse. He further denounced those “self-same so-called Labourites” who he claimed had been “scabs” in 1890 and 1893.⁴¹

Three weeks later, on 23 October 1919, he accused wharf labourers of “scabbing” on him and taking his job in 1890 and 1893. Since Lynch himself did not elaborate, we have no way of knowing exactly what had happened so many years previously. It is clear, nevertheless, that as a consequence of these experiences he harboured a long-standing grudge against wharf labourers in general.⁴² His accusations may simply reflect general tensions which existed between different groups of maritime unionists—especially between seamen and wharf labourers—at the time of the 1890s strikes.

The connection between these events and those of 1919 appears tenuous. Lynch wished to condemn the actions of striking wharf labourers at Fremantle. In so doing, he appeared to be drawing upon the alleged miscreance of another group of wharf labourers (who had “scabbed” on him in Sydney nearly thirty years previously) as convenient ammunition with which to attack current workers. Beyond that, it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions, other than this: Lynch had obviously neither forgotten nor forgiven a bitter personal experience.

Given his involvement as a striking seaman in the maritime strikes of 1890 and 1893, and the resultant difficulties which it created for him in terms of

⁴¹ *CPD*, Vol.90, pp.12935-6 (2 October 1919).

⁴² *Ibid*, p.13823 (23 October 1919).

employment, it was hardly surprising that Lynch should avail himself of the opportunity to venture to Fiji and work on a sugar plantation for twelve months. Despite his youth and sense of adventure, Lynch did not choose the option of accompanying William Lane and his followers to Paraguay a year earlier,⁴³ although living in Balmain, he was well placed to do so. Balmain had served as the temporary base for a large number of the settlers for the few months prior to departure. With its capitulation to the employers, the 1893 strike reached its culmination in July, the same month as the “first batchers” left Sydney aboard the *Royal Tar*. Lynch later recalled standing on the Sydney Domain just prior to the departure, listening to several of Lane’s followers extolling the virtues of their imminent adventure.⁴⁴ He felt no temptation to go to Paraguay, however. He did not believe, even at that early stage, that this kind of socialist experiment could ever work.⁴⁵

So it was that Lynch ventured to Fiji rather than Paraguay. May 1895 found him on the eve of his 28th birthday, having just completed his twelve-month contract on the Rarawai sugar plantation. After seven years at sea, and a year in Fiji, immediate employment prospects were not bright. At about this time, Lynch got word of the glowing prospects on the Western Australian goldfields. Here at Coolgardie, another Irishman, Paddy Hannan, had discovered gold in 1893. By the mid-1890s, men were flocking to these goldfields in their thousands,

⁴³ In the wake of the failed Queensland shearers strike of 1891, William Lane, the British-born and Brisbane-based socialist and journalist, founded the New Australia Movement. Under his leadership, a party of some 240 followers left Australia in July 1893 and established a settlement in Paraguay. A second batch of several hundred colonists arrived early the following year. This utopian socialist experiment eventually broke down, however descendants of the movement remain there till this day. See Gavin Souter, *A Peculiar People: The Australians in Paraguay* (Sydney, 1968).

⁴⁴ *CPD*, Vol.131, p.4271 (23 July 1931).

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p.4272 (23 July 1931); Vol.133, pp.126-38 (19 February 1932). See Chapter Eleven for fuller discussion.

particularly from the eastern colonies, to seek their fortunes working at the alluvial finds. The idea of setting off to Western Australia to try his own hand at making a fortune must have appealed to Lynch. He had not only his Croydon experience, but his abortive 1888 foray to the Cossack gold find in the Kimberleys, behind him.

Official parliamentary biographical sources, comprised for the most part by information supplied by Lynch himself, state that he “eventually” made his way to the Western Australian goldfields. This leaves a year or so unaccounted for between his departure from Fiji in mid-1895 and his arrival on the goldfields, probably in late 1896 or early 1897. It is likely that upon his return to Australia he worked for a time in New South Wales before heading west. He is recorded as having been a shearer and AWA man in New South Wales at some unspecified time.⁴⁶ The completion of a circuitous journey from South Pacific island via New South Wales to the Western Australian goldfields draws the curtain on this particular chapter in Lynch’s life.

Conclusion

By the year 1896, Patrick Lynch, barely a decade out of Ireland, already had a rich and diverse career behind him for a young man still only in his late twenties. He had seen most of the colonies of Australia and several other parts of the world besides. He had left Ireland as a teenager with few immediate prospects, and certainly no real professional or practical qualifications. Like many other emigrants from a farming background, he was forced to adapt to vastly different environments when he travelled—to outback Queensland, to life at sea, to urban

⁴⁶ *Mount Leonora Miner*, 2 July 1904, p.2.

harbourside Sydney and to a South Pacific sugar plantation. He was obliged to engage in hard physical labour. He had to be both adaptive and adventurous enough to travel wherever and whenever opportunities presented themselves.

Tough life experience in a variety of demanding occupations had given the young man a hard-headed practical view of the world. At the same time, reading and travel had expanded his horizons. He had been introduced to the Australian outback tradition which he had grown to admire. From relatively modest beginnings in Ireland, he had managed to improve his situation and prospects within the space of decade. He had gained a marine engineer's certificate and, though still primarily engaged in manual occupations, acquired the kind of qualification with which he could now hope to better himself. This quest for self-advancement sat side-by-side with a sense of loyalty to his mates and to the principles of collective solidarity. His involvement in the maritime strikes of the early 1890s was the formative experience in his early political education and a major conditioner of his later public life. He was both a witness to and a bit player in these momentous events in Australian history. But he was more *influenced by* than *influential in* those events.

Like many other Irish migrants, Lynch had become actively involved in the labour movement, something which almost certainly would never have happened had he remained in Ireland. At the same time, he can be clearly identified with that more moderate Laborist strand that emanated from the experience of the maritime strikes. Whilst strongly associating with the cause of organised labour and the rise of the political movement which grew from it, he was nonetheless motivated by practical goals and by realistic demands rather than by socialist ideology. His early adventures as an ambitious young Irishman in his late teens

and his twenties had been motivated primarily by this sense of adventure coupled with a desire to better himself materially.

CHAPTER THREE

THE GOLDFIELDS (1897-1904)

The seven years from Lynch's arrival on the Western Australian goldfields¹ c.1897 until his election to the State Parliament in 1904 proved to be a very productive period in his life. It was also one into which he packed an abundance of activity in public affairs. Lynch turned thirty years of age in May 1897. Having spent the best part of his early adult years rambling and wandering, he was now in a sense settling down.

Lynch was variously employed after his arrival at Boulder but his primary occupation was that of mine engine-driver.² He was a founding member of the Amalgamated Certificated Engine-Drivers Association (ACEDA) in 1897 and served a total of five years as its Goldfields General Secretary—roughly three in an honorary capacity (1898-1901) and another two as a full-time paid official (1902-4). He also served at various times as Boulder branch secretary, occasionally overlapping with his tenures as General Secretary.

Aside from his keynote role in the ACEDA, Lynch was otherwise active in public affairs. He was a member of the Electoral Reform Convention in Kalgoorlie (1898) and a member of the executive of the Alluvial Rights Association in 1899. He became the first President of the Political Labor League (PLL) on the Goldfields in 1900 and was subsequently an officer of the Australian

¹ Hereafter "Western Australian goldfields" and "Goldfields" are used interchangeably.

² Not to be confused with a locomotive engine-driver. His job was to work the winding machinery which transported men and equipment up and down into the mines.

Labor Federation (ALF), Goldfields, attending successive Labor conferences in Kalgoorlie and Perth. Having twice been unsuccessful in Labor pre-selection ballots (for the state seat of Hannans in 1902 and for the Senate in 1903), it was a case of third time lucky for Lynch when in 1904 he won pre-selection for the newly-created state seat of Mount Leonora. Upon the establishment of the State Arbitration Court in 1901, he represented the ACEDA and a number of other Goldfields unions in several significant cases, a role which greatly strengthened his profile and reputation within the labour movement.

Within the Goldfields community, Lynch was involved in a number of local organisations and societies. These included the Boulder branches of the United Irish League and the Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society (HACBS), of which he served a term as president. In December 1901, he became the first officially endorsed Labor councillor at Boulder, and served on the council until his election to the State Parliament in 1904. He also served simultaneously on other public bodies such as the Boulder Roads Board and the Boulder Health Board.

Lynch also “settled down” (in that peculiarly Irish sense of the term) when in 1901, aged 34 years, he married Ann Cleary. By 1904, the first of their children had been born. In 1899, Lynch became a property owner when he acquired land at two different sites in Boulder, one at Moran Street and another at nearby Wittenoom Street. By 1903 the Moran Street property had become the site of the Lynch residence, adjoined by two shops. This land and property, most of which he retained until after the 1914-18 War, made Lynch, engine-driver and trade

union official, a significant stakeholder in the town.

The Setting: Boulder 1897

Photographs of Boulder in 1897 reveal a rather spare and open landscape. Tents and other temporary dwellings rather than more permanent structures provide the signs of human habitation. Nonetheless, the *Western Argus* observed in June of that year that the Boulder townsite was making rapid strides:

[Along with Mulcahy's Hotel] a large number of other business premises have been finished, and are occupied ... The residence areas are being rapidly settled, while the school grounds are being enclosed with a fine jarrah fence ... ³

The following month the same paper noted that, whereas Boulder was both an unsanitary and an unsuitable location, economically it was booming. The Golden Mile next door would guarantee it success.⁴

The townships of Boulder and Kalgoorlie, while less than a mile apart, had really developed as separate entities. Boulder "took off" some years after Kalgoorlie, initially dwelling in its shadow as something of the poor relation. However, by mid-1898 the *Western Argus* was able to claim that Boulder was now outstripping Kalgoorlie,⁵ and before the end of the year that Boulder had a bright future, the rate of increase in buildings far outstripping that of Kalgoorlie.⁶

Boulder also displayed other signs of advancement and prosperity. A Boulder Suburbs Progress Committee was active as early as September 1897. From May 1898, Boulder had its own evening daily, the *Boulder Evening Star*, joining the

³ *Western Argus*, 17 June 1897, p.14.

⁴ *Ibid*, 1 July 1897, p.5.

⁵ *Evening Star* (Boulder), 12 July 1898.

⁶ *Ibid*, 23 November 1898. In December 1896 the Boulder survey was completed and workers began moving from shanties into the township. In 1897 more substantial stone and brick buildings began to take shape and on 6 August that year Boulder attained municipal status.

daily *Kalgoorlie Miner* and the weekly *Western Argus* (founded 1895 and 1894 respectively) as major newspapers in this part of the Goldfields. At the turn of the century the Boulder Primary School had the largest population of any school in Western Australia.

Into this setting of a challenging yet promising pioneer mining township stepped Paddy Lynch. The thirty-year-old man standing in Boulder was indeed occupying a starkly different environment to the one he had left behind in Ireland as an eighteen-year-old. Notwithstanding everything that had passed during the twelve intervening years, these two sharply contrasting physical landscapes must have somehow moulded his interior mental landscape. How did he reconcile them in his mind, for they were indeed worlds apart?⁷

Settling In

The first actual documentary evidence of Lynch being on the Goldfields is a record of his having attended a Boulder ACEDA branch meeting in mid-September 1897.⁸ His first recorded address is C/- Lake View Consolidated in 1898.⁹ From this it may be concluded that he worked for this particular company, at least for a time. In mid-1897, Lake View, Great Boulder and Ivanhoe were the largest gold producers on the Golden Mile. In August, the *Western Argus* predicted that within a week Lake View would be the greatest gold producer in Australia.¹⁰

It seems likely that Lynch resided in temporary rented accommodation for

⁷ This reflection was recorded after my first visit to Boulder on 5 September 2000, some seventeen months after I had stood in Lynch's homeplace at Skearke.

⁸ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 16 September 1897.

⁹ *Post Office Directory* (1898).

¹⁰ *Western Argus*, 12 August 1897, p.11.

most of his early years (c. 1896-1902) on the Goldfields, quite possibly within the “Boulder Block”. This would have left him convenient to the main Boulder railway station and thence to the various stations on the loop-line which served most of the mine sites to the east and south of the township. Alternatively, he may have stayed in the small township which grew up around Kamballie station, located one stop from the main Boulder station in a south-easterly direction, and convenient to the Lake View Consolidated site.

While Lynch’s primary occupation during his early years in the Goldfields was that of mine engine-driver, he may also have had a part share in a lease and worked at various times as an alluvial miner. Most mining company employees worked as alluvial miners at some stage in order to supplement their incomes and to acquire a little capital. Lynch’s membership of the executive of the Alluvial Rights Association in 1899 helps sustain this view.

Within only two or three years of having arrived on the Goldfields, he was able to become a property-owner and, with it, a significant stakeholder within the Boulder community. By 1899, he had acquired land at two sites—Lot 150 Moran Street (corner Lane Street) and Lot 92 Wittenoom Street nearby. A year later, the addition of a shop to his land at Lane Street gave his two properties a combined rateable value of £123, thus doubling the number of votes to which he was entitled in municipal elections. Although only about half a dozen engine-drivers were enrolled in the Boulder municipality in 1900-1, Lynch was easily the best off financially speaking.¹¹

¹¹ Boulder Rate Books (1900-1) consulted in the Kalgoorlie Town Hall, September 2000. Lynch’s combined rateable value of £123 far exceeded, for example, that of James Quinn (sometime treasurer of the Boulder ACEDA branch) whose neighbouring land at Lot 148 Moran Street attracted a rateable value of only £6.

It seems that the three shops at Lane Street were all built after Lynch acquired this land.¹² This, together with the fact that he was able to acquire such well-placed property in the first place, suggests that he had accumulated a substantial amount of capital; certainly far more than the average engine-driver could have hoped to acquire in a couple of years, no matter how hard he had worked. Whether he had already obtained this capital before arriving in Western Australia, whether he made it working as an alluvial miner or whether he acquired it by some other means, such as shrewd investments, is uncertain.

On 19 November 1901, Lynch married Ann Cleary, a native of County Clare, in the nearby All Hallows Catholic Church. The newly-weds lived at the Lane Street address for a couple of years, until Lynch's election to the State Parliament in 1904. The immediately adjoining shop, a five-room affair, served during those years as the Manhattan Tearooms, a restaurant run by Lynch's sister-in-law, Mary Cleary.¹³ The tearooms was a well-known establishment in Boulder during the early years of the last century and, side-by-side with Lynch's income as a trade union official, provided a lucrative little business for the Cleary sisters. The sisters, Ann and Mary—accompanied by at least one other sibling (Ann's twin sister, Tess)—had arrived in Australia several years previously. According to one account, they were based first at Sydney, where Lynch is said to have met Ann, his bride to be, during his seafaring days.¹⁴ If this is true, it may have provided another motivation for his venturing west to the Goldfields, after the Cleary sisters

¹² They are still standing to this day; structurally-speaking, relatively unchanged. Until quite recently they were used as shops or offices, though as at September 2001 they were all lying vacant.

¹³ Mary Cleary seems to have given up the running of this establishment in late 1904 and to have accompanied her sister and brother-in-law to Perth, leaving the restaurant to be rented out to a succession of different proprietors in the ensuing years.

¹⁴ Information from Celine Pownall, grand-daughter of Lynch.

had already done so.

Lynch's other property, situated barely 200 yards away at Lot 92 Wittenoom Street, remained a vacant block of land until an iron office (or camp) was erected here in 1902. More importantly, he had acquired Lot 93 Wittenoom Street next door on behalf of the ACEDA and by the middle of 1902 a union hall had been built on the site.¹⁵

Let us then envisage the setting and environs in which Lynch found himself during his period of residence in Lane Street in 1903-4. He was barely a couple of minutes walk from his place of work, the ACEDA Hall in nearby Wittenoom Street. En route he would have passed the Terminus Hotel built in 1902 on the corner of Lane and Wittenoom Streets, directly next door to Lynch's property at Lot 92. Heading down Lane Street from his residence to the hall, he would have passed the Boulder Primary School on his left. From his front door, it was only about five minutes walk to the Church of All Hallows, his regular place of worship, then occupying a site at Lot 247 Wittenoom Street.¹⁶

Less than a block from the Lynch residence, though heading in the opposite direction, was Burt Street, the main thoroughfare of Boulder. Here the Workers Hall would have played a major part in Lynch's life, especially before the construction of the ACEDA Hall, and, along with it, the Mechanics Institute next door. Both places were regular venues for the numerous political meetings and social events held in the town. Burt Street was also the focal point of civic and commercial life, housing as it did the Post Office and, later, the grand Boulder

¹⁵ Boulder Rate Books (1901-2). The land records show this site as Crown land before Lynch purchased it on behalf of the ACEDA.

¹⁶ This church, in which Lynch was married, is long demolished. The present Church of All Hallows (opened in 1911) stands on a nearby site in Moran Street.

Town Hall (completed 1907), along with the prominent hostelrys which dominated the block.

All in all, Lynch was well placed close to the hub of community life in the town. What is more, he was still guaranteed ready access to the vital connecting link to Kalgoorlie and to the mines sites outside Boulder because his residence in Lane Street left him only five minutes walk from the main railway station. In short, he had the best of all worlds.

ACEDA

Lynch was a founding member of the Boulder Engine-Drivers Association in 1896, and of the Goldfields Amalgamated Certificated Engine-Drivers Association (ACEDA) the following year. He is first recorded in a report of a Boulder branch meeting in September 1897 at which he and four others were appointed to a sub-committee to consider the Mines Regulations Act in the context of the Royal Commission on Mining.¹⁷ The ACEDA, along with the Amalgamated Workers Association (AWA), were the most powerful labour organisations on the Goldfields at this time. The ACEDA head office was at Boulder and its branches quickly spread throughout the Goldfields, with a total membership by 1903 of 860.¹⁸ According to Layman and Goddard:

The engine-drivers were the elite of the mining work-force, acknowledged and respected as the skilled winder drivers on whom the miners depended for their lives, as they travelled between the surface and their working levels. From its formation the association worked to raise standards throughout the industry. Only certificated engine-drivers could belong to the association and it set out to eliminate non-certificated drivers, to raise examination standards and to see instituted an inspection system for all boilers and machinery. The

¹⁷ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 16 September 1897.

¹⁸ Lenore Layman and Julian Goddard, *ORGANISE! A Visual Record of the Labour movement in Western Australia* (Perth, 1988), p.83.

engine-drivers had great pride in their skill and a determination to embrace the standards and status of their occupation.¹⁹

Although the ACEDA was unwilling to amalgamate with the mass of unskilled labour, its role cannot really be understood without reference to the development of the broad labour movement and of the other major unions co-existing within it. We cannot consider this subject fully here; however, I.H. van den Driesen, in his study of the early labour movement in Western Australia, has described the developing inter-relationships between the ACEDA, the Amalgamated Workers Association (AWA) also founded 1897; the Goldfields Trades and Labor Council, founded 1898; and the Amalgamated Miners Association (AMA), founded 1901.²⁰ At the 1899 Trades and Labor Congress it was recommended that a paper be established and, in September 1900, the first issue of the *Westralian Worker* appeared, with T.H. Bath as editor. The Kalgoorlie-based paper was owned by the Labor Press Printing Company Limited and Lynch was one of the original shareholders.²¹

As a powerful and independent craft union in its own right, the ACEDA was able to remain aloof from much if not all of the internecine conflict which plagued the nascent Goldfields labour movement. Furthermore, its close links with the AWA, especially during the early years, strengthened its ability to exert a strong impact on Labor politics. The ACEDA was not without its own internal tensions. Generally speaking, however, it was able to remain sufficiently united to have a consolidating influence on the Goldfields labour movement as a whole, while at the same time being a more than effective voice for its own membership. As an

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ I.H. van den Driesen, "The Evolution of the Trade Union Movement in Western Australia" in C.T. Stannage, *A New History of Western Australia* (Perth, 1981), *passim*.

²¹ SROWA 1370/79/1900.

elite craft union, the role of the ACEDA had, if anything, been strengthened by the Arbitration Act of 1900 and its successor, the Trades Union Regulation Act of 1902, which further encouraged unionism along sectional lines.

Many years later, in 1937, W.D. Johnson, recalling his time as secretary of the Trades and Labor Council on the Goldfields, remarked that “Paddy Lynch, Jack Scaddan, Charlie Frazer, Jim Brydon and many others who became very prominent in the administration of the Labor Movement developed through [the ACEDA].”²² Even later, G.F. Young, another contemporary, recalled: “At one time I was driving a winding-machine and Paddy Lynch was driving another. Like many of my mates, Paddy was an ardent socialist, and it was at this time he was beginning to organise the engine-drivers ...”²³

Lynch was first elected to the position of General Secretary of the ACEDA at the AGM on 30 July 1898. He had, however, already been acting in that role for some time previously.²⁴ The position was still then an honorary one, which he would have performed as and when his day job as mine engine-driver allowed. He had the use of the Boulder Workers Hall as a headquarters where the ACEDA shared facilities with a number of other Goldfields unions. In delivering his first annual report as General Secretary, he expressed concern that some of the outlying branches of the association had a capacity for electing to go on strike—

²² Layman and Goddard, *op.cit.* (1988), p.83. Johnson became a Labor MLA and later a minister in the Dalglish Government (1904-5).

²³ G.F. Young, *Under the Coolibah Tree* (London, 1953), p.182. Young continued his reminiscence: “Later he got deeply into the political life of Western Australia, won a seat in the parliament, and finally became President of the Senate, a post he held for six or more years. Paddy was a lovable, capable man, and a friend I held on to till his death ...” . Young worked on the Ivanhoe mine for three-and-a-half years (c.1901-4) which suggests that Lynch quite possibly worked there also – after his time at the Lake View.

²⁴ *Evening Star* (Boulder), 8 August 1898. Lynch had apparently replaced the foundation General Secretary, Charlie Nicholas, sometime during late 1897-early 1898.

albeit with just grievances regarding threatened wage reductions—without consulting the association’s executive.²⁵

Here we detect for the first time that propensity for moderation, discipline and responsibility which would characterise his career as a union official and, later, as a Labor politician. Two years later, Lynch, in his capacity as ACEDA General Secretary, forwarded a telegram to the TLC Congress in Perth congratulating it on pursuing a “moderate practical policy”.²⁶ That propensity for moderation was reflected in his seemingly cordial relationship with other elements in the community.

Lynch regularly attended the annual Engine-Drivers’ Ball, a major event in the association’s calendar which was well reported in the local press. At the association ball in August 1898 Lynch delivered a toast to the ACEDA, which was responded to by John Kirwan, editor of the *Kalgoorlie Miner*. Lynch in turn proposed a toast to “the Press”, complimenting the local press on its role.²⁷ It is significant that John Kirwan, a prominent employer in Kalgoorlie, should attend this and subsequent ACEDA balls. It is indicative of not only a broad sympathy with the labour movement on Kirwan’s part, but of a harmonious relationship between a major trade union and the leading newspaper within this small but rapidly expanding mining community.

At the same time, Lynch also engaged in extensive travel throughout the wider Goldfields, overseeing the establishment of more association branches. In November, the newly established Leonora ACEDA branch held a social in

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 20 August 1900, p.2.

²⁷ *Evening Star*, 11 August 1898.

Lynch's honour at which the president complimented him generously.²⁸ This reflected not only a wider recognition and appreciation of Lynch within the association; it was the beginning of a special relationship with Leonora which would profoundly influence the direction of Lynch's career four years later.

It was, however, the Paddington Consolidated strike earlier in 1900 which really won for Lynch his spurs in battle as a trade union official and gained for him a higher profile within the labour movement on the Goldfields. The strike began in May and dragged on through June and July. This was the first time that all the major unions on the Goldfields had joined together to defend the interests of striking workers, who were resisting wage reductions by the management. It is clear that Lynch played a prominent part in the dispute, firstly trying with others to avert it, then, when it did happen, ensuring that his own members closed ranks in solidarity with the striking AWA members. AWA General Secretary Fred Gilbert later claimed that he, Lynch, Hugh de Largie (District President AWA) and others had tried their utmost to prevent the "calamity" at Paddington.²⁹

Following a mass meeting of workers at Paddington on 8 May, Gilbert and Lynch led a unsuccessful deputation to the manager, Mr Nicholson. The *Kalgoorlie Miner* reported that, at the follow-up mass meeting, Lynch "spoke earnestly in support of the opinions advanced by Gilbert and announced that the Engine-Drivers Association were heartily in accord, and would give every support..." before making "an eloquent appeal to all workers in Paddington to support their comrades in trying to maintain a living wage...". According to this report, "the remarks of the visiting gentlemen were enthusiastically received by

²⁸ *Westralian Worker*, 30 November 1900, p.2. Leonora is 150 miles north of Kalgoorlie.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 4 June 1900, p.8.

those present.”³⁰ The local branch of the engine-drivers—with only one dissenter—later voted to come out. The dispute eventually ended in late July with what the *Kalgoorlie Miner* called “an honourable compromise”.³¹

Reflecting the rapid growth of the branches and membership, the ACEDA in April 1901 appointed its first full-time paid General Secretary and Organiser. Despite apparently winning the ballot, Lynch, who, as honorary secretary for the three preceding years was the obvious candidate, decided to stand aside for the time being.³² He did, nevertheless, assume the position in mid-1902 and retained it until his election to the State Parliament two years later. During the intervening twelve months or so (in 1901-2), he remained active in association affairs, serving as secretary of the Boulder branch.

In this capacity, Lynch was kept extremely busy during the closing months of 1901 and early months of 1902. The advent of the Arbitration Court had necessitated the registration of trade unions with the Register of Friendly Societies, and it fell to Lynch to prepare and forward the necessary documents (including a rule-book) for approval.³³ After some delay, the Boulder ACEDA branch was duly registered on 5 March 1902. Lynch submitted a list of branch officers which included Charles Frazer (later an MHR and Caucus colleague of Lynch’s) as president, along with a list of some 223 members, including John

³⁰ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 9 May 1900, p.5.

³¹ *Ibid*, 23 July 1900, p.4.

³² *Westralian Worker*, 12 April 1901. W.Roberts served the first term in office. Lynch stated at the meeting which confirmed Roberts’ appointment that “the union would best progress in this way”. His decision to pass up the job for the first year probably had as much to do with personal affairs—he had married only three months previously—as it did with union politics; although we cannot state this conclusively.

³³ SROWA 141/3/1018/455/1901. On 11 February Lynch forwarded the Register a package containing no less than fifteen foolscap pages of hand-written proofs, all composed in his own distinctive hand. Although he doubtless had a model document to work from, one could envisage far more pleasant tasks for an unpaid branch secretary in the heat of a Boulder summer.

Scaddan (later Premier of Western Australia) and William Tonkin, father of another future Labor premier, John Tonkin.³⁴

The completion of the ACEDA Hall on the site at Wittenoom Street was another major practical preoccupation of Lynch's at this time. Since first acquiring this site on behalf of the association in 1899, this project had consumed much of his attention; indeed, he had been the driving force behind its initiation and completion. In August 1900, the *Western Argus* had published a design for an elaborate ACEDA Hall on the site but nothing ever came of this ambitious plan.³⁵ The construction of a somewhat more modest though no less spacious hall had, nevertheless, been completed by mid-1902.³⁶ Alterations demanded by the health authorities then delayed the actual opening until August 1903. For all that, it was an impressive headquarters, the largest such hall on the Golden Mile, exceeding in space the AMA Hall at Boulder, the Boulder Workers Hall and the Kalgoorlie Trades Hall.³⁷ This must surely have reinforced Lynch's status and sense of pride as General Secretary of the largest and most prestigious craft union on the Goldfields. Given his ongoing responsibility for the hall, it would also have reinforced his role as a substantial property-owner in Boulder.

The solid base which the new headquarters provided was justified all the more by the accompanying upsurge in membership and branches. Membership of the ACEDA leapt from 107 in 1901 to 461 in 1902 (260 in Boulder alone) to over 800 by mid-1903.³⁸ This necessitated much travelling to outlying districts by the

³⁴ *Ibid.* Frazer had been elected branch president on 2 January, his 23rd birthday.

³⁵ Lenore Layman, Justin Barrett and Andrew Gill, "Kalgoorlie Trades Hall and other workers' halls on the Golden Mile", *Papers in Labour History*, No.15 (Perth, 2000), p.5. The design sketch is reproduced.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.6.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ SROWA 141/3/1018/455/1901-3.

General Secretary to service the new membership. During his final two years in the post, Lynch, a newly married man, was obliged to spend a good deal of time away from home.

In fact, in February 1904, he cycled no less than 800 miles in fifteen days throughout the “back country” visiting new branches and recruiting new members. He penned a colourful account of his travels for the *Westralian Worker*:

If a stranger were in search of a place where unionism is as it should be then Murchison must be his destination. There, the posturing dissembler or inexperienced strife-stirrer finds no abode and no quarter, with the happy result that Labor in that centre will speak through one tongue at any future contingency, and will not be the hydra-headed absurdity it has made itself in this and other places through purposeless dissension ... the outlook for a strong goldfields Labor contingent being returned to the State Parliament is highly encouraging, and if this state does not maintain the proud distinction she achieved at the recent Federal elections, the fault, I would venture to think, won't lie at the door of the men of the mulga.³⁹

His references to the “posturing dissembler” and “inexperienced dissembler”—not to mention “hydra-headed absurdity” and “purposeless dissension”—could be taken as further evidence of his desire for discipline and unity. More realistically, however, they reflect the internal politics of the labour movement on the Goldfields. The ACEDA and the AWA were both active in the Murchison area, while the AWA's opponents—the AMA—were not; hence the lack of dissension. Since the *Worker* editor, Julian Stewart, was an AWA man, the article may reflect his views as much as Lynch's.⁴⁰

Through his travels as ACEDA General Secretary, he was broadening the base of his operations and acquaintances. As we shall see, this widening of horizons and heightening of profile would be reinforced by his new role as industrial advocate after the establishment of the State Arbitration Court in 1901. Here

³⁹ *Westralian Worker*, 18 March 1904, p.3.

⁴⁰ I am indebted to Andrew Gill for this insight into AWA/AMA politics.

Lynch would serve as advocate; not only for the various far-flung ACEDA branches, but for a number of other geographically widespread Goldfields trade unions.

Arbitration Court Advocate

The Arbitration Court provided a new opportunity for trade unions to defend the interests of their members against the employers. With the rapid growth of the union movement on the Goldfields at the turn of the century, the time was now ripe for the mining unions in particular to assert their claims against the large mining companies. The unions required in turn skilful and articulate advocates to represent the workers' interests in the Arbitration Court. Given the limited resources at the unions' disposal it was only logical for full-time paid officials like Paddy Lynch to fill the breach. This he did over a period of three years, with a fair degree of success. He proved a capable advocate, employing his persuasive and well-researched arguments with a tone of firm moderation.

Lynch took on a number of cases during the period 1902-5 but the first series of cases will be considered in some depth because they are the most significant while, at the same time, being representative of the rest. The others will then be alluded to only briefly. Fortunately, the verbatim records of the Arbitration Court give us a good insight into his thinking.

The first series of cases were heard before Justice Burnside at Leonora in January - February 1903. The primary case was that of the Menzies ACEDA v. the Lady Shenton Mining Company. It was, however, heard together with two others: Leonora ACEDA v. Sons of Gwalia and the Goldfields ACEDA (WA) v.

Cosmopolitan Goldmining Company, Sons of Gwalia and five other companies. Lynch represented his association in all these cases.⁴¹

The dispute had begun in mid-November 1902 when mine owners at four different venues in the North Coolgardie district gave notice of seeking to reduce the wages of all engine-drivers from an unspecified amount to 13/4- a shift. Lynch as union advocate sought 17/- for first-class engine-drivers and 16/8- for others. In his award of 5 March 1903, Justice Burnside granted 16/- and 14/6- respectively, less than what Lynch had sought, yet considerably more than what the employers had been seeking.⁴² An interesting parallel may be drawn with the case of the seamen in the 1890 maritime strike. In each case the employers were seeking substantial wage reductions and in each case the striking unionists were forced to accept a substantial and greater compromise. In each case Lynch argued for such compromise.

In his submission to Justice Burnside, Lynch emphasised that his union was seeking only to maintain existing pay rates and, in his concluding remarks, he stressed that he didn't find fault with the mine owners as a whole. He was not against the *principle* of employers being economical by reducing wages where necessary, but he rejected the particularly severe reductions in this instance and the arbitrary *methods* employed by the Chamber of Mines to achieve them.⁴³ He had tried to bring about a settlement with the employers by way of a conference so that the issue of wage rates could be "settled amicably". They had, however, declined to negotiate.

⁴¹ *Westralian Worker*, 9 January 1903, p.1.

⁴² SROWA 1095/43-71.

⁴³ SROWA 1095/101.

Developing his argument against wage reductions, Lynch proceeded to describe some of the great virtues and merits of engine-drivers as he saw them. Because it provides an excellent insight into Lynch's perceptions of his craft as engine-driver, this section of his submission is worth quoting at length:

I think that the court will see from the evidence that we shall bring forward that the calling of an engine-driver requires a man of no mean intelligence in order to undergo the tests necessary to entitle him to his certificate ... With regard to the importance of the calling, we will call evidence to show that it be placed on a footing level to, or in some cases, superior to any branch of skilled labour. We propose to show in the course of our evidence that the calling of an engine-driver, more especially the man in charge of a main shaft, should be regarded as work requiring more skill and carrying with it more responsibility than the average skilled calling ... this will be the standard test case for engine-drivers, as it is the first time these workers have been before the court...⁴⁴

The subsequent examination of witnesses allowed Lynch to further strengthen his case. He questioned C.J. Matthews, Chairman of the Examining Board for Engine-drivers.⁴⁵ Reflecting what engine-drivers perceived as the prestige of their craft, Lynch wanted to suggest that this generally afforded them a certain increased social status and responsibility:

Lynch: Are not engine-drivers generally better known than anyone else in the district?

Matthews: I dare say they are but we have nothing to do with that.⁴⁶

During the lengthy cross-examinations, Lynch (unlike F.B. Trude, the employers' representative) came into occasional conflict with presiding Judge Burnside. The judge, however, revealed his bias when, seeking to highlight alleged discrepancies in the cost of living figures provided by Lynch, he opined:

⁴⁴ SROWA 270/16/1614A/138/3.

⁴⁵ SROWA 270/16/1614A/138/9, 17 and 51.

⁴⁶ SROWA 270/16/1614A/138/7.

“For my part I should sooner take the testimony of one storekeeper on such matters as these, as the testimony of a dozen engine-drivers ...”⁴⁷

Despite these setbacks, Lynch had acquitted himself well. The outcome for engine-drivers was the best that could be expected in the prevailing economic circumstances. He had established his reputation as an industrial advocate. Indeed, the case became a celebrated one and the Menzies ACEDA demonstrated its appreciation of his efforts by presenting Lynch with an inscribed silver tray.⁴⁸ Having acquired a reputation through his advocacy of the Menzies ACEDA case in 1903, he continued to represent his and other Goldfields trade unions in the Arbitration Court. He took on several substantial cases during 1904-5, continuing to perform the role of union advocate after his election to State parliament in June 1904.

In October 1904, Lynch, by now a State parliamentarian, represented the Broad Arrow and Paddington Mining Timber and Firewood Supply Union in a case against the Kalgoorlie and Boulder Firewood Company before Justice Burnside. Here he displayed a knowledge of the practicalities of life for timber-cutters working on the now legendary Goldfields “woodlines”.⁴⁹ Another case—this time against the Kurrawong Firewood Supply Company—was aborted when the company’s managing director, W.D. Hedges, successfully challenged the status of the Kurrawong branch of the timber-cutters’ union, which Lynch was to represent. Barely two years later, Hedges was elected MHR for Fremantle, narrowly defeating the Labor candidate, W.H. Carpenter. As Federal parliamentarians, he

⁴⁷ SROWA 270/16/1614A/138/48-51.

⁴⁸ The tray is now in the possession of his grandson, Paddy Lynch, of Perth, Western Australia.

⁴⁹ SROWA 1095/102/49-50.

and Lynch later became good friends.⁵⁰ Their acquaintance, if not friendship, can certainly be traced to the timber-cutters' case of 1904.⁵¹

Finally, in May 1905, Lynch represented two AWA branches, Sir Samuels and Lawlers, against a small number of mining companies.⁵² Justice Parker, a Daglish Labor Government appointee who was nonetheless loathed by the trade union movement, presided. Most of the hearings in the relevant cases after 1903 were held in Perth rather than the Goldfields; Lynch's presence as MLA for Mount Leonora would have facilitated his representing the Goldfields-based unions. While placing heavy demands upon his time, his role as industrial advocate would also have allowed him to hone his parliamentary debating skills.

Lynch's sojourn on the Goldfields evidently reinforced his firm commitment to those principles of arbitration first acquired during the maritime strikes a decade previously. It is noteworthy that in November 1903 Lynch wrote to the Goldfields TLC enclosing a letter from Sam Smith (his old friend and colleague from Sydney days) who was by then a judge on the New South Wales Arbitration Court. The judge had supplied useful information and advice regarding the preparation of

⁵⁰ Information from grandnephew, John Lynch, of Cottesloe, Western Australia.

⁵¹ That same month, Lynch also represented the Hannans and Boulder AWA against a number of mining companies, and in another case, the Eastern Goldfields and Restaurant Employees' Union against Kalgoorlie restaurateur, Rebecca Ellis. He was then kept busy until December with hearings in a number of concurrent cases: *Menzies ACEDA (once again) v. Menzies Consolidated*; four other ACEDA branches (Leonora, Laverton, Kookynie and Mount Morgans) against several mining companies; and four AWA branches (Mount Morgans, Gwalia, Dayhurst, Kookynie and Yundermindera) plus the Goldfields AWA, against various mining companies. He represented the AWA branches as well as the ACEDA [*Reports of the Arbitration Court of Western Australia*, I (1901-3), pp.98-102, 128-35, 164-71].

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp.68-108.

cases for hearings.⁵³

Political Involvement

In 1961, the *Kalgoorlie Miner* ran a series of articles by George Spencer-Compton entitled “Personalities of the Old Goldfields”. In his piece on Paddy Lynch, he observed that “[Lynch had] won praise for his interest in an all-workers’ union [sic]... and a clear and logical set-out of his arguments” before concluding that “he [would] ever be remembered as one of the Labor stalwarts of the early days of struggle for recognition and representation”.⁵⁴ Lynch was not only a trade union official and an industrial advocate; he was a political activist.

The milestone Kalgoorlie Congress of 1899 is generally regarded as representing the foundation of the Labor Party in Western Australia. Initiated by the AWA and chaired by Hugh de Largie (AWA President), it not only transformed the labour movement in Western Australia; it made it very much a Goldfields affair. Although Lynch was not present on this occasion, he did attend the subsequent congresses of 1901 and 1903 representing the ACEDA.

In about 1900, perhaps earlier, Lynch met for the first time Hugh Mahon, a fellow Laborite whose background in Ireland bore many similarities to his own.⁵⁵

⁵³ WAA 300/1704A/15/142 (Goldfields TLC Minutes Book, 30 November 1903). It is not clear whether Lynch had sought his assistance; however, Smith was not backwards about writing to his old West Sydney Labor colleagues extolling the virtues of arbitration and offering unsolicited advice. In 1905, he wrote in similar terms to J.C. Watson, Federal Labor leader [NLA 451/1/139-40 (Watson Papers), 13 May 1905].

⁵⁴ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 10 October 1961.

⁵⁵ Both were born in the rural Irish midlands in the late 19th century, albeit a decade apart—Mahon in 1857 and Lynch in 1867. Both were from established and moderately well-off farming families, Mahon the second youngest of 13 children from Geashill outside Tullamore, Co.Offaly. Both had arrived on the Western Australian goldfields via the eastern colonies (Mahon worked for some years as a newspaperman in New South Wales). For further details of Mahon’s Irish background, including his involvement with the Land League and brief imprisonment with Parnell in Kilmainham Jail in 1882, see H.J. Gibbney, “Hugh Mahon: a political biography” (Masters thesis, ANU, Canberra, 1969), Chapter One.

Mahon had arrived on the Goldfields in 1895, a year or two before Lynch. He worked in newspapers, at Coolgardie, then Menzies, and finally, in 1900, at Kalgoorlie. In 1901, he was elected to the first Federal Parliament as Labor MHR for Coolgardie. He and Lynch would serve together in the Federal Labor caucus from 1907 until parting company over conscription in 1916. A professional journalist, Mahon came to Labor politics without the solid trade union background enjoyed by Lynch.

In August 1900 a letter to the *Kalgoorlie Miner* suggested the widespread establishment of Political Labor Leagues (PLL's) separately from the unions.⁵⁶ This suggestion was far from universally popular within the Goldfields labour movement. The *Westralian Worker* dismissed PLL's as "a refuge for traitors and trimmers [fence-sitters]"⁵⁷ while Lynch's own Boulder ACEDA branch opposed PLL involvement in the pre-selection of Labor candidates.⁵⁸

Lynch himself had no such misgivings. From the very outset, he had seen his commitment to the Goldfields labour movement as explicitly political and not merely industrial. In this, his Goldfields experience reflected his New South Wales experience. In the end, he confidently survived opposition to the PLL's from within the Boulder ACEDA and other Goldfields trade unions. Although first-and-foremost a trade unionist, he never had any problem with an active political dimension to the labour movement which did not stem exclusively from a trade union base.

⁵⁶ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 20 August 1900.

⁵⁷ *Westralian Worker*, 26 October 1900.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

It comes as no surprise then that Lynch should chair the public meeting in November 1900 to form a Boulder PLL.⁵⁹ He later became the first President of the PLL on the Goldfields and also served briefly as Vice-President of the ALF (WA Division). In January 1901 he was a member of a PLL delegation to an AWA meeting in Boulder, as a consequence of which the right of all PLL members to vote in Labor pre-selection ballots was recognised.⁶⁰ This recognition would have favourable implications for his own future pre-selection chances. That same month he became a member of the Labor selection committee for the forthcoming State elections. Over the next couple of years Lynch had an even closer personal involvement with Labor pre-selection ballots on three separate occasions: as a candidate for the state Assembly seat of Hannans in 1902, for the Senate in 1903, and, finally, for the state Assembly seat of Mount Leonora in 1904. All of these pre-selection ballots will be considered in some detail later in this chapter.

In summation, Lynch was very active in the foundation and early development of the Labor Party on the Goldfields. Despite this, his presence at the Labor congresses and in the ALF was not overly prominent. It would be a mistake to exaggerate his role. This reflects, in turn, certain ambiguities in Lynch's position: not so much his own personal motivation; rather, the labyrinthine internal politics of the ACEDA (to which he owed his primary allegiance) and of the ALF itself, not to mention the often fraught relationship between other major players such as the TLC and the AWA.

⁵⁹ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 5 November 1900, p.7. Support from the meeting was not unanimous, however.

⁶⁰ *Westralian Worker*, 4 January 1901.

Nevertheless, his unequivocal commitment to the political process—expressing as it did the logical extension from trade unionism to parliamentary representation—consistently shone through. In his speech following the declaration at Boulder of the Hannans’ pre-selection ballot in October 1902, Lynch made two noteworthy points. First, he traced his own involvement in the Labor Party back to the 1891 campaign in West Sydney. Secondly, he called upon trade unionists and Laborites to be tolerant and forbearing with regard to the Parliamentary Labor Party. He was in effect asking supporters of the movement to “go easy” on their elected members. Labor members were doing their best against the odds, and progress would inevitably be slow.⁶¹

Community Affairs

During his early years in Boulder, Lynch was preoccupied with getting established, earning a living, carrying out his union duties and pursuing his political activities. Even during the later period (1901-4), he does not appear to have been overly active in local societies and committees. This judgement must be qualified, however. Without the benefit of extensive surviving records for these various organisations, we have only local newspaper coverage to go on; obviously, this was selective. We do know that he was involved in the Electoral Reform Convention in Kalgoorlie (1898) and the Alluvial Rights Association as an executive member (1899),⁶² but he does not appear to have been prominent in

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 10 October 1902, p.3.

⁶² *Ibid*, 8 June 1906, p.2.

either cause. Nor, while a supporter of Federation, does he appear to have been prominent in the Separation for Federation Movement.⁶³

We would expect Lynch to have been active in the local Irish and Catholic organisations. He does not appear to have played a prominent part in the 1798 centenary commemoration, however. Rather, it is other Irishmen who are to the fore: publican and alluvial rights activist, Mick Mannion; publican Patrick Whelan; Clareman, publican and namesake, Patrick Lynch; lawyer and labour activist, Con Lyhane; and labour activist, Malachy Dwyer.⁶⁴ He did appear as President of the HACBS Parnell (Boulder) branch in 1899 when, as President, he moved a vote of thanks to Bishop Gibney for his attendance at a communion breakfast.⁶⁵ In August of that year he was delegated to attend the Australian Natives Association (ANA) Ball on behalf of the Boulder HACBS. At the annual HACBS Ball, he delivered a toast to the “Kindred Societies”, a reference to the other friendly societies in the town.⁶⁶

In 1902, Lynch was a founding member of the United Irish League (UIL) in Boulder. League events were often held in the ACEDA Hall. At the second anniversary of the League in May 1904, he was included amongst a nineteen-man committee.⁶⁷ He was obviously an active participant in the League’s activities, significant enough in itself given the sectarian atmosphere which prevailed at the time.

⁶³ A movement on the Western Australian goldfields in the late 1890s which proposed that, in the event of Western Australia declining federate, the Goldfields separate from that colony and join the Commonwealth in conjunction with South Australia.

⁶⁴ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 26 February 1898.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 15 June 1899.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 24 August 1899. He is not listed, however, amongst the trustees for any of the three friendly societies (including the HACBS) in Boulder for the period 1900-6 [SROWA 141/3/1018/2 and 11].

⁶⁷ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 4 May 1904, p.4.

With the exception of his year as President of the HACBS branch, Lynch's official role in the leading Catholic and Irish societies in Boulder appears to have been limited. Even at this early stage, he made little use of the Irish and Catholic cards. We should not, however, conclude from this a lack of commitment to Irish Catholic interests—or to community affairs in general. Given his ACEDA and PLL duties, it was necessary for him to conserve time and energy, and to devote his focussed attention to his primary responsibilities. When we come to consider his contribution to local government, it will readily become apparent that he was both active and recognised in the wider Boulder community.

Local Government

Lynch served as a member of the Boulder Municipal Council from December 1901 until his election to State Parliament in June 1904. He was in fact the “first Labor councillor” in Boulder, in the sense of having received official party endorsement. In November 1901, the Labor municipal elections committee had endorsed Frank Kelsall and Lynch as candidates for Kalgoorlie and Boulder respectively. While Kelsall narrowly missed election, Lynch was returned third out of eight candidates for the three vacancies in Boulder.⁶⁸ On 2 December the Irishman Lynch swore allegiance to King Edward VII and duly signed the declaration as an elected councillor.⁶⁹

However, Lynch's pre-selection had not been free of controversy. Divisions with sectarian overtones—or rather undertones—had emerged within Boulder Labor ranks. Two local party activists, Joe Cadwalladder and Joe Atkinson, both

⁶⁸ *Westralian Worker*, 15-22 November 1901. He polled 255 votes and came in behind James Orr (360 votes) and Matthew Rodda (298 votes).

⁶⁹ SROWA 1893/1 (Boulder Council letterbooks).

Protestants, were accused of working for candidates other than Lynch, the officially endorsed Laborite. Although Lynch himself did not pursue the matter, some of his supporters did. One of them, Kelsall (a Protestant), laid charges with the Goldfields TLC against the two miscreants. Cadwalladder was subsequently disciplined.⁷⁰

Lynch's contribution to the work of local government was geared very much to practical bread-and-butter issues rather than to overtly political programmes. This is reflected in the various committees and boards on which he served: the Works and Fire Brigade Committee, later the Electric and Fire Brigade committee (of which he was sometime chairman), the Boulder Roads Board and the Boulder Health Board. In July 1903, he was a delegate to a special conference involving the Kalgoorlie and Boulder municipalities, along with the Kalgoorlie Roads Board. In 1903 and 1904 he represented the council as a delegate at the annual State Municipal conferences at North Fremantle and Bunbury.

The major public issue which held Lynch's attention during his term on council was "alien" labour and it will be considered in a wider context in the next section of this chapter. As far as the practicalities of local development were concerned, tramways and public works were his two preoccupations. The extension of the tramway from Kalgoorlie to Boulder was a major project in 1902 and Lynch served on a special Tramways Committee whose responsibility was to facilitate its completion.

In a bold initiative in January 1904, Lynch proposed that the Boulder Council borrow £15000 for the development of public works in the town, comprising three

⁷⁰ WAA 300/1704A/16/157-8, 163-4, 182, 186 (Goldfields TLC letterbook). During December 1901-January 1902, a series of letters were exchanged between T.H. Bath, Secretary Goldfields TLC, and the various parties to the dispute.

items: (i) the erection of a town hall and theatre, (ii) conversion of the municipal dam to public baths, and (iii) the installation of a drainage system or general footpaths improvement. Eventually, some six months later, the council adopted a £21000 loan schedule, including £7000 for a town hall.⁷¹ The result of his initiative became evident three years later, in 1907, when that grand edifice, the Boulder Town Hall, was opened. It serves the town to this day.

Lynch did his best to facilitate different groups within the community in getting access to the Council. On separate occasions he introduced delegations from the Boulder United Friendly Societies and from the local greengrocers.⁷² All in all, he worked harmoniously with his fellow councillors. Party politics were noted more for their absence than their presence. Such alliances as existed were inclined to be personal rather than political. Although a Labor councillor, he was generally perceived by his colleagues as working in a practical and non-partisan manner for the general good of the Boulder community.

Lynch's election to State Parliament in 1904 was certainly greeted with bipartisan expressions of congratulations from his fellow Boulder councillors. The council "[H]oped he would show the same capacity for discharging public duties as he had while a member of Boulder Council".⁷³ Because of his parliamentary duties in Perth, he applied in August 1904 for two months leave of absence from Council.⁷⁴ He in fact attended no further meetings thereafter, and by May 1905

⁷¹ SROWA 1892/531/22 (Boulder Council Minutes, 14 January and 26 July 1904).

⁷² SROWA 531/1892/22 (22 October 1903); *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 2 June 1904.

⁷³ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 1 June 1904. Mayor Rabbish delivered a warm speech of praise and Lynch's health was drunk.

⁷⁴ SROWA 531/1892/22 (23 August 1904).

appears to have relinquished his seat.⁷⁵

Major Issues of the Day

Like most of his fellow workers on the Goldfields at the turn of the century, Lynch was primarily concerned with practical economic issues such as wages and conditions. These concerns were closely linked to the general progress and development of the Goldfields and to related factors such as the periodic upsurges and declines in the mining industry. However, linked to all of the above were several more specific issues which demanded the attention of Lynch and his colleagues. Amongst the more contentious were the plight of alluvial miners, the presence of alien labour, the problem of sectarianism and the fight for Federation. We will now consider Lynch's reaction to each in turn.

Alluvial Miners

David Mossenson has described the background and events of the 1898-99 conflict on the Goldfields between reef mining companies and alluvial miners. In March 1898, Premier John Forrest met with a hostile reception from alluvial miners when he visited Kalgoorlie and, in November 1899, there was a near uprising amongst diggers, a revolt which included both moderates and militants within the Alluvial Rights Association.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Lynch's relatively short term on the Boulder Council was duly recognised in one other way. During his term in office the names of sitting councillors were assigned to new streets on the outskirts of Boulder. A clearing along the northern boundary fence of the cemetery south of Boulder became Lynch Street. However, with changes to the landscape, Lynch Street has long since disappeared from the map [SROWA 531/1892/12/2 (Boulder Council Minutes, 14 June 1904)].

⁷⁶ David Mossenson, "Gold and Politics: The Influence of the Eastern Goldfields on the Political Development of Western Australia, 1890-1904" (Masters thesis, University of Western Australia, 1952), p.8. Reef mining overtook alluvial mining in the early years of the Goldfields. The 1897 recession, however, led to a boost in alluvial mining again.

Although he was a member of the executive of the ARA in 1899, Lynch does not appear to have been to the fore in the Alluvial Rights cause; he was not amongst the representatives who addressed a major public meeting in Kalgoorlie in September of that year.⁷⁷ As an engine-driver, his first loyalty was to the ACEDA. However, unions such as the ACEDA and the AWA made common cause with the ARA, so there was no conflict in that regard. Lynch was sympathetic to the cause of alluvial miners and was active in the background. For example, in October 1900, in his capacity as General Secretary of the ACEDA, he wrote to the Goldfields TLC concerning the alluvial troubles.⁷⁸

Much more explicit, however, are comments made by Lynch some four years later while on a tour “out back”. They reveal in no uncertain terms his sympathy with hard-working pioneering prospectors rather than idle speculators, whom he derided:

Mr. Lynch has vigorously pointed out that the Labor Party seeks a broader base and a higher standard in public life, and that it should solidify its resistance by hauling down idlers, in the shape of speculators, sharks and all manner of exploiters, and make them, for the first time in their existence, useful units in the human race. In the Industrial Army, the man who makes a waterbag, or a pair of boots, or a wheel-barrow, to cart his camp to the nearest rush, has made a more genuine addition to the requirements of the community, than the speculator who netted £20,000 in land dealing, and who has the effrontery to tell you that the country is the better for his presence.⁷⁹

Alien Labour

“Alien labour” was a major political issue on the Goldfields from the very outset and dominated Lynch’s attention during his period on the Boulder council. In the eyes of the Anglo-Celtic majority, the term “alien” covered everyone non-

⁷⁷ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 28 September 1899. Other Irishmen, such as Michael Burke, ARA President and former Land Leaguer, were to the fore.

⁷⁸ *Westralian Worker*, 12 October 1900, p.7.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 31 March 1904. Again, editor Julian Stewart’s voice may be in evidence here as much as Lynch’s.

British, but especially “Asiatics” and Italians. Organised opposition to “alien labour” developed into the perennial *cause-célèbre* for the local Press, trade union leaders and both politicians and would-be politicians. Labour organisations of all kinds led the way, frequently holding public meetings and passing resolutions, as well as forwarding letters and deputations to Federal Labor leaders.⁸⁰

The race question flared up periodically, but particularly in 1904 when, under a variety of guises, the issue dominated the pages of the *Kalgoorlie Miner* during the months of April and May. Editorials, articles and letters to the editor bore such headlines as “Alien Invasion”, and “Influx of Italians”.⁸¹ The *Westralian Worker* highlighted “The Dago Question”.⁸² The State elections in June of 1904 served to focus attention upon the issue and to provide a platform for opponents of coloured labour. Clearly, opposition to both non-British immigration and to “alien labour” was seen as a vote-winner, particularly on the Goldfields.

From the outset, Paddy Lynch had clearly followed the consensus of his fellow “Britishers” with regard to “alien labour”. At a public meeting in Kalgoorlie in July 1899 to support the Federal Movement, he stated quite openly that the exclusion of “alien labour” was worth serious consideration as an argument for Federation.⁸³ Later, at the 1901 Trade Union Congress in Kalgoorlie, he launched a scathing attack on Western Australian non-Labor senator, Dublin-born Edward Harney, for comments allegedly made by him in the Federal Parliament sympathetic to the use of “alien labour” in certain circumstances.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ The Goldfields TLC was particularly active in this regard. For example, on 6 February 1902 Secretary T.H. Bath wrote to Prime Minister J.C. Watson about the “Italian problem” [WAA 300/1704A/16/16].

⁸¹ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 14 and 21 April 1904 (for example). The latter was an editorial.

⁸² *Westralian Worker*, 22 April 1904, p.4 (for example).

⁸³ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 27 July 1899.

⁸⁴ *Westralian Worker*, 16 August 1901, p.1. Lynch’s motion of condemnation was carried unanimously.

When the issue flared on the Goldfields in 1904, Councillor Lynch was again to the fore. On 19 April he took the initiative, presenting the following resolution which was adopted unanimously:

That [Boulder] Council urges on the government the necessity for immediate and effective action to check the recent abnormal increase in the proportion of Alien Labor [sic] engaged in the Mining Industry to the positive injury of our own workers whose efforts and sacrifices have created the employment they are now being ejected from, and that the Northern Councils be urged to cooperate in this appeal to the Government.⁸⁵

Within a relatively short time, letters of unanimous support had been received from no fewer than eleven neighbouring municipalities.⁸⁶ Premier James promptly promised that action would be taken.⁸⁷ Lynch and his fellow councillors had clearly touched a sympathetic nerve.

That same month the Boulder Council was obliged to address the issue in more specific terms when it considered tenders for the supply of firewood for the new electric plant in the township.⁸⁸ Grave concern had been expressed in the past about the tendency of some firewood companies to employ Italians and “other alien labour” as woodcutters to the detriment of “Britishers”. Clayton and Rintoul’s eventually won the contract—in preference to the Kalgoorlie and Boulder Firewood Company—but only after much deliberation and the receipt of certain assurances from the successful firm. Lynch played a prominent part in the discussions, supporting Clayton and Rintoul’s, subject to the insertion of an appropriate clause in their contract regarding the use of British labour.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ SROWA 531/1892/22.

⁸⁶ SROWA 531/2653/455. They were Bulong, Leonora, Day Dawn, Malcolm, Kanowna, Geraldton, Coolgardie, Southern Cross, Menzies, Kookynie and Mount Morgans.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* (Boulder Council letterbook, 22 April 1904)

⁸⁸ SROWA 531/1892/22. A special meeting was held on 25 April to consider the issue. The contract was finally approved on 14 June.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* (Minutes, 3 May 1904).

All of this took place in the context of the State elections due in mid-1904. In March, Lynch had entered the fray of the Labor pre-selection contest for the newly created Legislative Assembly seat of Mount Leonora. Like the other two candidates, Frank Keenan and George Graham, he campaigned strongly on the “alien” question. At Gwalia he delivered a one-and-a-half-hour speech which, amongst many other topics, dealt with “aliens”.⁹⁰ At Mertondale a month later he referred to “a swarm of aliens” descending upon the country.⁹¹ Keenan and Graham both addressed the “alien” question while campaigning at Leonora.⁹² All three candidates clearly believed that there was political capital to be made, especially amongst voting trade unionists, although this is not to imply that their private views were any different.

Furthermore, remarks made by Lynch during his speech on the “alien labour” motion at the Boulder Council had received state-wide coverage courtesy of a *West Australian* editorial. It quoted him in passing, making specific reference to his claim that 50-60% (or even 70%) of Italians in the northern parts of the Goldfields were non-English speakers.⁹³ This in turn occasioned a letter to the *West Australian* by A. Ferretti regarding the “Italian Labor Question”. As an Italian who had lived in Australia for some thirty years, Ferretti took issue with people like Lynch who, spoke of his countrymen as “dirty dagoes” and who, as political aspirants, sought to exploit the feelings of Britishers on the Goldfields.⁹⁴ The author appears, however, to have singled out Lynch for criticism purely on the strength of a passing reference in the *West Australian* editorial. There is in fact

⁹⁰ *Westralian Worker*, 28 March 1904.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 22 April 1904.

⁹² *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 5 April 1904.

⁹³ *West Australian*, 26 April 1904.

⁹⁴ *West Australian*, 4 May 1904. Ferretti was writing from a Perth address, so it is difficult to say how familiar or otherwise he was with the circumstances on the Goldfields.

no evidence to suggest that Lynch personally used the term “dirty dagoes” or that he, more than any other political aspirant, was leading a crusade against Italians on the Goldfields.

In light of Ferretti’s letter, it is indeed ironic that at the declaration of the Mount Leonora pre-selection poll some three weeks earlier complaints had been made that an Italian bloc vote had been mustered at the last moment for one particular candidate (clearly Lynch) at one particular centre (unnamed). Another candidate (anonymous, but probably Keenan) was reported as calling for “the immediate deportment [sic] of all foreigners”.⁹⁵ Later, some of Keenan’s supporters accused Lynch’s campaign workers of having “rounded up the dagoes”.⁹⁶ Indeed, Lynch seems, if anything, to have been the most moderate of the three candidates on the “alien” question.

However, this is all a matter of degree; ultimately, he was as guilty as anyone. Lynch, like his colleagues, shared with his fellow “Britishers” the prevailing assumptions about race (Aborigines did not even rate a mention). It is further apparent that Irishmen like Lynch and Hugh Mahon,⁹⁷ and Irish-Australians like Keenan, readily associated with their fellow “Britishers” rather than with their Italian co-religionists. Anglo-Celtic solidarity transcended any potential Irish affinity with their Continental European Catholic brethren.

⁹⁵ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 14 April 1904.

⁹⁶ *Westralian Worker*, 22 April 1904.

⁹⁷ In March 1904, the Leonora Council had called upon Premier James to drive Italians from the district and, the following month, it forwarded through Mahon (the local MHR) a motion to the Federal Government calling for a halt to the landing of all “aliens” [*Westralian Worker*, 29 March and 9 April 1904].

Sectarianism

This is not to say that “Britishers” were a homogeneous lot. Sectarianism was rife in the Goldfields at the turn of the last century, manifesting itself with particular severity in Coolgardie in 1897-98 and again 1904. In Boulder, it reared its ugly head most conspicuously in 1901-2. The labour movement was particularly susceptible to this divisive influence, given its strong component of English, Scots, Welsh and Irish of various religious creeds. The differences between the AWA and the AMA, for example, have to some extent been explained by the dominance of the former by Scots and Irish Catholics and of the latter by English and Welsh Non-Conformists.⁹⁸ The ACEDA was largely removed from this conflict; hence Lynch does not appear to have encountered much sectarianism within his own union.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, we have already seen how Lynch did suffer from the effects of an element of sectarianism in Boulder politics, when, during his campaign for a Council seat in November 1901, at least two Protestant labour activists (Atkinson and Cadwalladder) refused to support him.¹⁰⁰ Once on Council, Lynch was forced to confront the issue directly and, the following July, to declare his position publicly.

In 1901, the annual Loyal Orange parade in Boulder had been the occasion of much violence and general disorder. The following year, the local Loyal Orange Lodge received a permit to parade again but such was the threat of renewed

⁹⁸ WAA 300/457A (Somerville Papers). William Somerville, *An Economic History of Western Australia*, Vol.II (Unpublished manuscript, Perth, n.d), pp.365-6. On the sectarian issue, see also: Andrew Gill, “ ‘Justice for All’: Jabez Edward Dodd and the Early Miners’ Union of the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia (1900-1906)”, *Papers in Labour History*, No.15 (Perth, 2000), pp.20-23.

⁹⁹ It has, however, been claimed that some of his supporters in Leonora took considerable exception when Lynch, having been elected unopposed, proceeded on the eve of the 1904 election to the neighbouring seat of Menzies to help his friend and Labor candidate, the Protestant, Dick Buzzacott. The same source claimed that Mount Leonora was the most sectarian electorate in the State [*Sunday Times* (Perth), 25 June 1905].

¹⁰⁰ See discussion earlier in this chapter.

violence that an emergency Council meeting was convened on the Sunday morning of the parade to re-consider the issue. On the question of imposing a last minute ban, Council was divided, Lynch coming down reluctantly on the side of those in favour:

Cr. Lynch said that his very name would no doubt cause one faction to impute his motives, but as a matter of fact he could view their processions from morn to night with indifference. Some of his countrymen, however, were more volatile, and the procession roused in them bitter feelings, and the council knew from experience what it led to. Viewed calmly, he thought that the council were justified in stopping the procession in the interests of peace and the good name of the town, as he feared the march would provoke a serious row. He would like to see all Roman Catholics and Irishmen treat these processions with contempt and indifference, and they would soon die a natural death for lack of notoriety. He knew that many alleged Roman Catholics who had never been inside the church from the day of their baptism were prominent in the disturbances and he could say that religion was not at the root of the trouble. It was more a racial feud than a religious difference, and it was a great pity that it had been imported into Australia. In the Eastern States these processions had been prohibited in the interests of public peace, and on this occasion he thought the council should wait on the officers of the Orange Lodge and ask them to forego.¹⁰¹

Despite being both a committed Catholic and an Irish nationalist, Lynch had no time for sectarianism of any kind, particularly from within his own camp. Furthermore, he clearly distinguished such manifestations of sectarianism from religion and patriotism. Like most of his fellow Irish Catholics in the labour movement, Lynch held himself aloof from militant nationalism. Other prominent Irishmen such as lawyer Con Lyhane (sometime President of the Boulder UIL) have been credited with injecting a strong element of Irish nationalism into Goldfields politics at this time.¹⁰² However, Lyhane was not typical of his fellow

¹⁰¹ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 14 July 1902. Council resolved to send a deputation to the Orangeman requesting a radical curtailment of the parade. The request was rejected but in the event the parade passed off relatively peacefully.

¹⁰² WAA 300/457A. Somerville, *An Economic History of Western Australia*, p.366. Also see Somerville, "Notes of Interview with T.H. Bath, giving his recollections of the early days of the ALP" (23 November 1953), p.6. A difference of opinion emerges between Somerville and Bath as to the degree of sectarian influence in the Goldfields labour movement; Somerville emphasises it while Bath is inclined to downplay it.

Irishmen, and men such as Lynch did not follow his lead.

Federation

Whatever internal divisions existed in the labour movement on the Goldfields, it remained rock solid in its support for Federation in the years leading up to 1901. Hugh de Largie and the AWA were the driving force behind the Federation movement, but all other major unions, including the ACEDA, were involved.¹⁰³ When the referendum results were announced at Boulder in July 1900, Lynch was not included amongst the list of the most prominent active Federalists on the Goldfields.¹⁰⁴ A number of prominent Labor figures, such as Hugh Mahon, had served at various times on the movement's executive, but Lynch was not one of them.

He did, however, play a prominent part in a public meeting at Boulder in July 1899 when he delivered a speech and submitted a resolution in favour of Federation. In doing so, he weighed up the various pros and cons and concluded that the advantages outweighed the disadvantages. For him, the three key issues were: the proposed Transcontinental Railway, the food tariff and "alien labour".¹⁰⁵ As we shall see later, once a senator, Lynch would pursue the first issue with a vengeance. His support for Federation appears to have been a rather measured and pragmatic one, his stance characterised more by ambivalence than enthusiasm. It should not come as a total surprise that in the 1930's he would become a Western Australian secessionist.

¹⁰³ Lynch toasted the Federal Movement at two successive ACEDA balls [*Kalgoorlie Miner*, 29 June 1899 and 30 June 1900].

¹⁰⁴ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 1 August 1900.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 27 July 1899.

His active engagement with some of the major issues which confronted the Goldfields—the rights of alluvial miners, the perceived threat of “alien labour”, the menace of sectarianism and the prospect of Federation—made him a logical candidate for higher political office. His roles as trade union official, Labor activist and Boulder councillor reinforced this claim. We shall now consider his pursuit of that goal and his ultimate success.

Preselection Ballots

On 30 September 1902, the entire labour movement on the Goldfields was shocked by the sudden death, at the age of only 33 years, of John Reside, the Labor member for Hannans in the State Parliament. A fellow member with Lynch of the Boulder ACEDA, Reside had been a leading activist on the Goldfields and one of Labor’s rising stars. The party acted quickly to find a replacement for this safe Labor seat which included the Kalgoorlie township and immediately adjoining areas.

Though various names were canvassed, in the eventuality there were only three candidates—W.J. (Nick) Reside (the late member’s younger brother), Thomas Bath and Lynch. Bath and Lynch were the two serious contenders, with Bath very much the favourite.¹⁰⁶ At only 27 years of age, Bath was eight years Lynch’s junior. Lynch had nominations from the AWA and the Firemens Union, while Bath had a host of nominations: from Lynch’s own union, the ACEDA; the AMA; the Butchers’ Employees Union; and the Tailors and Tailoresses Union.¹⁰⁷ Bath’s position was strengthened by his position as Secretary of the Goldfields TLC,

¹⁰⁶ Reside was never regarded as a serious contender. He was too young and inexperienced and was said to presume upon his late brother’s name [*Westralian Worker*, 10 October 1902, p.2].

¹⁰⁷ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 7 October 1902, p.4.

while Lynch had the somewhat lesser advantage of having recently been elected to the Boulder Council, which had served to raise considerably his political profile.

The pre-selection ballot was resolved quickly and without rancour—at least on the part of Bath and Lynch. Bath won comfortably, with an absolute majority of votes (646) over Lynch (376) and Reside (68).¹⁰⁸ In announcing the results, the *Westralian Worker* revealed its true preference for Lynch as the AWA-backed candidate. After generously appraising Bath's attributes, it went on to say:

His chief opponent, Mr. Lynch, was also a strong candidate. He is in every way a splendid man. He is a forceful speaker and a tried and tested Laborist. He possesses not only exceptional brain power, but also—what is perhaps of even greater consequence—exceptional force of character. I have no hesitation in saying that, had he been selected, he would have been a tower a strength in the Parliamentary Labor party.¹⁰⁹

Having cut his political teeth in the Hannans ballot and thus acquired a wider profile, Lynch was well-placed to contest the Senate pre-selection ballot the following year. His name was amongst the thirteen candidates announced at the AGM of the ALF (WA) at Kalgoorlie in July.¹¹⁰ When the result was finally announced in late September, Lynch had finished in fourth place for the three available positions on the Labor senate ticket. Sitting Senators Hugh de Largie and George Henderson had been joined by John Croft. The voting figures for the five leading candidates were as follows: de Largie 8335, Henderson 4761, Croft 4491, Lynch 2780, Stuart 2301.¹¹¹ Lynch would have to wait another three years to become a Labor senate candidate. In the meantime, he had another

¹⁰⁸ *Westralian Worker*, 10 October 1902, p.2.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, "Peter Plainspeech". Probably a pseudonym for the editor, Wallace Nelson.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, 7 August 1903. The others were E. Casson, J. Croft, H. de Largie, J. Diver, G. Henderson, F. Kelsall, C. Matthews, Michael O'Connor, W. Roche, J. Stuart, A. Uren, and Martin O'Connor.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 25 September 1903.

tilt at pre-selection for the Western Australian legislature.

Due to the rapidly expanding population of the northern Goldfields, the new seat of Mount Leonora was created following re-distribution prior to the 1904 state elections. The electorate of Mount Leonora was carved out of the existing electorate of Mount Margaret, held for Labor by George “Mulga” Taylor.¹¹² Lynch was not mentioned initially as one of the likely candidates. However, a large number of Laborites in the new electorate requested his candidature and the Leonora ACEDA formally asked him to nominate.¹¹³ The *Westralian Worker* rated him a “splendid chance”, noting that his involvement in the landmark ACEDA case in the Arbitration Court a year previously had made him a “household name” in the Leonora area (despite living some 150 miles distant at Boulder).¹¹⁴

In the event, Lynch, Frank Keenan (a full-time AWA branch secretary) and George Graham (another AWA activist) were the three candidates for pre-selection. Keenan and Lynch were clearly the frontrunners, with Graham very much an also-ran. On the eve of the ballot, “Mulga” Taylor gave Lynch’s campaign an additional boost by declaring at Kookynie that he was for him rather than Keenan as had been widely presumed.¹¹⁵ The final result was a comfortable victory for Lynch with 401 votes, against 329 for Keenan. As Graham polled only 68 votes, Lynch had achieved a narrow absolute majority. Furthermore, he had

¹¹² George Taylor (1861-1935). Born in New South Wales, imprisoned during the 1891 shearers strike in Queensland, moved to Western Australian goldfields in 1894, MLA for Mount Margaret 1901-30 (Labor until 1917, then Nationalist).

¹¹³ *Westralian Worker*, 11 March 1904, p.8.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 18 March 1904, p.4.

¹¹⁵ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 12 April 1904.

won convincingly a majority of booths.¹¹⁶ At the declaration of the poll, Keenan gracefully accepted defeat and praised Lynch as the duly selected candidate.

This, however, did not prevent some Keenan supporters from accusing Political Labor League officers of partiality in the ballot.¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, the result stood and the majority of Laborites in Mount Leonora threw their weight behind Lynch. In all the welter of accusations, both before and after the declaration of the poll, there was never any hint of impropriety on Lynch's part. Nor was there any apparent animosity between himself and Keenan.

1904 Election Campaign

Soon after his pre-selection victory Lynch was on the campaign trail in Mount Leonora. The *Westralian Worker* of 22 April carried a photo of the candidate and reported upon his visits to Lawlers, Menzies, Mertondale and Sir Samuels. At Lawlers, Lynch was adamant that he wanted the result to be above reproach, insisting that:

So anxious am I to see a clean contest conducted on clean lines that, should my success depend on one vote, and that vote be cast out of considerations other than my fitness for the position, I say to the voter 'Forebear; better that I be condemned to irredeemable obscurity than win distinction by unworthy means.'¹¹⁸

At a meeting of the Mount Leonora Political Labor League at Gwalia on 6 May, a campaign committee was formed and a week later the *Worker*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, 12 April 1904, p.6. Results were given for seven booths.

Gwalia: Lynch 47, Keenan 44, Graham 15, Informal 3

Mertondale: Lynch 28, Keenan 2

Malcolm: Lynch majority of 23

Pig Well: Lynch majority of 7

Kathleen Valley: Lynch led

Lawlers: Lynch 88, Keenan 120

Sir Samuel: Keenan led

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.6. One Keenan supporter specifically accused T.C. Butler (Boulder) and certain other officers of blatantly favouring Lynch.

¹¹⁸ *Westralian Worker*, 22 April 1904, p.2.

optimistically predicted a Labor hat-trick in the northern Goldfields: Taylor in Mount Margaret, Lynch in Mount Leonora, and Buzzacott in Menzies.¹¹⁹ Taylor and Lynch worked together closely during the ensuing campaign, both doing their best to assist Buzzacott in his bid to wrest Menzies from the sitting conservative member, Henry Gregory.¹²⁰ By this stage it was apparent that by a simple twist of fate Lynch had been elected unopposed, the prospective conservative candidate, Mayor Snell of Leonora, having neglected to get his nomination papers in on time.

In the final week of the campaign, Lynch spoke to a packed public meeting in Boulder in support of four fellow Labor candidates: M.J. McCarthy (Boulder), John Scaddan (Ivanhoe), Wallace Nelson (Hannans) and Taylor (Mount Margaret). He moved a vote of confidence, acknowledging that:

The policy advocated by them was identical with that of the [Watson] Federal Government where Labor was now at the wheel. It was identical with the policy of Labor in Queensland, where a partial Labor Government was in power. It was identical with the Labor platform of NSW, and with that of reactionary Victoria, where they are now awaking, as they had at the last election returned two Labor members.¹²¹

The election proved an historic triumph for Labor which increased its representation in the Legislative Assembly from seven to 22. With the exception of Buzzacott and McCarthy, all the Goldfields Labor candidates for whom Lynch had campaigned emerged victorious. He now joined them as the inaugural member for Mount Leonora.

Under the heading “Our Member”, the *Mount Leonora Miner* printed a rather

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 20 May 1904.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, p.8. Gregory narrowly retained the seat by 60 votes and the hat-trick was thwarted.

¹²¹ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 24 June 1904, p.2

endearing pen portrait of the new member:

P.J. Lynch, who was elected unopposed for Leonora, is a tall, athletic bright-eyed Irishman, with brains and fluency; also a heart. Everyone knows black-bearded Paddy and everyone likes him for his honesty and good heart, and recognises him as one of the rising hopes of Labor. He has read much and thought more; roughed it in four countries; been farm hand and Nationalist in Ireland; day laborer and Knight of Labor in the US; shearer and AWA man in NSW; engineer and union secretary in WA; and all his life Democrat to the core. He can speak on any subject from Nationalism to numismatics, and speak as only a clever Irishman can. The only thing against him so far is that he is a member of the Boulder Council, but he will live that down.¹²²

Conclusion

In such a relatively confined and inter-related community as the goldfields, it was inevitable that a newcomer like Lynch, who was gradually becoming active in public affairs, would regularly encounter other local political and social activists. He had still further opportunity to meet all kinds of interesting and influential people amongst the numerous visitors to the Goldfields: Premier John Forrest and Bishop Matthew Gibney, for example. The regular Sunday evening lectures in the Boulder Mechanics Institute attracted such visiting speakers as Eureka veteran and IWW activist, Monty Miller, in 1901, and Victorian socialist, Tom Mann, in 1904. As Lynch later recalled, John Lane toured the Goldfields in 1901 proselytising on behalf of the Cosme colony in Paraguay.¹²³

During his years on the Goldfields, then, he met a religiously and politically diverse collection of people. He was subject to a broad range of influences from outside his own Irish Catholic and Labor background. Those influences included not only fellow Irish Catholics of a more conservative political disposition, but Laborites from a wide variety of non-Irish and non-Catholic backgrounds. It is

¹²² *Mount Leonora Miner*, 2 July 1904, p.2. The article was signed "Democrat".

¹²³ *Westralian Worker*, 22 November 1901. It was reported that he spoke in both Boulder and Kalgoorlie.

difficult to assess with any degree of certainty the influence of any particular individual or group of individuals upon Lynch's political development.

Some useful observations can, however, be made with regard to Lynch's Goldfields Labor colleagues and the paths they subsequently took in 1916-17. As in New South Wales, most, though certainly not all, of these colleagues declared as conscriptionists and subsequently left the party. Of the Goldfields-based Federal parliamentarians, only Hugh Mahon MHR stayed; the other two (Senators de Largie and Buzzacott) both left.¹²⁴ On the State political scene, too, there was a clear majority of conscriptionists amongst Lynch's Goldfields contemporaries: in 1916, only two still-serving MP's (Tom Bath MLA and Phil Collier MLA) declared as anti-conscriptionists, while the other four (George Taylor MLA, Jack Scaddan MLA, Richard Ardagh MLC and Jabez Dodd MLC) were conscriptionists,¹²⁵ all of whom left the party. Conscriptionists, therefore, enjoyed a majority in both groups. During his Goldfields days, then, Lynch was living and working in an environment which later produced a solid majority of conscriptionists from amongst his closest Labor colleagues, most of whom displayed a marked predisposition to split with the party in 1916-17.¹²⁶

Having previously cut his industrial and political teeth in the NSW labour movement of the early 1890's, Lynch's time on the Western Australian goldfields represented a political coming of age for him. His first encounter with Labor activism had been comparatively brief; he was now in it for the long haul. Significantly, he was a member and official of the ACEDA, *the* elite craft union

¹²⁴ Charlie Frazer MHR had died in 1913.

¹²⁵ J.F. Mullaney MLC was yet another. However, unlike the others, it is not clear that he was an acquaintance of Lynch's during his Goldfields days.

¹²⁶ Not all conscriptionists automatically left the party; nor was it a simple conscriptionist/anti-conscriptionist divide. The issues are necessarily over-simplified here but explored more fully in Chapters Six and Ten.

on the Goldfields. This in turn influenced both his perception of himself and his outlook on the major industrial and political issues of the day. It steered him away from militancy and towards moderation.

He had also acquired a certain stature and was obviously much favoured by the *Westralian Worker* as one of Labor's rising stars. Yet he cannot readily be dismissed as a careerist; rather than seeking to promote himself, he was prevailed upon to run for public office. Once committed, however, he applied himself fully to the task. Elected unopposed to the State legislature, he was well placed to represent those interests which he had espoused on the Goldfields. In this, Lynch *reflected* the primary concerns—fear of “alien” labour, for example—of the dominant majority of white working-class “Britishers”. He articulated these concerns rather than initiating or promoting new issues of his own. His attention was focussed on immediate practical concerns rather than broader long-term goals, let alone any overtly ideological agenda.

His approach was one of firm moderation, with a renewed commitment to the enduring value of arbitration first acquired during the maritime strikes. Reform through legislation was now his keystone. In this, he was representative of that reformist Labor tradition which established itself on the Goldfields at the turn of the last century.

CHAPTER FOUR

STATE PARLIAMENT (1904-6)

I will briefly sketch the major developments in Western Australian politics between 1904 and 1906 before proceeding to describe in more detail Lynch's early parliamentary career.

In the State elections of 28 June 1904, the Labor Party triumphantly increased its share of seats from seven to 22. This left the party short of an absolute majority in the 50 seat Legislative Assembly, but when the State Parliament re-assembled in August Labor was able to garner the support of five independents who had previously supported the James administration. The James Government was voted down on the floor of the house and a minority Daglish administration assumed office.¹ This was the first ever Labor government in Western Australia, although it lasted barely twelve months.

From the very outset the government was fraught with internal tension and conflict, reflecting dissent both within Caucus and the ministry itself. In June 1905, a cabinet re-shuffle resulted in Lynch being appointed Minister for Works. He was returned in the ministerial by-election with a two-to-one majority over W.A. Snell, his opponent the previous year.² For another two months, the Daglish Government clung precariously to power. However, on 17 August, legislation to

¹ The three independents were W.J. Butcher (Gascoyne), Francis Connor (Kimberley), C.J. Moran (West Perth), Non-Labor members, C. Harper (Beverley) and F. Wilson (Sussex), also supported the no-confidence motion, giving Labor a 27-19 majority.

² According to the law at the time, if appointed to the ministry, a member had to re-contest his seat in a by-election. Lynch had been elected unopposed in 1904 when Snell failed to get his nomination papers in on time. The result of the 30 June 1905 by-election was: Lynch 821, Snell 411.

empower the government to purchase the Midlands Railway Company was defeated in the Assembly, several Labor members siding against their own party. The government resigned five days later and the Liberal Party assumed power with Rason as Premier. Lynch's two-month spell as a government minister thus came to a premature end.

The Rason Government was comfortably re-elected at the October 1905 elections; Labor dropped from 22 seats to fourteen, all but two of these on the Goldfields. Lynch was returned for his seat of Mount Leonora with a comfortable majority of more than two to one over his non-Labor opponent, J.C. Semken.³ In April 1906 Rason retired as Premier and Moore took over as leader of the Liberal Government. In November, Lynch (now on the Opposition benches) resigned his seat of Mount Leonora, having been elected to the Labor Senate ticket for Western Australia.

Lynch Enters the State Parliament

Lynch arrived in Perth in August 1904 to take up his seat in the Legislative Assembly as the inaugural member for Mount Leonora. He was one of a contingent of some fifteen new Labor members, most of them colleagues from the Goldfields. He entered a house in which a Labor Party dominated by Goldfields "outsiders" contrasted starkly with a conservative opposition dominated by south-west and coastal-based "old" West Australians.⁴ That same month, before Caucus or Parliament had even met, Lynch was mentioned as one of six possible

³ The result of the 27 October 1905 election was: Lynch 786, Semken 378.

⁴ No fewer than half (eleven) of the Labor members had their origins in states other than Western Australia, compared to only four of the 24 conservative members. By contrast, the conservatives boasted eleven native-born West Australians while Labor had only one.

contenders for the Labor leadership. However, “Mulga” Taylor and Henry Daglish were the only two serious ones and Daglish duly won the leadership ballot.⁵

Lynch delivered his maiden speech in the State Parliament during the Address-in-Reply debate on 4 August 1904, some five days before the vote of no confidence in the James Government brought the Daglish Labor administration onto the Treasury benches. In his speech Lynch laid down several markers with regard to his future concerns as a Labor parliamentarian. In so doing, he also gave a good guide to his political philosophy.

He began by giving a spirited defence of trade unionism, the Labor pledge and the Labor Caucus system. He repudiated derogatory references by Premier James to the Labor Party as a “trades hall party”, declaring that he was not at all ashamed to be a member of a trade union-associated party. He defended the Labor pledge as a “business pledge” and “nothing more than what a business man in everyday life would insist on”.⁶ As for the Caucus system, it was “only copying the example set for us [by the other parties]”, while making the arrangement explicit.⁷

Interestingly for a Labor man, Lynch compared the James Government unfavourably with its Forrest predecessor. He credited Forrest with the Coolgardie Water Scheme, a progressive railways policy and, most specially, the Arbitration Act. Lynch even went so far as to proclaim: “When the time comes to write the names of the statesmen of this State, Sir John Forrest will be entitled to the

⁵ E.S. Buttfield, “The Daglish Ministry 1904-5: Western Australia’s First Labor Government” (Masters thesis, University of Western Australia, 1979), p.80. The information regarding the six contenders is attributed to an “unofficial statement”.

⁶ *Ibid*, p.153.

⁷ *WAPD*, Vol.25, pp.153-4 (4 August 1904).

worthiest place”.⁸ A certain amount of this praise for the Forrest administration can doubtless be attributed to a degree of exaggeration on Lynch’s part; to rhetoric employed in an attempt to belittle the James Government, an administration which the Labor Party was seeking to replace. In view of Lynch’s later political conservatism, it is significant, nonetheless, that he should extol the virtues of the relatively conservative Forrest administration at the expense of a more liberal reformist administration buttressed by the Labor Party.⁹

Lynch continued his maiden speech by reminding the house that the Labor Party could be thanked for the gradual extension of the franchise and for electoral reform in general. He attributed to the birth of the Labor Party in New South Wales in 1892 the subsequent rapid adoption of the principle of one man/one vote at a Constitutional Convention and its insertion in the Constitution.¹⁰ He naturally devoted some attention to Goldfields issues: he criticised the Mines Act for reflecting the interests of the Chamber of Mines rather than the workers; then, warming to a familiar theme, he took the minister (Gregory) to task for not honouring his promise to include a clause protecting the rights of British labour.¹¹

It was now time for the James Government to move aside and let Labor sit on the Treasury benches, Lynch argued. In future, Labor should carry out its own progressive legislation rather than act by proxy. Concluding in a somewhat poetic vein, he asserted that, whatever benefits could be attributed to a past ministry, “theirs was only a reflected light; it was now time for Labour’s sun to do its own shining”.¹²

⁸ *Ibid*, p.154. Lynch repeated these sentiments two years later [*Ibid*, Vol. 29, p.762 (1 August 1906)].

⁹ See discussion in Chapter Eleven.

¹⁰ *WAPD*, p.155.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p.156.

¹² *Ibid*, pp.157-8.

The Daglish administration, however, did not assume power in the most auspicious of circumstances. Brian de Garis's brief assessment is probably an accurate one:

Neither [Daglish] nor his colleagues had much political or administrative experience and, dependent as they were on non-Labor support, they were hamstrung from the start. In order to remain in power they eschewed distinctively Labor policies, thus incurring the wrath of the TLC, and after twelve ineffective months, were defeated over their plans to buy the Midland Railway Company for one-and-a-half million pounds. It was an inglorious episode for the Labor Party but a significant staging-post in Western Australia's political evolution.¹³

The Daglish Government was remembered thereafter as a "mark time" administration.

Updating the Arbitration Court and its procedures was a priority for the Labor Party but here the government was rendered vulnerable by its slim working majority in the Legislative Assembly and an overwhelming anti-Labor majority in the Legislative Council. When, in October 1904, the Arbitration Bill was brought before the Assembly, the member for Boulder (J.M. Hopkins) unsuccessfully moved an amendment "to debar members of parliament from representing parties before the Arbitration Court".¹⁴ As Norman Dufty observes:

If this had been enacted it would have been a serious blow to the union movement as a number of parliamentarians appeared for the unions from time to time before the Court and the Boards of Conciliation. These included the Minister himself (J.B. Holman) and other prominent figures such as T.H. Bath, W.D. Johnson, P.J. Lynch, and A.J. Wilson ...¹⁵

¹³ B.K. de Garis, "Self-Government and Political Parties" in C.T. Stannage, *A New History of Western Australia* (Perth, 1981), p.350.

¹⁴ *WAPD*, Vol. 25, p.702 (11 October 1904). The amendment was re-introduced and carried in the Legislative Council, then returned to the Legislative Assembly where it was passed by the narrow margin of two votes after two Labor members crossed the floor. The government, however, then dropped the legislation altogether.

¹⁵ Norman Dufty, *Arbitration in Western Australia: the early years* (Discussion Paper No.11, Murdoch University, Perth, 1985), p.15.

In any event, Lynch was left free to act as an industrial advocate. As we saw in the previous chapter, he represented the ACEDA and the AWestern Australia in a number of prominent cases during the latter part of 1904, and again in 1905.

Lynch in the Ministry

We have already noted Lynch's major political concerns as set down in his maiden speech of 4 August 1904. Over the following ten months, he participated diligently in parliamentary debates but confined himself very much to the bread-and-butter issues of the day. Matters directly concerned with his own constituency and with the Goldfields in general consumed most of his attention: public works (including railways and tramways), legislation regulating mines (especially the inspection of machinery), workers' wages, and arbitration and conciliation.¹⁶

When, in early June 1905, tensions within the government came to a head, two ministers—J.B.Holman (Railways and Labour) and George Taylor (Colonial Secretary), both Goldfields colleagues of Lynch's—were forced to resign. In the resulting cabinet reshuffle on 7 June, Lynch was sworn in as Minister for Works (replacing W.D. Johnson), and yet another Goldfields colleague, Tom Bath, was sworn in as Minister for Lands and Minister for Education. That Bath still held Lynch in high regard nearly fifty years later is evident from the following remarks made in 1953. Despite their having been political adversaries after 1916, Bath still felt able to attest to his former colleague's attributes:

One thing I'd like to tell you about Paddy Lynch. When Paddy was elected for Leonora, these fellows, a crowd of people of the AWestern Australia, had an idea that they'd use him, but they couldn't. They were never able to use Paddy. He was not a plotter; a good, straightforward chap. I had an opportunity to know Paddy's character well because we did a very long tour extending over six

¹⁶ *WAPD*, Vol.25 (Index of Speeches), XLVIII.

months through the back country—the back Goldfields country right through to the Murchison. He was a very good man ...¹⁷

It is ironic that “Mulga” Taylor, long-time friend and colleague, should be one of the men whom Lynch replaced.¹⁸ Furthermore, whereas Lynch had once endorsed Taylor’s call for assertive Labor independence, he was now more willing than his outspoken colleague to accept the compromises of government.¹⁹

In his inaugural speech as Minister of Works, Lynch readily conceded: “If the Labor Party have not adhered rigidly to the platform laid out in the past, it is because with wider experience we recognise it is necessary to revise, as I said before and I say again, and I shall say as long as I am in the arena of politics, *in order to be in keeping with the exigencies of the times*”.²⁰ [my emphasis]

A.R. Grant, then clerk of the Assembly, over thirty years later recalled Lynch’s address of 8 July 1905 as a telling speech which helped save the Daglish Government from defeat in the no-confidence motion that day.²¹ Nevertheless, although rigorously compiled and delivered with conviction, Lynch’s speech for the most part merely embellished—albeit in a somewhat muted tone—many of the themes of his maiden speech eleven months earlier. Once again, he came to the defence of Labor ideals and the system of Caucus rule. Interestingly for a Labor

¹⁷ WAA, 457A, Somerville Papers. Notes by Dr. William Somerville from an interview with Tom Bath (23 November 1953), giving his recollections from the early days of the ALP. Somerville was over eighty and Bath was in his eightieth year at the time. Both died within a few years.

¹⁸ As noted in the previous chapter, the two men undertook an extended tour of the “back country” during the June 1904 election campaign. Taylor, who had been jailed during the 1891 strikes, shared with Lynch a first-hand experience of the Queensland outback pioneering tradition.

¹⁹ At Gwalia in March 1904, Lynch had spoken eulogistically of Taylor and of the benefits of his outspokenness. He had argued for the return of Laborites not tied to the government’s tail and favoured Labor sitting on the cross-benches [*Westralian Worker* (25 March 1904), p.6].

²⁰ *WAPD*, Vol.27, p.509 (28 July 1905).

²¹ A.R. Grant, *Memories of Parliament* (Perth, 1937), p.16. The motion, moved as amendment to the address-in-reply by Rason (the Leader of the Opposition) was defeated, 25 votes to 22 [*WAPD*, Vol.27, p.518].

man, however, Lynch asserted that he “would like to bury party government”. At the same time, he failed “to understand how it [was] possible to dispense with the system of party government...”.²²

Moreover, the Labor Party was a means rather than an ends in itself; it had come “into existence because of the need for remedying some long-standing economic wrongs”. If, however, progressive reforms could be achieved by another party administration, then so be it. In order to illustrate this, Lynch pointed to the relative weakness of the Labour Party in New Zealand, whilst lauding the achievements of the Seddon Liberal administration there. He even went so far as to say that, with a Seddon in Australia, there would not be the same need for the existence of the Labor Party.²³

Lynch’s attempt to cultivate an image of moderation is underlined by his response to allegations that the Government was controlled by outside Labor organisations. He vehemently denied any such suggestion, asserting that he and his colleagues were as independent in the discharge of their duties as were members of the Opposition. Rather than proclaim his pride in the party’s trade union base as he done eleven months earlier, Lynch, now a minister, merely observed that it was unfair to criticise actions of the Trades Congress without likewise criticising the Employers Federation.²⁴

He was also keen to deny any hint of personal ambition:

If anything has been my failing it is my excessive modesty. If a man told me eighteen months ago that I should be in this Chamber and a Minister of the Crown by now, I would have told him to get somewhere else where he would

²² *WAPD*, p.516. The subject of non-party government is developed in Chapter Eleven.

²³ *Ibid*, p.508. Lynch appealed to the authority of such conservative and respectable figures as Lord Ranfurly, the Governor of New Zealand, and to the benefactor Andrew Carnegie, in order to support his argument [pp.516-7]. Seddon, who was a role model for many Labor men at that time, died in 1906.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p.516.

have a better chance of obtaining his livelihood as a prophet. I came here, not because I sought the position. I am here simply because I am pushed here ...”²⁵

He apparently believed that he had been “pushed” into the ministry in the same way that he had been pushed into the seat of Mount Leonora. Within both the Caucus and the ministry, Lynch was a moderate, and placed firmly in the Daglish camp. A pragmatist, he recognised that Labor had to bow to “political exigencies”. Reports at this time (July 1905) claimed that Lynch and five other members of Caucus had supported an alliance with the four independents, if need be, in order to retain government. They also indicated that he and three other ministers had threatened to resign if Daglish were replaced as Premier.²⁶

Lynch’s two month tenure as Minister for Works was too brief for him to make any impact on the public works programme in Western Australia. However, in early August (1905) the government sent him to the East Murchison goldfields in an attempt to urge workers to accept wage reductions awarded by Justice Parker of the State Arbitration Court. It clearly believed that his authority as a minister, together with his personal influence as a former Goldfields trade union official, could be used to convince the workers of the need for compromise. His mission was only a qualified success; union officials continued to raise grievances.²⁷

Later that same month, on 17 August, the Daglish Government was defeated on the floor of the house and five days later it resigned. Lynch would serve out the remaining fifteen months of his State parliamentary career on the opposition benches.

Electoral reform had been one of Lynch’s preoccupations from his early days

²⁵ *Ibid*, p.506.

²⁶ Buttfield, *op.cit.* (1979), pp. 235 and 238. Buttfield does not give his sources.

²⁷ *Westralian Worker*, 4 August 1905, p.5 and 11 August 1905, p.7. This was a time of widespread union disillusionment with the Arbitration Court.

on the Goldfields and it was an issue which he pursued during his time in State Parliament. During the latter part of 1905, he was one of five members of a select committee of the Legislative Assembly which enquired into the compilation of the State electoral rolls. His colleagues were two Labor members, Thomas Walker (chairman) and John Scaddan, and two non-Labor members, Harry Brown and James Price. Walker presented their report to State Parliament on 20 December 1905.²⁸

Lynch was particularly concerned with what he saw to be electoral malpractices by the non-Labor parties in the Fremantle area, especially by agents working for a Mr. Steward of the National Political League (a conservative anti-Labor organisation).²⁹ As he demonstrated in Parliament the following July, Lynch's concern with electoral grievances did not end with the enquiry.³⁰ In the course of what the *Westralian Worker* described as "a splendid fighting speech",³¹ he issued a severe condemnation of the Government's actions during the previous State elections. He lambasted the Minister for Mines, Henry Gregory, for having told a Fremantle audience that the Dalglish Government had resigned because it would not purchase the Midland Railway. This was tantamount to claiming that the Labor Government members had been "feathering their own nests in a dark and underhand way". If that was what Gregory meant, then it was "an unmitigated and cowardly lie".³²

The *Worker* praised Lynch's speech overall, stating that his arguments had

²⁸ *Minutes, Votes and Proceedings of Parliament (1905), Western Australia, First Session, Sixth Parliament, Paper 1A*, p.7.

²⁹ *Ibid*, pp.57-63. When Steward himself appeared before the enquiry, he received a grilling from Lynch regarding the role of the League in canvassing electors in the Fremantle area.

³⁰ *WAPD*, Vol.29, pp.152,157-8 (3 July 1906).

³¹ *Westralian Worker*, 6 July 1906, p.4.

³² *Ibid*.

fallen “with sledge-hammer effect”. Indeed, it observed, so keenly and effectually did he criticise the administration and policy of the Rason government in general, that the *West Australian* deemed it necessary to deal with him in a leading article the following morning.³³ Free now from the inhibitions of being a government minister, Lynch became one of Labor’s front-line soldiers in the House and, with his powerful attacking speeches, proved a major thorn in the side of the Rason Government.

Senate Preselection Contest

Meanwhile, Lynch had again thrown his hat into the ring for Senate preselection, having previously missed out by a narrow margin three years earlier. It was evident from early June that he was a candidate.³⁴ Interestingly (in light of his candidature), he strongly defended Federation in a speech to the Assembly on 1 August.³⁵ By 17 August, the *Worker* was able to reveal that, while the poll had not been formally declared, there was little doubt that Pearce, Lynch and Needham were the three successful candidates.³⁶ A week later the same paper declared that “the Leonora seat will soon be vacant and Laborites should get solidly together to put a real good Labor man in place of ‘Paddy’ Lynch who is a cert for the Senate”.³⁷

³³ *West Australian*, 4 July 1906.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 8 June 1906, p.2. Details of the sixteen candidates were published, including a biographical sketch of Lynch.

³⁵ *WAPD*, Vol. 29, pp. 759-63 (1 August 1906). He was addressing a motion by Liberal members F. Monger and A. Gull which proposed secession. During the same debate, Lynch’s colleague, Thomas Walker, lamented the tendency for the Commonwealth to draw the best talent from the states: “In a very little time this party [Labor] will lose, I doubt not, that very valuable help now in its ranks, the member for Leonora” [*Ibid*, p.751].

³⁶ *Ibid*, 17 August 1906, p.2.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 24 August 1906, p.2.

On 31 August nominations were called for Leonora³⁸ and a week later the *Worker* published the final returns for the Senate preselection ballot. From fourth in 1903, Lynch improved his position to second. He finished well ahead of Needham who came in third, though a long way behind Pearce who comfortably topped the poll. The top five candidates were:

Pearce 5535 votes

Lynch 2903 votes

Needham 2228 votes

Dodd 1629 votes

Ardagh 1309 votes³⁹

Lynch toured Western Australia extensively during the months leading up to the Senate elections in late December. Throughout the campaign Labor expectations ran high. Following a tour of the Murchison and North Coolgardie districts in November, Lynch was reportedly confident that Labor would get an almost unanimous vote in the outback goldfields.⁴⁰

However, all was not plain sailing. One particular issue threatened to cause enormous internal party controversy, even to derail Lynch's bid for a place in the Senate. That issue was his support for a rebate on the Land Tax.

In September, Lynch, together with J.B. Holman and W.D. Johnson, had voted with the government for the insertion of rebate clauses in the Land Tax Bill.⁴¹ Labor was divided on the issue: party policy opposed land tax exemptions but a

³⁸ Lynch did not actually resign his seat until 2 November. Eight days later he was replaced by Julian Stewart, a former editor of the *Worker*, who was elected unopposed.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 7 September 1906.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 23 November 1906, p.5.

⁴¹ They provided for a rebate of half the amount of tax on all properties improved to the extent of one third the unimproved value of the land.

certain ambiguity existed with regard to “rebates”.⁴² In any event, the issue was a contentious one within the organisation and so Lynch’s breaking parliamentary ranks had significant implications. The issue simmered for a couple of months before blowing up into a major controversy in November-December. By then, Lynch was under such strong attack from elements within the party that the *Worker* felt moved to publish a four-paragraph defence of his behaviour.

It claimed that the controversy had been caused by a dozen delegates to the Goldfields Political Council who, believing that Lynch had broken the Labor platform by voting for rebates on the Land Tax, had managed to persuade the council to ask the ALF to withdraw its support for Lynch’s Senate candidature. This had brought the issue out into the public arena before he had been given a chance to defend himself and, according to the *Worker*, was most unjust.⁴³

The matter came to a head at a public meeting at Boulder barely a week before polling day. Lynch vigorously defended his vote on the Land Tax rebate, insisting that Caucus, after much discussion, had agreed that every member should be free to follow the dictates of his conscience. He explained that he had voted for rebates in the case of a man who improved his land, as against the man who did not, for he held that wherever possible industry should be recognised. (Here his status as a substantial property-owner—and improver—surely influenced his outlook). Lynch’s opponents eventually backed off. The meeting concluded by carrying a motion of confidence in Lynch, though not without further recrimination.⁴⁴

The *Worker* declared that “although we differ with Mr. Lynch as to his

⁴² *Westralian Worker*, 7 September 1906, p.5.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 16 November 1906, p.1.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 14 December 1906. Lynch accused his long-time colleague, M.J. McCarthy (unsuccessful Labor candidate for Boulder in 1904) of being one of those working against him.

interpretation of the meaning of ‘exemption’, *we have every confidence in his loyalty to the Labor movement.*”⁴⁵ [my emphasis]. For Lynch, all ended well. A week later, the *Worker*, reporting on a reception for the visiting British Labour leader, Ramsay MacDonald, was able to rejoice in the Senate election results: “The success of Messrs. Pearce, Lynch, and Needham is very popular. Pearce is the foremost public man in Western Australia, and with the able assistance of ‘Lord Lynch of Boulder’ and ‘Five-foot Ned for Fremantle’, should do good work for Labor in the Senate.”⁴⁶

Conclusion

Paddy Lynch’s two year term in the State Parliament was in most respects a logical extension of his seven year career as a trade unionist and Labor activist on the Goldfields. His continuation in the role of advocate in the Arbitration Court whilst a parliamentarian best signified this. Not only that, it served to underline his ongoing commitment to the principles of arbitration. The parliamentary sphere afforded him the opportunity of pursuing his belief that further reform could best be achieved through legislation.

Nevertheless, Lynch, like the rest of his Labor colleagues, had to accept the limitations imposed by the prevailing political circumstances. His all-too-brief stint as a government minister gave him little opportunity to display his talents or to enact any lasting achievements. Throughout this period, which was marked by tension and unrest within Caucus, Lynch remained loyal and committed to the

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 14 December 1906. It had previously acknowledged that, although it believed that “rebate” could be equated with “exemption”, there was room for interpretation in this case [*Ibid*, 16 November 1906].

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 21 December 1906, p.3.

mainstream policies of the Labor Party and to the “mark time” Dalglish administration.

Lynch retained strong support on the Goldfields. The influential *Westralian Worker* clearly saw him as one of Labor’s rising young stars. Nevertheless, as the controversy surrounding Lynch’s vote for the Land Tax rebate amply demonstrated, he was not without his critics within the party; nor was he totally above suspicion with regard to his commitment to Labor principles. Indeed, internal opposition could well have stalled his Senate career before it had even begun. Despite his move to Perth in 1904, Lynch retained both his property and his political base in Boulder. His interlude in State Parliament enabled him to expand his sphere of influence to include the Perth metropolitan area, as witness his interest in the electoral affairs of Fremantle, and other parts of the state. This effectively broadened his political profile within Western Australia.

Viewed in hindsight, Lynch’s brief spell in the Western Australian Parliament could be seen as a stepping-stone into Federal politics, which is not to say that he planned it thus. It is, after all, not difficult to envisage an alternative scenario: Lynch ignores the temptations of a place in the Senate and, instead, pursues his already promising career in state politics. In this case, it is not inconceivable that he would have gone on to serve as a senior minister in the Scaddan Labor administrations of 1911-16.

CHAPTER FIVE

LYNCH IN THE SENATE: 1907-14

This chapter will take as its chronological span the period from Lynch's entry into the Senate in July 1907 until the Double Dissolution election of September 1914 which brought the third Fisher Labor administration into power. Since the outbreak of war occurred in the preceding month (August 1914), this serves as a convenient point at which to end our discussion. It also represents the end of Lynch's first two terms in the Senate—the normal six year term (1907-13) followed by a brief one year term (1913-14), curtailed as it was by the aforementioned Double Dissolution.

With the exception of the majority Fisher Labor Government, which served a full three year term (1910-13), this was a period of minority administrations, shifting alliances and general political instability. It was, nonetheless, a period noted for considerable legislative reform and social progress in Australia. It was an era in which Labor was, generally speaking, in the ascendancy in the Federal political arena. With strong Labor support, the liberal reformist Deakin administration of 1909-10 introduced New Protection, the Old Age Pension and compulsory military training. The second Fisher administration (1910-13) introduced a maternity allowance, established an Australian Navy and founded the Commonwealth Bank.

From July 1905 until April 1910—with the exception of the brief interlude for the first Fisher Labor administration (November 1908-June 1909)—Australia was governed by a series of Deakin administrations. With the historic merger of the

two non-Labor parties (the Protectionists and the Free Traders) into the “Fusion” in June 1909, the contest became a straight two-way tussle between the Labor and non-Labor (Liberal) parties. After the narrow defeat of the Fisher government in the June 1913 elections, Australia was governed until the outbreak of war in August 1914 by Joseph Cook’s Liberal administration. The elections of the following month saw Labor returned to office as the third Fisher administration.¹ For Lynch, the short period marked by the years 1911-13 must have seemed a charmed one, characterised by great hope. Not only was the first ever majority Federal Labor government in power, its tenure in office coincided with the first ever majority Labor government (the Scaddan administration 1911-14) in his home state of Western Australia.²

I shall now consider Lynch’s entry into the Federal Parliament, his Caucus contemporaries and his maiden speech. I shall then proceed to the primary focus of the chapter: a consideration of his major political concerns during his first seven years in the Senate. Finally, I shall consider a major development which intruded in his private life in 1909—the establishment by Lynch and his brother, newly arrived from Ireland, of a substantial farming property at Three Springs in Western Australia.

Senator Lynch

On 1 July 1907, Lynch was sworn in as a senator for Western Australia at the then Commonwealth Parliament House in Melbourne.³ He had celebrated his fortieth birthday just five weeks previously. Lynch entered the Senate as one of

¹ Much of the material for this section is based upon Patrick Weller (ed), *Caucus Minutes 1901-49: minutes of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party*, Vol. 1 (Melbourne, 1975); introductions to sections on Third, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Parliaments, pp.156-7, 252-3, 320, 372-3.

² Labor Premier John Scaddan was an old party colleague of Lynch’s and a fellow resident of Boulder from his Goldfields days.

³ Although elected in December 1906, Lynch, according to parliamentary practice, did not actually take up his place until the middle of the following year.

the fifteen senators who constituted a Labor *minority* in that chamber for the duration of the Parliament until the elections of 1910. He was, however, a member of the comfortable Labor *majority* during the two successive Parliaments (1910-13 and 1913-14)—and yet again after the Double Dissolution of September 1914.

Many of his Labor Caucus colleagues were no strangers to him: from Western Australia, his running mates, George Pearce (first elected 1901) and Ted Needham, along with his old Goldfields colleagues, Senator Hugh de Largie, Hugh Mahon MHR and Charlie Frazer MHR;⁴ from New South Wales, MHR's J.C. Watson, W.M. Hughes and W.G. Spence (all elected in 1901); and, from South Australia, an old seafaring colleague, Senator R.S. Guthrie.⁵

According to John Murdoch, from the time of the demise of the Watson Labor Government in 1904, a small group under the leadership of Charlie Frazer MHR (Kalgoorlie)⁶ had developed within the Federal Caucus. This group was united insofar as it shared Frazer's view that the Labor Party should assume a more distinctive identity and adopt a more active role than it had achieved under Watson's leadership.⁷ MP's such as W.G. Spence, George Pearce, King O'Malley and Josiah Thomas, amongst others, became the "fighting wing" of the party. They adopted a more aggressive approach towards the Deakin Government whose liberal reformist policies the Labor Party had previously supported. In 1906, Lynch and Needham had, along with Pearce, been elected to the Senate with the

⁴ The other Western Australians were Senators George Henderson and John Croft (both first elected in 1904) and Henry Fowler (elected MHR for Perth in 1901).

⁵ Watson, Hughes and Spence were old colleagues from Lynch's earliest days in the labour movement in Sydney in the early 1890's and Guthrie was South Australian Secretary of the Seamens Union during the maritime strikes (see Chapter Two). Lynch may also have been acquainted previously with Josiah Thomas, MHR for Barrier (based on Broken Hill), yet another trade union official active in the early 1890s. Like all the aforementioned, Thomas was later a conscriptionist and left the Labor Party in 1916.

⁶ Labor MHR for Kalgoorlie (1903-13). Minister in the Fisher administration 1910-13. Died in 1913 aged 33.

⁷ John Murdoch, *The Vision and the Void: Five Labor portraits* (London, 1999), p.67.

help of an enormous Goldfields vote. It was only natural then that Lynch and Needham should ally themselves with George Pearce and Kalgoorlie MHR, Charlie Frazer.

In October 1907, only three months after Lynch entered the Federal Parliament, J.C. Watson was replaced as Labor leader by Andrew Fisher. It is apparent that the Frazer-led group played a major part in this. There is, however, no evidence to suggest that Lynch played an active role in the moves to precipitate the resignation of his old New South Wales Labor colleague; neither does he appear to have actively supported him. In fact, he nominated W.G. Spence in the leadership ballot. W.M. Hughes was the other unsuccessful candidate.⁸ We can only speculate as to why Lynch supported one old New South Wales colleague (Spence) over another (Hughes). There is nothing to suggest that his relationship with Spence was any closer. As he frequently made clear during his subsequent parliamentary career, he greatly admired both men.⁹

The Caucus group with which Lynch was loosely connected was diverse in its membership: it transcended left/right and other divisions and was united only by its desire for a more forceful presentation of the Labor interest.¹⁰ Nothing too much should be made of Lynch's supposed connection with what was, after all, only an accidental and temporary alliance of individuals. He quickly fell in behind the majority of Caucus as a loyal supporter of Fisher and of the new leader's moderate and restrained approach to the responsibilities of opposition. (Indeed, even Charlie Frazer himself did the same once he had succeeded in ousting Watson in favour of Fisher).

⁸ Weller, *op.cit.* (1975), p.202. David Watkins MHR (NSW) was Lynch's seconder.

⁹ For example, Spence: *CPD*, Vol.82, p.413 (28 July 1917); Hughes: *CPD*, Vol.81, p.10973 (14 March 1917)

¹⁰ Another connecting thread, however, was the desire by some Labor members from the outlying and less populous states to assert their combined numerical strength within the Caucus against the larger states such as New South Wales and Victoria.

Lynch's contributions to debate during his first six months in the Senate (July-December 1907) set the tone for the period up until late 1914 and beyond. Like his inaugural speech to the Western Australian Legislative Assembly some three years earlier, his maiden speech to the Senate on 5 July 1907 repays examination for the way in which it reveals his primary political concerns and sets down certain markers for his future parliamentary career.

Lynch spoke during the Address-in-Reply debate on only the third day of the new parliamentary session. In a comprehensive address which lasted some one and a quarter hours, he canvassed such diverse subjects as: the role of the Senate; Commonwealth/State relations; protectionism; defence and immigration; electoral laws and their abuse by the non-Labor parties; a Federal Land Tax; the Trans-Australia Railway project; the Deakin Government; and the need or otherwise for a Labor Party.

Lynch viewed the Senate as a States' chamber rather than as a party chamber and was critical of those Opposition (Free Trade) members who abused the house by using it as a party forum in which to attack the Deakin Government. Unlike the Free Traders, he did not see the Deakin government as "wicked" but neither was he bound to give it his support.¹¹ In the area of Commonwealth/State financial relations, he considered that Western Australia was disadvantaged and endorsed John Forrest's view that the Federal Government should discharge its duty by taking over some of the States' debts.¹²

Early on, Lynch firmly nailed his colours to the mast as a protectionist. He enunciated the principle that the imposition of a "scientific tariff" could protect Australian industries but stressed that it should benefit employees and not just the

¹¹ *CPD*, Vol.36, pp.147-8 and 155 (5 July 1907).

¹² *Ibid*, pp.149-50.

employers.¹³ Lynch's views on defence and immigration dovetailed with his protectionist stance: he advocated the creation of an Australian navy while insisting that such an initiative need not conflict with loyalty to the Imperial forces of the Mother Country; he also believed that Australia needed a High Commissioner in London to encourage British migration.¹⁴

Returning to a familiar theme from his time in the Western Australian Parliament, Lynch decried the unfair advantage which the electoral laws gave the non-Labor parties and lamented the fact that "whilst opposition candidates hired special trains, Socialist candidates must walk or cycle". In what was for Lynch a rare criticism of John Forrest, he denounced the Federal Treasurer's abuse of the postal system during the previous Federal elections. Sending partisan newspapers and newsheets to electors free-of-charge was a blatant case of "the Anti-Socialist party abusing the socialist means of communication".¹⁵ He strongly advocated a progressive Federal Land Tax and declared that the Trans-Australia Railway project deserved a much higher priority than it had been given in the Governor-General's speech.¹⁶

In his conclusion, Lynch insisted that Australia had nothing to fear from a Labor Government. Significantly, his message was almost identical to the one he had conveyed to the Western Australian Parliament whilst a government minister two years earlier:¹⁷ there would be no need for a Labor Party but for the failings of other parties who had talked reform rather than enacting it. Once again, he held up

¹³ *Ibid*, p.151.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 150 and 153.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.152-3.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, pp.154 and 156.

¹⁷ *WAPD*, Vol.27, pp.516-7 (28 July 1905).

New Zealand as the shining example of what a non-Labor reformist government could achieve.¹⁸

Major Political Concerns

A number of key issues defined Lynch's role during his first seven years in the Federal Parliament; these included Commonwealth/State relations, protection, defence and immigration.

Although a committed Federalist, Lynch was also a staunch advocate of States' rights; always to the fore in defending and promoting the interests of his home state. Lynch's resolute advocacy of the Transcontinental Railway from the very outset of his parliamentary career provides the best possible testimony of his commitment to Western Australian interests. He was quick to remind the Senate that the railway project was the *quid pro quo* for the sacrifices that Western Australia had made on behalf of Federation.¹⁹

On the broader issue of Commonwealth/State relations, he advised the Commonwealth to "hasten slowly" in implementing the full exercise of its powers.²⁰ On another occasion Lynch advocated the virtues of a balanced budget: a surplus was not good because it would only encourage extravagance; a deficit would encourage parsimony.²¹ He was already displaying signs of the fiscal conservatism for which he later became noted. Lynch was also a trenchant critic

¹⁸ *CPD*, Vol. 136, p.157 (5 July 1907).

¹⁹ *Ibid*, Vol.37, p.1261 (1 August 1907). He recalled a meeting at Boulder in 1899 at which he and other speakers had supported Federation on these grounds. See discussion in Chapter Three.

²⁰ For example, in the debate on the Exchange Bill [*Ibid*, Vol.37, p.1591 (8 August 1907)]. He argued that Western Australia was consistently disadvantaged in financial transactions with the Eastern States.

²¹ *Ibid*, Vol.39, p.3916 (27 September 1907).

of the proposal to build the national capital at Canberra, describing it as “a national folly”.²²

It is a measure of Lynch’s position as a defender of States’ rights and a Western Australian loyalist that some of his most notable exchanges during his early days in the Senate involved his party colleague, Tom Givens, an equally outspoken Queenslander.²³ Equally, it was not beyond Lynch on occasion to cooperate with his anti-Labor opponents, in particular South Australian senator, Josiah Symon. In a rare display of bi-partisanship, Symon seconded an amendment by Lynch during a debate on an electoral bill. This prompted a jibe about a “Lynch/Symon coalition” from Labor senator, Gregor McGregor, something which both men hastily denied.²⁴

In 1908, John Forrest publicly attacked Lynch and the other Western Australian Labor members for in effect being party political ciphers rather than representing the interests of their home state as he himself did.²⁵ Stinging criticism of this kind from someone of the political stature of Forrest—and in the politically vulnerable climate of Western Australian parochialism—would surely have strengthened Lynch’s resolve to promote himself as a Western Australian loyalist. Recognition of the senator’s efforts came from another source within his home state, however. According to the *Cyclopedia of Western Australia*, Lynch:

²² *Ibid*, Vol. 48, pp.2706-7 (4 December 1908). He favoured the alternative site at Tooma-Dalgety. In the closing stages of the debate Lynch sarcastically moved an amendment to alter the title of the bill to “The Seat of Government and Surrender to Sydney Influence Act 1905”. Although introduced by Hugh Mahon as Minister for Home Affairs, the legislation was the product of an ongoing commission established by a previous government and not a Labor initiative as such.

²³ For example, *CPD*, Vol.37, p.1254 (1 August 1907). Lynch also clashed frequently with another Queenslander, Senator William St.Ledger, but, unlike Givens, he was a party political opponent.

²⁴ *CPD*, Vol.41, pp.5983-4 (14 November 1907). Viewed with the benefit of hindsight, McGregor’s remark may not have been totally wide of the mark. The cooperation between Lynch and Symon foretold a close political and personal friendship in later years, evidenced by correspondence between the two men in the early 1930’s. See discussion in Chapter Eight.

²⁵ *West Australian* (18 July 1908 and 12 August 1908). He described them as “dumb-driven cattle”.

[T]ook a prominent part in the famous tariff debate of 1907[8], during which his utterances elicited the most highly commendatory notices from the Press and others who, though opposed to his party, could not but forebear their full meed of praise for the worthy service rendered to his State and his country ...²⁶

Certainly, these debates significantly established Lynch's reputation during his first year in the Federal Parliament.

The tariff legislation introduced by the Deakin Government in early 1908 established the basis of New Protection in Australia. New Protection essentially advanced existing protection legislation by ensuring that the benefits were directly carried on to employees in protected industries by way of guaranteed wages and working conditions. The legislation was debated in the House of Representatives and the Senate over a six month period from January to June 1908. Lynch was a prolific and consistent contributor to these debates. He addressed himself, albeit often only briefly, to an enormous range of tariff items.²⁷ In so doing, he displayed a thorough grasp of technical detail with respect to particular items and to particular industries. His well-researched contributions reflected the strongly protectionist stance of the majority within the Labor Party at this time.²⁸

As early as 1 August 1907, Lynch revealed his preoccupation with defence when he declared to the Senate: "If we want to secure peace, we must be prepared for war."²⁹ In December 1908, he deplored the government's parsimonious attitude towards defence expenditure and warned of the possibility of German and Japanese threats to Australia. He described Japan "as a country which is making itself very troublesome, and which possibly has designs upon the Commonwealth in the near future".³⁰ The following August, he criticised the over-reliance upon

²⁶ *Cyclopedia of Western Australia*, Vol. 1, (Perth, 1912), p.307.

²⁷ *CPD, Index to Speeches* (3 July 1907-5 June 1908), lxxv. Under the Customs Tariff Bill Schedule, some fifty items on which Lynch spoke are listed, from agricultural implements to wicker products.

²⁸ For example: *CPD*, Vol.43, pp.8233, 8249, 8251-3, 8260 (20 February 1908).

²⁹ *Ibid*, Vol.37, p.1260.

³⁰ *Ibid*, Vol.48, pp.2978-9 (9 December 1908).

cadets, once again demonstrating his preoccupation with defence issues and underlining his position as a proponent of Labor's preference for compulsory military service.³¹ When, the following December, the Deakin government finally introduced legislation to introduce such service, Lynch opposed a successful amendment to allow religious conscientious objectors to be allotted non-combat duties.³²

Closely linked to Lynch's preoccupation with defence was a keen interest in immigration, although, chiefly at this stage, exclusionist in character. He was particularly concerned with the entry of "coloured labour" into the Queensland sugar industry,³³ having on at least two previous occasions specifically mentioned this issue as a major reason for his support for Federation.³⁴

With the exception of the Irish Home Rule debate of June 1914 where he appears to have played a background role (see Chapter Nine), there is little evidence that Lynch consciously promoted Irish issues within either the Parliament or the party during his first seven years in the Senate. Yet he did offer an Irish perspective to certain Australian issues such as land ownership. In August 1909, for example, when discussing the high rentals for and dearth of land in the Eastern States, he said: "We talk about the condition of affairs in Ireland, but the crack of the landlord's whip will ever be heard as loudly in New South Wales and Victoria as it ever was in Ireland".³⁵

³¹ *Ibid*, Vol.50, p.2719 (27 August 1909).

³² *Ibid*, Vol.54, p.6710 (2 December 1909). He believed such a provision was open to abuse and was one of only six senators (three Labor and three non-Labor) to vote against the amendment.

³³ *Ibid*, vol. 37, p.1689 (9 August 1907).

³⁴ *Ibid*, p.1255 (1 August 1907). Also at the pro-Federation public meeting at Boulder in 1899.

³⁵ *Ibid*, Vol. 50, p.2721 (27 August 1909). Barely four months previously, Lynch, writing to an old acquaintance in Ireland, had made reference to the scourge of one particular landlord in his home parish [Letter to T.P.McKenna (29 April 1909)].

Role in Caucus

The Federal Caucus minutes³⁶ for the period under discussion reveal that Senator Lynch played a role in Caucus proceedings which suggested neither relative obscurity nor undue prominence. When it came to moving motions or amendments, as he frequently did, Lynch almost invariably found himself on the losing side. This is not to suggest, however, that Lynch was a part of any minority bloc; rather that the numbers were stacked against him on particular issues. Nor is it to suggest that he was one of the Caucus malcontents.

He does, however, appear to have acted for a time as an informant for Lloyd Dumas, a journalist with the conservative Melbourne *Argus*. Dumas later revealed that Lynch:

[W]as concerned because some of his colleagues, he said, were feeding false stories to the newspapers to create propaganda for their own ends. He wouldn't leak any stories to me, he said, but he was prepared, if I liked to see him after a party meeting, to check any stories that I had heard from other members. It was a wonderful arrangement.³⁷

Dumas does not specify the time period, although the context of his discussion suggests it may have been some time around 1913. We can only speculate as to whether Lynch was acting on behalf of some faction within Caucus, on behalf of the party leadership or purely on his own personal behalf.

Something of Lynch's standing can be gleaned from the results of the first ever election, in July 1913, of a Caucus executive. Nearly every member of Caucus contested the eight positions. Of the fifty-five candidates in the first ballot, Lynch, with thirteen votes, finished equal fifteenth. In the second ballot, which excluded all but the top sixteen contenders from the first ballot, Lynch again finished in

³⁶ Weller, *op.cit.* (1975), *passim*.

³⁷ Lloyd Dumas, *The Story of a Full Life* (Melbourne, 1969), p.19. Dumas (later Sir Lloyd Dumas) was a political conservative. He was released by the *Argus* to travel with Prime Minister Billy Hughes during the 1916 Conscription referendum campaign and later accompanied Hughes to the Imperial Conference in Britain in 1918. In 1929, he became managing editor of the Adelaide *Advertiser* and, later, chairman of Advertiser Newspapers Ltd.

fifteenth place.³⁸ Although he never appears to have been a serious contender for a ministerial post in any of the Labor administrations during this period, his performance in the executive ballot does suggest a reasonably high standing amongst his colleagues.

Commissions

During his early years in the Federal Parliament Lynch took on various responsibilities. Upon arrival in 1907, he was appointed to the Joint House Library Committee, a post he held for most of his parliamentary career. In October 1914, he was appointed to the Joint House Public Works Committee and subsequently became vice-chairman, only relinquishing the post when appointed Minister for Works in the Hughes government after the Caucus split in November 1916. Lynch, however, was not content to limit his contribution to serving on parliamentary committees. His ambition sought other outlets.

His first such opportunity was the Royal Commission on the Fruit Industry (1912-14).³⁹ The commission appointed by Trade and Customs minister, Henry Tudor, on 3 April 1912 consisted of four Labor members: F.J. Foster (chairman), W.F. Finlayson, R.K. Ready and Lynch; and three non-Labor members; D. Gordon, R. Sampson and W. Thompson.⁴⁰ Over the following two-year period, the commissioners held no less than ninety-three sittings, examined no less than 312 witnesses and travelled a total of 20,000 miles. The Commissioners' brief

³⁸ Weller, *op.cit.* (1975), p.323. Unlike some of the candidates who were eventually successful, Lynch made very little headway in the second ballot, only increasing his vote tally marginally (from thirteen to 18). The eight successful candidates were Russell, Pearce, Hughes, Archibald, Spence, Charlton, Higgs, and McDonald. Interestingly, all but two (Charlton and McDonald) subsequently left the party in 1916-17.

³⁹ Its origins were somewhat political. It had been first proposed to Prime Minister Fisher in 1909 by John Earle, the leader of the Tasmanian Labor opposition but the idea had met strong opposition from leading Tasmanian fruit-growers [*Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers (General) Session 1914-17, Vol. V, pp.227-8*].

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p.227.

was, in fact, much wider than the Tasmanian fruitgrowers and extended to a consideration of the prospects for the expansion of the fruit industry throughout Australia.⁴¹

In July 1914 the final reports were submitted. Reflecting the somewhat politicised nature of the enquiry, separate majority and minority reports were presented. The majority report by the four Labor members concluded that Australian climactic conditions favoured the consumption of more fresh fruit and followed with a list of some twenty-nine recommendations, a large number of which addressed the issue of marketing.⁴² They strongly expressed the need for a more effective distribution of Australian fruit in the United Kingdom and on the Continent. They also recommended the appointment of a Commonwealth Trade commissioner in London and the establishment of a Commonwealth Bureau of Agriculture.

Despite the origins of the commission and a certain lack of bi-partisanship in the final reports, there were nonetheless broad areas of agreement amongst the seven commissioners as to ways of encouraging the future development of the Australian fruit industry. Several of their recommendations were taken up and implemented by the Fisher Government.

While Lynch had not laboured in vain, the time spent travelling and the long hours consumed at hearings, when added to his ordinary parliamentary duties, must have placed considerable demands upon his time and energy over this two year period. Thus, the Commission could also be seen as a major distraction from politics which kept him out of the “kitchen”.

In 1912, the Federal Parliament finally enacted legislation establishing an

⁴¹ *Ibid*, pp.225-7.

⁴² *Ibid*, pp.209-10 and 241-2.

Interstate Commission. This commission, much vaunted for some years, would consist of representatives of both the Commonwealth Government and the various states. It would be charged with the responsibility of deliberating on matters of joint Commonwealth-State concern, but with particular regard to financial relations and joint development projects. Amongst other things, it represented an attempt to place on a more permanent footing the structures for Commonwealth-State relations, whilst at the same time ensuring the proper participation of the states.

Lynch narrowly missed out on being an inaugural member of this Commission when it was first established in 1913.⁴³ That much is clear from a letter he wrote some twenty-four years later to then Prime Minister Joseph Lyons making application for a position on the Interstate Commission at that time. Lynch wrote *inter alia*:

In 1913, I was the chosen nominee for this position by the Fisher Labor government.

The Rt. Hon. W.M. Hughes was selected as Chairman, I myself as senior member and the late Sir John Quick as junior member. The Cabinet, I believe, had decided to gazette the personnel before the election in 1914, but suddenly decided not to do so until after the election. The contest which followed hung in the balance for a time, depending upon the vote of the late Sir William Lyne, a supporter of the Fisher Government. Sir William Lyne being defeated, the Cook Government came into office and appointed its own commission. Like the other members, I lost the position by one vote.⁴⁴

Lynch naturally felt cheated. But for the change of government at the 1914 election, he would have served as senior member representing the Commonwealth on the Commission. Not only would such an appointment have allowed him to pursue his already demonstrated interest in Commonwealth-State relations, it would have enabled him to be a voice for Western Australia in a position of

⁴³ Ironically, Lynch had questioned on the grounds of expense the need for such a commission when it was first proposed by the Deakin Government in 1909 [CPD, Vol.52, p.4530 (14 October 1909)].

⁴⁴ NAA CP 450/7/16 (27 November 1937).

considerable power and influence.

Lynch's membership of the Fruit Industry Royal Commission (1912-14) and his narrowly aborted membership of the Interstate Commission in 1913-14 reflected his desire to be more than a mere backbench senator. In the absence of a ministerial post, such endeavours could enable him to consolidate his political career while making a substantial contribution to the nation's development.

Farming at Three Springs

Having considered Lynch's early parliamentary career, we must now turn our attention to two significant but related developments in his private life: first, the arrival of his brother and family from Ireland and, secondly, the acquisition by the brothers of two large tracts of land at Three Springs near Geraldton with a view to farming.

On 25 March 1909, Paddy Lynch's older brother Philip, wife Sarah (nee McEnroe) and seven children arrived by ship at Fremantle.⁴⁵ In a letter to Hugh Mahon a week later, Lynch wrote:

The brother has arrived and what a contingent he has brought—six sons and a daughter. He has aged more than he should have done and when I look upon him sadly note that the youthful sprightliness has prematurely departed ... We are looking for land and busy.⁴⁶

Paddy had not seen his brother for some twenty-three years. Phil was thirteen years his senior and, at 55 years of age, rather old to be starting a new life in a strange country.⁴⁷ Phil's wife Sarah was some fifteen years his junior. Sadly, she died (aged 42) only two years later, in 1911, leaving a young family of eight

⁴⁵ Their baby daughter Brigid had become ill with pneumonia during the voyage and died soon afterwards. Two more children were born in Australia.

⁴⁶ NLA 937/173/3 (Mahon Papers), 2 April 1909.

⁴⁷ It is said that Senator Lynch contributed substantially to the fares of his brother and family. Phil Lynch had by all accounts got into financial difficulties on the farm in Ireland and been forced to vacate the property. Wife Sarah was keen for the young family to make a new start and reputedly the driving force behind the move to emigrate.

children, the youngest (Mary) only a baby. Thereafter, Senator Lynch assumed an even greater responsibility for his nephews and nieces.

Many years later, one of the six nephews who arrived in Perth in March 1909, Thomas Alphonsus (Phonsie) Lynch, described their reception:

We were met by our uncle Senator Patrick Lynch and installed in a house here in North Perth ... Our dear uncle welcomed us generously and did all he possibly could. Nobody could have done more for us ...⁴⁸

At a farewell function organised by local parishioners prior to the family's departure from Ireland, Phil Lynch had been entrusted with an inscribed "loving cup". It was accompanied by an ornate illuminated scroll; the concluding paragraph of the dedication read:

We request you to bear to your distinguished brother—Senator P.J. Lynch—the accompanying loving cup from the friends of his youth in Ireland, and ask you to assure him of the pleasure and pride his great success in Australia has brought to the hearts of his old companions here. We wish him many years of health and happiness to still further serve the old land and the land of his adoption.⁴⁹

Some five weeks after the family's arrival at Fremantle, Lynch wrote to T.P. McKenna, one of the signatories to the scroll, expressing his gratitude and appreciation. The recent events had apparently rekindled his feelings for Ireland and for those aspects of Irishness which he had left behind so many years before.⁵⁰

As Lynch had intimated in his letter to Hugh Mahon, he and brother Phil had quickly set about trying to acquire suitable farming land. Within a few months they had succeeded, purchasing land at Three Springs released for sale by the

⁴⁸ Typed up version of notes made by the late Phonsie Lynch (c.1980) and collected by the late Marie Clarke (nee Clune), grand-daughter of Senator Lynch. Amongst papers in the possession of her daughter, Bernadette Lindsey, Piesse Brook, Western Australia.

⁴⁹ Copy of scroll in possession of D.Cusack. Original in possession of John Lynch, grandnephew of Senator Lynch, Cottesloe, Western Australia.

⁵⁰ Letter by Lynch to T.P. McKenna, Mullagh, Co.Cavan, Ireland (29 April 1909). The letter provided ample evidence of such sentiments. See discussion in Chapter One.

Midlands Railway Company.⁵¹ As someone with a farming background in Ireland and with a keen awareness of the vital role played by the Perth-Goldfields rail link, it made sense for Lynch to avail himself of the new opportunities thus provided.⁵²

The Lynch brothers initially purchased a small block of some 315 acres about a mile south of the Three Springs townsite, and another block eight miles north of Three Springs. The latter, referred to as the “top block”, comprised some 2000 acres of heavy forest and another 1200 acres of sand plain.⁵³ This was later named *Mount Leonora* after Lynch’s former electorate in the Legislative Assembly. A four-room house was built on the smaller “homestead block” nearer Three Springs, and Phil Lynch and his family went to live here in late 1909.

They then set about clearing the land for farming. Phonsie Lynch provides this description of the laborious task undertaken:

In 1910 we let contracts for land clearing, 100 acres on the homestead and 200 acres on the top block. This was all done by hand axe. Everything up to 6” in diameter was cut level with the ground first, then the trees were felled at about three feet above the ground ... Contract clearers had to leave the land clear to ground level and ready for the plough.

In 1911 we bought a team of eight horses and a wagon from the Murchison goldfields, and cropped the three hundred acres that we had just cleared. We let contracts for 400 acres of poor land to be cleared the following year. We used horses for seeding, harvesting and carting the bagged wheat to the siding in the wagon. We had to cart water for the horses and other stock from government wells. This was quite a job in the summer time ...⁵⁴

⁵¹ This privately-owned company held substantial tracts of land on either side of the line which extended from Midland (east of Perth) through the northern wheatbelt as far as Geraldton.

⁵² In 1906, an area west of the railway line in the vicinity of Three Springs was thrown open as the Kadathinni Agricultural area, attracting the first influx of settlers. In 1909, more land was surveyed into farms and sold off by auction, bringing into the area a second influx of settlers which included the Lynch brothers and eight others.

⁵³ WAA 4978A/239/7/4. Midlands Railway Company Papers (Land Grants) 1891-1964, and information supplied by the late Phonsie Lynch, a son of Phil (see Footnote 48).

⁵⁴ Information recorded by the late Phonsie Lynch (c.1980).

The first harvest in 1910-11 was a good one; subsequent years not so good (1914 a complete failure). However, the year 1915-16 recorded a good harvest and thereafter things looked up.⁵⁵

In 1910 Patrick and Philip Lynch had formed a farming partnership trading as the “Lynch Brothers”. It lasted until 1918 when it was amicably dissolved (Phil then took over the small farm at Three Springs and Paddy the larger property known as *Mount Leonora*). Given his parliamentary duties in Melbourne, it was understandable that after the initial land-hunting expedition and acquisition of property in 1909 Lynch took relatively little part in the day-to-day running of the farms. These responsibilities were left to his brother, nephews and farm employees. Nonetheless, as we shall see later, the harsh pioneering conditions and the huge challenges faced in establishing viable farms both moulded and reinforced aspects of the Senator’s character: his enterprising spirit, his hard-headed practicality and his stubborn resilience.

Meanwhile, Lynch had acquired the first of several different rental addresses in Melbourne which would serve as accommodation when Parliament was sitting. Between 1907 and c.1912, he stayed at 63 Buckley Street, Moonee Ponds.⁵⁶ For the first couple of years, his wife and young family lived with him in Melbourne during the parliamentary sessions. In 1909, however, Lynch bought a house at 8 Avenue No.2 (re-named *Camelia Street* c.1920), North Perth.⁵⁷ Lynch’s wife and children then returned to live in Western Australia, dividing their time between

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Melbourne Post Office Directory (various years 1908-19). He was recorded as C/- Parliament House (c.1913-14) and at addresses in East Melbourne (c.1915-19).

⁵⁷ The house is still stands at this location just off Vincent Street. *Camelia Street* forms the eastern boundary of the large Redemptorist Monastery which was built in 1902 and still dominates the site. The Redemptorists originally owned some 15 acres of land in this part of North Perth and it is likely that Lynch originally acquired his property through the subdivision and sale of some of this land from 1906 onwards.

North Perth and Three Springs, before settling permanently in Three Springs in 1918.

Lynch, however, had not entirely severed his property connections with the Goldfields. He appears to have retained his property at Lane Street, Boulder until approximately 1919. He appears on the Boulder Council Roll as late as 1917, thus underlining his continuing connection with the Goldfields, through property qualification and voting rights, long after his entry into Federal politics in 1907.

For the decade following 1909, then, Lynch had effectively four different property and/or residential bases: Boulder, North Perth, Three Springs and Melbourne. His pursuit of a career in Federal politics had occasioned a shift of focus in everyday life from Perth and Boulder to Melbourne and Three Springs.

Conclusion

Between 1907 and 1914, Lynch established a solid reputation as a promising though not outstanding Labor parliamentarian. Never afraid to take an independent stance when the situation demanded—on the Transcontinental Railway, for example—he remained nonetheless a faithful servant of the Labor governments of the day. He was, however, overshadowed by his slightly more senior Western Australian compatriots, Senators George Pearce and Hugh de Largie (party whip in the Senate and assistant secretary of Caucus) and Hugh Mahon MHR. With Pearce and Mahon to the fore, he had little chance of achieving ministerial rank.

Lynch easily negotiated the transition from State to Federal politics. His first seven years in the Senate was in many respects a continuation of his two-year stint in the Western Australian Parliament. He continued to preoccupy himself with

practical issues of economic and social reform. *Protectionism* in its various guises was the implicit underlying theme: *protection* of Australian industry (through tariffs and bounties), *protection* of British labour (by the White Australia policy and appropriate industrial legislation) and *protection* of Australia's borders (by a strong local defence force and the promotion of national development). Lynch was very much a man of the "New Settlement", that broad political consensus which had been achieved post-Federation; namely, a commitment to the principles of White Australia, arbitration and protection.

Even at this early stage in his career, Lynch, committed Federalist *and* Western Australian loyalist, always put *state* and *national* ahead of *class* and *sectional* interests. Although a committed Laborite, he was always willing to work with his political opponents in the "national interest". This preoccupation was clearly manifested from the very outset in Lynch's defence-consciousness. Furthermore, Lynch's early association, however tenuous, with such conservative figures as Colonel J. Lyon Johnston (his property agent at Boulder), Senator Josiah Symon and the journalist Lloyd Dumas is noteworthy. A pattern is emerging which will become all the more clear later on.

As early as 1907, Lynch had observed that the prosperity of any country depended as much upon the seasons as it did upon politics; nonetheless, politics was still relevant.⁵⁸ The first part of the foregoing statement—that is, the emphasis upon the seasons—is revealing inasmuch it reflects the outlook of a conservative farmer rather than a politicised social reformer. The move to Three Springs in 1909 was a significant one politically. Thereafter, Lynch was a substantial farmer, the joint holder of some 2500 or more acres. This had reinforced his earlier property-owning status. It had also served to loosen, though not sever, his original

⁵⁸ *CPD*, Vol.36, p.156 (5 July 1907).

Goldfields trade union base. It is not surprising that he should come to see the world through the eyes of a pioneer farmer rather than a Goldfields-based engine driver-cum-trade union official. It also provides further evidence of a conservative influence at work in Lynch's politics.

In order to attain office and be in a position to implement its programme, Labor had to broaden its electoral appeal. The party depended upon a certain amount of middle-class support for its electoral successes in the first decade of the Federal Parliament. Lynch himself acknowledged that circumstances had changed. In 1909, he told the Senate:

[I]n the early history of the movement the Labour Party mainly represented the working-classes. Of course, as time went on, our aims came to be better understood and we now represent more than the manual toilers. Our supporters include a great leaven of other elements ...⁵⁹

The defeat of the Fisher government in June 1913 represents in many respects a landmark in the history of the Australian Labor Party. Many of the reforms which it sought had now been achieved. By 1913, men of the Western Australian Labor "old guard", the pioneering trade unionists of the 1890s such as Lynch, Pearce, de Largie and Henderson, had achieved their immediate goals. They could feel reasonably contented. However, some of their younger colleagues (particularly from the eastern states) were impatient for more radical and far-reaching reform. Already there were signs within the Labor ranks of a growing cleavage along left/right or radical/moderate lines; seen in these terms, Lynch was clearly one of the older moderates. During the war years this cleavage would deepen; conscription would then serve as the catalyst to split the party asunder.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, Vol.50, p.2716 (27 August 1909).

CHAPTER SIX

THE CONSCRIPTION CONTROVERSY AND THE LABOR SPLIT (1914-17)

This chapter forms the crux of our narrative. It embraces the period from the declaration of war in August 1914 until the defeat of the second conscription referendum in December 1917. It includes the focal point of our story—the conscription controversy and Labor Split of 1916-17.¹ The two pivotal events here are the Caucus split of 14 November and the Special Interstate Labor Congress of 6-7 December 1916.

The chronology will be interwoven with interpretative discussion. Further, it will be broken at certain places to consider particular topics in some detail: for example, Lynch's conflict with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in 1915 and his split with the Labor Party in 1916. A brief historical background to the period will be given at the outset. Subsequent sections will each focus upon Lynch's own involvement in events, providing further background only insofar as it is necessary to understand these events and to put them in context.

Britain declared war on Germany on 5 August 1914, which meant that Australia was also at war. In the Double Dissolution election the following month, the Labor Party won a comfortable majority in each house. Andrew Fisher became Prime Minister once again, and made his famous pledge to commit Australia “to the last man and to the last shilling”. The Labor Party enjoyed office for most of the period 1910-16, but it always had to balance careful administration against

¹ As we shall see, the split had as much to do with issues of authority and democracy within the party as it did conscription *per se*.

social reform. Once war broke out, the exigencies of wartime administration took almost total precedence over the desire for domestic reform. The consequent internal tensions caused the various strands within the party slowly to unravel. Furthermore, the introduction of special war-time legislation such as the War Precautions Act, which many considered unduly oppressive, made certain ministers such as Pearce and Hughes particularly unpopular with sections of Caucus, not to mention the extra-parliamentary party.

In October 1915, Fisher stepped down as Prime Minister and was replaced by Hughes who immediately postponed the proposed referendum to extend Commonwealth powers, measures which had already been rejected by referendum in 1911 and 1913. This was six months after Caucus had rejected a motion by Lynch that any further submission to the people of such proposals be deferred until June 1917.² It seems likely that Lynch was doing Hughes's bidding on that occasion. Certainly the two were of like mind.³ Lynch, like Hughes, favoured a policy which made all other economic and political considerations subservient to the war effort.

Following a protracted six months sojourn in Britain and Europe, Hughes returned to Australia in July 1916 deeply concerned about the apparent shortfall in Australia's recruitment for the Western Front. He proposed conscription as the remedy. In August, after a heated debate extending over three days, he obtained Caucus approval (by the narrow margin of 23 votes to 21) to submit the proposal to the Australian people by referendum. The following month, Hughes was expelled from the Labor Party by his own party executive in New South Wales.

² Patrick Weller (ed), *Caucus Minutes 1901-49: minutes of the meetings of the Federal Parliamentary Party*, Vol. 1 (Melbourne, 1975), p.393.

³ *Ibid*, p.253. In 1912, when a resolution was moved at the Commonwealth Labor Conference demanding that the defeated 1911 referendum proposal be re-submitted to the people, Hughes had resisted making such decisions mandatory, arguing that they should be left to the discretion of the Federal Parliamentary party.

The conscription referendum was lost in October, and the following month a major split occurred when Hughes led twenty-three of his supporters out of Federal Caucus. This group reconstituted themselves as the National Labor Party. The remaining 42 members of Caucus elected Frank Tudor as their leader and called themselves the Official Labor Party. On the initiative of the Victorian executive, a Special Interstate Congress of the Labor Party was held in Melbourne on 6-7 December. Here a number of conscriptionists (including Lynch) were formally expelled from the Labor Party.

From November 1916 until February 1917, the Hughes-led National Labor Government governed as a minority administration with Liberal support. In February, Hughes entered into an alliance with the Liberal Party to form a national war-time administration, ministries to be shared between National Laborites and Liberals. The Hughes administration, however, lacked a majority in the Senate. Although Hughes used various devices to give his government a working majority in that chamber, these all failed, and eventually a general election was called for May. Hughes's Government, which by this time had reconstituted itself as the Nationalist or "Win-the-War" party, won an overwhelming majority in both houses and the Official Labor Party was consigned to the Opposition benches for a period of what turned out to be twelve years.

Under war-time conditions, a fundamental re-alignment had taken place in Australian politics. The Labor Party, which had begun the war in a position of strength, was now in the political wilderness. The split at the Federal level was soon followed by a series of splits at state level, leading directly to the fall of Labor administrations in New South Wales and Western Australia.

In December 1917, the Hughes National Government held another referendum in an attempt to introduce conscription, but this was defeated by an even bigger margin than the first. Nonetheless, the Hughes Government saw out the rest of the war and was still comfortably ensconced in power when an armistice was declared in November 1918.

Supporter of the War Effort

As we saw in Chapter Five, Lynch showed abundant evidence from the earliest stages of his parliamentary career of being preoccupied with defence.⁴ Once war broke out in August 1914, he was a strong supporter of the war effort. He upheld the Empire cause whilst maintaining that Australia had to stand on its own feet militarily and not rely overly upon Britain. For him, it was the cause of Australia and the Empire against Germany.

Lynch's first major speech on the war, delivered to the Senate on 15 April 1915, gives a clear insight into his thinking. For Lynch, "a great Empire had taken up cudgels on behalf of right and justice".⁵ Therefore, Australia had to exert all its energies for the cause of the Mother Country and her allies. Lynch insisted, furthermore, that it was necessary to remodel ideas about waging war. To this end, he proposed that all civilised nations refuse to associate with any other nation which did not agree to consult the bulk of its population before entering a war. Significantly, he observed that socialists in Germany had been either silenced or politically submerged.⁶

Lynch was eager to defend his party's loyalty to the Empire against taunts from Labor's opponents. He demonstrated that a higher proportion of unionists than

⁴ As early as December 1908 Lynch had warned of the Japanese and German threats, and sixteen months previously he had intoned: "[I]f we want to secure peace, then we must be prepared for war" [*CPD*, Vol.138, p.1260 (1 August 1907)].

⁵ *CPD*, Vol. 76, p.2321 (15 April 1915).

⁶ *Ibid.*

non-unionists had enlisted. He argued, furthermore, that trading with the enemy legislation had exposed “many so-called patriots”, the commercial men of the community, before the courts.⁷ Lynch pronounced himself impressed with the Government’s overall handling of the war situation.⁸

As we shall see later, his speech of 25 June 1915 would become a landmark event, being the first by a Federal Labor MP to advocate publicly conscription. The speech bears further examination for the way in which Lynch clearly revealed his views on all the significant issues relating to the war. He was of the view that the Opposition included “all the reactionary elements in our political life” which had opposed such measures as the establishment of an Australian navy and compulsory military training⁹. He further insisted that Australia was not doing enough for the war effort when compared to the “Mother Country”. Germany clearly had designs upon Australia, yet Australian people did not realise the true severity of the situation.¹⁰

It was highly indicative of Lynch’s preoccupation with the war effort that he should be the one to initiate an extraordinary motion from the floor at the Special ALF Congress in Perth twelve months later, in June 1916, to congratulate the Allied forces on their claimed victory at the Battle of Jutland the previous day.¹¹ Despite the fact that the Congress had been called specifically to consider the issue of conscription, he was able to have his motion considered automatically and carried unanimously. The ease with which he accomplished this feat suggests that, whatever the divisions over conscription, he carried enough authority and

⁷ *Ibid*, p.2323.

⁸ *Ibid*, p.2328.

⁹ *CPD*, Vol. 77, p.4379, (25 June 1915).

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p.4380-1.

¹¹ *Report of Proceedings of General Council (Special Congress) 1916 of Australian Labor Federation (WA Division)*, p.24. It read in part: “[Congress] conveys to British Admiralty its sincere gratitude for and high appreciation of the British fleet ...”. The next day Congress received a message that Lord Kitchener and his staff had been drowned at sea.

influence to be able to marshal the patriotic and imperialist sentiments of Western Australian Laborites.

Some eleven months earlier, Lynch had concluded one of his Senate speeches with an appeal to the “spirit of Gallipoli”. It was, unfortunately, necessary to wage war in order to preserve peace.¹² For him too, this was clearly “a war to end all wars”. Lynch, then, was clearly one of the most “hawkish” members of the Parliamentary Labor Party and one of its most ardent supporters of the war effort—long before the conscription controversy broke in late 1916. He would remain both a loyal defender of the Allied cause and an unrelenting foe of German militarism for the duration of the war.

The issue of war-time censorship was one on which Lynch proved himself to be profoundly more sympathetic to the government’s predicament than its critics, whether inside or outside the Labor Party. In September 1916, he raised in the Senate the issue of the “much-abused” Department of Commonwealth Censorship. He was at pains to show that this was not a “one-sided tyranny”; that anti-conscriptionists were not the only ones to suffer. He pointed out that there was censorship of conscriptionists too; for example, the Press had not reported that the Fremantle Trades Hall had voted *against* the calling of a general strike in the event of the introduction of conscription.¹³ His equation of the failure of the press to report the *defeat* of an anti-conscriptionist motion with the government’s pursuit of draconian censorship measures was, to say the least, disingenuous.

Earlier that same month, Lynch had shown himself much more understanding of government censorship of United Irish League (WA) resolutions regarding the situation in Ireland than was his colleague Hugh Mahon, who had vigorously

¹² *CPD*, Vol. 79, pp.7805 and 7802 (11 May 1916). The battle at Gallipoli had taken place thirteen months earlier, in April 1915.

¹³ *Ibid*, Vol.80, p.9119 (29 September 1916).

pursued protests with Defence Minister Pearce. This, despite the fact that Lynch, a mere backbencher, was much less constrained than Mahon, Minister for External Affairs at the time.¹⁴

The IWW

It is important at this stage to consider the role of the IWW in Australia for several reasons: first, it was closely involved in the struggles within the labour movement and contributed to the internal tensions therein; secondly, it was one of the major forces behind the anti-conscription movement in Australia and the anti-war cause in general; thirdly, for both of the aforementioned reasons and as a result of basic ideological differences with Senator Lynch, direct conflict occurred between him and certain IWW members. Consequently, Lynch was one of the IWW's most strident opponents within the Labor Party and a major sponsor of moves (including legislation) to suppress the organisation. As we shall see, Lynch's antagonistic relationship with the IWW was inextricably linked to his strongly conscriptionist stance and to his perception of the Labor Party as a strictly reformist parliamentary organisation.

The origins of the IWW as a revolutionary trade union-based organisation implacably opposed to the prevailing capitalist system, lie in late nineteenth century United States history.¹⁵ It sought to achieve revolutionary change by mass political action. Its political philosophy was anarcho-syndicalist and it proclaimed the General Strike as the means by which to overturn the existing economic and

¹⁴ NLA 937/667, 677-8 (Mahon Papers). This issue is elaborated in Chapter Nine.

¹⁵ Ironically, in view of Lynch's brief association in the USA with the Knights of Labor, P.J. Rushton has suggested that the Knights were the "true precursor of the IWW". Although differing radically in temper and method, both emerged to cater for those groups of unskilled and migrant workers largely ignored by the American Federation of Labor [P.J. Rushton, "The IWW in Sydney, 1913-17" (Masters thesis, University of Sydney, 1969), pp.7-8].

political order.

The IWW first appeared, in the eastern states, in the very early years of the last century. However, it was not until the years immediately preceding the 1914-18 War that it emerged as a force in Western Australia, mainly through the influx from the east of IWW activists, such as Monty Miller (a veteran of the Eureka stockade) and Mick Sawtell. Active branches (known as “locals”) developed in Fremantle and Boulder. The Boulder local began in late 1914, with thirty members, and reached the height of its strength in mid-1915, with 117 members, before declining in early 1916. It had some success in organising the woodcutters on the railway lines outside Kalgoorlie who included Italians and many other non-British whom the Goldfields trade unions were loath to organise. During the 1914-18 War, the IWW was not only anti-conscriptionist; it opposed the war itself. This served to marginalise the organisation, not only within the labour movement but within the Australian community as a whole.

Boulder Local

The stories of Senator Paddy Lynch and the IWW came to intersect through Lynch’s properties, first at Boulder and then at Three Springs. The IWW activists who had come west from Broken Hill and other places in the eastern states concentrated their energies upon Boulder during the first half of 1915. From approximately April 1915 until January 1916, the Boulder local rented as its headquarters a small hall—the property of Lynch—in Lane Street. On the face of it, this was a most unlikely arrangement for at least two reasons: firstly, Lynch’s own lack of sympathy for such militant leftist organisations; secondly, the fact that Lynch’s agent in Boulder was the firm, Johnston and Bridges, of which Lieutenant Colonel J. Lyon Johnston was the major partner. Johnston was also

organiser of the Boulder Volunteers which had used the same premises as a drill hall just a few years previously.¹⁶ It seems probable that Lynch, who was living in Melbourne at the time, had no direct say in the letting and that Johnston and Bridges had treated the matter as a purely commercial transaction. In any event, none of the parties involved—Lynch, Johnston or the IWW—could have predicted the events that followed.

Sometime in 1915 a poem appeared in the window of the IWW office in Lane Street parodying the clergy and bishops who exhorted men to enlist for the war. It was accompanied by a caricature of a clergyman kneeling in prayer.¹⁷ Some local people took offence at this display and a complaint was lodged with the police.¹⁸ By the end of 1915 it was evident that the Boulder local was in severe financial difficulties and that debts incurred for literature purchased and the rent of the hall were largely to blame.¹⁹ By the end of the following January it had been decided to vacate the hall²⁰ and, by May, the Boulder local had ceased activity.

IWW officials blamed Paddy Lynch for their financial problems. In the course of correspondence, secretary Fred Lunn vented his spleen on several occasions, variously describing Lynch as a “Labour fakir”, a “shark” and a “porpoise”.²¹ On another occasion, he asked : “Why on earth don’t we send our money [to the Press Fund in Sydney] instead of into Sir Paddy Lynch’s belly?”²²

¹⁶ Boulder Rate Books (1915-16); NAA A456 W26/148/57, Attachment B, p. 43. Deposition by Stanley Read.

¹⁷ Tom Scutt, “ ‘Kicking like Hell’: The IWW in Western Australia”, *Papers in Labour History* (No. 11, June 1993), p. 69.

¹⁸ NAA PP14/1, Military Intelligence File 17/1/10.

¹⁹ NAA A456 W26/148/57, Exhibit 36. Letter Daly to Hanscombe (10 January 1916). Members were originally proud of their commodious headquarters but it was not long before some began to suggest that it might be a bit of an extravagance.

²⁰ *Ibid*, Exhibit 15. Minutes of Boulder Local meeting (30 January 1916).

²¹ *Ibid*, Exhibit 36. Letter to “Fellow Worker Sec.” (13 June 1915); letter to Corinthian (21 November 1915): “[I]t does seem foolish paying good money to a porpoise like P.Lynch for nothing ...” .

²² *Ibid*, Exhibit 36. Letter to “Fellow Worker” (19 December 1915).

The IWW were well accustomed to speaking of politicians, especially Labor politicians, in the most contemptuous and disparaging language. “Labour fakir” was a favourite term of abuse. There are, furthermore, various examples of IWW members, Mick Sawtell in particular, using the disparaging term “crafties” to refer to the craft unions and their bosses.²³ Such attitudes could hardly have endeared the IWW to Lynch, himself a former craft unionist and prominent union official in Boulder. It is little wonder then that the relatively short-lived episode of the IWW renting Lynch’s premises should exacerbate the already evident underlying tensions between the parties involved.

In September 1915, Tom Barker, one of the leading IWW activists in New South Wales, was imprisoned for the first time, causing “the thoughts of Western Australian Wobblies to turn to sabotage”.²⁴ From the Goldfields, IWW activist Mick Sawtell wrote to the Wobbly newspaper *Direct Action*: “Last Sunday night we discussed the imprisonment of fellow-worker Barker, and decided upon a campaign of ‘Black Cat’... [S]ome of the Federal Senators have large farms in this State. Nuff sed [sic]”.²⁵

Since Lynch owned a large farm, he was obviously one of the politicians Sawtell had in mind. Soon afterwards, Sawtell, following through on their threat, addressed the following undated, unsigned handwritten note to “Senator P. Lynch, Parliament House, Federal”:

Dear Senator,

Tom Barker of IWW, Sydney has nine months jail hanging over his head. If Barker goes up then we will “sabotage” the Master Class all over Australia. All the labor politicians are capitalists, consequently we will not hesitate to “Sabotage” the Labor politicians. If you wish to save your farm at Three springs see that tom barker is released at once. Be sure and show this note to all the other members of the Labor party.

²³ *Ibid*, Exhibit 15. For example, letter Sawtell to Boulder Local (16 May 1916): “In whose interests do the crafties function, ours or the bosses?”

²⁴ Ian Turner, *Sydney is Burning* (Sydney, 1967), p. 44.

²⁵ *Ibid*.

Remember your class, the capitalist class has everything to lose, we workers have only our chains. Don't forget release Tom Barker or "Sabotage".²⁶

This letter would come back to haunt Sawtell.

Backlash

In the last months of 1916, the Federal Government initiated strong measures to clamp down on the activities of the IWW. In Sydney, twelve leading Wobblies (including Tom Barker) were arrested. There followed in November the celebrated trial of "The Sydney Twelve", well documented by Ian Turner.²⁷ In Perth, a similar trial of IWW activists took place the following month. In both cases, police raids and subsequent arrests had taken place during the lead-up to the first conscription referendum in October. It has been convincingly argued by Verity Burgmann and others that these actions were initiated by a desire on the part of the Federal Government to use the supposed threat of the IWW as a weapon against the anti-conscriptionists during the final stages of the referendum campaign.²⁸ Lynch, as we shall see, was fully supportive of such action. Nevertheless, he was not directly involved in the Perth trial which took place over a number of days in mid-December. By this time, he was very much preoccupied in Melbourne as Minister for Works and Railways in the Hughes-led National Labor Government following the Caucus split the previous month.

All the defendants were found guilty, but Justice Burnside showed great leniency in letting them off on good behaviour bonds. All except Sawtell. He faced the additional charge of threatening Lynch's property, was convicted and given a six months jail sentence. Sawtell admitted being the author of the letter,

²⁶ NAA A456 W26/148/57, Exhibit 227. Reproduced here without correction.

²⁷ Turner, *op.cit.*, (1967), *passim*.

²⁸ Verity Burgmann, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism: The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia* (Melbourne, 1995), p.193.

which was tendered in evidence. During the hearing, IWW veteran Monty Miller attempted to help Sawtell by leading him through a cross-examination which sought to tease out the exact meaning of the term “sabotage” in Sawtell’s letter. The purpose of the exercise was to suggest that in this context the term was intended to imply *industrial* sabotage (encouraging Lynch’s farm employees to go on strike, for example) rather than *physical* sabotage (burning out Lynch’s property).²⁹ If a later reference to this episode in a Senate speech is anything to go by, Lynch apparently favoured the latter interpretation.³⁰

All of these events need to be seen in the context of growing concern within the Labor leadership about the destructive influence of the IWW within the movement as a whole. The Hughes and Holman Governments were particularly severe on the IWW. George Black, Chief Secretary in the New South Wales Labor Government, instructed his police to “stop any speaker who makes a disloyal statement”,³¹ while Premier Holman blamed the drift into the anti-conscription camp on “the recent but steadily growing influence of the IWW over union organisations”.³² Prime Minister Hughes attacked the IWW on numerous occasions during 1916, but with increasing ferocity and regularity immediately before, during and after the conscription referendum of late October. On one occasion, he declared “its ideals are German, and its only weapon is force;” on another, “there is only one thing they understand, and that is force”.³³

Significantly, all three men—Black, Holman and Hughes—had been colleagues of Lynch’s during his formative days in the labour movement in West

²⁹ Burgmann, *op.cit.*, (1995), pp.212-13. In strict IWW terminology, “sabotage” does refer to *industrial* sabotage. Note the standard IWW text *Sabotage* by Eric Smith, and the booklet of the same title by Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, the Irish-born US unionist and radical militant.

³⁰ *CPD*, Vol.80, p.10181 (19 December 1916).

³¹ Burgmann, *op. cit.*, (1995), p. 200.

³² *Ibid*, p.201.

³³ *Ibid*.

Sydney a quarter of a century previously. Now, in 1916, they were fellow conscriptionists doing battle with their opponents inside and outside the movement. It is little wonder then that they and Lynch should be of like mind with regard to the IWW.

In December, Lynch had the vicarious pleasure, as minister representing the Government in the Senate, of introducing into that chamber the Unlawful Associations Bill, the purpose of which was to further strengthen government powers over such organisations as the IWW.³⁴ Lynch was both defiant and unapologetic. He acknowledged that the legislation represented a departure from democracy. He, insisted, nevertheless, that the industrial disorder fomented by the IWW, especially in war-time conditions, necessitated such oppressive measures.

Australian democracy was not perfect but it was worth defending, Lynch maintained. The IWW was anti-democratic and violent and the community had to defend itself. Members of the IWW had visited Western Australia and done their best to “pollute the social and industrial atmosphere” and endeavoured “to sow their poisonous seeds”. He particularly resented the fact that these people had only arrived on the scene after the hard battles of the union movement had been won; that “these mushroom and cancerous growths should appear amongst us and try to wither the beautiful tree of liberty and rob us of the fruit of all our strivings”.³⁵

His constant interjections during the rest of the debate signified his deep emotional engagement, none more so than the following contribution during a speech in support of the legislation by his fellow Western Australian Labor renegade, Senator Hugh de Largie.

De Largie: A man commits a much more brutal crime in burning out an individual than he does in shooting him.

³⁴ *CPD*, Vol. 80, p.10151 (19 December 1916).

³⁵ *Ibid*, pp.10151-2.

Lynch: Not only that, but a favourable breeze would sweep the whole countryside.³⁶

Both Lynch and de Largie obviously had in mind the threat issued by Sawtell a year or so earlier.

In replying to the debate for the government, Lynch insisted that, contrary to the impressions of some Labor senators, the Bill was *not* directed at the Official Labor Party. It would have been needed anyway because the War Precautions Act was not sufficient.³⁷ When Labor Senators Gardiner and Mullan protested that the Bill could be applied to other organisations and unions, he impatiently advised them to “leave well enough alone”.³⁸

By July 1917, when the Hughes Government introduced amendments to strengthen the provisions of the Unlawful Associations Bill, Lynch was no longer a government minister. Nevertheless, as a government backbencher, he made a substantial contribution to the debate during the Committee stage. His attitude was no less hard-line; indeed, he was concerned that the Bill did not go far enough. He sought an assurance that a ban on Commonwealth Public Service employment by members of such organisations would extend to those engaged in “casual employment” and those employed by government contractors.³⁹ Nor had he forgotten the threat to his property at Three Springs. Hansard records the following:

Senator Millen (the responsible government minister): [IWW members] have committed offences against individuals and property.

Lynch (interjecting): Hear, hear! I know something about it!⁴⁰

This was not the only past experience which still rankled. He recalled bitterly the defeat of his old colleague W.G. Spence for the presidency of the AWU in

³⁶ *Ibid*, p.10181.

³⁷ *Ibid*, pp.10185-6.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p.10188.

³⁹ *Ibid*, Vol. 83, p.408 (25 July 1917).

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p.409.

northern New South Wales by an IWW man (Naughton). Thousands of unionists had unfortunately flocked to the IWW, “an evil agency” which had arisen in Australia, “the freest democracy that ever existed”.⁴¹

The general consensus amongst historians is that, for all the commotion, the Unlawful Associations Act (and amendments) had very little practical effect. In Western Australia, for example, the IWW had been in decline well before the October 1916 prosecutions, and certainly before the Commonwealth legislation that December.⁴² At the national level, the IWW was considerably weakened by the end of 1916 and had ceased to exist before the second conscription referendum of December 1917. Some historians have convincingly argued that the repressive and extremist measures taken by the Federal government—including the IWW “show trials”—only served to harden public opinion against conscription.⁴³

Lynch remained an unforgiving and unrelenting foe of the IWW, for at least three reasons. First, there were sharp ideological differences. He and many of his long-term colleagues (such as Hughes, Holman, Spence and Pearce) clearly had a quite different conception of the labour movement to that of the radical militants in the IWW. Lynch and company were first and foremost Australian and Empire nationalists who had little time for the brand of internationalism and the extra-parliamentary “direct action” against capitalism preached by the IWW. Secondly, in Lynch’s eyes, the Wobblies had effectively undermined the Australian war effort and the quest for conscription, both causes dear to his heart. Last but not least, Lynch retained the memory of two bitter experiences at the hands of the IWW: the tension and conflict stemming from the hire of his hall at Boulder and,

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.413.

⁴² Naomi Segal, “Westralian Wobblies: the Industrial Workers of the World in Western Australia, 1914-1917” (unpublished work-in-progress paper delivered to University of Western Australia History Department seminar, c.1992), p.9.

⁴³ For example, Bill Beattie, “Memoirs”, p.37, quoted in Burgmann, *op.cit* (1995), p.193.

more especially, the threat issued by Sawtell against his property at Three Springs. Neither could be easily forgotten or forgiven.

Conscription

On 9 June 1915 Lynch became the first Federal Labor parliamentarian to publicly advocate conscription. On that date, Tasmanian Liberal, Tom Bakhap, delivered a speech to the Senate in favour of conscription. Speaking immediately after Bakhap, Lynch strongly endorsed his remarks, declaring furthermore that he could foresee circumstances in the none-too-distant future when its introduction might prove necessary. This section of Lynch's groundbreaking speech is worth quoting:

I believe that what Senator Bakhap said with regard to Conscription has in it very much food for earnest thought for every member of the British Empire wherever found, for to-day we are engaged in a war the equal of which has never before occurred. We are engaged in a war with enemy countries which need not have gone to war at all. Germany was securing a peaceful, blood-less victory the world over in the matter of trade, and need not have gone to war at all. She could have preserved her good name and retained the respect and good opinion of the civilized world if only she had stood where she was, and had not drawn the sword. But Germany began by breaking her word, and since then has prosecuted the struggle in a way which could never have been anticipated ... She has violated every moral code, and to-day retains no vestige of respect throughout the civilized world. Having participated in that struggle, we need now to recast our ideas radically as to how victory is to be secured. Conscription has no terrors for me.

Senator BAKHAP: That is the way to talk.

On June 25, Lynch reiterated his remarks, observing that married men were going to the war but young single men were staying behind. Greater sacrifice was called for. Australia needed to send more than three times the number of men to the front and to achieve this, some form of compulsion was required. Italy and France had conscription, and Britain would probably introduce it soon. Lynch insisted that Australia was worth defending and declared once again that

conscription had “no terrors for him”.⁴⁴ Pearce’s immediate reaction was to pour cold water on Bakhap’s and Lynch’s proposals, maintaining that conscription was unnecessary in the present circumstances. However, many in the labour movement were apprehensive. The Melbourne Trades Hall Council was sufficiently concerned to send a delegation to Prime Minister Fisher on September 24 to seek reassurances regarding the government’s plans.

The following year, on 11 May, replying to his Queensland Labor colleague, Senator Myles Ferricks, Lynch delivered yet another keynote speech advocating conscription. Australia had to get behind the Empire despite its past failings because Australia’s own safety was at stake, he insisted. On this occasion, Lynch argued the relative merits of compulsion over voluntarism, observing that the voluntary system attracted too many married men and only led to fatherless homes. Rather, young single men should be forced to enlist.⁴⁵

Kalgoorlie Congress

In June 1916, the annual congress of the Western Australian division of the ALF⁴⁶ devoted itself in large part to the issue of conscription. After three days of debate, in which over sixty speakers were engaged, the following compromise resolution was carried:

That in the interests of the defence of Australia and the Empire, this congress desires to express its confidence in the Federal Executive.⁴⁷

Lynch took part in the debate on the first day (Monday 5 June), supporting an early amendment proposed by E.W. Walsh (Barmen and Barmaids Union) which

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, pp.4381-2 (25 June 1915).

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, Vol. 79, p.7805 (11 May 1916).

⁴⁶ For convenience sake, usually referred to hereafter as simply the “Kalgoorlie Congress” in order to distinguish it from other state congresses during the war years.

⁴⁷ *Report of Proceedings of General Council (Special Congress) 1916 of Australian Labor Federation (WA Division)*, i. As the foreword facetiously observed, the congress had in fact “decided not to decide the question of Labour’s attitude”.

supported the principle of conscription for overseas service.⁴⁸ It recognized the principle of the conscription of wealth, which had been endorsed by the conference three days earlier.⁴⁹ Walsh's amendment had been moved in response to a strongly worded motion by Don Cameron which sought not only to declare against the principle of conscription for overseas service but to refuse endorsement to any Labor member, State or Federal, who voted for conscription.⁵⁰

Lynch reminded delegates that he had been the first member of the FPLP to oppose the present system of voluntarism, which he believed to be contrary to the party policy and "subversive of socialism". He further reminded delegates that such well known British Socialists and Labourites as H.G. Wells, H.M. Hyndman, Arthur Henderson and Robert Blatchford favoured conscription.⁵¹

Clearly there was a broad range of opinions on the conscription issue within congress as a whole and between the two extremes represented by Cameron and Lynch, the various speakers and the host of amendments reflecting this diversity. The final resolution effectively expressed no opinion: it was a lowest common denominator compromise. Nevertheless, its refusal to criticize the Hughes Government or to express any kind of anti-conscription sentiment could only have satisfied Lynch and his supporters.

The non-committal resolution of congress notwithstanding, divisions within the Western Australian labour movement simmered below the surface during the ensuing months. The ten district and area councils reflected the diversity of opinion within the state: for example, on 8 August, the Fremantle District Council, having just listened to veteran IWW activist Monty Miller present the

⁴⁸ For exact wording, see *Ibid*, p.22.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, pp.4-5, 8-18. The original motion had been moved on behalf of the Midland District Council ALF.

⁵⁰ For exact wording, see *Ibid*, p.21.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p.22.

anti-conscriptionist case, resolved to write to Senator Lynch inviting him to present the other side of the argument.⁵²

Caucus Votes for Referendum

At the end of July, Prime Minister Hughes had returned from an extended visit to Europe and announced his desire to introduce conscription in order to make up an alleged shortfall in recruitment for overseas service. At the Caucus meeting on 24 August, Lynch moved that a proposal by Hughes for a referendum be discussed and decided by Caucus before being considered by cabinet.⁵³ That is exactly what happened and after a discussion spanning several days, Caucus finally approved Hughes's proposal by the narrow margin of 23 votes to twenty-one.

Once Caucus had made that fateful decision, much of the pent up dissent and divisiveness within the Labor Party surfaced, in Western Australia as much as elsewhere. By mid-September, the Metropolitan and Fremantle District Councils, along with the North Coolgardie Area Council, had declared for conscription, while the Midlands and Eastern Goldfields District Councils and the Albany Area Council had declared against.⁵⁴

On 15 September, the New South Wales executive expelled Hughes from the party for supporting conscription. Lynch, a loyal Hughes supporter, welcomed all the support that his leader could get, especially from Western Australia. He was particularly encouraged by and supportive of those sections of the party in the West which were declaredly conscriptionist. A couple of days after his expulsion,

⁵² WAA, 300/1198A/6.

⁵³ Weller, *op.cit.*, (1975), p.435.

⁵⁴ J.R. Robertson, "The Conscription Issue and the National Movement in Western Australia, June 1916-December 1917", *University Studies in Western Australian History* (Vol. 3, No. 3, October 1959), p.12.

the Metropolitan District Council telegraphed Hughes expressing its support. Over the next few days there followed a flurry of appreciative telegrams from Lynch to Jack Cornell MLC (representing the Metropolitan District Council). One read:

I am proud of west australia the pioneer labour state that has done something promptly taking its stand behind the federal government your action is life giving tonic when some are suicidally trying to level a stonewall of their own making with their heads your steadfast stand under present circumstances is like a western dawn this amplifies yesterdays message.⁵⁵

The previous day Lynch had telegraphed Cornell: “kindly try to get my message sent [to] eastern press[.] trying time here”.⁵⁶ He was apparently working frantically behind the scenes trying to shore up support within the party for Hughes. Cornell, obviously sensing something major in the political air, wrote to the North Coolgardie Area Council in mid-September warning them of the possibility of a split in the Federal Labor Caucus and, consequently, the prospect of an election.⁵⁷ Since Lynch was Cornell’s informant, Lynch himself almost certainly believed the same.

Meanwhile, the campaign in the lead up to the referendum was starting to hot up. In the Senate, the Labor Party was behaving like two different parties. On 22 September, the enabling legislation, the Military Service Referendum Bill, was debated in the Senate. Lynch rose to protest against Labor anti-conscriptionists denying his ill Western Australian colleague, Senator Henderson, a pair during the vote:

During the debate on the bill we heard the statement repeated ad nauseum by those who are opposed to conscription that they object to conscripting human life. And yet when a sick comrade was lying close at hand ... [they] would have that comrade endanger his life by coming here to record his vote.

⁵⁵ WAA 300/1689A/27 (3 September 1916). Reproduced without correction.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* (2 September 1916).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* (21 September 1916).

According to Lynch, “they would not play the game”.⁵⁸

Some subsequent developments in the West would have given Lynch heart. On 2 October, the State Executive narrowly defeated an anti-conscription motion.⁵⁹ The following evening, the Fremantle District Council rejected affiliation with the Anti-Conscription League.⁶⁰ The same day, 3 October, the Senate re-adjourned especially to facilitate the proclamation for the conscription referendum. In seconding the enabling motion, Lynch delivered a long speech in which he supported conscription on socialist grounds, defended his own role in the labour movement and attacked Labor anti-conscriptionists, placing much emphasis all the while on his representing the will of Western Australia. The constant barrage of interjections from Labor colleagues such as Ferricks, Findley, Barnes, Blakey, Turley and McKissock, reflected the growing rift within the parliamentary party. Lynch, nevertheless, likened his Labor anti-conscriptionist opposition to a “rheumatic mosquito”.⁶¹ Clearly he was on the offensive.

Referendum Campaign

Lynch launched himself into the fray as one of the government’s leading spokesmen for the conscriptionist cause. From 4 October until referendum day, 28 October, both sides conducted an intensive and bitter campaign. Lynch’s itinerary for October can be divided into three phases: (i) early October (c.4-11), which he spent in Melbourne; (ii) mid-October, which he spent in the Victorian rural districts; (iii) late October (c.23-27), when he spent the last week of the campaign in Western Australia.

⁵⁸ *CPD*, Vol. 79, p.86969 (22 September 1916).

⁵⁹ WAA 300/1573A/2. In the third and final vote the motion was defeated 16-18 on a division.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *CPD*, Vol. 80, p.9164 (3 October 1916).

In Melbourne he addressed public meetings at Northcote (4 October), Moonee Ponds (5 October), South Melbourne (7 October), Kensington (9 October) and Fitzroy (10 October). Most of these were stormy affairs where Lynch and his colleagues met hostile and disruptive receptions from anti-conscriptionists in solidly working-class areas. Women were amongst the most vocal protestors.⁶²

The newspaper headlines give a hint of the reaction: “Rowdy Meeting at Northcote: Senator Lynch Howled Down”, “Uproar at South Melbourne: A Meeting Abandoned”, “Speakers Howled Down: Fitzroy Women’s Meeting”.⁶³ On these and other occasions Lynch was accompanied on the platform by fellow conscriptionists, including Labor Senators Pearce and Givens, Labor MHR’s W.G. Spence and W. Archibald, Crawford Vaughan (Labor Premier of South Australia) and Sir William Irvine (Leader of the Federal Liberal Opposition). Lynch in particular was a target of hostile crowds, although he gave as good as he got. The hostile reaction was explained not only by his defiant and combative manner but by the spectacle of an Irishman advocating conscription, something which inflamed many of his fellow countrymen and co-religionists. At several of these meetings only a strong police presence prevented outbreaks of violence between Lynch and his opponents.

At the Kensington meeting, Lynch stood calmly facing the hostile crowd for several minutes before thundering: “Are you afraid of what I am going to say?” He then leapt down from the platform into the body of the hall and engaged in a personal altercation with a woman who had been heckling him. Returning to the stage, he had no more success in gaining a hearing. Shortly afterwards, the same

⁶² For a discussion of this phenomenon, see: Judith Smart, “The Right to Speak and the Right to be Heard: the Popular Disruption of Conscriptionist Meetings in Melbourne, 1916”, *Australian Historical Studies* (Vol. 23, No. 92, April 1989), p.201-219.

⁶³ *Argus* (Melbourne); 5 October 1916, p.8; 9 October 1916, p.8; 11 October 1916, p.10.

woman challenged him. Not for the first time, his Irishness was used against him.

The *Argus* reported it thus:

The woman then advanced to the platform, and was heard to exclaim, “You are false to Ireland. Will you resign?”

Senator Lynch.—“I would be false to Ireland and to Australia if I did.”⁶⁴

Several such incidents occurred at other meetings but Lynch was always defiant.

At Northcote, he was counted out while shouting: “You cowardly dogs, you’re letting the Socialists of Europe fight your battles for you!” And at Fitzroy, after one particularly vociferous outburst of heckling, he roared: “I only wish you could count out the Germans like that!”⁶⁵

In mid-October Lynch joined a number of fellow conscriptionists on a speaking tour of rural Victoria—to towns such as Benalla and Wangaratta, and to different centres in the Western District.⁶⁶ On 18 October, for example, Lynch, along with Liberal MP’s Senator Shannon and A.S. Rodgers MHR, addressed a conscriptionist meeting in Hamilton. On the strength of local press coverage, Terry Metherell has suggested that Lynch’s charisma possibly contributed to the narrow majority for the ‘YES’ vote in the Hamilton district.⁶⁷ Compared to the overwhelming hostility which had confronted him in Melbourne, he certainly received a much more favourable—albeit mixed—reception in rural Victoria.

From here, it was on to Western Australia for the last week of the campaign. The Catholic Archbishop of Perth, Dr P.J. Clune, was a committed conscriptionist. The Perth archdiocesan newspaper, the *Westralian Record*, was,

⁶⁴ *Argus*, 10 October 1916, p.8.

⁶⁵ *Argus*, 5 October 1916 p.8; 11 October 1916, p.10.

⁶⁶ *Benalla Standard* (17 October 1916), *Wangaratta Chronicle* (18 October 1916), *Hamilton Spectator* (19 October 1916).

⁶⁷ Terry Metherell, “The Conscription Referenda: October 1916 and December 1917: an Inward-turned nation at war” (Ph.D. thesis, University of Sydney, 1971), p.368; *Hamilton Spectator* (19 October 1916).

however, in the editorial hands of Fr Tom O'Grady, an ardent anti-conscriptionist.

In the issue of 14 October, O'Grady launched a strong editorial attack on Lynch:

Senator P. Lynch's "great" conscriptionist speech in the Federal Parliament was, from the Irish view-point, the most absurd and the least convincing piece of rhetoric we have read in a long time. We would not give much for the Senator's worries about the drain recruiting has caused in Ireland in the past. Recruiting did not rob Ireland of her best manhood. There were other contributing causes which our Federal friend forgot in his deification of Mr W. Hughes and his policy. While he can quote the ancient classics, he has in his fit of Imperialism either forgotten or never read a decent history of his native land.

He then proceeded to give Lynch a long lesson in some of the facts of Irish history, beginning with the Famine:

Is Mr Lynch old enough to have memories of the crowbar brigade, or how the holders of small farms were evicted so that the bullock ranches of Meath—to quote an instance intelligible to the Senator—might be extended?⁶⁸

This was only the first of several attacks on Lynch by Fr O'Grady during the conscription controversy of 1916-17. If Lynch replied publicly, it was not in the pages of the *Record*.

Nine days later, on 23 October, Lynch arrived by ship in Fremantle to a welcome by the Western Australian Referendum Committee, before joining Senator Pearce and others on a five day speaking tour of Perth and the country districts. With the notable exception of the meeting at Boulder on the eve of the referendum, he enjoyed a generally favourable reception, certainly in comparison to Melbourne. On the Goldfields, the labour movement was badly divided over conscription. Returning to speak at his old stamping ground, the Boulder Town Hall, he received a hostile reception from some sections of the crowd and retaliated with some extremely provocative language.⁶⁹ Three days later, his alleged statements were reported by delegate J.R. Brown to a meeting at Boulder

⁶⁸ *The Westralian Record*, 14 October 1916, p.5.

⁶⁹ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 28 October 1916.

of the Eastern Goldfields District Council (EGDC) ALF which resolved to ask Lynch for a public withdrawal.⁷⁰

Meanwhile, the conscription referendum had been lost, despite three states recording majority 'YES' votes. Lynch drew some consolation from the fact that his home state had returned an overwhelming seventy percent majority. He was, nevertheless, bitterly disappointed with the result overall. Though his resolve was in no way weakened, the hostility with which he had been received by many anti-conscriptionist Laborites had left him shell-shocked.

On 14 November, some two-and-a-half weeks after the defeat of the referendum, matters came to head in the Federal Labor Caucus with a motion of no confidence in the Prime Minister, Mr Hughes. Hughes led twenty-three supporters (including Lynch) out of the Caucus, thus precipitating the first great split in the Australian Labor Party. Some sixteen members—one of whom was Lynch—are listed as speaking either for or against the motion. Unfortunately, there is no official record of what Lynch or any of the others said.

Following the walkout, Hughes was left with a number of vacancies in his ministry to fill because of the resignations of Mahon and O'Malley—and, previously, Higgs, Gardiner and Russell. Lynch was appointed as Minister for Works and Railways, a position he would have to surrender in a cabinet reshuffle barely two months later. Lynch's role as minister will be discussed more fully later.

⁷⁰ WAA, 300/1704A/3. On November 27, the EGDC received a letter from Lynch denying the allegations and expressing a wish to meet with the council to discuss the matter. This eventually happened in January.

Melbourne Conference

Meanwhile, attention turned to the Special Interstate Labor Congress⁷¹ convened by the Victorian Executive of the ALF for the purpose of resolving the issues relating to conscription and the split in the Federal Parliamentary party. On November 24, Lynch replied to the North Coolgardie Area Council, accepting their nomination as delegate and seeking their instructions.⁷²

The Congress took place at the Melbourne Trades Hall from 4-9 December. The six man Western Australian delegation was split between the three conscriptionists: Senator Lynch (Minister for Works and Railways), R.J. Burchell (MHR for Fremantle) and J. Cornell MLC, and the three anti-conscriptionists Alex McCallum, H.C. Gibson, and J. Lutey.

On the second day, Victorian delegate, James Scullin, moved the fateful motion:

That, as compulsory overseas military service is opposed to the principles embodied in the Australian Labour Party's platform, all Federal members who have supported compulsory overseas military service, or who are members of any other political party, are hereby expelled from the Australian Labour movement.⁷³

Thereafter, Lynch took a major part in the conference. Indeed, he was the leading proponent of the conscriptionist cause, and a most combative one at that. Early in the debate, he spoke at length in his own defence and against the Scullin motion. Although questioning whether the conference had been called by the proper authority, Lynch insisted that he was there as an accredited representative of Western Australia. He condemned the violation of party rules by the eastern states organisations. He and others were to be ousted from the movement merely for

⁷¹ Often referred to hereafter simply as the "Melbourne Conference". For stylistic reasons, the term *conference* has been used to distinguish the Interstate Congress from the various state congresses.

⁷² WAA, 300/1704A/19.

⁷³ *Report of the Proceedings of the Special Commonwealth Conference of the Australian Labor Party* (Melbourne, 1916), p.4.

exercising their freedom to differ. He vigorously defended himself against insinuations that he had profited from his disloyalty by being granted a ministry. If he was to go to the guillotine, it would be in a spirit of liberty. The security of Australia was more important than “tinpot principles”. He denied that he had ever betrayed the movement. He was still hopeful of reconciliation at that late hour but not at the expense of sacrificing his freedom.⁷⁴

Delivered in a defiant and aggressive tone, Lynch’s speech was peppered with interjections. His nationality was often used against him by other Irish-Australian delegates. Dan McNamara (Victoria) acted as Minute Secretary and we can be grateful to his ear for picking up and faithfully recording the strong motifs of Irishness underlying the debate:

Lynch: He had come that day with an olive branch _____

A Delegate: A shillelagh!

Mr Carey felt that if Senator Lynch had come to the conference with an olive branch it was in a rather crumpled condition now. Reference had been made by Senator Lynch to his name being “Carey” ... He had not disgraced the name of Carey, but he considered that Senator Lynch had disgraced the name of Lynch

Mr Cavanagh: ... Senator Lynch was a discredited man who had sold the movement. As an Irish-Australian, he was very sorry Senator Lynch had left Ireland. (Applause from the gallery)

Lynch: Ah, you have got the Grattan mob up there.

Mr Dwyer-Gray was surprised at finding Senator Lynch at the conference at all, and he was surprised beyond measure to find an Irishman in favour of coercion

Mr Grealey said that he had been surprised to know of a man named Patrick Lynch advocating conscription when there was a standing army in Ireland at the time.⁷⁵

Scullin’s motion was eventually carried 29 votes to four, Lynch, Burchell and Cornell abstaining. Only the other three Western Australian delegates and Senator Gardiner (Victoria) voted against. Some delegates (notably Gardiner and the three

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 6-8.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, pp.7-15.

Western Australian anti-conscriptionists) had expressed a willingness to expel the Federal members on the grounds of their membership of another political party (the Hughes faction) whilst being reluctant to do so solely on the basis of their advocacy of conscription. A request by Gardiner that the motion be divided and the two parts put separately was refused.

Lynch and Burchell in any event accepted the verdict and left the conference; Cornell followed of his own volition. Two days later, on 7 December, Lynch sent the following letter to Clementson, the acting Western Australian branch secretary, in Perth:

Dear Clementson,

I wired you on Wed. stating that Mr. Burchell & myself were duly expelled from the Labor Conference & the Labor Party. When the vote was taken the President ruled that I had no right to sit. I protested against this ruling & said that I realised the moral effect of the overwhelming vote taken but, reflected that I had every legal & constitutional right to share in the Conference until the last word was said. After making this protest, I retired from the conference, as otherwise, no good could result. The effect of this expulsion is that the elected representatives of the Official Labor Party cannot support or advocate conscription & remain members of it. The rank & file of the Party can still believe, & advocate conscription with impunity.

I am firmly of opinion that Conference has made a monumental blunder. I was prepared, on the terms of my instructions from the North Coolgardie Area Council, to effect a reconciliation, but my expulsion prevented that being done. I'm afraid the breach is unhealable as far as the Eastern States are concerned. Notwithstanding this lamentable prospect, I believe the movement as a whole can remain solid & not suffer from happenings on this side. But, for the present the outlook here is not good.

Yours,

P.J. Lynch ⁷⁶

Writing some fifty years later, the conference chairman, E.J. (Ted) Holloway, recalled the circumstances of Lynch's departure:

Senator Lynch fought throughout the discussion to retain his membership of the Party and I have often thought how much more than favourably his attitude compared with the spineless-ness of some others ... When the vote had been

⁷⁶ WAA 300/68.

declared from the chair, Senator Lynch rose in the most dramatic manner from his seat and asked me what his position now was. I told him that, in view of the vote just taken he [and others] who had supported overseas military conscription were no longer members of the Australian Labour Party. This placed him automatically outside the Conference from that moment. Lynch replied, "Very well Mr. Chairman, I bow to your ruling." He then walked to the Press table, filled a glass with water, turned to me, and raising his glass above his head said, "Here's good luck to you, Sir, you will need it all, and remember that you will come to Paddy Lynch before Paddy Lynch comes to you".⁷⁷

Reaction in the West to the decisions of the Melbourne Conference was generally less than favourable. Throughout the whole conscription controversy the party had bent over backwards to avoid a schism. Delegates McCallum, Gibson and Lutey had defended the right of Lynch, Burchell and Cornell to attend the conference and were less than happy with the outcome. On 6 December, the day following the expulsion of Lynch and the others, a hastily convened State Executive meeting voted to protest against the disenfranchisement of the three Western Australian delegates.⁷⁸ On 19 December, the North Coolgardie District Council ALF declared that the Melbourne Conference had acted unconstitutionally, and passed a vote of confidence in the three expelled members. It also expressed sympathy to Lynch who as their representative had been expelled "just because he had the courage to stick up for his opinion".⁷⁹

Reaction to Lynch and his supporters from other quarters was, however, far less sympathetic. On 15 December, the Cue District Council wrote to the State Executive complaining that Lynch "who had SECEDED" had been appointed as delegate to the conference in preference to Needham: "... it must have been known that this would probably lead to disruption YET THE EXECUTIVE DISALLOWED NEEDHAM AND ALLOWED LYNCH?"⁸⁰

⁷⁷ E.J. Holloway, *Australian Labor Victory over Conscription 1916-17*, (Melbourne, Anti-Conscription Jubilee Committee, 1966), p.18.

⁷⁸ *West Australian*, 7 December 1916.

⁷⁹ WAA, 300/1689A/27. On 12 December, the Fremantle District Council also carried two resolutions condemning the expulsions [WAA 300/1198A/6].

⁸⁰ WAA, 300/1688A/68. [Capitalization in original]. Letter written by James White (Secretary). A similar letter of protest was received from the Murchison District Council ALF.

There was little respite for Lynch over the Christmas/New Year period. During the early part of 1917 a series of developments took place in Western Australia which would sever once and for all Lynch's now tenuous links with the Labor Party. One-by-one, these events served to remove those precarious footholds in the West which still afforded Lynch some slender hope of salvaging his place in the party.

Minister for Works and Railways

Meanwhile, amidst all the intra-party turmoil, Lynch had ministerial responsibilities to attend to. We shall now digress briefly to consider his three-month tenure in office before resuming the narrative at the beginning of 1917.

It is little wonder, given their apparent like-mindedness and Lynch's loyalty over the years, that Hughes should offer him a ministerial position. Lynch assumed responsibility for the newly-created ministry of Works and Railways (replacing Home Affairs). This seemed a logical appointment inasmuch as he had served since October 1914 as vice-chairman of the Joint Parliamentary Public Works Committee, resigning only to take up his ministry. He also boasted the experience of a two month stint over a decade earlier as Minister for Works in the Daglish Labor Government in Western Australia.

Lynch entered the Hughes ministry along with three other newcomers: W. Archibald, F.W. Bamford and A. Poynton. E.J. Russell and W.H. Laird Smith were appointed assistant ministers. Another of Lynch's colleagues in this short-lived ministry was his old friend W.G. Spence, Vice-President of the Executive Council.

At the time of Lynch's appointment, Melbourne *Punch* published a lengthy biographical sketch of the new minister. It observed that most politicians only

graduated to ministerial office “by scraping and clawing their way up through the school of hard knocks”. Not so with Lynch:

[For some] the door of opportunity simply opens without a creak, and they walk in just as naturally and comfortably as though it were part of the piece. Senator P.J. Lynch, for instance, has just walked in and closed the door behind him with less formality, perhaps, than would attend the official welcoming of a Trade Hall delegate... As Commonwealth Minister for Works, he takes his place in the sun, anyhow, with some qualification for the job, which is painfully more than could be said of others who have been boosted through the golden portals of office. That has no intention of conveying that P.J. Lynch is a born Cabinet Minister or a man so peculiarly fitted for the billet that providence has sent him. Nothing of the kind ...⁸¹

It noted that Lynch himself claimed no expertise in anything except “fixing a steamer and running a farm along model lines” and alluded briefly to his life-saving attempt at Fiji in 1891 before concluding:

There should not be much of a yellow streak about a man like that. As for his own job, he will probably make good. His experience as Works Minister in the West will help him ... He will, in the circumstances, be worth a try out, anyhow, if only for the reason that as a decent Imperialist he is no quitter.⁸²

Two months later, the *British-Australasian* gave a more personalised pen-portrait of the new minister declaring: “Senator Lynch (WA) is the fighting man of the war party. He is as great a fighting man as Mr Hughes himself...”⁸³ It lauded his courage during the conscription fight, before remarking affectionately:

The new minister ... endears himself to democracy by the simplicity of his attire. The present writer used to see him going up the steps of Parliament House, Melbourne, looking for all the world as if he had slept out all night. He does not bother with trifles; and after all a clothes brush is a trifle. He was once seen wearing a starched collar—but no one could remember the date. A warm hearted, impulsive, generous, fearless, sham-detesting Irishman, Lynch would rather be found dead than voting to desert his country or his mates ...⁸⁴

Whatever Lynch’s virtues or otherwise as a minister, political circumstances intervened once again—as they had done some twelve years earlier—to bring about the premature termination of his appointment (this time after barely three

⁸¹ *Punch* (Melbourne), 23 Nov 1915, p. 804.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *British-Australasian*, 18 January 1917, p.25.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

months in office). On 17 February 1917, Hughes formed a new Nationalist “War” Ministry, a coalition of National Laborites and Joseph Cook’s Liberals. Lynch and his other newly-appointed ministerial colleagues were forced to make way for the appointment of a number of Liberals to the cabinet. Lynch was replaced as Minister for Works and Railways by William A. Watt, a Victorian. Interestingly, however, one commentator later wrote that “when the alliance [between the National Laborites and Liberals] was consummated, some observers judged several of the ministers [Hughes] dropped, Poynton, Laird-Smith and Lynch, better than the ones who remained in Cabinet”.⁸⁵ Political exigencies had dictated that Lynch and his colleagues be passed over for lesser talent. For this, they have to be deemed unfortunate.

Lynch’s three months in office was far too brief to achieve anything substantial. He did, nevertheless, take an active part in the completion of the Transcontinental Railway, a project long dear to his heart. Ever since his election to the Senate in 1907, he had been one of its staunchest advocates. Sadly for him, he did not have the satisfaction of being the minister in office when the line was finally completed later in 1917.

In early January, however, whilst still minister, Lynch had the opportunity of leading a parliamentary party on an almost-complete journey. The party journeyed by rail from Perth to Kalgoorlie, then eastwards as far as the line had been completed. His journey has been described thus:

Senator Lynch inspected the construction works on route, bemoaned the shortage of locomotives and the scant water supply, sacked an antagonistic construction supervisor (who also planned to run for the Senate) and reportedly travelled part of the 105 mile gap by camel before reaching the eastern end of the road at Ooldea. He also urged a “Yes” vote for conscription on his desert audience and became the first Federal Minister to descend beneath the

⁸⁵ *Round Table* (June 1917), p.601.

Nullarbor, hence the naming of Lynch Caves, noted for their stalactites and delicate colouring, near Loongana.⁸⁶

When questioned in the Federal Parliament about the cost and efficiency of the East-West construction, Prime Minister Hughes was able to announce that Senator Lynch “who recently travelled over the whole length of the line” would report to the government on the matter of expenditure.⁸⁷

The only other noteworthy feature of Lynch’s tenure in office was his role as first chairman of the River Murray Waters Commission which had been established by an agreement ratified in April 1916 by the parliaments of the Commonwealth, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. It sought to promote cooperation between the Commonwealth and relevant states with a view to developing the river waters which New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia shared as a common border. The extension of irrigation to facilitate the growing of new crops was one objective.

As the relevant Commonwealth Minister and representative, Lynch was officially appointed chairman on 31 January 1917.⁸⁸ He appears to have officially retained the post for some time after relinquishing his ministry, eventually being replaced by his successor, William Watt, on 11 August 1917. Although Lynch had long been an advocate of the kind of rural development envisaged by that body, the scanty records available for the early years of the River Murray Commission do not reveal what, if any, significant contributions he was able to make.

Reaction in the West

We shall now resume the main narrative at the beginning of 1917, roughly half

⁸⁶ David Burke, *Road through the Wilderness* (Sydney, 1991), p.226. Loongana is the fifth stop in Western Australia from the South Australian border.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p.231.

⁸⁸ NAA A6006 series, CRS A2, 19/494.

way through Lynch's tenure in ministerial office. In the aftermath of the Melbourne Conference, his position in Hughes' ministry had only served to harden feelings against him within the ranks of the party. On 10 January, a specially convened meeting of the EGDC was held to coincide with Lynch's visit to Kalgoorlie to begin his trip along the Transcontinental line. Lynch was allowed to respond to the charges which had been levelled at him regarding inflammatory remarks made at the Boulder Town Hall on the eve of the October referendum. His position already seriously undermined by the fact that Council had resolved two days earlier—by a four-to-one majority—to endorse the expulsion of Federal members who had “left the party of their own free will”,⁸⁹ Lynch replied to accusations of having described anti-conscriptionists as “pro-German”, “Huns” and “IWW”,⁹⁰ before precipitating this dramatic climax:

In conclusion the Senator openly defied the Council or anyone else to expel him from the Labour Movement. Mr Brown then rose to reply but the chairman stated that no further discussion would be allowed unless a motion was tabled. Mr Brown thereupon moved “That Senator Lynch's explanation is unsatisfactory”. He said in speaking to the motion “that the Senator had stated that whoever had charged him with using the term ‘mongrel’ was a calculating and deliberate liar”. He would hurl those words back in the Senator's teeth and would endeavour also to prove that many of the statements made by the Senator that night were lies. At this stage Senator Lynch rose from his seat alongside the Chairman and said, “this man has called me a liar twice, and I am not going to stand for it.” He then walked towards Mr Brown (who was standing in the next to back row of seats) in a threatening attitude, the pair closed, blows were struck, and the lights were turned down. The combatants were eventually separated with difficulty. After the lights had been turned on the Chairman called the delegates to order and declared the meeting closed.⁹¹

The eruption into violence and abandonment of the meeting meant that the issues regarding Lynch's alleged remarks at Boulder were never resolved.

The West Australian State Executive discussed the implications and consequences of the Melbourne Conference on three separate occasions before

⁸⁹ WAA 300/1704A/3, p.65. The meeting had received a one-and-a-half hour report on the Melbourne Conference from J. Lutey, one of the anti-conscriptionist delegates.

⁹⁰ For the substance of his remarks, see Chapter Ten.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* The small Kalgoorlie Trades Hall where the meeting took place is still standing. The scene of the fracas may be viewed to this day.

eventually, on 21 January, accepting a lengthy report written the previous December by State Secretary, Alex McCallum. The executive resolved to give Federal members one month to recant of their support for Hughes and to come back to the party. If they did so, they would be eligible for selection ballots.⁹² Even at this late stage the State Executive was bending over backwards to give Lynch and the other renegades an escape route. Lynch, however, was not for recanting. Indeed, he was more defiant than ever.

On 7 February, Alex McCallum received a note from Arch. Stewart (Secretary, Political Labor Council of Victoria) enclosing a copy of “a statement reported to have made by Senator Lynch. If the statement is true, it shows that he thinks very little regard for the ALF ...”.⁹³ The enclosed clipping from the Melbourne *Herald* (5 February) read:

Labor Executive’s Message to be Used to Light Cigar

Senator Lynch Defiant

Senator P.J. Lynch, Minister for Works, has received an official intimation from the Labour Executive of Western Australia, giving him a month to repent of his action in remaining loyal to Mr. W.M. Hughes, the P.M., and return to his party, under penalty of expulsion. “I am still, and will remain, a member of the Labour movement”, said Senator Lynch this afternoon, by way of comment, “but not a member of the party masquerading in the name of Labour both here and in the West. There is no repentance for me, as I am not guilty of any crime. I am going to answer in those terms. When their notice of expulsion comes I intend to use it to light a twopenny cigar. Even if I could afford a more costly smoke I would hesitate to spoil its flavour by using a document in question as a lighter”.⁹⁴

Here Lynch’s defiantly unapologetic tone contrasted sharply with the conciliatory—even optimistic—tone of his letter to Clementson barely eight weeks earlier. Since then, however, he had been rejected by both the EGDC and the ALF State Executive—bodies which only four months previously he had

⁹² WAA 300/1573A/2.

⁹³ WAA 300/81. The file containing this letter and the enclosed clipping is labelled ‘RATS’.

⁹⁴ *Herald* (Melbourne), 5 February 1917.

lauded for their loyalty to the Hughes Labor Government and the conscription cause.

Northern Territory Administratorship

On 17 February, Lynch lost his position in the Hughes ministry. This, together with the ongoing turmoil in the Labor Party in the aftermath of the Melbourne Conference, meant that his own political position was severely undermined. Given the circumstances, it should hardly come as a surprise that he might look for a way out of parliamentary politics.

In March 1912, the Commonwealth had appointed Dr J.C. Gilruth for a five year term as Administrator of the Northern Territory. However, the controversial nature of Gilruth's tenure in the position and the uncertainty surrounding his re-appointment, created an opportunity during the early months of 1917 for other prospective candidates to throw their hats into the ring. Lynch was one of those candidates.

The scanty records of the Department of Home Affairs and Territories provide no actual evidence of Lynch's candidature. We have to look elsewhere and three such pieces of evidence present themselves. First, on 1 March 1917, Senator Findley (ALP, Victoria) asked a question in the Federal Parliament regarding the prospective vacancy for the Northern Territory Administratorship and mentioned Lynch by name as a contender.⁹⁵ Secondly, in April 1917, a G.F. Dennis offered himself as a candidate to Senator Buzzacott (Hughes Labor, Western Australia) "in case Lynch resigned from the Senate to accept a position of profit under the Crown ...".⁹⁶ Thirdly, in a letter written some twenty years later to Prime Minister

⁹⁵ *CPD*, Vol.81, p.10756 (1 March 1917).

⁹⁶ WAA 1573A/300/2. Minutes of the ALF State Executive (16 April 1917).

Lyons, Lynch himself mentioned that he “was nominated for the Administratorship of the Northern Territory, but did not succeed ...”.⁹⁷

Given his brief acquaintance with Port Darwin in 1888 and his more extensive knowledge of outback Queensland and Western Australia—not to mention his brief ministerial experience—Lynch obviously believed he was qualified for the job. Although on good terms with the relevant minister, fellow Irishman Patrick McMahon Glynn, there was no guarantee, however, that Lynch was viewed as favourably by other Liberal members of the Hughes administration. In the eventuality, Gilruth was re-appointed to the position for a limited period until after the war was over. Nevertheless, the very fact of Lynch’s candidature is evidence of his seeking a way out at this time. Given the disappointment of a prematurely curtailed ministerial career, the prospect of such a position would surely have proved alluring; all the more so given that recent political events had undoubtedly taken their toll.

Special State Congress

Early in February 1917, the Western Australian State Executive decided to convene a special State Congress for the following month to resolve all the issues relating to the conscription controversy and the ongoing divisions within the party. On 19 February, it was announced that the Executive had received replies from all the Western Australian Federal members—except Lynch—issued with ultimatums four weeks earlier. All had declined to leave the Hughes party.⁹⁸ Lynch had decided to ignore the ultimatum and to treat it with the contempt he doubtless thought it deserved. (Perhaps he had used it to light his cigar after all!)

⁹⁷ NAA CP 450/7/16. Letter Lynch to Lyons, 27 November 1937.

⁹⁸ WAA 300/1573A/2.

The special Congress was convened in Perth for 20-22 March. Meanwhile, however, Federal Parliament had resumed after the summer recess, allowing a resumption—and intensification—of hostilities between the competing Labor factions. Lynch used two speeches—delivered on 5 and 14 March—to let off steam. He proved himself as fierce a Hughes loyalist as ever, lauding his leader’s twenty-five years of service to the labour movement. In one of his most quotable of quotes, Lynch lamented:

[H]e [Hughes] has suffered the pangs of hunger, and the biting blasts through a threadbare coat, but he never felt those things as bitter, as cruel, or as unkind as the black ingratitude today of the men who were his former allies ...⁹⁹

History had been littered with men maligned by the lesser members of the mob for taking a stand: Bracchi, Danton, Wellington, Peel, Grattan, Parnell and Mazzini. He could not resist repeating the famous reference to Parnell having “lime thrown in his eyes”.¹⁰⁰ Clearly, Hughes had achieved heroic proportions on Lynch’s political stage.

In defending Hughes, he was, however, defending himself. He declared that he had remained true to Labor principles for twenty-five years and that the movement owed *him* a debt. It had been a dream to come to Australia. He had not promoted himself but had been pushed into Parliament by his colleagues. He had but one party and one plank—to win the war.¹⁰¹

On 5 March, Lynch began by sadly lamenting the fact that old political brothers had separated on different sides.¹⁰² Yet, as soon became all too apparent, there was no love lost between them. During the ensuing debates Lynch found himself in constant conflict with his erstwhile Labor colleagues, especially Senators Mullan, Ferricks, Gardiner, Barnes, Turley and Needham.

⁹⁹ *CPD*, Vol.81, p.10973 (14 March 1917).

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p.10975.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p.11406.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, p.10970 (5 March 1917).

There was particular animosity between Lynch and fellow Irishman, Queensland senator Johnny Mullan. Lynch (inappropriately) characterised the Dublin-born Mullan as “outside the Pale”.¹⁰³ He later levelled constant interjections during a speech by Mullan, which featured the following acrimonious exchange:

Lynch: A Labour man you call yourself?

Mullan: The honourable Senator, who says he is a Labour man, is defending a scab [Scaddan].

Lynch: You are a half-boiled Labour man.

The President: Order!¹⁰⁴

There was also long-standing animosity between Lynch and another Queenslander, the Irish-Australian senator, Myles Aloysius Ferricks, which dated back to the early conscription debates some two years earlier. In the course of one parliamentary exchange on 14 March, Lynch issued a somewhat bizarre challenge to Ferricks to resign so that they could contest one another’s seats at the next Senate elections, Lynch in Queensland and Ferricks in Western Australia.¹⁰⁵ Most of these encounters were marked by the same degree of bitterness, acrimony and—often—absurdity.

The special Congress of the Australian Labor Federation (WA Division) assembled in Perth on 20 March. It was clear from the outset that it would have to make some momentous decisions regarding the future of the party in the West.¹⁰⁶ Lynch was not present despite having been nominated by the Federal members as

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, p.10975

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p.11377 (14 March 1917)

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p.11415. Lynch renewed the challenge during the adjournment debate later the same day [*Ibid*, pp.11473-4].

¹⁰⁶ *Official Proceedings of the Australian Labor Federation (WA Division) General Council (Special Congress) 1917*. The foreword provides an excellent summary (expressed both succinctly and impartially) of the sequence of events and major issues relating to the divisions within the party, with particular reference to Western Australia. The signatories were P. O’Loghlen (General President), Alex McCallum (General Secretary) and A. Clementson (Assistant Secretary).

their delegate. The key items on the agenda were four resolutions submitted by the State Executive the previous month. No sooner had the first motion (which proposed the expulsion of the six Federal members) been moved, than Hugh Mahon MHR was invited to address the delegates.

This was a politically astute move by the organisers: it effectively put the supporters of the “renegades” on the defensive from the outset. Mahon delivered a lengthy and well-crafted address setting out his interpretation of the conscription controversy and the recent divisions within the Labor Party. He was interrupted periodically by applause and it was apparent that he had the majority of delegates behind him. Although he made no mention of Lynch by name, he did refer to the cabinet reshuffle a month earlier when several Laborites had been “thrown to the Tory wolves”. In his conclusion, Mahon adjudged that Hughes and his followers had “abandoned the Party of their own volition”.¹⁰⁷

Debate on the motion for the expulsion of the Federal members—involving a bewildering array of speeches and amendments—took up the bulk of the second and third days of congress. Lynch was mentioned by name on several occasions, although opinion on him was divided. W.L. Thomas MLA, for example, thought that “Pearce, Lynch and the others had all along been animated by lofty motives”,¹⁰⁸ whereas W.H. Carpenter MLA (Fremantle ALF), who had been present at the State Executive meeting on 8 January when Lynch had been given a chance to defend himself, described the Senator’s speech on that occasion as one of defiance. He believed that Lynch was in fact the worst man that the FPLP could have sent as a representative.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p.9.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p.15.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p.13. Oddly enough, these remarks came from a man who was widely regarded as a “trimmer” on the conscription question and who subsequently supported the Labor “renegades” at the Federal election two months later.

It would not be too much of an exaggeration to say that the Congress was stage-managed. By this time, opinion in the West had clearly swung behind the majority in the eastern states. Although supporters of the Hughes faction were present, it was clear that they were outnumbered and very much on the defensive. The resolution expelling Lynch and the other federal members was eventually carried by the overwhelming majority of 134 votes to thirty. The Congress had endorsed the expulsions decided upon by the State Executive and the Melbourne Conference. For Lynch, the most immediate consequence was that he was rendered ineligible to contest the Senate pre-selection ballot later that same day.

Within the space of four months Lynch had been rejected by the federal body (the Melbourne Conference), the state body (the ALF State Executive and the Special Congress in Perth) and the district body (the EGDC). This left his local body, the North Coolgardie Area Council, as the only party organisation to which he could now turn for support. Lynch had represented the Council at the fateful Melbourne Conference the previous December and up till now it had remained loyal to him. On 25 January the council had voted unanimously to support Lynch and the other members expelled from the party.¹¹⁰

On 2 April, in the wake of the Special State Congress, Council held a special meeting to decide whether to abide by Congress decisions or to support the Hughes party. Although the three Goldfields-based politicians—George Foley MLA, George “Mulga” Taylor MLA, and R.G. Ardagh MLC—all addressed the meeting, Lynch, who was also present, surprisingly did not. After the speakers had been heard and the opinions of the affiliates reported upon, the council eventually voted by six votes to two to support the Official Labor Party.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ WAA 300/1688A/30. On 6 March the Council received a letter from Lynch thanking it for its support. Meanwhile, however, on 12 February, Alex McCallum had visited the Council and presented a one-and-a-half hour report on his recent eastern states trip.

¹¹¹ WAA 300/1689A/27.

Of all the Western Australian organisations, the North Coolgardie Area Council, had hitherto been the most resolute in its support for the “renegades”. It was evident, moreover, that there was still strong support for the Hughes party within the council’s affiliates.¹¹² The vote was not so much a rejection of Lynch and his colleagues as a belated falling into line behind the state and national organisations. Forced to declare for one side or the other, the majority had ultimately—albeit reluctantly—opted to remain loyal to the Official Labor Party. Unfortunately, Lynch’s reaction to the fateful decision is not recorded.¹¹³ The body which had once been a bastion of support had now effectively deserted him. For Lynch, this must surely have been the last straw.

During the month of April, the State Executive obliged all state Labor MP’s to declare for either the OLP or the Hughes party. A significant number, including all the aforementioned who attended the North Coolgardie Council meeting, declared for Hughes.¹¹⁴ Something of Lynch’s personal influence can be gauged from the comments of R.G. Ardagh MLC when explaining his decision:

[H]aving the position as it took place at the various meetings placed fully before me by Senator Lynch I feel I cannot cast on one side those members who are prepared to put the National Welfare of the people of Australia before party politics.¹¹⁵

The fact that some sections of the movement on the Goldfields did not fall into line behind the OLP can be attributed in large part to the influence of Lynch and those state politicians who stayed loyal to Hughes. However, many organisations

¹¹² After all, only nine weeks earlier the council had voted unanimously to support Lynch and the other expelled members. Furthermore, all of the State politicians mentioned, along with a number of affiliated unions and individual party members, soon opted for the National Labor Party.

¹¹³ The minutes record only that Lynch and his fellow politicians left before the vote was taken.

¹¹⁴ WAA 300/1688A/81. The letters were all retained in the file marked ‘RATS’. On 16 April Scaddan and eight other deserters were formally deemed by the State Executive to be outside the Labor Party [WAA 1573A/300/2].

¹¹⁵ WAA 300/1688A/81. On 2 April, Ardagh resigned as a trustee and member of the State Executive. He was an old colleague of Lynch’s from their days in the Boulder ACEDA.

on the Goldfields remained internally divided, including Lynch's original political base, the Boulder ACEDA.

The sequence of events for the remainder of 1917 can be summarised briefly. Following the Federal election in May in which the Hughes National Government was returned with an overwhelming majority, the Hughes Laborites reconstituted themselves both state and federally as the National Labor Party (NLP). In June, the NLP members of the Western Australian parliament allied themselves with the opposition Nationalist Party. In September, a Scaddan-led Nationalist administration (which included National Labor elements) assumed office after a comfortable victory at the State elections. With 18% of the vote (and seven seats), the NLP took a substantial proportion of the traditional Labor vote from the ALP which polled only 26% (and won 15 seats).

National Labor Party

Since Lynch's own political fortunes at this stage were inextricably linked with those of the NLP, a brief consideration of that relationship seems appropriate. The NLP in Western Australia owed much of its initial success to the fact that it had prominent political figures to the fore: ex-Labor Premier Jack Scaddan at state level; Senators Pearce, Lynch and de Largie at federal level. Ernest Scott has noted that "in Western Australia, some of the most powerful unions, following the lead of Pearce and Lynch, declared for the formation of a new National Labor Party".¹¹⁶ Withdrawals from the ALF in early 1917 included the Boilermakers Society, the Western Australian Associated Society of Railway Employees (WAASRE), the Australian Society of Engineers (ASE), the ACEDA, and the

¹¹⁶ Ernest Scott, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18*, Volume XI (Sydney, 1936), p.372.

Carpenters Union. Lynch was of course closely associated with the ACEDA, and Pearce with the Carpenters Union.¹¹⁷

In Western Australia, the new party had a firm set of policies enunciated as the “Twelve Principles of the National Labor Party” with which it contested both the Federal and State elections of 1917.¹¹⁸ Pearce, Lynch and other prominent National Labor senators threw themselves into the May Federal election campaign to good effect. As we shall see in Chapter Twelve, Lynch’s personal influence in the Goldfields and the wheatbelt was arguably responsible for swinging a large section of the traditional Labor vote (including a significant Irish Catholic vote) behind the NLP in preference to the ALP.¹¹⁹

At an organisational level, however, the NLP in Western Australia seemed to have all kinds of problems. In attempting to build a successful extra-parliamentary organisation it was over-dependent on the likes of Pearce and Lynch for moral and practical support. In late 1917, one local NLP organiser, J.G. Hay, went to great lengths to track down Lynch. On 10 August, he wrote to Pearce regarding the prospects of National Labor in Perth and requested the use of his Senate colleague: “If Lynch could be spared it requires a man of his calibre to deal with Collier, McCallum and the ‘Official’ Labor Party here”.¹²⁰

Pearce agreed in principle but over the next couple of months they had enormous difficulty tracking down Lynch, even though he was in Western Australia.¹²¹ When Hay did eventually catch up with Lynch some months later,

¹¹⁷ Paul Thornton-Smith, *The 1917 Australian Federal Election: a case study of Politics in the Great War* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Melbourne, 1987), p. 401, gives a full list of Western Australian unions who followed the NLP.

¹¹⁸ NLA 213/2/126 (Pearce Papers).

¹¹⁹ See also Thornton-Smith, *op.cit.*, (1987), p. 633.

¹²⁰ NLA 213/2/92 (Pearce Papers).

¹²¹ Hay plagued Pearce with letters complaining about Lynch’s lack of response. He also complained about the poor state of the NLP in Western Australia and, in particular, the State secretary, Thomas Dunne [For example, NLA 213/2/108. (Letter Hay to Pearce, 13 September 1917)].

his quarry was not overly receptive:

I saw Senator Lynch one afternoon in Hay Street and got off a tram to run after him. I caught him as he was going into the Celtic Club and told him I should like a talk with him over the position in Perth of the NLP but no satisfaction from him. He had the appearance of being tired and sleepy as if up all night.¹²²

Lynch's prominent role in the NLP after 1917 (before the eventual absorption of that party into the Nationalists in the early 1920's) will be discussed in the next chapter.

Conscription Revisited

Meanwhile, the defeat of the conscription referendum of October 1916 did not mean that the issue was dead and buried. Certainly not for Lynch, who afterwards declared:

Personally, I do not regard the net result of the Referendum as a true expression of national will in any conceivable sense. That 50,000 odd votes figuring as a majority represents the opinion of persons openly or covertly hostile to Australia's and the Empire's interests ...¹²³

The protagonists relived the battles of the referendum campaign when Federal Parliament resumed the following February. Lynch quickly resumed hostilities with his erstwhile Labor colleagues. Just days before he was forced to relinquish his ministry on 16 February, he clashed with Senators Gardiner and Ferricks over the government's refusal to surrender details of the voting figures for the Armed Forces in the referendum.¹²⁴ His landmark speeches the following month in which he revisited all the key issues relating to conscription and the Labor Split have already been considered earlier in this chapter.¹²⁵ Although Lynch made no further explicit reference in the Parliament to conscription for the remainder of 1917, the issue was kept alive in other ways.

¹²² NLA 213/2/132 (Letter Hay to Pearce, 15 October 1917). Possibly he had. He had travelled extensively during the campaign leading up to the State elections on 27 September. He had been as far as the Goldfields and his farm at Three Springs.

¹²³ *Punch* (Melbourne), 23 November 1916, p.80.

¹²⁴ *CPD*, Vol.81, pp. 10471, 10488, 10490-2 (14 February 1917).

¹²⁵ *CPD*, Vol.81 (speeches of 5 and 14 March 1917).

Some of his bitter disappointment at the defeat of the October 1916 referendum was assuaged by the recognition and support he continued to receive within his home state. In June, a special presentation was made to Senator Lynch at the Perth Town Hall in appreciation of his efforts for “the National cause” during the Federal elections the previous month, and for his loyalty to the conscriptionist cause. Various Nationalist politicians and supporters delivered accolades from the platform, including the mayor Frank Rea, the Colonial Secretary Hal Colebatch, the Minister for Mines R.T. Robinson, the Agent-General J.D. Connolly, ex-Premier John Scaddan MLA, Sir Walter James (another ex-Premier), R.P. Vincent (President of the National Federation), W.D. Hedges MHR, and Thomas Dunne (Organising Secretary of the National Labor Party). Lynch, responding, interpreted the overwhelming Nationalist election victory as endorsement of conscription as “the essence of fair play and justice”.¹²⁶ The occasion further demonstrated Lynch’s acceptance and warm embrace by the conservative political camp. It did their cause no harm to have a token “Paddy” on their side.

Lynch’s estrangement from Labor was further demonstrated by his more than vigorous response to remarks made later by Philip Collier MLA (Boulder) concerning the presentation in the Perth Town Hall. Collier, the Leader of the Western Australian Labor opposition, had supposedly alleged that Lynch “now stood with men who had previously opposed [him]”, that “he had got [his] reward from the employers” and that “[his] hands were stained with gold which represented the excessive price of the food of women and children”. Replying, Lynch labelled Collier a “turncoat” on conscription. He alleged that Collier had been one of his (Lynch’s) strongest supporters during the Kalgoorlie Conference of June 1916, but had since jumped horses in order to ingratiate himself with the

¹²⁶ *Western Mail*, 8 June 1917.

“party junta” and save his political career. Given these circumstances, Lynch particularly resented Collier’s “hypocritical accusations”.¹²⁷ This was vintage Lynch. As always, he believed that the best method of defence was attack.

Not accepting defeat the first time round, the Hughes Government decided to hold another referendum, on 20 December 1917. Compared to the bitterness and division engendered in October 1916, the second referendum was something of an anti-climax. Although again an active campaigner, Lynch certainly did not subject himself to the same gruelling tours—nor to the same attendant hostility—as he had done on the previous occasion.

Here we will confine our attention to the *Westralian Record* which once again adopted a militantly anti-conscriptionist stance. In the lead-up to the 20 December referendum, the editor, Fr Tom O’Grady, resumed with a vengeance his attacks upon Lynch. In the week before referendum day, he directed various jibes at both Lynch and Hughes. He caustically observed that Lynch had kept away from the Goldfields from this time: “I suppose discretion is the better part of valour ... He has been touched with imperialistic bubonic plague from associating with ‘rats’.” Elsewhere, the readers were urged: “On the 20th be with the big men—the Ryans, the Colliers, Archbishop Mannix...”.¹²⁸

Two weeks later, in the aftermath of the referendum defeat, O’Grady took several digs at Senator Lynch, “honourably wounded in the bad cause which he wholeheartedly espoused” (a reference to his having injured his leg in an accident at Wagin during the pre-referendum campaign tour). Lynch was further ridiculed for insisting that Dr Mannix did not speak for him: “[I]magine a pygmy protesting against the danger of being represented by a giant”.¹²⁹ O’Grady was, however, out

¹²⁷ *West Australian*, 7 July 1917. Lengthy letter to the editor by Lynch.

¹²⁸ *Westralian Record*, 15 December 1917, p.12.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, 29 December 1917, p.11.

of kilter with mainstream church opinion in Western Australia, especially Archbishop Clune and most of the senior clergy, who were solidly conscriptionist.

The second referendum returned an even bigger vote against conscription than the first. Although Western Australia once again returned an overwhelming—albeit reduced—‘YES’ majority, this was little consolation to Lynch. Once again, he was bitterly disappointed with the result: in particular, Boulder and Ivanhoe had voted ‘NO’ after recording ‘YES’ majorities in 1916.

Conscription was dead and buried for the time being. Lynch, however, had never really accepted the majority verdict. In January 1918, he declared to the Senate:

If those who voted ‘NO’ could have visualised the sufferings of the men in the trenches, if they could have seen what was passing here, and could have known the superhuman sacrifices which were being borne there, the vote would have been different ... the result of the referendum would have been more pleasing to real patriots.¹³⁰

Indeed, he even questioned the efficacy of the referendum process itself. After the defeat of the first referendum, he had declared:

I have deliberately come to the conclusion that a Referendum to determine the popular will in war time is a positively mistaken device; because the average workaday citizen is too much at the mercy of shallow-witted, short-sighted and designing men.¹³¹

Three months later, he had been challenged in the Senate regarding the government’s withholding of voting figures for the Armed Forces. This had led to the following sharp exchange between himself and his old sparring partner, Senator Myles Ferricks:

Ferricks: It is unworthy in a democracy that a government should withhold information from people.

Lynch: What do you want it for?

Ferricks: To see how far you were from the truth ...¹³²

¹³⁰ *CPD*, Vol.84, pp.3461-2 (24 January 1918).

¹³¹ *Punch* (Melbourne), 23 November 1916.

¹³² *CPD*, Vol.81, p.10488 (14 February 1917).

Taken together, these anti-democratic sentiments do more than reveal Lynch's outlook at the time; they reflect the authoritarian mindset of the government to which he was loyal throughout the greater part of the conscription saga.

Conclusion

The conscription controversy and the ensuing Labor Split of 1916-17 represented the climax of Lynch's political career, bringing to an end his 25 years of involvement in the movement. Lynch's departure from the Labor Party was more a process of gradual disengagement, beginning with his formal expulsion at the December 1916 Melbourne Conference, than a single event. The seven months from October 1916 to May 1917 proved the most turbulent period in Lynch's political career, not to mention the history of the Australian Labor Party. By the end of that period, his links with the ALP had been permanently severed. Moreover, the merger of the Liberals and the National Laborites had confirmed Lynch in the conservative ranks of the ruling Nationalist Party, in direct opposition to most of his erstwhile Labor colleagues. The second conscription referendum, in December 1917, served as a kind of postscript to this saga, merely cementing earlier divisions.

Lynch was the first Federal Labor parliamentarian to advocate conscription. His stance can hardly have come as a surprise. It represented a logical development of his previous position on issues related to national security: his long-evident preoccupation with defence, his loyalty to the Empire and (as early as 1909) his lack of sympathy for conscientious objectors. His conflict with the IWW during 1915-16 set the scene for his crusading stand in favour of conscription and his subsequent estrangement from the mainstream labour movement.

Lynch's arguments for conscription, his underlying assumptions and the related issues of party democracy will be examined in greater depth in Chapter Ten. Suffice to say, that his stance throughout was unambiguous, unapologetic and uncompromising—unlike some of his Labor colleagues whom he perceived as vacillating “trimmers” and “fence-sitters”. He remained devotedly loyal to Hughes, to the Empire, to the nation and to the war effort. In this, he followed the path of his closest colleagues from his earliest days in the labour movement in New South Wales—men such as Hughes, Watson, Guthrie and Spence—and from his days on the Western Australian goldfields—de Largie, Buzzacott, Scaddan and “Mulga” Taylor.

To a significant degree, the split reflected a growing left/right divide within the labour movement, a divide which was aggravated by war-time conditions. As we shall see in Chapter Eleven, when we consider the evolution of Lynch's attitude towards the Labor Party, these divisions cloaked fundamentally differing conceptions of what the party was about. Lynch and his kind retained an ongoing commitment to arbitration and parliamentarianism, but, for them, political and economic reform would always have to take second place to the security of the nation and the war effort. The time had come for a parting of the ways between the first political generation of conservative Labor men (Lynch, Pearce, et al.) and their more radical colleagues.

Lynch's split with Labor in 1916 would warrant far less comment but for his Irish Catholic background. Significantly, he parted political company with his two Irish Catholic colleagues from Western Australia, Hugh Mahon and Ted Needham. He was, nevertheless, very much a part of that overall conscriptionist majority comprised by the rest of the Western Australian colleagues. In this chapter, we have seen that, during the momentous events of 1916-17, Lynch—

nationalist and Imperial patriot—thought and acted very much as a loyal Western Australian. The Perth of Archbishop Clune was, however, not the Melbourne of Archbishop Mannix. In Chapter Twelve, we will analyse more fully the distinctive political climate of Irish Catholicism in the West; how it may have influenced Lynch and the path he took.

CHAPTER SEVEN

GREAT WAR TO GREAT DEPRESSION (1918-32)

This chapter will consider the period from the second conscription referendum of December 1917 until Lynch's election to the Presidency of the Senate in August 1932. During this period his career spanned three administrations—Hughes (1918-23), Bruce-Page (1923-29) and Scullin (1929-31)—and will be examined with reference to his major political concerns as expressed in his parliamentary speeches.

Ross McMullin has observed that, besides Hughes and Pearce, there were only three of the Labor renegades left in the Federal Parliament after the 1922 elections:

Whereas two of them, Queenslanders Bamford and Givens, remained on reasonably friendly terms with their former colleagues, another, Paddy Lynch, became a bitter public opponent of the ALP.¹

Paul Thornton-Smith made a similar observation when he noted that Hughes's downfall in 1923 meant the virtual end of the National Labor influence in the Nationalist Party: "The ex-Laborites were either defeated, thoroughly conservatised like Pearce, Plain and Lynch, or powerless mavericks like Hughes himself."²

Lynch, then, was confirmed in his new role as a Nationalist senator, and as a committed anti-Labor politician with a strong loyalty to the conservative forces in

¹ Ross McMullin, *The Light on the Hill: The Australian Labor Party 1891-1991* (Oxford, 1991), p.130. He notes that three other Labor renegades—Archibald, Poynton and Lynch's Western Australian colleague, de Largie—also displayed intense hostility to old comrades.

² Paul Thornton-Smith, *The 1917 Australian Federal Election: a case study of Politics in the Great War* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Melbourne, 1987), p.773. Pearce and Lynch's long-time colleague Senator Hugh de Largie had retired at the 1922 elections, leaving them as the only survivors from amongst the Western Australian contingent of National Laborites. By 1924 the National Labor Party had effectively ceased to exist as a separate entity in Western Australia.

Australian politics. He was re-elected to the Senate in 1919, then again in 1925 and 1931. He made two unsuccessful attempts at the Nationalist Party nomination for the Presidency of the Senate, in 1926 and again in 1929.

At the same time, he consolidated his position as a substantial wheat farmer at Three Springs. In 1918, he and his brother Phil amicably dissolved their partnership and went their separate ways. From about 1919 onwards, instead of renting at East Melbourne as he had done for some years previously, he stayed at temporary accommodation whilst in Melbourne for the parliamentary sessions. This left the Three Springs property as his only long-term residence. When, in 1927, the Federal Parliament finally moved to Canberra, this entailed still more travelling for Lynch and further separation from his family.

Political Career (1918-32)

Between the end of the Great War in November 1918 and the election of the Scullin Labor Government in November 1929 at the onset of the Great Depression, Australia was governed by a series of Nationalist administrations. This eleven-year span can be conveniently divided into two shorter periods: 1918-23, when the Nationalists ruled in their own right under the Prime Ministership of Billy Hughes; and 1923-29, when the Nationalists governed in coalition with the Country Party under the Prime Ministership of Stanley Melbourne Bruce (the so-called Bruce/Page administration). Following that, the Scullin Labor administration lasted barely two years in office before its landslide defeat in December 1931. It is useful to survey Lynch's political career during this thirteen year period by considering each of these administrations in turn.

1918-23: Hughes Administration

Let us consider firstly the period from the defeat of the second Conscription Referendum in December 1917 until the following December. This equates roughly with the calendar year 1918, during which Lynch made at least two very significant speeches to the Senate—one in January and another, barely two days after the 11 November Armistice. On both occasions he pursued themes which had preoccupied him throughout the war.

Lynch's speech of 24 January 1918, which lasted a marathon three hours and 25 minutes, mirrored in many respects his two major speeches of March 1917. He revisited most of the key issues relating to the divisions of the previous years, reiterating his by now all-too-familiar arguments for conscription. Once again, he condemned what he saw as the ambivalent attitude of the Labor Party towards the war effort.³ He indulged in more than his usual share of historical and classical allusions, referring at various points to Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine, Lord Byron, Gracchi, Belisarius, Danton, Washington, Ordell, Grattan, Parnell and Lincoln.⁴ Once again he defended Hughes, this time comparing his leader to the former of the two aforementioned Irish statesmen: "We know that Henry Grattan was tackled by the mobs in the streets of Dublin and that they made the blood of the Irish patriot flow".⁵ His speech was further distinguished by a series of attacks on John Curtin,⁶ a subject to which we shall return at the end of this section.

The Armistice of 11 November 1918 did not bring any cessation of hostilities between Lynch and his erstwhile comrades in the Labor Party; indeed, the conflict only intensified. Just two days later, the Senate debated at length the proposed Peace Conference. Lynch attacked Labor's policy of peace by negotiation and

³ CPD, Vol.84, p.3458 ff. (24 January 1918).

⁴ *Ibid*, pp.3462 and 3475.

⁵ *Ibid*, p.3475. Ten months previously he had compared him to Parnell. See Chapter Six.

⁶ *Ibid*, pp.3464, 3472, 3476.

challenged what he saw as their attempt to hitch themselves to President Wilson's 14-point peace plan.⁷ He opposed any peace settlement which did not include penal indemnities and the annexation of German territories, and decried the inconsistency in this regard between Australian Labor policy and that of its North American counterparts.⁸

The reaction to Lynch's speeches are all the more interesting for what they reveal about the soured relationship between Lynch and his former comrades. On both occasions (January and November 1918) Lynch faced an almost constant barrage of interjections from Labor senators.⁹ On the first occasion, Senator Long (Tasmania) taunted: "The honourable senator is prepared to send other people to fight for him, when he will not go himself". Lynch retorted by alluding to his life-saving attempt off the coast of Fiji over a quarter of a century previously and by proudly extolling the recognition of his courageous deed by the Royal Humane Society. "I risked my life to save a life", he told his fellow senators.¹⁰

The conflict in Europe was over. Lynch, nevertheless, remained as hawkish and irreconcilable as ever in that other war with his old Labor comrades. For the Official Labor Party, he and Pearce were the most despised bogeymen on the government benches. For Lynch's part, the bitterness engendered by his treatment at the time of the 1916 Split meant that he was inclined to stick the boot in at every opportunity. His former colleagues came to regard his outbursts with a

⁷ *Ibid*, Vol.86, pp.7664-7 (13 November 1918).

⁸ *Ibid*, p.7666. He was referring to the American Federation of Labor and the Canadian Congress of Labor.

⁹ In January, Senators Long, Barnes and Maughan; in November, Senators Gardiner, Barnes and O'Loughlin, amongst others.

¹⁰ *CPD*, Vol.84, p.3480 (24 January 1918). Lynch responded in a similar vein when taunted by Labor senator, Arthur Rae, in 1932 [*Ibid*, Vol.134, p.1106 (19 May 1932)]. For a fuller treatment of the life-saving incident, see Chapter Two.

mixture of anger and bemusement.

Lynch versus Curtin

1918 saw a public dispute between Lynch and John Curtin, largely conducted through the pages of the *Kalgoorlie Miner*. The first shots, however, were fired by Lynch in his Senate speech of 24 January. He had Curtin fixed firmly in his sights because of his prominent stand against conscription in 1916-17.¹¹

Indeed, Lynch had good reason to regard Curtin with some degree of enmity. Curtin had moved from Victoria to Western Australia in July 1917 in order to take over the editorship of the *Westralian Worker* from John Hilton. He promptly turned this paper, which had long been kind to Lynch, into a fervently anti-conscriptionist organ. As a Victorian, Curtin was regarded as an interloper and a “blow-in”, sufficient reason in itself to raise Lynch’s ire: “He came from a state in which there is no enlightenment, whilst Western Australia is today the only enlightened quarter of the continent.”¹²

It was, however, Curtin’s alleged hypocrisy and inconsistency which formed the basis of Lynch’s parliamentary attack. He took particular exception to the fact that Curtin, on the Yarra bank, had denounced the war as a “capitalist war”, but had then gone to the Western Australian goldfields to tell the workers that “the freedom of Australia was ... being fought for in Europe”.¹³

Sometime later, the episode took another turn when Lynch resurrected an issue which he had first raised during the conscription referendum campaign the previous December. On that earlier occasion, Lynch had revealed that Curtin, the

¹¹ *Ibid*, pp.3464, 3472, 3476

¹² *Ibid*, p.3476. Here Lynch clearly equated support for conscription—as evidenced by the results in the two referenda—with “enlightenment”.

¹³ *Ibid*, p.3464.

“conscientious objector”, had previously enlisted—only to be rejected on account of poor eyesight.¹⁴

Curtin’s biographer, Lloyd Ross, has reproduced the texts of the exchange which took place between Curtin and Lynch in the pages of the *Kalgoorlie Miner*. Curtin explained that he had been sentenced to three months’ imprisonment for refusing to go into camp as a conscript, and that “he had been in gaol for five days when the government, of which Senator Lynch was a member, quashed the conviction”. In his opinion:

Either the government was wrong in quashing the conviction, or Senator Lynch was acting in a despicable manner in referring to the conviction which he, as a member of government, was jointly responsible with his fellow ministers in wiping off the records.¹⁵

Ross then reported Lynch’s reply (*inter alia*):

So he [Curtin] does not dispute my public contention that he preferred the inside of a Melbourne gaol as a safer place than the trenches fighting with his fellow country men ... When he was in gaol he whimpered like a scared Lascar, and to my personal knowledge his friends pestered my colleague [Senator Pearce] night and day for his release. His friends sought favours for him from the man he never tires of calling “renegade”... Regarding his release, sought by his friends, he was released in common with others as an act of clemency, which he now condemns.¹⁶

Curtin had in fact originally been arrested for failing to enlist in accordance with the Military Service Proclamation, which was subsequently withdrawn once the 1916 referendum had been defeated.¹⁷ Lynch’s explanation of the release as an “act of clemency” by the government therefore seems highly dubious; rather, it was an act of necessity forced upon the government. That this was largely occasioned by the defeat of the referendum would surely have rankled with Lynch, and fuelled even further his animosity towards Curtin.

¹⁴ Lloyd Ross, *John Curtin: a Biography* (Melbourne, 1977), p.47. Ross states that, later, Curtin tacitly acknowledged the truth of this claim.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, pp.52-3.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.53.

¹⁷ *Ibid*. Ross’s consideration of these matters is somewhat incomplete, as is his referencing of the relevant sources which report the exchanges between Lynch and Curtin in 1918.

Lynch also observed that, while Curtin had refused to “go into camp as a conscript”, all he would need to have done, given that that he had already been rejected on account of poor eyesight, was to present himself again and he would have been assured of rejection a second time. Lynch conveniently ignored the fact that Curtin had refused to enrol as a conscript *on principle*, regardless of whether or not he could have been exonerated on health grounds. Curtin’s attempted enlistment and subsequent gaoling, for refusing to answer a call-up, was merely a convenient stick for Lynch to beat his opponent with. Lynch was pursuing a personal vendetta.

His earlier response to Lynch’s accusations aside, we have no firm evidence of any enmity by Curtin towards Lynch at this time. Doubtless it existed, though. As we shall see in Chapter Eleven, it surfaced some nine years later when Curtin penned an editorial in the *Westralian Worker* attacking Lynch and questioning his Labor credentials.¹⁸

The real significance of this episode, however, is that even in 1918 Lynch was still fighting old battles; this after two successive referendum defeats had effectively killed any realistic prospect of the introduction of conscription. But he had never really accepted defeat. Until such time as the war was won, he could not give up the fight.

A loyal Hughes supporter of long standing, Lynch was more than content while his old colleague retained the Prime Ministership. During this time he consolidated his active and prominent role within the National Labor Party. Lynch took a prominent part in the first major post-war conference of the Western Australian branch of the party, held at Kalgoorlie 18-22 April 1919. His motion praising Prime Minister Hughes’s efforts on behalf of Australia at the Versailles

¹⁸ *Westralian Worker* (21 January 1927).

Peace Conference and expressing “confidence that he will continue his labours with characteristic zeal until the nation’s share on the world war is fully and justly recognised” was carried unanimously with great enthusiasm.¹⁹

On the Federal stage, Lynch played a prominent part in the debates within the Nationalist Caucus. He was equally as strong a supporter of Hughes here as he had been at the Western Australian conference of the NLP. In June 1922 Lynch complimented Hughes “on the great work that he had done for Australia” and declared himself prepared to support the Prime Minister with utmost confidence.²⁰

If there was a difference of emphasis between Lynch and Hughes it was this: as a farmer, Lynch identified more readily with rural interests and was much more comfortable working with the Country Party. This difference was best exemplified at the 1919 election when Lynch positively propounded the interests of primary producers while Hughes seemed content to conduct a “khaki” election.²¹ It is also apparent from his contributions to debate, both in Caucus and Parliament itself, that Lynch took a much more hard-line stance against striking trade unionists than did his leader. Hughes appears to have retained a stronger residual sympathy with the mainstream labour movement than his colleague.

Lynch/Gregory Report

In January 1922, Hughes commissioned Lynch and fellow Western Australian MP, Henry Gregory (Country Party), to prepare a special report on the possibilities of settling immigrants in Western Australia.²² The commissioning of

¹⁹ *The National Labor Party of Western Australia: Report of the Second annual conference* (Kalgoorlie 1919), NLA 1538/27/143 (Hughes Papers), p.5.

²⁰ NLA 213/394 (Pearce Papers).

²¹ See discussion later in this chapter, especially reference to Lynch’s keynote address to the Senate in August 1919 [CPD, Vol.89, pp.12035-42 (28 August 1919)].

²² *Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers (General) Session 1922. Vol.II*, pp.1615-22. The report was formally requested on 13 January and completed barely ten weeks later, on 23 March.

this report had been prompted by initiatives taken in the early 1920s by the Premier of Western Australia, James Mitchell, to establish the now notorious Group Settlement Scheme in the south-west of that state.

In what must have been a gruelling schedule, between January and March 1922, Lynch and Gregory²³ travelled extensively throughout the south-west of Western Australia. They duly completed a report summarising their findings: it was entitled *Immigration: Possibilities of Settling Immigrants on Lands in Western Australia*. The report was more than favourable to the Group Settlement Scheme. It saw at least two major benefits of the methods employed: first, the massive forests of timber in the south-west of Western Australia could be more easily cleared; secondly, maximum benefits could be derived for “the poor man of sober industrious habits”.²⁴ In making their general recommendations, Lynch and Gregory expressed their approval of the broad principles of the Mitchell Government’s immigration policy, noting the long-term economic benefits of encouraging new settlers. They also argued that the arable portions of the state could accommodate tens of thousands of “our race”, strengthen the ranks of the nation’s defenders and richly reward those who developed such prolific lands.²⁵

The recommendations were entirely consistent with Lynch’s own views on immigration and land settlement, and the report itself gave him a platform on which to promote his views. Apparently, he also used the preparatory tour to do his own business: he spied rich farm land to the east of the Karlgarin soldier-

²³ Ironically, they had been old political adversaries nearly twenty years previously during Lynch’s Goldfields days and his time in the State Parliament. See Chapters Two and Three.

²⁴ *CPP, op.cit.*, (1922), pp.1618-9. As an example of the latter, the report praised the Italian orchardist, Fontinelli, who had settled near Manjimup.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.1622. One section of the report attached strong importance to the opening up of good cultivable land near railways and roads. Lynch had himself previously benefited from this very practice when in 1909 he had acquired land opened up for sale at Three Springs by the Midlands Railway Company.

settlement area in the eastern wheatbelt and subsequently purchased 4000 hectares for himself and his nephews, several of whom he set up in farming.²⁶

1923-29: Bruce-Page Administration

Although there is no record of his reaction, Lynch was doubtless disappointed when, in July 1923, Henry Gregory's Country Party, with whom he displayed a fair degree of sympathy, chose to bring down Hughes as Prime Minister. With the departure of his old friend, Billy Hughes, and the accession of Stanley Melbourne Bruce to the Prime Ministership, Lynch nevertheless remained a loyal supporter of the Nationalist Government. He did, however, take a noticeably less active and prominent part in the parliamentary proceedings during the Bruce/Page administration.

With the demise of Hughes, any lingering chance which Lynch may have had of promotion to ministerial ranks had evaporated. This may explain why Lynch elected in July 1923—after a seven-year absence—to re-join the Parliamentary Public Works Committee²⁷: it was one way of assuming a greater role in political affairs. In 1929 he was appointed to a Special Senate Committee established to enquire into the merits of introducing a standing committee system in the Senate.²⁸

²⁶ One nephew, Phonsie, took up a block of land at Hyden in 1922 and another nephew, Peter, did likewise in 1926. Lynch descendants are still farming in the area today [*The Countryman* (29 September 1977) and the *West Australian* (2 July 2002)].

²⁷ Lynch had been vice-chairman of the committee 1914-16, resigning in November 1916 when he was appointed Minister for Works and Railways. His second term lasted three years; he resigned on 30 June 1926, on the eve of the election for the Presidency of the Senate.

²⁸ The following year the committee reported favourably upon the proposal which was subsequently adopted. Lynch's Western Australian colleague, Senator Hal Colebatch, was also a member of the committee.

Tilts at the Presidency

The biggest single obstacle to Lynch ever again acquiring ministerial rank was his Western Australian colleague, Senator George Pearce. There was only room enough in the Federal cabinet for one Western Australian of National Laborite background and, as Lynch's senior, Pearce had that position sewn up. Pearce's biographer, Peter Heydon, is almost certainly correct in his assessment that, whilst Lynch "owed much to Pearce in terms of securing constant re-election", he "naturally saw Pearce as having blocked his career".²⁹ It was little wonder, then, that when his attempt to obtain a parliamentary sinecure was thwarted he should vent his spleen on Pearce. This is what happened in 1926.

That year saw the first of two unsuccessful attempts by Lynch to secure his party's nomination for the Presidency of the Senate; the second was in 1929. On the first occasion he was defeated in the party room by Senator John Newlands (another ex-Laborite) of South Australia. Despite, on his own admission, having only secured the support of roughly one-third of party members, Lynch took his defeat very hard and with some display of bitterness.³⁰

He imagined Pearce responsible for his defeat and, when Newlands' name was proposed to the Senate, "for twelve minutes ... raged in uncontrolled anger and allegations".³¹ Lynch's rant against Pearce was a most extraordinary outburst. He apparently saw himself as a victim of "black ingratitude" and bemoaned the fact that for years he had done Pearce and the government's donkey work:

When it is a question of distributing plums, it appears that I am not considered good enough; that I must be shoved aside. Paddy Lynch, it seems, was good enough to do the fighting, but, when the plums were ladled out, Paddy Lynch must be thrust into the background ...³²

²⁹ Peter Heydon, *Quiet Decision: a Study of George Foster Pearce* (Melbourne, 1965), p.199.

³⁰ CPD, Vol.114, 3681 (1 July 1926).

³¹ Heydon, *op.cit.*, (1965), p.199.

³² CPD, Vol.114, p.3682. He recalled three specific occasions between 1917 and 1919 when he had been called upon to undertake difficult political tasks at the behest of Pearce or of a government of which Pearce was a member.

There were also racial and sectarian undertones to Lynch's grievance against Pearce. He alleged that Pearce had once "impugned the race to which I belong, at a public gathering, when he stated that the Country Party in Australia was founded by Sinn Féiners", but hastened to add: "I made him eat and swallow his words".³³ He complained that someone of his name, race and religion could all too easily be used "to take all the abuse coming", only to be just as easily shoved aside "in the interests of a pet".³⁴ Taken together, these two statements reveal a latent resentment on Lynch's part that someone of his ethnic and religious background in the Nationalist Party would never be given his due. The bitter disappointment of his defeat had brought this resentment bubbling to the surface; suddenly, it erupted.

Pearce responded to Lynch's twelve-minute tirade with a one minute rejoinder in which he calmly expressed regret at "the bitter and altogether unjustifiable attack" upon himself. He was sure that when Lynch had reflected upon what he had said, no-one would regret it more than Lynch himself. Lynch, however, would not be placated: "Never!"³⁵

On the next occasion, in 1929, Lynch was one of three candidates who put themselves forward for the Nationalist Party nomination to succeed Newlands as President of the Senate. This time he lost out to Senator Walter Kingsmill, his Nationalist colleague from Western Australia.³⁶ In stark contrast to his outburst three years earlier, however, he maintained a discreet silence when Kingsmill's name was presented to the Senate. Whatever may have taken place in the party

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.3683

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ A quarter of a century earlier Lynch and Kingsmill had been political adversaries in the Western Australian parliament. Despite his long record of parliamentary and ministerial service in Western Australia, Kingsmill had only entered the Senate in 1922. His relatively speedy elevation to the Presidency must have peeved Lynch.

room, Lynch on this occasion took his defeat with public good grace. In the face of two successive defeats, and however personally disappointed and humiliated, he remained a loyal supporter of the Bruce/Page Government.

1929-31: Scullin Administration

In November 1929 a Labor landslide brought the Scullin Government into power thus bringing to an end thirteen years of Nationalist rule. During the address-in-reply debate in the Senate soon after the swearing in of the new ministry, Lynch delivered a lengthy speech which began magnanimously enough, congratulating Senator J.J. Daly on his elevation to the post of government leader in that chamber. It quickly degenerated, however, into an all-out attack on the Labor Party, re-living old battles and resurrecting a litany of past grievances.³⁷ Indeed, it set the tone for Lynch's attitude towards the Scullin Government for the rest of its brief tenure in office.

Even in the harsh economic circumstances of the Depression, Lynch's attitude was unrelenting; he showed his former party little sympathy. In December 1930, he made an unsuccessful plea for a government of national unity.³⁸ He expressed the view that Labor blamed the banks too much for the depressed economic circumstances and he endorsed the Niemeyer Plan.³⁹ From Lynch there was no hint of that Keynesian economic thinking which came to influence many politicians in the liberal democracies during the Depression era; rather, he continued to decry what he saw as an over-reliance upon government. During the New South Wales coalminers strike in 1931 he wanted stronger action from the

³⁷ *CPD*, Vol.122, pp.406-16 (28 November 1929).

³⁸ *Ibid*, Vol.127, pp.1401-2 (12 December 1930).

³⁹ *Ibid*, Vol.131, p.4951 (5 August 1931). A harsh economic plan proposed by Otto Niemeyer, the governor of the Bank of England. Amongst other strict measures, it include massive cutbacks in government expenditure.

government to ensure adherence to the principles of arbitration and to rescue the coal industry from its parlous state. Only greater production could pay for such measures as increased pensions, he maintained; otherwise expenditure cuts would be necessary.⁴⁰

The Scullin Government, rendered impotent by the Depression crisis and by an internal party split, suffered a landslide defeat in the elections of November 1931. Much to Lynch's relief, the conservative parties were restored to office; with Labor renegade Joe Lyons, leader of the newly-formed United Australia Party, at the helm.

A reading of his Senate speeches for the period 1918-32 reveals that Lynch had four broad areas of concern: namely, defence, Ireland and the Empire; the Labor Party and socialism; industrial order; the economy.⁴¹ These issues will each be examined in turn. Occasional references will be made to other public statements by Lynch, but the discussion will rest primarily upon the evidence provided by his contributions to parliamentary debates.

Defence, Ireland and the Empire

Whether implicit or explicit, *the* dominant theme in Lynch's parliamentary speeches between 1918 and 1932 was the threat to the existing social order and the need to defend it. In August 1920, he noted "the onward march of the Red Army of Russia" and stated that the time was coming when, as he put it, "we shall have to stand very firmly together to preserve our social order".⁴² For Lynch, the best guarantee of Australia's freedom and the preservation of the social order was

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, Vol.131, p.4273 (23 July 1931).

⁴¹ Two of these themes will later be examined in much greater depth for the whole of Lynch's political career (1901-38): Defence, Ireland and the Empire in Chapter Nine; the Labor Party and socialism in Chapter Eleven. Hence, their treatment here is comparatively brief. The other two themes—industrial order and the economy—receive rather more substantial treatment.

⁴² *CPD*, Vol.92, P.3203 (4 August 1920).

the British Empire and the military protection which it afforded. In the aftermath of the 1914-18 War, the political climate of the early 1920s (especially in Western Australia) was fervently loyalist, and Lynch reflected this.

On the face of it, Ireland was a significant political preoccupation of Lynch's between 1919 and 1921; he presented two motions to the Senate concerning Home Rule for Ireland—the first in August 1919⁴³ and the second in August 1921.⁴⁴ However, as we shall see in Chapter Nine, he was motivated primarily by a desire to secure Ireland as a loyal friend within the Empire—and by domestic political considerations.

At this time Dr. Daniel Mannix was still the recognised leader in Australia of the Irish nationalist cause. Ironically, given their opposing stances in the conscription controversy some five years earlier, Lynch invoked Mannix's authority during his speech in support of the Home Rule motion of August 1921. He did this by endorsing a statement, which he attributed—accurately or otherwise—to the archbishop, expressing the view that the menace to Australia was an Asiatic one.⁴⁵

Interestingly, Mannix had come up for discussion some four months earlier at a Nationalist Party Caucus meeting when two backbenchers—Senator J.M. Chanter and Mr. W.M. Marks MHR—proposed that action be taken against prominent churchmen and others who were “continually giving utterance to disloyal sentiments”. The minutes record that considerable discussion followed but,

⁴³ *Ibid*, Vol.89, pp.11783-93 (21 August 1919). The motion was not actually put to the vote.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, Vol.97, p.11210 (24 August 1921). Lynch's motion was withdrawn but, when he submitted another motion the following December congratulating Lloyd George on arriving at an Irish settlement (the Treaty), it was carried without debate [*Ibid*, Vol.98, p.13994 (7 December 1921)].

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, Vol.97, p.11212 (24 August 1921). We have no way of knowing for certain whether or not Mannix did make such a statement.

although Lynch was present and spoke, his remarks, unfortunately, are not recorded.⁴⁶

Labor Party and Socialism

Earlier in this chapter we noted Lynch's two keynote Senate speeches of January and November 1918 in which he clearly enunciated his argument against the Labor Party. From this point on, his periodic pronouncements became progressively anti-Labor in sentiment.⁴⁷

In June 1919, a resolution of the Official Labor Congress in Sydney sentenced Labor members who had advocated conscription to perpetual expulsion from the party. Lynch responded by making a host of charges against the Labor Party, asserting that the interests of Labor and the interests of the nation could never be reconcilable in war-time. He proclaimed that a new party (the National Labor Party), with its own objectives, had come to stay. Meanwhile, until the Official Labor Party cleansed itself, he would not touch it with a barge-pole.⁴⁸ Linked with this growing hostility to the Official Labor Party was an increasing alarm on Lynch's part at the triumph of Bolshevism in Russia and a gradual rejection by him of the basic tenets of socialism as essentially unworkable.⁴⁹

Throughout the 1920's, Lynch distanced himself further and further from his old comrades. The election of the Scullin Government in November 1929 did nothing to restrain his growing hostility to the Labor Party. He took strong exception to the singing of *The Red Flag* at the Hotel Kurrajong in Canberra at a celebratory gathering attended by a number of newly-elected government

⁴⁶ NLA 213/379 (Pearce Papers). Minutes of meeting, 12 April 1921. Six other members of Caucus also spoke.

⁴⁷ Here we mean anti-Labor in the sense of opposition to the Official Labor Party; as late as 1932 Lynch had not entirely abandoned a residual attachment to "old Labour" values.

⁴⁸ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 June 1919, p.7.

⁴⁹ See discussion in Chapter Eleven.

ministers. He was of the view that such behaviour was offensive, not only to a number of hotel guests, but to the nation as a whole.⁵⁰

Industrial Order

Industrial unrest was the subject which evoked the most passion from Lynch and which most distanced him from his old Labor comrades. He consistently opposed strikes, and was nothing less than vigorous in his defence of “law and order”. He delivered some of his most outspoken speeches during 1919-20 when he was vehement in his condemnation of strikes by seamen, marine engineers and coal miners. The ill-tempered Senate debates of 1919 took place in the context of a national seamen’s strike and ongoing conflict between Official Laborites and National Laborites regarding the loyalties of unions attached to these two competing factions. In Fremantle, notably, conflict between the Lumpers Union and an independent strike-breaking “National” union culminated in the events of “Bloody Sunday”, 4 May 1919.⁵¹

Between 1925-27, Lynch spoke out against strikes by British seamen and by waterside workers.⁵² During the Depression years 1929-31 he condemned strikes by wharf labourers and by New South Wales coalminers.⁵³ Lynch’s stand against illegal strikes—even in peacetime—was inextricably linked to his stand for law

⁵⁰ *CPD*, Vol.122, pp.22 and 170 (21-22 November 1929). Lynch raised the matter by way of a question to the Government leader in the Senate, Senator J.J. Daly. The irony of Lynch’s protest is that the author of *The Red Flag*, James Connell (1852-1929) was a fellow Meathman, born barely ten miles from Lynch’s homeplace at Skearke; in the townland of Rathniska, parish of Kilskyre, approximately five miles west of Kells. Connell had written *The Red Flag* in 1889, largely inspired by the London dock strikes of that year. Connell died in London in February 1929, just nine months before Lynch’s protest in the Senate. It is interesting to speculate whether or not Lynch was aware of these facts. Quite possibly, he was not.

⁵¹ Striking lumper Tom Edwards died from injuries inflicted by a police baton during a skirmish on the Fremantle wharves that day. Lynch and de Largie were both to the fore in defending the role of the opposition “National” lumpers union [*CPD*, Vol.90, pp.13826-8 (23 October 1919)]. De Largie insisted that the Nationalist workers were not “scabs” in the true sense of the word, a view Lynch would surely have endorsed.

⁵² *CPD*, Vol.112, pp.170-1 (20 January 1926).

⁵³ *Ibid*, Vol.120, p.1417 (19 March 1929); Vol.131 (23 July 1931).

and order. Speaking to the Unlawful Assemblies Bill in 1921, he insisted that, while for him the idea of democracy implied complete freedom of expression, he nevertheless wanted to qualify this with the provision that such expression “should not disturb the social order or interfere with the laws of the country”.⁵⁴

Several dominant themes emerge in Lynch’s speeches on industrial unrest, each of which will be considered in Chapter Eleven. Here I will briefly mention just one: his steadfast defence of the arbitration system. In 1919 alone, he extolled its virtues on several occasions.⁵⁵

The proposal by the Bruce Government in 1929 to return to the states the powers and responsibilities with respect to arbitration was seen by many as an attempt to undermine the arbitration system. It has often been cited as one of the causes of the Bruce Government’s landslide defeat later that same year. Lynch, however, supported Bruce’s proposals. He reasoned that, until such time as the electors gave the Commonwealth the full powers needed to operate the system properly, the responsibilities should be left to the states. He predicted that such an arrangement would become so unworkable that they would only too willingly revert to the system of Commonwealth control.⁵⁶

After the defeat of the Scullin Government in December 1931, Lynch pronounced himself in accord with the Lyons Government’s new Arbitration and Conciliation Act the following May. Indeed, he was more “hawkish” in his stance than even his Western Australian counterpart, former Nationalist premier Hal Colebatch: he strongly supported those sections of the Bill which provided for

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, Vol.92, p.3128 (30 July 1920) .

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, Vol. 88, p.10503 (9 July 1919); Vol. 90, pp.12953-6 (2 October 1919), p.13823 (25 October 1919). On the last two occasions Lynch exalted Justice Higgins, “the friend of the workers” who had “replaced the competitive system”.

⁵⁶ NLA 1009/39/67 (Latham Papers). Lettergram Lynch to Bruce (29 May 1929).

strict sanctions against organisations not adhering to the rulings of the Arbitration Court.⁵⁷

The Economy

Between 1918 and 1932 a distinct rightward drift was evident in Lynch's views on economic issues. His increasingly conservative stance was characterised by a concern for budgetary restraint, a thorough identification with primary producer concerns at the expense of trade union demands; a growing opposition to high rates of tariff protection, a general defence of rural rather than urban interests, and a firm commitment to increased immigration as a remedy for underpopulation.

When the Nationalist Caucus came to consider government budgetary proposals for 1922, Lynch proved to be a strong advocate of fiscal rectitude. He argued that Australia had been living beyond its means. He believed that the government was wrong to give effect to the recommendations of the Piddington Commission which had included an increase in the basic wage. He further insisted that if the government did not economise, it would be punished at the next elections.⁵⁸ The irony is that Lynch, one time Laborite, is revealed to have been much more hard-line and "right-wing" on issues of government expenditure than many of his erstwhile Liberal opponents.⁵⁹

Lynch established himself as one of the leading spokesmen within the Senate for primary producer interests. In August 1919, the Australian Farmers Federation⁶⁰ at their conference in Melbourne drew up a political platform in

⁵⁷ *CPD*, Vol.134, p.1106 (19 May 1932).

⁵⁸ NLA 213/374 (Pearce Papers), Minutes of Nationalist Caucus meeting, 13 July 1922. The Piddington Commission had been established under the aegis of the Interstate Commission in order to make recommendations regarding a Commonwealth basic wage.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 6 July 1922. For example, Austin Chapman MHR supported an increase in pensions whereas Lynch opposed this on financial grounds.

⁶⁰ Later the Primary Producers Association. Both organisations had close links with the nascent Country Party (which formally came into existence at the federal level in January 1920).

anticipation of the Federal elections the following December. Barely a week after the conference, Lynch presented a lengthy motion to the Senate which articulated the general needs of primary producers.⁶¹ During his speech he noted that there had been much talk about the troubles of manufacturers and seamen, before adding “I know something about the latter, because I was employed in seafaring for about seven years, but I never felt more exhausted than when working on a farm.”⁶²

An about-turn on the issue of protection accompanied Lynch’s new-found commitment to rural interests. As early as August 1920, Lynch tacitly admitted a change of emphasis on his part when he declared: “I have great faith in protective duties, but I never claimed that their influence was equal to that mighty power described in the Book of Genesis, which said, ‘Let things be’, and, of course, they were.”⁶³ He was firmly against pampering the cities at the expense of the countryside: if protection was good enough for manufacturing interests, it was good enough for primary producers.⁶⁴

A comparison of Lynch’s contributions to the tariff debates of August—September 1921 with his contributions to the landmark tariff debates some fourteen years earlier reveals that Lynch had altered his position significantly.⁶⁵ Although far from declaring as a free trader, Lynch was no longer the ardent protectionist he once had been.⁶⁶

⁶¹ *CPD*, Vol.89, p.12035 (28 August 1919). It specifically requested the Commonwealth Government to guarantee wheatgrowers a fixed minimum export price of five shillings per bushel for the following five years.

⁶² *Ibid*, p.12040.

⁶³ *Ibid*, Vol.92, p.3200 (4 August 1920)

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, Vol.89, p.12041 (28 August 1919).

⁶⁵ *Index to Senate Speeches*, 26 February-10 December 1921, xci. According to the list presented, Lynch contributed to the discussion on no less than eighty-five items. See Chapter Four for discussion of the 1907 debates.

⁶⁶ Indeed, if voting behaviour on tariff legislation in 1932 is anything to go by, then Lynch and Pearce had practically reversed their respective roles of 25 years previously. Something of a selective and lukewarm supporter of protection in 1907, Pearce was now much more protectionist than his colleague.

Lynch was much more than an ally of primary producers; he was an advocate for rural life in general. He was alarmed at the rapid urbanisation of Australia to the detriment of the countryside. In the preamble to his motion before the Senate in August 1919, he lamented that “the present baneful tendency of the time is to encourage and aggrandise urban life and urban activities at the expense of injury to rural prosperity.”⁶⁷ He further lamented that “a vast number of people employed in [the wheat-growing industry] should be condemned to a joyless existence of excessive hardships and ill-rewarded toil ...”. In language that might have been taken straight out of a National Catholic Rural Movement pamphlet of the 1940s, he advocated the creation of the conditions “to cause a permanent and prosperous peasantry to be rooted in the soil”.⁶⁸

To this end, Lynch was a strong advocate of large-scale British immigration as a cure for rural de-population.⁶⁹ We have already noted his role, in 1922, in the preparation of the report on the prospects for migrant resettlement in Western Australia.⁷⁰

Wife’s Death

On 8 May 1931—just six months short of what would have been their thirtieth wedding anniversary—Lynch’s wife, Annie, passed away, aged 60 years. Mrs. Lynch had been ill with diabetes for some time and did not often accompany her husband to social events. The senator received some eighteen telegrams and

⁶⁷ *CPD*, Vol.89, p.12035 (28 August 1919).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* Lynch’s language closely resembled that employed by B.A. Santamaria and other Catholic social theorists during the 1930s and 40s. They constantly extolled the virtues of rural life in preference to big cities. There is, however, no evidence that Lynch was influenced by these ideas, in 1919 or at any other time.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol.103, p.876 (11 July 1923).

⁷⁰ Henry Gregory and Patrick Lynch, *Immigration: Possibilities of Settling Immigrants on Lands in Western Australia* (Melbourne, 1922).

letters of condolence.⁷¹ They are significant for what they reveal about the political and social circles in which he was mixing at this time.

Of the eight condolences from party political sources, only one was from the Labor side of politics, and that was a formal telegram from Scullin in his capacity as Prime Minister (ironically, the same man who had moved the expulsion of Lynch and other conscriptionists from the Labor Party in 1916).⁷² The other seven, from the non-Labor side politics, were: W.D. Hedges MHR (Nationalist, Western Australia), James McCallum Smith MLA (Nationalist, Western Australia), Sir James Mitchell MLA (Nationalist Premier of Western Australia), J.L. Price (on behalf of the United Australia Party) and A.M. Jacka (on behalf of the Nationalist Party of Western Australia).

Condolences were also received from four Western Australian-based organisations: the Celtic Club, the West Australia Club, the Dominion League, and the National Rifle Association (Western Australia). The remaining six were from individuals, and included James Reed (an Orangeman and former Goldfields Laborite-turned-Nationalist) and J.B. Durack of the well-known pastoral family, long associated with conservative politics in Western Australia.

At Christmas/New Year 1931-32, Lynch and the new Minister for External Affairs, Sir John Latham, cabled one another: Lynch to congratulate Latham on his appointment to the Lyons Ministry, and Latham to congratulate Lynch on his re-election to the Senate.⁷³ These messages reveal a close and easy relationship between Lynch and his good friend Sir John Latham.⁷⁴ Lynch was by then a fully-

⁷¹ Original copies of telegrams and letters of condolence in the possession of Bernard Clune (grandson of Senator Lynch), Mullewa, Western Australia. Sighted and photocopied by the author at Geraldton, 30 October 1999.

⁷² Lynch appeared, nevertheless, to bear Scullin no personal grudge. In his parliamentary tirades against the Labor Party, Lynch never attacked him personally, even when Scullin was Prime Minister.

⁷³ NLA 1009/50/674-5 (Latham Papers). Lynch to Latham (22 December 1931); Latham to Lynch (14 January 1932)

⁷⁴ Leader of the Nationalist Party during the period of the Scullin Government (1929-31).

fledged Nationalist politician, entirely comfortable with his conservative political bedfellows. Moreover, the correspondence with Latham—together with the condolences received upon his wife's death—reveal Lynch as thoroughly immersed in conservative political and social circles far removed from the Labor circles in which he had mixed thirty—even fifteen—years previously.

Conclusion

By the early 1920s, the breach between Lynch and the Labor Party had become irrevocable. He reacted to the events of 1916-17 by going to extremes in his anti-Labor opinions. Despite his initial membership of the National Labor Party and his ongoing attachment to “old Labour” values, he came less and less to define himself as a Labor man. His already apparent right-wing attitudes on issues such as defence and the Empire were reinforced by increasingly right-wing stances on political and economic issues in general. He consciously adopted the role of representative of primary producer interests—and of the rural populace at large.⁷⁵ Once he and the other surviving remnants of the NLP had been absorbed into the Nationalist ranks, he felt more than comfortable amongst his erstwhile political opponents.

At the beginning of 1918 Lynch was a middle-aged man of fifty; at the beginning of 1932 he was an elderly man in his sixty-fifth year, an age which presaged retirement. For him, the intervening period must ultimately have proved both frustrating and unfulfilling. His rejection (twice) by his own party as its

⁷⁵ It is interesting to speculate why Lynch did not eventually follow his Nationalist colleague Henry Gregory into the Country Party. (Gregory had switched to the new party when it was formed federally in January 1920). On the face of it, Lynch had all the makings of a Country Party politician and, unlike Gregory, no previous emotional attachment to the major anti-Labor party of the day. As we shall see in Chapter Eight, Lynch formed a strong political alliance in the 1930s with E.B. Johnston, a Western Australian Country Party senator (and former Labor MLA).

candidate for the Presidency of the Senate had been a cruel double blow. Although comfortably secure as a Nationalist senator for Western Australia, there appeared little on the political horizon other than to serve out his time faithfully.

CHAPTER EIGHT

POLITICAL EPILOGUE (1932-44)

This final chronological chapter will deal with the remainder of Paddy Lynch's life, covering the years 1932-44. The twelve-year span can neatly be divided into two six-year periods: the first (1932-38) taking in Lynch's Presidency of the Senate and subsequent electoral defeat; the second (1938-44) his period of retirement culminating in his death.

In 1932, Lynch, politically frustrated for some years, received the belated consolation prize of the Presidency of the Senate and, in 1935, the bonus prize of a second three-year term. He was very much in the twilight of his political career by this stage. Only a few months prior to his elevation to the Presidency, he turned sixty-five, an age when most present day politicians would either have retired or be on the verge of doing so. Lynch's second marriage in 1933—to his secretary, some eighteen years his junior—undoubtedly rejuvenated him, though he did suffer periods of ill-health in 1936 and 1937.

His final six-year term in the Senate coincided with the austerity of the Depression era. It was a period of non-Labor dominance in Federal politics, roughly coinciding with Joseph Lyons's reign as Prime Minister (1931-38). Lynch's Presidency of the Senate, though curbing his capacity for political pronouncements, far from silenced him. In the wake of the Depression, an upsurge in support for secession occurred in his home state of Western Australia and he lent his support to this movement. When the situation demanded, he was

outspoken on farming and security matters. He was confirmed, moreover, as a spokesman for conservative interests and upholder of the prevailing social order.

Electoral defeat in 1937 brought Lynch's thirty-year Federal parliamentary career to an end. Both he and his long-time Western Australian colleague, Pearce, were victims of a large swing to Labor. His defeat was a bitter personal blow. He retired, both as senator and President of the Senate, the day his term formally expired—30 June 1938. Despite his age (71 years) and some ill-health, he would not fully accept retirement. Earlier in 1938, he had unsuccessfully applied for a position on the reconstituted Interstate Commission and, the following year, he unsuccessfully contested the Legislative Assembly seat of Geraldton for the Nationalist Party.

Lynch's period of retirement (1938-44) serves as an epilogue to his political career. It was spent in the main pursuing his farming interests at Three Springs. Although the last years of his life were spent under war-time conditions, he did not live to see the end of the war. He died in Perth in January 1944 and was given a State funeral. Meanwhile, Labor had returned to power in 1941 under the leadership of his old protagonist, John Curtin.

President of the Senate

Having failed previously in 1926 and 1929, Lynch finally succeeded in 1932 in his third attempt at being elected to the Presidency of the Senate. Following the retirement from the post of the incumbent, Walter Kingsmill, Lynch won his party nomination by a roughly two-to-one majority. On 31 August 1932 he defeated

Labor nominee, Senator John Barnes, by 24 votes to ten in a ballot which followed party lines.¹

In his valedictory speech some six years later, Lynch revealed how he had “‘dogged and devilled’ morning, noon and night” to familiarise himself with *May’s Parliamentary Practice*, “with the result that eventually I reached this elevated stand ...”.² This not only suggests that he took all the procedures and formalities of Parliament very seriously; he had consciously groomed himself for the job. It is a measure of how much Lynch had come to embrace British parliamentary traditions (with their attendant pomp and circumstance) that he chose not to dispense with the traditional wig and gown of office; this despite the fact that, in 1910, whilst still a Labor man, he had applauded a predecessor who had discarded “those emblems of medieval mysticism”.³

In his acceptance speech, Lynch acknowledged that it would clearly be foolish to ignore the reality of the existence of political parties, but nevertheless flagged his intention as President to treat all senators as individuals and to be blind to the question of party allegiances.⁴ This was probably an attempt on his part to reassure those Labor senators such as Arthur Rae who had questioned his

¹ Lynch had been nominated by Senators Lawson (UAP) and Carroll (Country Party). Barnes had been nominated by Labor senators O’Halloran and Dooley.

² *CPD*, Vol.156, p.2956 (30 June 1938). The implication is that he had begun this process a good number of years previously. *May’s Parliamentary Practice* is a 1000 page (plus) volume authored by T.Erskine May, the acknowledged British authority on parliamentary practice and procedure.

³ *CPD*, Vol.40, p.316 (13 July 1910). It may, however, be unrealistic to expect a non-Labor President to have taken such step in 1932, even if he had wanted to. Along with portraits of all his presidential predecessors and successors, a portrait of Lynch, bedecked in the wig and gown of office, hangs today in the gallery of the New Parliament House in Canberra.

⁴ *Ibid.* Significantly, Lynch had begun his acceptance speech by assuring the electors of Western Australia that his elevation to high office would not cause him to neglect in any way the needs of the people of his home state.

candidature on the grounds of temperament and partiality:

While I hope that the adaptability which is in all human nature to a certain extent will enable Senator Lynch, if elected to the position, to carry out his duties impartially, I can hardly imagine any one believing that he has been gifted with a judicial temperament.⁵

Another old sparring partner, Senator J.P. “Digger” Dunn, went so far as to appeal for the withdrawal of Lynch’s nomination. In extolling the virtues of the Labor candidate, Senator John Barnes, Dunn made an obvious dig at Lynch when he observed that “as a good Irish-Australian”, Barnes “would not always feel it necessary to hit a man with a shillelagh or a bag of shamrocks”.⁶ Barnes himself acknowledged Lynch’s “highly explosive temperament as a private member”.⁷

Lynch, nevertheless, was re-elected unopposed three years later. The absence of a Labor candidate was itself a measure of the party’s satisfaction with his performance to date. Senator Brown (Queensland), for example, acknowledged that Lynch had given the small minority constituted by Labor senators a “fair go” in the face of a large and powerful Government majority.⁸

In fact, Lynch met more opposition from within his own party to his re-election than he did from the Labor Party. No less than five other candidates contested the Government party nomination:

Senator Millen (UAP, Tasmania) was originally the main government contender, and was understood to have ministerial support. However, it was later made clear that he did not have government backing because of a “disinclination to submit to government discipline”. The support of the ministry was then thrown behind Senator Foll (UAP, Queensland), who

⁵ *Ibid*, p.8

⁶ *Ibid*, p.9. Dunn and Lynch had been regular sparring partners during the time of the Scullin Government. Dunn continued to be a thorn in Lynch’s side during his tenure in the Presidency, though there was a certain amount of good-humoured “taking the mickey” involved.

⁷ *Ibid*, p.13. Once the result had been announced, Lynch and Barnes paid generous tributes to one another.

⁸ *Ibid*, Vol.147, p.4 (23 September 1935).

made a hasty return by mail-plane from England, but Lynch still secured his party's nomination.⁹

The clear implication is that the support of Government backbenchers carried him through.

There are several possible reasons for the relative lack of support for Lynch on the Government side (particularly within the ministry): first, his resolute independence and impartiality in ensuring equal treatment for all senators, regardless of party; secondly, the fact that his two immediate predecessors (Kingsmill and Newlands) had only served one three-year term each and that Lynch, by the end of his first term, was already sixty-eight years of age;¹⁰ thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, his controversial support for the Western Australian secession movement which may well have alienated him from key figures in the Government ranks.¹¹ In his acceptance speech upon his re-election, Lynch acknowledged the opposition to his candidature from within the Government:

I have not been appointed to this honorable post in any haphazard manner. As a matter of fact, there was a very keen and spirited contest for it; and when I call to mind the character of the men opposed to me in the selection for this high office—old, experienced and trusted parliamentarians—I feel that the choice of me from such a distinguished group of competitors is a compliment of which I may pardonably be proud.¹²

His six-year spell in the Senate Presidency capped a lengthy parliamentary career and afforded him the satisfaction which accompanied this belated recognition. However, as Lynch himself acknowledged in 1932, Australia was

⁹ Martyn Forrest and Gordon Reid, *Australia's Commonwealth Parliament* (Melbourne, 1989), p.43. The other three candidates were Senator Payne (UAP, Tasmania), Senator Crawford (UAP, Queensland) and Senator Plain (UAP, Victoria).

¹⁰ However, Tom Givens had previously served a thirteen year term (1913-26).

¹¹ This subject will be examined later in this chapter.

¹² *CPD*, Vol.147, p.4 (23 September 1935).

facing troubled times as it entered the depths of the Great Depression.¹³ As a consequence of government economies enacted in 1931, he inherited a sharp reduction in presidential salary.¹⁴

Financial sacrifices notwithstanding, there were other compensations in Lynch's life. Nine months after assuming the Presidency, he re-married; to his secretary, Miss Mary Brown of Narrogin (a large country town in the south-west of Western Australia). This in turn afforded him the comfort and support of a wifely chaperone during the rest of his term as Senate President, and companionship during his subsequent years in retirement.¹⁵

Despite the blessings of re-marriage late in life, this period was not altogether free of troubles. The farm at Three Springs, which like other wheatgrowing properties suffered badly during the Depression, was always a major concern. In March 1934 he wrote to his close friend and [former] parliamentary colleague, Sir Josiah Symon: "[F]ollowing upon the tar accident we had a big bush fire in our neighbourhood that swept the countryside and left me one of the severest sufferers."¹⁶ Bouts of illness during Lynch's second term of office led to prolonged absences from the Parliament in 1936 and 1937.

Lynch's term as President afforded him an even greater opportunity to indulge himself as a loyal imperialist. In 1934, for example, along with the Speaker of the House of Representatives, he had personal responsibility for welcoming and

¹³ *Ibid*, Vol.135, p.12 (31 August 1932).

¹⁴ On one occasion Lynch observed that he was receiving the same remuneration as that paid to the occupant of the chair thirty-two years previously [*Ibid*, Vol.140, p.2638 (27 June 1933)].

¹⁵ Mary Brown was the daughter of Michael Brown, pastoralist and "king of Narrogin". When Lynch married at St.Matthew's Roman Catholic Church, Narrogin on 1 May 1933, he was almost 66 years of age and eighteen years his wife's senior. His re-marriage took place less than two years after the death of his first wife Annie on 20 May 1931.

¹⁶ NLA 1736/1/5620 Symon Papers. Letter from Lynch to Symon (2 March 1934).

entertaining the Duke of Gloucester at Parliament House.¹⁷ He suffered the disappointment, however, of having through ill-health¹⁸ to forego a trip to London in 1936 as one of a parliamentary delegation to the coronation of Edward VIII. He thus missed his big opportunity to re-visit the imperial capital, and possibly Ireland too. That chance never came again.

Pinner Report

While neither radical nor innovative, Lynch took seriously his role as protector of Parliament against the Executive and other outside agencies. This had special relevance when, less than a year after assuming office, he was obliged to deal with the implications of the Pinner Report. The origins of the report lay in the Premiers' Plan of 1931 and subsequent measures taken by government to effect economies in most areas of public expenditure. The Public Service commissioner, J.T. Pinner, was asked by the then presiding officers to examine the five departments of Parliament and to report on ways in which combined expenditure could be reduced.¹⁹ When Pinner presented his report in June 1933, Lynch "felt constrained to justify" the initiative of his predecessor (Kingsmill) and the Speaker in permitting "an outside body to enquire into the exercise of parliament". Although acknowledging this to be "dangerous and unprecedented", he conceded that he would have acted as Kingsmill did.²⁰

Despite his past reputation for frugality and fiscal rectitude, Lynch was

¹⁷ NLA 451/1 (Watson Papers).

¹⁸ In May 1936, Lynch was taken ill in the Parliament and conveyed to the Canberra Community Hospital where he was operated upon [*Sydney Morning Herald* (11 May 1936)].

¹⁹ Gavin Souter, *Acts of Parliament: A Narrative History of Australia's Federal Legislature* (Melbourne, 1988), p.29. Souter observed that "this was an unprecedented concession to the executive".

²⁰ *CPD*, Vol.140, p.2572 (23 June 1933).

sufficiently protective of the interests of Parliament to reject any of Pinner's recommendations which might have severely inconvenienced the work of members; for example, reductions in the number of Senate and House staff.²¹ Upon his elevation to the Presidency, he had acquired *ex officio* membership of the House, Library and Standing Orders Committees, so he was well placed to judge the potential damage inflicted by excessive rationalisation.²²

Lynch also assumed the role of defender of the Parliament against attacks from what he called "the self-appointed guardians of the press" who had never been elected to public office.²³ Some press coverage of the Pinner Report had given him grave cause for concern²⁴ and he was harsh in general with those "pharisaical critics" who effectively undermined parliament from their "cosy armchairs".²⁵ He reminded senators:

Throughout the world today those institutions are on their trial, and are in danger of abolition; and any man who deliberately lowers politicians and other public men in the eyes of the people is, wittingly or unwittingly, paving the way for the destruction of the most glorious system of social control that the mind of man has yet conceived.²⁶

Political Concerns

During Lynch's tenure in the Presidency, his role as chair, demanding as it did detachment and impartiality, restricted severely his participation in debates. Nevertheless, as an ordinary senator he was able to make contributions during the committee stages of debate, and did so on about a dozen occasions (mainly during

²¹ *Ibid*, p.2573

²² For a fuller consideration of Lynch's reaction to the Pinner report and his role in its effective rejection by Parliament, see Forrest and Reid, *op.cit.* (1989), pp.413-4.

²³ *CPD*, Vol.142, pp.4317-8 (9 November 1933).

²⁴ *Ibid*, Vol.140, p.2594 (23 June 1933).

²⁵ *Ibid*, p.2637 (27 June 1933).

²⁶ *Ibid*.

his first term in office). In this way he was able to pursue his major political preoccupations despite the encumbrances of office.

His position as president notwithstanding, Lynch continued to see himself as a parliamentary spokesman for the rural community. He resolutely defended the interests of primary producers in general, and wheatgrowers in particular, many of whom were experiencing grave difficulties in the face of the Great Depression. He lent his support to legislation which sought to provide debt relief for struggling growers²⁷ and on three occasions supported amendments moved by his fellow Western Australian, Senator E.B. Johnston (Country Party).²⁸ He repeated on several occasions his by now all-too-familiar call for a lessening of the burden resulting from high tariff levels.²⁹

He was at pains to emphasise that farmers were not in it for the fun; they had to make a profit. Hard work and the spirit of enterprise deserved to be rewarded.³⁰ Lynch may have had himself as much as other wheatgrowers in mind: the years 1932-35, at least, were something of a struggle for him at Three Springs. In November 1937, he concluded a letter to Prime Minister Lyons:

This farming business has been a great anxiety to me as I planned extensively for a heavy production just as prices fell and interest and working costs rose to peak levels.

²⁷ *Ibid*, Vol.137, pp.3421-22 (1 December 1932).

²⁸ *Ibid*, Vol.143, p.5995 (7 December 1933); Vol.145, pp.1190 (13 December 1934); Vol.146, p.1013 (9 April 1935). These amendments proposed that relief go directly to farmers rather than their creditors.

²⁹ He specifically argued for a reduction on tariffs on spray-pump irons used by fruitgrowers and on galvanised iron [*CPD*, Vol.142, p.4586 (9 November 1933) and Vol.146, p.921 (8 April 1935)]. See Chapter Seven for a discussion of his increasingly anti-protectionist stance already evident by the 1920s.

³⁰ *CPD*, Vol.143, p.5995.

I presented the authentic records of my losses to you, Sir, at the Wheat Growers Conference in your office some three years ago [1934].³¹

The security of Australia remained a major concern of Lynch's and prompted his intervention during the debate on the Appropriation Bill (1933-34).³² As far as the threat of war was concerned, it was Asia rather than Europe which seemed to preoccupy him. Although Hitler had come to power barely seven months earlier, he mentioned neither Germany nor Italy. He was more concerned with the threat posed by Japan, which had recently built its own warship funded by public subscription. Australia with its open spaces offered a huge attraction to its northern neighbours, he observed, and population pressures had been the cause of most wars.³³ If other countries were taking measures to defend themselves, then so should Australia, Lynch argued. He even advocated the re-introduction of compulsory military training, insisting that, if Russia had it, then so should Australia with so many more liberties to defend.³⁴

An almost complete absence of personal papers prohibits a detailed account of his subsequent views. Given his perceptions of the Japanese threat, he would presumably have supported Curtin's decision to take on Churchill and insist that Australia's priority had to be the war in the Pacific. And, given his early support

³¹ NAA CP 450/7/16. Lynch to Lyons (27 November 1937). These paragraphs formed part of a postscript to his application for a position on the Interstate Commission. A couple of weeks earlier, Lynch had concluded a brief telegram to Menzies (then Attorney-General): "EXCEPT FOR WINDFALL [,] SINCE 1932 HAVE HAD A ROUGH SPIN ABOUT WHICH MR. HUGHES CAN TELL YOU EVERYTHING." [NAA CP 40/7. Lynch to Menzies (11 November 1937)].

³² *CPD*, Vol.143, pp.5602-3 (7 December 1933). Senator Rae had moved that there be no increase in defence expenditure and Senator Dunn had moved formally for a one pound reduction. It was probably these motions which prompted Lynch's intervention.

³³ *Ibid.* See also discussion in Chapter Ten.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.5603. He was replying to Senator Rae who had argued against compulsory military training. Lynch also criticised Rae for his association with "the pan-Pacific organisation that has very little respect for our White Australia policy".

for an American alliance,³⁵ he would presumably have supported his former arch-rival's initiative in that direction.

During his second term in the Presidency, Lynch's contribution to Senate debate was confined primarily to three pieces of legislation: the Crimes Bill (1935), the Interstate Commission Bills (1937 and 1938) and the Pensions and Health Insurance Bill (1938). His stance on the Crimes Bill epitomised his status as an elderly right-wing conservative defender of law and order. More than any other measure, it symbolised the yawning gap which now existed between him and the Labor Party. He earnestly supported the provisions in the Bill which would compel people to supply any information they might have regarding unlawful associations, which he defined as those specially created for the purpose of "upsetting the existing social order" and whose object was to "create revolution". He mentioned "a communist organisation" by way of example, and declared such organisations had to be attacked at the root.³⁶ Unlike Lynch, the Leader of the Labor opposition, Senator Collings, chose to ask about the application of such measures to Eric Campbell and the New Guard, and to "fascist organisations" of the kind led by Moseley, Hitler and Mussolini.³⁷

Parliamentary Farewell

Although ostensibly addressing the National Health and Pensions Bill, Lynch's speech of 23 June 1938 (exactly a week before the expiry of his Presidency) was in fact a lengthy discourse traversing a wide range of topics.³⁸ It was delivered to

³⁵ In July 1915. See Chapter Ten.

³⁶ *CPD*, Vol.148, pp.1915-6 (27 November 1935). Lynch had always been a strong supporter of such tough measures ever since, as a Government minister, he had introduced the original Unlawful Associations Bill in December 1916.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p.1916.

³⁸ *Ibid*, Vol.156, pp.2582-9.

the Senate in full sitting and, in order to do this, Lynch took the rare and unusual step of disrobing and speaking from beside the presidential chair. Apart from a short valedictory speech on 30 June, it was his last major parliamentary address and he obviously had certain important things to say.

This marathon speech of 23 June can be taken to represent Lynch's farewell *as a senator*.³⁹ Here we hear Lynch the partisan politician—critical, polemical and, as always, brutally frank. Spoken truths prevail over kindly platitudes. Painstakingly prepared, the speech had the typical sprinkling of references, quotations and aphorisms.⁴⁰ It was vintage Lynch. By contrast, his valedictory speech of 30 June can be taken to represent his farewell *as President*.⁴¹ Here we hear Lynch the elder statesman. He stresses unity and harmony rather than division and discord. While still his irascible self, his tone is discernibly muted; he is more philosophical, more beneficent, more magnanimous.

The landmark National Health and Pensions Bill of 1938 was a major initiative of the Lyons Government. It provided for the introduction of a contributory insurance scheme based upon three sources of revenue: the insured person, the employer and the government. In his speech of 23 June, Lynch lauded the proposed scheme as the most advanced social legislation in Australia for 75 years.⁴² He used the title of the Bill to discuss Australia's future and how it could generate the income to sustain high levels of social welfare. He expressed extreme disquiet regarding population and the declining birth-rate. Ever the old-fashioned

³⁹ Along with his various contributions during the committee stages of debate over the following week. He addressed the chamber on three separate days: 24, 25 and 28 June.

⁴⁰ For example: "There is an old Roman saying that no man is a just judge in his own cause"; "The country is on the road to perdition and ruin"; "The man on the land pays all the taxes" and (on 25 June): "Fair play is bonny play"; "Even the devil must be given his due".

⁴¹ Along with his short speech immediately prior to the Christmas adjournment of 1937 [*CPD*, Vol. 155, p.522 (9 December 1937)].

⁴² *Ibid*, Vol.156, p.2585 (23 June 1938).

Irish Catholic patriarch, he solemnly chided the young women of Australia for not doing their duty:

If Australian women of today were like their mothers, and not merely spurious imitations of them, we should have a population today of about 11,000,000. The “he-maids” of society who encourage the devilish practice of birth-control are as bad as those barren fig trees of women who live only for pleasure and selfish indulgence.⁴³

Extolling the virtues of thrift, Lynch offered the following *non sequitur*:

We should profit by the example of the honey bee and store up in the days of plenty enough to tide us over the days of scarcity. It has been said that it is impossible to study the lives and habits of the bees without becoming a socialist.⁴⁴

Regardless of any residual sympathy for socialism, the overall thrust of Lynch’s remarks favoured the anti-socialist side. He warned that men with capital should not be treated as the enemy; employers were fellow citizens and should be treated as such. Exploitation of the kind that prevailed 25-30 years previously no longer existed. He defended insurance companies, arguing that rather than “grinding down the poor” they were performing useful services and had done much for primary producers such as himself.⁴⁵

Lynch once again bemoaned the burden that extra taxation and excessive wage levels placed upon primary producers:

The cold blasts of competition blow upon them from all points of the compass. I have felt them. I love Australia; for me it is the one country in the world; but I am not so patriotic as to allow myself to accept an unfair burden which other people do not share.⁴⁶

He was patriotic but his patriotism had its limits.

Something of his own self-image is revealed in this defence of his own record as an employer: “I have treated the men who worked for me well, for the simple

⁴³ *Ibid*, p.2583.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p.2585.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p.2672 (25 June 1938).

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p.2588.

reason that I myself was a worker in this country for many years".⁴⁷ Lynch, however, wished to transcend such sources of tension and conflict: he wanted employers and employees to work together harmoniously. He even went so far as to extol the virtues of the medieval craft guilds as models.⁴⁸ To his mind, differences of opinion within the community should not be equated with differences between good and evil; between saints and devils. In order to advance, Australians needed "more goodwill and mutual regard for each other".⁴⁹

Neither the retiring senator nor his ideas received much praise from the Labor benches. Some senators could not share Lynch's ready acceptance of prevailing economic relationships. Senator Brown, for example, was severe in his dismissal of Lynch's notion of "equality". In Brown's view, the economic power of employers and employees could not be equated; nor could the dictates of prices and wages. Moreover, he insisted, the community was divided into sections with competing interests.⁵⁰ This statement clearly underlined the fundamental difference between a class conflict-based model of society and Lynch's consensus model.

The themes of social harmony, unity of purpose and transcendence of party politics are even more evident in Lynch's speech at the 1937 Christmas adjournment and in his valedictory speech some six months later. On the former occasion he bemoaned the lack of bipartisanship and goodwill in the Parliament,

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p.2587. He prefaced this with something of an under-exaggeration: "By the grace of the mortgagee, I work a small farm".

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, pp.2588-9. This was first time he had done so. In order to sustain his argument, he quoted from Lipson's *Economic History of England* and Robinson's *The Spirit of Association*.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p.2589.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p.2694-5. Lynch also drew a retort from Senator Collings that there could be no equality "between the lion and the lamb".

pleading for political tolerance and advocating good neighbourly relationships within communities and between countries.⁵¹

In his ten-minute valedictory speech,⁵² Lynch emphasised the enduring role of the Federal Parliament as “the grand custodian of the rights and liberties of the people”, declaring that the measures enacted since Federation had been for the greater good of the overwhelming majority of the masses. The “glorious privilege” of living in Australia had not been truly appreciated because people had not experienced the “miserable conditions” which pertained elsewhere. He waxed lyrical on the enormous debt which Australians owed their pioneering forebears and concluded by reminding his listeners of the sacred duty to pass on the “precious heritage” of those hard-won liberties and freedoms to future generations.⁵³ Gratitude for achievements hard-won transcended any discontent with outstanding injustices. He was a true conservative.

Supporter of Secession

Lynch’s final six-year term as senator was not free of controversy. His support for the Western Australian secession movement would appear to have conflicted with his role as President of the Senate. Nevertheless, as a Western Australian loyalist of long standing, he was an obvious candidate to be a secessionist.

Although a Federationist in his Goldfields days, his support for the new Federal system was somewhat less enthusiastic than that of many of his political colleagues.⁵⁴ Having entered the Senate in 1907, he was persistent in his

⁵¹ *Ibid*, Vol.155, p.522 (9 December 1937). He warned, however, that unless due importance was given to maintaining such friendships with other countries, “we must be prepared to fight”. Despite his conciliatory tone, he was as defence-conscious as ever.

⁵² *Ibid*, Vol.156, p.2957. It was good-humoured, self-deprecatory and almost wistful in tone.

⁵³ *Ibid*.

⁵⁴ See Chapter Three.

promotion of Western Australian interests, particularly in his advocacy of the Transcontinental Railway, a measure which he, like Forrest, saw as the *quid pro quo* for joining Federation. During the early years of the 1914-18 conflict, he had taken great pride in Western Australia's strong support for the war effort and, later, in its overwhelming votes for conscription in the two referenda.⁵⁵ He had resented the way in which the heavily-populated cities of the east had carried the anti-conscriptionist cause to victory—both within the labour movement and the nation as a whole. Throughout his parliamentary career he had exhibited a certain antipathy to the eastern states, especially Victoria. He believed that the more populous regions of the east received a much better deal from the Commonwealth than the rural regions of the outlying states. During the 1920s and early 1930s, he complained constantly of the disadvantage suffered by Western Australia as a primary producer state because of high tariff levels.

Discontent during the Depression years brought support for secession in Western Australia to a peak. Many Western Australians believed that their state was receiving an unfair deal from the Commonwealth Government.⁵⁶ At the state convention of the Western Australian Secession League in Perth in August 1931 a resolution was carried to re-form the organisation as the Dominion League. The League then proposed that the State Government conduct a referendum on the issue of secession. The title of the new organisation reflected the movement's dual

⁵⁵ See discussion in Chapter Six. "Why, we have the grit and brains of Australia in the West", declared Lynch at the Melbourne Conference of December 1916 [*Report of the Proceedings of the Special Commonwealth Conference of the Australian Labor Party* (Melbourne, 1917), p.10].

⁵⁶ For a fuller discussion of the background to these developments, see E.D. Watt, "Secession in Western Australia", *University Studies in Western Australian History* (Vol.3, No.2, 1958), pp.43-86.

goals: to have Western Australia secede from Federation; then to have Westminster grant it dominion status within the British Commonwealth.⁵⁷

The Labor opposition in Western Australia opposed secession. However, the governing Nationalist Party and its conservative supporters—including associated business interests—were divided on the issue. Leading opponents of secession formed themselves into the Federal League in order to resist the Dominion League.⁵⁸ Both sides were curious alliances containing strange bedfellows.

When, in April 1933, a referendum was eventually held, it resulted in an overwhelming vote for secession, despite the official opposition of the Labor Party and the divisions within the conservative ranks. There followed a delegation to Westminster bearing a petition on behalf of the people of Western Australia, which pleaded for the restoration of its dominion status. Needless to say, this was fiercely opposed by the Commonwealth Government and Westminster rejected the request.

With the rejection by Westminster and the gradual emergence of Western Australia from the worst effects of the Great Depression, the sting went out of the secession movement. The Dominion League remained active but began to peter out in the mid-1930s. Nevertheless, the League was still sufficiently active in 1937 for influential elements within the organisation to wage a vindictive “Put Pearce Last” campaign during the Federal election of that year, thus bringing about the defeat of the anti-secessionist George Pearce after some thirty-six years in the Parliament. The irony is that this campaign, in targetting Pearce, also helped

⁵⁷ WAA 609/431A/2. The convention also urged MLA's to withdraw support from the Mitchell Nationalist Government because of its refusal to hold a referendum.

⁵⁸ NLA 213/16 (Pearce Papers), file on the Western Australian secession movement.

bring about the defeat of his running mate, Senator Paddy Lynch, one of the best supporters the secessionists had.

After August 1932, Lynch was constrained by his position as President of the Senate from speaking out publicly on such controversial issues. While there is only limited documentary evidence of his active support for the campaign, it does exist nonetheless. His earliest recorded involvement was a public meeting organised by the executive committee of the Western Australian Secession League and held at the Midland Junction Town Hall on 16 October 1930. The speakers included Lynch and Henry Gregory MHR.⁵⁹ Over two years later, the Dominion League issued invitations to a private meeting to be held at the Palace Hotel, Perth on 17 January 1933. Among the invitees were Lynch (by then President of the Senate), Norbert Keenan MLA, Tom Ahern (a prominent Irish-born Perth businessman) and prominent Perth doctors, Connor, Quinlan and McWhae (later Lynch's personal physician). Many Perth business houses were also represented. A schedule of donations promised totalled a sum of over £225 and included a £2 donation from Senator Lynch.⁶⁰

In the lead-up to the referendum of 8 April, anxiety was reported in Commonwealth ministerial circles that the President of the Senate had been speaking openly in favour of secession. Since Lynch held such a highly responsible position, a delicate position was seen to have arisen.⁶¹ Lynch, however, reportedly denied any active part in the secession movement, acknowledging that this would have been inconsistent with his role as President of the Senate. He was, nevertheless, still of the firm conviction that Western

⁵⁹ WAA 609/431A/1.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Sydney Morning Herald* (8 March 1933), p.11.

Australia had not had a fair deal, and he would continue to speak out. A referendum, he insisted, was a valid means of testing public opinion; the disadvantage of one-third of the country (Western Australia) would otherwise be to the disadvantage of the whole in the long run.⁶²

Existing evidence—the private meeting at the Palace Hotel and his donation to the campaign fund—suggests that Lynch was less than frank in his disclosures and that he deliberately sought to downplay his involvement in the movement. He was not, however, involved in any of the public rallies during the closing weeks of the referendum campaign; to have done so would have severely compromised his position—all the more so since the Dominion League itself had already protested about the Commonwealth Government’s active participation on the anti-secessionist side.⁶³ Lynch found himself in opposition to a number of prominent individuals on his own side of politics. These included long-time Western Australian colleague Senator Sir George Pearce, Prime Minister Joe Lyons, his old colleague Billy Hughes, and close friends Sir John Latham and (ex-senator) Sir Josiah Symon.⁶⁴

At least one Western Australian Federal parliamentary colleague expressed concern at Lynch’s apparent conflict of interest. In a letter marked “Personal” and dated 8 March 1933, Country Party senator William Carroll wrote to Pearce:

We all know that each and every one is entitled to his or her views on this question but having regard to the official position he holds I think that Paddy Lynch is mad to take an active part in the campaign, if he could not restrain his [?] desire to get into a fight whenever he sees one, he should have resigned. Possibly he may be able to reconcile the two positions but I am sure that I could not ...⁶⁵

⁶² *Ibid*, (10 March 1933), p.8.

⁶³ *Ibid*, (8 March 1933), p.11

⁶⁴ Even Symon, a South Australian and very close personal friend, had condemned the “fetish of secession” [*Sydney Morning Herald*, (8 March 1933), p.11].

⁶⁵ NLA 213/16/302 (Pearce Papers). Letter Carroll to Pearce (8 March 1933).

Three days later J.J. Simons penned a most revealing letter, also marked “Personal”, to Pearce, in which he stated:

With few exceptions those who take part in public movements, who are either born in Ireland, or are of Irish extraction, are secessionists, notably, Norbert Keenan, Senator Lynch, M. Lavan, Arthur Haynes, [and] James Brennan [,] and the younger school is led by Hartrey (a son of the single tax agitator) and Dudley ... Hostile interjections are usually in an Irish or “pommy” accent at anti-Secessionist meetings.⁶⁶

These letters notwithstanding, Lynch also had his defenders. On 8 March (the same date as Carroll’s letter to Pearce), Carroll’s Western Australian party colleague, Senator E.B. Johnston, was reported as objecting to attempts to silence Lynch:

All know that Senator Lynch has been a consistent secessionist for many years past ... and while he is a representative of the people of Western Australia, I, for one, resent the attitude of those people in Canberra who are endeavouring to gag him.

It shows the weakness of the anti-secessionists when they endeavour to silence first Sir Hal Colebatch, and now Senator Lynch, from giving their views, born of experience in the federal arena, in favour of secession.⁶⁷

The Perth *Sunday Times*, of which Dominion League officer James McCallum Smith MLA was proprietor, published a photo of Lynch in full presidential regalia with the caption: “President of the Federal Senate, whose patriotic Western Australian-first attitude on the question of Secession is causing unwarranted attacks upon him by other members of the Commonwealth Parliament and leaders of opinion in the Eastern States”.⁶⁸ Elsewhere, it observed: “The same Paddy

⁶⁶ NLA 213/16/322 Pearce Papers. Letter Simons to Pearce (11 March 1933). The letter is on headed notepaper of the Perth weekend newspaper *The Mirror*, of which Simons was then proprietor.

⁶⁷ *Herald* (Melbourne), 8 March 1933. As we have already noted, during the 1920s and 1930s Johnston and Lynch were close political allies in the Senate, particularly in defending Western Australian primary producer interests. The fact that Country Party colleagues Carroll and Johnston were on opposite sides on the secession question merely reflects the (mes)alliances which the issue threw up.

⁶⁸ *Sunday Times* (Perth), 12 March 1933.

Lynch is quite capable of defending himself, and when he gets across to Canberra it will be a case of ‘see how they run’ ...”.⁶⁹

At the end of the day, his stance as a secessionist was just one more expression of Lynch’s role as spokesman for conservative Western Australian rural interests. Significantly, the secessionist vote in 1933 was strongest in wheatgrowing areas, where low prices had been aggravated by the federal tariff.⁷⁰ Although this stance furthered his popularity in his home state, it made him much less popular in Canberra. Nevertheless, as a political maverick, he was also a survivor; after all, he did retain the Senate Presidency for a second term.

Defeat and Retirement

Even had Lynch desired a third term (which seems unlikely), such ambition would have been thwarted by his defeat—along with the other two retiring Government senators for Western Australia—at the November 1937 elections. This brought to an end his long parliamentary career which spanned over thirty years. In a letter to Prime Minister Lyons soon afterwards, Lynch admitted: “My late election defeat was a sore experience to me”.⁷¹ He was also reported as saying that the electors possessed “the brains of a sandfly”.⁷²

There were several reasons for the defeat of Lynch and Pearce in 1937. Nationally, there was an unexpectedly strong swing to Labor which saw most re-contesting Government senators defeated. Western Australia followed that trend.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Watt, *op.cit.*, (1958), p.50.

⁷¹ NAA CP 450/7. Letter Lynch to Lyons (27 November 1937).

⁷² NLA 1927/949 (Pearce Papers). Quoted in letter by W.G. Thompson to Pearce (11 January 1938). W.G. Thompson, a defeated Nationalist senator in Queensland, was writing to Pearce to commiserate with him on his defeat.

Locally, there were other factors at play. First, the third Government candidate, Senator Arthur Marwick (Country Party) had divided his how-to-vote cards; some listed Marwick (1) instead of Pearce (1).⁷³ Secondly, there had been strains within the Nationalist camp in the seat of Perth, the effects of which spilt over into the campaign statewide.⁷⁴

Heydon, however, maintains that neither of these factors were crucial: he suggests, rather, that it was the “Put Pearce Last” campaign which ultimately defeated him and his two running mates. The Wheatgrowers Union and the Dominion League, seemingly independently of one another (although Heydon suggests a hint of collusion), took out advertisements urging electors to “Put Pearce Last”.⁷⁵

One effect of the campaign was to encourage a direct vote for Labor; another was to split the anti-Labor vote and to encourage cross-voting. Many Marwick and Lynch voters—approximately one in seven, Heydon estimates—put Pearce last. Heydon analyses the various interpretations as to the effect that the “Put Pearce Last” campaign could have had on the results. In doing so, he takes into account the vagaries of the Senate voting system and—in arriving at results—the almost infinite number of permutations it can produce.⁷⁶

Significantly, Lynch polled a higher proportion of first preferences than in either 1925 or 1931, but still failed to be elected. Even more significantly, however, over 30% of Lynch’s preferences went to Labor; 12,088 votes compared

⁷³ Peter Heydon, *Quiet Decision: A Study of George Foster Pearce* (Melbourne, 1965), p.200. Marwick had replaced Carroll as a Country Party senator for Western Australia in 1936.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p.201. There were two Nationalist endorsements for Perth: the sitting member, W.M. Nairn, and Pearce’s good friend, J.J. Simons.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*. T.H. Powell and H.K. Watson, respectively, authorised the advertisements. Heydon hints strongly that Senator Johnston may also have been behind the campaign.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, pp.200-3.

to 25, 636 to Pearce. This represented an enormous leakage of preferences. By contrast, less than 4% of ALP candidate Clothier's preferences went to the Government parties. Heydon concludes that the preference leakage of Lynch (approx. 30%) and Marwick (approx. 13%) contributed to the Government's bad performance in Western Australia, but that they would probably have lost anyway.⁷⁷

We can only speculate as to the reasons for the heavy leakage to Labor of Lynch's preferences: discontent with Pearce may have led many secessionists and wheatgrowers who were otherwise Government supporters to direct their preferences to Labor. Lynch may also have drawn a residual Labor vote from his Goldfields days, in which case most of these preferences could be expected to flow on to Labor (rather than Government) candidates.

Moreover, it may be both inaccurate and unfair to blame Lynch for the defeat of the Government candidates; at least one other interpretation has been put forward regarding the leakage of his preferences. Writing to Pearce soon after the results were announced, Western Australian Nationalist MLC, J.C. Seddon, suggested that a large proportion of Lynch's preferences which had gone to Labor were in fact votes that had flowed to Lynch first by way of *preferences* from Marwick and other candidates. He concluded: "I think that the reference by the Press on merely superficial data was not a fair one to Paddy."⁷⁸ Pearce, in any event, agreed with Seddon's conclusions.⁷⁹ It would seem that he bore Lynch no grudge on that score.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p.203.

⁷⁸ NLA 1927/897 (Pearce Papers). Seddon to Pearce (14 November 1937).

⁷⁹ NLA 1927/18. Pearce to Seddon (19 November 1937).

The Nearly Man

In November 1937, with seven months of his Senate term still to run, Lynch clearly saw the electoral writing on the wall and was already angling for an extra-parliamentary post. A fortnight before the elections, he signalled his intentions in a telegram to Menzies: “IF DEFEATED AT ELECTION WHICH SEEMS CERTAIN WILL APPLY YOUR GOVERNMENT FOR APPOINTMENT INTERSTATE COMMISSION ...”.⁸⁰ The Lyons Government had moved earlier that same year to reconstitute the Interstate Commission.⁸¹

A formal letter of application to Prime Minister Lyons followed promptly sixteen days later, immediately after his election defeat. Lynch recounted a series of political misfortunes and near-misses which he seemed to believe might count as qualifications for the job: his selection in 1913 as a nominee by the Fisher Labor Government for the position of senior member on the original commission (an appointment aborted by the subsequent defeat of the Fisher Government),⁸² his unsuccessful nomination for the Administratorship of the Northern Territory⁸³ and his unsuccessful nomination in 1929 for the Senate Presidency when, as with the Interstate Commission in 1913, he was defeated for the position by one vote. He also recalled his two brief spells in ministerial office, noting that both appointments had been prematurely terminated by “political party necessities”. He assured Lyons that though he had turned 70 years the previous May, his medical adviser, Colonel McWhae, had stated that he had the “heart, constitution and nerve system of a man of 50 years”. Lynch concluded by promoting himself as a

⁸⁰ NAA CP 450/7/1C. Telegram Lynch to Menzies (11 November 1937).

⁸¹ Lynch had participated in the relevant Senate debate [*CPD*, Vol.153, pp.439-42 (25 June 1937)].

⁸² See Chapter Five.

⁸³ See Chapter Six.

representative of Western Australia, something that could be borne in mind in the event that the government considered direct representation of the three small states an essential requirement of the Commission.⁸⁴

On 3 December, Lynch forwarded a copy of his formal application to Menzies.⁸⁵ His frequent correspondence with Menzies at this time reflects at least in part Menzies' influential position as Attorney-General and his instrumental role in the government's reconstitution of the Commission. It suggests, furthermore, that a friendship may have developed between the elderly President of the Senate and the budding young politician.⁸⁶ In any event, Lynch was clearly angling for Menzies' support.

There is more than a hint of special pleading in Lynch's letter to Lyons. It is as if he regarded a seat on the Interstate Commission as some kind of consolation prize, not least for his near miss in 1913. That element of special pleading is further evident in his emphasis upon his representation of one of the "small states". The letter reveals much about the personal outlook and self-image of the recently defeated and soon-to-be-retired septuagenarian politician. Lynch seemed to see himself as the "Nearly Man",⁸⁷ someone whom bad luck and ill-fate had conspired against, who had never quite made the grade, who had never been given his full due.

⁸⁴ NAA CP 450/7/16. Letter Lynch to Lyons (27 November 1937). It is surprising that Lynch did not also mention his experience with the Fruit Industry Commission (1913-14) and the River Murray Commission (1916-17).

⁸⁵ NAA CP 450/7/ Letter Lynch to Menzies (3 December 1937).

⁸⁶ During his final years, Lynch (who died in 1944) reportedly regarded Menzies as a promising young politician who would go far. Information from Carmel Muir, grand-daughter of Lynch, Perth, 3 November 2000.

⁸⁷ *The Nearly Man* was the title of a short BBC television series broadcast on the ABC in late 1976. It portrayed the career and personal life of a fictional British Labour politician who, although ambitious, never quite made the grade politically. As with Lynch, circumstances always conspired against him.

It may be a sign of his desperation—or hard neck—that Lynch later wrote to the Australian Workers Union (WA) seeking support for his nomination to the Commission, this after some twenty years of bitter estrangement from the labour movement:

[T]hat in order to better balance that commission the same Government might include a representative of Labor, and lastly, that, if this suggestion was unacceptable to the government that it might examine my credentials for the position and see if I had the necessary qualifications, in view of the fact that I was the chosen nominee of the Fisher Labor Government for this same position.⁸⁸

Not surprisingly, Lynch received short shrift from his erstwhile Labor comrades.

Vic Johnson, the Western Australian branch secretary of the AWU, replied:

I have to advise that when your correspondence was read, a resolution was passed “That the next business be proceeded with” which was unanimously agreed to.⁸⁹

Lynch was apparently aggrieved by this response—or feigned as much. He wrote to Menzies, quoting Johnson’s reply, before observing indignantly :

It would appear that twenty years is not enough to “bury the hatchet” for the people of an industry upon whose behalf, amongst other things, I piloted two resolutions through the Senate requesting the Government of the day to come to the industry’s rescue, which was ultimately done in the Gold Bonus Act.⁹⁰

Doubtless, this was the kind of “black ingratitude” he so resented. This correspondence also suggests a genuine if naïve belief on Lynch’s part that others would share his desire to transcend political and sectional loyalties in order to promote the interests of Western Australia.

Lynch failed in his ambition to gain a seat on the Commission. There is no indication as to why the government rejected his application, although age may

⁸⁸ NAA CP 450/7. Letter Lynch to Menzies (21 February 1938) reporting his approach to the AWU.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* Letter from Johnson, Perth Trades Hall, to Lynch (7 January 1938) quoted in Lynch letter to Menzies (21 February 1938).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* He also quoted another negative response, from the Pastoralists Association, as representative of the replies he had received from Western Australia.

well have been a factor. His frank admissions to Menzies regarding his failed attempts at soliciting support would not have aided his cause.

Lynch made one final attempt to re-enter public life via the March 1939 election for the Legislative Assembly seat of Geraldton. He ran as the Nationalist candidate in a three-horse race with the eventual winner, J.C. Willcock (then Labor Premier since 1937) and A.C. Curlewis (Country Party), but polled a derisory 8% of the vote. Willcock and Curlewis had already established themselves as the front-runners when they were the only two candidates in the previous election the preceding year. As the third candidate intruding into a well-established two-horse race, Lynch was effectively squeezed out. His long-established reputation as a senator, and as a farmer in nearby Three Springs, counted for little. It is not clear why Lynch accepted the candidacy. At his age, it could hardly have been driving political ambition. More likely he was drafted by the local party to fly the Nationalist flag.

From 1 July 1938, Lynch was officially in retirement. With the exception of the documents in the National Archives relating to an ongoing dispute between Lynch and the Commonwealth authorities regarding the conditions of his Life Railway Pass,⁹¹ the only surviving records from his period of retirement are his will and the press coverage of his funeral.

A successful income from farming, together with his parliamentary pension, allowed Lynch and his second wife Mary to spend their remaining years on the property at Three Springs in relative comfort. By this time there was a cluster of children, nephews, nieces, grandchildren, grandnephews and grandnieces either living in the general vicinity or visiting periodically. A couple of the

⁹¹ NAA A432/85/38/984.

grandchildren (then very young) recall their elderly grandfather—always respectfully referred to as “Senator”—as a somewhat aloof figure, a little forbidding, but solicitous in a grandfatherly kind of way.⁹² Something of an old-fashioned Irish Catholic farmer patriarch in his attitude towards the role of women and family, he believed in frugality and discipline and insisted upon a certain deference and respect.

Some years previously, Lynch’s two daughters, Bidy and Molly, had married the two Clune brothers, Jerry and Jim, from the large pioneering family which had farmed at New Norcia since the mid-19th century. With the cooperation of their father-in-law, the Clune brothers, around 1940, took up farm properties in the Three Springs area and lived there with their wives and children. Most of the extended Lynch family had already gone into farming.⁹³ As noted in the previous chapter, in the 1920s Senator Lynch helped set up a number of his young nephews on farms—in places as far away as Hyden in the eastern wheatbelt.

Another nephew, John, declined his uncle’s offer of farming in favour of goldmining; he enlisted for the war but died as a result of the Sandakan death march in 1945. In 1941, John wrote on several occasions from Malaya to his brother Peter, then farming at Hyden; his letters reflected on the war-time

⁹² Memories of Bernard Clune, Geraldton, October 1999, and Loretta Pell (nee Clune), Perth, April 2002.

⁹³ Senator Paddy Lynch (and brother Phil) succeeded in establishing a farming dynasty. Lynch and Clune descendants are still farming in the Three Springs/Mullewa/Geraldton area to this day, as are descendants of Lynch’s nephews around Hyden.

situation in general and on farming conditions in particular. One such letter reveals that both brothers rejoiced at John Curtin's ascension into office in 1941.⁹⁴

Doubtless, their uncle did not. It is apparent that not all the nephews shared his anti-Labor politics at this time.⁹⁵

As for his own views on current affairs after 1939, these remain obscure due to a lack of surviving documentation. What was his estimation of the young Menzies as Prime Minister? Of Curtin's move to introduce conscription in 1943? Regrettably, we do not know.

Lynch's Estate

During his last years Lynch spent a certain amount of time in Perth and in other parts of the south-west (his wife's people were still in Narrogin). Early in January 1944, having been taken ill at Albany, he was transferred to St Anne's Nursing home, Mt. Lawley, run by the Sisters of Mercy. He passed away there a couple of weeks later, on 15 January, aged 76 years and eight months. His death certificate gave arteriosclerosis and cerebral haemorrhage as the causes of death. He was survived by his wife, Mary, along with his son and two daughters by his first marriage.

The day after Lynch's death, Prime Minister John Curtin on behalf of the

⁹⁴ Letter from John Lynch (Malaya) to Peter Lynch (Hyden), 10 October 1941. Original in possession of John Lynch (son of Peter), Cottesloe, Western Australia.

John Senr. wrote *inter alia*: "Well, Peter, I see you have got your heart's desire[,] a Labour government in Australia, lets hope they make a better job of running things than did Menzies crowd [,] any change must surely be for the better, it's a pity in didn't happen before Page got away ...".

⁹⁵ Another nephew, Paddy Lynch Jnr, who farmed at Mingenew, was election agent in 1943 for Rick Newton, the victorious Labor candidate for the northern wheatbelt seat of Greenough. Newton subsequently went missing in action over Germany (presumed dead) and never actually took up his seat. Information from Lynch's daughter, Patti Campbell, Perth, 12 July 2002. Senator Lynch's son-in-law, Jim Clune, was the unsuccessful Labor candidate for Greenough in 1952.

Commonwealth Government telegraphed Mrs. Lynch to sympathise with her on the loss of her husband “so well known in Canberra as a member of the Commonwealth legislature”.⁹⁶ Two days later, Lynch was given a State funeral in Perth and laid to rest in the Catholic section of Karrakatta Cemetery with his first wife Annie. The funeral arrangements were made by Harrie Seward MLA, a brother-in-law of the widow.⁹⁷

Ex-Senator Patrick Joseph Lynch died a relatively wealthy man: the gross value of his estate for probate was £67,077 and the net value £26,197.⁹⁸ The provisions of his will reflected his closeness to the institutional Church in Western Australia, and underlined his status as a devoted lay Catholic. His affairs were handled by the prominent Catholic law firm, Lavan, Walsh and Lavan.⁹⁹ The final version of Lynch’s will (as amended by codicil on 21 December 1942)¹⁰⁰ provided as follows:

- £2000 to the Catholic Archbishop of Perth “to be applied by him for the purpose of assisting worthy children of parents of small means to a spiritual calling where they can better bring souls to God both by word and example”. (The sum was not to be made available until after his wife’s death).

⁹⁶ NAA (WA office) 700/1/497.

⁹⁷ Harrie Seward (1884-1958) was a Catholic and married to Eva Brown, Mary Lynch’s sister. He was Country Party MLA for Pingelly (1933-50) and subsequently a senator (1951-58).

⁹⁸ Gross value approx. \$8 million (net value \$3 million) in today’s terms. Estimation by Lynch’s grandson, Paul Clune (a land economist), Perth, May 2002.

Coincidentally, an exact namesake of the senator—Patrick Joseph (Paddy) Lynch, also native of Co. Meath—died at Fremantle exactly six months later (July 1944) after being knocked off his bicycle. By contrast, the 52 year old lumper (a grand-uncle of the author) left an estate with a gross value of £536.

⁹⁹ One of these was John Lavan, son of one of the founders of the firm, later Judge Lavan and later again Sir John Lavan. Lavan and J.F. Walsh were both prominent members of the Catholic lay organisation, the Knights of the Southern Cross. Lynch’s patronage of this firm underlines his relationship with the tightly-knit Catholic establishment in Perth. See further discussion in Chapter Twelve.

¹⁰⁰ Copy of the will obtained from the office of the Probate Registrar for Western Australia. Probate payable was £2750/14s./3d. Unfortunately, access to the full file relating to Lynch’s will was denied. This file would have surrendered further valuable information regarding Lynch’s financial affairs.

- £100 to his nephew Fr. Michael Lynch for the purpose of saying Masses for the deceased and for his wife after her death.
- £100 to the Reverend Mother of the Dominican Convent, Three Springs for use as considered best on behalf of the Convent.
- The residue of the estate to be held by the Trustees (his wife and solicitor J.F. Walsh) in trust until such time as his wife died. Then the outstanding sum would be divided equally amongst his three children.¹⁰¹

Conclusion

Nothwithstanding the consolation prize of the Presidency of the Senate, Lynch's parliamentary career after 1932—indeed, arguably after 1916—has to be rated something of an anti-climax. He retired from politics confirmed as a staunch Imperialist, conservative representative of rural interests and committed defender of the existing social order. Viewed in retrospect, his career reveals Lynch as the “Nearly Man” plagued by bad luck, near misses and frustrated ambition. Certainly, he seemed doomed to remain always in the shadow of his fellow Western Australian, George Pearce. And he was never rewarded by the Empire for his loyalism.

Nevertheless, Lynch died in 1944 a relatively wealthy man; in many respects a prosperous and conservative Irish Catholic farmer. He died in a Catholic institution, was buried with a Catholic ceremony in a Catholic plot and, most significantly, bequeathed a substantial amount of money to the church. He had

¹⁰¹ Mary Lynch did not die until 21 August 1959. Therefore Lynch's children had to wait over fifteen years for a share of their father's estate; even then, there was considerable delay before the proceeds were finally distributed.

travelled some distance since his arrival in Australia as a young unskilled Irish labourer nearly sixty years previously.

PART TWO

CHAPTER NINE

LYNCH'S POLITICAL IDEOLOGY (1):

IRELAND AND THE EMPIRE

This and the following two chapters will consider the evolution of Lynch's political beliefs and attitudes and attempt to fit them into an all-embracing ideology. For the purposes of the discussion I will divide this examination into three parts: (1) Lynch's views on Ireland and the Empire [this chapter]; (2) Lynch's views on war, defence and conscription [Chapter Ten]; and (3) Lynch's views on trade unionism, the Labor Party and socialism [Chapter Eleven]. It will quickly become apparent that beliefs in one particular area helped determine beliefs in another. For example, his commitment to the Empire strongly influenced Lynch's attitude towards the 1914-18 War and the necessity for conscription, which in turn determined his placing of the national interest over sectional labour interests. Certain connecting threads run through Lynch's beliefs in all of these areas. They reflect basic assumptions about the world, the Empire, nation, class and the human condition. Most of this discussion will be based on Lynch's Senate speeches, although reference will also be made to other occasional public pronouncements.

This chapter will consider Lynch's commitment at once to both Ireland and to the Empire. It will examine some of the reasons for his apparent change of heart with regard to the Empire which led to his becoming a loyal imperialist. In so doing, it will also consider his public record on Irish issues (especially Home

Rule). Finally, he will be placed in a Western Australian context in order to see how his views may have been reinforced or challenged by other Irish-Australians.

Road to Damascus?

Throughout his political career Lynch proclaimed his loyalty both to Ireland and to the British Empire. On the face of it, this may seem to be a contradiction. It was never so for Lynch. Indeed, more than once he declared that “he was an empire man *because* he was an Irishman”.¹ He openly and publicly acknowledged on several occasions that since leaving Ireland as a very young man of eighteen years he had undergone a change of heart with regard to the Empire. While not exactly a “road to Damascus” experience—the change took place over a number of years—it did, nonetheless, constitute a significant turnaround in his attitude. On at least four separate occasions he used almost identical language to describe this transformation from seeing the Union Jack as a symbol of slavery to seeing it, instead, as a symbol of salvation. The first two occasions were speeches to the Senate in August 1919 and August 1920.²

His remarks on the third occasion can be taken as representative of his utterances. Addressing a Loyalty League demonstration in Perth on Empire Day, 24 May 1922, “as a pure-bred Irishman, whose pedigree went back to the misty realms of unrecorded things”, Lynch is reported as saying:

[I]n the days of [my] boyhood I had no special admiration either for the British Empire or its flag. [I] went abroad in the world. [I] sampled this form of government and that, and lived under one flag and then another. When I came to this country I realised that the same Union Jack, which in my boyhood I considered the symbol of servitude for me and mine, was the title of security for

¹ *CPD*, Vol. 80, p.1967 (3 October 1916), for example.

² *Ibid*, Vol. 89, p.11793 (21 August 1919); Vol.92, p.3203 (4 August 1920). The first speech is quoted in Chapter Seven.

me and mine in this glorious Commonwealth, which forms part of the British Empire.³

Later, in 1925, Lynch enlarged on this when addressing a meeting in Perth to form the Argonauts Club. The following is a section of his comments as reported, in indirect speech, by the Press:

What democrat could find fault with a political organisation that permitted a Labor government to hold office? Yet there were some who appeared dissatisfied with the Empire, although they had enjoyed the utmost freedom in the shelter of the flag—even the freedom to be disloyal ...⁴

It is apparent that Lynch attributed his change in attitude towards the British Empire to his sampling of other forms of government prior to his settling down in Australia. Nowhere has he clearly spelled out the precise reasons for this change of heart. He did, however, provide certain clues and what we already know about the earlier period in his life enables us to speculate further. There is more than a strong implication in some of his later statements that, after observing various countries and their systems of government during his travels, he had drawn the conclusion that the British Empire provided the best system that was on offer.

Lynch had lived in only four countries—Ireland, the USA, Fiji and Australia. Rather than speculating about the nature of these comparisons, it is more useful to consider his experience of the Empire during his seafaring days, an experience which was for him clearly a positive and affirming one. More particularly, it is important to remind ourselves of the source and nature of Lynch's employment and of the context in which he happened to spend seven early formative years of his life. Firstly, Lynch was employed by the AUSNL, a British-owned shipping

³ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 May 1922, p.9. The first part of the indented quotation has been altered from reported to direct speech by substituting the first for the third person.

⁴ WAA 948A/2 (Boas Papers). Undated report in an unnamed newspaper [1925]. The Argonauts Club was a pro-Empire organisation formed by Lionel Boas and a number of other prominent Perth businessmen for the purpose of fighting communist and other left-wing influences. Membership was open to all except "communists" and "criminals".

line. He owed his livelihood to this British shipping line whose extensive trade on the Australian east coast and in the South Pacific depended not only upon the existence of British colonies but also the protection afforded by the British Navy. Secondly, Lynch's subsequent employment by the British-owned CSR for a one-year stint on a Fijian sugar plantation likewise depended upon Fiji's status as a British colony. This experience, if only because it helped guarantee him a livelihood, would have further assimilated a young Irishman like Lynch into the dominant values of that imperial culture.

This did not mean that Lynch, any more than any other young Irishman, had to suppress his Irishness. It did mean, however, that he and other young Irishmen, Scotsmen, Welshmen and Englishmen were working and living in a situation which encouraged them to see themselves first and foremost as "Britishers". Especially within the colonial situation which pertained in Fiji, this would sharply distinguish them from the local peoples, whether native Fijians or immigrant Indian labourers. In such circumstances Irishness was easily subsumed under Britishness. Whether in Fiji or employed on the shipping lines, Lynch would have been mixing predominantly with other "Britishers" in circumstances in which they all depended upon the protection of the British Empire for their livelihood and security. Little wonder then that Lynch should absorb many of the values of an Empire which he saw as bestowing certain benefits upon himself and his fellow Irishmen.

When he later arrived on the Western Australian goldfields, Lynch was again mixing in the main with Britishers, from a variety of national and religious backgrounds. While Lynch did involve himself in some of the Irish organisations on the Goldfields, such as the United Irish League, he made it clear at the same time that in his view there was no place for sectarianism, or for the more militant

Irish nationalism pursued by some Irish stalwarts there. As a Boulder councillor, Lynch was forced to confront the issue of sectarianism head-on at an emergency meeting of the council on the morning of the proposed Loyal Orange parade in 1902. Addressing a motion to have the parade banned, Lynch was insistent that “religion was not at the root of the trouble”. Rather, “[I]t was more a racial feud than a religious difference [and] it was a pity that it had been imported into Australia”.⁵

While a devout Catholic, Lynch was always at pains to separate Catholicism from Irishness, and more particularly Catholicism from Irish nationalism. This went hand in hand with his rejection of sectarianism, an outlook no better exemplified than by remarks he made when addressing the Senate in 1919 on his own motion calling for self-government for Ireland. Lynch said, *inter alia*:

For quite a number of years an industrious effort has been made to represent Ireland as a nation which would persecute for religion’s sake. As one who has studied Irish history as much as the opportunity has served in my work-a-day life, I have come to the conclusion that the man who says that the Irish people would penalise or persecute for religion’s sake is either hopelessly ignorant of the facts of the immediate or remote past. Or deliberately blind to the teachings of the history of that country ... I have seen in Ireland dwellings of one room, and that room had to suffice for all purposes. Upon its walls there would sometimes be pictures. Pictures of whom? Pictures of the redeemer of mankind and his mother, Mary. What occupied the space between them? Pictures of the Protestant defenders and champions of Ireland—every one of them. Thus one would find side by side men like Grattan, Robert Emmett, Parnell and others.⁶

Lynch always saw the conflict in Ireland as essentially political rather than religious. This gave him the advantage of being able to identify simultaneously with the cause of Ireland and the cause of the Empire. He never equated the cause of Ireland with a specifically Catholic form of Irish nationalism. For Lynch,

⁵ *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 14 July 1902. See discussion in Chapter Three.

⁶ *CPD*, Vol. 89, p.11790 (21 August 1919).

therefore, loyalty to Ireland was quite consistent with loyalty to an Empire which embraced many religions.

Superiority of the British Empire

Up until 1915 Lynch had no particular need to defend the virtues of the British Empire. Only with the exigencies of the war situation and a growing realisation that the very existence of the Australian nation might be threatened did he feel compelled to publicly exhort Australians to the defence of the Empire.

It was clear by 1915-16 that Lynch was one of the Empire's strongest supporters within the Federal Parliament. The explanation for this lies within a combination of two factors; first, the conclusions drawn from his own life experience as a young man travelling the world, and, secondly, the results of his own reading and thinking on the subject over a number of years. They appear to have reinforced one another. Lynch had developed his own geo-political world view which foregrounded the threat of imperial Germany to the world at large, particularly to the British Empire and to the Australian nation. According to this view, Australia's own survival depended upon the defence of the Empire.

Nowhere is his attitude to the Empire more clearly expounded than in his keynote speech to the Senate of 11 May 1916. He was quite prepared to acknowledge that the Empire had failings:

We admit, of course, that there have been times in the history of our Empire when its record has not been the cleanest. The best that we can do with those black pages which disfigure the story of the Empire's career in the past is to draw over them a merciful veil of forgetfulness.

He nevertheless insisted that:

Notwithstanding those blemishes, there is the compensating reflection that today our Empire stands for a higher and greater measure of justice and human freedom than any other Power on the surface of the globe.⁷

Lynch also had an answer for anyone who asked whether it made any difference whether Australia was ruled by the British or by the German Empire.

He quoted the Kaiser:

Remember that the German people are the chosen of God. On me, the German Emperor, the spirit of God has descended. I am his sword, his weapon, his vice-regent. Woe to the disobedient and death to cowards and unbelievers.⁸

To this, Lynch retorted:

If an occupant of the British throne uttered anything so arrogant and blasphemous of that kind, I would give very little for his crown, and still less for his life. That is the difference between the order of things which has been approved and applauded in the German empire.⁹

He clearly did not accept any relativistic arguments regarding the respective merits and demerits of the British and German empires. Whatever its acknowledged past failings, the British Empire was morally superior. Everything else—even the cause of Ireland—was secondary to the defence of the Empire, especially in war-time when “our national existence is threatened”.¹⁰

That Lynch saw the cause of Ireland as very much subservient to that of the Empire is best exemplified by the fact that he appeared to endorse tacitly conscription for Ireland, something which even the most pro-Empire Irish-Australian was loath to do. The following exchange took place in the Senate

⁷ *Ibid*, Vol. 79, p.7799 (11 May 1916).

⁸ *Ibid*, p.7801.

⁹ *Ibid*.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p.7799.

during a later stage of his aforementioned speech:

Senator Ready: The Mother Country has not included Ireland in the scheme [of Conscription].

Senator Lynch: I am not responsible for what the Mother country has done.

Senator Long: I think that you were rather glad that Ireland was not included.

Senator Lynch: I am not, and if my position on that point needs to be defined it is that Ireland should be included. I do not believe that Ireland or any other country should loaf upon another Power in a crisis like the present.¹¹

He was willing to follow his own relentless Imperial logic wherever it led him.

Another example of Lynch's willingness to give the Empire priority over Ireland can be found in his reaction to the Hughes Government's war-time practice of censoring communications regarding Irish matters. One particular episode in September 1916 best demonstrates this. On this occasion Lynch was initially supportive of moves by Hugh Mahon to challenge Defence Minister, George Pearce, regarding the censorship, prior to despatch to London, of resolutions carried by Irish organisations in Western Australia. However, Lynch subsequently informed Mahon that, having heard Pearce's viewpoint, he no longer wished to pursue the matter.¹²

The die had already been cast: the war-time experience only served to strengthen Lynch's loyalty to the Empire, and through subsequent decades his commitment became all the more resolute. In 1920, he declared emphatically to the Senate Australia's debt to "the British Power". He continued, however:

I speak of the British Power with qualification. One qualification is that I want to see that Power deal out even-handed justice to Ireland—the country from which I come. I am not, and never will be one of those who stand for a policy that means cutting the painter from the Imperial power. I stand with O'Connell,

¹¹ *Ibid*, p.7804. Ready and Long were both anti-conscriptionist Labor senators.

¹² NLA 213/274 (Pearce Papers). See also previous discussion in Chapter Six.

with Isaac Butt, and with Parnell, in demanding that Irishmen within their own island territory shall have the right to control their own affairs.¹³

There then followed this exchange:

Senator Gardiner: The honorable senator stands for English justice in Ireland.

Senator Lynch: I stand for justice in all lands, I hope.

Senator Gardiner: Does the honourable senator want English justice or Irish justice?

Senator Lynch: My policy on this question has been proclaimed more than once in this chamber ... I say, so far as the British power is concerned, that this country is dearer to me than any other.¹⁴

Lynch had effectively evaded Gardiner's probing question by declaring his primary loyalty to Australia. As long as there was a military threat to Australia, she would still need the protection of the British Empire.¹⁵

Ireland Home Rule Motions

In 1933 Lynch claimed that "during the last 30 years of my public life I have been primarily responsible for the passage of resolutions by the Senate favouring self-government for Ireland."¹⁶ As we shall see, this claim is something of an exaggeration. Nevertheless, it does suggest that he set considerable store by these resolutions and, for that reason alone, they merit further examination. They further reveal how he was able to reconcile his loyalties to Ireland and the Empire.

As early as 1905, as a member of the Western Australian Legislative Assembly, he had supported a Home Rule resolution. That Lynch attached

¹³ *CPD*, Vol.92, p. 3203 (4 August 1920).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.* Lynch said that he hoped that "the war is over" but noted "the onward march of the Red army of Russia."

¹⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 January 1933, p.13. The article reproduced the text of a cable message from Lynch to Alfie Byrne, then Lord Mayor of Dublin.

considerable importance to the 1905 Legislative Assembly resolution and his part in it is demonstrated by the fact that four years later he felt able to write:

It gave me special pleasure to share in the carrying of the resolution amongst the first of my duties in parliamentary work. I have heard it responsibly stated that the lead given by Western Australia in this matter facilitated the influential and weightier action of the Commonwealth Parliament in the passing of the Home Rule resolutions ...¹⁷

Lynch was inexplicably absent from the Senate for the Home Rule debate in 1914. He did, however, play a major background role as one of the instigators of a Home Rule motion in 1917 and later as the mover of similar motions in both 1919 and 1921.

Addressing the Legislative Assembly motion in 1905, he appealed to the fact that the late Secretary State for Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain, had sought the opinion of other self-governing colonies with regard to the form of government to be instituted in South Africa. By extension, Lynch argued, what was wrong with expressing an opinion about Ireland which was as much part of the Empire as the South African Republics? He reinforced his argument by stating that the Parliament owed at least some debt to Parnell for having used the influence of his party in the House of Commons to guarantee the passing of legislation granting self-government to Western Australia.¹⁸

Such a tone of sweet reasonableness distinguished all of Lynch's contributions to the Home Rule debates. He always emphasised the moderation of his claims: that he merely sought Irish Home Rule within the British Empire, that Ireland's cause was the Empire's cause, and that the best way of serving the interests of the Empire was to advocate the granting of Home Rule. When the Home Rule motion

¹⁷ Letter by Lynch (Perth) to T.P.McKenna (Mullagh, Co.Cavan, Ireland), 29 April 1909.

¹⁸ *WAPD*, Vol.27, p.738 (16 August 1905). See also discussion in Chapter Four.

came before the Senate in 1917, he merely made a brief statement in support, declaring that supporters of the motion were doing both Ireland and the Empire a favour.¹⁹

Lynch took a much more prominent public role as the mover of Home Rule motions in the Senate in 1919 and 1921. Although the 1919 motion does not appear to have been put to the vote and the 1921 motion was eventually withdrawn, the respective debates gave Lynch and his supporters an important forum within which to promote the cause of Irish Home Rule. Lynch's substantial contributions to both debates provide useful insights into his thinking.

During the 1919 debate, he enunciated three grounds for presenting his motion: first, "the inherent justice which sustains Ireland's claim to Home Rule"; secondly, "the principle of mutual aid and sympathy which operates in a freedom-loving and freedom-controlled Commonwealth such as ours"; thirdly, "the factor of common prudence".²⁰ He later explained that by "common prudence" he had in mind the consideration that if Ireland's claim to self-government remained unsettled it would bode "ill for the security of the Empire itself." He also had in mind the necessity of satisfying American public opinion with regard to Ireland in order to ensure future US/British friendship.²¹

Lynch clearly defined himself within the Redmondite Home Rule tradition. He lauded the manner in which John Redmond had at the outbreak of war in 1914 offered the British government "the last soldier out of Ireland".²² In return, the September 1914 Home Rule Bill held great promise for Ireland but its suspension,

¹⁹ *CPD*, Vol. 81, p.11056 (7 March 1917).

²⁰ *Ibid*, Vol. 89, p.11788 (21 August 1919).

²¹ *Ibid*, pp.11789-90.

²² *Ibid*, pp.11786.

according to Lynch, unfortunately led many Irishmen to believe that they had been fooled yet again. He nevertheless saluted Redmond in these terms: “ There is no man who has done so much as Mr. Redmond—peace to his ashes!—to raise recruits in Ireland; and there is no man who was so much misunderstood in consequence.”²³ Lynch was probably identifying himself with Redmond in this regard. He also observed that the Charter of the League of Nations, which guaranteed amongst other things, religious liberty, should serve to reassure the British government about a self-governing Ireland:

If Ireland should repudiate her part of the contract, I would repeat, in effect, the words of John Redmond, and say that the charter of liberty granted to her should be withdrawn if she were found ever to be faithless in her trust.²⁴

His identification with John Redmond had almost certainly been strengthened by the visit of Redmond’s brother, William, to Western Australia in 1905. Lynch, as one of the guests of the United Irish League, had met William Redmond at a social function held in the Celtic Club in Perth at the start of his tour.²⁵ He was of course a Member of the Legislative Assembly at the time and Redmond’s visit prompted Home Rule supporters to present their resolution to the Parliament the following August. The fact that William Redmond later died fighting on the Western Front would further have strengthened the affinity which Lynch, a loyal Imperialist, felt for Willie’s brother and the Redmondite Home Rule cause.

Throughout his public career, Lynch clearly identified not only with the Redmonds but with other prominent Irish nationalist figures. At various times he invoked the names of Daniel O’Connell, Isaac Butt, Henry Grattan, Michael

²³ *Ibid*, p.11787.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p.11793.

²⁵ Minutes of a meeting of the Special Committee of the West Australian Celtic Club held Perth, 1 December 1904 to organise a reception for William Redmond, and Social Club Committee meeting held Perth, 13 March 1905. Records retained in the Celtic Club, Perth.

Davitt and Charles Stewart Parnell. In his Home Rule speech to the Senate in 1919, he praised Davitt in similar terms to those in which he praised John Redmond: “With all my heart, I thank the British democracy which Michael Davitt—peace to his ashes—spent the greater part of his life in seeking to convert...”²⁶

On the occasion of his Home Rule speech of 1921, Lynch appeared to identify himself with the Irish nationalist politician, John Dillon:

[W]hen I recall the experience of that faithful champion of Ireland ... who, as result of his association with his leader and chief, Parnell, brought the Ireland of my memory from almost a state of destitution and rags to a comparatively high state of opulence, and who, majestic figure in history, after nearly forty years of fight, was turned down in his declining years, I feel that I have no right to complain.²⁷

Once again he invoked names from the pantheon of Irish nationalism:

I stand, humble though my station is, where Grattan stood ... where O’Connell stood in 1848, and he also did something for Ireland, though he said that the winning of Ireland’s freedom was not worth the shedding of a single drop of blood. I stand where Parnell and John Redmond stood, and although I do not go so far in my demands as do those who are at the present time in charge of national affairs in Ireland, I nevertheless feel that I am not any less sincere in my attachment to my native land, and my desire to see her happy, prosperous, and free.²⁸

Conspicuous by their absence from any speech of Lynch’s were the names of James Connolly, Padraic Pearse or any of the other heroes of Easter Week 1916; likewise the heroes of the War of Independence. Lynch placed himself firmly in the camp of constitutional nationalism and rejected any notion of armed struggle or separatism.

²⁶ *CPD*, Vol.89, p.11784. The names of O’Connell, Butt and Grattan were also invoked later in this same speech.

²⁷ *Ibid*, Vol. 97, p.11210-1 (24 August 1921).

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 11211. By “those at present time in charge of national affairs in Ireland” Lynch was referring to de Valera, amongst others. At the outset of his speech he had mentioned that he had a communication “from the elected representatives of Ireland under the leadership of Mr. de Valera”.

Lynch's speech of August 1921 was revealing in one other vital respect. He acknowledged explicitly for the first time the assumption underlying his argument that the cause of Ireland should take second place to that of the Empire. That assumption had been *implicit* in most of his previous pronouncements upon the Empire; now it was made quite *explicit*. Australia faced a direct threat to its security from its north. Lynch asked rhetorically: "when the tide of aggression sets out from Asiatic shores, what direction will it take? When the Asiatic menace begins to be felt, who will receive the first shock of contact?"²⁹

Consequently, Australia relied on the military might of the Empire for its protection: "[I]f Britain's power is weakened, the means of the defence of this lonely outpost of the Empire must be correspondingly weakened".³⁰ The corollary was that the maintenance of British naval power in the region depended upon the existence of friendly relations between Britain and Ireland so as not to occupy Britain's military attention at home. According to this argument, such a situation could best be achieved, by Ireland remaining a friendly neighbour within the British Empire. This in turn could be achieved by granting Home Rule to keep Ireland happy.

Lynch's hidden agenda was now clearly revealed: Australia and its defence was paramount; Ireland and the Empire secondary. His support for the Empire was not ultimately based on any sentimental or cultural reasons, but rather on a tough-minded appraisal of Australia's own self-interest. He argued:

There are probably 1,000,000 people in Australia who are Irish or of Irish extraction, and it is very questionable whether the little extra amount of freedom for which those in control of Irish affairs are now asking [a republic] would be of much value in securing the maximum happiness for the people of Ireland, whilst it may be, perhaps, that that little extra demand would be the means of

²⁹ *Ibid*, Vol. 97, p.11212.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p.11214.

throwing to the Asiatic wolves the friends of Ireland here who are not of Irish extraction as well as the 1,000,000 of Irish people.³¹

His appeal to the Empire, then, was based on one other important consideration revealed in this same speech: the blood ties which united Irish, Scots, Welsh and the English as “Britishers”. Since most Australians were of the same stock, this united them with their fellow Britishers within the Empire:

We are of the same stock with the people of England, Ireland, and Scotland. Amongst the sympathisers with Ireland in Australia, I am glad to say that there are hundreds of thousands who are not of Irish extraction, and who are sympathetically disposed to Ireland.³²

These common blood ties set Britishers apart from other races and nationalities and united them in mutual self-interest. In that way the cause of Australia and the cause of the Empire could be represented as one and the same. Lynch concluded this speech with these portentous words:

Ireland is now at the cross-roads. There are two fingerposts—one which points to Empire disruption and Australia’s danger. I appeal to the people of Ireland to pause before they take any fatal step in that direction ...³³

Taken in conjunction with his other statements upon the subject, this was clearly a call to the Irish people to accept the Treaty and, with it, self-government within the Empire. Furthermore, it was a call not to pursue more adventurous goals, such as a republic. This could lead only to further conflict and turmoil in the form of civil war.

Domestic Political Agenda

That Lynch assigned to himself a key role in the various Home Rule resolutions is further underlined by remarks he made in the introduction to his

³¹ *Ibid*, p.11213.

³² *Ibid*, p.11212.

³³ *Ibid*, p.11214.

speech of 24 August 1921. He stated:

This is the fourth occasion on which I have interested myself in this question ... I would remind those people that whenever Ireland has looked in this country for a mouthpiece and sponsor she has always found me ... I have never flagged in my fidelity to my native land in those successive vicissitudes, and in the policy that I have advocated from the earliest days of my youth.

At this stage Senator Bakhap interjected: “Nor has the honourable senator flagged in his loyalty to the Empire” to which Lynch replied: “I hope not ...”. This exchange neatly encapsulates Lynch’s dual loyalties to Ireland and to the Empire.³⁴

Nevertheless, not everyone appreciated these in the way that Bakhap did. In fact, Lynch suffered many taunts during his political career on account of his Irishness from those who saw a basic contradiction between his loyalties as an Irishman and some of the public stances he took. These critics did not share the same degree of commitment to the Empire as did Lynch. This was never more evident than at the December 1916 Special Interstate Labor Congress held in Melbourne, where a number of Irish-Australian anti-conscriptionist delegates cast aspersions on his Irishness.³⁵ Other examples from the conscription controversy of 1916-17 include the lambasting which Lynch received in the *Westralian Record* from its editor, Fr Tom O’Grady,³⁶ and the interjections from a woman at public meeting addressed by Lynch at the Kensington (Melbourne) Town Hall.³⁷

Criticism of this kind did not come only from Irish-Australian sources, however. In 1935, for example, J.H. Collings, the English-born leader of the Labor opposition in the Senate, made much of the seeming contradiction of

³⁴ *Ibid*, p.11210.

³⁵ See discussion in Chapter Six. Delegates included Grealey, Kavanagh, Carey and Dwyer-Gray.

³⁶ See discussion in Chapter Six.

³⁷ *Argus* (Melbourne), 10 October 1916, p.8. See also discussion in Chapter Six.

Lynch's support for provisions in the Crimes Bill which would compel citizens to "inform" on unlawful associations. Collings could not believe that an Irishman could support such measures: he suggested that it would only give the government an opportunity "to create a squad of Pigotts and Careys – Senator Lynch knows to what I refer ...".³⁸

These examples demonstrate that many Irish-Australians—and others—perceived a contradiction between Lynch, the Irishman, and some of his public statements. For a Labor man like Lynch, this presented a particular problem during 1916-17 when he was still so dependent on the Irish Catholic vote, the bulk of which had traditionally gone to the Labor Party. He risked alienating a large section of his traditional Labor supporters by his stances on conscription and the Empire.

For this reason particular significance can be attached to the intervention by Labor senator Albert Gardiner on the occasion of Lynch's giving notice of his "Self-Government for Ireland" motion in August 1921. Gardiner interjected to ask whether this indicated an intention that the (Nationalist) government was to call an early election. He observed that "for many years an indication of the approach of a general election has been a movement by Senator Lynch *to make himself right with one section of the community*."³⁹ The obvious insinuation here was that Lynch was seeking to woo alienated Irish-Australian voters.

Gardiner was in effect accusing Lynch of pursuing a domestic political agenda

³⁸ *CPD*, Vol.148, p.1916 (27 November 1935). Pigott and Carey were two notorious informers and double agents who operated in Ireland in the late 19th century.

³⁹ *Ibid*, Vol.96, p.10759 (5 August 1921) [my emphasis]. Lynch gave notice of his motion 19 days before the actual debate. Gardiner was correct insofar as general elections did follow within months of the motions presented in 1914, 1917 and 1919. However, this was not the case in 1921.

with his Home Rule motions. While there is no firm evidence of this in 1919 and 1921, there is in 1917. The papers of J.D. Fitzgerald reveal that various political machinations took place in the lead up to the presentation of the Home Rule motion to the Senate in March, and that Lynch was heavily involved.⁴⁰

The “lynchpins” in this political exercise appear to have been J.D. Fitzgerald in Sydney and Morgan Jageurs, Victorian State Secretary of the United Irish League. Lynch was the Western Australian contact in this loose network which included Prime Minister Billy Hughes, William Holman, the National Labor Premier of New South Wales, Richard Meagher (New South Wales National Labor MLC and government minister), Archbishop Ceretti (the Papal Nuncio) and John Redmond (the Irish Nationalist MP).⁴¹ Fitzgerald wrote to Hughes on 9 January 1917 advising him that the Home Rule issue was a barrier to Irish Catholics volunteering for the Armed Forces. He proposed that a pronouncement by the Federal Parliament in favour of Home Rule would help in this regard. Fitzgerald asked for Hughes’s support and proposed a confidential meeting in Melbourne some two weeks hence.⁴² This set in train the set of events leading to the presentation of the Home Rule motion to the Senate on 7 March.

In an undated confidential report, Jageurs and Fitzgerald acknowledged that “Senator Lynch attended all our deliberations and gave us valuable assistance. He undertook an immediate canvass and from the substance of [his] telegram I should say that the passage of the 1905 resolution through the Senate is assured.”⁴³ Lynch

⁴⁰ ML Fitzgerald Papers. J.D. Fitzgerald, the erstwhile Labor leader in the NSW Legislative Council and sometime government minister, was an Irish-Australian Catholic conscriptionist who left the Labor Party in 1916-17. As we saw in Chapter Two, he was almost certainly a political acquaintance of Lynch’s in West Sydney in the early 1890s.

⁴¹ ML Fitzgerald Papers Q256/11.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ ML Fitzgerald Papers, Q268/291-3. Fitzgerald is the likely author of this document.

played a key behind-the-scenes role in mustering the parliamentary numbers. On 9 February, Jageurs wrote to Fitzgerald indicating that Lynch had reported that he had received promises of support for the Home Rule motion from 27 members provided the terms of the 1905 resolution were adhered to. He also reported that the only trouble had been caused by two recalcitrant Irish-Australians (unnamed), one in the Senate and one in the House of Representatives, and that they had been quickly brought to account. Signatures had been obtained in all doubtful cases.⁴⁴

Lynch was a government minister until 16 February and, when mustering extra support for the Home Rule motion, would have been able to use the additional influence which his position carried. It is significant that Lynch's fellow Western Australian National Laborite, Senator George Henderson, a Protestant Scotsman, was chosen to present the motion to the Senate. This was almost certainly a strategic move on the part of Lynch and others to lessen antagonism and to broaden potential support for the motion by presenting it not merely as a purely Irish-Australian initiative, but as one which could command general support. Lynch deliberately kept himself in the background. In the Senate debate he rose only briefly to support the motion.

Furthermore, if Lynch's claim to have played a major role in the presentation of the Home Rule motion to the Western Australian Legislative Assembly in 1905 can be believed,⁴⁵ then it may also be significant that another Scotsman, Wallace Nelson (a republican-minded Laborite) was chosen to present it. Lynch played a relatively low-key role in the actual debate, though his contribution was somewhat

⁴⁴ ML Q256/105. Lynch also advised that the moderate terms of the 1905 motion would "keep the timid ones onside".

⁴⁵ Note the claim made in his letter to T.P. McKenna in Ireland, dated 29 April 1909.

more substantial than it would be in 1917.⁴⁶ Again this seems to have been a strategic move on Lynch's part to ensure the success of the motion. Throughout his subsequent parliamentary career he always made a point of emphasising that some of the best friends of Ireland and of Home Rule were non-Irishmen, that support for Irish Home Rule was not the exclusive preserve of Irishmen.

As far as the Irish Home Rule issue is concerned, it is clear that some of Lynch's political opponents were convinced that he and his supporters were using it for domestic political purposes. There is no better evidence of this than Hugh Mahon's perceptions of the episode which he set out in a twelve-page handwritten document.⁴⁷ Although he and Lynch had worked together previously in 1905 and 1914—albeit largely behind-the-scenes—to have Home Rule motions presented to the Federal Parliament, Mahon revealed that he had declined to become involved on this occasion because he knew the whole venture was a political ploy by the National Laborites to save Holman and Hughes from the wrath of Irish voters.⁴⁸ He further revealed his knowledge of Lynch's part in the political manoeuvres, although he incorrectly limited his involvement to the later stages of the operation.⁴⁹

The episode also revealed the existence of personal animosity between Mahon and Lynch. Three months after the presentation of the Home Rule motion, one of Mahon's supporters, Joe Monaghan, wrote to warn him that Lynch had been making harmful statements within the Perth Irish community regarding

⁴⁶ See discussion in Chapter Three.

⁴⁷ NLA 937/661 (Mahon Papers). No date on document [c.June 1917].

⁴⁸ Holman had received a hostile reception from the crowd when he tried to address a St. Patrick's Day assembly in Sydney in 1917 [Patrick O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History* (Revised edition, Sydney, 1985), p.329].

⁴⁹ NLA 937/661 (Mahon Papers), p.10. It is clear from revelations contained in the Fitzgerald Papers (discussed earlier) that Lynch was involved from the outset.

Mahon's decision to decline his support for the motion.⁵⁰ Replying to Monaghan, Mahon spoke disparagingly of "Senator Lynch's vagaries" and expressed surprise that anything that Lynch may have said "should damage me with my fellow Irishmen".⁵¹ Jim Gibbney was almost certainly correct when he observed that as a consequence of the Split "Mahon lost his friend Patrick Lynch".⁵²

In another sequel to the presentation of the Home Rule motion in March 1917, James Dowling, Secretary of the United Irish League (WA), telegrammed Jageurs from Fremantle nine months later to question the role which Lynch had claimed for himself. Dowling pointed out that, according to the *West Australian*, Lynch had stated that "he alone [was] primarily responsible [for the] overwhelming Senate Home Rule vote cast twice [in] the last four years". Dowling asked that an urgent telegram be sent to Senator Needham in Perth, either "affirming if correct or denying if otherwise [the] statements [Lynch] made."⁵³ Jageurs did in fact telegram Needham the same day, as requested by Dowling, but only to say that the Victorian United Irish League was neutral in Australian politics and could not interfere.⁵⁴

Some significance can be attached to the fact that, whereas Lynch and Fitzgerald were guests at the United Irish League Conference chaired by Jageurs in the Melbourne Celtic Club in early 1917,⁵⁵ Needham, rather than Lynch, was

⁵⁰ NLA 937/659. Monaghan to Mahon (1 June 1917). Monaghan was proprietor of the Orient Hotel in Fremantle, a prominent member of the Knights of the Southern Cross and sometime President of the Perth Celtic Club.

⁵¹ NLA 937/660. Mahon to Monaghan (9 June 1917).

⁵² H.J. Gibbney, "Hugh Mahon: a political biography" (Masters thesis, ANU, Canberra, 1969), p.157. Certainly the friendship and mutual regard apparent, for example, in Lynch's letter to Mahon of 2 April 1909 (see Chapter Five) had evaporated.

⁵³ ML Q256/541. (19 December 1917). Lynch's comments had presumably been made in the context of the second conscription referendum campaign which was then in full swing.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* In view of the Victorian League's active collaboration with National Labor figures such as Lynch and Fitzgerald, this was a somewhat disingenuous reply on Jageurs' part.

⁵⁵ ML Q268/339c.

the visitor representing the United Irish League (WA) at the Fourth Victorian Irish Convention in Melbourne in May 1918. Indeed, all the politicians present on this occasion were from the Official Labor Party.⁵⁶ Two years later the Sixth Irish Race Convention in Melbourne “strongly repudiate[d] the action of Senator Lynch in claiming to represent Irish-Australian opinion and voicing the attitude of the Australian democracy towards Ireland’s claims to independence”. It was reported furthermore that “[S]teps were to be taken to inform his Eminence Cardinal Logue and the Australian people of the real attitude of the Irish in Victoria”.⁵⁷ It is evident, that from 1918 onwards at least, Lynch was outside the mainstream of Irish nationalist opinion in Victoria (and almost certainly, Australia). After 1916, Lynch’s committedly pro-Empire views would have increasingly marginalised him in Irish-Australian nationalist circles. Given his combative temperament, this would only have made him state those views all the more defiantly and explicitly.

Devotion to Empire Consolidated

Lynch’s public career from 1921 was marked by a decreased lack of interest in Ireland and a corresponding increase in devotion to Australia by way of the Empire. The sentiments expressed during the 1920s in addresses to such pro-Empire bodies as the Loyalty League and the Argonauts Club provide ample witness to this.⁵⁸ After his Home Rule for Ireland motion of 1921, he made no other substantial reference to Irish affairs in his parliamentary speeches. Like many Irish-Australians, he was no doubt both confused by and alienated from Irish affairs by the Civil War of 1922-23, which, as Patrick O’Farrell has noted,

⁵⁶ ML Q268/343.

⁵⁷ *Westralian Catholic Record* (18 December 1920), p.13.

⁵⁸ See quotations from relevant speeches earlier in this chapter.

“almost totally destroyed the Irish cause in Australia and New Zealand...”.⁵⁹ For Lynch, who had been such a solid supporter of the Treaty and who had warned the Irish people against taking the “wrong road”,⁶⁰ the Civil War and consequent division and turmoil in Ireland must have been especially disillusioning. The very thing he most feared had come to pass.

Lynch’s only other recorded public comment on Ireland took the form of a lengthy cabled message in 1933 to Alfie Byrne, then Lord Mayor of Dublin, in which he endorsed his call for an end to de Valera’s “economic war” against Britain.⁶¹ Noting that Ireland now enjoyed self-government, he pleaded for “an end to useless wrangling over inconsequential issues”. Once again, his primary concern was the preservation of the Empire and, with it, the security of Australia. He in effect demanded that Ireland abandon the “economic war” with Britain for the sake of Australia and New Zealand’s security:

[Australia] has been Ireland’s steadfast friend down the years. Is it right that such a friendship should be ignored and forgotten and two million Irishmen both here and in New Zealand, potentially thrown to the [Asiatic] wolves, for the sake of an obstinate insistence on claims surely not beyond reasonable adjustment?⁶²

Such developments within Ireland could not but have confirmed Lynch’s prior loyalty to the Empire. Furthermore, it is apparent that during the 1920s and 1930s, Lynch, now moving in more conservative political circles, was quite comfortable in his role as an Empire man. Not only was he a loyal imperialist, he was publicly

⁵⁹ Patrick O’Farrell, *Vanished Kingdoms: Irish in Australia and New Zealand* (Sydney, 1990), p.224.

⁶⁰ *CPD*, Vol.97, p.11214. The Irish Civil war does not appear to have even rated a mention in the Federal Parliament.

⁶¹ The previous year, 1932, had seen the election of the first Fianna Fáil government, led by Eamon de Valera. De Valera had since initiated the so-called “economic war” against Britain, one feature of which was the refusal to pay land annuities. There can be no doubt that had Lynch been in Ireland at this time he would have been an opponent of Fianna Fáil and a supporter of Cumann na nGaedhael.

⁶² *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 January 1933, p.13.

perceived as such. For example, on his election to the Presidency of the Senate in 1932, Perth's *Sunday Times* praised Lynch as "a good champion of Empire and WA alike."⁶³ Nevertheless, despite his tenure as president and long parliamentary career, he was overlooked for imperial honours. Although there is no firm evidence that Lynch actively sought them, it was predicted honours might come his way. For example, in 1934, one popular public affairs monthly observed: "He has risen from the humblest positions in Australia to the presidency of the Commonwealth Senate, with a knighthood in prospect."⁶⁴

Personal History

Certain aspects of Lynch's own personal history helped to determine his relative loyalties to Ireland and to the Empire. This becomes quite apparent when one compares his own experience with that of other Irishmen with whom he was acquainted. The contrast between the path followed by Lynch and that taken by his parliamentary colleague Hugh Mahon could not be more striking.⁶⁵ Lynch an ardent conscriptionist and Empire man followed Billy Hughes out of the Labor Party. Mahon an anti-conscriptionist⁶⁶ and opponent of Hughes stayed with the

⁶³ *Sunday Times* (Perth), 4 September 1932, p.4. The editor, James McCallum Smith, was a National Party MLA, Dominion League activist and friend of Lynch's.

⁶⁴ *To-Day* (Melbourne), April 1934, p.15. The previous year, a former Kalgoorlie journalist had similarly predicted: "[T]he next thing will be Sir Patrick Lynch." [Arthur Reid, *Those Were the Days* (Perth, 1933), p.143].

The *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.10 (Melbourne, 1986), p.177 incorrectly records that Senator Lynch was awarded a CBE in 1936. It is clear from the senator's file in the ADB office in Canberra that the recipient was in fact a different Patrick Joseph Lynch (resident in Melbourne).

⁶⁵ Their contrasting political odysseys are analysed more fully by the author in a forthcoming article in the *Australian Journal of Irish Studies*.

⁶⁶ Mahon was in fact initially regarded within the labour movement as something of a "trimmer" and a "fence-sitter" on the issue of conscription. His declaredly anti-conscriptionist position was not entirely apparent until his resignation from the Hughes ministry some two weeks after the defeat of the first referendum. He clarified his position at length in his keynote address to the special Western Australian Labor Congress in March 1917 [*Report of Proceedings of General Council of ALF (WA Division) 1917*, pp.4-12].

party, only to have the peculiar distinction of being the only person ever to be expelled from the Federal Parliament. This unique honour was bestowed upon him by a motion of Prime Minister Hughes in the House of Representatives on 11 November 1920 for “seditious utterances” made at a public meeting at Richmond Reserve (Melbourne) a few days earlier, when Mahon had allegedly condemned “this bloody and accursed Empire”.⁶⁷

Lynch’s older brother Philip provides an interesting example of a different path taken by a sibling. Phil Lynch did not leave Ireland until 1909 by which time he had reached the relatively advanced age of 55 years. The scroll which he bore with him to Perth expressed the admiration of his native parish for “the high feeling of Patriotism which always prompted your actions in your never failing services to the National Cause”. In 1909, Paddy Lynch seemed more than comfortable with such expressions of Irish nationalism and support for “the National Cause”—while they were couched in general terms.⁶⁸ However, subsequent developments within Britain and Ireland—including the Home Rule Bill, the Easter 1916 Rising, the War of Independence, the Treaty, and finally the Civil War—meant that Irish nationalists, Paddy and Phil Lynch included, had to make difficult choices about their loyalties. As with many families in Ireland, the

⁶⁷ We have no way of knowing how Lynch felt about Mahon’s expulsion from the Federal Parliament in 1920. Certainly, there is no record of his speaking out, either for or against. Since Lynch was a member of the Senate, he was spared the necessity of having to vote for his former friend’s expulsion: a vote of the House of Representatives was sufficient to effect such a measure. We do know, however, that on 10 November the Nationalist Party Caucus unanimously carried a resolution supporting Hughes’s motion for Mahon’s expulsion the following day. Since no attendance record was kept, we cannot be sure that Lynch was present.

⁶⁸ See Lynch letter to T.P.McKenna (29 April 1909). See Chapters One and Five for discussion of contents.

Civil War divided Paddy and Phil: it has been said that “they fell out over de Valera”.⁶⁹

For Paddy Lynch, the realities of his adopted land had well and truly superseded the sentimentalities of his homeland. It is significant that he never returned to Ireland after he left in 1886. By contrast, his brother Phil returned in 1932 and in again in 1936, this time staying until his death in 1941. Hugh Mahon, likewise, visited Ireland in 1922.

Western Australian Context

Given his combination of moderate Irish nationalist and strongly Imperialist views, Lynch would have felt reasonably comfortable in Catholic establishment circles in Western Australia. Bishop Gibney, for example, although sometimes described as a strong Irish nationalist, was in fact a loyal Empire man. This is no more vividly portrayed than by the sentiments expressed in a somewhat sycophantic letter to Sir John Forrest in August 1915. Gibney began: “My dear Sir John, I read your patriotic speech, which you delivered at Bendigo with great pleasure and satisfaction ...” and continued:

Under God [Australians] owe all to the United Kingdom—Great Britain and Ireland. Under her flag [Australians] have held peaceful possession. Under her flag they enjoy all the privileges of a self-contained, self-governed people. From every heart should ascend the beautiful expression of Love and Loyalty—‘God save the King’ ... It is not necessary to tell Australians that if their country was threatened by a foreign power, Great Britain and Ireland would rush to their assistance. I would expect them to fulfill the adage of old—‘*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori!*’⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Information from the late Stephen Cahill, Diralagh, Mullagh, Co.Cavan, Ireland. This observation was expressed in an interview on a video compiled by John Lynch of Perth, Western Australia whilst on a visit to Ireland in 1983. Stephen Cahill was a cousin of Paddy and Philip Lynch on their mother’s side.

⁷⁰ Catholic Archdiocesan Archives, Perth. Gibney Papers 34/766A/1/594. Gibney kept up a regular correspondence with Forrest from 1899 onwards. This particular letter was written after his forced retirement and replacement by Archbishop Clune in 1911.

Stripped of some of the more religious language, Lynch would have had little trouble identifying himself with these sentiments. Equally, he would have had little difficulty in identifying with the position adopted by Gibney's successor, Archbishop Patrick Joseph Clune, who spent a large part of the 1914-18 War as chaplain to the Australian Imperial Forces on the western front. Clune co-authored with his Anglican counterpart in Perth, Archbishop C.F. Riley, a strongly pro-conscriptionist leaflet addressed to their respective flocks and issued on the eve of the October 1916 conscription referendum. Later, in 1920, Clune played a crucial mediatory role in Ireland, attempting to broker a peace agreement between the British and the Irish forces, an action with which Lynch would wholeheartedly have approved.

Certainly, Lynch did have his clerical opponents in Western Australia—men such as Fr Tom O'Grady, the editor of the *Westralian Record*. As we have already noted, O'Grady frequently used the pages of the *Record* to attack and ridicule Lynch during the conscription referenda campaigns of 1916-17. In October 1916, for example, O'Grady devoted a two-and-a-half column editorial to giving him a lesson in Irish history which embraced such episodes as the Great Famine and the Cromwellian conquest and quoted at length from John Mitchel's *Last Conquest of Ireland* and from Canon Sheehan.⁷¹ However, Lynch himself was by no means oblivious to English misdeeds in Ireland, nor did he need lecturing on Irish history, as he proceeded to demonstrate in his speech in the Senate on a Home Rule motion some three years later, in August 1919. On that occasion, he observed: "I need go only amongst the ranks of Englishmen to produce

⁷¹ *The Westralian Record*, 14 October 1916, p.5. See discussion in Chapter Six for reference to the lesson which O'Grady offered Lynch regarding, amongst other things, the evictions in County Meath.

unchallengeable evidence regarding the treatment which English rule has meted out to Irishmen”. He then proceeded to quote figures compiled by “the renowned statistician”, Mr. Mulhall, regarding Famine deaths, evictions, imports and exports. In conclusion, he lamented: “[W]hat a dark and depressing reign it was for unhappy Ireland, when it took from her landscape more than 9,000,000 human beings ...”.⁷² Nonetheless, this has to rank as by far the strongest condemnation of British rule in Ireland offered by Lynch in any of his public speeches.

In any event, for every Father O’Grady and for every like-minded lay critic, Lynch would have had at least one supporter. Irish Catholics in Western Australia were, generally speaking, more politically conformist and more willing than their eastern states counterparts to demonstrate their loyalty to the Empire. This argument will be developed in the final chapter.

Finally, in assessing the evolution of Lynch’s stance on Ireland and the Empire, we must bear in mind the problem of evaluating these issues from present day historical standpoints. Historians viewing the early 20th century from contemporary Irish Catholic republican perspectives will be inclined to read into the views of people such as Lynch contradictions which either did not exist or were not apparent a century ago. Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh reminds us that by the early 20th century most Irish people felt comfortable with some sense of Britishness. This he attributes largely to the effects of the Act of Union of 1800.⁷³ Consequently, Lynch cannot simply be dismissed as a “West Brit” or a “Castle Catholic”: he could, for example, remain an Irish cultural nationalist whilst

⁷² *CPD*, Vol. 89, p.11785 (21 August 1919).

⁷³ Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, “Ireland under the Union: Historiographical Reflections”, in Bob Reece (ed), *The Australian Journal of Irish Studies*, Vol. 2 (Murdoch University, Western Australia, 2002), p.17.

embracing the ideals of the Empire *and* eschewing all but the most moderate forms of political nationalism.

Lynch was born on 24 May, a date that in 1905 became designated as Empire Day. In 1911, and partly in response, the Catholic Church in Australia designated 24 May as Feast of Our Lady Help of Christians, patroness of Australia. One need not infer any element of predestination to explain Lynch's subsequent evolution into a loyal Empire man. However, it would nevertheless be safe to conclude that as a loyal Empire man *and* devoted Catholic, he would have felt more than happy with *both* those coincidences.

CHAPTER TEN

LYNCH'S POLITICAL IDEOLOGY (2): WAR, DEFENCE AND CONSCRIPTION

We have noted in the last chapter that Lynch's unswerving support for the British Empire was based upon two fundamental assumptions: first, a belief in the superiority of the British system of government and its guarantee of basic freedoms; secondly, the existence of a threat to Australia's security from the Asiatic north and from Germany, against which the Empire offered the best possible defence. In this chapter we will consider further how Lynch's attitudes towards war and defence were closely linked to his beliefs about Ireland and the Empire, before devoting the bulk of our attention to his consequent arguments for conscription.

Because of the external threat to Australia and the imperative to defend basic freedoms, Lynch believed that war might sometimes be necessary. As early as August 1907, he declared: "If we want to secure peace, we must be prepared for war."¹ Nine years later, in the middle of the 1914-18 War, he said that "there is something more precious and priceless than mere life itself and that is life worth living." He went on to justify such past wars as the French Revolution, the Civil War in England, the American War and the Boer War, because "they were waged against tyranny, injustice and aggression by those who believed in freedom". He also declared that "we may very well in our better judgement detest war. It is all right to detest it, but we cannot stop war by hating it ... We must wage war

¹ *CPD*, Vol.37, p.1260 (1 August 1907).

against those who war against peace”.² There could be a no more unambiguous statement of Lynch’s outlook on war; for him it was clearly the lesser of two evils.

Lynch was no dove or pacifist. He was consistently hawkish and tough-minded throughout his political career. He retained a keen interest in military affairs (informed by his reading of history), although he was not personally militaristic,³ nor did he have any military training.⁴ This tough-mindedness was manifested, for example, in his harsh attitude towards enemy aliens in Australia and towards trading with the enemy.⁵ Furthermore, he readily accepted the need to curtail civil liberties in war-time. He was an enthusiastic supporter of such draconian war-time legislation as the War Precautions Act and the Unlawful Associations Act, and tolerant of Hughes’s and Pearce’s implementation of war-time censorship.⁶ According to Lynch, it was sometimes necessary to restrict freedom in order to defend freedom. Successfully waging war would necessitate certain restrictions as a means to an end, as the lesser of two evils.

Defence-Conscious

Lynch displayed a heightened defence-consciousness from the very outset of his Federal political career. In his maiden speech to the Senate he called for an Australian Navy.⁷ Four weeks later, he made a point of including in his arguments for the construction of a Trans Australia Railway the observation that such a

² *Ibid*, Vol.79, p.7802 (11 May 1916) Lynch used the analogy of a poisonous reptile which could be dealt with neither by “pious aspiration” nor with “Buddhistic resignation”. The only way to deal with the “human viper” was to kill it.

³ *Ibid*, Vol.55, p.316 (13 July 1910). He called for the downgrading of military displays at ceremonial occasions such as the opening of Parliament: memories of the redcoats in Ireland had left him with “an innate horror of such spectacles”.

⁴ He was always a strong supporter of compulsory military training, however. See discussion in Chapter Five.

⁵ *Ibid*, Vol.75, p.1093 (26 November 1914). During the debate on the Trading with the Enemy Bill, Lynch asked: “Can we take power to impound moneys due to German firms?”

⁶ See discussion in Chapter Six.

⁷ *CPD*, Vol.36, p.150 (5 July 1907).

railway could in a war situation be used to transport troops from the Eastern States via Fremantle to places like India and England.⁸

By the end of 1914, Lynch clearly saw Germany, with its foothold in New Guinea, as the major immediate threat to Australia. His apprehension with regard to Germany was based not just upon the fact that it was at war with the Empire in Europe, but that it constituted a direct military threat to Australian security. In June 1915 he declared:

Australia is a country with no racial problems, a country which is easily accessible, and it naturally constitutes a very tempting prize in the eyes of Germany. As a matter of fact, I have come across opinions expressed by Germans to the effect that this country will be Germanised in the very near future.⁹

For Lynch, Australian defence was inextricably linked to the defence of the Empire: “It has been said that Great Britain’s battle is our battle, and that Australia’s fate is being decided on the battlefields of Europe just as substantially as if the struggle were being waged on our own shores”.¹⁰ On the basis of this assumption, Lynch was convinced at this stage (June 1915) that, in comparison to the Mother Country, Australia was not contributing enough—in terms of both money and manpower—to the war effort. He was of the opinion:

[T]hat the majority of the people of this country are not seized of the momentous consequences of the present struggle. If they were—if they once realised that even the safety of Australia is bound up in it—they would awake from their lethargy and put forward a better effort.¹¹

Such admonitions reflected the manner in which Lynch always saw his role as leader rather than follower of public opinion when it came to matters of national defence.

Even after the end of the war, Lynch maintained his hard-line stance towards

⁸ *Ibid*, Vol.37, p.1260 (1 August 1907).

⁹ *Ibid*, Vol.77, p.4381 (25 June 1915).

¹⁰ *Ibid*, Vol.77, p.4380.

¹¹ *Ibid*.

Germany. Two days after the Armistice, Lynch voiced his opposition to Labor policy which in his view would have allowed peace without annexations or penal indemnities. Worse still, by permitting Germany to retain territory in New Guinea and the Pacific, it would have allowed the German flag to fly near Australia once again.¹² He strongly supported Prime Minister Hughes's tough stand at the Versailles Treaty negotiations.¹³

Interestingly, as early as July 1915, Lynch was to the fore in the Federal Parliament in calling for closer ties with the United States. Since there were already ties of kith and kin, he argued, Australia should cultivate the friendship of the USA next to that of the Mother Country. However, defence was clearly the underlying motivation in his initiative for he observed that “when the hour of trial comes, if it should come, we may be able to depend on her strong protecting arm if the task of protecting ourselves is found to be beyond our strength.”¹⁴ Already favourably disposed towards the US after his brief sojourn there, he was seemingly one of the first members of the Federal Parliament to make intimations of an American alliance.

Lynch retained his strong commitment to defence issues right up until the end of his political career. In 1936, in a speech to the Overseas League in Perth, he made it abundantly clear that a commitment to the Empire remained as much the foundation stone of Australian security as ever. He also marked himself down as a firm advocate of collective defence and forward defence, and as an opponent of a fortress Australia mentality and creeping isolationism. According to one report, Lynch:

[A]ttacked the doctrine that in event of war, Australia's post must be confined to Australia. This doctrine was 'a jackal motto of every man for

¹² *Ibid*, Vol.86, p.7667 (13 November 1918).

¹³ *Ibid*, Vol.88, p.10204 (21 June 1919).

¹⁴ *Ibid*, Vol.78, p.5477 (29 July 1915).

himself'. It was [according to Lynch] largely a reaction to the colossal misery of the great war [sic], but to mitigate horrors of war by such a doctrine would never be the part of men of the British Empire.¹⁵

The report continued by quoting Lynch directly:

Just imagine Australia folding her arms and standing unmoved when New Zealand was being savaged by a foreign foe. Just think of Australia standing with strong indifference while the motherland was fighting for her life, and its lusty favoured son leaving her to fight alone. I cannot see how if the empire seriously engaged in war, Australia can be at peace. Similarly, I cannot see how if Australia was attacked and its freedom trembling in the balance, the rest of the empire can be at peace.¹⁶

This pronouncement, proffered in the twilight of his political career, offers a succinct statement of Lynch's unchanged position on matters of war and defence.

Conscription

This position formed the basis of his arguments for conscription and we will now consider some of these. We will then examine Lynch's own approach to the debate itself (especially insofar as it related to the public platform and to the internal workings of the Labor Party). Thirdly, we will consider some of the reactions which he evoked, along with some of the counter-arguments put forward by his Labor opponents. Fourthly, we will summarise his arguments for conscription as a syllogism and analyse some of the suppressed premises and assumptions involved. We will conclude by making some general observations regarding Lynch's approach to the conscription debate and the arguments which he employed.

Lynch's arguments for the introduction of conscription are set out in seven different Senate speeches between June 1915 and January 1918.¹⁷ These will serve as our major sources, along with his speeches to the Western Australian Labor

¹⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald* (25 July 1936), p.18.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*.

¹⁷ 9 and 25 June 1915, 11 May 1916, 3 October 1916, 5 and 14 March 1917, and 24 January 1918.

Congress in June 1916 and the Special Interstate Labor Congress in Melbourne in December of that year. Some reference will also be made to public speeches during the two referenda campaigns, although these were inclined to be occasions of abuse and counter-abuse rather than serious argument.

In his major speeches dealing with the topic, Lynch never really sustained a full argument in favour of conscription on any occasion; rather, he scattered key elements of his arguments throughout various speeches, repeating some of these on certain occasions and excluding them on others. Nevertheless, there were at least two occasions on which Lynch went close to encapsulating the essence of his motivation for wholeheartedly supporting conscription, instances which provide us with key insights into his thinking. The first was his landmark speech of 9 June 1915 when he became the first Federal Labor parliamentarian to publicly advocate conscription. On that occasion Lynch asked the crucial question:

In the event of an attack upon this country, we would have conscription pure and simple, or its equivalent, so why should we hesitate to resort to that policy which we would have to adopt if the battles were fought here in Australia instead of Europe?¹⁸

Fourteen months later, in October 1916, Lynch addressed the following remarks to the Senate:

I advocated conscription because I am alive to Australia's danger, and I support the policy of the government because it seeks to make all able-bodied men stand to their guns in defence of this dear country ... I am a conscriptionist because I am a staunch and true believer in Labour principles and in the Labour Party. I am a conscriptionist because I am a practical Socialist, believing that if our country goes down, neither party, platform, policy, nor any thing else will count ... I am in favour of conscription because I am an Irishman. Under the other system [of voluntarism], and its iniquitous operation in Ireland, the best blood of that country has been spilled in more than fair proportion in the interests of the Empire, which was slow to give it a full measure of justice. I do not want that to be the case in Australia. If the men who now call me a traitor to Ireland wish to see the best blood of the country spilled, as in Ireland, I

¹⁸ *CPD*, Vol. 77, p.3781 (9 June 1915).

do not; if that is their brand of patriotism, it is not mine, and never will be.¹⁹

He was arguing that he was a conscriptionist *because* he was a Labor man, *because* he was a Socialist, *because* he was an Irishman—and, also, by implication, *because* he was an Australian. However, this was a case of Lynch *defining* his position as much as *arguing* it. There is also an undertone of defensiveness here; Lynch was tacitly acknowledging that some of his opponents might see a contradiction between being a conscriptionist and being a Labor man, a socialist and, most especially, an Irishman.

Neither the key question which Lynch asked in June 1915 nor the defining statement of October 1916 will stand as satisfactory explanations of his stance on conscription. Instead, we must identify and analyse more closely the key elements in his argument. These may be identified in the form of a number of statements which, taken together, constitute his argument in favour of conscription:

Firstly, Germany was the aggressor and constituted a direct military threat not only to Britain but to Australia.

This argument, which has already been set out in the previous section, was a foundation stone in Lynch's case for conscription. In June 1916, he warned the Western Australian State Labor Congress that “[Australia was] fighting against the greatest military power in the history of the world, and the hateful rule of the military spirit. Australia was by no means safe”.²⁰

He argued that the German Empire was fundamentally different from the British Empire in that it was driven by a militaristic spirit and by the total subjugation of the individual to the State.²¹ Furthermore, underpopulated Australia

¹⁹ *Ibid*, Vol. 80, p.9167 (3 October 1916).

²⁰ *Report of the Proceedings of the General Council of the Australian Labor Federation (WA Division)* held at Kalgoorlie, June 1916, p.22. Hereafter, referred to as the “Kalgoorlie Congress”.

²¹ *CPD*, Vol.79, p.7801 (11 May 1916).

offered an attractive temptation to overpopulated Germany, all the more so since Germany already had a foothold in New Guinea. This stark geographical reality, combined with what he viewed as the current mode in German political and military thought, meant that Australia was in direct danger from German aggression.²² Lynch's deep conviction regarding the nature of the German threat was informed by his own reading of recent German political thought, something which is examined in greater depth later in this chapter.

Secondly, Australia's defence was linked to the defence of the Empire and hence Britain's war was automatically Australia's war.

This argument held true for Lynch, regardless of the existence of any direct German military threat to Australia, although its existence strengthened his argument and the immediacy of its implications. The basis of Lynch's argument that Australia's fate was inextricably linked with that of the Empire has been outlined in the preceding chapter. According to this view, Australia had a moral responsibility to contribute to the war in Europe because Britain was fighting, not only on her own behalf, but on behalf of the entire Empire—including Australia.

Lynch claimed that even the ardent anti-conscriptionist, John Curtin, had acknowledged "that Australia's freedom was being fought for in Europe".²³ In his keynote Senate speech of 9 June 1915, he warned:

We must not forget that our liberty is at stake. It has been said that the battles of this country are being fought on the fields of Flanders just as effectively as if they were fought on the plains of Bourke or in Western Australia.

On that basis, he asked, why not conscription of Australians for Europe, assuming

²² *Ibid*, Vol.77, p.4381 (25 June 1915) and Vol.79, pp.7799-7800 (11 May 1916).

²³ *Ibid*, Vol.84, p.3476 (24 January 1918). Here Lynch was contrasting the line taken by Curtin when addressing workers on the Western Australian goldfields with the line he took when speaking on the Yarra bank.

that there would be conscription at home in the event of a direct attack?²⁴

Throughout the conscription debate, Lynch's arguments were delivered in a tone suggesting dire urgency. For him, Australia's future was at peril; such a crisis demanded extreme measures and did not allow for the luxury of holding back. At times his tone was almost apocalyptic. In December 1916, at the height of the conscription controversy he deplored the divisiveness within the labour movement "when the Continent was rocking". He asked: "Where would White Australia be if the Allies went down?"²⁵, a rhetorical question which implied a threat not only from Germany but from the Asiatic north.

It also served to underline the racial element implicit in all of Lynch's arguments. As noted earlier, his conception of Australian loyalty to the Empire rested in large part on the blood ties which existed between Britishers (whether English, Irish, Welsh or Scots) in Britain, Australia and elsewhere. He ridiculed those anti-conscriptionists who argued that Indians could be called on to fight for Australia if need be: "Fair Australia is to be fought for by the poor benighted inhabitants of India!" Then, as if to appeal to racial pride, he added: "It is only a degenerate Australian who would ask a black man to fight for him".²⁶

Thirdly, there was a shortfall in the recruitment of Australians to fight in Europe and therefore it was necessary to take appropriate measures to make up the numbers, by conscription if need be.

Lynch maintained from an early stage that Australia was not doing its fair share for the war effort. In June 1915 he observed: "The Mother Country has

²⁴ *Ibid*, Vol. 77, p.3781 (9 June 1915).

²⁵ *Report of Proceedings of the Special Commonwealth Conference of the Australian Labor Party* held at Melbourne, December 1916, p.7. Hereafter referred to as the "Melbourne Conference".

²⁶ *CPD*, Vol. 80, p.91678 (3 October 1916).

under arms one man in every fifteen of her population [while] Australia has called to arms, up to the present, and in a voluntary way only, about one man in fifty.”²⁷ Eleven months later he observed that, proportionately speaking, Great Britain still had nearly two and a half times as many men in arms as did Australia. Furthermore, Great Britain had since introduced conscription. This for Lynch rendered redundant the argument of the advocates of voluntarism that Australia should wait until the Mother Country had acted. She had done so and it was now time for Australia to do likewise.²⁸ He also tacitly accepted the argument of his leader, Prime Minister Hughes, that there was a large shortfall in recruitment and that it would need to be made up for by introducing conscription if Australia were to fulfil its commitment to the war effort.

Fourthly, the principle of compulsion had already been accepted for military service within Australia; by logical extension that same principle should also apply to service overseas.

Lynch argued that the principle of compulsion was generally accepted in modern society for the common good—for example, with regard to taxation, education and sanitation. He argued from this principle that each individual unit of a population had a responsibility to participate in the defence of the whole, if necessary by bearing arms.²⁹ He noted that “if we look into the sphere of civil society we find that in every case the interest of the individual is subordinate to the interest of the people”.³⁰ Why, he asked, should a citizen be allowed to please himself whether or not he fought for his country if he was compelled to act for the

²⁷ *Ibid*, Vol. 77, p.4380 (25 June 1915).

²⁸ *Ibid*, Vol. 79, p.7804 (11 May 1916).

²⁹ *Ibid*, Vol. 77, p.3781 (9 June 1915).

³⁰ *Ibid*, Vol. 79, p.7803 (11 May 1916).

common good in lesser matters?

This argument also had a particular political dimension for Lynch, however, since compulsory military service had been a part of Labor's platform since 1902, and had in fact been introduced by the Deakin government with Labor support in 1909. On the public platform he pointed to what he saw as the inconsistency of his anti-conscriptionist Labor colleagues. Why, he asked, if the principle of compulsory military service was so evil, was it not cast out during the previous fourteen years?³¹ For Lynch, the proposal to introduce conscription represented merely the extension of existing Labor policy to service overseas.

Fifthly, voluntarism was neither the fairest nor the most efficacious system of recruitment.

Lynch was convinced that the system of voluntarism—waging the war solely with volunteers—was both unfair and ineffective; conscription offered a better system in both respects. Above all, he wanted “equality of sacrifice”. In his view, it was unfair that only the bravest men should fight and sacrifice their lives; the whole adult male population should be called upon to share the burden.³²

According to this argument, it was necessary, therefore, to have a system based on compulsion whereby all fit young men of military age would be obliged to bear arms. Lynch argued that the system of voluntarism had created thousands of “fatherless homes”. In his view it was unfair that so many married men with young children had gone off to fight and be killed while young single eligible men stayed at home.³³ He argued, furthermore, that the peril facing the nation needed

³¹ *Argus* (Melbourne), 5 October 1916, p.8. Meeting at the Northcote Town Hall in Melbourne, 4 October 1916. Whilst on the referendum campaign trail, Lynch also took pleasure in pointing out that Australia was the only country in the world whose citizens were being given the opportunity to vote on the matter.

³² *CPD*, Vol. 77, p.4382 (25 June 1916).

³³ *Ibid*, Vol.79, p.7805 (11 May 1916).

to be brought home to such men by compelling them to fight.³⁴ Drawing on his own previous experience at sea, Lynch employed the shipwreck analogy to demonstrate how all men were obliged to contribute in an emergency situation: “[I] was shipwrecked once, and if it had been a case of manning the boats, would they have allowed any man to refuse to pull the oars?”³⁵

For Lynch, there was no inherent contradiction between conscription and democracy. He was able to declare that “Compulsion, in my opinion, is a sensible system, entirely fitting in with democratic ideals.”³⁶ The voluntary system had nothing to recommend it from the standpoint of economy, democracy, the “future of the race”, or the “safety of the country”.³⁷

At the Western Australian Labor Congress in June 1916, Lynch declared that voluntarism was not the policy of the Labor Party; it did not deserve to be exalted, and “he for his part was not going to burn incense before it.”³⁸ Thus, from the very outset of the debate within the party, a central tenet of his argument was that conscription rather than voluntarism was compatible with the Labor platform. Much later on, he felt compelled to ask what, in any event, the Official Labor Party had done to make voluntarism a success? To his mind, half-hearted support for recruitment campaigns did nothing to recommend the efficacy of voluntarism as a system of manning the armed forces.³⁹ It is a significant measure of Lynch’s rejection of this system that even in January 1918, after the defeat of two conscription referenda, he should still feel able to decry that “old delusion ... the moth-eaten shibboleth of voluntarism.”⁴⁰

³⁴ *Ibid*, p.7803.

³⁵ *Report of Proceedings* (Kalgoorlie Congress, June 1916), p.22.

³⁶ *CPD*, Vol.79, p.7804.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p.7805.

³⁸ *Report of Proceedings* (Kalgoorlie Congress, June 1916), p.22.

³⁹ *CPD*, Vol.84, p.3469 (24 January 1918).

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p.3473.

Sixthly, conscription had been introduced by other leading democracies and, furthermore, was supported by leading British and European Socialists.

Lynch's argument for conscription rested partly on the fact that other leading parliamentary democracies such as Italy, France and (later) Great Britain had already introduced conscription. He also argued that conscription was quite consistent with socialism and that leading socialists in Great Britain and Europe supported it.

His argument, however, was based more upon an appeal to the authority of certain British and European socialists than on any systematic exposition of specifically *socialist* arguments for conscription. On only one occasion—the Western Australian State Labor Congress of June 1916—did he set out, albeit briefly, the “socialist” case for conscription. He based his argument upon the bold assertion that “voluntarism was subversive of Socialism”.⁴¹ In doing so, he implicitly linked the “socialist” argument for conscription to the principle of compulsion (for the common good) which he had enunciated in the Senate twelve months earlier.⁴²

Lynch was, above all, “a *practical* Socialist”. For him, fraternal greetings were worthless unless accompanied by practical aid in the form of arms and fighting men. He insisted that no true socialist could stand by without coming to the aid of their fellow socialists in France and Italy. He asked rhetorically what “self-proclaimed Socialists” in the Labor Party were doing “to assist [German socialist leader] Leibknecht, who, with Homeric valour, has for so long stood up to the

⁴¹ *Report of Proceedings* (Kalgoorlie Congress, June 1916), p.22.

⁴² *CPD*, Vol.77, p.3781 (9 June 1915). Because such things as taxation and education were compulsory, he argued, so ought a contribution to the defence of one's country.

military despotism of Prussia?”⁴³ His rhetorical appeal to these kinds of sentiments was admirably demonstrated by his parting thrust to a rowdy and hostile audience in the Northcote Town Hall during the 1916 conscription referendum campaign: “You cowardly dogs, you’re letting the socialists of Europe fight your battles for you!”⁴⁴

Lynch’s appeal to the authority of European socialists was also very much a self-defensive rhetorical device. For example, when his name was linked by anti-conscriptionist Labor opponents with such conservative political figures as Joseph Cook and Sir William Irvine, he would often respond, as he did at the Kalgoorlie Conference, by reminding his audience that those in favour of conscription included “such well-known Socialists and Labourites as H.G. Wells, H.M. Hyndman, Arthur Henderson and Robert Blatchford”.⁴⁵ Indeed, Lynch made great play of the fact that Arthur Henderson and other leading British Labourites were firm conscriptionists. As far as he was concerned, Prime Minister Billy Hughes had lost his political head merely “for doing exactly what Labourites in the Old Country have done”.⁴⁶

The Context of the Conscription Debate

Having considered Lynch’s arguments with regard to the *content* of the conscription debate, it is now necessary to consider his arguments with regard to the *context* of the debate. For Lynch and most of the other leading protagonists,

⁴³ *Ibid*, Vol.80, p. 9168 (3 October 1916). Lynch was presumably familiar with the leaflet *The Socialist’s Duty* produced by the National Referendum Council in Melbourne for the October 1916 referendum. It quoted European socialist leaders such as Jaures (France) and Vandervelde (Belgium) supporting conscription, before declaring: “The socialist, the democrat beyond all other men, should vote ‘YES’ to the Referendum” [WAA 956A/69/9 (Jull Papers)].

⁴⁴ *Argus* (Melbourne), 5 October 1916, p.8

⁴⁵ *Report of Proceedings* (Kalgoorlie Congress, June 1916), p.22.

⁴⁶ *CPD*, Vol. 81, p.10976 (5 March 1917).

the conscription controversy was as much about authority and democracy within the Labor Party as it was about conscription itself.

During the early stages of the conscription debate Lynch primarily addressed himself to the arguments for conscription. It was only from mid-1916 onwards, when this increasingly divisive issue came to a head within the Labor Party, that he was obliged to address the related issues of party democracy. This he did on numerous occasions, though most polemically at the Melbourne conference of December 1916 and most comprehensively in his Senate speech of 14 March 1917.

Lynch argued that Labor parliamentarians should be free to support conscription if they so desired because compulsory military service was already part of the Labor platform; what was being proposed was merely that it be extended to service overseas. Furthermore, since the Labor platform was silent on the latter issue, it did not preclude it.⁴⁷ He insisted that, despite talk of some ill-defined and nebulous “spirit of the movement”, anti-conscription had never been a principle in the party platform. He also consistently argued that Labor members were bound by their pledge to the platform and to the majority decisions of Caucus, not to the decisions of party conferences and executives (State or Federal).

Lynch was assiduous in pointing out the inconsistencies involved in expelling conscriptionists such as himself from the Party. For a principle to be a principle it should hold true universally, he argued. Disciplining conscriptionists such as himself effectively elevated a policy of anti-conscription above Labor principles: these principles did not vary from state to state whereas policy on conscription and disciplinary practices did. The various State executives had taken a variety of

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, Vol.81, p.11412 (14 March 1917).

stances on the issue; do-or-die decisions made in one state need not pertain in a neighbouring state. Moreover, the Western Australian State Executive had given members a free hand on the issue.⁴⁸

For Lynch, regardless of conference decisions, there were other more fundamental principles at stake relating to the very function of democracy and to the exercise of conscience. He maintained that, even if part of a minority within the party, he should still have the right to speak out. He subscribed to the view that democracy was more than just majority rule: it should acknowledge the rights of minorities. “If I understand anything about a Democracy, it is that, if it does not give its units the right to think, to act and to speak as their consciences dictate, it is not a Democracy at all”, he declared.⁴⁹ On that same occasion he explained why the small minority of expelled Laborites, himself included, were seated on the opposite of the Senate chamber to their former colleagues: “We are here ... because we insist upon that inalienable right that a free man should possess to express his thoughts independently of consequences in a free Democracy”, and then more polemically: “We are here ... in obedience to that mental injunction, that impulse of soul, without which a free man is only a slave ...”.⁵⁰

Lynch also made it clear that he put what he saw as the obligation “to safeguard this country of ours” ahead of any talk of platforms and “tinpot principles”.⁵¹ For him, the safety of Australia represented a higher principle than did submission to any “principle” enunciated in a party platform.

A number of these issues are encapsulated in the following statement of March

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, pp.11407-13.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p.10977 (5 March 1917).

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p.10970.

⁵¹ *Report of Proceedings* (Melbourne Conference, December 1916), p.7.

1917 which neatly summarised his fundamental grievance:

I was expelled because I supported Mr.Hughes, who, in turn, had been expelled because he advocated conscription; and I contend that I was expelled on unconstitutional grounds. If there is a Labour principle, it ought prevail as such throughout the whole world of Labour; but this alleged principle is sacred in some states, semi-sacred in others, and no principle at all elsewhere. I was not expelled on account of my advocacy of conscription, because in Western Australia we were given a free hand by the highest council of labour, namely, the Labour Congress of Kalgoorlie.⁵²

The sheer arbitrariness, as he saw it, of party discipline, riled him.

Lynch objected violently to individual state executives dictating to their respective MP's on how to vote and speak on the conscription issue. For this reason, he was particularly hostile to the state executives in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. As time went on, he denounced more and more forcibly what he called rule by the "trades hall juntas".⁵³ Worse still, as far as he was concerned, these Labor organisations in the Eastern States had "scabbed" and "ratted" on the Hughes Government. For Lynch, it was most unjust that he and his fellow conscriptionists had been branded as traitors and called "rats" and "renegades" merely for standing up for the inalienable right to express their opinions as democrats.⁵⁴

Given the general confusion which existed during the conscription controversy resulting from the disputed legitimacy and jurisdiction of various party organisations, it was perhaps inevitable that Lynch would issue his own particular challenge in this matter. He did so inasmuch as he questioned the constitutionality of the Melbourne Conference which expelled him from the Party. In the opening portion of his address on that occasion he reminded delegates that such a conference could only be called by "proper authority". When challenged as to

⁵² *CPD*, Vol.81, p.11407 (14 March 1917).

⁵³ *Ibid*, p.10976 (5 March 1917).

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p.11413 and 11408 (14 March 1917).

why he had attended, Lynch said that he was there as an accredited representative of Western Australian organisations.⁵⁵ At the end of the day, Lynch accepted the vote expelling him and others from the party, did not attempt to challenge it and left the conference of his own accord. To all intents and purposes, he had accepted the reality—and the authority—of the fateful decision.

One key question is central to this whole discussion: To what extent was Lynch arguing that the conscriptionist viewpoint should prevail within the party and to what extent was he merely pleading for the right of a minority to hold such a view? Put another way, was he a majoritarian (who happened to be on the losing side) or was he a genuine pluralist? The question is not easily answered.

During the early stages of the conscription controversy, Lynch pleaded on a couple of occasions for tolerance in debate and for the free expression of opinion.

In the Senate in May 1916 he counselled his colleagues:

We must keep our tempers, as well as possible, under subjection, if we are to record a reasoned and seasoned judgement in relation to it, because when passions are inflamed it is impossible to arrive at a clear decision. Therefore, I would plead that, in the present case, we should be indulgent to the last degree concerning opinions expressed by all who take part in the debate.⁵⁶

In light of subsequent behaviour, both by himself and other protagonists in the conscription debate, Lynch's prescient remarks would assume a certain irony before the year was out.

As events unfolded, so the stakes grew higher. The debate became progressively more impassioned and Lynch became less and less inclined to use such placatory and moderate language. Rather than advocate tolerance in debate, he was more likely to complain about the intolerance of his opponents. This was

⁵⁵ *Report of Proceedings* (Melbourne Conference, December, 1916), p.6. Lynch later claimed to be representing "the miners of North Coolgardie", a reference to the North Coolgardie Area Council.

⁵⁶ *CPD*, Vol.79, p.7799 (11 May 1916).

especially the case after the Melbourne Conference, and subsequent moves against himself and other conscriptionists by the Western Australian State Executive.

The change in Lynch's tone within the space of less than twelve months is exemplified in the following extract from a Senate speech in March 1917. Having just condemned the expulsion of himself and others, he added:

The very least we expected from our late [Labor] colleagues was that they should show some tolerance; but it was their intolerance, their tyranny, their unwillingness to allow me and mine to hold opinions we are entitled to hold as members of a free democracy that has caused the unbridgeable gulf that exists today, and will continue to the bitter end.⁵⁷

The bitterness which Lynch refers to is reflected in his own increasingly intemperate language as the conscription controversy wore on. His speech at a referendum eve rally at Boulder in October 1916 employed such terms as "Huns", "pro-Germans" and "IWW" to describe his opponents.⁵⁸

Lynch's contribution to the conscription debate at Melbourne highlighted the tension or duality which had by now developed in his approach to the issue. On the one hand he was talking reconciliation and on the other hand defiance and confrontation. This is best symbolised in the following brief exchange:

Lynch: He had come that day with an olive branch ___

A Delegate [interjecting]: A shillelagh!⁵⁹

Lynch's concluding remarks were recorded in the following way: "Seemingly the time of tyranny had arrived. He was hopeful there might be reconciliation, but if it did not come he was not going to sacrifice his independence for any man."⁶⁰

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, Vol.81, p.11407 (14 March 1917).

⁵⁸ WAA 300/1704A/3. As alleged by delegate J.R. Brown at EGDC meeting of 4 November 1916 following the rally on 27 October.

⁵⁹ *Report of Proceedings* (Melbourne Conference, December 1916), p.7. This was recorded in reported speech.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*.

Lynch took some pride in pointing to the relative tolerance, as he saw it, shown by conscriptionists towards anti-conscriptionists within the party in Western Australia. In March 1917, he boasted to the Senate:

Whilst we who believed in conscription had charge of the State Executive, and could pass any resolution we chose, we had as president Mr. Doland and as secretary Mr. Clementson, both of whom were anti-conscriptionists. There was no attempt on our part to expel them. We never dreamt of taking such a course, although we were strong enough to force them out of the movement if we so desired.⁶¹

He was referring to what was in reality only a temporary and precariously slim majority which the conscriptionists commanded on the State Executive in mid-1916. Thereafter, the anti-conscriptionists were clearly in the majority. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that they in turn showed the same degree of tolerance to their opponents as Lynch claimed the conscriptionists had to theirs. The three anti-conscriptionist delegates from Western Australia at the Melbourne Conference (McCallum, Lutey and Gibson) were, for example, three of only four delegates who voted against Lynch's expulsion from the party.

Lynch made much of the tolerance and pluralism which was supposedly exercised in Western Australia, although, in truth, it was motivated as much by pragmatism as by principle, since no side held an overwhelmingly majority. Furthermore, the anti-conscriptionists were desperate to keep the conscriptionists on board and to prevent a split in Western Australia at all costs. Nevertheless, Lynch could point to the October 1916 referendum result (a 70% + 'YES' vote) and justly claim to represent "the will of the West", then point to the tolerance displayed by the party in his home state and proudly proclaim that "the West was different".

However, such solace as Lynch could hitherto salvage from this state of affairs

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p.11410-1 (14 March 1917).

evaporated rapidly once the Western Australian State Executive delivered its ultimatum of 21 January 1917 to Lynch and his conscriptionist colleagues to renounce their support for Hughes and return to the fold.⁶² Thereafter, Lynch's attitude towards the state branch took an about turn, becoming stridently hostile. It was, for Lynch, as if that much-valued tolerance of "the West" had now too dissolved. Nowhere was his new-found hostility more evident than in his defiant statement to the Eastern Goldfields District Council ALF on 10 January 1917. Here he added the Western Australian organisation to his targets of condemnation, a place previously reserved for the eastern organisations:

With regard to his statement that the Labor Party in the Eastern States were [sic] rotten to the core—He repeated that statement now, the organisations were sound, but the official heads were rotten and doubly rotten to the core, and so far as the organisations in [Western Australia] were concerned, the official heads were also rotten to the core, in fact rotten was too mild a term to use when referring to the official heads of the Labour movement, and he would repeat this with all the emphasis he possessed ...⁶³

The "West" had now turned against him, and thereafter he was disinclined to show the tolerance in debate which he believed was no longer being shown to him. More importantly, now that he had been expelled and the party itself split, the issue was much larger than conscription itself. Again, was Lynch a majoritarian or a genuine pluralist?

It is worthwhile here to consider his attitude towards the guarantee of free speech for both sides in the conscription debate. During the two referendum⁶⁴ campaigns—but particularly during the extremely heated and divisive campaign of 1916—both conscriptionist and anti-conscriptionist speakers were often denied hearings on the public platform. In some cases this involved the disruption of meetings by opponents and, in the case of the anti-conscriptionist side, the denial

⁶² WAA 300/1573A/2

⁶³ WAA 300/1704A/3.

⁶⁴ Strictly speaking, they were plebiscites.

of public halls for meetings. Anti-conscriptionist literature was also censored on occasions or delayed in transport. Lynch's response was neither to protest against such censorship nor to demand a fair hearing for anti-conscriptionists, but rather to parade similar instances in which he and other conscriptionists had allegedly suffered. Two examples will suffice.

In September 1916, Senator Needham put a question to Pearce, Minister for Defence, regarding the breaking up of an anti-conscription meeting in Perth, asking whether the government would ensure freedom of speech for anti-conscriptionists. Lynch's response was to rise and pose a similar question to Pearce regarding his (Lynch's) attempt to address a meeting at the Melbourne Guild Hall the previous Sunday night, when he had been threatened with personal violence. Countering Needham, Lynch asked whether the government would ensure freedom of speech and protection for himself and others like him.⁶⁵

Some six months later, in March 1917, Needham rose to make a statement in the Senate in reply to interjections made by Lynch and Pearce that he (Needham) had run away from meetings in Western Australia during the referendum campaign the previous year. Needham referred to one occasion in Fremantle where he had first been granted the use of the Victoria Hall for an anti-conscriptionist meeting only to have a £25 bond demanded of him later.⁶⁶ Following Needham's lengthy explanation, Lynch rose to reply and, egged on by Pearce, proceeded to lampoon his friend in the following terms:

The serious part of the business is that when it was announced that Senator Needham, as leader of the anti-conscription movement in Western Australia, was about to arrive and set the Swan River on fire, there was a very great shortage of furniture in the State ... Being isolated as we were, with the prospect of sitting on jam or milk boxes, we did not wish to have our public halls used by the leader of the anti-conscription

⁶⁵ *CPD*, Vol.80, p.9039 (28 September 1916). According to Lynch, one man threatened to shoot him and another "to finish the job".

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, Vol. 81, pp.11470-2 (14 March 1917).

movement unless he entered into a guarantee as a business arrangement that no furniture be broken.

Lynch's consistently displayed a propensity to turn the legitimate complaints of anti-conscriptionists into a joke or to otherwise treat them dismissively by recourse to grievances of his own. This does serve to detract from his claim during the conscription controversy that tolerance and the free expression of opinion were central to his position. Nevertheless, given the circumstances, it is at least understandable—if not excusable—that some of his early proclaimed tolerance and sense of fair play should have dissolved in the heat of battle. For all that, the evidence suggests that he was more majoritarian than genuine pluralist.

Counter-Arguments against Lynch

For each of the six arguments put forward in the previous section as constituent parts of Lynch's case for conscription it is possible to construct a convincing counter-argument. It is also possible to counter each of his arguments insofar as it related to the broader issues of authority, discipline and democracy within the Labor Party. However, it is not the purpose here to engage in such a discourse in political and moral philosophy. Rather, the task is to consider some of the more significant responses to Lynch put forward by his opponents at the time.

This task is made somewhat more difficult by the fact that it is impossible to find any detailed systematic rebuttal of the arguments used by Lynch to support his case. Not one anti-conscriptionist opponent attempted such an enterprise. Rather, the various elements which might go to make up such a response are scattered throughout various speeches (and interjections) made during Senate debates. They are also to be found in some of the contributions to debate made at

such significant occasions as the Kalgoorlie Congress of June 1916 and the Melbourne Conference that December, not to mention speeches made on various public platforms, and articles and letters appearing in the Press.

It is noteworthy that most of these responses addressed the *context* rather than the actual *content* of the conscription debate. That is to say, they were for the most part directed towards arguing the politics of the Labor Split of 1916-17 rather than the issues of conscription *per se*. They were also essentially reactive in nature.

One obvious exception was the detailed and lengthy report on the Melbourne Conference (and associated events) prepared by the ALF State Secretary Alex McCallum and delivered to the Western Australian State Executive in January 1917. McCallum firmly believed that the Melbourne Conference viewed conscription as being against the fundamental principles if not the very planks of the Labor platform. He wrote: “[T]he very basis of our existence was the sacredness of human life whereas conscription proposed treating human life as goods and chattels which was the very antithesis of one of our basic principles.”⁶⁷ Later in this same report McCallum quoted Resolution No.26 which had been carried at the Melbourne Conference subsequent to the expulsion of Lynch and his colleagues: “That this conference is of the opinion that the disposal of life and the question of religion are sacred to the individual, and cannot be submitted to a referendum.”⁶⁸ It was indeed rare to have such a statement from within the Labor Party which went to the very core of the moral argument against conscription. For the most part, anti-conscriptionists in the Senate and within the wider party ranks addressed the more peripheral issues concerning the necessity or otherwise of conscription rather than these moral questions.

⁶⁷ WAA 68/2. McCallum Report (December 1916) contained in ALF State Executive Papers.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p.6

McCallum also delivered a damning indictment of Lynch's position insofar as it related to his walking out of the Federal Labor Caucus to join Hughes and his supporters in the formation of a new political party. McCallum maintained that the only excuse which Hughes's supporters could give when challenged was that they had left the party because they believed that Hughes would not be given a fair deal by Caucus. For McCallum, "this was of course a spurious argument". He argued that if every man took such an attitude then there would no end to such walkouts and schisms.⁶⁹

These essential arguments in McCallum's report were of course directed at all the Western Australian conscriptionist Federal MP's, not at Lynch alone. There were, however, numerous points of counter-argument directed at him personally during debates in both the party and the parliamentary forums. We will consider here just a few of the more important examples.

Firstly, it was argued by Labor senators J.V. O'Loghlin and R. Blakey that Australia had done as well as other Dominions in supporting the war effort. They regarded this as a more valid comparison than that of Lynch's which compared Australia to the Mother Country.⁷⁰

Secondly, it was argued that voluntarism would suffice to produce the necessary number of recruits. This argument followed logically from those employed by Blakey and O'Loghlin. It was a common theme, for example, of Archbishop Mannix's anti-conscriptionist pronouncements. Labor MHR Dr William Maloney took a similar line when he argued that any soldier should go to

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p.3. Jim Page MHR had earlier alluded to the same subject. He observed that Lynch had spoken of men going to Caucus with their minds made up, but retorted: "What about [Hughes's] followers troop[ing] out after him?" [*Report of Proceedings* (Melbourne Conference), p.14]

⁷⁰ *CPD*, Vol.77, pp.4383-4 (25 June 1915) [O'Loghlin]; *Ibid*, Vol.79, p.7804 (1 May 1916) [Blakey].

war as a volunteer and not as a “slave”; furthermore, that no people had ever voted freely for conscription.⁷¹

Thirdly, it was claimed that conscription would be used to crush the labour movement and would be extended into peacetime. This was a common objection to conscription, by eastern states trade unionists in particular. However, it was addressed to Lynch personally by several delegates, including P.J. Mooney and Mrs Foxcroft, at the Kalgoorlie Congress of June 1916.⁷²

Fourthly, it was argued that conscription was opposed to the very “spirit” of the Labor platform. This kind of argument was contained in the McCallum report, which we have already noted. It had also been used in direct response to Lynch by delegate T.C. Carey, for example, at the Melbourne Conference.⁷³ As we know from Lynch’s speeches at this conference and elsewhere, he rejected any such argument based upon the “spirit” of the Labor platform. For him, it was the letter that mattered; regardless, the “spirit” of Labor also endorsed the principle of compulsion.⁷⁴

Fifthly, it was stated by many who disagreed with Lynch over conscription that such disagreement did not constitute the basis of their fundamental argument against him; rather, it was the action taken by him and others in following Hughes and establishing a new political party. This argument was put by several delegates at the Melbourne Conference, including Cavanagh, Gunn, Gill and Lynch’s parliamentary colleague, Senator Ready. Ready asked why Lynch had walked out

⁷¹ *Ibid*, Vol.80, p.9160 (29 September 1916). Eight days previously Lynch had complained to the Senate about Maloney having denied his request to speak to an anti-conscriptionist meeting on the Yarra Bank [*Ibid*, p.8787 (21 September 1916)].

⁷² *Report of Proceedings* (Kalgoorlie Congress, June 1916), pp. 22 and 27.

⁷³ *Report of Proceedings* (Melbourne Conference, December 1916), p.7. In Carey’s words, “[T]he spirit of Labor was embodied in ‘no conscription’.”

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, pp.7 and 16. Carey at one stage interjected during Lynch’s first speech to challenge his use of the term “tinpot principles”.

of the Labor Party room.⁷⁵ A few months later the Labor leader in the Senate, Albert Gardiner, interjected during one of Lynch's speeches to remind him that he had been expelled at the Melbourne Conference not merely for supporting conscription but for helping to set up a new party.⁷⁶

The nearest thing to be found to a full and proper response to Lynch on the issues relating to the conscription controversy and the Labor Split is a lengthy speech made by Labor senator Henry Turley directly following Lynch's landmark address to the Senate on 14 March 1917.⁷⁷ Turley methodically dissected Lynch's speech and rebutted most of his points, although he occasionally indulged in the same kind of rhetoric and polemic which Lynch had employed. Most of Turley's arguments dealt not with the issue of conscription *per se* but with the broader issues relating to Lynch's role in the Labor Split.

Turley argued that Lynch had no right to complain about the treatment he had received because he had willingly followed Hughes out of the party. With regard to conscription, however, Turley made the acute observation that any Labor candidate who had advocated conscription at the 1914 general election would not have been re-elected.⁷⁸

Two of the most telling points against Lynch were made on other occasions by Labor senator John Barnes. On the first occasion, in March 1917, Barnes observed by way of interjection that it had taken Lynch a long time to discover what awful people the "cowardly members of the [Trades Hall] junta" were.⁷⁹ On the second

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p.13.

⁷⁶ *CPD*, Vol.81, p.11407 (14 March 1917). Lynch replied: "I was expelled because I supported Mr Hughes, who, in turn, had been expelled because he advocated conscription; and I contend that I was expelled on unconstitutional grounds."

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, Vol.81, pp.11417-31 (14 March 1917). Lynch's speech began at 4.10a.m. and lasted an hour and twenty minutes. Turley's reply lasted two hours and ten minutes, finishing at 8.40a.m.!

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, pp.11424-5. Lynch, who was present in the chamber, did not challenge Turley at this point.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, Vol.81, p.10976 (5 March 1917).

occasion, in January 1918, Barnes delivered what was possibly the most potentially damning indictment of Lynch's argument for conscription. He interjected during Lynch's speech to ask: "Why did the honourable senator not protest earlier against that plank of the Labor platform which restricts compulsion to service within Australia?" To this, Lynch lamely replied:

We are living and learning, and when we framed that policy we were so much engrossed in the improvement of the social and industrial conditions of the Australian people that we ignored, to some extent, the necessity for ensuring the safety of the country.⁸⁰

Following directly upon Lynch's speech, Labor senator James Guy delivered yet another blow when he observed that "every word uttered by Senator Lynch in condemnation of the Labor Party and of the people who voted 'NO' at the recent referendum, applies with equal force to the men in the trenches who voted 'NO'."⁸¹

There were two other issues related to the conscription debate on which Lynch was personally vulnerable. However, since they were not used against him to any significant degree by his opponents, they will only be mentioned here in passing. The first was the issue of Maltese labour and the second was the conscription of wealth.

During the referendum campaign of October 1916 the anti-conscriptionist side used the threatened importation of Maltese labour to replace conscripted British labour as a scare tactic against their opponents.⁸² Despite Lynch's past record of strong opposition to "alien labour", some of his opponents had picked up more than a hint of ambivalence in his attitude towards the importation of Maltese

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, Vol.84, p.3472 (24 January 1918).

⁸¹ *Ibid*, p.3485.

⁸² There were at this time unsubstantiated rumours that a large shipload of Maltese labourers were due to arrive at Fremantle. Apart from appealing to racial prejudice, such claims were used to substantiate the argument that conscription would be used to undermine the organised labour movement.

labour during war-time. The issue was raised and used against him by two delegates—J. Gunn MHA (South Australia) and T.D. Mutch (NSW)—at the Melbourne Conference of December 1916.⁸³ Lynch took the matter seriously enough to rise and make a statement in his own defence, ending with the comment that “nothing was said about the Maltese coming into the commonwealth until conscription was talked of”.⁸⁴

Lynch also displayed a certain ambivalence on the issue of conscription of wealth in war-time, questioning the practicability of its implementation and challenging the view that its implementation should be a pre-condition for the conscription of men.⁸⁵ This, despite the fact that he had been a delegate at the Western Australian Labor Congress in 1916 which, before the more contentious matter of conscription of men had even been debated, had unanimously accepted a carefully worded resolution endorsing conscription of wealth for the war effort.⁸⁶

Underlying assumptions

By summarising Lynch’s arguments for conscription as a syllogism we may proceed to uncover some of the suppressed premises in his arguments. These premises will in turn reveal some of his underlying assumptions with regard to the related issues of war, defence and conscription. In so doing we will discover that his opinions cloak even more fundamental beliefs about Aboriginal, Asian and European civilisations and, indeed, about what is meant by such terms as “development” and “progress”. By unpacking his ideas in this way we may gain a better understanding of the ideological underpinnings of Lynch’s world-view.

⁸³ *Report of Proceedings* (Melbourne Conference, December 1916), pp. 10 and 12.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p.15.

⁸⁵ *CPD*, Vol.79, p.7805 (11 May 1916); Vol.84, p.3482 (24 January 1918).

⁸⁶ *Report of Proceedings* (Kalgoorlie Congress, June 1916), p.10. The resolution had been devised by a specially appointed sub-committee under Premier John Scaddan after a long and thorough debate had proved inconclusive.

The syllogism might be described as the argument for conscription based upon the *Common Good Principle* and can be stated as follows:

Premise (A): The defence of any nation is for the common good of the citizens of that nation.

Premise (B): Voluntarism cannot be counted upon to achieve what is necessary for an adequate national defence in war-time.

Conclusion: The government has the right to employ an element of compulsion (that is, conscription) for the common good.

Some of the readily identifiable suppressed premises in this argument may be summarised as follows:

(1) Any threat to the Empire is a threat to Australia; hence the Australian nation is under military threat.

(2) The Empire in general, and Australian democracy in particular, are superior to any alternatives, and hence worth defending.

(3) The “Common Good” is defined by what the government of the day decides as being best for the “national interest”.

(4) Europeans—specifically Britishers—have a legitimate right to Australia, and to defend and retain it as their own.

We will now examine each of these premises in turn to uncloak their underlying assumptions:

(1) The Australian nation is under threat.

This statement was premised upon the assumption that Germany constituted a direct military threat to Australia. Lynch’s argument that German militarism was fundamentally different from British or any other kind of militarism was based upon his reading of recent German political thought. He was particularly informed by his reading of the philosopher Nietzsche to whom he attributed such ideas as

the doctrine of the supremacy of the State, the triumph of war and courage over love, the inversion of the beatitudes and of the Sermon on the Mount, the condemnation of Christianity, the denigration of such virtues as charity and forgiveness, and the division of mankind into the servile and the rulers.⁸⁷

Furthermore, for Lynch, Nietzsche's philosophy was being enacted by the German rulers of the day:

Is there not a very strong resemblance in that picture by Nietzsche with the terrible pathway which has marked the advance of the German Army through Belgium to its present front in France? Has not his teaching been carried out to the very letter in Belgium and the north of France?⁸⁸

He revealed that he had also read German political thinkers such as Treitschke, who advocated a superior position for the army in the State. According to Lynch, within both the philosophic and the military spheres, Germany was advocating force.⁸⁹

In his critique of German militarism we can detect something of a precursor, in certain respects at least, of the kind of anti-totalitarian critique of German National Socialism and Soviet Communism employed by many commentators in the 1930s and 1940s. From his 1916 speech we get a sense of recognition on his part that the British democracies were now dealing with something more than just another authoritarian regime. Lynch was arguing that, in German militarism, the world was confronted by a fundamentally different phenomenon to anything hitherto; to that extent he was presaging significant elements of an anti-totalitarian critique.

(2) The Empire and Australian democracy are superior and worth defending.

Lynch's arguments for conscription were always premised upon his oft-stated

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, Vol. 79, pp.7800-1 (11 May 1916). His speech contained six short quotes from Nietzsche.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p.7801.

claim that Australia had a near perfect democracy guaranteeing a high level of personal freedom. Addressing himself to the Unlawful Associations (Amendment) Bill in 1917, he justified the further curtailing of liberties of such groups as the IWW by claiming that “Australia is the freest democracy that ever existed”.⁹⁰ When debating the Unlawful Assemblies Bill in 1920, he stated that “[M]y idea of a democracy is that no matter [what your viewpoint is] you should have ample freedom to express it on all occasions”, but added the important qualification, “provided, of course, that to carry it into effect would not disturb the social order or interfere with the laws of the country”.⁹¹

Lynch’s proviso here about “not disturb[ing] the social order” signified a firm belief in its legitimacy. He emphasised defence rather than reform of the prevailing order. This approach of course overlooked—or at least downplayed—both the weaknesses in Australian democracy and the problems of social injustice. It reflected, furthermore, the inherently conservative political view that in a democracy priority must always be given to preserving the existing social order, whatever its faults.

(3) The “Common Good” is defined by what the government of the day decides as being best for the “national interest”.

Advocates of the right of governments to implement conscription (especially in war-time) often argue from the premise that an elected government should have the power, if deemed so necessary, to conscript citizens for the “common good” and in the “national interest”. This assertion is based upon the idea that in war-time the good of the nation should automatically come before that of any

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *CPD*, Vol.82, p.413 (25 July 1917)

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, Vol.92, p.3128 (30 July 1920)

particular section, class or individual. It also assumes the existence of some transcendent “national interest”.

Lynch’s own assumptions about the national interest (a concept neatly mirrored in the name *National Party*) very much reflected the social harmony model which he implicitly accepted and applied to his politics. This model, which can be sharply contrasted to a class conflict model, was by no means peculiar to Lynch and other latter-day conservative politicians—indeed, it was implicitly adopted by William Lane and many other non-Marxian socialists.

Lynch’s tacit acceptance of the social harmony and, with it, a particular conception of the national interest, is reflected in a number of his later political speeches. It is reflected, for example, in his March 1917 assertion that for him the only party was the “Win-the-War Party” and by his argument for the transcendence of party politics in war-time.⁹² It is also reflected in his appeals during the 1930s for the various parties and interest groups to work together in a spirit of social harmony for the common good.⁹³

(4) Europeans—specifically Britishers— have a legitimate right to Australia, and to defend and retain it as their own.

Let us now analyse some of the underlying assumptions of Lynch’s argument for the defence of Australia as “a white man’s country”. His claim that Britishers had a right to retain Australia rested upon the notion that these settlers were actually “doing something” with the country, that they were “developing” it. He acknowledged that Europeans had displaced Aborigines from their own country, which he justified by saying, in effect, that the natives were not doing anything

⁹² *Ibid*, Vol. 81, p. 11406 (14 March 1917)

⁹³ For example: *Ibid*, Vol.155, p.522 (9 December 1937). Lynch deplored the lack of bi-partisan goodwill then present in politics.

with it. Here Lynch did not recognise the radical implications of his admission—or the potential undermining of his own position—because he unquestioningly accepted the dominant notions of his day regarding the primacy of “development”. He argued that British Australians had to develop the continent in order to justify their continued presence, otherwise other races would have the right to come in and take it over just as the British had done.

Lynch developed this argument most comprehensively in a speech to the Senate in 1931, but the assumptions underlying it are revealed in much earlier speeches. As a government minister introducing the Unlawful Associations Bill in December 1916, he condemned the IWW for its doctrine of “going slow”, comparing it to the practice of Australian aborigines:

What is the position? We came here and dispossessed a native race. On what grounds? On no other ground than that its members were “going slow”, and were not making the best use of it ... We dispossessed them, and now it is suggested that we in our turn, should “go slow” just as the aborigines before us had been doing. If we wish to protect this continent, we cannot accomplish our purpose by “going slow”.⁹⁴

Lynch’s observations reflected the common assumptions of his day regarding Aborigines. One of these was revealed in the concluding sentence of his speech of December 1916 (the opening sentence of which provides a connecting link to our earlier remarks regarding the supposed supremacy of Australian democracy):

In no other country in the world has the tree of liberty flourished and blossomed to so fine an extent as it has here. It has grown to its present splendour of outline and state of luxuriance through not a single blow being struck for it on this continent nor *a drop of blood being shed to obtain it*.⁹⁵ [my emphasis]

Such a statement of course overlooked the Aborigines and continued the common practice—relinquished only quite recently—of ignoring the Aboriginal blood spilt during the conflicts resulting from European occupation.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, Vol.80, p.10155 (19 December 1916).

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, Vol.80, p.10151 (19 December 1916).

Lynch's practice of referring to the "discovery" of Australia likewise reflects the *terra nullius* assumptions of his day regarding the presence of the Aboriginal peoples. In 1931 he declared: "It is a primitive law and in accordance with natural right that those who *discover* a new country are entitled to possess it" [my emphasis].⁹⁶ His comments were made in the context of discussing the safety of Australia and the nation's obligations to the League of Nations. He believed that the League's task of establishing "racial equality" meant "nothing more than the unquestioned entry of the people of other countries into Australia",⁹⁷ something he could never accept.

For Lynch, the strongest claim of the present occupants to the ownership of Australia rested on two considerations; first, the fact that its development was "the result of the efforts of the hardy pioneers of the British nation"; and, secondly, that, on the basis of density of population, the Caucasian countries were much more entitled to some relief than were the countries of Asia. Not for the first time, he attempted to debunk what he called the myth of "the teeming east" in favour of the more accurate appellation, "the teeming west". By demonstrating that Europe was in fact more densely populated than Asia, he sought to show that European peoples had a greater claim on the land mass of Australia.⁹⁸

Developmentalism

Here we come to the crux of the matter. Lynch's argument for the defence of Australia depended to a large degree on the assumption that the development of the continent by the British legitimated their continued occupation and control. His conception of what constituted "development" in turn reflected what may be

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, Vol.130, p.3105 (26 June 1931).

⁹⁷ *Ibid*.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*.

termed the *developmentalist* ideology of his day, an orthodoxy which was hardly questioned. This ideology was very much based upon the exploitation of the earth's resources for the material advancement and progress of the community at large. As someone previously engaged in the occupation of mining, and thereafter in farming, Lynch could only be expected to embrace such a world-view.

This world-view could further be said to reflect that ideology of developmentalism⁹⁹ which he had inherited from his farming background in Ireland, and which we briefly examined in Chapter One. It is a distinguishing feature of this outlook that the land is seen very much as a commodity and as a resource to be developed. In that respect it differs markedly from the Aboriginal view of the land.¹⁰⁰

In turn, this strongly developmentalist outlook can be said to represent but one aspect of the colonised mind. The Meath farmer, growing up in a largely Anglicised part of Ireland, may be said to have internalised in large measure the values and precepts of the coloniser. The colonised, in this case, had imbibed from the coloniser the notion of material progress based upon the exploitation of the land. This conception contrasted sharply with the Celtic world-view prevailing in pre-Anglicised Ireland, which retained a notion of existence and a conception of achievement which was much less dependent upon an exploitative relationship; it stressed a more symbiotic relationship between the people and the land.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Developmentalism as an ideology has been defined by its critics rather than its proponents (who simply accept its basic assumptions). One celebrated critique of present-day manifestations of developmentalist ideology is Richard Douthwaite's *The Growth Illusion: how economic growth has enriched the few, impoverished the many and endangered the planet* (Devon, England, 1992). Douthwaite is an English economist living in Ireland. His critique, however, has universal application.

¹⁰⁰ It also contrasts sharply with the somewhat romanticised and idealised view of the native Irish relationship to the land entertained by many in the diaspora.

¹⁰¹ Lynch's developmentalist assumptions pre-date the rise of environmentalism and the Green movement, the questioning of economic development (or at least economic *growth*) as a good in itself, the greater understanding of Aboriginal culture and spirituality (especially the relationship with the land), the recent revival of Celtic spirituality, and the even more recent reclaiming of elements of creation-centred spirituality within the Christian tradition.

Paddy Lynch was of course a product of his time. For one, he was steeped in the Old Testament tradition of Genesis, with its renowned stress upon man's dominion over—rather than stewardship of—the earth.¹⁰² What he had learnt from his Christian education in Ireland—combined with what he needed to earn a living—stayed with him the rest of his life.

We may now identify the crux of Lynch's argument. It rested on a key underlying assumption. He genuinely believed that Britishers had every right to defend Australia as their own. This assumption was based upon a particular notion of development which in turn underpinned the British claim to occupancy. These claims served as the basis of most of his pronouncements on conscription. For him, they were self-evident truths which did not need to be proven. Hence, we can understand the assertive self-confidence and almost total lack of self-doubt evident in so many of his public statements. In its unstated assumptions, that key question posed by Lynch towards the conclusion of his speech to the Melbourne Conference of 1916—"Where would White Australia be if the allies went down?"—encapsulates his outlook on the related questions of war, defence and conscription.

We may also observe that many of his assumptions examined in this discussion reflect Victorian notions of progress, an inherent belief in white racial superiority, and a tacit acceptance of an enlightened and civilising European enterprise. Most of these assumptions sat comfortably with both Lynch the Irishman and Lynch the Britisher. In this, his mindset was the same as that of most of his fellow Britishers, and, indeed, most of his fellow Irishmen, in Australia.

¹⁰² *CPD*, Vol.97, p.3200 (4 August 1920). He quoted Genesis.

Tolerance

Some general observations can now be made about Lynch's role in the conscription debate and the arguments which he employed. The first relates to tolerance of opposition. After the defeat of the October 1916 Referendum and the decisions of the Melbourne Conference the following December, it became increasingly clear to Lynch that he was on the losing side of the debate—both within the Labor Party and within the community at large. This did not alter his conviction one iota. He was so convinced of the self-evident correctness of his own position that he became increasingly intolerant in debate. There is a strong hint of authoritarianism in some of his later actions and pronouncements—for example, his readiness to dismiss the legitimate complaints of anti-conscriptionists regarding the suppression of free speech and his all-too-ready willingness to accept some of the more repressive war-time measures initiated by the Hughes Government.¹⁰³ For Lynch, however, Australia was in great peril and, provided one accepted this premise, then all else was secondary to the task of winning the war. Only fools and humbugs would believe otherwise.

Secondly, particular aspects of Lynch's argument for conscription were highly contentious and, to say the least, highly contestable. Foremost amongst these perhaps was his assertion that conscription was a socialistic measure. Closely connected to this was his claim that prominent British and European socialists supported conscription, not least as part of the Allied war effort to save the German working-class from the ravages of Prussian militarism.

Several of Lynch's arguments in this regard bear an uncanny resemblance to

¹⁰³ As minister in the Hughes administration in December 1916 he took responsibility for introducing the Unlawful Associations Bill into the Senate.

those put forward by D.H. Newman in his 1916 pamphlet entitled *The Socialist Case for Conscription*.¹⁰⁴ There is no way of knowing whether Lynch had read his pamphlet or how much he was influenced by it. It is readily apparent nonetheless that he and Newman were drawing from the same pool of ideas. Regrettably, Newman detracted from his otherwise cogent and credible presentation by lapsing briefly into a rhetoric which betrayed general anti-German sentiments; this only served to undermine his argument that he was simply opposed to Prussian militarism. Lynch did the same, only his anti-German rhetoric was all the more strident. It was this kind of polemic in the heat of the first conscription campaign which brought most trouble upon himself—especially the remarks attributed to him at the rowdy referendum eve rally at Boulder. These remarks, as we have already seen, landed him in hot water with the Eastern Goldfields District Council ALF.¹⁰⁵

However, it was the substance of Lynch's remarks when called before the council to explain himself—together with his excessive truculence and total lack of repentance—which reflect little credit upon him. His response was recorded as follows:

Senator Lynch stated that he denied using the word “mongrel” as asserted by the person who laid the charges ... he admitted calling anti-conscriptionists Pro-Germans and he was still of this opinion. In reference to the term “IWW”—all these were anti-conscriptionists. He would stick to anything he said with regard to these people. He adhered to his statements that that the anti-conscriptionists were IWW. Regarding the word “Huns” he said this was the neuter gender of German—and he wouldn't withdraw anything he said in regard to anti-conscriptionists being Huns. He said that he knew but could not make public that German gold was being used to finance the breaking up of the AWU (he had it on the authority of Mr. W.G. Spence, that the men that were endeavouring to break up the AWU were living at first class hotels) ...¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ D.H. Newman, *The Socialist Case for Conscription* (Melbourne, 5 September 1916). This was obviously produced as a contribution to the ‘YES’ case in the October referendum. Newman was described as a member of the Federated Clerks Union with a private address in Melbourne.

¹⁰⁵ See discussion in Chapter Six.

¹⁰⁶ WAA 300/1704A/3.

There was more of the same. Clearly such ludicrous remarks could only come from a man who was speaking in anger in the heat of battle. Such spurious logic as would, for example, infer, that because all IWW men are anti-conscriptionists, then *ipso facto* all anti-conscriptionists are IWW, reveals a certain desperation. It suggests that at this stage he may have “lost the plot”.

Conclusion

We may now proceed to an overall evaluation of Lynch’s stand in the conscription debate. It has already been emphasised that the controversy had as much to do with the related issues of authority, democracy and discipline within the Labor Party as it did with conscription itself. With this in mind, the following judgements may be offered:

(1) If there had been one clear national decision-making authority within the Labor Party from the outset, then some of the inevitable confusion and ambiguity with regard to the jurisdiction of state organisations would have been avoided. If a Federal Executive had been established earlier than 1915, and deliberated on a regular basis, then many of the problems resulting from inconsistencies between the various State Executives could have been forestalled. As it was, the belated establishment and effective functioning of the Federal Executive allowed Lynch and other conscriptionists to claim—legitimately—that there had been no clear and authoritative ruling on the issue. In the absence of such a body, Lynch and others were able to trade on the confusion and ambiguity which prevailed; all the more so in Lynch’s case because opinion within the party in Western Australia was clearly divided and, at least initially, there was no clear anti-conscriptionist majority.

(2) Lynch could claim with some justification that talk of the “spirit” of the party platform being opposed to conscription was vague and nebulous. Furthermore, during the early stages of the conscription debate (notably the October 1916 referendum campaign) he and others could legitimately argue that they still had the democratic right to put the conscriptionist case within the internal structures of the party. However, once the Federal Executive and the Special Interstate Congress had resolved these issues in December 1916, Lynch would not adhere to their rulings. As we have previously noted, although he made a token challenge to the constitutionality of the conference, he did thereafter, for all intents and purposes, accept his expulsion from the party. What he did *not* accept, however, was that the conscriptionist side had lost the battle within the labour movement.

(3) For all that, the single most damning indictment of Lynch must be—and this is the crux of the matter—the refusal of he (and 23 others) to accept the precepts of party democracy when on 14 November 1916 they followed Billy Hughes out of the Federal Labor Caucus. Having realised they no longer had the numbers, they simply defied democracy and walked out. In doing so, they ignored the basic principle of majority rule. The excuse subsequently tendered by Lynch and others—that many members had gone into the Caucus meeting with their minds already made up and that Hughes therefore had no chance of a fair hearing—is, to say the least, both lame and self-serving. It is a spurious and circular argument. If applied at will, it would make a total nonsense of party democracy. Lynch simply was not willing to abide by the principle of democracy.

Whatever Lynch may have said during the ensuing debate, it was clear by November 1916 that the overwhelming majority within the labour movement opposed conscription. He and others tried to make heroes and martyrs of

themselves by portraying themselves as a brave minority defying the dictates of the party machine. He appeared to revel in this role which enabled him to pose as a democrat standing up to the “tyranny of the majority”.

In steadfastly maintaining his advocacy of conscription, Lynch obviously believed that he was standing for some higher principle. To that extent there was as much an anti-democratic streak in Lynch’s attitude as there was democratic impulse. The ambivalence with which he accepted the democratic will of the people as expressed in the overwhelming ‘NO’ vote in the December 1917 Conscription referendum supports this contention. As always he was a leader rather than a follower. Like de Valera later, he apparently believed that the majority had no right to do wrong!

Lynch’s argument for conscription was, on its own terms, logical and consistent; although, as we have shown, many of his assumptions were highly questionable. It is evident nonetheless that, for Lynch, this whole episode involved something much deeper and more fundamental than the mere issue of conscription. Underlying the divisions were clearly different conceptions of the Labor Party and of what it was about. This subject will be examined more fully in the next chapter. Lynch genuinely and sincerely believed that his ideal of the Labor Party—a conception which also happened to embrace the idea of conscription—was a legitimate one. He was prepared to fight for that ideal, though, once again, it was clear he was in a minority.

Lynch an Aberration?

One final question to be considered in this chapter is this: To what degree was Paddy Lynch an aberration as an Irish Catholic Labor conscriptionist? Glenn Withers has concluded that the impact of Catholics on the ‘NO’ vote in the 1916-

17 referenda has been greatly exaggerated; he endorsed those historians who have argued that the Catholic vote was in fact divided.¹⁰⁷ As a conscriptionist, then, Lynch was in good company with many of his fellow Catholics; nothing particularly unusual there. But how did he rate as an Irish-born Labor man?

Enter Humphrey McQueen, who poses the question: “Who were the Labor conscriptionists?” In so doing, he aims to disentangle some of the complexities of affiliation and to move beyond crude generalisations and stereotypes.¹⁰⁸ His survey shows that, in comparison to the anti-conscriptionists, the conscriptionists as a group (a) were older, (b) were born in Britain¹⁰⁹ rather than in Australia, (c) represented New South Wales, Tasmania or Western Australia, (d) were Protestant, (e) were less inclined to have had a trade union background, (f) were more inclined to have had ministerial experience, and (g) were inclined to have had longer periods of parliamentary service.¹¹⁰

Measuring Lynch against these criteria, he emerges a typical conscriptionist on *three* of the seven counts: (i) he was born in Britain (Ireland included for this purpose), (ii) he represented one of the designated states (that is, Western Australia), and (iii) he had a longer period of parliamentary service than average (albeit marginally so—12.3 as against 11.5 years). On the other four counts, however, he was atypical: (i) in November 1916, he was *younger* than the average parliamentarian (49 years as against 53), (ii) he was *not* a Protestant, (iii) he *did* have a trade union background (and a rather solid one at that), and (iv) although

¹⁰⁷ Glenn Withers, “The 1916-17 Conscription Referenda: a Cliometric Re-appraisal”, *Historical Studies* (April 1982), p.43. See also the Introduction.

¹⁰⁸ Humphrey McQueen, “Who Were the Conscriptionists?: Notes on Federal Labor Members”, *Labour History* (May 1969), p.4. Supporting Withers, he observes that “the division on the basis of religion is not as clear-cut as legend might suggest”.

¹⁰⁹ Here McQueen includes Ireland.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, p.4. See Table One on p.5.

he *did* have ministerial experience, it was only two months (well short of the average of three years).¹¹¹

Other interesting facts emerge from McQueen's study which help put Lynch into context. Of the five Irish-born Labor members of the Federal Parliament, two—Lynch and Tom Givens (a Protestant)—were conscriptionists, while three—Hugh Mahon, W.G. Mahoney and John Mullan (all Catholics)—were anti-conscriptionists. Thus, three of the four *Irish-born* Catholics were anti-conscriptionist, making Lynch the exception. Only three of the 15 Catholics in the Federal Caucus were listed as “conscriptionists”, of whom Paddy Lynch was one. However, the other two—John Lynch MHR (New South Wales) and Ted Russell MHR (Victoria)—were in fact *anti*-conscriptionists who followed Hughes out of the Caucus over the issue of extra-parliamentary executives dictating to MP's, rather than over conscription *per se*.¹¹² This leaves Patrick Lynch as the only real Catholic conscriptionist in the Caucus.

In the State parliamentary sphere, McQueen notes the interesting case of the South Australian Labor MLA, Peter Reidy, an Irish-born Catholic conscriptionist.¹¹³ He might equally have noted Lynch's fellow Meathman, New South Wales Labor MLA, Patrick McGarry.¹¹⁴ As an Irish-born Catholic Labor conscriptionist, Paddy Lynch, then, was not a complete maverick. He was, however, unique in the Federal Parliament. Moreover, he was certainly the most

¹¹¹ This refers to his two months as a minister in Western Australia in 1905.

¹¹² *Argus* (Melbourne), 15 November 1916, p.8. John Lynch is quoted as saying: “I merely detach myself from the main body of the Labor party as a protest which I have all along maintained against the attempted domination and control of the Federal Labour Party by the State Executive”.

¹¹³ McQueen, *op.cit.*, (1969), p.4.

¹¹⁴ *Biographical Register of the New South Wales Parliament 1901-1970* (Canberra, 1979), pp.176-7.

senior and most prominent Irish-born Catholic Labor conscriptionist in Australia.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Irish-born Catholic conscriptionist, Patrick McMahon Glynn MHR (at various times a minister) and Tom Givens (President of the Senate 1913-26) were politically more senior; however, Glynn was non-Labor and Givens was a Protestant.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

LYNCH'S POLITICAL IDEOLOGY (3):

TRADE UNIONISM, LABOR AND SOCIALISM

It was suggested in the conclusion of the last chapter that Lynch's stance on conscription was closely linked to his conception of Labor ideals. The metamorphosis in his attitudes towards trade unionism, the Labor Party and socialism throughout the period of his political career are traceable through a study of his parliamentary speeches and other public pronouncements. Several continuities and discontinuities will suggest themselves. While his changing attitudes towards all of the aforementioned are obviously interconnected, it is nonetheless useful to consider each in turn.

Trade Unionism

Lynch changed from being a strong supporter of trade unionism during his early political career to being one of its strongest parliamentary critics during his later years. Lynch himself would have said that he still accepted the essentials of trade unionism but that the practice of trade unionism had changed. In other words, he had not changed; trade unionism had. It is evident, nevertheless, that from the time of the Labor Split of 1916-17 and, more particularly from 1919 onwards, that he became progressively more critical of trade union activities—especially with regard to strikes and to other operations outside the law.

Lynch's Labor politics were always solidly trade union based. His prominent role in the trade union movement on the Goldfields (both as union secretary and industrial advocate) had been his path into Parliament in 1904. Despite his involvement in the Political Labor Leagues and his personal association with *the* elite craft union (the ACEDA), he was by no stretch of the imagination a middle-class professional Laborite—like Hugh Mahon, for example.

Nowhere is there to be found a stronger and more unequivocal statement of Lynch's commitment to the principles of trade unionism than in his maiden speech to the Western Australian parliament in 1904. Replying to a jibe that the Labor Party was a "trades hall party", he replied that he was "not all ashamed of belonging to a political party in the House that is associated with trade unions". He then referred members to "that period in the progress of this country when, were it not for trade unionism, the country would have been at a low ebb, not only socially but industrially" and directed attention to the time (of the great maritime strikes) when "trade unionism was all smashed up".¹

By 1916-17, however, far from defending the "trades hall party", Lynch was attacking the "trades hall juntas", those trade union dominated executives in the eastern states who, he alleged, were dictating to Labor MP's on conscription. In July 1917 Lynch alleged that Labor members of the Federal Parliament had received instructions from the "Sydney trades hall bosses" to oppose the passage of the Unlawful Associations Bill. In wartime, Lynch clearly expected the trade union movement to rally around the government of the day for the good of the nation. When it did not do so unequivocally, and when it allowed more militant

¹ *WAPD*, Vol. 25, p.153 (4 August 1904).

elements such as the IWW to breed “sabotage” and dissent, this was enough for Lynch to condemn trade unionism as a body.²

Lynch and Pearce brought a significant number of the Western Australian trade unions with them at the time of the Labor Split in 1917. Thereafter, for as long as Lynch as associated with the National Labor Party,³ his formal connections with trade unionism were not severed. Indeed, he made a point of defending the “national unions” and the “loyalist lumpers” at Fremantle during the 1919 waterfront strike.⁴

At the same time, however, Lynch became progressively more critical of the behaviour of trade unions in general. In the Senate he was an outspoken critic of the seamen’s strike (1919), the marine engineers’ strike (1920), yet another seamen’s strike (1925), the wharf labourers’ strike (1929) and the coal-miners’ strike (1931).⁵ Indeed, when it came to strikes and “excessive” wage demands, there were few more strident critics of trade unionism in the Federal Parliament than Senator Lynch.

His attacks on trade union behaviour during the period 1919-31 were based on a number of considerations:

- (i) That strikes were outside the law and were holding the country to ransom.
- (ii) That the country was being ruined by excessive wage demands.
- (iii) That industrial awards were favouring some workers (for example, seamen and coalminers) at the expense of others (for example, goldminers and timber workers).

² *CPD*, Vol.82, pp. 410 and 413-14 (25 July 1917)

³ That is, until it was subsumed by the Nationalist Party in 1924.

⁴ *CPD*, Vol.90, p.13882 (23 October 1919).

⁵ See discussion in Chapter Seven.

- (iv) That conditions then (the 1920s) were much better than in the hard times of the 1890s. Trade unionism had already succeeded in achieving minimum living standards for workers.
- (v) That workers now had the arbitration system (and a good friend in Justice Higgins); there was no need to operate outside the law.
- (vi) That these gains had been hard one by the sacrifices of the “old battlers” in the labour movement, men like himself.⁶

Moreover, Lynch came to believe that the workers had been “poisoned by a false doctrine”⁷ of militancy which had brought “the business of [the] country ... practically to a standstill ...”.⁸ It was not only the union leadership which was at fault; the rot had spread downwards into the rank-and-file.

It is noteworthy that, as strong as Lynch’s commitment to trade unionism had been in his early days, he had always emphasised the need for moderation, responsibility and discipline within the ranks of the movement. It is true that as a young man he had been active in the 1890s maritime strikes and, in his capacity as ACEDA General Secretary, in the Paddington strike on the Western Australian goldfields in 1900. Both of these events took place, however, before the introduction of an arbitration system, and on both occasions he had argued for moderation rather than militancy.⁹ Moreover, Lynch had always emphasised the responsibilities as much as the rights of workers. In 1919 he told the Senate: “The

⁶ *CPD*, Vol.90, p.12936 (2 October 1919). According to Lynch, the latter-day Laborites had “never spent an hour outside their doors during the weary years when battlers of the kind [he had] mentioned were always abroad. They did nothing, while the real battlers for Labour had almost to be introduced to their wives and children on their return home after weary months of work in the cause they espoused”.

⁷ *Ibid*, Vol.103, p.876 (11 July 1923).

⁸ *Ibid*, Vol.131, p.4273 (23 July 1931).

⁹ See discussion in Chapters Two and Three.

time has arrived in this country for telling the multitudes of the workers that they have their duties and responsibilities as well as their rights".¹⁰ He had always been a firm advocate of "a fair day's work for a fair day's pay".¹¹

Lynch very much personified that "old-fashioned" trade union outlook which had little time for "shirkers" or "slackers". In his case, such an outlook would have been considerably reinforced by the pride which engine-drivers took in their craft, one which required certificated skills and carried with it a certain status. This, then, was the kind of "moderate and responsible" trade unionism into which he had been introduced in the 1890s—and for which he still retained a certain sympathy in the 1930s.

Despite Lynch's claims to hold to the essentials of trade unionism, there is no doubt, however, that his public utterances during the latter part of his political career reflected a far less sympathetic attitude to trade unionism in general. There is one simple and obvious explanation: from 1909 onwards Lynch was a farmer, and a substantial farmer at that. He looked at the world from the perspective of a farmer whose class interest differed from that of an engine-driver trade unionist. Such a transformation did not necessarily imply a conscious change of attitude based, as it were, on naked self-interest; it merely reflected the unconsciously changed outlook which accompanied altered circumstances.

Lynch's change of status was accompanied, especially after 1919, by constant pleas on behalf of rural interests in general, which he clearly believed to be suffering at the expense of privileged urban industrial interests. He became much

¹⁰ *CPD*, Vol.90, p.13824 (23 October 1919).

¹¹ *Ibid*, Vol.80, p.10154 (19 December 1916). "[T]he man who does not do a fair day's work for a fair day's wage is an enemy of the Labour party, as well as his own worst enemy."

less sympathetic to trade union demands, especially when increased wages led to increased costs for the rural community.

To the extent that awards for unionised farm workers adversely affected his costs, there would always be a conflict of interest between the farmer and trade unions. Lynch was quick to take umbrage at any suggestion that his workers were not well treated, and to insist that he always paid award wages or above.¹² At the same time, as a newly established farmer in 1920, he felt able to tell the Senate : “I would like to get some of these [judges of the Arbitration Court] who frame such fanciful awards out into the wilderness, and, on their own awards, set them the task of carving a farm out of the primeval forest”.¹³

Doubtless the practical exigencies of establishing a viable property from the scrub wilderness at Three Springs and making a successful living as a wheatgrower had substantially altered Lynch’s sympathy for the employed vis-à-vis the self-employed. However, something even more fundamental can be divined from the foregoing remark: a much greater emphasis on Lynch’s part on the pioneering spirit of the individual as the means to self-advancement. He now assigned a much lower priority to the collective spirit of trade unionism; that assertion of the individual over the collective reflected in no small part his new economic status.

Moreover, Lynch had come to see trade unionism, especially in times of crisis as such as war and depression, as a *sectional* interest which conflicted with the *national* interest. If Australia were to advance economically, then trade unionism

¹² *Ibid*, Vol.156, p.2587 (23 June 1938). This he did during one (unspecified) election campaign when his opponents had accused him of not paying good wages.

¹³ *Ibid*, Vol.92, p.3197 (4 August 1920). Ironically, Lynch was criticising, amongst others, Justice Higgins, someone whom he had once strongly supported.

had to consider the national interest first. In 1919, Lynch declared:

[I]f we are to progress we cannot do it by glaring at each other and grappling at each other's throats, but only by pulling together, by having a true feeling for each other's welfare, and so studying the interests of the *whole* community.¹⁴
[my emphasis]

“Pulling together” for the common good had become Lynch’s catchcry. Had he stayed on the farm in Ireland rather than emigrating, he would almost certainly never have been involved with trade unionism as he was in Australia. The extent to which the ingrained conservative attitudes of the farmer simply re-asserted themselves once he had eventually returned to that occupation in Australia—and severed his close connections with trade unionism—will be considered more fully later.

The Labor Party

Trade unionism was Lynch’s avenue into the Labor Party. He was a member of the Labor Party for over 25 years, nearly ten years as a senator. In March 1917 he proclaimed to the Senate proudly and defiantly: “There stands my blameless record of twenty-five years in the cause of Labour.”¹⁵ Yet in later years he became one of the most fiercely anti-Labor members in the Federal Parliament. Expelled from the Labor Party in December 1916, he spent the rest of his parliamentary career, over twenty years, in bitter opposition to old comrades.

These statements about Lynch must be immediately qualified with a couple of observations. Firstly, from 1917 until the early 1920’s, when the National Labor Party was absorbed into the Nationalist Party, he was still a member and parliamentary representative of the NLP—albeit in opposition to the Official

¹⁴ *Ibid*, Vol. 90, p.13825 (23 October 1919).

¹⁵ *Ibid*, Vol.81, p.10977 (5 March 1917)

Labor Party. Secondly, and more importantly, although he became increasingly anti-Labor (in the sense of being opposed to the Official Labor Party), he continued to claim allegiance to the Labor tradition. On the one hand he was anti-Labor, yet on the other hand he was still Labor.

Was this not a contradiction? Rather, it revealed a certain tension or duality which persisted in Lynch's political position. He himself was cognisant of the inherent confusion and impermanence of political labels. In 1926, he asked: "Who is Labour and who is anti-Labour?"¹⁶ As late as 1931 he still retained a distinction in some of his speeches between "Old Labour" and "New Labour", clearly identifying himself with the former. "Latter-day Labour" was another popular phrase of his. In 1929 he condemned what he called the hypocrisy of "latter-day Labour" politicians¹⁷ and in 1932 he decried their lack of courtesy.¹⁸ Despite these suggestions of ambiguity and ambivalence in his attitude to the broader Labor tradition, there was no such ambivalence in his response to the Official Labor Party from 1917 onwards.

Lynch's conversion to a solidly anti-Labor political stance at this time is explained at least in part by the bitter personal experience of having been expelled from the Labor Party at the Melbourne Conference of December 1916. According to his interpretation of events, he had been expelled merely for advocating conscription (which in his view was not contrary to the Labor platform) and for remaining loyal to his leader, Prime Minister Billy Hughes. This rejection, after

¹⁶ *Ibid*, Vol.112, p.171 (20 January 1926). The context was an ongoing seamen's strike. Lynch had just quoted the Secretary of the Albany Waterside Workers Federation as having made comments critical of the strikers.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, Vol.122, p.413 (28 November 1929).

¹⁸ *Sydney Morning Herald* (12 March 1932), p.13. The context was a complaint by Lynch that the New South Wales Labor Government had not extended invitations to members of the Commonwealth Parliament to attend the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

more than a quarter of a century of service to the party, left him angry, bitter and resentful. It seemed to him that he—along with other long-standing colleagues such as Hughes, Spence and Guthrie—had been cast aside, despite having all made great personal sacrifices for the cause.

The ultimatum of early January 1917 delivered by the Western Australian State Executive calling on Lynch and the other renegades to repent of their support for Hughes only served to reinforce his intransigence:

I am still, and will remain, a member of the Labour movement ... but not a member of the party masquerading in the name of Labor both here and in the West. There is no repentance for me because I am not guilty of any crime ...¹⁹

This defiant statement underlined both his hostility to the ruling elements in the Labor Party and his continuing loyalty to the movement. Lynch insisted that he was still more a Labor man than most of his political executioners. A year later he declared: “[S]o far as the essentials of the Labour platform are concerned, I am yet more clearly wedded to them than are those who have ‘Labour’ always on their lips ... before I was politically beheaded and told to walk the plank ...”.²⁰

Lynch especially resented himself and his kind being branded by their erstwhile comrades as “traitors”, “rats” and “renegades”.²¹ Indeed, he saw his Labor Party opponents, rather than himself, as “rats” and “scabs” on the movement.²² Clearly, he saw himself as more sinned against than sinning.

Doubtless there was a certain amount of polemic involved in Lynch’s flinging back taunts such as “rat” and “scab” at his former Labor colleagues, not to

¹⁹ *Herald* (Melbourne), 5 February 1917.

²⁰ *CPD*, Vol.84, p.3459 (24 January 1918).

²¹ *Ibid*, Vol.81, 11408 (14 March 1917).

²² *Ibid*, p.11377. There occurred an exchange between Lynch and Irish-born Senator Johnny Mullan (Official Labor Party, Queensland) in which each accused the other being “rats” and “scabs” on the labour movement.

mention a certain a degree of self-justifying rhetoric employed to defend his own Labor credentials. For all that, there does appear to have been a genuine perception on his part that he, rather than his opponents, was loyal to the principles of the movement. Such talk cannot be dismissed as mere polemic and rhetoric. It was, however, rhetoric that he became less inclined to use once the divisions created by the Labor Split had become solidified; more especially, after the National Labor Party had been absorbed into the Nationalist Party and he was confirmed in his role of anti-Labor politician.

Lynch's subsequent hostility towards the Labor Party cannot be entirely explained by his angry reaction to the circumstances of his expulsion at the Melbourne Conference, nor by subsequent events in Western Australia. Despite his rhetoric claiming to remain a true Labor man, it was obvious from 1917 onwards that he had become less sympathetic to mainstream Labor policies. This dissent was most evident in the areas of industrial relations, protection, socialisation and general economic policy.

Socialisation Objective

Coupled with this was Lynch's growing concern about the leftward drift in the Labor Party, particularly the influence exerted by such marginal left-wing elements as the IWW.²³ During the early 1920's he became progressively more uneasy about the relationship between Labor and socialism as enunciated, for

²³ *CPD*, Vol.122, p. 22 (21 November 1929). Lynch's objection in 1929 to newly elected ministers in the Scullin Government singing *The Red Flag* in the Hotel Kurrajong in Canberra ranks as one of the more trivial yet noteworthy examples of his hostility towards any kind of left-wing or communist influence.

example, in the Socialisation Objective adopted in 1921.²⁴ Addressing the Senate in 1923, Lynch insisted that “the present ‘whole hog’ objective of the Labour Party is different from the objective of earlier days”. When challenged by the Labor leader in the Senate, Albert Gardiner, with the assertion that “it is the same, word for word, as it was when the honorable senator was a member of the Labor Party”, Lynch replied: “In the early days a haphazard decision might have been arrived at by the Labour Party for the socialisation of industry, but that objective was very quickly altered so as to apply only to the abolition of monopolies. There it should have stopped. The members of the Labour Party now wish to socialise everything ...”.²⁵ Gardiner was in fact wrong. The Socialisation Objective had been adopted at the 1921 Federal Conference, *after* Lynch had left the Labor Party. However, in his reply, Lynch did not pick up on that point. Since the Socialisation Objective had been qualified by the adoption of the crucial Blackburn Declaration²⁶ it may not have suited his argument to do so. Moreover, it would seem the Labor Party had been acceptable to him whilst its “socialism” remained vaguely defined—embracing, for example, notions of comradeship and a role for state enterprises—but not when it became more explicitly ideological.

Lynch was especially severe on what he saw as the hypocrisy of Laborites—saying one thing while doing another, preaching socialism whilst practising capitalism. In 1929 he scathingly observed: “Latter-day Labour men have to earn a living, and they do it mostly by condemning capitalism, but they never miss an

²⁴ The objective was “the socialisation of the means of industry, production, distribution and exchange” but the three paragraph Blackburn Declaration stated that collective ownership was proposed only to the extent necessary to eliminate exploitation in these fields.

²⁵ *Ibid*, Vol.103, p.877 (11 July 1923)

²⁶ See footnote (24) above.

opportunity to get some of what tarnishes one".²⁷ He also lamented the part-sale by the Western Australian Labor Government of a state enterprise established by a previous Labor government "when Labour was Labour; when it kept its word; when it did not have time to sing the Red Flag—it was too busy doing good work for the people."²⁸

Urban v. Rural Interests

Notwithstanding such attacks on the peregrinations of the Labor Party, the truth is that Lynch's own political position had changed in several important respects after 1917. In 1910, he had confidently declared to the Senate that, speaking as a farmer himself, he could assure the farming interest that it had nothing to fear from the Labor Party.²⁹ By 1919, however, he was articulating the views of the Primary Producers Association and expounding a political philosophy regarding rural interests similar to that of the newly emergent Country Party.³⁰ Indeed, Lynch came more and more to portray the Labor Party as hostile to the interests of farmers and to the rural community in general. Such antipathy towards the Labor Party did not follow automatically from his consolidation as an established wheatgrower—Labor still retained strong support from wheatgrowers after 1917—but it was at least consistent with it. From 1909 until about 1918 (when his own immediate family finally settled permanently at Three Springs),

²⁷ *CPD*, Vol.122, p.412 (28 November 1929). Lynch gave the example of some Labor men in the Federal Parliament who had bought a mining property in Queensland and then sold it to the State Government for a tidy profit. He did not mention E.G. Theodore by name, but this is almost certainly a reference to the recently appointed Federal Treasurer and the "Mungana Mines scandal" some years earlier when Theodore was minister in a Queensland Labor Government.

²⁸ *Ibid*, p.413. This was a reference to the implements works in Perth which Lynch claimed to have helped establish.

²⁹ *Ibid*, Vol.55, p.317 (13 July 1910).

³⁰ Manning Clark, *A History of Australia*, Vol.6 (Melbourne, 1987), p.130.

Lynch was still in the process of establishing himself as a successful farmer. From 1919 onwards he could safely regard himself as an established farmer and a substantial property-owner. His new class interest naturally left him less favourably predisposed to the trade union-based Labor Party and its policies.

Nothing epitomises Lynch's political metamorphosis from labour representative to farmers' representative more than his about-turn on the issue of protection. From being an ardent advocate of protection during the tariff debates of 1907-8, he had evolved into a fervent critic of "excessive" protection. In August 1931, he told the Senate that the Labor Party should drop its protection policy which, he said, had been added since he had been expelled. Labor was "filling the cities" and "robbing the countryside".³¹ More generally speaking, it is clear that by 1931 Lynch felt much more comfortable with the conservative brand of politics espoused by the Nationalist and Country Parties, and with their amenability to rural interests, than he did with the urban-based Labor Party.

Having examined the apparent transformation from 1917 in Lynch's attitude towards the Labor Party, it would, however, be a mistake to take for granted his commitment before that date. Although he made much of his 25 years of service to the labour movement, a closer examination of Lynch's early parliamentary career suggests that, as firmly rooted in the movement as he was, some ambivalences may be detected.

On the one hand, Lynch was an active and committed supporter of the Labor Party from the age of twenty-three. He did not come to the party via another political background as did many of his contemporaries—for example, the

³¹ *CPD*, Vol.131, p.4953 (5 August 1931). Earlier in this same speech Lynch had condemned Labor's advocacy of that "absurdity", the 44-hour week. Such comments epitomised the outlook of the farmer who believed that he didn't have the luxury of regulated working hours.

Queensland Labor icon, T.J. Ryan, who originally came via the Protectionist Party.³² There had never been any suggestion of a connection with any party other than Labor. Lynch saw a distinctive role for the parliamentary Labor Party independent of other parties and, in his maiden speech to the Western Australian Legislative Assembly, vigorously defended both the Labor pledge and the caucus system.³³

On the other hand, Lynch was not exclusively wedded to his party. A year later, in his inaugural speech as a government minister, he stated that he believed the existence of the Labor Party to be secondary to the achievement of desirable political and social reforms. He emphasised that the Labor Party was only a means to an end; if reforms could be achieved in some other way, then so be it.³⁴ He also publicly acknowledged the need for pragmatic moderation by the minority Dalglish administration of which he was a member.³⁵

Lynch emerged during his early parliamentary career as neither a left-wing Labor militant nor an opportunistic right-wing Labor careerist, but rather as a moderate Labor man firmly committed to the mainstream of his party. The question, however, remains: how do we reconcile the young politician's apparently loyal commitment to the party with the ambivalence revealed in some of his early speeches?

³² T.J. Ryan (1876-1921) was Labor Premier of Queensland 1915-19, then Labor MHR for West Sydney (1919-21). He was Deputy Leader of the Opposition at the time of his premature death. As an anti-conscriptionist in 1916-17, he was in frequent conflict with Prime Minister Hughes. He ran as a Deakinite candidate for the Federal Parliament in 1903 before joining the Labor Party the following year.

³³ *WAPD*, Vol.25, p.15 (4 August 1904).

³⁴ *Ibid*, Vol. 27, p.509 (28 July 1905). He referred in this context to the progressive reforms of the Seddon Liberal Government in New Zealand, and delivered a similar message in his maiden speech to the Senate two years later.

³⁵ *Ibid*.

Non-Party Government

The answer may be found in another strand in Lynch's political thinking which can be detected at a surprisingly early stage. It is at first muted, but becomes much more apparent by 1916-17. This is a preference on his part for the ideal of non-party government—especially in war-time or in other times of crisis.

As early as July 1905, Lynch, then a government minister, told the Western Australian Legislative Assembly that "for my part I would like to bury party government ... [however] ... I fail to understand how it is possible to dispense with the system of party government ...".³⁶ Twelve years later Lynch was much more emphatic when he declared to the Senate: "My own opinion is that I am more staunch to the principles of [the Labor] party than is any other man in the Senate or outside it. But I have long since flung all party issues behind me, because I recognise that the safety and security of this country transcends everything which can fall within the compass of party politics."³⁷

For Lynch, this meant placing the national interest above and beyond any class or sectional interest. By 1917 at least, the trade union-based Labor Party, in his mind, represented class and sectional interests rather than the national interest. Lynch was by no means alone amongst Laborites in holding this inherently conservative view regarding the supremacy of the national interest, but he was one of the most adamant in proclaiming it and carrying the argument to its logical conclusion. For Lynch, then, the Nationalist Party, with all its connotations of representing the *national* interest—including the *interests of labour*—seemed far more all-encompassing and attractive than any version of a Labor Party. From

³⁶ *WAPD*, Vol.27, p.516 (28 July 1905).

³⁷ *CPD*, Vol.81, p.11406 (14 March 1917)

1917 onwards, Nationalist Party government—including as it did *National Labor* elements—much more closely represented Lynch's ideal of non-party government than anything that could be offered by a severely circumscribed Labor Party.

In 1930, he called for a government of national unity to deal with the crisis inflicted by the Great Depression. Beseeking the parties to relinquish "sham battles", Lynch drew upon an analogy from his own life experience: the situation of being in a hurricane when previous petty differences were cast aside and the crew pulled together for their own survival. Pursuing that analogy, Lynch declared the "Ship of State" to be at peril.³⁸

Given his preference for non-party government, expressed as early as 1905, why then did Lynch opt for the Labor Party and remain loyal to that party until 1916? In posing this question, we must bear in mind that the party system remained in a considerable state of flux during the first two decades of the twentieth century. It was much more common then than now for politicians to switch allegiances. Given this fact, it is perhaps all the more remarkable that his unswerving loyalty to Labor should remain unchallenged until the conscription crisis of 1916.

Interpretations of Labor Tradition

The answer of course lies in the fact that the early Labor Party was a broad church which accommodated a wide variety of interests and opinions. From the 1890s until 1916, Lynch and his like represented *one* vision of that party. By 1910 at least, developing tensions could clearly be discerned between this and other visions. These tensions heightened during the period of the Fisher Government

³⁸ *Ibid*, Vol.127, pp.1401-2 (12 December 1930).

(1910-13) and came to a head with the war-time pressures of 1915-16. According to this view, the Labor Split of 1916-17 reflected a growing left/right divide within the party rather than differences over conscription *per se*.³⁹ Although they would not necessarily have seen things in left/right terms, Lynch—and others such as Pearce—had a vision of the Labor Party which was essentially pragmatic (yet principled), moderate, reformist and parliamentarian. It was exemplified by a strong commitment to arbitration and legislative reform. Lynch and his kind typified that old breed of Labor men, solidly rooted in the trade unionism of the 1890s, who had by 1913 achieved many of their goals. They represented the conservative Labor men of the first political generation.

At the time, Lynch himself appeared to believe that the Labor Split was by no means inevitable—and would never have occurred but for the controversy over conscription. As late as November 1918 he told his fellow senators: "Had Labour in this country only spoken with the same degree of patriotic intensity and earnestness, I should still be sitting in this Senate as a member of the Parliamentary Labour Party, which, instead of being the political outcasts of the Commonwealth as they are now, would be still in charge of the Treasury bench today."⁴⁰

Lynch was deluding himself, however, if he believed that Labor could have avoided a split but for differences over conscription. Had the party not split then, it would surely have split along left/right lines at some later stage. The adoption of the Socialisation Objective in 1921, for example, would have stoked the fires of debate regarding Labor's interpretation of socialism and doubtless alienated many

³⁹ J.A. Merritt, "George Foster Pearce: Labour Leader" (Masters Thesis, University of Western Australia, 1963), pp.560 and 570-1.

⁴⁰ *CPD*, Vol.86, p.7666 (13 November 1918).

less socialistically inclined members of the party. This is not to say that the 1916-17 Split was conducted purely along left/right lines; it was nonetheless roughly congruent with such a divide (that is to say, most conscriptionists were of the right and most anti-conscriptionists were of the left).

The most persuasive argument for an inevitable falling out between Paddy Lynch and Labor is, however, that presented by none other than John Curtin. In 1927 he wrote:

The "United" Party has been having a conference, at which Senator Lynch was one of the representatives of the "Federal parliamentary section," and dispensed economics, statistics and other useful knowledge as follows:

"The Federal Statistician's figures showed that in 1916, if all the incomes of more than £3 per week were divided among those who received less than that amount, each recipient would get 10/5. Accepting the period from 1913 to 1918 and on the purchasing power of the sovereign in 1920, if all the profit and interest earned in Australia were divided among the workers they would get 9/2 each."

There is a good deal more of it, but the foregoing is quite enough to show its quality. The first thought that strikes one on reading it, is that it was something much more fundamental than a difference about the war or about conscription that led to the Labor schism when Lynch and his friends took to treason against the party which had raised them from obscurity. Looking back now it is clear enough that *the war merely acted as a sort of touchstone* which served to show up the hangers-on and to distinguish them from the real Laborites. For a rigmarole like that quoted could never emanate from a man who had ever had any comprehension of, and any genuine belief in, Labor ideas and ideals. [my emphasis]

Curtin then described the iniquities of the existing social order before concluding:

To demonstrate a la Lynch that this state of chaos could, if all incomes were placed on a level, only give an additional 9/2 or 10/5 or something of the sort, is the last word in fatuity.

But it serves not only to show where Lynch stands now, but where he always must have stood. For the tale is much older than Lynch himself, and it has been deemed unnecessary to seriously answer it for ages. It is also a pity that Lynch did not round off his discourse with another ancient friend, namely the anecdote of the Irish Socialist who was the possessor of two pigs. Perhaps it is to be put to the credit of his own Hibernian extraction that he was saved from that further absurdity.⁴¹

⁴¹ *Westralian Worker*, 21 January 1927, editorial.

He was arguing essentially that Lynch, with his simplistic notion of levelling incomes, had no real understanding of what in modern day parlance we would call the “structures of injustice”. In Curtin’s eyes, then, Lynch had never really been a Labor man; the war had served as a “touchstone” to distinguish him and his kind from “the real Laborites”.

Lynch himself would never have accepted such a conclusion. He genuinely believed that he represented the legitimate Labor tradition; of course he did, but it was only *one* strand of the Labor tradition. Two fundamentally different conceptions of a Labor Party had developed during the pre-war years: despite their parliamentary reformism, Lynch and his kind believed in a Labor Party which was essentially a conservative party working within "the system".

Distinct parallels can be drawn between Lynch’s position post-1917 and that of parliamentary supporters of the Democratic Labor Party (DLP) following the even more bitter Labor Split of the mid-1950s.⁴² These DLP supporters, like Lynch, genuinely believed that they represented the legitimate Labor tradition. In both cases, their response to being placed outside the official Labor fold displayed a curious ambivalence. On the one hand, they became progressively more “anti-Labor” in the sense that they publicly opposed the official Labor Party, sometimes even more strongly than Labor’s conservative opponents. On the other hand, they still claimed to be legitimate heirs to the Labor tradition.⁴³

⁴² This is not to deny that there were also significant differences between the situations in which Lynch and the DLP members found themselves. For example, the latter retained their own name and identity for another two decades and were never totally absorbed into the major conservative parties as Lynch and the National Laborites were.

⁴³ For example, see Frank McManus, *The Tumult and the Shouting* (Melbourne, 1976), *passim*. In both 1916 and 1955 the genuine pluralists claimed to represent *one* strand of the Labor tradition; others, maintaining that their view alone should prevail, claimed to represent *the* Labor tradition.

In analysing the consequences of the Labor Splits of both 1916-17 and 1955, there is, however, a danger of reading history backwards. The subsequent rightward drift into a more conservative brand of politics by the likes of Lynch (after 1916)—and by most of the DLP members (after 1955)—can too easily be taken as proof of their prior lack of adherence to Labor values. To the contrary, most of them saw themselves as loyal Laborites right up until—and well beyond—their time of departure.

It is beyond the scope of this discussion to consider on a case-by-case basis the political paths taken by the Labor renegades of 1916. Some individuals could be picked as likely candidates to split with the Labor Party; others would not. Of the conscriptionists, Lynch would surely have to be picked as one of the most likely candidates to split with Labor. However, not all conscriptionists split with the party permanently, nor did they all finish up in the conservative ranks. Many remained sympathetic to mainstream Labor politics and did not become bitter opponents of their former party. We have already noted, for example, the different paths taken by Pearce and Lynch on the one hand and their fellow conscriptionists in Queensland, Givens and Bamford, on the other.⁴⁴

In Lynch's case, there is a danger of accepting his markedly rightward drift into a distinctively anti-Labor brand of politics as proof that he was always fated to split with his party. Nevertheless, having regard to his political attitudes prior to 1916, such a conclusion seems reasonable. On the evidence presented here, some kind of rift between Lynch and Labor appeared likely, if not inevitable.

⁴⁴ See discussion in Chapter Seven. Givens and Bamford did not become as anti-Labor in their politics as did Lynch and Pearce.

Socialism

From early sympathy to hostility, a marked change in Lynch's attitude towards socialism is readily discernible over the span of his political career. Until about 1917 he used the terms "socialism" and "socialist" in a generally favourable sense, but thereafter markedly less so. During his early political career, Lynch seemed happy enough to call himself a socialist. During the 1916-17 conscription referenda campaigns he employed "socialism" as a rallying call for the conscriptionist forces, beseeching Australian socialists to go to the aid of their comrades on the battlefields of Europe.

Lynch's expulsion from the Labor Party in December 1916 appears to mark a turning point in his attitude. By 1920 he was openly questioning the tenets of socialism and the implications of Labor's supposed commitment to them. This questioning developed into a progressively more critical attitude during the 1920s, and by the 1930s Lynch was openly hostile towards all experiments in socialism. It would be no exaggeration to describe the latter-day Lynch as emphatically anti-socialist in outlook. Yet, he never really announced his change of heart. Nor did he ever state explicitly whether it was socialism, the world or merely himself that had changed. His transformation poses more questions than it readily answers.

The basic issue is: why this change from a professedly socialist to a declaredly anti-socialist stance? This begs the question: what did Lynch mean by socialism, which is notoriously difficult to define and has been given any number of definitions by various brands of socialists (and anti-socialists).

Van den Driesen's observation regarding the understanding of socialism in the early labour movement in Western Australia is especially relevant:

So far as political philosophy went, the union movement continued to profess a commitment to socialism. Whether the term had the connotations that now

attach to it however, is open to doubt. Admittedly there were unionists and labour politicians, both on the goldfields and on the coast, who understood and supported the theoretical implications of scientific socialism, but they were relatively few in number. Most of the leaders and the majority of the rank and file seem to have had only the vaguest idea as to what socialism actually involved. To some, it meant state enterprise, though in certain selected areas alone, and not as part of an integrated plan. To others, it represented a concern for the welfare of the weak and the underprivileged. To most, it was a system which assured the working man of a fair return for his labour, and guaranteed to him a general standard of living that was worthy of a human being. This last interpretation was not without its religious overtones, for it was widely believed that here was a minimum level to which every citizen of a Christian society was entitled.⁴⁵

This observation bears a direct relevance to Paddy Lynch. He obviously belonged to the latter category described by van den Driesen; he was never one of those who endorsed scientific socialism. During his early political career he never really defined socialism but, like so many of his colleagues, accepted a kind of motherhood meaning roughly synonymous with brotherhood, comradeship and Christianity. A strong commitment to the promotion of state enterprises was another defining feature. In his maiden speech to the Senate in 1907, Lynch freely referred to the Labor Party as the “socialistic” party and to its opponents as the “anti-Socialists”.⁴⁶

Significantly, during his early career as a trade unionist and Labor activist, Lynch never lectured or wrote on socialism, or for that matter on the general principles of Laborism. Here he stands in marked contrast to some of his Labor contemporaries. For example, the Dublin-born secretary of the Queensland branch of the Seamens Union, Charles Seymour, produced a pamphlet in 1893 entitled *What is Socialism?*⁴⁷ Nor did Lynch produce anything like Billy Hughes’s

⁴⁵ I.H. van den Driesen, “The Evolution of the Trade Union Movement in Western Australia”, in C.T. Stannage, *A New History of Western Australia* (Perth, 1981), pp.379-80.

⁴⁶ *CPD*, Vol.36, p.153 (5 July 1907). Indeed, Lynch also described the Post Office as the “socialistic means of communications”, thus equating “socialist” with publicly-owned.

⁴⁷ Charles Seymour, *What is Socialism?*, one of the series “Leaflets for the People” produced by the Social Democratic Federation (Brisbane, [n.d., c1892]).

publication *The Case for Labor* which, amongst other things, set out some of the author's ideas (however woolly) concerning socialism.⁴⁸ Furthermore, insofar as we can tell from the Goldfields newspapers of his time, Lynch—unlike Labor colleagues Wallace Nelson and Hugh de Largie, for example—was never a speaker at such occasions as Sunday evening lectures which dealt with such topics as socialism and the theoretical principles of Laborism.

Although Lynch was well-read and had absorbed a certain amount of political philosophy, little of this appears to have been expressedly socialist. Marx, for example, barely rated a mention until the highly condemnatory references in Lynch's parliamentary speech of February 1932.⁴⁹ From his early days on the Goldfields, he always focussed his attention upon the everyday practice of politics, which he separated from the pursuit of political philosophy. It is no wonder that in 1916 he should declare that he was a conscriptionist because he was a "practical socialist".⁵⁰

As noted in Chapter Ten, Lynch appealed to the authority of those British and European socialists who supported conscription, rather than to their arguments. To that extent, he was arguing *ad hominem*. About the closest that he ever got to actually expounding their arguments was his quite reasonable inference that socialists could be expected to oppose Prussian militarism. However, he did not explain how this was translated into support for conscription, nor did he acknowledge the fact that socialists could reasonably be expected to oppose *all* forms of militarism (including British militarism).

⁴⁸ W.M. Hughes, *The Case for Labor* (Melbourne, 1910).

⁴⁹ *CPD*, Vol. 133, p.131 (19 February 1932).

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, Vol.80, p.9167 (3 October 1916).

The Irish-born Labor MHR, Mick Considine, probably came close to the truth during this short exchange with two members of the National Labor Party in the House of Representatives in 1918:

Archibald: The German Socialists voted for the war.

Considine: No, they did not, but the Germans who called themselves Socialists did, just as Labourites who “ratted” and still call themselves Labourites, did so.

Jowett: What side are they on?

Considine: Those who are Socialists are on the side of peace, but those who masqueraded under the name of Socialists, and delight in calling themselves patriots, like the honourable member, are on the side of war.⁵¹

When Lynch was referring to British Socialists he was in fact adopting the old habit of equating Socialists with Laborites, most of whom would be better described as social democrats.⁵² The kind of socialism to which he was appealing was more akin with what today would be called social democracy.⁵³ However, in Lynch’s time, few such distinctions were made—socialism was a cover-all term for a wide range of political positions—and so it is difficult to blame him for using terms in the way he did.

Despite Lynch’s war-time appeal to the ideals of socialism, by 1920 we can detect a distinct scepticism in his views. He did not, however, mention socialism by name; his attitude at this stage would be better described as anti-statist than anti-socialist. Here Lynch explicitly defined his own position as being midway between the Jeffersonian minimalist position, which saw the role of government as merely the preservation of order, and the “extravagant conception” of those “who think that a government should be a kind of agency whose influence and

⁵¹ *Ibid*, Vol.84, p.3611 (4 April 1918)

⁵² See discussion in Chapters Six and Ten. He cited “such well-known Socialists and Laborites” as H.G. Wells, H.M. Hyndeman, Arthur Henderson and Robert Blatchford.

authority should extend and ramify down to the minutest details of everyday life".⁵⁴

In 1923 his position was revealed all the more explicitly in his repudiation of the thorough-going socialism, as he saw it, of the ALP.⁵⁵ In rejecting Labor's Socialisation Objective, Lynch added:

If I were satisfied that by supporting this objective we should reach a stable state of society, such as has been talked about and dreamed about, I would hesitate to oppose it, because I have no inclination to ignore the benefit which would result from maintaining or supporting an ideal socialistic state. But a remedy for the various ills and injuries of mankind will not be obtained by merely supporting the platform of the Labour Party. It has been suggested that another system would work.⁵⁶

"Ah! But will it work?", he asked. Here, for the first time, Lynch revealed fully his thorough-going scepticism with regard to socialism (or any other doctrine) which purported to solve the problems of the human condition and promise an earthly paradise.

During the late 1920s, Lynch's more conservative outlook manifested itself in more concrete ways: in particular, he came to favour private enterprise over public enterprise. In March 1929, for example, he praised the privately-owned Midlands Railway Company as a small concern which had succeeded in making ends meet, contrasting its performance more than favourably with the various State-owned railways.⁵⁷

We also discover a new-found willingness to make at least a limited defence of

⁵³ This distinction between socialism and social democracy did not really develop in Britain and Europe until after the end of the Second World War, and then largely as a response to Soviet-style Communism.

⁵⁴ *CPD*, Vol.92, pp.3199-3200 (4 August 1920).

⁵⁵ See discussion in the previous section.

⁵⁶ *CPD*, Vol.103, p.877 (11 July 1923).

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, Vol.120, p.1417 (19 March 1929).

capitalism:

[W]e hear a great deal about capitalists and capitalism ... [but]... when we consider the many directions in which governments have failed when they have entered into business we should regard the capitalist, not as an enemy, but as one of the best friends of the country. If the government were to enter every line of business in which capitalists are now engaged, this country would become solvent almost immediately ...⁵⁸

He believed that where private enterprise could do the job better it should be encouraged to do it. He was now quite forthcoming in extolling the virtues of capitalism at the expense of socialism.

Much of Lynch's scepticism about socialism can be attributed to what he perceived as the failure of socialist experiments in other parts of the world. This was a prominent theme in his pronouncements from the 1920's onwards. In three significant Senate speeches—in 1923, in 1931 and, at much greater length, in 1932—he alluded scathingly to the “failed experiments” in Paraguay and Russia.

Paraguay

In 1932 Lynch described the New Australia venture in his own words: “In the early 'nineties a number of Australians decided to make a grand experiment in socialism. Some of them I knew well. Under the leadership of William Lane those who had drunk deeply of the poisonous draught of socialist propaganda decided to put into practice what they had read by establishing a new socialistic colony in South America”.⁵⁹

On this and two earlier occasions, Lynch recalled to the Senate how he had been present at a big demonstration on the Sydney Domain prior to the departure

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p.1418.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, Vol. 133, p.128 (19 February 1932).

of the first batch of New Australians upon the *Royal Tar* in July 1893.⁶⁰ It is not clear whether Lynch had met William Lane personally. We do know, however, that he did provide his brother John with accommodation some years later, in 1901, when the younger Lane came to Kalgoorlie/Boulder, as Lynch himself put it, “on his futile recruiting mission”.⁶¹

Significantly, Lynch did not feel at all inclined to sign up for Paraguay, this despite his being in many ways a likely candidate: young (he was twenty-six at the time) and single, with a solid labour background, and the bitter experience of the 1890 maritime strike not long behind him. Rather, he made his disinclination abundantly clear: “I did not believe in the experiment then any more than I believe in socialism today ...”.⁶² This is what is most revealing—his outright rejection of the venture—rather than any decision not to go.

He later recalled the speech made by an unnamed South Australian schoolmaster on the Sydney Domain prior to the departure of the New Australians. The speech obviously made quite an impression, albeit a negative one. According to Lynch, the most significant remarks made by this schoolmaster (a New Australian voyager himself) expressed sympathy with those who were being left behind to live in this “capitalist ‘ridden’ country”. Again, Lynch’s reaction was revealing: “Thousands listened to him, and many cheered his utterances. I did not cheer”.⁶³

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. 103, p.877 (11 July 1923); Vol. 131, p.4271 (23 July 1931); Vol. 133, p.129 (19 February 1932).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 133, p.131 (19 February 1932). See also Chapter Three.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.129 (19 February 1932).

⁶³ *Ibid.* This was Lynch’s third reference to the schoolmaster’s speech. He made two previous ones in 1923 and 1931 [*Ibid.*, Vol.103, p.877 (11 July 1923) and Vol.131, p.4271 (23 July 1931)].

He further noted that in South America the schoolmaster's views changed, and "after shedding his wild notions" he returned to Australia where he was "glad to settle down and make a living for himself".⁶⁴ This observation reflected Lynch's general attitude towards such failed experiments in socialism: the realities of life would always undermine cherished ideals. The inability of the settlers to deal adequately and promptly with the practical everyday tasks (for example, the mending of a fence required a decision by a committee), doomed the project to failure. As a farmer himself, he had little sympathy for those who ventured into farming without the practical skills and know-how to make it work. For him, grand theories and romantic notions had no place in the life of a pioneering community.

In his 1932 speech to the Senate, Lynch developed at considerable length his reasons for renouncing the Paraguay venture. Significantly, he emphasised that the experiment had not floundered because of the people themselves—indeed, he favourably contrasted the intelligent New Australian settlers to illiterate Russian peasants⁶⁵—but because the idea itself was fundamentally flawed: "It failed not because those who espoused the new doctrine were ignorant, indolent, or unenlightened—they were the exact opposite—but because of inherent defects in the system itself".⁶⁶ Crucially, he argued that the New Australian settlers had eventually realised their folly: "They abandoned their socialistic ideals, the community broke up, and they lived prosperously under a totally different

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, Vol. 131, p.4271.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, Vol. 133, p.135 (19 February 1932).

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, Vol. 133, p.129 (19 February 1932). On this occasion Lynch referred to two specific texts from which he had obviously drawn many of the ideas for his critique of the South American experiment: *Where Socialism Failed* (London, 1909), an anti-socialist tract by the conservative British journalist Stewart Grahame, and a report compiled by a Mr Finlay for the British Foreign Office.

system—the old hated capitalistic, or competitive system if you will.”⁶⁷

According to Lynch, this was because socialism could never have worked: people wanted a return for their individual labours; they did not want to be obliged to surrender all their produce to the collective.

In many respects, the New Australia venture reflected the ideas of a particular school of thought which embraced simultaneously some of the more radical and conservative strands in contemporary British socialism. Lane’s experiment was based upon a communal existence, collective ownership of property, and a certain amount of collective democratic decision-making. At the same time it retained a predominant role for a strong leader (Lane), conventional marriage and traditional family values, and was confined to members of the European race. In some respects it was egalitarian, in others elitist. Most of these features ought to have appealed to Lynch. On the face of it then, if any application of socialism were to have had any attraction at all for him in 1893, it ought surely to have been this.

An interesting parallel may be observed between the political paths travelled by Lynch and by William Lane. Having left Paraguay and eventually settled in New Zealand, Lane was by 1915 a solid Empire man, a strong supporter of the war effort, a conscriptionist and a critic of striking trade unionists—much like Lynch himself. Indeed, Lane was not the only prominent New Australian to travel this path; Harry Taylor was another.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ *CPD*, Vol.133, p.131 (19 February 1932).

⁶⁸ Taylor had been an avowed socialist in Paraguay before returning to his home country and becoming involved in the establishment of a community near Renmark in South Australia. Although he remained a committed socialist, he also became a solid Empire loyalist and conscriptionist. He, like Lynch, parted company with the Labor Party over conscription and by the early 1920s had become a Nationalist supporter—without ever really eschewing his socialist ideals [Don Gobbett and Malcolm Saunders, *With Lane in Paraguay: Harry Taylor of The Murray Pioneer, 1873-1932* (Brisbane, 1995), *passim*].

The parallels between Lynch on the one hand, and men like Lane and Taylor on the other, are such as to suggest the following scenario: Lynch might have followed a similar path by going off to Paraguay as an adventurous young socialist, returned to Australia disillusioned and conservatised, and finished up a pro-war imperialist. A large number of British socialists and Labourites remained loyal imperialists and monarchists throughout the 1914-18 War; there was always a significant school within British socialism which managed to reconcile left-wing ideals with patriotic and imperialist sentiments. Within an Australian context, Lane and Taylor appeared to fit that category, and it is not unreasonable to suggest that Lynch, despite his Irishness, might have done so too.

What is significant, however, is that he—unlike Lane and Taylor—never elected to venture as far as Paraguay in the first place. So there our analogy breaks down. Lynch, after all, was not some erstwhile supporter of the New Australia project who became disillusioned and apostasised; he made it abundantly clear that he had *never* supported the venture. Nor, so it seems, did he ever support *this* particular conception of socialism, as limited as it was. That in itself says something about his lack of commitment to socialism in 1893, whatever his views may have been in 1916, 1923 or 1932.

Russia

Lynch also rejected socialism because of Soviet Russia. He rejected Soviet communism in both theory and practice. In 1923, he declared that “Russia has tried to establish a successful communistic order, but has failed”.⁶⁹ Nine years

⁶⁹ *CPD*, Vol.103, p.877 (11 July 1923).

later, Lynch developed his critique of the Soviet system at considerable length, if not in great depth. He taunted the left-wing Labor senator, Arthur Rae, a committed socialist, with what would happen to him if he ventured to Russia. He devoted considerable attention to describing the brutality of the Soviet system, particularly as it applied to the workers, drawing the obvious inference that they would be were far better off in “capitalistic” Australia.⁷⁰

In somewhat hyperbolic language, he condemned the “immorality” of the godless Soviet system for the way in which it had destroyed the institution of marriage and assaulted the virtues of womanhood:

[U]nder sovietism the human race has been brought down to the level of the beasts of the jungle ... Moscow has dragged noble womanhood from its high pedestal from which for long ages she has, by the exercise of her silent power, guided the footsteps of wayward erring men, and made her the plaything of brutal unbridled lust.⁷¹

Here he was in fact indulging in a rather (stereo)typical diatribe against “godless, atheistic communism.”

Lynch’s Senate speech of February 1932 drew together and developed the major strands in his thinking about socialism over the previous decade. He acknowledged at the outset that there were as many brands of socialism as there were tea or whiskey. He further acknowledged what Sir William Harcourt had once told the House of Commons: “We are all socialists now”.⁷² These customary acknowledgements made, Lynch nonetheless did exactly what so many conservative politicians were wont to do: he proceeded to launched a stinging attack on the Soviet system, an attack which effectively equated “socialism” with its Soviet manifestation (or aberration). Notwithstanding his prior

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, Vol. 133, p.132 (19 February 1932).

⁷¹ *Ibid*, pp.133-4.

⁷² *Ibid*, Vol.133, p.126.

acknowledgement regarding different brands of socialism, he continued to use the terms “communism” and “socialism” almost interchangeably. In fairness, however, his speech must be seen in context: it was delivered in direct reply to his old protagonist, Labor senator Arthur Rae, who had just lauded many aspects of the Soviet system as examples of “socialist practice”.⁷³ In rejecting Rae’s version of Soviet “socialism”, therefore, Lynch was merely accepting the terms of debate established by his opponent.

Having alluded to the failure of socialist experiments in Paraguay and Russia, and to the rejection of communism by the people of France, Germany, Spain and Italy, Lynch then revealed the essence of his argument against socialism: that it was against human nature and simply could not work. “Socialism has failed, and must continue to fail, because it postulates that human nature is different from what it is”, he declared.⁷⁴

Moreover, socialism would fail, if only because men always desired a reward for their individual labours. Lynch recalled challenging John Lane some thirty years earlier:

[I asked him] how it was possible for any one to agree that if he strived better than his fellows, he must, for the benefit of his fellows, sacrifice his reward for that extra effort. Socialism cuts across human nature, and for that reason fails unless enforced by the rusty bayonets of a ‘Red’ Army. It has no scientific basis for its existence. Man will not work unless he has a reward in prospect.⁷⁵

He then instanced the case of the Frenchman in Paraguay working for himself who did as much work as that done by 35 Australians working for one another. Here we hear the voice of Lynch the pioneering farmer and practical self-made

⁷³ *Ibid*, pp.70-1.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p.129.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p.132.

man: “[S]ocialism in theory may appear to be good; but it will not work out in practice ... Oil and water will never mix ...”⁷⁶

Original Sin

Lynch arguments against socialism on the basis of human nature rested essentially on his awareness of the doctrine of original sin—or the intrusion of “old Adam” as he called it. “Adam” rated several mentions in each of his keynote speeches of 1923 and 1932. Such references are best exemplified by his observation that “the old Adam asserted itself even in the ideal socialistic community”.⁷⁷ In other words, there was no getting away from the failings of human nature.

This “old Adam” (or original sin) argument suggests yet another philosophical underpinning of Lynch’s broader argument against socialism; that is, a recognition of the limits of politics in improving the human condition. While his particular view of the limitations of politics almost certainly owed something to the inherited Catholic notion of original sin with which he had been inculcated as a boy, it owed still more to his own reading and life experience. He explicitly acknowledged the limits of politics when he said:

[T]he true welfare of any people is not bound up solely and absolutely by what political governments and parties do. I am firmly of the opinion that the welfare of the people has its origin in the home, in the morals of the people. And in the way citizens comport themselves in private and public life.⁷⁸

His statements on socialism also displayed elements of what can be described as an anti-totalitarian critique of socialism in general, and of Soviet communism

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p130-1.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p.130.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, Vol.91, p.13 (26 February 1920)

in particular. As with his critique of German militarism during the 1914-18 War, Lynch's pronouncements upon Soviet communism hinted at a recognition that, in dealing with this new political phenomenon, the world might be confronted with something fundamentally different to the traditional authoritarianism of imperialistic military powers.⁷⁹ This argument carried with it the strong implication that the democracies were facing a completely new form of tyranny. Although Lynch himself never used the term "totalitarian", during the 1930s many critics of Stalinism and Nazism developed a distinctly anti-totalitarian critique of those regimes.

Pre-dating this anti-totalitarianism, yet closely linked to it, was the anti-utopian reaction of the 1920s. This decade saw the advent of some of the great anti-utopian literature, beginning with Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1920).⁸⁰ While not explicitly acknowledging any of these literary influences, Lynch does appear nonetheless to have imbibed something of the anti-utopianism that was in the air at this time. A strong element of this can be detected in his responses to his past reading. Early in his keynote 1932 speech, he mentioned some of the relevant philosophers and texts which he had dipped into: Plato (*The Republic*), Augustine (*The City of God*), Thomas More (*Utopia*) and Francis Bacon (*The Lost Atlantis*). In doing so, he made it abundantly clear that he rejected Plato's vision of the perfect society: "a sort of community of angels living in perfect harmony with one another".⁸¹ He had no time for such notions.

⁷⁹ See also discussion in Chapter Ten.

⁸⁰ This Russian novel has often been credited with serving as an inspiration for George Orwell's classic anti-utopian masterpiece, *1984* (London, 1948). Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) was in the same vein.

⁸¹ *CPD*, Vol.133, p.127 (19 February 1932).

Lynch's resounding rejection of Plato contrasted markedly with his ringing endorsement elsewhere of Aristotle. He specifically endorsed Aristotle's assertion that the greatest threat to a free society was the demagogue rather than the wealthy man.⁸² Although not mentioned by name, Aristotle's influence is clearly to be found in his address to the Argonauts Club in 1925: "The real enemy of a democracy [is] the demagogue who [depends] upon his tongue alone to procure human happiness ...".⁸³

Philosophically speaking, Lynch was a conservative Aristotelian rather than a Platonist. He had little time for Platonic grand theories which extolled the virtues of philosopher kings and collective solutions; much more to his liking was Aristotelianism with its more individualistic preferences and thorough-going scepticism with regard to grand explanations. To the extent that socialism reflected a Platonic worldview, the "philosopher" Lynch rejected it as a political creed.

There is little evidence in Lynch's speeches of a specifically Catholic critique of socialism. In this he stood in marked contrast to Hugh Mahon, who consistently used official church teachings as his reference point for evaluating the relationship between the ALP and socialism.⁸⁴ In his Senate speeches and other public pronouncements, he provided no explicit evidence that he was influenced by the debate that went on within the Australian Catholic Church during the early part of

⁸² For example: *Ibid*, Vol.122, p.413 (28 November 1929).

⁸³ WAA 948A/2 (Boas Papers).

⁸⁴ For example, his letter to Fr. H. Fitzgerald of Maryborough, Queensland (26 October 1909) [NLA 937/76 (Mahon Papers)]. Here, as elsewhere, Mahon employed the distinction between "Continental socialism" and "Australian socialism" favoured by Cardinal Moran and Archbishop Sheehan.

the last century regarding socialism and the ALP.⁸⁵ Until the 1920s, Lynch's own position appears to have coincided fairly much with the dominant thinking within the Australian Catholic hierarchy; that is to say, the socialism of the ALP was quite compatible with the Church's teachings insofar as it applied only to the socialisation of selective enterprises and was not part of a full-scale programme of socialisation. This substantially accords with his declared position in 1923 which distinguished between the selective socialisation of monopolies and any "whole hog" approach to socialisation.⁸⁶

Regardless of the official church position, however, by 1931-2, Lynch's pronouncements reflected that suspicion of socialism in general—and hostility towards "atheistic Soviet communism" in particular—which characterised so many Australian Catholics. Nevertheless, his critique of Soviet communism was secular rather than religious in its basis, emphasising as it did the practical defects of the Soviet system. He did not rely on Catholic teachings to inform his arguments; his sources were rather more eclectic.⁸⁷

For all that, many of Lynch's attitudes and ideas reflect an inherently conservative religious worldview: in his case a Catholic one. Such a view wishes to place a limit on politics because of the potential dangers presented by the existence of original sin ("old Adam"). It is therefore highly sceptical of the prospects for salvation in this world. While Lynch never explicitly expounded

⁸⁵ See Patrick O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: an Australian History* (Revised edition, Sydney, 1985), pp.288-92. Especially relevant is the ACTS pamphlet by E.J. Kelly SJ, *Socialism* (Melbourne, 1905). See also O'Farrell, *op.cit.*, (1985), p.383, for the views of Archbishop Michael Sheehan in 1931-32 on the relationship between the ALP and socialism.

⁸⁶ *CPD*, Vol.103, p.877 (11 July 1923).

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, Vol.103, p.878 (11 July 1923) and Vol.133, p.129 (19 February 1932). For example, he cited Tolstoy in order to support his arguments concerning the impracticability of the ideals of communism.

such a worldview, he had nonetheless absorbed its basic tenets and beliefs from the religious and social milieu in which he had been raised as a child. Furthermore, his reaction to the Soviet treatment of marriage and womanhood clearly reflected a conservative Catholic moral stance.⁸⁸ Here he readily accepted the contemporary Catholic notion that communism provided a licence for sexual immorality.

Whether he acknowledged it or not, Lynch's changing attitudes towards socialism were also heavily influenced—especially after 1917—by his new-found role as a substantial property-owner. Put bluntly, his progressive hostility towards socialism was determined largely by his newly-acquired class interest: material interest determined—at least partially—ideology. As an established farmer, he felt that he had more to lose from fully-fledged socialism. In this, he reflected that traditionally conservative response of rural society to socialistic measures of any kind. Neither in Ireland nor in Australia have farmers or country people in general ever been noted for their predisposition towards socialism.⁸⁹ Most importantly, Paddy Lynch had achieved self-advancement primarily through his own efforts. He undoubtedly saw that path as the preferred option for most citizens in the community. By no means did he eschew the role of collective effort, but he did set limitations on it. At the end of the day, each individual had to make his or her own way.

Conclusion

Lynch never made his conception of socialism clear. This allowed him to appeal to socialism when, up to 1917, it suited him, and to reject it during the

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, Vol.133, pp.133-4 (19 February 1932).

⁸⁹ Notwithstanding the “rural socialism” of the Country Party.

1920's and 30's when it no longer did so. This lack of clarity in definition was not characteristic of him alone: it reflected a general confusion and ambiguity within the labour movement and society at large.

Taken overall, there was, however, a clearly discernible element of contradiction—or at least duality—in his attitude towards socialism. On the one hand, he could embrace socialism when it could be safely equated with brotherhood, comradeship and the promotion of state enterprises. On the other hand, he could safely reject it when it implied the implementation of a fully socialistic order; more especially, when it digressed into its more extreme manifestations such as Soviet-style communism.

For all that, it is clear that during his later political career Lynch became much less accepting of socialist ideas in any shape or form. This both reflected and reinforced his new-found roles as established farmer and conservative politician. Although his views may have become more extreme than most ex-Laborites, he was not alone in his later hostility towards trade unionism, socialism and the Labor Party. In many ways, he was representative of the more conservative Labor men of his generation—notably his Western Australian colleagues, George Pearce and Hugh de Largie, and their eastern states counterparts, J.C. Watson, W.M. Hughes, W.G. Spence and R.S. Guthrie.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE POLITICS OF IRISH CATHOLICISM IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

This chapter will put forward the hypothesis that the traditional Catholic/Labor nexus has always been much weaker in Western Australia than in the more populous eastern states (particularly New South Wales). It will be argued that this has resulted from Western Australia having experienced an historically different demographic¹ and politico-religious development with regard to Irish Catholicism.² It will further be argued that, as an Irish-born Catholic politician based in Western Australia, Paddy Lynch both represented and reinforced that development.

In order to test this hypothesis, we will briefly examine the historical development of Irish political Catholicism in Western Australia, then explore some of the links between leading church figures and conservative politicians in early 20th century Western Australia. From this discussion, we will attempt to

¹ In 1901, Western Australia ranked second amongst the colonies in terms of the percentage of Irish-born in the population: Queensland (7.5%), Western Australia (5.3%), Victoria (5.2%), New South Wales (4.4%), South Australia (3.1%), Tasmania (2.3%). Western Australia had risen from third place in 1891, relegating Victoria to that position. The Western Australian figure of 5.3% was well above the national average of 4.9% whereas a decade previously, in 1891, it stood at 7%, below the national average of 7.2%. [Source of figures: James Jupp and Barry York, *Birthplaces of the Australian People: Colonial and Commonwealth Censuses, 1828-91*, Studies in Australian Ethnic history No.8 (Centre for Immigration and Cultural Studies, ANU, 1995), p.17].

It should, however, be noted that the 1901 figures would have been inflated by the large number of Irish from the eastern colonies who had settled on the Goldfields during the intervening decade. Most importantly, there was not the same heavy concentration of Irish in Perth as there was in parts of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

² This argument for Western Australia exceptionalism is developed at greater length in a forthcoming journal article by the author. It has not been explored fully before, although it has been touched upon briefly by writers such as J.R. Robertson: see "The Scaddan Government and the Conscription Crisis, 1911-17" (Masters thesis, University of Western Australia, 1958), p.338.

bring Lynch into the picture and to suggest that his political leanings might at least in part be explained by the particular circumstances prevailing in his home state.

Western Australian Exceptionalism

The late history of convictism in Western Australia inevitably affected the development of its class structure. The convict era spanned the period 1850-68, considerably later than the eastern colonies. During the 1850s and 1860s, Western Australia had a substantial pool of convict labour.³ In Perth and surrounding districts, a considerable amount of building and other work was carried out by convicts. This, together with the relatively slow economic development of the colony during the mid-to-late 19th century relative to the eastern colonies, retarded the growth of a large industrialised working-class—at least until the development of the Goldfields in the 1890s. Unlike the major eastern colonies of New South Wales and Victoria, Western Australia lacked a major industrial city to compare with Sydney or Melbourne. In turn, the lack of an industrialised working-class base meant the lack of a geographically concentrated Irish Catholic proletariat such as existed in some of the eastern colonies.⁴

Even the rapid development of the Western Australian goldfields from the mid-1890s did not alter this situation entirely. The bulk of the working-class population which grew at Kalgoorlie/Boulder and surrounding districts had its

³ Convicts accounted for approximately 9700 of the population growth of 17000 during the period of transportation to that colony, 1850-68; this from a very low base of only 5700 European settlers in 1850. Of the 9700 convicts, however, only 900 were Irish [R.T. Appleyard, "Western Australia: Economic and Demographic Growth, 1850-1914" in C.T. Stannage (ed), *A New History of Western Australia* (Perth, 1981), p.212].

⁴ In Perth, for example, there was never the same critical mass of working-class Irish Catholics. Although there was a sizeable number of Irish labourers working on the Fremantle wharves by the 1890s, this in no way compared to the large enclaves of Irish to be found in parts of Sydney and Melbourne—for example, the concentrations of seamen and dockers at Balmain and railway workers at Flemington/North Melbourne.

origins in the eastern colonies. The growth of the Separation for Federation Movement⁵ proved that many of these newly-arrived “t’othersiders” associated more with the eastern colonies than with the “old” West Australians of Perth and the south-west. Moreover, this Goldfields population was characterised by its transitory nature.

The relative conservatism of the labour movement in Western Australia (even on the Goldfields) also served to retard the development of a heavily politicised industrial working-class. This in turn meant that large sections of the working-class (including its Irish Catholic component) were not as firmly bonded with the Labor cause. A sense of class loyalty and labour solidarity grew much more slowly and unevenly. Western Australia had no such formative experience to compare with the great maritime strikes of the early 1890s which so hastened the development of Labor politics in the eastern colonies. Indeed, the Lumpers Union at Fremantle (founded in 1889 and including its fair share of Irish Catholics) retained early links with the reformist Liberal Association⁶ and it was not until the lumpers’ strike of 1899 that the union became firmly wedded to the nascent Labor Party.⁷

Bobbie Oliver has rightly challenged the broad consensus amongst historians regarding the supposed lack of radicalism, militancy and class conflict in Western Australian society during the years 1914-26.⁸ Notwithstanding her valuable observations, it is nevertheless, fair to say that during the 1914-18 War the labour

⁵ For description, see Chapter Three.

⁶ B.K. de Garis, “Self-Government and Political Parties,” in C.T. Stannage, *op.cit.* (1981), p.337.

⁷ Significantly perhaps, W.A. Murphy, an Irish-born merchant seaman who had been involved in the 1890 maritime strike at Sydney and subsequently served as a Labor MLA in New South Wales (1891-4), after arriving at Fremantle in the early years of the following century, affiliated with the Liberal cause and served for one term (1910-11) as a Liberal MLA. He was also Mayor of Fremantle (1907-9). It could be argued that Murphy’s metamorphosis reflected the political culture of the West as much as it did any change in the man himself.

⁸ Bobbie Oliver, *War and Peace in Western Australia: the social and political impact of the Great War 1914-1926* (Perth, 1995), *passim*.

movement in Western Australia continued to display those same moderate tendencies which had distinguished it hitherto. Unlike the solidly anti-conscriptionist labour movement of the eastern states, the Western Australian movement (even on the Goldfields) remained seriously divided over conscription.

Moreover, during the early decades of the 20th century (especially during the 1914-18 War) Western Australia as a whole was more “loyal” than any of the other states. From the first settlement in 1829 until as recently as the 1960’s, Western Australia had one of the highest proportion of British-born in its population of any Australian state.⁹ As Anne Partlon observes: “[T]he Catholic Irish were insignificant in the ‘founding population’ of the first decades of settlement, although a handful of Protestant Irish played a key role in government”.¹⁰ Geographical isolation and insecurity further bred conformity to the dominant Anglo-Protestant political culture. While not hermetically sealed off from the rest of the country, Western Australia was nonetheless inhibited by distance in its importation of the more radical ideas of the east.¹¹ The political culture in the West could not but encourage greater conservatism on the part of the working-class, notably the Irish Catholic working-class. This is not say that there were no Irish Catholic working-class Labor activists—or radical Irish nationalists—to challenge this consensus: clearly there were, but their impact was muted when compared to the more populous eastern states. There—especially in

⁹ The 1901 Census shows that Western Australia had a British-born population of approx. 31,800 compared with an Irish-born population of only 9,900. British here means English, Scots and Welsh. The Western Australian-born population was approx. 52,700 and the Victorian-born population approx. 39,500 [R.T. Appleyard, *op.cit.* (1981), p.225].

¹⁰ Anne Partlon, “‘Singers Standing on the Outer Rim’: Writing about the Irish in WA” in Bob Reece (ed.), *The Irish in Western Australia* (Nedlands, Western Australia, 2000), p.190. Partlon also notes that “[A]nother crucial difference between east and west is the absence of organised Irish resistance to colonial authority in Perth. There are no Vinegar Hills or Eureka Stockades in Western Australian history ...”.

¹¹ The activities of the IWW at Fremantle, Perth and Boulder during the early years of the 1914-18 War notwithstanding. This organisation enjoyed much more limited success in the West and, even at that, relied almost entirely on imported activists from the eastern states.

Sydney and Melbourne, both of which boasted a larger critical mass of working-class Irish Catholics—it was much easier to challenge the Anglo-Protestant hegemony.

In Western Australia, a small upwardly mobile group of individuals dominated the Irish Catholic political scene. Prominent Irish families were seeking advancement through the professions, especially the law and medicine.¹² They gravitated towards the relatively respectable and apolitical Celtic Club.¹³ Western Australia was distinguished by an evident lack of radical republican and Fenian groups; the Irish republican sub-culture which existed in the eastern states was notably absent.¹⁴ An assimilationist and non-confrontationalist ethic prevailed, fostered by the Roman Catholic hierarchy itself.

The distinctive development of the class structure, coupled with the relative conservatism of the labour movement, significantly influenced the politico-religious character of Western Australia. Most importantly, the absence of a substantial urban Irish Catholic working-class hampered the development of the early Catholic/Labor nexus which so characterised some of the eastern states. Indeed, it was not until the dramatic rise of the labour movement on the Goldfields in the early years of the twentieth century, coupled with the massive upsurge in electoral support in 1904, that Irishmen such as Paddy Lynch and Hugh Mahon began to make their mark in Labor politics. There was nothing to compare, for example, with the influx of Irish-Australian Labor politicians into the New South Wales parliament in the wake of the 1890s maritime strikes.

¹² Many of the better off Irish lived around Vincent Street, North Perth near the Redemptorist Monastery. As we noted in Chapter Five, Paddy Lynch bought property in this area c.1909.

¹³ Although founded by supporters of the Irish nationalist movement, it remained for the most part moderate in its nationalist politics, especially after 1908 when it opened its membership to all Celts regardless of whether they were of Irish descent [Ian Chambers, “ ‘I’m an Australian and speak as such’ ,” in Bob Reece (ed), *op.cit.* (2000), p.126].

¹⁴ The United Irish League was active in Perth and on the Goldfields but was not particularly noted for its radicalism or militancy. As we noted in Chapter Three, Paddy Lynch was a member of the Boulder branch.

Instead, prominent Irish Catholic politicians in Western Australia in the 1890s and the very early years of the twentieth century were drawn almost exclusively from the professional and farming classes. They were socially ambitious, therefore politically conservative and culturally assimilationist. Lawyers, businessmen and pastoralists predominated. Prominent Irish-born politicians in Western Australia included publican and businessman T.F. Quinlan, pastoralists Francis Connor and D.J. Doherty, lawyers Norbert Keenan and F.W. Moorehead, and newspaperman John Kirwan.¹⁵ Aside from the Irish-born politicians already mentioned, we may also take into account the presence of other prominent Irish-Australian politicians such as businessmen J.D. Connolly and C.J. Moran (both of whom hailed originally from the Darling Downs in Queensland) and, later, M.P. Durack, a member of the politically influential pioneering pastoralist family.

This is not to deny that Irish Catholics from the professional and farming classes were also prominent in the parliaments of the eastern colonies; they were of course. But what is significant about Western Australia is that, at this early stage, it lacked the countervailing influence of a sizeable Irish Catholic working-class. Indeed, Irish Catholic politicians with working-class sympathies—the Goldfields-based Hugh Mahon and Paddy Lynch notwithstanding—were conspicuous by their absence.¹⁶ There was nothing to compare with the affinity between Cardinal Moran and the early New South Wales labour movement during and after the maritime strikes; nor to compare with the affinity, somewhat later, between Archbishop Mannix and the Labor Party in Victoria. Although Bishop Gibney of Perth made occasional sympathetic utterances towards labour interests

¹⁵ Another Irish-born figure of note was newspaperman J. Winthrop Hackett MLC, a Protestant and a fiercely anti-Catholic one at that.

¹⁶ A notable exception is John Horgan, an Irish lawyer and briefly MLC for Perth (1888-9). Although his parliamentary tenure pre-dated the Labor Party, he demonstrated strong labour sympathies. The Goldfields-based MLC, John Kirwan, later did likewise.

in the 1890s, this in no way suggested the kind of Catholic/Labor nexus which could be discerned in some of the eastern colonies. Indeed, as we shall see, Gibney was of a more conservative political disposition than Moran.

Gibney and Forrest

Nothing exemplifies better the alignment of the institutional Catholic Church in Western Australian with the local conservative political establishment than does the enduring friendship and almost symbiotic relationship over three decades between Sir John Forrest¹⁷ and Bishop Matthew Gibney. Gibney has, on the strength of his presence at Glenrowan, oftentimes been portrayed as some kind of a militant Irish nationalist,¹⁸ and, on the basis of an occasionally independent stance—for example, in support of the extension of the electoral franchise in 1890 and against the mistreatment of Aborigines—as some kind of radical democrat. Nothing could be further from the truth. He was essentially a conservative and a loyal Imperialist.¹⁹

There is ample documentary evidence to support the view that Gibney was a strong and steadfast supporter of Forrest, and that over a period of least fifteen years he used his episcopal influence to rally Catholic support for him. The net effect of the close relationship between Forrest and Gibney during this formative period in Western Australia's political history could only have been to reinforce

¹⁷ Sir John Forrest (1867-1918), explorer, conservative State and Federal politician. Forrest was first Premier of Western Australia (1890-1901), then first MHR for Swan in the Federal Parliament (1901-18). Amongst other posts, he served as Treasurer in various non-Labor Federal ministries.

¹⁸ See John Kirwan, *My Life's Adventure* (London, 1936), pp.124-31, for an account of Gibney's response to Ned Kelly and the episode at Glenrowan. This reveals Gibney to be anything but a "Fenian" or an Irish radical. He made it abundantly clear that he had little time for any romanticisation of Kelly and his gang, "a wild, reckless, lawless lot."

¹⁹ Gibney's political position was arguably more nuanced than this: he could be liberal or conservative depending upon the issue. See C.T. Stannage, "Bishops Gibney and Salvado and Western Australian politics, 1889-97" in *Journal of Religious History* (Vol.6, No.3, June 1971). However, by misinterpreting Gibney's opposition to Salvado's particular brand of conservatism, Stannage exaggerates Gibney's liberalism.

links between the church and the non-Labor parties. Tom Stannage has noted the sectarian influence which existed in Western Australian politics in the mid-1890s.²⁰ The Gibney-Forrest alliance served to undermine this sectarianism by reassuring the Protestant establishment of the Catholic Church's loyalty whilst at the same time making the conservative parties more acceptable to the great mass of ordinary Catholics.²¹

Gibney's support for Forrest was most evident and crucial in the Federal elections of 1906 and 1910 when Forrest succeeded in being re-elected to the seat of Swan.²² On the latter occasion in particular, Gibney was instrumental in marshalling clerical and religious support for Forrest in his rural electorate. On both occasions, Gibney was offended that Forrest should even be opposed. In December 1906 he wrote from the Bishop's Palace:

My dear Sir John Forrest,

I am greatly surprised to see that you should have to contest your seat in this State. Your works alone should make men believe in you. No man in any of the Federated States has carried out successfully so many great works for the advancement and prosperity of his State as you have done for WA.²³

Four years later, he was equally outraged:

My dear Sir John,

The ingratitude of Man grates on my feelings. Only I know what is in Man I could not understand it ... Any West Australian constituency should be proud to have you for its representative. You are eminently the best West Australian friend and statesman yet born.²⁴

²⁰ C.T. Stannage, "Electoral Politics in Western Australia: 1884-1907" (Masters thesis, University of Western Australia, 1967), Chapter Four, *passim*.

²¹ *Ibid*, p.241. Stannage, however, has noted vacillations in Catholic support for Forrest, despite his alliance with Gibney: such support remained strong until about 1897 but from 1897 until 1901 it was more evenly divided between the Liberal Party (represented by Forrest) and the newly emergent Labor Party

²² The House of Representatives electorate then taking in most of the south-west of Western Australia outside of the Perth metropolitan area, including the area covered by the Legislative Assembly seat of Forrest.

²³ WAA 766A/3/1/235. Letter Gibney to Forrest (1 December 1906).

²⁴ LISWA, Battye Library, PR 2274. Letter Gibney to Forrest (23 February 1910).

Three days after this ringing endorsement, Forrest wrote to Gibney thanking him profusely: “How can I sufficiently express my gratefulness to you ... I shall treasure your letter with affection all the days of my life.”²⁵ Forrest had even more reason to be grateful for the letters which Gibney had sent to the Bishop of Geraldton, Dr.Kelly, to various priests in key country centres in the Swan electorate and to the Reverend Mother of the Convent of Mercy, Bunbury, soliciting support for Forrest.²⁶

The unsuccessful Labor candidate on both occasions—and again in 1913—was Peter O’Loghlen, miner and timberworker, Labor MLA for Forrest (1908-23), and sometime state president of the ALF. Given O’Loghlen’s prominence in the south-west as a Miners Union and Timberworkers Union official, it is little wonder that John Forrest should receive a cool reception in the timber towns. Writing to Gibney whilst on the campaign trail in March 1910, he complained of the hostility and ingratitude shown him, despite the fact that “I gave them plenty of work—gave them the Arbitration Act ... in fact passed a greater number of humanitarian laws than have been passed since and there was no Labour party or payment of members in my day ...”.²⁷

Gibney was of little help to Forrest in the timber towns of the south-west but he did help to shore up his support elsewhere, especially in the farming areas around Toodyay, York, Northam and Beverley, areas with substantial Catholic farming populations. After Forrest’s re-election in April 1910, Gibney displayed his outright political partisanship in his letter of congratulations:

²⁵ Catholic Archdiocesan Archives, Perth. Gibney Papers. Letter Forrest to Gibney (26 February 1910).

²⁶ *Ibid.* Copies of letter Gibney to Reverend Mother, Bunbury (4 March 1910) and letter to various priests in Forrest’s electorate (11 March 1910). At the bottom of the copy of the letter to priests Gibney added a note: “With this Sir John was very pleased”.

²⁷ *Ibid.* Moynihan Papers, pp.30-32. Letter Forrest to Gibney (13 March 1910).

My dear Sir John,

Permit me to congratulate you on the success of the Liberal Party in the West. I regret that your party were [sic] unsuccessful in the Senate ... The position at present is that the West clearly asks for the policy of the Liberal party.²⁸

Irishtown

Nothing demonstrates better the ability of Forrest to claim a great slice of the Irish Catholic vote than the electoral behaviour of Irishtown, a small Irish Catholic enclave situated five miles from Northam (a large country town about 60 miles east of Perth). Paddy Lynch remarked that the only place in which he felt he had totally wasted his time campaigning as a Labor Senate candidate in 1906 was, ironically, Irishtown.²⁹ Indeed, his perception was proved to be accurate. In the 1910 Federal election, for example, all 62 votes in the Irishtown subdivision went to Forrest. This must represent the supreme irony: an almost exclusively Irish Catholic community voting unanimously for Forrest, a conservative establishment figure of Scottish Protestant parentage, over a Labor candidate with the name Peter O'Loghlen. South Australian by birth, O'Loghlen was of Irish Catholic parentage. The dominant families in Irishtown were the Frenches, the McManus's and the Carrolls. John Michael Carroll was of Kerry parentage and James McManus was also of Irish parentage. These two men, along with John French, had founded the Irishtown Farmers Club in the early 1890s.³⁰ In 1894 the Irishtown Agricultural Hall was opened by none other than John Forrest. Clearly,

²⁸ *Ibid.* Gibney Papers. Letter Gibney to Forrest (21 April 1910). Gibney enclosed correspondence from the London Investment Registry Ltd. and requested Forrest's opinion on same. This, along with previous correspondence, suggests that Forrest helped Gibney considerably with his investment interests, surely another source of bonding between the two men.

²⁹ *Westralian Worker* (1 February 1907), p.6. Lynch was using Irishtown to exemplify the commendable lack of sectarianism in Western Australian politics. His implication was that such an Irish Catholic enclave would normally be assumed to show sizeable support for Labor.

³⁰ *Cyclopedia of Western Australia*, Vol.2 (Adelaide, 1913), pp.541-3 and 555; State Electoral Rolls (1910); Post Office Directory (1913); notes taken at Irishtown on visit (July 2001).

Forrest had succeeded in establishing an early presence and a strong core of support in this small community.

The case of Irishtown strongly contrasts with that of Koroit, a somewhat larger but nonetheless equally homogeneous Irish Catholic farming community in south-western Victoria.³¹ Until the Labor Split of the mid-1950s, the Koroit sub-division returned the highest Labor vote in the whole of the Western District; this despite being represented in the Federal Parliament for a portion of this time by a Catholic anti-Laborite, W.S. Rodgers MHR (Wannon). After the Split, Koroit consistently returned the highest DLP vote (in percentage terms) in the whole of Australia.³²

It is a measure of both Gibney's influence and of the support which Forrest could command that a small and predominantly Irish Catholic community should return a 100% anti-Labor vote in 1910. If such influence could be brought to bear in the determination of Catholic voting habits in a place like Irishtown, then we can only speculate as to the effect of the Gibney-Forrest alliance over a number of years in blunting the potential Catholic support for Labor in the rest of Western Australia.

Gibney was forced to retire in 1911 but the special relationship that Forrest enjoyed with the Catholic hierarchy in Western Australia appears to have survived Gibney's demise. In 1917 his successor, Archbishop P.J. Clune, wrote to Forrest in cordial terms thanking him for the letter of sympathy which Forrest had sent on the death of Archbishop P.J. Carr of Melbourne.³³ While this letter displays none of the personal closeness and familiarity which existed between Gibney and

³¹ Although one significant difference is that, whereas many of the farmers around Irishtown owned medium-to-large size wheat and diary properties, Koroit consisted almost entirely of small diary farms. Nevertheless, we would expect at least *some* Labor voters at Irishtown. Lynch obviously did.

³² P.R. Hay, "Labor Vacates the Bush: the Eclipse of Working Class Values in Victoria's Western District", *Labour History* (May 1988), p.67ff.

³³ WAA 766A/34/4/673. Letter Clune to Forrest (10 May 1917).

Forrest, it does nonetheless imply a continuation of a warm and friendly relationship between the episcopal successor and the much favoured politician.

Indeed, there is strong evidence of a continuation during Clune's reign (1911-35) of that close relationship between the Bishop's Palace and some of the leading conservative politicians of the day which so characterised the Gibney era.³⁴ This was apparent as late as 1933, barely two years before the end of Clune's reign. In March of that year, the proprietor of *The Mirror*, J.J. Simons, a Catholic, wrote to Senator Sir George Pearce expressing concern about possible collusion between the Nationalist Premier, Sir James Mitchell, and Archbishop Clune, to the detriment of the anti-secession campaign, in which both Simons and Pearce were leading figures. Simons wrote, *inter alia*:

It has been known to us for some time that Sir James has been a fairly frequent visitor to the Bishop's Palace and we heard a whisper that he promised Archbishop Clune a concession in regard to Catholic education which has been consistently refused by Labor and Nationalist Governments alike.

One of the Archbishop's right hand priests, who held an important position at the Palace, was recently given charge of the parish of Northam, which is in Sir James' constituency.

He then made this most revealing observation:

If a pact has been made, it looks as if support of secession is part of the arrangement. It is hoped that the latter will save the seats of Sir James for Northam and Harry Mann for Perth. The latter, for some mystifying reason, seems to have command of the votes in all the convents and other Catholic establishments in his Electorate. In fact, a prominent Nationalist worker, now employed by the paper, asserts positively that at the last two elections the rotation in which Mann votes came out of the boxes, where Nuns and Brothers voted, indicated conclusively that it was a solid Mann vote, although, as you know, on the last occasion, Needham, who is a devout Catholic, was the [Labor] candidate.³⁵

³⁴ A prominent stained glass window in the chapel at St Thomas More College, University of Western Australia is dedicated to Archbishop Clune by the sponsor, Sir James Daniel Connolly, a prominent Irish-Australian Catholic Liberal politician and cabinet minister in Western Australia during the early years of the last century.

³⁵ NLA 213/16/322 (Pearce Papers). Letter Simons to Pearce (11 March 1933). See also discussion of secession campaign (and Lynch's part in it) in Chapter Eight, where other parts of this letter are quoted. Ted Needham had been a Western Australian Labor Senate colleague of Lynch's from their election together in 1906 until they parted company over conscription in 1916.

Simons, a former Labor MLA turned Nationalist, had no reason to reflect adversely upon Mann and his ability to garner the Catholic vote. What he does reveal is all the more significant: the ability of the Nationalist candidate, Harry Mann, a non-Catholic, to obtain the bulk of the Catholic religious vote at the expense of the Labor candidate, Ted Needham, a Catholic. This was not in some conservative rural electorate, but in the heart of Perth. That the bulk of the (predominantly Irish) Catholic religious should in 1933 prefer a Protestant Nationalist candidate to a moderate Labor candidate, who was not only Lancashire-Irish but also a devout Catholic,³⁶ says something about the prevailing politico-religious climate in Perth at the time. It also demonstrates the influence that the Bishop's Palace was able to exert amongst the religious. If the evidence provided by Simons in 1933 is anything to go by, then clearly there is good cause to suggest that the Catholic-conservative political alliance forged by Gibney was maintained by Clune—and inherited in turn by Archbishop Prendiville (1935-68).

Catholic Networks

This political alliance was but one manifestation of a loose network of Catholic bishops, senior clergy, leading laymen and conservative politicians (some Catholic, some not) which had grown up in late 19th and early 20th century Western Australia. The connecting links were as much social as they were religious or political; in some cases they were even reinforced by marriage. These conservative Catholic elites quickly established the dominant politico-religious ethos for the Western Australian Catholic community, particularly during the Gibney era. While far from monolithic, the prevailing ideology was essentially

³⁶ Needham was a member of various Irish organisations and had been an active supporter of Home Rule motions in the Senate. Furthermore, he was no left-winger; so he ought not to have scared off the Catholic clergy on that account.

conservative and assimilationist.

Other acquaintances of Gibney's such as the two leading Irish-born laymen, J.T. Reilly (1836-1915) and T.F. Quinlan (1861-1927), both political conservatives, help to complete the picture. Reilly was a great admirer of Gibney's and together they founded the *Westralian Record* in 1874 which Reilly edited for a number of years. The Northam-based Reilly raised Quinlan (and his sister Mary) when they were orphaned soon after their arrival in Western Australia in 1863.³⁷ Quinlan went on to become a prominent publican and businessman in nearby Toodyay and in Perth. He was for a number years (1890-4 and 1897-1911) a member of the Legislative Assembly, the last six as Speaker. Quinlan was a strong supporter of the Forrest party and staunchly anti-Labor. He collaborated with Gibney on a number of projects and was granted a papal knighthood for his contribution to church affairs.³⁸

Subsequent generations of Quinlans and (O') Connors³⁹ have remained prominent until this day in Perth medical, legal and business circles—not to mention Catholic lay affairs.⁴⁰ These and other leading Catholic families such as the Aherns, the Duracks and the Lavans have constituted a loose network within the West Australian business and professional community.

Senator Paddy Lynch was at least tenuously connected with this network through his dealings with the leading Catholic law firm Lavan, Walsh and Lavan which handled his estate.⁴¹ He also had a much earlier acquaintance with Bishop

³⁷ J.T. Reilly, *Reminiscences of Fifty Years in Western Australia* (Perth, 1903), pp.31-32. See also: Lucille Quinlan, *Undaunted Spirit: the life and times of Joseph T. Reilly* (Melbourne, 1980), *passim*.

³⁸ Quinlan, *op.cit.*, (1980), pp.139-41 and 240; Reilly, *op.cit.*, (1903), *passim*.

³⁹ Quinlan married Theresa Connor, daughter of Daniel Connor, a poor Irish settler made good, of Toodyay.

⁴⁰ Several of these Quinlans and O'Connors have been prominent in the affairs of Notre Dame University at Fremantle

⁴¹ See earlier discussion in Chapter Eight. The co-executor of his will, J.F. Walsh, was active in the Knights of the Southern Cross, a Catholic lay organisation whose membership included many of the prominent business and professional figures already referred to.

Gibney going back to his Goldfields days. A frequent Mass-goer at the Redemptorist Monastery next to his home in North Perth, he was also acquainted with Archbishop Clune, a Redemptorist himself. Indeed, he was a pall-bearer at Clune's funeral in 1935. We also know from the correspondence relating to Lynch's will that he was an acquaintance of Archbishop Prendiville.⁴² We have already noted that Lynch's two daughters married two Clune brothers⁴³ from the prominent pioneering New Norcia farming family of that name.⁴⁴ Indeed, the Lynches and Clunes could be said to represent yet another farming dynasty in their own right and to have merged in time with that loose network of prominent Western Australian Catholic families described earlier.

The predominant politico-religious ethos within 20th century Western Australian Catholicism was never in any sense all-pervasive; the Church was always able to accommodate a variety of tendencies and viewpoints.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the interlocking clerical and lay elites described earlier did create a climate in which the dominant conservative ethos prevailed. It is reasonable to assume that these attitudes would and did filter down and influence the mass of ordinary Irish Catholics.

⁴² Catholic Archdiocesan Archives, "P.J. Lynch" file. Letter by Prendiville to Lavan, Walsh and Lavan Solicitors, Perth (8 May 1944). Prendiville notified Lynch's solicitors that Lynch had come to see him prior to his death and asked that part of the sum he had bequeathed to the Perth archdiocese be utilised for the benefit of the Geraldton diocese.

⁴³ They were no close relation to Archbishop Clune, though their ancestors were from the same part of County Clare.

⁴⁴ Several of these Clunes made forays into local and state politics during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

⁴⁵ Notable amongst those who swam against the prevailing current on issues such as conscription, the Empire and Irish nationalism were Fr Tom O'Grady, editor of the *Westralian Record*, and Hugh Mahon MHR.

Catholic Political Preferences

It is almost an article of faith that the 1916 Split solidified Catholic support for the Labor Party⁴⁶ whilst the 1955 Split severely undermined it. It is generally accepted, furthermore, that at both state and national levels support for the Labor Party has been significantly stronger amongst Catholics than amongst members of the other major Christian denominations (certainly support for the ALP has almost invariably exceeded that of support for the non-Labor parties).

The Labor Split of the 1950s and the emergence of the Democratic Labor Party (DLP) provides further evidence to support our thesis regarding the distinctive development of political Catholicism in Western Australia. The Split had a muted impact in the West for at least three reasons: (i) There was not such a large Catholic Labor support base in the first place—many Catholics had never been Labor voters; (ii) Many of those Catholic Labor voters discontented with the ALP had already defected to the opposition *before* the Split; (iii) Many other Catholic Labor voters defected straight to the Liberals in the mid/late 1950s, bypassing the DLP.⁴⁷

The muted impact of the Split in Western Australia contrasted sharply with the Victorian experience, for example. In that state, later to become the bastion of the DLP, the Split had a massive impact because of the existence of a large critical

⁴⁶ This is indirectly attested to by the vote for Hugh Mahon's expulsion from the House of Representatives in 1920. The vote clearly reflected the reinforced ethnic-religious cleavage in Australian party politics resulting from the Labor Split of 1916-17. The voting figures demonstrate how the Labor Party—at least at the Federal parliamentary level—had become a strongly Irish Catholic dominated party. The vote was conducted along strict party lines; that is to say all Nationalist members voted for Mahon's expulsion and all Labor members against. Of the 17 Labor members, seven had Irish surnames. Of the 34 Nationalist members, only one had an Irish surname. If we include the members of both parties who were paired in the vote, we achieve a similar result. 10 out of a total of twenty-six Labor members had Irish surnames. They were: Brennan, Considine, Cunningham, Lavelle, McGrath, Mahon, Mahony, Maloney, Moloney and Ryan. They represented approximately 40% of the total. Eight of them were Catholics. In stark contrast, only one of the forty-three Nationalist members (Fleming) had an Irish surname. That represented a bare 2.2%. And Fleming was not a Catholic.

⁴⁷ F.G. Clarke, *The Democratic Labor Party in Western Australia* (Masters thesis, University of Western Australia, 1969), pp.54-55, 82. Clarke hints at but does not fully articulate these points.

mass of Catholic Labor voters. Encouraged by no less influential a person than Archbishop Mannix, Catholics deserted the ALP in droves. Desertions never occurred on such a scale in Western Australia where the much less overtly political Archbishop Prendiville exerted nothing like the same influence on his flock. For the much smaller critical mass of Catholic Labor voters the issues were never as divisive as they were in the emotion-charged atmosphere of Victoria. The generally non-confrontationist ethic of the Western Australian church also facilitated a broad consensus which served to smooth over potential difficulties. Paradoxically, the very conservatism of Western Australian Catholics limited the impact of the Split and, subsequently, of the DLP.⁴⁸ Moreover, the muted impact of the Split served to underline that pre-existing conservatism.

Lynch as a West Australian

Lynch's loose connections with the dominant Catholic elites in Western Australia has been noted earlier. However, the question remains: does the more conservative and assimilationist nature of Irish political Catholicism in the West help to explain the particular political path he took?

Throughout his thirty-one years in the Federal Parliament Lynch remained a fervent *Western* Australian loyalist. He therefore reflected the more conservative and assimilationist ethos of his Church in the same way as he reflected the conservative and imperialist predispositions of the state as a whole.⁴⁹ For all that, it seems likely that Lynch would have taken the same political stance in 1916 whichever state he had been representing. Had he stayed in either Queensland or

⁴⁸ Here Western Australia had much more in common with New South Wales where the Catholic Church under Cardinal Gilroy was similarly non-confrontationist. However, the situation was also different insofar as the Church enjoyed a close relationship with the Cahill Labor Government of the day and general Catholic support for the ALP was much stronger than in Western Australia.

⁴⁹ He shared the defence-consciousness and pro-Empire stance of Bishop Gibney, for example.

New South Wales and come to represent one of those states in the Federal Parliament, he would just as surely have been a conscriptionist in 1916-17. He was after all a single-minded individual with the overwhelming strength of his convictions, always the leader rather than the follower.

At the same time, there is no doubting that the prevailing political climate in Western Australia made it much easier for Lynch to fit in—both with the electorate at large and with his fellow Irish Catholics. He experienced a relative lack of hostility from his co-religionists in the West compared to what he might have expected in Queensland, New South Wales or Victoria. Even the hostility he received on the Goldfields in no way compared to the reaction he received in Melbourne where approbation and abuse was constantly heaped upon him by fellow Irish Catholics who felt betrayed.⁵⁰

This is not to say that Lynch did not brook strong opposition from some of his fellow countrymen and co-religionists in his home state. He did. Fr Tom O'Grady, the editor of the *Westralian Record*, is an obvious example.⁵¹ In the parliamentary sphere, Hugh Mahon is another. Mahon, however, had very little to do with the Perth-based clerical and lay elites: he was Goldfields-based and actually spent most of his political career domiciled in Melbourne. Perth may have been Lynch's reference point but Mahon's was Melbourne.⁵² This difference is highly significant: the two men personified in many respects the prevailing politico-religious climates—Lynch the conservative and assimilationist ethos of the Western Australian church (represented by Gibney and Clune) and Mahon the

⁵⁰ At public meetings during the October 1916 referendum campaign and at the Special Interstate Labor Congress the following December. See descriptions in Chapter Six.

⁵¹ See discussion in Chapters Six and Nine. Prominent Irish-Australian critics included the State Labor leader, Philip Collier, and the *Westralian Worker* editor, John Curtin—both of whom were Victorian imports.

⁵² The Mahon Papers reveal a close political affinity between Mannix (and the Bishop of Sale, Patrick Phelan) and Mahon [NLA 937/219. Phelan to Mahon (4 June 1909); NLA 937/192. Mannix to Mahon (1 January 1920)].

more assertive and nationalistic ethos of the Victorian church (represented by Mannix).

Yet Lynch survived politically and Mahon did not. Mahon was twice rejected by the electors of Kalgoorlie—in May 1917 and again in December 1920, at the by-election following his expulsion from the Federal Parliament.⁵³ This latter defeat spelt the end of Mahon's political career. As a senator, Lynch of course had one huge advantage: he was somewhat cushioned from the electoral vicissitudes which beset MHR's in marginal seats. Provided the statewide anti-Labor vote held solid, his Number Two position on the party ticket generally guaranteed his re-election.⁵⁴ Following the Split, he lasted another twenty years in the Federal Parliament (eventually being defeated in 1937). It is reasonable, however, to conclude that he would not have survived so easily in Victoria. Indeed, had he been representing any state other than Western Australia, it is doubtful he would have lasted beyond the early 1920s. At neither State nor Federal level, did any other Irish Catholic ex-Labor parliamentarian survive anywhere near as long as what Lynch did. This owes much to the fact that he was able to attract a substantial level of support from former Labor voters who had deserted the party in 1916-17. Added to the traditional anti-Labor vote, their support strengthened his position considerably.

The fact that Lynch survived while Mahon did not says something, not only about Lynch and Mahon, but about Western Australia. The relatively conservative and conformist political climate of the state in general—and of the Irish Catholic

⁵³ Mahon had regained his seat at the elections in 1919. He suffered his two electoral defeats despite the fact that Kalgoorlie had a large natural support base of Irish Catholic Laborites. He received no support from the Kalgoorlie or Boulder councils following his expulsion from the Federal Parliament. Indeed, the Dublin-born Catholic mayor of Kalgoorlie, Bernard Leslie, led the charge against Mahon when the matter of his "disloyalty" was discussed in that council.

⁵⁴ This of course has to be balanced against the vulnerability of sitting senators when there was a substantial statewide swing against their party. And all the more so in Lynch's day when only six senators were returned from each state and it was common practice for entire party teams to be defeated.

community in particular—made Lynch’s task so much easier. For every Irish Catholic opponent in the West, he probably had a least one supporter. The same could never have been said of the eastern states.

It was argued earlier that Lynch would have taken the same political path in 1916 had he been based in another state. Therefore, the argument that he *reflected* the prevailing Western Australia political climate has only limited strength. We can, however, state with greater conviction that he helped to *reinforce* the prevailing conservative Catholic political alignment. He did this in several ways:

(i) In 1916-17 he helped confirm a large number of Irish Catholics in Western Australia in their commitment to the imperialist and conscriptionist causes.⁵⁵ To have an Irish Catholic politician (and a Labor one at that) supporting these causes conferred on them a certain legitimacy and removed some of the sectarian barriers to Catholic support.

(ii) More importantly perhaps, he brought a certain number of Irish Catholic Laborites with him. Most of these erstwhile Labor supporters (especially in the farming and goldfields mining communities) were subsequently absorbed into the Nationalist ranks. He led the way in breaking down sectarian barriers to Catholics within the anti-Labor parties.

(iii) Unlike most of the other states where the Catholic/Labor nexus was much strengthened by the events of 1916-17, his influence effectively thwarted any consolidation of the relatively weak Catholic/Labor alignment in Western Australia. To the contrary, he helped to reinforce the close relationship with the non-Labor parties of a significant number of influential clergy and lay Catholics.

⁵⁵ A good example is F.C. Hagan, a Perth correspondent to the *Westralian Record* in December 1917. A Catholic non-Labor supporter, he found Lynch’s articulation of the conscriptionist cause much more palatable than Hughes’s sectarianism which he deplored. See discussion in Chapter Six.

In summary, Lynch, by virtue of his own political and personal stature, served to undermine further the already weak Catholic/Labor alignment in Western Australia. In so doing, he both extended and consolidated the support base for the conservative parties amongst the Catholic population.⁵⁶

Lynch was able to exert some degree of political influence within a large geographical area of Western Australia through his various associations of one kind or another (work, residence and family connections). Included were localities such as Kalgoorlie/Boulder (former place of work and residence), Perth (former place of work and residence), New Norcia (family and educational connections), Three Springs and Mullewa (work, residence and family connections), Geraldton (family connections), Hyden (family connections) and Narrogin (family connections through his second wife).⁵⁷ In most of these places, Lynch's connections with the Irish Catholic communities were strong. He was also able to tap into a church network linking such places as Perth, New Norcia and the Three Springs/Mullewa/Geraldton area (where his nephew, the well-known Dean Michael Lynch, served from the time of his ordination in 1922 until his death in 1968).

Conclusion

This chapter began by describing how the distinctive historical development of Western Australia had resulted in the lack of a significant urban proletariat comparable to that in the more populous eastern states. It was noted that this had also retarded the growth of a large industrial Irish Catholic working-class. Along

⁵⁶ Evident, for example, amongst his own extended family and their descendants. Whilst some of his nephews at least were still Labor supporters in the early 1940's (see Chapter Eight), most of the extended family of Lynches and Clunes became committedly anti-Labor in their politics.

⁵⁷ Indeed, large sections of the Goldfields, wheatbelt and south-west.

with other historical factors—such as the Gibney-Forrest alliance and the generally close links between the influential Catholic elites and the conservative political establishment—this served in turn to discourage the development of the traditional Catholic/Labor political alignment. Irish Catholics in Western Australia have, generally speaking, been more politically conservative than their eastern states' counterparts.⁵⁸

Paddy Lynch's political views had largely been fashioned before his arrival in Western Australia. The formative experience in his early political education was the maritime strikes of the early 1890s during which time he was based in New South Wales. The influence upon him of the prevailing conservative political climate in the West was therefore limited and ought not be exaggerated: he was, in any event, too much of an individualist for it to have been otherwise. For all that, it was a climate in which he felt comfortable as his political career progressed; all the more so as he made the transition from conservative Labor to Nationalist politics. Rather than challenged, his political convictions were reinforced. Most importantly, Lynch himself came to reinforce that conservative Catholic political climate.

⁵⁸ Simple observation warrants the suggestion that in recent decades there has been a consistently high proportion of Catholics involved in the Liberal Party in Western Australia, and at the highest levels. Many of those concerned are part of a loose but readily identifiable network of politically conservative Catholic businessmen and professionals.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to explain Lynch's apparent political metamorphosis from early Labor pioneer into right-wing conservative Nationalist Party imperialist. In so doing, it also sought to resolve the apparent contradiction of Lynch, as Irish Catholic nationalist and ardent conscriptionist. Although it emerged that Paddy Lynch was not such a paradox after all,¹ he was, nonetheless, unusual. And certainly the most prominent Irish Catholic Labor conscriptionist in Australia.

These two considerations—Lynch as conservative Labor man and Lynch as Irish Catholic nationalist—make competing though not conflicting claims. Rather, they offer differing levels of explanation. At one level, Lynch's Irishness and Catholicism become irrelevant because he is best explained as representative of the conservative Labor men of the first political generation (for the most part *non-Catholics* such as Watson, Hughes, Spence, Guthrie and Pearce). However, at a more fundamental level, his ethnicity and religion remain central because he is shown to have been an essentially conservative Meath farmer who retained traditional Catholic and rural values. As Patrick O'Farrell has observed of the Irish in Australia:

Few were natural radicals. They protested not so much against the system, but against their exclusion from its benefits. Give them a modest share of prosperity and the conservatism of a peasant and religious people asserts itself.²

Ultimately, it is Lynch's conservative rural background and his drive for material advancement which is the key to our understanding of him. To that extent his involvement with the labour movement in Australia can be seen as a temporary

¹ Humphrey McQueen's study of the Labor conscriptionists helped put Lynch into context. See Chapter Ten.

² Patrick O'Farrell, *The Irish in Australia* (Third edition, Sydney, 2000), p.16.

phase consequent on emigration.

Lynch was neither an intellectual nor a particularly original thinker: he was, nevertheless, well-read. Having been introduced to historical, literary and philosophical texts during his schooling in Ireland, as an auto-didact he pursued these interests throughout his life. His parliamentary speeches were studded with evidence of his reading. For all that, the learning constituted an overlay on his inherited rural folksiness and “commonsense” conservatism. And, at the end of the day, it was this conservatism which won out. His ongoing attachment to the land and to property reflected the values of the post-Famine tenant farmer. Likewise his tough-minded approach towards economic matters: if it wanted to survive, the country, like the farm, had to pay its way. For him, the private virtues of frugality and thrift were easily converted into public values of fiscal rectitude.

His speeches were also sprinkled with aphorisms and colloquialisms from his Irish boyhood.³ Lynch the conservative Irish farmer patriarch is revealed in his attitudes towards women, the family and issues such as birth control.⁴ But for the fact of his emigration, it would not be difficult to imagine him in 1937⁵ as a seventy-year-old farmer on the family property at Skearke, rather than at Three Springs. Geographically speaking, they were a world away; yet, in another sense, they were the same place.

The analysis of Lynch’s political beliefs in Chapters Nine-Eleven unveiled his assumptions. The fundamental underlying premise of his political beliefs can ultimately be traced to a *developmentalist* ideology which largely measures human progress in terms of the exploitation of land, whether through mining or

³ For example, the story of the two boys and the allocation of eggs recounted in Chapter One. See Chapter Eight (footnote 40) for examples of popular sayings.

⁴ See discussion in Chapter Eight.

⁵ The year of his Senate defeat.

agriculture. The acceptance of this basic premise provided Lynch with a justifying argument for the European occupation of Australia and for his politically tough-minded stance on the defence of the nation against external threat—particularly from Asia. Many of his other political arguments—including his support for conscription—follow from these assumptions.

Although single-minded and combative in his politics, Lynch was not entirely a maverick: his core beliefs were generally representative of his early Labor contemporaries. As we saw in Chapter Five, he was very much a man of the “New Settlement”, that broad post-Federation consensus which embraced support for White Australia, protection and compulsory arbitration. But, from an early stage, Lynch was also a defence-conscious ultra-nationalist, displaying those traits which would later make for an easy and logical transition into the Nationalist Party.

We must also allow for a certain evolutionary dynamic in Lynch’s politics. He was always fundamentally a conservative, but his later role as Nationalist Party politician and representative of rural interests served to reinforce this conservatism. Further, his policy positions were never entirely static: his later move to an anti-protectionist stance exemplifies this. What ultimately distinguished Lynch as a true conservative was the primacy he assigned to defending the existing social order: many of his erstwhile Labor colleagues—even those who, like Lynch, placed *national* interest over *class* interest—remained committed nonetheless to significant social change.

Conservative and aspiring Labor man of the first political generation and essentially conservative Meath farmer: these are two key elements to an explanation of Lynch’s political odyssey. There is, however, a third: individual temperament. For, while Lynch may have carried an olive branch in one hand, he

always clutched a shillelagh in the other. He never scorned a fight. He was no self-doubter. Ted Holloway observed admiringly how tenaciously he fought at the December 1916 Melbourne Conference to retain his membership of the Labor Party.⁶ Once he had made the traumatic break, however, he became an implacable foe. He was a man for whom there were no half-measures. Instead, there was almost an equal-and-opposite reaction: his early dedication to the labour movement was matched only by his later commitment to the Nationalist cause and his excoriation of the Labor Party.

In one sense, 1916-17 marks a major watershed in Lynch's political career—in another sense, it does not. The traumatic events of the Split obscure an underlying continuity in his fundamental political beliefs. These beliefs reflected the values of the Irish tenant farmer—albeit significantly modified by his materially successful Australian experience. There is, at the same time, no denying that the circumstances of his departure from the Labor Party—he didn't jump, he was pushed—along with the vitriol directed at him, served to steel his political conservatism. He was also bound to make some adjustment to his views to take account of his new political friends and supporters.⁷ The dangers of merely projecting Lynch's latter-day conservatism back onto his early political career—of arguing with the dubious benefit of hindsight—have been acknowledged in Chapter Eleven. In his case, however, the evidence overwhelmingly favours a continuity.

George Pearce and Paddy Lynch could be regarded as archetypes of the conservative Labor tradition. In the conclusion to his biography of the former, John Merritt explains Pearce's transformation from early Labor pioneer to latter-

⁶ See discussion in Chapter Six.

⁷ I wish to thank John Merritt for suggesting this point.

day conservative. If we apply these points of explanation to Lynch, an uncanny resemblance emerges between the two men: each represented skilled tradesmen with middle-class values who wanted more within the system (and ideally to become “small capitalists” themselves); each felt pride in his achievements and the sacrifices which he had made on behalf of the movement; each retained a belief in old Labor methods and was generally suspicious of radicalism (especially of the IWW variety during war-time); each believed that his job was to serve the community and not just trade unions (and that serving the national interest made all-out support for the war effort axiomatic); each believed that he was better able to assess the war situation and the country’s needs than the majority of the labour movement; and each was reinforced in his sense of rightness by the initial support which he received from the movement in the West during the conscription controversy (and came to see the anti-conscriptionists as eastern states agitators).⁸

There are nevertheless areas of difference. First, Lynch didn’t attend the Imperial Conference in London in 1911, so he could not have picked up the deference towards British Establishment figures (and their Australian equivalents) which Merritt attributes to Pearce as a result of the latter’s experience overseas. In any event, it was not in Lynch’s nature to be deferential in this way: as we saw in Chapter Nine, he was no “West Brit”—he was an Irish nationalist whose embracing of the Empire was based upon hard-headed practical considerations.⁹ Secondly, except for a brief three-month stint in office in 1916-17, Lynch never faced the same kinds of ministerial demands which increasingly removed Pearce from the Labor rank-and-file.¹⁰ He was inclined nonetheless (especially during

⁸ John Merritt, “George Foster Pearce: Labour Leader” (Masters thesis, University of Western Australia, 1963), pp.544-70. These are just some of the most salient points of similarity extracted from Merritt’s study; there are others.

⁹ *Ibid*, pp.549-53.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, pp.553-4.

wartime) to sympathise with those who had to shoulder the burden of the practical responsibilities of government.¹¹ His instinctive sympathy was never with what the Irish call “the hurler on the ditch”.

For all his similarities with Pearce, Lynch differed in significant respects from his fellow Irish Catholic nationalist, Hugh Mahon. Most fundamentally, he and Mahon related their religion to their politics differently. Mahon’s religion and politics were inextricably entwined: he was very much a *Catholic* Labor politician. By contrast, Lynch’s religion and politics were more compartmentalised: he was a Labor (later Nationalist) politician who also happened to be a Catholic. Mahon’s Catholicism and Irish nationalism ultimately determined his politics. This was never so for Lynch whose Australian nationalism always transcended his Irish nationalism. While most of Mahon’s closest associates were Catholics, this was never the case for Lynch; during his later career in particular, most of his closest political friends, notably Sir Josiah Symon, were non-Catholics.

This study has also drawn attention to the diversity of the Irish immigrant experience—within Australia and elsewhere. The Australian-Irish as a group have long been regarded as emphatically more pro-Empire than the American-Irish. Thus, it is much less likely that Lynch would have ended up a thorough-going British imperialist had he remained in the USA. In his study *How the Irish became White*, Noel Ignatiev has taken this consideration of American-Irish exceptionalism a step further.¹² According to him, the Irish in the USA started as excluded outsiders but eventually “*became white*” by gaining membership of the

¹¹ His tolerance of government censorship in 1916 provides an excellent example. See discussion in Chapters Six and Nine.

¹² Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish became White* (New York, 1995).

dominant “in” group.¹³ In Australia, by contrast, it can be argued that the Irish were *always* “white” in the sense that, despite a certain amount of discrimination as members of the founding European population, they were never totally excluded from the “in” group.¹⁴ Ignatiev has also observed of the American-Irish that, as they tried to expand and consolidate their privileges as part of the “in” group, so they sought to reinforce barriers against other, still excluded, groups (such as African-Americans).¹⁵ Applied to Australia, this “reinforcing of barriers” aptly describes the process in which Lynch and his fellow Irish-Australians were engaged—on the goldfields as elsewhere: defending their own industrial gains whilst vigorously working to maintain the exclusion of “non-whites” (Italians, Asians, etc.).¹⁶

In the 20th century, many Irish-Americans, once they had embraced the “American dream”, became super-patriots. Once he had embraced the “Australian dream”,¹⁷ Lynch, in his own way, became an Australian super-nationalist. His devotion to his adopted country took pride place over everything else—including any residual loyalties to his native land. Yet, at the end of the day, he was very much a product of that conservative rural parish into which he was born.

This in turn raises other important issues for students of Irish-Australian history. Much popular history has hitherto exaggerated and romanticised the role of the Irish as rebels in Australia—Ned Kelly, Peter Lalor (despite his later career

¹³ *Ibid*, Chapter Two, *passim*.

¹⁴ “White” in this context is not used as a racial term but rather to signify acceptance into the political and economic “in” group. As members of this “founding population”, the Irish in Australia had an advantage which the Irish in North America did not.

¹⁵ Ignatiev, *op.cit.* (1995), Chapter Four, *passim*.

¹⁶ As the Democratic Party was for many Irish-Americans, so the Labor Party was for Lynch and many of his fellow Irish-Australians an avenue to political power.

¹⁷ CPD, Vol.81, p.11406 (14 March 1917). “I am living in Australia, which was the dream of my youth ... the very fact that one is able to rise, as I and scores like me have risen, fills me with a just appreciation of this glorious, free and unexampled Australia.”

as a conservative politician),¹⁸ Daniel Mannix and the other Irish anti-conscriptionists of 1916-17. Indeed, the preferred perceived self-image of many present-day Irish-Australians as heirs to an exclusively anti-establishment rebel and radical republican tradition is at best simplistic and at worst grossly delusive.

The truth is more complex: both within the labour movement and within Australian society at large, the Irish have been as much as a conservative as a radical influence. At the same time, the Irish cannot be neatly divided into the radicals and the conservatives, the rebels and the Establishment, the Ned Kellys and the Redmond Barrys: as this study of Lynch has shown, *within* each Irish migrant there may be competing elements of radicalism and conservatism. In Lynch's case, the conservative ultimately won out. Like many migrants, he was successfully co-opted by the dominant ideology.

Writers such as Ignatiev raise even more fundamental issues regarding the Irish as agents and beneficiaries as much as opponents and victims of Empire; as *oppressors* as much as *oppressed*.¹⁹ In Australia, these matters have direct contemporary relevance as historians grapple with such subjects as the relationship of the early Irish settlers to the Aborigines.²⁰ For many Irish-Australians, celebrating the Irish influence in Australia means being honest and embracing the *whole* story—not just those parts which romanticise the “rebel Irish”.

This study has highlighted some of the complexities of the Irish emigrant experience in Australia and at the same time suggested areas for further study.

¹⁸ Lalor's grandson later condemned those anti-conscriptionists who invoked his grandfather's name in their cause. See John Kirwan, *My Life's Adventure* (London, 1929), pp.18-19.

¹⁹ The title of the recent RTE television series “The Irish Empire” implies this very question.

²⁰ For example, Bob Reece, “The Irish and the Aborigines” in Tadhg Foley and Fiona Bateman (eds) *Irish-Australian Studies: Papers at the Ninth Irish-Australian Conference*, Galway, April 1997 (Sydney, 2000). In this regard, I also wish to acknowledge the work of Melbourne-based historian Val Noone.

The biographies by Tony Evans of Paddy Lynch's fellow Meathmen, John Boyle O'Reilly and C.Y. O'Connor, provide us with two excellent case studies of late 19th century Irish personalities prominent in the history of Western Australia.²¹ Other biographies of this kind will further advance our understanding of the Irish contribution: Lynch and Hugh Mahon, both Irishmen who came to political prominence in early 20th century Western Australia, provide just two obvious examples. One comparative study which immediately suggests itself would involve Paddy Lynch and another rural north Meathmen, Jim Connell (author of *The Red Flag*): how did two contemporaries from such similar backgrounds ultimately follow such different political paths?²²

This study of Lynch has also attempted in some small way to rectify a previous neglect by devoting attention to the peculiarities of the subject's homeplace in Meath. Future biographies could move beyond the generalities of Irish experience to explore more fully the specifics of place (county, parish, townland). Finally, more attention might be devoted to the peculiarities of place within Australia, such as the Western Australian goldfields. Most importantly, a thorough analysis of the Catholic Irish emigrant experience in Western Australia is called for. Such a study might explore further the argument for Western Australian exceptionalism advanced in the final chapter of this thesis. Coupled with suitable biographies, such localised studies could contribute significantly to an even better understanding of the complexities of the Australian-Irish experience.

The story of Paddy Lynch, Irish-born Catholic, conscriptionist, Labor man turned conservative Nationalist Party politician, has demonstrated that Irish-

²¹ A.G. Evans, *Fanatic Heart: A Life of John Boyle O'Reilly 1844-1890* (Nedlands, 1997); C.Y. O'Connor: *His Life and Legacy* (Perth, 2001).

²² Note references in Chapters Eight and Eleven to Lynch protesting in the Senate in November 1929 against the singing of *The Red Flag* in the Hotel Kurrajong in Canberra. Connell was involved in the Irish Republican Brotherhood and, later in Britain, in the left-wing Social Democratic Federation.

Australian politics have been more complex and nuanced than much popular and academic myth-making has allowed. Straddling as he did both political camps, Lynch personified many of the ambiguities of the immigrant Irish. For him, as for most, various impulses and influences—spiritual and materialist, individualist and collectivist, conservative and radical—were at work. But at the end of the day his primary motivation was the drive for material self-advancement.

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