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**THE BANNING OF E.A.H. LAURIE AT MELBOURNE TEACHERS'
COLLEGE, 1944.**


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SYNOPSIS

This thesis examines the banning of a communist speaker, Lieutenant E.A.H. Laurie, at Melbourne Teachers' College in July, 1944 and argues that the decision to ban Laurie was unwarranted and politically motivated. The banning, which was enforced by the Minister for Public Instruction, Thomas Tuke Hollway, appears to have been based on Hollway's firm anti-communist views and political opportunism. A. J. Law, Principal of the Teachers' College, was also responsible for banning Laurie. However, Law's decision to ban Laurie was probably directed by Hollway and supported by J. Seitz, Director of Education.


Students at the neighbouring Melbourne University protested to defend the rights of Teachers' College students for freedom of speech. The University Labor Club and even the University Conservative Club argued that Hollway should have allowed Laurie to debate the "Yes" case for the forthcoming 1944 Powers Referendum.

The "Fourteen Powers Referendum" sought the transfer of certain powers from the States to the Commonwealth for a period of five years after the war, to aid post-war reconstruction. It was supported by the Labor Party (ALP) and the Communist Party. The UAP/Country Party coalition opposed it. The Fourteen Powers Referendum proposal was often referred to by the UAP/Country Party coalition as an attempt by the Labor and Communist Parties to introduce socialism through centralised powers.

The formation of the Liberal Party in October 1944 occurred within two months of the Referendum defeat. Hollway, who was a State political ally of Robert Menzies, knew that the UAP/Country Party coalition would benefit from the Referendum loss. The new Liberal Party which was soon to emerge needed as much support as possible. Hollway himself had further political aspirations and by assisting the non-Labor parties to discredit Labor's "Yes" referendum campaign, he was probably securing his own place within the new Liberal Party.


DISCLAIMER

This thesis is the product of my own original research
and has not been previously submitted for academic accreditation.



Rochelle White
12 December, 1997

To the best of my knowledge and belief ,
the above statements are true.



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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Melbourne Teachers' College (MTC) had a reputation for being rigidly controlled by the Department of Education, particularly during the 1930s and 1940s. In 1936, for instance, a debate proceeded for months between the College and the Department to resolve whether the College needed two new typewriters; the Department eventually decided it needed only one.¹

A teacher crisis developed during the Second World War, as a shortage of teachers and trainee teachers became evident. There was increasing demand for educational reform in 1942-1945, despite war-time concerns, provoked by the Dunstan government's neglect of education. The Depression in the 1930s had seen a vast number of cutbacks in education and in the 1940s the situation was no better. During 1944, the Educational Reform Association and the Victorian Teachers' Union considered education to be a significant political issue and campaigned for improved conditions for teachers.²

During the 1940s, the atmosphere at the College was undergoing changes: the rigid discipline of the College authorities was being questioned. Student freedom emerged as an issue probably due to Principal A.J. Law's strict disciplinary rules.³ Although political activity was evident at Melbourne University during the 1930s and 1940s, it was not at the Teachers' College, which was viewed as a government institution in which teacher trainees were considered government employees and therefore subject to stringent official control.

This thesis examines the banning from speaking at the Teachers' College of a prominent communist, E.A.H. Laurie, who had been asked by students to present the "Yes" case in a debate on the 1944 referendum on post-war reconstruction. Law was supported by the

¹ Education Department Correspondence 36/2774, cited in Garden, D., (1982), The Melbourne Teacher Training Colleges: From Training Institutions to Melbourne State College, 1870 - 1982, Heinemann Educational Australia, Richmond, pp. 150-51.

² Ibid., pp. 168-175.

³ Ibid., pp. 176-177.

Education Department and Minister, T.T. Hollway. This debate epitomises the two most significant concerns of the 1940s: post-war reconstruction, and the fear of communism which was in later years to reach its height in the Cold War.

A disunited group of non-Labor parties supported the Referendum “No” campaign, principally, the United Australia Party under Menzies’ leadership and the Country Party.⁴ The non-Labor parties tried to discredit the Labor Party’s Referendum proposal. Shortly following the Referendum’s defeat in August 1944, the Liberal Party was formed officially in December. The Liberal Party emerged in 1944 amidst a climate of fear: fear that the country was suddenly moving towards socialism.⁵

Menzies and his political state ally, Thomas Hollway, were discontented with the UAP/Country Party coalition in the Victorian Parliament: the Labor Party, with Curtin as Prime Minister, was in power federally and Dunstan, leader of the Country Party, was Premier of Victoria. Menzies at this time was creating the Liberal Party. In securing support for the new Liberal Party, Menzies and Hollway had to promote their cause, whilst tarnishing the image of the Labor Party.

This thesis supports the view that perhaps Laurie’s banning was enforced because Hollway, Minister of Education, simply did not consider communists loyal citizens and because of his dislike of them. Communists were feared by many non-Labor supporters in 1944, that year being the most successful for the Communist Party because it attained its highest membership ever. By late 1944 membership of the Communist Party had risen to 23,000⁶; this being largely attributed to the enthusiasm created when the Soviet Union joined forces with the Allies.

⁴ Clarke, F.G., (1992), Australia: A Concise Political and Social History, Harcourt Brace Jovanich, London, pp. 260-61.

⁵ Coleman, P., “The Liberal and Country Parties: Platforms, Policies and Performance”, in Wilkes, J., (ed.), (1963), Australian Politics, Angus & Robertson Ltd., Sydney, p. 2.

⁶ Cook, P. S., (1994), Red Barrister: A Biography of Ted Laurie, LaTrobe University Press, Bundoora, pp. 68-69.

Chapter Two provides the background to the events to be analysed. It discusses the social and political climate prevailing in 1944, including the Powers Referendum in 1944 and the state of the Teachers' College. Chapter Three explains the events surrounding Laurie's banning and its consequences, i.e. student protests rallying for greater freedom from the College authorities. Chapter Four explains how Hollway's decision to ban Laurie was unwarranted and how the loss of the Referendum for the Labor Party was an advantage for the soon to emerge Liberal Party. Chapter Five, the Conclusion, draws together the strands of the thesis.

A great deal of literature is available on the 1944 Fourteen Powers Referendum⁷, Communism⁸ and the relationship between the Labor, United Australia and Country Parties. There are also two important sources explaining the relationship between Melbourne University and the adjacent Teachers' College⁹. However, this thesis aims to contribute to the literature by outlining the full set of events regarding Laurie's banning at the Teachers' College and by considering this ban in the context of the 1944 Powers Referendum campaign and other political and social developments at that time.

⁷ National Library of Australia, (1981), Post-war reconstruction in Australia: a bibliography of resources for study in the National Library of Australia, NLA, Canberra.

⁸ Symons, B. (et. al.), (1994), Communism in Australia: a Resource Bibliography, NLA, Canberra.

⁹ Poynter, J.R., & C. Rasmussen, (1996), A Place Apart: the University of Melbourne: Decades of Challenge, MUP, Carlton; & Garden, D., op. cit.

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND

In order to understand the events of July and August 1944 at the Melbourne Teachers' College, it is necessary to provide some information about the College and teacher education in Victoria; post-war reconstruction and the 1944 Powers Referendum; the Labor Party's objectives for post-war reconstruction, and the non-Labor parties' attitude; the political climate in Victoria and at the College; attitudes towards Communism; and importantly, a brief introduction to key individuals involved in the events.

Melbourne Teachers' College and the neighbouring University of Melbourne

Many trainee teachers in 1943 and 1944 felt that the training course at Melbourne Teachers' College was inadequate, trainee teachers having to cram all subjects into ten months. Some trainee teachers were called to the classrooms because of teacher shortages caused by the war; many teachers and student teachers left to serve in the war. In an attempt during 1944 to increase the number of students completing the teacher training course, the Education Department lowered the entrance standard to five leaving subjects.¹ Some trainee teachers were frustrated with the rigid rules governing them whilst at College. Teacher trainees were considered to be government employees and thus expected to act according to the Education Department's strict guidelines.

The Principal of the Teachers' College, A. J. Law, had a reputation for being strict and he attempted to restrict the students' ability to question authority. He had the power to veto the College's Student Council decisions and he had authority over what was published in its two papers: The Griffin and The Trainee. Although Law had been criticised for his rigid enforcement of rules,² some of the students felt that his authority was necessary to manage the college effectively.

A survey on teacher training in Victoria conducted in 1943 proved unfavourable for the College: many students criticised the teachers training course, whereas others criticised

¹ Garden, D., op. cit., pp. 168-69.

the narrow-minded temperament possessed by some of the College and Departmental staff.³ Thomas Tuke Hollway, Minister for Public Instruction, intervened in College matters when necessary. When communist speaker Ted Laurie was invited to speak at the College, Hollway stepped in to control what he saw as a potential politically intense situation.

Melbourne University was going through some dramatic social changes in the 1940s. Ken Gott, a student at the University at that time, claimed that the biggest development for Melbourne University during the 1940s was that it no longer only catered for the sons and daughters of Melbourne's social elite. In 1944 the first Commonwealth scholarships were introduced; the Commonwealth Government introduced subsidies, many to ex-servicemen subsidised under the Commonwealth Restoration Training Scheme. It was the first time Federal money had been allocated for university education and the reason for the Government choosing to introduce the scholarship was to ensure that there would be more engineers and scientists who would be in a position to assist the war effort.⁴

One way in which the events of the war affected Melbourne University was that many students, regardless of their political view, co-operated with the communists when the USSR became Britain's ally in 1941. Gott says that communists were viewed differently as a consequence of the Red Army's struggle against the Nazis because the communists were then seen to be behind the war effort. He explains that a favourite political device of the Left, for a political 'showdown', was to organise large general meetings in the Public Lecture Theatre. This tradition, Gott says, was formed when the Public Lecture Theatre was packed to condemn the Teachers' College authorities for refusing to allow communist speakers the right to speak on the College premises.⁵

Political Background

² Ibid., p. 176.

³ Biddington, R., "Policies in Primary Teacher Training in Victoria 1850-1950", vol. 2, Ph. D Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1978, pp. 625-626.

⁴ Gott, K., 'Student Life: the Forties', in Melbourne University Magazine, (1961), Spring, pp. 23-27, SRC, Melbourne University.

Hollway and Law upheld authority over teacher training and the College as well as, John Seitz, Director of Education and Albert Dunstan, Premier of Victoria. Dunstan was unpopular in 1943-44, with teachers believing that he was neglecting education in the state. J. B. Paul writes of Dunstan that he was preoccupied with finding ways to gain political advantage. His unflattering description of Dunstan states that:

It would surely not be an unjust conclusion to say that the Government led by Dunstan went the shortest distance in fulfilling the minimum unavoidable commitments of office, but only went further when it stood to gain some additional electoral advantage. The overriding consideration which inspired Dunstan's actions in those ten years was his retention of office.⁶

In 1943, Dunstan implemented a small increase to teachers' salaries. However, this helped only the lowest and highest paid and ignored the remainder of teachers in the middle. Dunstan had made this decision without consulting the Public Service Board, which included teacher representatives and the Victorian Teachers' Union (VTU). Dunstan's decision was attacked by the VTU, who objected to the proposed salary changes. Eight hundred teachers marched along Bourke Street to Parliament House to protest.⁷ The large number of teachers protesting at this march to Parliament indicates that teachers were extremely dissatisfied with Dunstan's attitude towards education in Victoria.

Hollway, as leader of the UAP, was also Deputy Premier in Dunstan's UAP/Country Party coalition government. He was not a strict party man and worked well independently. This may explain why his most successful period was during the UAP era, which is described as the era of the independent politician.⁸ Hollway was not always pleased with the UAP/Country Party composite government and was known for working with the Labor Party. The UAP, led by Hollway, supported the Country Party, however, he on occasions negotiated with the Labor party in an effort to dislodge Dunstan.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 25-26.

⁶ Paul, J. B. (1961), "The Premiership of Sir Albert Dunstan", Masters Thesis, University of Melbourne, Dept. of Political Science, p. 413.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 356-357.

⁸ White, K. B., (1975), "A Political Biography of Thomas Tuke Hollway", Masters Thesis, LaTrobe University, p.(v).

Hollway and Cain, leader of the Labor Party, were both anxious for a redistribution of electoral boundaries to occur to reduce the Country Party gerrymander. But the existing electoral boundaries suited Dunstan.⁹ Hollway's tendency to switch sides between the Country and Labor reflects the fragmented nature of the non-Labor Parties in 1944.

The Post-War Reconstruction Referendum.

The Post-War Reconstruction Referendum was a heated issue during 1944, especially in the three months leading up to polling day which was on August 19, 1944. A general feeling prevailed, reflected in the debates over post-war reconstruction, that the sacrifices endured in the war ought to result in a better society without the economic hardships experienced in the previous decades. Many felt that the Depression, which had caused so much suffering in the 1930s, had to be prevented in the aftermath of World War Two. Serious talks concerning post-war reconstruction began in 1942 when the Curtin government introduced a bill into parliament to broaden the Federal Government's constitutional powers.

However, moves to gain these powers by the Federal Government were forestalled the next month, at the Federal-State Constitutional Conference.¹⁰ Following the 1942 Conference, which ran between November 24 to December 2 in Canberra, Prime Minister Curtin in a statement said that the Premiers and Leader of the Opposition representing six states had agreed to work towards granting increased Commonwealth powers for post-war reconstruction.¹¹ Among those attending the Convention were: the Prime Minister, Hon. John Curtin; W. M. Hughes (Commonwealth Leader of the UAP and Dep. Leader of the Opposition); H. V. Evatt (Attorney-General and Minister for Home Affairs); R. G. Menzies and J. B. Chifley (Treasurer); A. A. Dunstan (Premier and Treasurer for Victoria) and J. Cain (Leader of the Opposition in Victoria).

The Constitution Alteration (War Aims and Reconstruction) Bill of 1942 was introduced by the Attorney-General, Hon. H. V. Evatt. The object of the Bill was to alter the Constitution

⁹ Ibid., pp. 70-72.

¹⁰ Bolton, G., (1990), The Oxford History of Australia, 1942-1988, The Middle Way, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 28.

by giving parliament the necessary powers to maintain economic security and social justice in the post-war world and to assist post-war reconstruction. Fourteen powers were to be transferred from the States to the Commonwealth Government for a period of five years after the war. The powers related to improving conditions for ex-servicemen and their dependents during peacetime; maintaining employment for many of those who had obtained work in war-time industries, such as in the munitions factories; development of production and markets; price control; profiteering; encouragement of population; national works and services; improvement of living standards in rural and urban areas; transportation, particularly air transportation; national health; housing; child welfare; and ensuring the four basic freedoms, i.e. freedom of speech and expression, religious freedom, freedom from want and freedom from fear.¹² The 1942 bill to alter the Constitution was put to a Referendum in 1944.

Political attitudes towards the Referendum

Most of the state governments and all of the non-Labor politicians opposed the Referendum for two reasons. Firstly, they claimed that there was already too much government interference and control over peoples' lives. Secondly, it was felt that the Labor Party could not be trusted with the powers to be transferred to the Commonwealth. Many non-Labor supporters and politicians believed that the Labor Party would introduce a socialist society if the Referendum was a success.¹³ The non-Labor parties sought to discredit Labor's image by associating their "Yes" case with the Communist Party.

The 1944 Referendum on post-war reconstruction and democratic rights caused some noteworthy divisions within the UAP in Victoria. For instance, when John Curtin became Prime Minister in September 1941, W. M. Hughes was elected leader of the UAP in place of R. G. Menzies . Hughes went on to fight the 1943 election in that capacity. After the 1943 election, Hughes stepped down as leader and was expelled in April 1944 for refusing

¹¹W. M. Hughes papers, MS1538/Series 48/Folder 67, NLA, Manuscript Section, Canberra.

¹² See Appendix: 'Constitution Alteration (War Aims and Reconstruction) Bill (1942)'; See also, Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 1 October 1942, pp. 1338-1341.

¹³ Clarke, F. G., op. cit., pp. 260-61. _

a UAP direction to leave the Advisory War Council.¹⁴ His support for the “Yes” case was a further problem for the UAP/Country opposition. W. M. Hughes was invited to join H. V. Evatt of the ALP to become a joint Honorary President of the Citizens’ Non-Party Committee for the “Yes” campaign. Hughes support for a “Yes” vote made it all the more important to Menzies, seeking to consolidate his own authority, to secure a “No” victory.

In July 1944, Evatt criticised Dunstan for renegeing on his earlier stance of supporting the Fourteen Powers transferal at the 1942 Constitutional Convention in Canberra and in the Victorian Parliament.¹⁵ Evatt claimed that the Constitution Bill had been passed through both Houses of the Commonwealth five months earlier and that Dunstan had had every opportunity to suggest amendments, but had sought excuses to oppose the Bill in the months prior to the Referendum of 19 August 1944. Other non-Labor politicians, such as R. G. Menzies were criticised, as was Dunstan, for supporting the Constitution Alteration (Fourteen Powers) bill at the 1942 Conference in Canberra and then for opposing it just prior to the Referendum in 1944.

The former Labor Premier of New South Wales, J. T. Lang, who in July 1944 was leader of a breakaway Labor faction in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly, announced in his newspaper The Century that his ‘Australhan Labor Party’ advocated a “No” vote. In his newspaper, he said that the executive of his Party has decided to vote “No” at the Referendum because it felt that the “Yes” campaign had been seized upon by the Communist Party, with plans of capturing the Labor Party and the Australian Council of Trade Unions. Lang believed the party was in the grasp of the Communist Party; he said that the Communist Party had entered a partnership with the Labor Party in a joint campaign to fight the “Yes” case.¹⁶

Lang’s accusation helped discredit the Labor Party, by associating it with fears of the communist ‘bogey’ and socialism. He said that the Curtin Government wanted to

¹⁴ Notes on Hughes from Biographical Notes listed in Index of W. M. Hughes papers, MS1538/48/F131, NLA, Manuscript Section, Canberra.

¹⁵ Daily Mirror, 13 July, 1944, p. 2.

¹⁶ Sydney Morning Herald, 1 July 1944, Page unknown, amongst W. M. Hughes Papers, MS1538/48/F134, NLA, Manuscript Section, Canberra.

introduce a centralised form of government, as in Germany and Russia: ‘It is a plan to place Australia under the system of government known as totalitarianism. It is sometimes described as Fascism, and sometimes called Communism.’¹⁷

Jack Lang’s newspaper, The Century was staunchly anti-communist. In an article titled “Coms to Tour Australia”, Lang spoke about the many communists traveling around Australia supporting the “Yes” case. The article says ‘These Commos can sure get around’. It also refers to J. B. Miles, General Secretary of the National Communist Party Branch, saying that it is hard to believe that Canberra regard Mr. Miles as an ally. In this article Lang attacks the Labor Party by accusing them of using poor judgment in working with and supporting the communists whilst campaigning for the “Yes” case.¹⁸

John Vincent Barry, K.C., ran as endorsed Labor Party candidate for the Balaclava electorate in the Federal elections of 1943. He was heavily involved in the post-war reconstruction issue and produced a pamphlet titled “An argument for Constitutional Reform: Wider Powers for Greater Freedom”, in 1944. In a paper titled “The Way to Nationhood”, Barry said that a “No” victory would lead to national helplessness, to selfish sectional interests, unemployment and social insecurity. He argued that the Constitution needed to be altered to allow for the strains of world wars and Depressions. He argued that even with the Fourteen Powers transferred to the Commonwealth Parliament, it would still have fewer powers than the British, New Zealand and South African Parliaments.¹⁹

In response to accusations made by Hollway, Barry stated that Hollway had quoted him out of context indicating that no agreement was made at the Constitutional Convention in Canberra during November and December 1942. Barry argued that the Victorian Premier, A. Dunstan, was present at the Convention whilst Hollway, his political ally, was not, implying that Hollway could not be in a position to argue such a case. Barry claimed that Dunstan had in the past told the Victorian Parliament that it would be better

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ The Century, (NSW Labor Newspaper), 14 July 1944. Date not known, taken from article amongst W. M. Hughes Papers, MS1538/48/F134, NLA, Manuscript Section, Canberra.

to have a single authority to carry out post-war reconstruction.²⁰ Barry was a founding member and Vice President of the Australian Council for Civil Liberties, and President between 1944 to 1947. He fought for the basic freedoms, such as, freedom of speech and freedom of expression, which the Constitution Alteration Bill claimed to uphold. Barry was an enthusiastic supporter of the “Yes” campaign and frustrated with Labor’s efforts in trying to convince non-Labor politicians that the Powers bill was important for post-war reconstruction.

Communism

Communists, prior to Germany’s invasion of Russia, were often seen to be obstructing the war effort. In April 1940, for instance, a general coal strike occurred in New South Wales over an issue concerning working hours which had begun in 1938. The men’s complaints were genuine but communist leaders who wanted to interfere with the war effort were adding to the notorious image communists already had: that they were assisting the enemy and deliberately hindering the war effort.²¹ Attitudes prevailing such as these in 1940 contributed toward the view that communism should be made illegal under the National Security Act. Under this Act the Communist Party was declared illegal on 15 June 1940. This ban was lifted in 1942 after the USSR entered the war in June 1941.

In a paper headed ‘Commonwealth Opposition Policy for 1942-1943’, the Opposition claimed that it would give full support to the war effort and resist to the utmost any use of war emergency for party political ends. The sixth point of the policy said that there must be the utmost freedom of thought, report and expression consistent with the National Security Act, but limited by no other factor. There must be resistance to political censorship in all its forms.²² However, political censorship was used by the non-Labor

¹⁹ John V. Barry Papers, MS2505/10/674, NLA, Manuscript Section, Canberra.

²⁰ The Herald, 19 July 1944, page unknown, amongst J. V. Barry Papers, MS2505/10/678, NLA, Manuscript Section, Canberra.

²¹ Sawyer, G., (1963), Australian Federal Politics and Law, 1929-1949, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, p. 119.

²² ‘Commonwealth Opposition Policy for 1942-43’ in Menzies’ Papers, MS4936/14/F41, NLA, Manuscript Section, Canberra.

parties in an attempt to silence the communists. This thesis, in studying Ted Laurie's banning at the Melbourne Teachers' College in 1944, will attempt to examine this exercise in political censorship.

As early as November 1941, Menzies supported abortive moves by Hollway to reconstruct the Victorian section of the UAP. In September 1943, when R. G. Menzies became Leader of the Opposition, he spoke of the reorganisation of the non-Labor parties. Between June and September 1944, four secret meetings prepared amalgamations in Victoria of the United Australia Organisation, the Services and Citizens Party and the Young Nationalists. At the time of the 1944 referendum, Menzies was working hard to unite the splintered non-Labor forces. The loss of the Powers Referendum for Labor assisted the non-Labor parties' campaign, led by Menzies, to unite the non-Labor forces in a common objective to overthrow communism.

Menzies supported the "No" case in the Referendum claiming that the powers sought could be sorted into three categories: some were unnecessary, others went beyond what a non-socialist programme of post-war reconstruction would require, and others might be supported if they could be made permanent.²³ Menzies argued against transferring employment and production to the Commonwealth because he claimed that this would enable industrial conscription and socialisation of industry. He said that the Fourteen Powers Referendum, if successful, would allow the Government to create a system of centralised power.

Menzies said in a statement in the UAP rooms on 16 June 1944 in Melbourne that Parliamentary Party leaders and office-bearers from all States agreed that they would do all in their power to defeat the Referendum proposal.²⁴ . It was Menzies and the UAP's view that improvement of living standards rested upon the encouragement and rewarding of enterprise and initiatives in the individual citizen. Menzies and his State allies were clearly determined to do whatever they could to defeat the Referendum. Menzies, triumphant after the defeat of the Powers Referendum, contacted a number of non-Labor

²³ Ibid., p. 172.

²⁴ Menzies Papers, (MS4936), National Library of Australia, Manuscripts Section, Document 14(f)/F64.

organisations inviting them to a conference to consider the establishment of a national and political movement.²⁵ This meeting of non-Labor party members soon paved the way for the Liberal Party to emerge.

E.A.H (Ted) Laurie and Communism

Ted Laurie had been involved in communist activities for many years and had problems in dealing with the war-time regulations in 1944, when the Communist Party was no longer illegal. Laurie wrote to John Vincent Barry on October 17, 1944 as Secretary of the Austraha-Soviet League asking Barry if he would be willing to be on a committee to raise support for Food Week to organise food for Russia. He felt that Food Week would be a greater success if it were represented by a public committee of citizens, including people not associated with the Austraha-Soviet League. Barry in reply wrote, that as a member of the ALP and due to the ban placed on the organisation by the Executive of the ALP, he was prevented from associating himself with the League and its effort, which he nonetheless approved.²⁶ The ALP seemed to have pressured its members to disassociate themselves from communist organisations in an effort to protect its image.

Laurie was a communist candidate for the House of Representatives in the federal election of 24 August, 1943 against Menzies in the middle-class Melbourne seat of Kooyong. Laurie did remarkably well, receiving 8 per cent of the primary votes, considering Menzies' popular reputation and the class composition of the seat.²⁷ When Laurie was invited to speak at the Teachers' College he would have seen this as a great opportunity to argue the "Yes" case on the Powers Referendum to the students. However, Laurie did not speak to the students because of the banning imposed by Law, and principally directed by Hollway. Ironically, Laurie was scheduled to debate the Referendum issue at the College against Menzies, whom he had run against in the

²⁵ Hazlehurst, C., (1979), Menzies Observed, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, p. 278.

²⁶ Sir John Vincent Barry papers, MS2505, Series 1/Folder 2, 1/198-199, NLA, Manuscript Section, Canberra.

²⁷ Cook, P. S., (1994), Red Barrister: A Biography of Ted Laurie, LaTrobe University Press, Bundoora, pp. 69-70.

previous year's federal election. Laurie's banning is representative of the treatment handed out to many communists during the 1940s by non-Labor politicians.

CHAPTER 3: EVENTS

The Fourteen Powers Referendum was a widely divisive issue in Australian society during 1944 and was the subject of debate and controversy at the Melbourne Teachers' College and the Melbourne University. Controversy surrounded its discussion in July and August, 1944. College Principal A.J. Law banned Laurie from arguing the "Yes" case on the Referendum, it seems, after receiving a direction from the Minister for Public Instruction, T. T. Hollway. Students protested in response to Laurie's banning and the issue received widespread coverage in the press. Many of the protests initiated by the banning soon moved to the issue of obtaining the same rights and freedom for Teachers' College students already granted to students at the University.

Laurie had already accepted his invitation to speak at the College debate on the Powers Referendum scheduled for July 12, 1944 and it had been advertised that he was going to attend.¹ However, Law subsequently called the Students' Council together telling its ^{leaders?} readers that Laurie would not be allowed to speak at the College. He said that any speaker could argue the "Yes" case provided that they were not a communist. After Laurie's banning, two hundred students protested by attending an outdoor meeting in the University grounds. J. B. Miles spoke at this meeting. Miles, Communist Party General Secretary, was invited to argue the "Yes" case on the Referendum instead of Laurie, because by the time the outdoor meeting had been organised, Laurie, who was on leave from the AIF, had to return to duty and was therefore unable to speak at the open air meeting replacing the banned referendum speech at the College.²

College students were unable to protest on their own behalf because of a fear of victimisation. The Teachers' College Student Council and The Griffin (the MTC Student Council's newsletter) were both controlled by Law, making it difficult to argue the issue within the confines of the college alone. According to Don Garden, the College Student

¹ Tribune, (Communist newspaper), July 20, 1944, p.3.

² Ibid.

Council consisting of Ken Mawson as President, Audrey Bowles as Vice President, and Gordon Keith as Secretary,³ defended Law's strict control. Mawson, President of the Student Council in 1944, claims that Law was often misunderstood and that conservative attitudes during the 1940s required a principal of a teachers college to behave in an authoritarian manner⁴. The Student Council said that Law did not impose his political views in banning Laurie and they justified his actions as necessary in running a government institution.⁵

Garden states that Laurie's banning was an example of the often-accepted distinction that existed between the Teachers' College and Melbourne University, i.e. between what is appropriate at a teacher training college which was government controlled in contrast to the University which was a public institution where free speech was permissible and even necessary. It was thought that more conservative attitudes were required for students who would be taking charge of society's children.⁶ Allowing communist speakers to attend the college would not be acceptable under Law's strict discipline.

A letter to the editor of the University newspaper Farrago captured another view of the conditions at Melbourne Teachers' College:

With reference to conditions in Teachers' College, it is worth noting that although political liberty and choice of jobs are denied under the Nazi system also, and victimization of offenders forms an integral part of it, there is no control of the private life of individuals - that feature is peculiar to the Victorian Education system.⁷

Melbourne University's Student Representative Council became involved through the actions of the University Labor Club in defending the civil liberties of Teachers' College students. The University's SRC held a Special General Meeting, called by a student petition, at the

³ The Trainee, December 1944, vol. XXXVIII, p. 30.

⁴ Interview between Ken Mawson and author, 5 December, 1997.

⁵ Garden, D., (1992), 'Teacher Training in Carlton: the predecessors of the Institute of Education', Ph.D. thesis, University of Melbourne, p. 252. (Note: The SRC was called the Student Council in 1944 at the College, and not the Student Representative Council: Garden, D., (1982), op. cit., p. 178.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Fred Right, letter to Editor in Farrago, 1 August, 1944, p.2.

Public Lecture Theatre on Monday, 24 July 1944. Over 700 students attended and passed the following motion protesting against the banning of Laurie:

That the students of the Melbourne University affirm that a basic necessity of education in institutions of higher learning is the free and unhampered access to all knowledge and points of view. Consequently they declare themselves strongly opposed to the action of the authorities in banning a speaker who is a Communist from speaking at Teachers' College.

Further they direct the S.R.C. to present their views to the Premier, the Minister for Education and the Secretary of the Teachers Union and to take any possible steps that may promote the granting to the students at Teachers College of the same rights of free speech and free activity that are possessed by University students.⁸

Fred Daly, then a student at the University, attempted to move an amendment which read: 'They do this in spite of the fact that the person banned was a member of a party which has shown itself violently opposed to freedom of expression in Australia'. Daly claimed that this amendment was necessary because the communists had made political capital out of the incident in an attempt to increase their influence at the Teachers' College. He continued in saying: 'The Communists are the greatest opponents of freedom of speech...' He believed the amendment to the original motion was necessary in order to indicate that students were not supporters of the Communist Party.⁹

As the original motion was not meant to be 'political', Beth Noye claimed that Daly's amendment was not necessary. A Teachers' College student then said that Daly's amendment would ruin the original motion which was not meant to adopt a political stance. Two more College students urged the students at the protest meeting to vote against the amendment because it would harm their case. It was noted that the names of the Teachers' College students who were protesting about the lack of freedom at the College were withheld for fear of victimisation from the authorities. The motion to include Daly's amendment was not passed due to strong opposition from the students at the meeting.¹⁰ Some students

⁸ Farrago, 27 July, 1944, p.1.; Melbourne University SRC Minutes, re. 24 July 1944 SGM, MU Archives.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

attending felt that they would be politicising the issue by moving Daly's amendment; it was best felt that the amendment should be ignored altogether.

During the meeting, David Bottomley, Secretary of the University SRC, described the view of the Melbourne Teachers' College: he said that trainee teachers were government employees and not allowed to have the same rights as university students. He described this situation as undemocratic. He explained that College students could not form Labor or Conservative Clubs and anyone involved in political activities was likely to be victimised.¹¹

An article had appeared in the Melbourne Herald, dated 12 May 1944, containing startling speculations as to whether Melbourne University was being overrun by communists. It was titled "Buttress or Hotbed ? - or Both". Opinions of some academics and students were collected. Mr. H. Oke, a member of the University Council, wrote in a report to the Trades Hall that the University is a "buttress of the upper classes". The Vice-chancellor, John Medley, claimed that the truth lay between the two extremes; he said that the financial costs associated with going to university had prevented some people from entering university but he stressed that with subsidies the situation had fortunately improved, and that different opinions were more prone to being expressed at the university.¹²

Soon after the First Special General Meeting, a second meeting was called by student petition and attended by approximately 1000 people at the Public Lecture Theatre on Tuesday, 1 August 1944. The purpose of the meeting was to put a motion to students protesting against Hollway's allegation that the university was a 'nursery and hot-bed of communism' made days earlier. The motion was later amended to say that a number of flourishing societies of religious character and political clubs of conservative persuasion existed at the University. It also said that the SRC was elected on a proportional basis from the whole student body, that out of 3,500 students only 250 were members of the Labor Club, and of the 250 who were members of the Labor Club, the majority were not members of the Communist Party.¹³ As

¹¹ Ibid..

¹² Farrago, 20 June, 1944, p. 3.

¹³ Farrago, 8 August, 1944, p. 3 _

far as University students were concerned, communists did exist but were only a very small minority. Hollway's allegation concerning the University being swamped by communists was unsupported.

Hollway was invited to attend the Second Special General Meeting called by the University Labor Club in response to the banning, but declined. Hollway remarked that he thought attending would serve no useful purpose.¹⁴ The motion was passed to demonstrate that students at the University were bewildered by Hollway's claim that the University was "a nursery of Communists" and that its spokesmen were communists. Students who supported the motion believed that Hollway was falsely claiming that communism was a real threat at the University, as a bogey issue to cover up the real issue at hand: a denial of basic freedoms of speech and expression at the College.

Ted Laurie's banning remained a controversial issue because of the restrictions imposed on freedom of speech, expression and right of association. An interesting and interrelated issue to the banning is Menzies' statement that at no time had he been asked to address students at the Teachers' College either personally or in debate.¹⁵ A Victorian Assistant Minister, Mr. T. Oldham, revealed this on behalf of Menzies while Menzies was busy speaking on the Referendum campaign in Queensland.

However, Menzies did speak on the Referendum at Melbourne University after Laurie's banning. He was invited by the Evening Student's Association and the Conservative Club to argue the "No" vote for the Referendum on 7 July 1944 in the Public Lecture Theatre. Menzies declared that there were too many diverse amendments to the Constitution being proposed in the Constitution Alteration Fourteen Powers Bill. He said he would probably vote for some of them separately, but that all of the proposals, "extending from repatriation to aborigines," should not be handed to the Commonwealth. Menzies criticised the amendment relating to employment and unemployment and the producing and distribution of goods; he

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Argus, July 29, 1944, p.5.

claimed that free trade and commerce between the states was already free and that no other steps were needed to safeguard them.¹⁶

Hollway vehemently opposed the “Fourteen Powers” Referendum, fearing the emergence of a socialist and totalitarian state with the changes to the Constitution. He said that the Bill being proposed at the Referendum was not the same one premiers agreed to at the Constitution Convention in November 1942. He believed that the powers granted to the Commonwealth Government were too far-reaching to be trusted to certain Labor politicians, such as Dr. H. V. Evatt and Arthur Calwell.¹⁷

A deputation of Teachers’ College students went to see Hollway. The students included: Ken Mawson, Gordon Keith and C. P. Wilson, Treasurer of the Student Council. John. A. Seitz, Director of Education, was also present. Discussion lasted two hours and dealt with the issue of free speech at the college. A friendly atmosphere prevailed. Hollway stated what he referred to as the official point of view:

...that State departments could not reasonably be expected to provide opportunities for the possible dissemination of anti-government propaganda. In banning Lieut. Laurie as a Communist Mr. Law was simply acting upon an agreement made over two years ago.¹⁸

When Hollway was interviewed by Farrago representatives concerning Laurie’s banning at the Teachers’ College, he said that controversial speakers were necessary in a university as its main function was to seek out truth and that communism was a manifestation of youth: ‘...if a man is not a communist by the time he is 21, there is something wrong with his heart; if he is still a communist after 21, there is something wrong with his head’.¹⁹ He continued by saying that although communists were a minority, they gained control over the student body or trade unions who were too busy and also generally apathetic to stand up to them; that

¹⁶ Farrago, 12 July, 1944, p.1.

¹⁷ The Argus, 28 July 1944, p.3.

¹⁸ Griffin, 14 August, 1944, p.1.

¹⁹ Farrago, 27 July, 1944, p.5.

communists are neither British nor Australian in their outlook and that students at the Teachers' College need to be segregated in order to concentrate properly. Hollway stressed that he did not want the university meddling with the college or the college with the university. He said that he had no intention of preventing college students from joining in political activities, but additionally, he said that he would stop college students from forming political groups, such as a Labor or Conservative Club, he claimed the college should not be divided up into groups.²⁰

The University Labour Club together with the University Conservative Club protested against Hollway's allegations. In The Challenge, a newsletter published by the Melbourne University Conservative Club, it was claimed that the protest began against the banning of a communist speaker and then soon became obscured as Hollway denounced the University as being communist. The Conservative Club said that both Hollway and the Communists were wrong: 'there are quite a few communists at the university, but not a vast majority as Hollway claimed'.²¹ Hollway claimed that 'communists had the whole of the facilities of the University at their disposal and there was no reason why those of the Training College should be added'.²² Many other comments were heard; for instance, the Warden of University House, Mr. R.R.P. Barber, supported free speech in saying that Universities had always been to some extent the centres of radical thought and that they should be so. John H. Reeves and David Bottomley, on behalf of the University SRC, said this in response to Hollway's allegations:

The University is just such a nursery for Communism as it is for Conservatism for students have full freedom of political expression. Indeed while there is a very active Conservative Club there is no Communist Society affiliated with the S.R.C, neither is the University Labor Club a Communist organisation.²³

The Communist attitude towards Hollway's allegation that the University was a "nursery for communists", as stated by the president of the Victorian State Committee Ralph Gibson, claimed that: 'Mr. Hollway's comments are in keeping of the UAP policy and its mentor Mr.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ The Challenge, vol. no. 3, Aug. 1944 (MS7528, Box 344 - Missen Papers at Manuscript Section, NLA)

²² Herald, 25 July, 1944, p. 5.

Menzies. These are the people who raise such a hub-bub about freedom of the press and now try and oppose Federal powers in the name of freedom...'.²⁴

Hollway continued to deny that dissatisfaction among students at the Teachers' College existed in relation to the banning of a communist speaker. Hollway said the referendum "Yes" case would be presented at the teachers' college by Labor Party Senator J.M. Sheehan who, he claimed would present the case as well as any Communist speaker. Hollway continued to say that he believed in freedom of speech but that the University confused this with licence.²⁵ Senator Sheehan did argue the "Yes" case and Mr. A. Jenkins from the Constitutional League argued the "No" case at a later meeting of the Literary and Debating Society's Wednesday lunch-hour lectures with the approval of the College authorities.²⁶

Similarly, a letter from Mr. A. Rowe of East Brighton said: 'a statement by Mr. Hollway, Minister for Education, in support of the ban on a debate between Laurie and Menzies should cause grave concern for democrats'. Rowe criticised Hollway's attitude toward students especially taking into consideration the fact that he was Minister for Education. Rowe hoped that Mr. Hollway would have no serious objections to Lieutenant Laurie making a 'stamping ground of New Guinea battlefields doing his little bit to see that dangerous thoughts never become a crime in Australia'.

During the Victorian Parliamentary Debates, on 7 December 1944, Mr. J. Corrigan, Member of Parliament for Port Melbourne, asked Hollway to give reasons for his decision to ban Laurie earlier in the year. Corrigan asked 'Is it the policy of the Government to prevent the representatives of any political organization from addressing university students?' Hollway answered that the ban on communists was imposed years ago under the Minister of Public Instruction when communism was illegal.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.,

²⁶ The Trainee, December, 1944 Issue, vol. XXXVIII, p. 45.

Hollway added that although the ban on communists no longer applied under the Commonwealth Government, he had not changed his view of communists . He said that communists were disloyal and therefore should not be given the opportunity to talk to students at the Teacher's College. He also claimed that it was his duty to see that communists did not interfere with the students or a government institution.²⁷ His decision to ban Laurie was unfounded because there was no official ban existing against communists at the time; Hollway's authority should have been contested further. It was a time when trainee teachers had to respect the College authorities and not question them.

²⁷ Victorian Parliamentary Debates, vol. 218, December, 1944, p. 2871-73

CHAPTER 4: WAS THE BAN WARRANTED?

Teacher education and the running of the Teachers' College was stringently controlled by Law, Principal of the College, but Hollway oversaw its operations. When the Literary and Debating Society scheduled a debate on the Powers Referendum and planned to invite Ted Laurie, Law almost certainly referred the matter to Hollway.¹ From the reactions by Sir Charles Lowe and Sir John Medley, the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor of Melbourne University respectively, it could be argued that Ted Laurie's speech on the Referendum would not have been banned if organised on the University grounds.

One explanation for the differences that existed between College and University students can be attributed to College students being paid to study, in comparison to the University students who were paying students. Teachers' College students in 1943, for instance, were paid ninety pounds a year if resident in the College, from which they paid approximately one pound per week for their board, while those living at home received forty pounds a year². University students, unless lucky enough to be granted a scholarship, were obliged to incur some of the costs of studying. Most teacher trainees studying at the College would perhaps have felt compelled to adhere to the strict guidelines operating at the College considering that their course was supported by a scholarship funded by the government. Students who are fee-paying are perhaps more likely to question anything they are unhappy with and be more demanding of their authorities.

When the College Literary and Debating Society invited Ted Laurie to speak at their weekly Wednesday lunch-hour meeting, they soon realised the anti-Communist stance adopted and practised by the Education Department and the direct influence the Department had over the Teachers' College. The banning of Ted Laurie at the College was protested against largely by University students and its Labor Club because it was considered unfair and unwarranted. There was no current government policy denying

¹ Letter from Dr. Phillip Law to the author, dated 16 May, 1997.

communists the right to speak at the College in July 1944. T. T. Hollway, the Minister for Education and Deputy Leader of the UAP/Country Party coalition, was staunchly anti-communist, and it was he who enforced the rule and supported Laurie's banning. Biddington says of the banning in his thesis on teacher education: 'In the political sense the issue was unimportant but it did bring to the surface a number of serious criticisms of the state of the College at the time, and its relationship with the Education Department'.³

Alister Clarke, a student at the Teachers' College in 1944, declared that Ted Laurie's banning was not considered a really important issue amongst College students because a large proportion of teacher trainees were Catholics. This helps explain, he believes, what appeared to be apathy by some students towards the banning. He said that many of the Catholic students were not very concerned with protecting the rights of a communist speaker.⁴ Whether a vast majority of the teaching students were concerned is interesting. However, when speaking to ex-College students who attended the Teachers' College in 1944, most did not recall the events of the debate. The main reason given by them for knowing or remembering very little about the events was not due to the fact that these events occurred over fifty-three years ago, but due to war-time and other student-related concerns. This thesis, though, is concentrating on the actions of the College authorities in banning a communist speaker and whether Hollway's decision in banning Laurie was warranted.

Hollway's decision to ban Laurie was not based on Education Departmental policy or regulations. Hollway said in Parliament on 7 December 1944 that the ban on communists in government institutions was imposed some years ago in 1940 when Sir John Harris, MLC, was Minister of Public Instruction and when communism was illegal. The ban Hollway was referring to came about as a consequence of the banning of the Communist Party which was effective between 1940 and June of 1942 under the National Security Act. The regulations Hollway was referring to in Parliament on 7 December 1944 did not

² Garden, D., (1982), The Melbourne Teacher Training Colleges: From Training Institution To Melbourne State College. 1870-1982, Heinemann, Richmond, p. 167.

³Biddington, R., (1978), "Policies in Primary Teacher Training in Victoria: 1850-1950, vol. 2", Ph. D. Thesis, university of Melbourne, p. 627.

justify Laurie's banning and for this reason should have been questioned further. Although the Commonwealth Government had changed its mind about the ban, Hollway said, 'I have not changed my mind about Communists'. He claimed that Communists were not loyal and also that he believed in freedom of speech, but not in that type of speech he referred to as treason: 'It is not the policy or the duty of the Minister, or of the Education Department to provide a forum for Communist speakers'.⁵

Hollway's banning of Laurie is only one of a number of many incidents, which occurred during the 1940s, in which communists were treated unfairly. The fear of communism was quite powerful throughout the 1930s and 1940s and the non-Labor parties supported the anti-communist struggle passionately. It seems likely that Laurie's banning was an attempt by Hollway to repress the communist threat that was believed by many people to be looming within Australian society.

Hollway claimed that the Education Department should not be providing communist speakers for the teacher trainees.⁶ Students from the College Literary and Debating Society had invited Laurie. College students and the University Labor and Conservative Clubs defended Laurie's right to speak and the rights of the College students to hear a speaker of their choosing, but Hollway refused their requests. When the outbursts by students protesting about the banning occurred, Biddington writes, it became evident to the College and University students that the Education Department had given direction to the College to restrict political student activities.⁷ Conditions at the College that have been described by teaching students are consistent with this, in saying that the College was authoritarian and tolerance or liberal political views were absent.⁸

Hollway refused to back down from his decision to deny Laurie the right to speak at the College. The College Student Council approached the Victorian Teachers' Union (VTU) whose Council supported free speech at the College. The Director of Education, J. A.

⁴ Telephone interview between A. Clarke and author, 4 December 1997.

⁵ VPD, Session 1944-45, vol. 218, 7 December 1944, pp. 2871-72.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Biddington, R., *op. cit.*, p. 627.

Seitz, was present when a deputation from the Student Council was handed to Hollway asking for free speech to be allowed at the College. However, Hollway refused to budge after a two hour discussion. He endorsed Law's decision to ban Laurie, claiming that he refused to allow anti-government propaganda to be spread in State Government buildings.⁹

Hollway's profound fear of communism appears to be genuine and understandable given that communists held firm beliefs that society needed to be changed and this change would occur via a revolution. Many communists looked to the Soviet Union for guidance: a country which itself had a tumultuous history not always regarded as being good. Most Australians, it seems, were pleased with the way life was and feared the dreaded communist 'bogey'. The Allied pact between the Western Allies and the Soviet Union was a purely convenient alliance during the Second World War. Though, in spite of anti-communist attitudes and fears, Hollway's decision to ban Laurie was unjust.

Laurie was to speak on the Powers Referendum at the Teachers' College, not communism. The fears attributed to communism and the 'red bogey' were reasonable. However, Hollway confirmed in Parliament that his reason for banning Laurie was based on an outdated policy that applied to the banning of communists when they were an illegal organisation. In 1944, communism was not illegal and therefore Laurie should not have been refused the right to speak.

The rigid control by the Education Department over the College was believed by Hollway to be necessary as teachers were respected government employees. The role of teachers in educating the children of the future generations was a serious concern for Hollway and other non-Labor members who did not want teachers to be influenced by communism. Hollway's decision to ban Laurie was not fair or impartial because he did not consider the requests and protests by University and College students asking permission to hear Laurie speak on the Referendum.

⁸ Ibid.; Garden, D., (1982), op. cit., p. 176.

⁹ Garden, D., (1982), op., cit., p. 178.

Hollway allowed Senator Sheehan to argue the “Yes” case and A. Jenkins, from the Australian Constitutional League, the “No” case in a debate at the Teachers’ College. Hollway did not choose to ban Laurie because of his support for the Labor Party’s “Yes” campaign, but due to his communist beliefs. Hollway may also have been attempting to gain support for the newly emerging Liberal Party by discrediting the communists and at the same time bolstering his own ‘political muscle’. The banning of Ted Laurie was perhaps an issue of political opportunism and Hollway’s perpetual loathing of communism overrode the basic political right of free speech, which in fact was one of the rights the Commonwealth Government was attempting to enshrine in the Constitution.

Ted Laurie’s banning attracted a great deal of attention not only at the College and University but also in major circulating newspapers. Most of those interviewed in the newspapers supported Laurie’s right to speak. Laurie was a respected lawyer who had served time in the AIF.¹⁰ The August 1944 issue of The Challenge, a paper published by the Melbourne University Conservative Club, said that it regarded the action of the Teachers’ College authorities in banning Laurie ‘as unwarranted and the reasons given as quite inadequate’.¹¹ The Conservative Club also said:

Of course, the fact that the banned speaker was a Communist was irrelevant...Communists are legally recognised and besides Lieutenant Laurie was to speak on the Referendum not Communism.¹²

The Conservative Club, with Alan Missen as President in 1944, supported Laurie’s right to speak despite their strong support for the “No” case in the Referendum. The Club’s constitution stated that communism should be opposed along with all forms of anti-British propaganda calculated to be detrimental to the National interests particularly to the war-effort.¹³ Yet in spite of this, the University Conservative Club chose to defend

¹⁰ Cook, P., (1994), op. cit., p. 70.

¹¹ The Challenge, August 1944 issue, vol. no. 3. (Melbourne University Conservative Club’s newspaper), in Alan Missen Papers, MS7528, Box 344, NLA, Manuscript Section, Canberra.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Melbourne University ‘Conservative Club’s Constitution’, 22 May 1940, in Alan Missen Papers, MS7528/Box 344, NLA, Manuscript Section, Canberra.

Laurie's right to speak as a communist, and it believed Hollway's decision was unjustified. The anti-communist Conservative Club thus believed that freedom of speech at the Teachers' College should be respected, even for communists with whom they strongly disagreed. Hollway, however, was not as tolerant, nor so respectful of the rights of free speech.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The ban on Laurie was a major issue in 1944 at the Melbourne Teachers' College and amongst students at the University of Melbourne. It attracted considerable media attention. And yet to many students at the Teachers' College, it was a sideshow, perhaps even unimportant.

College students in 1944 had to contend with a one year crammed course with countless teaching rounds.¹ The students studied for an exceptionally full year attending classes all day with only a break for lunch, and were then required to study from 7.30 p.m. to 10 p.m.. The course was so demanding that a concern was expressed periodically at the severe strain it placed on students.² Therefore, College students did not have much free time to spare, and being at College for only one year limited the time students could form or become involved in clubs and societies. Having a crammed course with a heavy workload for students must have suited the Education Department, as political activities seem to have been largely absent from the College when compared to the more liberal University.

Mr. Hugh Adamson, a College student in 1944, captures the concerns teacher trainees may have faced:

If I was present at that debate, it left no impression as I cannot recall anything of it. Remember this was wartime and I had an ambition to join the navy, which I did in 1945...My brother was in the Air Force and many friends in the services. I was more concerned with anxiety about their well-being than the politics of the day. Further, we had numerous teaching rounds during the year and didn't always get back to College to participate in assemblies and debates.³

These events occurred in 1944, a year in which the war-time 'marriage of convenience' between the western powers and the Soviet Union had not yet given way to 'cold war'! They reflect the conflict between those whose pre-war fear of communism and the USSR

¹Garden, D., (1982), Op. Cit., p. 167.

² Ibid.

continued, and those who believed that communists were now allies rather than adversaries.

The year of Laurie's banning is quite significant because it was during World War Two when the Soviet Union was being hailed by the Allied Powers for its war-efforts. However, at the same time, a battle was being fought on the grounds of Melbourne Teachers' College in the name of free speech and in support of civil rights. This battle was closely aligned with a fear of communism and took place, ironically, in the same year that we were supposedly more accepting of communists.

These events of Laurie's banning reflect the war-time sense of vulnerability many Australians felt; and the willingness of many, especially more conservative people, to accept the authority of the government, with little or no questioning. They reflect a political culture in which the meaning of free speech was still deeply contentious, and the power of those able to control it was in danger of being used for their private purposes, rather than for the public good.

³ Letter from Hugh M. Adamson to the author, dated 4 September, 1997.

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APPENDIX

CONSTITUTION ALTERATION (WAR AIMS AND RECONSTRUCTION) 1942.*

A BILL

FOR

AN ACT

To alter the Constitution by empowering the Parliament to make Laws for the purpose of carrying into effect the war aims and objects of Australia as one of the United Nations, including the attainment of economic security and social justice in the post-war world, and for the purpose of post-war reconstruction.

Be it enacted by the King's Most Excellent Majesty, the Senate, and the House of Representatives, with the approval of the electors, as required by the Constitution, as follows:-

1. This Act may be cited as *Constitution Alteration (War Aims and Reconstruction) 1942*.
2. The Constitution is altered by inserting in Chapter 1. after Part V. the following Part and section:-
3. Part VI.- WAR AIMS AND POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION.

60A.- (1.) The Parliament shall have full power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of the Commonwealth, its territories and all places under its jurisdiction or control, for the purpose of carrying into effect the war aims and objects of Australia as one of the United Nations, including the attainment of economic security and social justice in the post-war world and for the purpose of post-war reconstruction generally.

(2.) Without limiting the generality of the foregoing sub-section, it is hereby declared that the power of the Parliament shall extend to all measures which in the declared opinion of the Parliament will tend to achieve economic security and social justice, including security of employment and the provision of useful occupation for all the people, and shall include power to make laws with respect to-

- (a) the reinstatement and advancement of those who have been members of the fighting services of the Commonwealth during the war and of the dependants of such members who have died or been disabled as a consequence of the war;
- (b) employment, including the transfer of workers from war-time industries;

- (c) the development of the country and the expansion of production and markets;
- (d) the production and manufacture of goods and the supply of goods and services, and the establishment and development of industries;
- (e) prices of goods and services, including their regulation and control;
- (f) profiteering;
- (g) the encouragement of population;
- (h) carrying into effect the guarantee of the four freedoms, that is to say-
 - (i) freedom of speech and expression;
 - (ii) religious freedom;
 - (iii) freedom from want; and
 - (iv) freedom from fear;

- (i) national works and services, including water conservation and irrigation, afforestation and the protection of the soil;
- (j) the improvement of living standards in both rural and urban areas;
- (k) transport, including air transport;
- (l) national health and fitness;
- (m) the housing of the people; and
- (n) child welfare

(3) All the powers conferred upon the parliament by this section may be exercised notwithstanding anything contained elsewhere in this Constitution or in the Constitution of any State and shall be exercisable as on and from a date to be proclaimed by the Governor-General in Council.

* The Bill was introduced by the Attorney-General, the Right Honourable, H. V. Evatt, and read a first time in the House of Representatives, 1 October 1942.