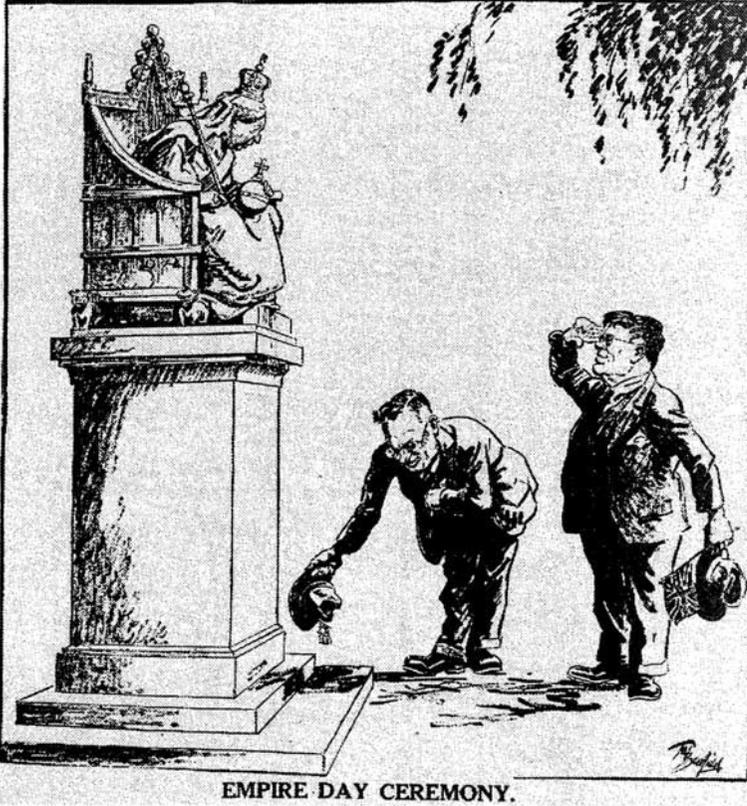


Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-14622-7 - Curtin's Empire
James Curran
Frontmatter
[More information](#)



'Bless my soul if it isn't Honest John Curtin and Bert Evatt' (*Bulletin*, 31 May 1944).

Praise for *Curtin's Empire*

'An original and compelling contribution to Australian historical knowledge. In this book James Curran sheds new light on the Labor party and its relationship to Britain and the Empire. Drawing on a rich vein of previously unseen archival material, he explains how John Curtin, in facing up to the post-war world, reconciled his anti-conscription and anti-imperialist past to the need for a common defence and foreign policy for Greater Britain, one that would never allow another Singapore disaster. In so doing, Curran has filled an important gap in our understanding of this iconic Labor prime minister.

'He also complicates the popularly accepted picture of a decisive Australian move in 1941 to the United States as Australia's principal ally. That change awaited later developments. The story of the 1940s was a quiet drift back to Empire defence.'

Kim Beazley

Ambassador to the United States of America

'Curran's fine book shows how Curtin's complex ideas of Australia and Empire were driven not by a mythic choice between loyalty and independence, but by the strategic imperative to find whatever means would best secure Australia in a fast-changing Asia. In doing so it sheds much light on the big strategic choices we face today.'

Hugh White

Professor of Strategic Studies and Head of
the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre,
Australian National University

Curtin's Empire

John Curtin remains a venerated leader. His role as Labor's wartime supremo is etched deep in the national psyche: the man who put Australia first, locked horns with Churchill, looked to America and became a national saviour. For many he remains the epitome of an anti-British Australian nationalism.

This book breathes new life into the Curtin story by revealing a dimension of his leadership that, until now, has been largely ignored – his vision for Australia's place in the British Empire: an Empire that he wanted to see endure in the post-war world.

This British world vision was not imposed from abroad, rather it animated him from deep within. Since entering politics, Curtin had fought with many inside and outside his party over issues of loyalty and national security. At stake was how Curtin and Labor related to the core idea of Australian politics for their times: Britishness.

James Curran is Senior Lecturer in the Department of History and the United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney. He is the author of *The Power of Speech: Australian Prime Ministers Defining the National Image* (2004) and the co-author, with Stuart Ward, of *The Unknown Nation: Australia After Empire* (2010).

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-14622-7 - Curtin's Empire
James Curran
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Other titles in the *Australian Encounters* series
(Series editor: Tony Moore)

Tim Soutphommasane
Reclaiming Patriotism: Nation-building for Australian progressives

Milissa Deitz
Watch this Space: The future of Australian journalism

Rodney Cavalier
Power Crisis: The self-destruction of a state Labor Party

Joanne Faulkner
The Importance of Being Innocent: Why we worry about children

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-14622-7 - Curtin's Empire
James Curran
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Curtin's Empire

James Curran



Cambridge University Press
 978-0-521-14622-7 - Curtin's Empire
 James Curran
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
 Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521146227

© James Curran 2011

This publication is copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2011

Designed by Adrian Saunders
 Typeset by Aptara Corp.
 Printed in Australia by Ligare Pty Ltd.

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

National Library of Australia Cataloguing in Publication data

Curran, James, 1973–
 Curtin's empire / James Curran.
 9780521146227 (pbk.)
 Australian encounters.
 Includes bibliographical references and index.
 Curtin, John, 1885–1945.
 Prime ministers – Australia – Biography.
 Politicians – Australia – Biography.
 Australia – Politics and government – 1901–1945.
 994.04092

ISBN 978-0-521-14622-7 Paperback

Reproduction and communication for educational purposes

The Australian *Copyright Act 1968* (the Act) allows a maximum of one chapter or 10% of the pages of this work, whichever is the greater, to be reproduced and/or communicated by any educational institution for its educational purposes provided that the educational institution (or the body that administers it) has given a remuneration notice to Copyright Agency Limited (CAL) under the Act.

For details of the CAL licence for educational institutions contact:

Copyright Agency Limited
 Level 15, 233 Castlereagh Street
 Sydney NSW 2000
 Telephone: (02) 9394 7600
 Facsimile: (02) 9394 7601
 E-mail: info@copyright.com.au

Reproduction and communication for other purposes

Except as permitted under the Act (for example a fair dealing for the purposes of study, research, criticism or review) no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, communicated or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior written permission. All inquiries should be made to the publisher at the address above.

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

The book has been printed on paper certified by the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC). PEFC is committed to sustainable forest management through third party forest certification of responsibly managed forests.

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-14622-7 - Curtin's Empire
James Curran
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

For Priscilla, Pia and Ella

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>page x</i>
1 'Citadel for the British-speaking race': Introduction	1
2 'Loyalty howlers': War and peace, 1914–1928	26
3 A 'deranged world': Leading Labor in the 1930s	57
4 'Practical Empire patriots': London, 1944	84
5 'Partial eclipse': Legacy and memory	117
<i>Notes</i>	135
<i>Bibliography</i>	147
<i>Index</i>	154

Acknowledgements

I have accumulated many debts in writing this book. First, the research could not have been carried out without the financial assistance from the School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry, the United States Studies Centre and the Faculty of Arts at Sydney University. In particular, I would like to thank Robert Aldrich, Andrew Fitzmaurice, Geoffrey Garrett and Duncan Ivison for their generous support over the last three years.

Some of the early thinking about this book originated from my appointment as the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library Visiting Scholar in 2004. In that regard, I am grateful to Kandy-Jane Henderson for her unstinting encouragement and enthusiasm for my work at that time. I would also like to thank librarians and archivists at the National Archives of Australia (Canberra), the National Library of Australia, Fisher Library at Sydney University, the National Archives in London, the British Library, the Library of Congress and the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Washington DC. When much of the research material from NARA was stolen from the Hotel Russell in London in early 2010 – surely every researcher's worst nightmare – archivists at NARA assisted me on a subsequent visit to ensure its speedy recovery. I am also grateful to the staff of Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service in Washington DC, especially Marie Champagne and Alan Tidwell, for their warm welcome and assistance as the book was entering its final stages.

At Cambridge University Press, Tony Moore commissioned the book and has championed it from the beginning. He also offered many helpful insights and suggestions as the book was being written. On the production side, Susan Hanley, Jenny Symons and Jodie Howell have been the very models of professionalism throughout the process, while Bree DeRoche has been a meticulous copyeditor.

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-14622-7 - Curtin's Empire
James Curran
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

In particular, I thank Frank Bongiorno, Matthew Jordan, Neville Meaney and Stuart Ward for their helpful and probing comments on previous drafts. Advice on source material was also provided by Mads Clausen, Simon Potter and some constructive questions from an audience at the British World Conference in Bristol in 2007. Special thanks are also due to my research assistant, Philippa Macaskill, for her tireless efforts in assisting the project. Needless to say, the flaws in the book are mine and mine alone.

Finally, I record the deepest and most enduring gratitude to my family: to my mother and father, Bernie Curran and Jeannie Addision, for their continued inspiration in all things; to Elwyn and Silvana Elms for their ongoing support, but especially to my wife Priscilla and my two gorgeous girls, Pia and Ella, who have had to put up with a distracted and often absent husband and dad while much of the research and writing was done for this book. They will be rightly relieved to see the curtain brought down on Curtin. That this book has been completed is testament to their love and forbearance, and it is to them that I dedicate this work.

James Curran
Washington, DC
November 2010