

A "Civilised Amateur":

Edgar Holt and His Life in Letters and Politics

Bridget Griffen-Foley

History, University of Sydney

Now largely forgotten, Edgar George Holt (1904-1988) was a leading journalist and public relations officer in the middle decades of twentieth-century Australia. This article examines his prominent journalistic career in the 1930s and 1940s, his presidency of the Australian Journalists' Association, and his work as the Liberal Party of Australia's public relations officer from 1950 to the early 1970s. The article explores the evolution of his cultural and political views, considering how a literary aesthete and poet came to be at the forefront 1944 newspaper strike and then an important player in Australian conservative machine politics and the emerging industry of political public relations.

Until the recent appearance of Ian Hancock's fine history of the federal organisation of the Liberal Party,¹ Edgar Holt's name was all but absent from works of Australian journalistic, cultural and political history. And yet, in the 1930s and 1940s, Holt was one of Australia's leading journalists and also a published poet; in 1950 he became the Liberal Party of Australia's public relations officer, a position he retained for more than twenty years. This article seeks to resurrect the cultural and political career of this most interesting and complex of figures by addressing Holt's association with bright young men of letters at the University of Queensland in the 1920s, his emergence as a poet and *bon vivant* in Melbourne and Sydney in the 1930s and 1940s, his active involvement with the Australian Journalists' Association during these years, and his work for the Liberal Party from the 1950s through to the 1970s. The article is concerned with how a literary

aesthete came to be at the forefront of the 1944 newspaper strike and then an important player in Australian conservative machine politics and the emerging industry of political public relations.

Edgar George Holt was born in Burnley, Lancashire on 27 December 1904. The family emigrated to Brisbane twelve years later. In 1924, after attending Brisbane High School in south Brisbane,² Holt secured a position on the afternoon *Telegraph*. He remained on staff when he enrolled in the University of Queensland's Diploma of Journalism in 1926.³ This course, one of the first of its kind in Australia, had only recently been introduced. Few students were enrolled in the diploma as journalists questioned the practical value of tertiary study and struggled to reconcile the odd hours of newspaper work with lectures and examinations.⁴

Holt studied English I and edited the student publication, *Galmahra*. More a magazine than a newspaper, the handsome publication offered a mixture of serious writing, social news, gossip and comment. In the 1920s *Galmahra* provided a vehicle for the writings of Eric Partridge, P.R. Stephensen and Colin Bingham (all of whom served as editors), and Jack Lindsay.⁵ Partridge, who won a scholarship to Oxford University, and Bingham, who later edited the *Sydney Morning Herald*, saw the Diploma of Journalism as an opportunity to "civilise" popular journalism by exposing its apprentices to the highest cultural and ethical values enshrined in literature, and in the history of journalism itself.⁶

Advocating complete surrender to the "Holy Trinity of Music, Art and Poetry", Holt wrote about the "high priests" of English decadence in the 1890s—Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley—and reflected on Beethoven's *Appassionata* sonata, "a tempest of the soul". Holt was fascinated by the heroic figure of the artist—"he alone attains to ideal self-knowledge and self-expression"—and the "aberrations of genius". In

his cultural commentaries, Holt averred that the imaginative faculty could only be achieved in an acutely sensitive, perhaps abnormally so, mind.⁷

Galmahra's editors frequently lamented the apathy of students. Holt's statements in the three issues he edited revealed him to be ambitious and exacting, even rather portentous and querulous. In May 1926, in his first issue, Holt took the opportunity to have "A Word to the Students" and call for contributions of an "original and thoughtful nature". The ominous silence of undergraduates on matters of contemporary importance, he opined, "reflects rather poorly on their status as men and women of the University". In July he bemoaned the "trifling" undergraduate response to his appeal, declaring that reading through "indifferent" manuscripts was not an "unalloyed joy". He hoped that he had not dampened the creative fibres of some young men and women by rejecting or "reducing to readable dimensions" articles "whose importance was not national, and whose literary style was not in every instance irreproachable". He announced a competition for the best original poem and short story, but in October he complained that only three poems had been received; none merited an award.⁸

Holt's last statement as editor also showed him to be less libertarian than some contemporaries. In 1921 Stephensen had published a selection of erotic poems by Lindsay, resulting in the Student Council decreeing that a "lady" would censor future issues before going to press.⁹ A contribution in 1926 entitled "Slander the Woman" seems to have gone no further than the "astonished" editor. The "indecorous nakedness" of the article had made Holt blush, and he declared that the article would have needed drastic censorship before it could even have been considered for publication.¹⁰

There is no record of Holt's results in English I, and he does not seem to have enrolled in any further courses. In his first *Galmahra* editorial, Holt had commented that "Literary taste and University education should be linked together", but had hinted that

this was not always the case.¹¹ In that same issue, a student of English I—possibly the editor himself—had penned a "lament" using the pseudonym "John Barleycorn". The disaffected writer said that school students had endured Senior English, with its useless rote learning and T.G. Tucker's English literature primer, "dreaming golden dreams" of English at university. But whereas students had expected English I to be "a true delight, a joy unalloyed, an inspiration for evermore", they had been sadly disappointed. They had been served up a Tucker handbook on Shakespeare, introduced to minor authors and expected to regurgitate information in examinations like parrots.¹²

In his short association with the University of Queensland, Holt made an impression on at least one contemporary. He formed a warm friendship with Colin Bingham, who also worked on the Brisbane *Telegraph*, as they debated the form and substance of what constituted poetry.¹³ In a poem entitled "To E.G.H." published in *Galmahra* in 1928, Bingham credited his friendship with Holt for revealing "many thoughts ... long concealed" as they walked side-by-side, guided by lanterns hung by "poets dead".¹⁴ In 1929 a slim volume of poems by Holt and Bingham appeared. Only twenty-five copies of the volume, entitled *The Merlin Papers*, were published.¹⁵

Colleagues on the *Telegraph* found in Holt a "cultured good taste, good judgment and lively initiative". In an unsigned piece in *Galmahra*, Holt had described Brisbane as one of the "most barbaric cities in the world from a cultural aspect". He had pressed the Queensland government and Brisbane City Council to foster the cultural side of civic life, and at the *Telegraph* he specialised in writing about art and theatre.¹⁶ In mid-1929 he was assigned to interview Arthur Benjamin, the composer and pianist who was visiting his native Brisbane to give some recitals. Benjamin advised the journalist to "go south", saying "Brisbane is all right from the neck down".¹⁷

In September 1929 Holt joined the Melbourne morning newspaper, the *Argus*. He was one of the brilliant group of young journalists—including Brian Penton and Hugh Dash—produced in Brisbane who invaded Sydney and Melbourne in the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁸ He knew that he had been given a "wonderful chance" by securing a position in Melbourne, but he was somewhat ambivalent about the move. Even though he wrote of his desire to become a "compleat [sic] journalist", he thought it quite possible that he would eventually return to Brisbane as a writer of "indifferent verse". He was desperately homesick, missing his family and the young woman he was courting, Dorothy Vaughan.¹⁹

Although voicing a desire to return to the "exotic beauty" of Brisbane in a series of emotionally extravagant letters to Bingham, Holt began to appreciate his surroundings as the months passed. He liked the bookshops of Melbourne and the bustle of the press scene, which he described as a "miniature Fleet Street". The *Argus* was a paper of record, the bible of the Melbourne Club, Collins House and the burghers of Toorak. Holt found the running of the *Argus* efficient and orderly, and shuddered at the haphazard way in which Brisbane cadets were trained. He found the editor of the *Argus*, Roy L. Curthoys, full of ideas and vitality. In spite of his "moods and rages", Curthoys had few equals in Australian journalism. Holt was encouraged that the editor believed in "giving the babies a chance": the deputy chief-of-staff, W. Shelton-Smith, was only thirty, and Clive Turnbull, who was in his early twenties, was encouraged to write "fine prose".²⁰

Holt was another young journalist taken under Curthoys' wing. Deciding that Holt showed promise as a descriptive writer, the *Argus* assigned him to review books, report on art shows and concerts, and contribute verse and feature articles to the prestigious camera supplement. He also had verse published in the *Australasian*, the weekly stablemate of the *Argus*, and edited the camera supplement over the New Year period. By

early 1930 he had concluded that he was "100 percent a better journalist than when I left Brisbane", and felt that Brisbane newspapers should send their men south for a term to pick up new ideas. If he were ever given the opportunity to reorganise the Brisbane *Telegraph*, he would return with a "headful of ideas": "the knowledge I gain here—from the executive point of view—might come in handy one of these days".²¹

At around this time Dorothy visited Melbourne and they became engaged. In a letter to Bingham, Holt described himself as a "romantic": at the least, marriage "will be the most magnificent & beautiful adventure of my life; at the worst, it may be paradise! Who knows?" Clouds, however, were hovering. The Great Depression was hurting the *Argus* and Holt was now the only member of his family working, which he naturally found a "troublesome responsibility".²²

In mid-1930 Holt was excited to be invited to write the leading article (editorial) for a Saturday edition. But as the Depression cut into his "perks" and he had some "stormy passages" with Curthoys, disillusionment set in. He looked with wry amusement at a Puck-like elderly leader-writer who had so mastered the formula of the main *Argus* leader—comfortable clichés, complicated sentences with long fruity words, and an occasional quotation in Latin that mystified the reader but hinted at erudition—that he could run them off at a canter before disappearing to his club.²³

Surrounded by men without "a vein of poetry", Holt continued to write verse himself. He fraternised with bohemian journalists, young professors and students from the University of Melbourne, including Cyril Pearl, editor of the student newspaper *Farrago*. After his marriage in October 1930,²⁴ Holt found a new outlet for his poetry. In July 1931 Pearl began editing *Stream*, a monthly magazine designed as "a medium of international art expression" which sought "only what is vital and genuine in contemporary art, literature and thought". The new magazine situated itself in a fluid

modernist tradition embracing symbolism, post-impressionism, surrealism, T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, Aldous Huxley and D.H. Lawrence. Adopting a montage of traditions, *Stream* established an ongoing debate—with itself—around the question of modernity.²⁵

Sending a copy of *Stream* to Bingham, Holt explained that the "bias is modern". He found the outlook "slightly too metaphysical" but was not surprised by this as Pearl and an associate were both "philosophy men" from "Varsity"—"they think and dream in metaphysics".²⁶ In September 1931 *Stream* announced that it was planning a major symposium on the rival aesthetics of Paris and Moscow, but the magazine collapsed. Holt told Bingham that the gang behind *Stream* had "disintegrated—more or less a rot from within". Some contributors, such as Alwyn Lee and Jack Maugham, became involved with the Workers' Art Club, which aimed to bring culture to the service of militant factory workers and encourage them to participate in artistic activities. The club served as a meeting ground for progressive writers and artists to work within an organisation influenced but not dominated by the Communist Party of Australia. Holt dismissed the club as "a refuge for young opportunists who don't like work, a few who can[']t get work, and a few curious drifters like Pearl". Holt derided fellows who were able to reconcile "the Communist outlook with complete dependence upon parents for whom they express nothing but contempt".²⁷

Other contributors to *Stream* included Bertram Higgins, Nettie Palmer and Professor A.R. Chisholm. Higgins, a poet, was at the centre of a small coterie of Melbourne writers and critics in the 1930s that included Holt. Chisholm even enthused that Higgins' poetic aesthetic went "far beyond that of Eliot, who is a much smaller and less original man". In 1930 Holt's *Argus* colleague, Clive Turnbull, wrote a collection of poems that clearly displayed Eliot's influence.²⁸ John Keats, Ernest Dowson and Rupert Brooke had inspired Holt's earlier poetry, but his work increasingly reflected the

influence of Eliot, Higgins and Turnbull. When *Stream* folded, Holt informed Bingham that, having soaked himself pretty thoroughly in "the various isms", he had a growing passion for classicism "and by that I mean the Eliot manner of *The Waste Land*". But Holt wondered whether a return of the classical spirit and the appreciation of beauty was possible in the wake of World War I: "mental balance, detachment, went by the board. The world is neurotic. We have lost that faith which is the foundation of the classical spirit".²⁹

In 1932 three hundred copies of Holt's new book of verse appeared. The title, *Lilacs Out of the Dead Land*, came directly from a line of Eliot's. The poems were less luxuriant than Holt's earlier work and drew on Eliot as well as the later romantic poets. In 1933 *Art in Australia* published a special number on Victoria. Pearl contributed an article nominating Holt, Higgins, Turnbull and Lee as four promising contemporary poets.³⁰

Now an A-grade journalist, Holt was excited when the company that published the *Argus* announced plans to launch an afternoon newspaper, the *Star*, in late 1933. For the first time in years, Sir Keith Murdoch's *Herald* was to have a competitor. When senior *Herald* journalists started defecting to the new paper, Holt told Bingham: "things are booming here—and the decks are being cleared for a fight such as Melbourne has never seen". Murdoch did indeed wage a vigorous campaign to fight off the *Star*, and it was a battle that severely damaged the already fragile finances of the *Argus* proprietary.³¹ In 1935, not long before the *Star* collapsed, Holt joined the *Herald* as a special and leader-writer.³²

Short and rotund, with an unruly mop of brown hair and a boisterous laugh, Holt had a high complexion that reflected his liking for cooking and good food.³³ He often wrote about food, but his columns proffered more than just recipes. Deploring the tradition of serving roast meals and steak and eggs in country hotels and mutton and tea

in homesteads, Holt explored meals suitable for the harsh Australian climate.³⁴ In two feature articles about ethnic communities in Melbourne, particularly Carlton, Holt acknowledged the contribution of immigrant communities to enriching Australian cuisine. But he went further, looking at how they were enlivening the musical and professional life of the city, and exploring some of the difficulties faced by migrants, including older people and Jewish exiles, attempting to make homes in Australia.³⁵

While advocating improvements to the cultural life of Melbourne, Holt pursued his own literary interests. In 1937 he wrote a one-act play, *Anzac Reunion*, which featured a traumatised World War I veteran visited by the ghosts of his army mates on the night of 25 April. The central character, forty-five-year-old Mr Harrison, tells his visitors that he had been the dupe of his own dreams when he had enlisted; life is like being in "a runaway train. We can't stop the train, and we know disaster is at the end of the line".³⁶

Holt was one of many other writers in the interwar years who was convinced that Australian society was dull and anti-intellectual and cared little for non-material things.³⁷ In the *Herald* he called on Angus & Robertson to publish more Australian plays, and literary groups to stage drama competitions and festivals; advocated increased funding for the Commonwealth Literary Fund; congratulated the Australian Society for Australian Literature on introducing a gold medal for poetry; and considered whether poets should use Aboriginal words in their work. What delighted Holt most was the flowering of the Australian novel in the 1930s.³⁸

Two articles for the *Herald* in 1938 were inspired by the visit of the English publisher Hugh Dent, who was looking for an "Australian classic" for the Everyman's Library series. Holt nominated *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony*, noting that while Henry Handel Richardson had never courted cheap popularity, discriminating readers had been treasuring her work for more than twenty-five years. He also praised Katharine Susannah

Prichard's latest novel, *Working Bullocks*, D.H. Lawrence's *Kangaroo*, and the poetry of Bernard O'Dowd. In essays and radio broadcasts, writers and critics like Holt displayed a commitment to the theory that a national literature both reflected and formulated the common experience of the Australian people. Holt encouraged Australian writers to "write, then, as we know, and stand on our own feet".³⁹ Like other social critics in the middle decades of the twentieth century, he was often to be found weighing up features of Australian life for their maturity or immaturity; each December the job of surveying the year's cultural output for the *Herald* fell to him.⁴⁰

Holt was also active in the Australian Journalists' Association (AJA). After serving on the committees of the Queensland and the Victoria districts, he joined the federal executive in 1935. He was elected general vice-president in 1937 and general president in 1938. He was one of the AJA's spokesmen at the negotiating conferences with proprietors for new awards in 1939. But on 25 September he stepped down from his position, which was based in Melbourne, as he and Dorothy and their young son and daughter were about to move to Sydney.⁴¹

Holt's new employer, Consolidated Press Ltd, had been formed by Frank Packer in 1936 to take over the publication of the moribund morning newspaper, the *Daily Telegraph*. An outstanding group of young journalists, many of them from the short-lived Melbourne *Star*, was recruited, including Sydney Deamer, Richard Hughes and Holt's old friends Cyril Pearl and Alwyn Lee. In September 1939 Consolidated Press announced the impending launch of the *Sunday Telegraph* and appointed Pearl editor. Holt took charge of the "Political Roundabout" column for the new paper and also became the *Daily Telegraph's* chief leader-writer.⁴²

While they revelled in the rumbustious, Rabelaisian atmosphere of the newsroom, *Telegraph* journalists became divided into cliques. The *Daily Telegraph's* quixotic and

ruthlessly ambitious editor, Brian Penton, was a particularly divisive figure. Although Penton was a fellow Queenslander, and Holt admired his novels, the relationship was always strained. A "Melbourne camp", featuring Deamer, Pearl, Holt and C.S. McNulty, was aligned against Penton and his growing coterie of admirers and sycophants. In February 1941 Penton, who enjoyed a close, if not conspiratorial, relationship with Packer, was promoted to the editorship of the *Telegraph*.⁴³

The wartime *Telegraphs* sought to cajole readers out of their perceived complacency. In May 1940 Holt was instructed to begin writing a series of editorials entitled "Please read this, Mr Menzies". Splashed across the front page, the editorials urged the Menzies administration to dismiss incompetent ministers, critiqued the Allied war effort, championed the formation of an all-party national government along British lines, and condemned the divisiveness of the union movement and the Country Party.⁴⁴ At around the same time Holt also made a series of broadcasts for the Department of Information.⁴⁵ In January 1942 he wrote a front-page leader demanding the immediate reinforcement of Malaya and the Dutch East Indies with any Allied troops at hand. While he did not claim to be a "Napoleon in tactics", he cited instances where newspapers in Australia and Britain had made prophetic criticisms of military strategy.⁴⁶

In the lead-up to the 1943 election, with the Curtin Labor government now in office, Holt compiled an "Electors' Guide" for the *Sunday Telegraph*. The weekly series profiled the debits and credits of leading politicians, including Arthur Fadden, Billy Hughes, John Curtin, Robert Menzies, Eddie Ward, John Dedman and Dr H.V. Evatt.⁴⁷ The journalist reserved high praise for Menzies, describing the deposed leader of the United Australia Party (UAP) as the best brain and most distinguished member of the House of Representatives. Holt lauded Menzies' lucid and disciplined intellect, and his preparedness to stand up for his principles no matter what the cost to his political fortune.

On the debit side, Holt contended that Menzies had all the gifts—except political savvy. Contemptuous of mediocrity and unable to resist the temptation to expose a fool, Menzies had fallen from power in 1941 because he had failed to keep in touch with the people and with the rank-and-file of his own party.⁴⁸

Holt also had considerable respect for Evatt, the author and former High Court judge who had become attorney-general and minister for external affairs in the Labor government. Holt admired Evatt's "shining talents"—his intellect and scholarship—but was rather disconcerted by his uneven temperament. Holt was more sharply critical of Curtin. The *Daily Telegraph* profile contended that the prime minister was a shrewd theatrical performer who was fighting the election on what lay in the past and mouthing platitudes about the war effort rather than squaring up to the dangers yet to be faced. According to Holt, Curtin had failed to give the electorate "arguments relevant to this country's future".⁴⁹ Many Australian intellectuals and aesthetes had despairingly rejected the UAP government and were sympathetic to the broad aims of reconstruction. But while Holt was one of those who deployed the rhetoric of maturation, national effort and unselfish concern for non-material interests, he did not automatically accept that reconstruction could only be advanced by politicians on the left. Interestingly, too, Holt dreamed of postwar "construction" rather than "reconstruction".⁵⁰

The *Telegraphs* were outspoken critics of the wartime censorship regime. Following a series of clashes, matters came to a head on Saturday, 15 April 1944 when Sydney newspapers, urged on by Packer, published blank spaces indicating where the censors' hand had fallen. While Penton, Pearl and McNulty were centrally involved in the resulting imbroglio, Holt also played a role. He appears to have written the trenchant editorial entitled "Free Speech is the Basis of Democracy" designed for the front page of the *Sunday Telegraph*. Copies of the newspaper and subsequent editions of the *Daily*

Telegraph and other papers were seized by police officers trying to enforce a ban on publication. As proprietors and editors conferred with their barristers, employees such as Holt smuggled copies of the newspapers out of buildings and threw copies from windows to curious on-lookers. The newspapers' counter-charge against the censors and the controversial minister for information, Arthur Calwell, was successful when a new code of censorship principles was drafted.⁵¹ Holt wrote two lengthy articles for the *Telegraph* about the battle for the freedom of the press in Britain and France since the seventeenth century. Shortly after this, the political correspondent Massey Stanley returned from the AIF to take over the "Political Roundabout" feature and Holt was appointed literary editor of the *Telegraph*.⁵²

In October 1944 printers at the *Sun* became involved in a dispute with management and a printing strike spread to all Sydney daily newspaper companies. The proprietors decided to issue a composite newspaper carrying the mastheads of the four dailies. A hastily convened meeting of the AJA in New South Wales directed members not to work on any composite newspaper, a decision overwhelmingly endorsed by a huge general meeting. Journalists who refused to provide copy or help produce the composite were dismissed or suspended. While management and "scabs" began producing the composite, AJA members decided to produce their own newspaper.⁵³

Edgar Holt was amongst those who reported for duty at the makeshift offices of the *News* on 11 October. The ten-page tabloid, which resembled the *Telegraph*, featured leaders by Holt and cartoons about the dispute, as well as general news.⁵⁴ He found working on the newspaper a liberating experience: "it was amusing to be let off the chain". The boldness and flamboyance of the *Telegraphs* could not compensate Holt for being forced to work under Penton and write editorials such "Please Read This, Mr Menzies". He would later dismiss the editorial formula under Penton as "a series of angry

barks. You didn't write paragraphs. You wrote sentences. You didn't argue. You made confident and preferably arrogant assertions".⁵⁵ Holt's views were coloured by bitterness, for the *Telegraphs* under Penton and Pearl were notable for their intellectual and cultural flair and their editorial innovations.

No militant unionist, Holt seems to have regarded the AJA as a professional association rather than as an industrial union. For journalists the 1944 dispute was not a strike but a lockout as proprietors had prevented them from performing their normal duties. Journalists resented proprietors treating the AJA as a "tame-cat" organisation and expecting them to work for any paper proprietors chose to produce, regardless of the plight of other craftsmen and unionists. A settlement between all parties was reached on 19 October, with one clause stipulating that there was to be no victimisation by either side.⁵⁶ This undertaking seems to have been flagrantly breached at the *Telegraph*. A colleague, Don Whittington, recalls that Holt's position was made untenable by the vindictive Penton. In early 1945 Holt resigned and joined *Smith's Weekly*.⁵⁷

Founded in 1919 and known for its jaunty style and appeal to the Digger ethos, *Smith's Weekly* was in decline by the second half of the 1940s. Holt wrote a weekly column on food using the pen name "Toby Belch" and compiled the waspish Political Form Guide. In 1946, two years after the formation of the Liberal Party of Australia under Menzies' leadership, Holt enthusiastically described the politician as "the biggest man, physically and intellectually, in the whole turnout".⁵⁸ When the editor of *Smith's Weekly* died in 1947, the managing director, Claude McKay, promoted Holt to the editorship. Holt recruited the popular cartoonist Bernard Hesling, formed a close friendship with the journalist and poet Kenneth Slessor, and felt at home with the bohemian staff. But in 1950 the principal shareholder, frustrated by the financial situation

of *Smith's Weekly*, sold off his shares. Other shareholders followed suit, and the newspaper ceased publication in October.⁵⁹

The following month, Holt was appointed the Liberal Party's Federal Public Relations Officer (PRO). After the Liberal/Country Party coalition was voted into office in December 1949, the Liberal Party's federal president, T.M. Ritchie, maintained that the role of public relations would have to change from attack and constructive criticism to one of consolidating the Menzies government's position and conditioning the electorate to accept the government's program. There was no journalist on the staff of the federal secretariat, state activity was spasmodic and varied, and federal activity was confined to a monthly broadcast by the prime minister, weekly commentaries on the Macquarie radio network by different ministers, and the distribution of a few pamphlets.⁶⁰

In July 1950 Holt had been one of a select group of newspaper proprietors and editors, including Frank Packer and Claude McKay, the New South Wales president of the Liberal Party had invited to a luncheon attended by the federal attorney-general, Senator J.A. Spicer.⁶¹ It may have been this meeting which led senior Liberal Party figures to consider appointing Holt to a position within the secretariat at a rumoured salary of £3000.⁶²

In an article about the Liberal Party, Don Whittington wondered how his former colleague, who had mixed in bohemian, "leftish" groups in the 1930s, could have settled for the "middle class suburban existence of a Liberal Party officer". Holt maintained that he liked the job and the prime minister and was fascinated by politics. Whittington wrote that Holt added, with "what could be a twinkle" in his eye, "Besides, I was always a true Liberal".⁶³ But while the decision of the prominent journalist and *bon vivant* to work for the Liberal Party may have puzzled some colleagues, Holt's commitment to the party, and to Menzies in particular, is evident. He was not a journalist available for hire by the

highest political bidder. In an article for the *Australian Liberal*, he dismissed nineteenth century liberalism as too "remote" before going on to state what he believed in "as a member of the Liberal Party". For Holt, this entailed rejecting totalitarianism, the "crude forms of power-organisation with which this century is familiar", too much government and the suppression of the personality.⁶⁴ Hancock has recently situated the Liberal Party's emergence in 1944 within the context of postwar reconstruction and shown that the concept should not be seen simply as the preserve of left-wing idealists. The early recruits to the party generally saw Australia as one nation, not an arena where competing classes fought to the death.⁶⁵

In an important speech in August 1945, Menzies averred that the distinguishing mark of liberalism was to view the Australian people as "seven million individuals" and not as "a mere mass" to be ordered about and legislated for.⁶⁶ Edgar Holt, who had advanced the idea of a more independent literary canon, moved into a party which made notions of individual "independence" the centre of its ideological counter-attack on Labor.⁶⁷ After rejecting various "isms" in his youth, he developed a belief in the dignity and freedom of the individual:

Political liberty is not easily come by in the twentieth century and, indeed, is under challenge. It may quickly be lost if men do not understand and insist that political liberty means individual liberty, that freedom means freedom for man as well as men, and that human dignity means the dignity of self.⁶⁸

There are also certain clues as to why Holt agreed to leave journalism. His excitement at the launch of the *Star* in the 1930s had shown that he revelled in a challenge, and his wartime profile of Menzies had suggested that the politician needed

help softening and projecting his public image. In 1957 Holt reflected on writing leaders, which he had done for nearly two decades, in an article for *Southerly*. He opined that leader-writing was one of the most frustrating newspaper activities because so few people read leading articles, and that editorial authority had diminished.⁶⁹ Entering the political arena allowed him to be an activist and player rather than just an observer and commentator.

Holt came into a political party that was dominated by state divisions and had an elaborate structure at the federal level. Holt had ambitious plans of the kind Tom Ritchie wanted: a closer relationship between all state divisions and the federal secretariat; a closer liaison between the government and the organisation through the secretariat; the growth of what he called the "intelligence service" of the Liberal Party; and the measurement of public opinion on major issues. However, he never received the necessary resources to fulfil his ambitions and he regularly complained, like every senior official in the organisation, that he needed more staff.⁷⁰

Holt made good use of his newspaper contacts and experience. He swung into action for the 1951 election, which came just weeks after the High Court disallowed the government's legislation to outlaw the Communist Party. Holt borrowed a photographic block from Angus McLachlan, general manager of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. The image seems to have ridiculed Evatt, who was leading the charge against the government's attempts to ban the Communist Party. In the highly charged and politically polarised atmosphere of the Cold War, Holt no longer had any sympathy for Evatt. Holt told "Angus" that the block had "helped, together with some other barbs, to make the Doctor's going a little rougher"; Holt had got "a great kick" when the government was returned to office.⁷¹

With his only staff consisting of a stenographer, Holt wrote summaries of parliamentary activities and policy initiatives, which were inserted over the local members' names in their electorate newspapers or used for local broadcasts. Aided by the federal secretariat's senior research officer, Holt produced a periodical, *Current Politics*, pamphlets—including one on New Australians published in several languages—and election and referendum material, as well as special publicity for the federal rural committee.⁷²

Holt found an ally in the prime minister's colourful press secretary, Hugh Dash, formerly a *Daily Telegraph* and *Smith's Weekly* journalist. Backed by the federal secretariat, Holt and Dash made Menzies, his diminutive wife Pattie and their only daughter Heather the focus of publicity. Much was made of the contrast between the prime minister and the irresponsible and dangerous Evatt, now leader of the ALP.⁷³

In January 1953, as a half-Senate election approached, Holt sent newspaper editors a booklet he had prepared outlining the government's achievements since 1949.⁷⁴ When the coalition only narrowly retained control of the Senate, Holt and the Liberal Party federal director, J.R. Willoughby, wrote detailed assessments of the political situation for the prime minister. Holt maintained that the government would have to meet what was "to a very abnormal degree a selfish electorate" if it were to be returned to office in 1954. With newspapers conditioning the electorate to believe that an "unsatisfactory" budget would be disastrous, the government had to take positive steps and seize the initiative. Special attention to skilled workers and the rural vote, coupled with Menzies' "personal appeal" and "very high prestige", would enable the government to defeat the tough odds. Holt could also see a sectarian crisis developing within Labor over the issue of communists in unions and the activities of the Industrial Groups.⁷⁵

In a confidential report about problems in the Liberal Party's Western Australian division in 1958, Holt noted that the leader, David Brand, had inadequate public relations assistance. Holt listed the qualities of a good PRO: a keen political sense; balance and judgement; a capacity to think creatively and put down ideas in crisp and lucid English; and an ability to deal with the press and community leaders, and prepare political appreciations and periodicals. Public relations, he concluded, "is largely salesmanship, but one must know precisely what is to be sold".⁷⁶

Taking his job very seriously, Holt clearly revered his own "Leader". He found in the prime minister a man with a ready wit and a superb command of language who enjoyed classical nineteenth-century English novels and Shakespeare, and took pleasure in good food and drink. "When I take my politics I take them, as I take wine, in amiable company", Holt wrote.⁷⁷ His enthusiasm may have been fuelled by the links Menzies had forged with the AJA while a young barrister in the mid-1920s.⁷⁸

As the 1950s drew to a close Holt had the opportunity to explore the potential of a new medium for political campaigning. In around 1958 he began appearing on *Any Questions?*, an ABC program in which studio audiences asked sages—academics, scientists and prominent journalists—for their opinions.⁷⁹ In February, having hired a television set for his own home, Holt implored the Liberal Party federal secretariat to invest in at least one television set.⁸⁰ He joined the federal director J.R. Willoughby, the New South Wales general secretary John Carrick and the Victorian general secretary J.V. McConnell on a special sub-committee looking into television. It concluded that there was no firm evidence that television significantly influenced the result of the Victorian state election in May 1958. Invoking overseas studies, the sub-committee thought that television was just one of a number of ways of getting messages across. After the November 1958 federal election, the sub-committee repeated its earlier view that

television presented personalities better than issues. But it also noted that even a small television audience added up to a lot of people, and that strong "television personalities" could be of considerable benefit to the Liberal Party.⁸¹

With "firm guiding rules" into this "difficult and subtle medium" yet to emerge,⁸² Holt was despatched on an overseas study trip. He was to spend several weeks in London observing the role of television in the British election and also visit Washington and New York.⁸³ Holt boarded his aeroplane in August 1959 carrying letters of introduction to, and briefs to visit, the British Conservative Party's radio and television unit and the United States Congress television unit.⁸⁴

With television spreading to regional Australia, the television sub-committee was transferred to the full federal public relations (staff planning) committee (SPC).⁸⁵ In 1960 both Holt and McConnell submitted reports on television's impact on the recent British election. These reports confirmed the SPC's view that television sold personalities and not issues, and that the qualities needed for presentation were friendliness, conviction, sincerity, an intimate manner and knowledge of the subject. While television now supplemented press and radio, "there is no evidence yet available that [it] will become the substitute for the written word". With characteristic elitism, Holt concluded that the influence of television would be confined to "the less intelligent section of the community, on voters who are only casually interested in politics, and on voters who have no mind to make up". Just the same, poor technique could be dangerous, so the SPC and the state divisions sponsored numerous training seminars.⁸⁶

In 1963 a small group of Liberal officials, including Holt, met with a GTV-9 executive, Colin Bednall, in Melbourne. The group agreed that the broadcasting of Menzies' forthcoming policy speech should be an "intimate presentation", with a small audience surrounding the prime minister so as to allow him to be the dominant image.⁸⁷

In 1964 Holt argued at a meeting of the SPC that the campaign for the Senate election should be a short one and that the prime minister should deliver a televised "Progress Report to the Nation". This strategy was followed, but the coalition failed to hold its majority in the Senate.⁸⁸ Holt later explained to a postgraduate student that the Liberal Party had sharply reduced its volume of press advertising because television was a dynamic medium better suited to projecting and selling personalities, and it had a much larger audience than the print media. He had quickly grasped the importance of political messages being "personalised" for television, and he was now completely enthralled by Menzies' mastery of the medium. The party organisation—including Holt—had constructed the image of first the fatherly "Bob Menzies" and then the statesmanlike "Sir Robert Menzies".⁸⁹

In 1965 Holt prepared a "factual" document on communist "North Vietnam's Campaign to Conquer South Vietnam" and in 1966 helped the new prime minister, Harold Holt, with his policy speech. Edgar Holt enjoyed a sense of brotherhood and camaraderie within the Liberal Party organisation,⁹⁰ and retained some of his old friendships. He was one of a group of Sydney journalists, in search of better food and drink than that to be had at the Journalists' Club, who established the Condiment Club in the 1960s. Fellow members included Slessor, Pearl, Alexander Macdonald, Bill Barr and Jerry Wilkes.⁹¹ Holt lived in Vaucluse, an exclusive waterfront suburb in Sydney, and in 1971 contributed a wide-ranging chapter on "The cities" for a book about Australia edited by his old friend Clive Turnbull. Melbourne, he announced, remained a state capital while Sydney had become "a metropolis with something of a cosmopolitan air". Sydney's cuisine was improving, with fine seafood and an increasing number of ethnic restaurants, and people were discovering a taste for good wines. Again, Holt applied a metaphor of biological growth to the changes in Australian society.⁹²

But unlike some other social critics in the 1960s, Holt did not express exasperation at the informal alliance between the ad hoc economic policies of Menzies and the flabby Australian ethos of "socialism without doctrines"; nor did he criticise the veteran prime minister for failing to recognise that Australia was facing new economic and geo-political challenges with less and less British help.⁹³ In 1969 Holt published a book, *Politics is People: The Men of the Menzies Era*. The title, which presumed that the actions of "people in politics" should be used as the basis for writing political history, was again premised on a belief in the primacy of individual agency. The engagingly written book recorded Menzies' at times turbulent career from 1934 to his retirement in 1966. Lauding the political dominance of the veteran prime minister, here is Holt on Menzies' physical presence:

... it was a revelation to walk behind Menzies as he mounted a flight of stairs. Slowly and purposefully the feet rose and fell upon each succeeding stair. The ground shook slightly. Each foot met the stair firmly, flatly, and authoritatively. He moved upward more like a force than a person. One had the feeling that anything or anybody in his way would be trodden down.⁹⁴

Penned in the wake of Harold Holt's disappearance and at a time when troubles were beginning to plague John Gorton's administration, the book was an elegy for the stability of the Menzies years. Menzies, who had been infuriated by Kevin Perkins' biographical study, *Last of the Queen's Men*, was naturally delighted by Edgar Holt's work. He wrote to Holt from England saying that he had found *Politics is People* "like balm in Gilead ... my daughter, Heather, has elevated you to something like sainthood".⁹⁵

Following the publication of his book, Holt wrote a series of articles for the *Australian Liberal*. Even more vigorously than before, he rejected the Marxist interpretation of history and all dogmas and ideologies, and described himself as an individualist. Most Liberals were not "theorists but political animals who believe that humans rather than being squeezed into rules should make rules to fit people". The articles also displayed Holt's increasing disillusionment with the media. He blamed the media for creating "instant politics": young men quizzed politicians on television and rarely permitted their "victims" to finish an answer; pollsters interrogated startled members of the public; newspaper journalists who were awarded by-lines and competed with young men waving microphones now wrote interpretive stories rather than factual accounts of events. In the early days of political television, Holt commented, people such as himself had been advised to choose candidates and leaders with a good television image, even though it had been well-known in the trade that animals, notably monkeys, performed better than humans on television.⁹⁶ As the 1972 election approached, he sarcastically referred to the Labor leader, Gough Whitlam, being suspended between the "researchers and the gimmick boys". Holt warned readers of the *Australian Liberal* that political crises would be manufactured with tedious frequency: "To deny the daily crisis to the Press Gallery would be as cruel as taking a rattle from an infant".⁹⁷

In his condemnation of what "was horribly called the mass media", Holt displayed more than a hint of disingenuousness. A considerable number of his own journalistic contributions had been by-lined; he had regularly monitored, and responded to, the findings of public opinion polls; he had enthusiastically helped to foster the image—including the television image—of Menzies at the expense of other Liberal Party politicians; and he had played a key role in determining how the party dealt with the advent of television. Holt, who had enrolled in one of the earliest university journalism

courses in Australia and had been recruited in 1950 to bring a measure of professionalism to the nascent Liberal Party, now portrayed himself and his contemporaries in the party as "civilised amateurs".⁹⁸ These articles were evidence, if any were needed, that Holt was a "forty-niner". In September 1972 he was replaced as senior PRO and given the title of senior political adviser to the secretariat. But in mid-November, with News Ltd subsidising Labor's election campaign, the hapless prime minister, William McMahon, called on Holt's services.⁹⁹

Following the election of the Whitlam Labor government, there were rumblings suggesting that Holt and Bede Hartcher, who had risen through the secretariat since 1947 to become federal director of the Liberal Party, were of touch with what a professional political organisation needed in the 1970s. A different breed of paid officials assumed control—the so-called "McKinsey set", consisting of Dr Timothy Pascoe and Jim Carlton. Liberal officials began publicly complaining about the ages of members of parliament and talking about the need for rejuvenation.¹⁰⁰ At the meeting of the federal council in 1973, the federal president thanked the federal executive, particularly Holt, Hartcher and Dr Graham Starr, the senior research officer, for their "experience, wisdom and devotion". Early the following year forty-one-year-old Tony Eggleton assumed a new position, director of the Liberal Party communications unit. Hartcher was given a largely honorific post and in the last weeks of 1974 Holt was eased out of the organisation. There is no extant record of Holt's reaction, but Graham Starr was so angry about the way in which Holt and Hartcher were treated that he resigned.¹⁰¹

Edgar Holt died, aged eighty-four, on 11 October 1988.¹⁰² From the aftermath of World War I to the collapse of the long reign of the Liberal and Country Party coalition, Holt had been involved in the major cultural and political conversations of Australian public life. He had been part of the dazzling generation of journalists, writers and

intellectuals that had emerged in Brisbane during the interwar years and he had moved to Melbourne just as the avant-garde and modernist moment "arrived". Unlike some of his contemporaries, he had refused to accept the politicisation of art,¹⁰³ preferring instead to celebrate the heroic figure of the artist and reject all "isms", with the exception of classicism. He had used his journalistic columns to act as an advocate for Australian cultural expression—in literature, art and cooking—and he had emerged as the head of the journalists' professional association. Holt's journalistic and literary oeuvre was dedicated to promoting a civilised and advanced national culture and lifestyle; in this he was like his colleagues Brian Penton and Cyril Pearl. Holt may be viewed as one of Gregory Melleuish's cultural liberals, someone who appreciated the richness of the human condition and recognised that human beings possess a spiritual dimension.¹⁰⁴

But while Penton and Pearl were content to confine their talents to writing, Holt was not. Just as he had dropped out of university in the 1920s and rejected the call of the left (and right) in the 1930s, Holt had become disaffected with the limitations imposed by newspaper proprietors and editors and the merits of pontificating on "affairs great and small".¹⁰⁵ Like the Queensland writer and polemicist P.R. Stephensen, he was drawn into the political arena. Of course, Holt's political career was less explosive and controversial and, in his case, there was no sudden switch from the left to the far right. To Holt the Liberal Party stood for the individual rather than any ideology; unlike other political parties, it was not passionately devoted to running people's lives "for the sake of some dogma that won't be worth tuppence a century from now". He was delighted to find that Menzies and his associates did not sit around a table passing resolutions, showing hands and wrestling with theories.¹⁰⁶ By the early 1970s Holt had become very sceptical about the value of the media, including that of the burgeoning public relations industry. The career of the ardent individualist, who had once commented that politics brought "out in

its practitioners some of the less lovable of human qualities",¹⁰⁷ was ended by the party whose interests he had served, and served well, for a quarter of a century.

¹ Ian Hancock, *National and Permanent? The Federal Organisation of the Liberal Party of Australia, 1944-1965* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000).

² I am grateful to Ms Pamela Barnett, archivist at Brisbane Grammar School, and the library staff of Brisbane High School for attempting to help me locate information about Holt's family and schooling.

³ *Journalist*, 9 October 1929, p. 163; *Who's Who in Australia* (1974), p. 521; *Sydney Morning Herald* (SMH), 20 October 1988, p. 14. Also information from University of Queensland Archives.

⁴ Clem Lloyd, *Profession: Journalist* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1985), p. 166.

⁵ Craig Munro, *Wild Man of Letters: The Story of P. R. Stephensen* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1984), pp. 19-20; Malcolm I. Thomis, *A Place of Light and Learning: The University of Queensland's First Seventy Five Years* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1985), p. 152.

⁶ Patrick Buckridge, *The Scandalous Penton: A Biography of Brian Penton* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1994), p. 33.

⁷ *Galmahra*, July 1926, pp. 3-4, October 1926, pp. 1, 9-11.

⁸ *Galmahra*, May 1926, pp. 3, 44, July 1926, p. 42, October 1926, p. 43.

⁹ Munro, *Wild Man of Letters*, p. 20.

¹⁰ *Galmahra*, October 1926, p. 43.

¹¹ *Galmahra*, May 1926, p. 3.

¹² *Galmahra*, May 1926, p. 28. T.G. Tucker was a prolific writer; the publications to which Holt referred may have been *A New Primer of English Literature* (London and Melbourne: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1912) and *The Making of a Shakespeare* (Melbourne: T.C. Lothian, n.d. [1907]).

¹³ Colin Bingham, *The Beckoning Horizon* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1983), p. 102.

¹⁴ *Galmahra*, April 1928, p. 12.

¹⁵ E. Holt and C. Bingham, *The Merlin Papers* (Brisbane: no publisher, n.d. [1929]). Bingham, *The Beckoning Horizon*, pp. 102-3, notes that a handful of copies of a second volume of *The Merlin Papers* were also published.

¹⁶ *Journalist*, 9 October 1929, p. 163; *Galmahra*, May 1926, p. 21.

¹⁷ Edgar Holt, "The cities", in Clive Turnbull ed., *Hammond Innes Introduces Australia* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1971), p. 46. Newspaper reports suggest that Benjamin was in Australia from April to September 1929.

¹⁸ *Journalist*, 9 October 1929, p. 163; George Blaikie, *Remember Smith's Weekly?* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1966), p. 122.

¹⁹ Letters from Holt at 109 Albert St, East Melbourne, to Colin Bingham; Box 2; MS 4862 Bingham Papers; National Library of Australia (NLA). This box contains twenty-five undated letters from Holt that appear to have been written between 1929 and 1933. To assist in locating the relevant letters, the Notes refer to the addresses from which the letters were written.

²⁰ Holt at 109 Albert St, East Melbourne and "Risby, Monday", to Bingham; Box 2; MS 4862 Bingham Papers; NLA.

²¹ Holt at 109 Albert St, East Melbourne, to Bingham; Box 2; MS 4862 Bingham Papers; NLA. See also *Australasian*, 19 October 1929, p. 51.

²² Holt at "Risby", 43 Spring St, Melbourne, to Bingham; Box 2; MS 4862 Bingham Papers; NLA. For Holt's engagement, see *Journalist*, 21 February 1930, p. 19.

²³ Edgar Holt, "Thunder without lightening", *Southerly*, 4 (1957), p. 183. Also Holt at "Risby", 43 Spring St, Melbourne and Florida Flats, St Kilda Road, Melbourne, to Bingham; Box 2; MS 4862 Bingham Papers; NLA.

²⁴ Holt, "Thunder without lightening", p. 183; *Who's Who in Australia* (1974), p. 521.

²⁵ David Carter, "Paris, Moscow, Melbourne: Some avant-garde little magazines, 1930-1934", *Australian Literary Studies*, 16, 1 (May 1993), pp. 62-3.

²⁶ Holt at Florida Flats, St Kilda Road, Melbourne, to Bingham; Box 2; MS 4862 Bingham Papers; NLA.

²⁷ *Ibid.* See also Carter, "Paris, Moscow, Melbourne", pp. 57, 63, 65; Drusilla Modjeska, *Exiles at Home: Australian Women Writers, 1925-1945* (London & Sydney: Sirius Books, 1984), p. 129.

²⁸ H.M. Green, *A History of Australian Literature*, 2 (London & Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1985), pp. 1007, 1009, 1331; Cyril Pearl, "Some contemporary Melbourne poets", *Art in Australia*, 53 (15 December

- 1933), p. 36; Bertram Higgins, "Some autobiographical notes", *Quadrant*, 13, 6 (November-December 1969), pp. 51, 54.
- ²⁹ Holt at Florida Flats, St Kilda Road, Melbourne, to Bingham; Box 2; MS 4862 Bingham Papers; NLA.
- ³⁰ Edgar Holt, *Lilacs Out of the Dead Land* (Melbourne: Transition Press, 1932); Pearl, "Some contemporary Melbourne poets", p. 38.
- ³¹ Holt at "The Argus" to Bingham; Box 2; MS 4862 Bingham Papers; NLA. See also Bridget Griffen-Foley, "The battle of Melbourne: The rise and fall of the *Star*", in Paul Ashton and Bridget Griffen-Foley eds, *From the Frontier: Essays in Honour of Duncan Waterson*, special issue of *Journal of Australian Studies* and *Australian Cultural History* (2001), pp. 89-102.
- ³² *Journalist*, October 1938, p. 3, October 1939, p. 2.
- ³³ Don Whittington, "Directors of the Liberals", *Nation* (7 October 1961), p. 7.
- ³⁴ *Herald*, 11 December 1937, p. 36, 10 December 1938, p. 38.
- ³⁵ *Herald*, 18 September 1937, p. 36, 25 September 1937, p. 35, 30 October 1937, p. 35.
- ³⁶ Edgar Holt, "Anzac Reunion", in W. Moore and T.I. Moore eds, *Best Australian One-Act Plays* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1937), 211-29.
- ³⁷ Tim Rowse, *Australian Liberalism and National Character* (Melbourne: Kibble Books, 1978), p. 179.
- ³⁸ *Herald* (Melbourne), 14 April 1938, p. 4, 5 November 1938, p. 4, 22 November 1938, p. 6, 24 November 1938, p. 6, 9 August 1939, p. 6.
- ³⁹ *Herald* (Melbourne), 14 January 1938, p. 6, 22 January 1938, p. 4, 15 October 1938, p. 4. See also Rowse, *Australian Liberalism and National Character*, p. 183.
- ⁴⁰ Rowse, *Australian Liberalism and National Character*, p. 228; *Herald*, 10 December 1938, p. 40, 24 December 1938, p. 12.
- ⁴¹ *Journalist*, 9 October 1929, p. 163, October 1939, p. 2.
- ⁴² Bridget Griffen-Foley, *The House of Packer: The Making of a Media Empire* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1999), p. 49ff. See also *Newspaper News*, August 1944, p. 12.
- ⁴³ Griffen-Foley, *The House of Packer*, p. 77; Buckridge, *The Scandalous Penton*, p. 189. For Holt on Penton, see *Herald*, 22 January 1938, p. 4.
- ⁴⁴ Edgar Holt, "Instant politics and the mass media", *Australian Liberal* (November 1971), p. 7; Griffen-Foley, *The House of Packer*, p. 94; Buckridge, *The Scandalous Penton*, pp. 209-11.
- ⁴⁵ Talks by Edgar Holt; 1/210; Series AWM80; Australian War Memorial, National Archives of Australia (NAA).
- ⁴⁶ *Daily Telegraph*, 13 January 1942, p. 4.
- ⁴⁷ *Sunday Telegraph*, 4 July-15 August 1943.
- ⁴⁸ *Sunday Telegraph*, 1 August 1943, p. 24.
- ⁴⁹ *Sunday Telegraph*, 15 August 1943, p. 24; *Daily Telegraph*, 19 August 1943, p. 8.
- ⁵⁰ Rowse, *Australian Liberalism and National Character*, pp. 179-80; *Daily Telegraph*, 19 August 1943, p. 8.
- ⁵¹ Brian Penton, *Censored!* (Sydney: Shakespeare Head Press, 1947), p. 60ff; Holt, "Thunder without lightning", p. 184.
- ⁵² *Sunday Telegraph*, 21 May 1944, p. 7; *Daily Telegraph*, 22 May 1944, p. 6; *Newspaper News*, August 1944, p. 12.
- ⁵³ Lloyd, *Profession: Journalist*, p. 239.
- ⁵⁴ *Journalist*, October 1944, p. 3; Griffen-Foley, *The House of Packer*, p. 137.
- ⁵⁵ Holt, "Thunder without lightning", p. 184.
- ⁵⁶ Lloyd, *Profession: Journalist*, p. 241; Don Whittington, *Strive to be Fair: An Unfinished Autobiography* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1977), p. 96.
- ⁵⁷ Whittington, *Strive to be Fair*, p. 101; *Telegus*, 2 March 1945, p. 3.
- ⁵⁸ Blaikie, *Remember Smith's Weekly?*, pp. 49, 53-4; A.W. Martin, *Robert Menzies: A Life*, 2 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1999), p. 61.
- ⁵⁹ Blaikie, *Remember Smith's Weekly?*, pp. 132, 257; Geoffrey Dutton, *Kenneth Slessor: A Biography* (Melbourne: Viking, 1991), p. 310.
- ⁶⁰ Hancock, *National and Permanent?*, pp. 125-6. For Holt's later reflections on the challenges of working within the organisation, see Holt's comments, 3 May 1962, p. 4; Folder: Public Relations Officer; Box 166; Series 7; MS 5000 Liberal Party (Federal) Papers; NLA.
- ⁶¹ Lyle H. Moore to Holt, 14 July 1950; Item 1; Box Y4601; MSS 2385 Liberal Party (NSW) Papers; Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.
- ⁶² *Things I Hear*, 24 October 1950, p. 4.
- ⁶³ Whittington, "Directors of the Liberals", p. 7.

- ⁶⁴ Edgar Holt, "Liberalism and the free man", *Australian Liberal* (September 1960), supplement, p. 3.
- ⁶⁵ Hancock, *National and Permanent?*, pp. 40-2.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 61.
- ⁶⁷ Rowse, *Australian Liberalism and National Character*, p. 187.
- ⁶⁸ Edgar Holt, "Liberalism and the free man", *Australian Liberal* (September 1960), supplement, p. 3.
- ⁶⁹ Holt, "Thunder without lightening", pp. 182-5.
- ⁷⁰ Hancock, *National and Permanent?*, p. 131.
- ⁷¹ Holt to Angus McLachlan, 3 May 1951, Folder: Liberal Party 1944-1969; Box 200.14/1; John Fairfax Archives, Sydney (JFA).
- ⁷² Hancock, *National and Permanent?*, pp. 130-1.
- ⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 139-40, 146; Martin, *Robert Menzies*, p. 365.
- ⁷⁴ Holt to McLachlan, 27 January 1953; Folder: Liberal Party 1944-1969; Box 200.14/1; JFA.
- ⁷⁵ Holt to Menzies, 28 July 1953; Folder: Prime Minister 1955; Box 191; Series 7; MS 5000 Liberal Party (Federal) Papers; NLA. See also Hancock, *National and Permanent?*, p. 40.
- ⁷⁶ "Public Relations Report to the State President", n.d. (February 1958); Box 169; Series 7; MS 5000 Liberal Party (Federal) Papers; NLA.
- ⁷⁷ A.W. Martin, "Sir Robert Gordon Menzies", in John Ritchie ed., *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 15 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000), p. 360; Edgar Holt, "A salute to the individualists in an age of conformity", *Australian Liberal* (August 1971), p. 7.
- ⁷⁸ See Lloyd, *Profession: Journalist*, pp. 157, 161-2.
- ⁷⁹ "Any Questions"; 11; Series 1426/4; NSW office, NAA. See also K. S. Inglis, *This is the ABC* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1983), p. 212.
- ⁸⁰ Holt to J.R. Willoughby, 28 February 1958; Folder: Public Relations Officer; Box 166; Series 7; MS 5000 Liberal Party (Federal) Papers; NLA.
- ⁸¹ Summary of the Highlights of a Meeting of Federal Executive, 6 April 1959, p. 3; SPC minutes, 3-5 June 1959, p. 5; Box 146; Series 7; MS 5000 Liberal Party (Federal) Papers; NLA.
- ⁸² *Ibid.*
- ⁸³ Lyle H. Moore to federal executive, 6 July 1959; J. Carrick to Moore, 9 July 1959; Box 169; Series 7; MS 5000 Liberal Party (Federal) Papers; NLA.
- ⁸⁴ J.R. Willoughby to R.D. Milne, 20 July 1959; Willoughby to Mrs W.M. Crum Ewing, 18 August 1959; Willoughby to Howard Beale, 18 August 1959; Box 146; Series 7; MS 5000 Liberal Party (Federal) Papers; NLA.
- ⁸⁵ SPC highlights, 24-26 August 1959; Box 146; Series 7; MS 5000 Liberal Party (Federal) Papers; NLA.
- ⁸⁶ Hancock, *National and Permanent?*, p. 256. Holt's summaries, February 1960; Folder: Television; Box 224; Series 7; MS 5000 Liberal Party (Federal) Papers; NLA.
- ⁸⁷ General Working Notes of Meeting, 30 October [1963]; Box 107; Series 5; MS 5000 Liberal Party (Federal) Papers; NLA.
- ⁸⁸ Paper presented to SPC by PRO, 13 May 1964; Folder Senate Election-1964-General; Box 119; Series 5; MS 5000 Liberal Party (Federal) Papers; NLA.
- ⁸⁹ Andrew Kaldor, "Liberal and Labor press advertising", *Australian Quarterly*, 40, 2 (June 1968), p. 43; Hancock, *National and Permanent?*, pp. 223-5, 231.
- ⁹⁰ Hancock, *National and Permanent?*, pp. 229, 248-9. See also *SMH*, 10 November 1966, p. 6.
- ⁹¹ Dutton, *Kenneth Slessor*, pp. 317, 326.
- ⁹² Holt, "The cities", pp. 39-48. See also Rowse, *Australian Liberalism and National Character*, p. 228.
- ⁹³ Rowse, *Australian Liberalism and National Character*, p. 228.
- ⁹⁴ Edgar Holt, *Politics is People: The Men of the Menzies Era* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1969), foreword & p. 34.
- ⁹⁵ R.G. Menzies to Holt, 14 August 1969; Folder 134; Series 1; MS 4936 Menzies Papers; NLA.
- ⁹⁶ Holt, "A salute to the individualists in an age of conformity"; Holt, "Instant politics and the mass media".
- ⁹⁷ Edgar Holt, "Don't believe all you will read in 1972", *Australian Liberal* (February 1972), p. 7.
- ⁹⁸ Holt, "A salute to the individualists in an age of conformity".
- ⁹⁹ *SMH*, 19 September 1972, p. 3; *Age*, 22 November 1972, p. 15. See also SPC minutes, 28 September 1972, p. 1; Folder 10; Box 255; Series 7; MS 5000 Liberal Party (Federal) Papers; NLA.
- ¹⁰⁰ Hancock, *National and Permanent?*, p. 269; information from Mr Ian Hancock, 8 August 2000. See also, for example, *SMH*, 4 June 1973, p. 3, 10 June 1973, p. 25.
- ¹⁰¹ Federal Council meeting, 6-8 August 1973; Box 189; Series 7; MS 5000 Liberal Party (Federal) Papers; NLA. Also information from Mr Ian Hancock, 8 August 2000; *SMH*, 11 August 1973, p. 3, 25 February 1974, p. 1.

¹⁰² *SMH*, 20 October 1988, p. 14.

¹⁰³ Carter, "Paris, Moscow, Melbourne", p. 57.

¹⁰⁴ Gregory Melleuish, *Cultural Liberalism in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 189.

¹⁰⁵ Holt, "Thunder without lightening", p. 182.

¹⁰⁶ Holt, "A salute to the individualists".

¹⁰⁷ Holt, *Politics is People*, p. 136.