

Australia's fight to become a republic

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

On Nov. 6, Australians went to the polls to vote in a referendum, whether to become a republic or retain the system of constitutional monarchy, with Queen Elizabeth II as head of state. The population voted 55-45% against the proposed republic. This was, however, not a pro-monarchy vote; it was a vote against the pseudo-republic, which was being offered. For, the change proposed was merely a formal one: The country would be ruled by an Australian President, instead of the Queen, but this head of state would be appointed by a parliamentary majority of two-thirds. Australians committed to the idea of a real republic, would have voted "yes" only if they had been given the right to elect the President by direct ballot (see *EIR*, Nov. 19, p. 48).

The entire dog-and-pony show around the referendum, was just the latest trick by the British-controlled establishment in Australia, to manipulate and deform a republican sentiment which runs deep in the cultural impulse of the population.

The fight for a true republic, has, in fact, been a constant in the history of Australia, although official British historiography has painstakingly covered this up. According to the British school, Australia was nothing but a dumping ground for social outcasts, criminals, and ne'er-do-wells.

History records that, because Britain lost its 13 American colonies as a destination for transporting (i.e., exiling) convicts from the overcrowded British jails in the American War of Independence, it was forced to look elsewhere, and so decided to settle Australia, which had been claimed for the Crown by Captain Cook just six years before the war broke out. Such is the gist of what is taught in schools in Australia. In reality, the story is much more interesting.

The initial idea to settle Australia came from an American named James Mario Matra, a native New Yorker who had been a junior officer on Captain Cook's ship *Endeavour*. Ma-

tra belonged to a circle of English loyalists, who had supported England in the War of Independence. He proposed to Lord Sydney, the British Secretary of State, that loyal subjects of the Crown who were no longer welcome in the United States could find new homes and opportunities for farming and commerce in the territories of the newly discovered New Holland, as Australia was then known. Matra's novel idea wasn't taken up; however, it did prompt Lord Sydney to decide on Australia as the next destination for convict transportation. This signalled the beginning of a mass transportation which, over the following 80 years to 1868, saw 160,000 convicts transported to Australia, at least 50,000 of whom were Irish.

Political prisoners

The crucial point is, that many of the Irish, Scottish, and even some of the English convicts were political prisoners, individuals who had become aflame with the passion for liberty, because of the American Revolution. They were people who had flocked to buy up copies of Thomas Paine's tract, *The Rights of Man*, which in 1791 sold an incredible 1 million copies in England! Paine was an Englishman whose writings had inspired and raised money for the American Revolution.

Paine's pamphlet was a manifesto for republicans, and circulating it became a crime. A promising young Scottish lawyer named Thomas Muir was sentenced in the star-chamber court, to 14 years transportation to Botany Bay for distributing *The Rights of Man*. The Scottish national poet Robbie Burns penned the words to Scotland's unofficial national anthem "Scots Wha Hae" when he witnessed this outrage.

Muir became part of a group of five Scotsmen transported to Botany Bay for their republican politics, who were known as the Scottish martyrs. They later banded together with Irish political convicts in a failed rebellion attempt at Paramatta

Australia, 1999



near Sydney in 1804 called the Battle of Vinegar Hill.

Most of the Irish convicts were shipped out in the wake of the 1798 “Great Rebellion,” or during the virtual civil war that existed in Ireland between 1815 and 1840, as the Irish struggled against what was called the Ascendancy, their name for the brutal British domination over the country since the days of Oliver Cromwell in the 1600s. Records show that about 20% of these transported Irish convicts were convicted of purely political crimes, including riot and sedition, and even for simply attending a political meeting. Many were ardent republicans, and although not all the details of their activities are known, it is obvious that republicanism was a crucial intellectual force from the earliest days of Britain’s colonies in Australia.

In fact, as is clear in the work of the Rev. John Dunmore Lang, republicanism was the dominant intellectual force, at least of the broad majority of Australians, from the very earliest days through at least 1856, and even beyond. The British, and their Anglophile Australian historians, have gone to extraordinary lengths to try to establish that Australia was not founded upon political prisoners—i.e., those infected with the virus of the American Revolution—but that most of these shipped to Australia were mere common crooks, pickpockets, prostitutes, and the like.

‘Radical nationalism’

By 1841, in New South Wales, which included Victoria at that time, 39% of the population were either convicts or



Rev. John Dunmore Lang came close to pulling off a republican revolution against England.

emancipated convicts, 24% were colonial born, and 37% were free immigrants. As in America, these free settlers were obviously some of the boldest and most pioneering spirits from the old country, which added to the republican aspirations set loose on the continent. However, an aristocracy had also been transplanted to the new colonies, in the form of the wealthy squattocracy that controlled the land. Naturally, this led to conflicts between classes of people, and not surprisingly, the wealthy landowning class were the strongest supporters of British colonial policy. This set the stage for the political career of the Rev. John Dunmore Lang, in the first of two waves of what British historians call “radical nationalism,” i.e., republicanism, which swept the country in the nineteenth century.

What follows here, is a preliminary account of the true story of the fight for a republic in Australia, beginning with the 1850s. The story continues with the awakening of a republican labor movement in the 1880s and 1890s, and moves on to the struggle against the City of London’s “money power” in the 1930s. It includes the extraordinary efforts launched during World War II, to mobilize the industrial potential of the nation for self-defense.

Throughout the narration, which highlights the great individuals who fought for the republic, a leitmotif emerges, which is the intimate intellectual as well as organizational connection of the Australian republicans, with the American tradition, from the early years to the fight for a Hamiltonian national bank.

The historical research which is summarized here, was presented at a conference of the Citizens Electoral Council, the movement associated with Lyndon LaRouche in Australia, on Oct. 22-24. The research was done from original sources, by Robert Barwick, Allen Douglas, Kelvin Heslop, and Noelene Isherwood.

The 1840s and '50s

The great republicans’ fight against Britain

by Noelene Isherwood

The spirit of national freedom and independence is one of the most generous and disinterested, as well as one of the loftiest and most ennobling passions of human nature; and when it once animates a people, they become capable of deeds, and sacrifices, and exertions, of which they could never have supposed themselves capable before. This spirit, moreover, is highly contagious; and it has only to take possession of some mastermind to communicate itself to the whole mass of the people.

Such was the conviction of the Rev. Dr. John Dunmore Lang, arguably the greatest true patriotic Australian of the last 200 years. Yet, precious little has been written about this man. It is as if one were to write about American history, without mentioning Benjamin Franklin, or George Washington, or Abraham Lincoln. What is said about Lang, is that he was just an egotistical character, who liked to get into lawsuits with everyone because he was just plain ornery, and was just too cranky to get his good ideas implemented. The historians who say this, are lying, in order to cover up the reality: that John Dunmore Lang came very close to pulling off a republican revolution in Australia in the early 1850s.

John Dunmore Lang was born in western Scotland of a farming family, and was sent to the University of Glasgow at age 13. By 22, he had graduated with an excellent education in Classical Greek, Latin, geometry, music, and astronomy, among other subjects. His brother George had emigrated to Australia, and was an official in New South Wales, so John Dunmore decided to follow him, arriving here in May 1823. He was a strongly built young man of 24, over six feet tall, with sharp blue eyes behind steel-rimmed glasses, and ready to take up his ministry.

‘Freedom and Independence’

Lang’s dream, from shortly after his arrival, was to see the British colonies of the great and golden lands of Australia, welded into a vibrant and dynamic sovereign nation, which he believed was the lawful and Divinely ordained destiny for all such colonies. He articulated this vision in his internationally esteemed book, written in 1852, *Freedom and Independence for the Golden Lands of Australia*: