

# Chapter 6

## Hedley in Canberra

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### I

The story of Hedley's coming to Canberra begins, in a sense, one day in 1951, when, in the quadrangle at the University of Sydney, I was accosted by a young man in a well-fitting suit who said his name was Hedley Bull. He said that he and some of his friends (he was specialising in Philosophy and History) had decided to form a Sydney University Political Science Association, and would like me to be President. I explained that I was a Staff Tutor in the university's adult education department and so not a member of the intra-mural staff; but he pointed out that there was no Political Science department (the nearest was Public Administration in the Faculty of Economics) and, in effect, I would have to do.

I saw quite a bit of him in the subsequent year, before I left to study at the London School of Economics (LSE). It was clear that he was bright, charming and a genuine seeker after knowledge. His study under John Anderson had equipped him with a properly sceptical disposition, which was endorsed by his life-long immersion in History. I think you could call us friends.

After I got to London I lost track of him; he was in Oxford and busy there. It was not until 1955, when I left the LSE to go to Leicester University, that I took up with him again. Charles Manning, the Professor of International Relations at the LSE, had made me an Assistant Lecturer the previous year, largely because I had no previous training in the subject, and he wanted his staff to listen only to him. When I left he appointed Hedley in my place, for much the same reason. Otherwise Hedley would have gone off to Aberdeen University to teach Political Philosophy. The job at the LSE was the start of his rise.

### II

Now I can cut forward to 1961–62. This is when I was recruited by Sir John Crawford, recently appointed as Director of the Research School of Pacific Studies, to be Professor of International Relations. When appointed, he had required that International Relations should be returned to his Research School after a period in the Political Science department in the Research School of Social Sciences, following a chaotic and confused life subject to major disturbances.<sup>1</sup>

Crawford's account of the state of the department was not encouraging. Its few members had been given the choice to stay with Political Science or come to Pacific Studies, and the brightest and the one acquainted with current American Scholarship, Arthur Burns, had elected to stay. Only George Modelski had a training in international relations. There needed to be an expansion.

My thoughts soon turned to Hedley. While I was at Leicester, he had gone from strength to strength. Martin Wight and Alastair Buchan had taken him to their hearts, Manning approved, he had had an American debut, and he was clearly the man of the future in British International Relations. Crawford told me that there was a Professorial Fellowship available if I could find a suitable candidate. I told Hedley I would nominate him for it if he wanted to come back to Australia.

He said he wanted to do so eventually, but it was too soon. He had a lot to do in London. So the job went to Modelski, but my eyes were still on Hedley.

So they remained until I went on study leave in London in late 1965. Hedley had meanwhile been made head of the Arms Control and Disarmament Research Unit in the Foreign Office, while retaining his Readership at the LSE. We met for lunch one cold day, and I told him that I was prepared to arrange with Crawford for a second chair in the Department, with joint headship, provided it went to Hedley if his references were satisfactory. (Crawford told me afterwards that he had never seen such impressive references anywhere.) I told Hedley that I was pretty sure my demand would be accepted by The Australian National University, and that no future time would be so ripe. After consideration, he said yes, and on returning to Canberra I set the machinery in motion. It worked, and in June 1967 he and the family arrived.

### III

So far as I know, The Australian National University had no previous experience of a joint headship, and there were those of the god-professors who said it would not work. In fact it did.

The system was that we would each do two years as head, turn and turn about, subject to each other's study leave absences. In those days Research School professors had every fourth year away. When we were both in Canberra, we consulted on all major questions: only once in the ten years do I remember our disagreeing, and I soon knew that he was right and I was wrong. We had identical rooms across from the department's small office, and it was easy to be constantly in touch. As my colleagues and I soon knew, his judgment was very sound.

When he came, the department was in better shape than it had been five years before. We were still in an era of major Commonwealth government spending for The Australian National University, and our School had been among

the beneficiaries. Crawford had been generous, and I think he felt that the money had been mostly well spent. The staff was bigger and more professional. There was, however, an underlying feeling in the Research School that we were not doing enough research in the regional area, particularly in Southeast Asia.

From the start, my opinion about this had been that international relations as a feature of the world affairs was too great to be contained within a program which concentrated on a particular geographical area. Whatever, the superpowers did affect other states, including all those in our region, however that might be defined. We were then the only International Relations department in any Australian university. It was our duty, where possible, to make our students aware of the many conflicting currents of international politics, so that when they went out to teach in other universities, they would be better equipped than as regional specialists.

Hedley fully agreed. Indeed, he aided the process. He brought to the department a more international focus than it had previously been possible to give it. His own recognition in Britain and the United States ensured this, as did his own previous work. He made the bipolar aspect of the world situation, with all its implications, plainer to all.

It was emphasised by at least two things during his time in Canberra. One was his own study leaves—one at Columbia University in New York, one at Jawaharlal University in New Delhi, and one at All Souls, Oxford. His contacts on these occasions provided us with new staff in one case and a variety of Visiting Fellows as well. There were also some from his time in London, the most notable of whom was Adam Watson, a former diplomat who shared with him the editorship of later books.

However, in looking for Hedley's influence while in Canberra, one must take full note of his influence on students—all post-graduate and all on scholarships. Here he was as successful and as effective as he had been in London and was later to be in Oxford. He was prepared to take pains and time to provide the criticism and encouragement which any student needs who is proceeding towards a PhD. He took a personal interest in each one, as they would all now acknowledge. John Vincent and Des Ball gave him special pleasure.

His influence was not confined to those for whom he was supervisor. Each week the department had a seminar, which all staff and students were expected to attend. One of us would write a paper on his or her current concerns, and cyclostyled copies of this would be distributed to all in advance. At the seminar the author would speak to the substance of the paper, and then there would be general discussion.

The benefit was not only to students, but also to staff, whose papers would not only benefit from criticism, but also provide material for later publication,

not least, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*. Hedley acknowledged this in his own case, but also saw what advantage the rest of us gained from it. That gain, again and again, would come from his analysis of the paper, to which he had given close attention, and his suggestions for improvement. He was receptive to all criticism, and rarely showed that ferocity which some scholars, especially Americans, had experienced at conferences. He was a mentor of the highest order.

Hedley's sense of the importance of students was manifest in his advocacy of an MA course as a possible precursor of any embarkation on the PhD. Here his and my awareness of the American system came into play. He was worried to find that the students to whom we awarded scholarships at the end of their BA course had rarely, if ever, done any work in international relations. They had usually done history or economics. The few Americans whom we attracted were exceptions, but few meant few.

Hedley's wish was that we would institute an MA degree by coursework which would provide scholarships in advance of PhD work. I agreed. There were two obstacles. One was that the Research Schools had provided scholarships only for the PhD, the other was that the MA had been the domain of the Faculty of Arts and obtained only by a dissertation.

It took much time and trouble before we could get our MA established in 1975. We could not make it a mandatory requirement for the PhD, but it soon took off in its own right as The Australian National University's second Master's degree by coursework. Now the university is awash with them.

## IV

To turn to Hedley's Canberra activities beyond the simple confines of the department's teaching and supervision is to enter something of a contested sphere. As the only department of the subject in the university system, our staff were often called upon to help with other efforts at international understanding, to comment on current affairs, and occasionally to provide expertise, or at least suggestion, to government, though that did not always prove popular.

Two offshoots of the department in which Hedley was involved were the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre and the Third Monday Group. Once again, these were cases of Crawford's foresight and generosity in accepting advice. The first of them was modelled in some degree on the Institute of War and Peace Studies at Columbia University (headed by Professor William J.K. Fox, who, together with his wife Anne, was later a valued Visiting Fellow). The purpose of the Centre was to provide what Australian universities had not previously had—a place at which major questions of defence policy could be discussed from the standpoints of scholars rather than those of partisans, which in public

had normally been the case. It developed effectively with the leadership firstly of Tom Millar and then of Bob O'Neill, both of them members of the department.

This was certain to be something of interest to Hedley, given his activities in London and at the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS). It was very much to his credit that he attempted no take-over bid. We did have some problems involving which of the institutions—Centre and Department—might claim funds from the School's total, but these were easily resolved. The Centre went on to be a major factor in any debate on Australian defence policy, and on our place in the world. Hedley had been far-sighted in supporting it.

The Third Monday Group was the product of a period before my own arrival in Canberra, when a group of academics from The Australian National University (not from the department, but some in the Research School) had attacked the Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation (a 'paper tiger' now forgotten) and the award of an honorary degree to the King of Thailand. It seemed to me that this had created a situation in which public servants no longer talked to academics (if they had ever done so in any measure), contrary to what I had experienced in London and New York.

I constructed a dining club consisting of half academics and half senior public servants in those fields concerned with external relations—Defence, Foreign Affairs, Immigration, Trade and Treasury—and put the proposition to Crawford in the first instance, and then with his support to Arthur Tange. It worked. With these two major figures in Public Service eyes, it lasted for ten years, month by month, a talk from either side of the table—or, increasingly, from the person next to you—followed by a vigorous discussion. When a new Minister for Defence appeared, we asked him along too.

Hedley fitted in as by nature to this environment. He was an Australian academic, he had worked in the Foreign Office, he was fully aware of the importance of officials in formulating policy, and he proved to be an acceptable interlocutor to all those he met. Like our other departmental members of the Group, he found the senior officials easy to deal with, and perhaps more able than ignorant academics had previously thought. Hedley managed the Group when I was away, and I am sure he enjoyed it.

He came a bit closer to political publicity when in November 1972 he signed, along with Keith Hancock, Walter Crocker (who had been the first professor in the department), Manning Clark and others, a letter to the papers denouncing the McMahon Government's performance, especially in foreign policy, and advocating a vote for Labor—which won the subsequent election.

This was an unusual excursion into party politics for Hedley, who did not think of himself as a party man. It was motivated by the absurdities of McMahon,

especially, I think, by that nonsensical fellow's approach to China. Most of us were rather pleased.

He took a keen interest in the Australian Institute of International Affairs, being its Research Director from 1968 to 1973. He gave lectures at a number of other Australian universities, thus enlarging the department's reach, and spoke often at various international conferences and at universities overseas. He was, in fact, an academic celebrity; not so much in the glamour sense, but that of being recognised as a leader in thinking and writing about the subject.

His connection with the IISS remained close; he acted as Australian representative on its Council, and was later very much a factor in the appointment as its Director of Bob O'Neill, one of our own people.

It is difficult for me to recognise just what was his overall effect on the Australian academic and political system, because he meant so much to me personally. But it is clear that he was a looming presence, someone who elicited admiration, even envy at times, for the effortless way in which he went about his work, and the efficiency of all he did. I have mentioned elsewhere his methods with a manuscript. He did not type, but wrote in a small but highly legible hand right up to the left edge of the page. When asked to provide a margin for comments and corrections he would politely decline. What he wrote he stood by because he had worked it out fully in advance. This did not mean he was averse to criticism, only that this could wait until the paper or chapter was complete. It was always a masterful piece.

Yet he was really masterful in personal relations. This was a man happily playing pat-ball tennis with me on Saturday mornings, who sent his children postcards adorned with funny drawings when he was abroad, who came into my room one day with an atlas, saying he couldn't find Baratara. I set him right, but have only recently found that there is a Gulf of Baratara somewhere in the West Indies; it would have been a help to know this at the time.

He was thus a complete man: masterful when necessary, humane and even sentimental when out of the firing line. We owe him so much. The Australian National University is right to commemorate him with the opening of the Hedley Bull Centre.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> See S.G. Foster and Margaret M. Varghese, *The Making of the Australian National University 1946–1996*, Allen and Unwin 1996, pp. 108–109 and pp. 132–33 for a full treatment.