

CHAPTER 8

THE BRISBANE LINE CONTROVERSY

Near the end of March 1943 nineteen members of the UAP demanded Billy Hughes call a party meeting. Hughes had maintained his hold over the party membership by the expedient of refusing to call members together.^{1a} For months he had then been able to avoid any leadership challenge. Hughes at last conceded to party pressure, and on 25 March, faced a leadership 'spill', which he believed was inspired by Menzies. He retained the leadership by twenty-four votes to fifteen.^{1b} The failure to elect a younger and more aggressive leader - Menzies - resulted in early April in the formation by the dissenters of the National Service Group, which was a splinter organisation, not a separate party. Menzies, and Senators Leckie and Spicer from Victoria, Cameron, Duncan, Price, Stacey and Senators McLeary, McBride, the McLachlans, Uphill and Wilson from South Australia, Beck and Senator Sampson from Tasmania, Harrison from New South Wales and Senator Collett from Western Australia comprised the group. Spender stood aloof.^{1c} This disturbed Ward. As a potential leader of the UAP Menzies was likely to be more of an electoral threat to the ALP, than Hughes, well past his prime, and in the eyes of the public a spent political force. Still, he was content to wait for the appropriate moment to discredit his old foe, confident he had the ammunition in his Brisbane Line claims.

The Brisbane Line Controversy

Ward managed to verify that a plan existed which had intended to abandon

all of Australia north of a line north of Brisbane
and following a diagonal course to a point north
of Adelaide to be abandoned to the enemy,

- the Maryborough Plan. His most likely source of information was
Howe, Forde's adviser, ... On 2 May, speaking in the
Western Australian election campaign in Perth he told his audience that

1.^aSpender, *op.cit.*, pp.200-201;^bFitzhardinge, *The Little Digger*, Vol. II, p.661;^cHasluck, *The Government and the People, 1942-1945*, pp.357-358: The policy of the National Service Group was, in part, a protest at Labor's insistence on the primacy of the Pacific front. It advocated more co-operation with the Allies in the overall war effort, that is, the 'Beat Hitler First' policy, and a better appreciation of Britain's contribution.

this had been the defence plan for all of Australia until the Curtin Government came to power. Two days later, at another meeting in Perth he spoke for the first time of a 'Brisbane Line', taking up MacArthur's phrase. Specifically, he noted the consequences of such a strategy to Western Australia, pointing out it was intended to abandon the State without 'any adequate method of evacuation ... workers who were tied to their jobs would be left in W.A.'. The rich, he implied, would have received 'prior warning' and escaped.² Characteristically for him, he had placed the 'Brisbane Line' in the context of a class struggle, implying the working class were to be abandoned to the Japanese, while the ruling classes, because they were in positions of power which gave them access to special knowledge, would unhesitatingly take advantage of that knowledge. This was not an interpretation placed on the Brisbane Line allegations by any other member of the ALP. It was imbued with Ward's own hatred of those who epitomised the UAP, Menzies and his ilk. Yet it was representative of Labor's left-wing radicals.

Ward returned to the East, via Adelaide, the heartland of Menzies' National Service Group. The day before his arrival the South Australian Federal politicians linked with Menzies denied there had been any such plan as the 'Brisbane Line' when they were in office in 1941. They had left office before there was any immediate danger of a Japanese invasion of Australia. If Ward's 'Brisbane Line' had any basis of truth, they said, it referred to one of the plans placed before the Curtin Government by the High Command 'when that Government became alarmed and began shrieking for help'.³ The Opposition counter-argument, emerging clearly, was similar to that first proposed by Menzies and Hughes late the previous year. If there were plans they were the responsibility of the High Command, and could only have been proposed to Labor, since Labor was in power when the Pacific War began.

It may have been better for the Opposition had they remained silent. Ward used his stop-over in Adelaide to add detail to his charges. He

2. Ward, cited in MS 1538, Hughes Papers. *Brisbane Line File*. (This file is composed primarily of press cuttings and some typed material. The above is from a typed extract.)
3. Spratt, *op.cit.*, p.100; *SMH* 6.5.43; (Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1942-1945*, p.357, places this response in the context of the National Service Group.)

played down the class struggle argument enunciated in the West, stressing that lack of transport was the cause of the decision not to evacuate the West, a tactic aimed at the more conservative South Australian audience, and linked the Curtin Government to MacArthur's supposed change to an offensive after his arrival in March 1942. Menzies and Fadden intended

to spend millions of pounds on an airfield [at Tocumwal] to be the last line of defence for the Melbourne and Sydney industrial areas ... They were resigned to the possibility of the great bulk of Australia being left in the hands of the Japanese. ^{4a}

Curtin, too, had been campaigning in Western Australia for the State election. ^{4b} He and Ward may have met there. The Prime Minister, the only politician at this point to have linked the Tocumwal airfield with the Maryborough Plan, clearly the base of Ward's allegations, could have given Ward the added detail. Such collusion would only have encouraged him.

The renewed allegations captured the attention of the national press. ^{4c}

Through Percy Spender, formerly Minister for Army under Menzies and Fadden, the Opposition members of the Advisory War Council on 13 May, in Sydney, tried to curtail the controversy. Forewarned by Spender that Ward's Brisbane Line claims would be raised at the meeting, the Department of Defence Co-ordination provided Curtin with a summary of Chiefs of Staff appreciations relevant to home defence submitted to Cabinet and the Advisory War Council during February and March 1942. The summary made it clear that as a consequence of Cabinet decisions about General Sir Iven Mackay's 4 February memorandum, 'the plans and forces available for the defence of North Queensland' had been briefly discussed by the Advisory War Council on 18 February 1942. ^{5a} Spender reiterated the Opposition argument, now becoming a commonplace that any Brisbane-Line-type proposals would have had to been submitted to the Curtin Government as Australia was not at war with Japan while Menzies and Fadden had been in office. Curtin for his part told Opposition members Ward's allegations were a result of MacArthur's 18 March 1943 statement. ^{5b} Fadden, supported by the rest of his colleagues, made it

4.^aSee MS 1538. Hughes Papers. *Brisbane Line File*, *Adelaide Advertiser*, 6.5.43 for Ward's Adelaide allegations. NLA.^bFor Curtin's campaigning in South Australia see *Century* 7.5.43; ^cFor the press see *SMH* 11.5.43.

clear Ward's charges were viewed as 'extremely serious'. He demanded a public statement from Curtin repudiating Ward and giving 'the real facts of the matter'.^{5a}

The 'real facts of the matter', as the Opposition saw it, had nothing to do with the alleged 'Maryborough Plan'. Since the allegation was false, but believed by Curtin and Ward to be true, it is likely the Opposition were, at this stage, unaware of the basis of Ward's charges. As they saw it, a Brisbane-Line-type plan, the Mackay memorandum, had been submitted to the Labor War Cabinet, and rejected by the Cabinet before Opposition members of the Advisory War Council formally learnt of its existence. Similarly, along with the War Cabinet~~the~~ Advisory War Council, had rejected the Chiefs of Staff 27 February appreciation which stressed the primacy of the strategy of concentration of troops in vital areas on the south-east coast, and around Fremantle. They had insisted, contrary to the military's intentions, that Darwin and Port Moresby were defended, and had been sufficiently vague in their instructions about the defence of Queensland north of Brisbane, as to have been ambiguous as to whether North Queensland should be defended.⁶ This political caution now appeared as if it might reap dividends in that, superficially, at least, the Opposition was exonerated from all blame connected with military strategies that failed to defend the northern parts of the continent.

Fadden wrote privately to Curtin the next day, 14 May, citing all of Ward's Brisbane Line statements to date reported in the press since October 1942. For good measure he added further unreported statements Ward had made on the issue. He repeated his demand that Curtin publicly deny Ward's allegations.^{7a} The same day, the hospital ship *Centaur* was sunk 40 miles north of Brisbane, off the Queensland coast. Eighteen medical officers and eleven nurses lost their lives. Shock and grief swept the nation.^{7b} The day after, Ward, possibly aware

5^a AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. Note. A.J.W. for Sec. Defence Co-ordination to P.M. 13.5.43; ^bAA ACT CRS 2682. Advisory War Council Minute 1198. 13.5.43. ^cAA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. Fadden to Curtin, 14.5.43 for Fadden's views.

6. For a fuller treatment of this situation as it occurred in March 1942, see Chapter 5. The relevant sources are cited in n. that chapter.

7^a AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. Fadden to Curtin 14.5.43;

^bLack, *op.cit.*, for the sinking of the *Centaur* etc.; ^cFor Ward's allegation see MS 1538. Hughes Papers. *Brisbane Line File*. Document dated 15.3.43.

of the Fadden protest note, cheekily capitalised on the successful Japanese submarine attack, remarking that

when the Fadden Government was in power Australia had hardly the means at her disposal to ward off a native canoe.^{7c}

The Brisbane Line issue was one on which all factions of the Opposition were agreed action needed to be taken. When the rump UAP-Country Party Opposition Executive met on 18 May, Fadden was pressed by enraged members to send an urgent telegram to Curtin repeating demands for a denial of the allegations.^{7a} Fadden went outside the Executive to consult Spender on the wording of the telegram.^{8b} Essentially, the telegram was substantially similar to Fadden's protest note of the thirteenth. But there was an added emphatic complaint against Ward's continued statements and his use of the 'Brisbane Line' label. If Curtin did not repudiate the Ward statements, Fadden threatened, he would publish the text of his May 14 letter.

Frank Forde, Labor's Minister for Army, in response to Fadden's 14 May letter, had been gathering 'the real facts of the matter'. At the Full Cabinet meeting held after the Opposition Executive met, and after Curtin had received Fadden's threatening telegram, Forde presented documents pertaining to Mackay's February 4, 1942 memorandum and to the Menzies/Fadden War Cabinet agenda of 10 June 1941 and 3 September 1941. Of particular interest to the Curtin Cabinet was the advice given to Menzies that 'plans existed in each Service for coping with attacks on these shores', and the Fadden Cabinet's direction on 3 September 'that joint operational plans for the defence of Australian territory should be completed as soon as possible'. Significant too, was the warning from the Chiefs of Staff embodied in the 3 September submission to Cabinet that to attempt to meet the enemy at all points of landing would result in ruinous dispersion of forces. The various commands were to be defended with the resources provided them by Army headquarters. Contrasting this, was Labor's response to suggestions in the Mackay memorandum and Lieutenant-General Sturdee's proposal of February 1942, that parts of the North of Australia, might have to be left undefended. Both generals, Forde had recommended, should be instructed to hold the whole of the populated areas of Australia and prevent the establishment

SAAA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. Telegram, Fadden to Curtin, 18.5.45; for Spender's role, see Spender, *op.cit.*, p.206.

of a Japanese foothold. Discussion centred around 'the personal and political viewpoints'. Perhaps Curtin was concerned at the effect the 'Brisbane Line' allegations might have on the continuation of a working relationship with Opposition members of the Advisory War Council. Nevertheless, it was obvious, provided Labor could blame the UAP-Country Party coalition for the introduction of a Brisbane-Line-type plan, it could not but be to the Government's advantage. There was hope of such evidence in the individual Service plans against invasion mentioned in the 10 June 1941 Cabinet submission, which Forde had not yet received. Forde suggested Curtin not reply to Fadden until he had sighted these plans. The content of that reply would be left to his discretion.⁹

Curtin wrote to Fadden the next day, 19 May,

I have been delayed by matters of great urgency in dealing with your telegram of yesterday ... I shall address a communication to you probably tomorrow.¹⁰

Fadden was impatient for an end to the 'Brisbane Line' and the political threat it held. Though he delayed in publishing the text of his 14 May letter, he released the telegram of the previous day to the press. In an accompanying statement he recalled Ward's opposition to defence measures proposed by non-Labor Governments and to conscription. It was only 'just and reasonable' Curtin should deny Ward's 'irresponsible statements'.^{11a} Privately, he was more forthright. He told some of his associates in Sydney 'If Curtin does not pull Ward off I will spill the whole of the beans'.^{11b} The 'whole of the beans' was obviously the fact that there had been bipartisan support for the implementation of the strategy of the defence of vital areas, despite its political unpalatability. Implicit in the adoption of that strategy from December 1941 to March-April 1942, was the fact that the north of Australia would not be adequately protected.

Forde, meanwhile, spoke to his Ministerial adviser, Howe, who told him that as of 26 August 1941 and 10 June 1941, no joint plans had

9. For the various details associated with the Full Cabinet meeting of 18.6.43 see the following: AAA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 1300. *Brisbane Line Strategy*. Summaries of War Cabinet Agenda 286/1941 and 96/1942, 19.5.43; AA ACT CRS A 2700. xm. Item Vol.C6 Cabinet Extract on the Brisbane Line. No.525. 18.5.43. MS 2396/13/123e. Ward Papers. Handwritten Note. Cabinet Meeting 18.5.43. Personal File.
10. MS 2396/13/123e. Ward Papers. Handwritten Note, Cabinet Meeting, 18.5.43. Personal File, for Curtin's letter to Fadden.
- 11 ^aFor Fadden's press statement see *SMH*, 19.5.43; ^bfor his private threat, MS 2396/13/123a. Ward Papers. Handwritten note dated 19.5.43. NLA.

been prepared for the defence of Australia. This could be used as an indictment of the Menzies Government's unpreparedness for war. He suggested Forde and Curtin obtain copies of all appreciations for the defence of Australia submitted before October 1941, including

one by General Sturdee which envisaged a primary defence line from about Maryborough in the East to about Geraldton in the West, and a final line of resistance from about Maryborough to the head of either Spencer's Gulf or St Vincent's Gulf.

Howe assured Forde that the ministerial directive of 3 September 1941 seeking the completion of joint operational plans for the defence of Australia had been replied to, giving plans similar to those proposed to the Curtin Government in the Mackay memorandum.¹²

Forde summoned Sinclair, the Secretary for the Army, primarily to question him on the Sturdee 'Brisbane Line' memorandum. 'Sturdee's appreciation of the 'Brisbane Line' had been lost ...' The Secretary 'did not know what had become of it'. Sinclair, in the light of future events, may have misunderstood Forde's meaning, and could conceivably have been referring to Sturdee's concurrence on 6 February to the Mackay memorandum. In the midst of this discussion, Ward dropped in on Forde, wanting to see all the documents relating to the 'Brisbane Line'. Forde was amenable to the request, provided Curtin gave his permission. He told Ward that Opposition members of the Advisory War Council knew of the defence plans proposed to the Curtin Government and approved them. He also told Ward that Sturdee's appreciation had been lost.¹³ From this casual remark a political storm would soon arise.

Forde went to see Curtin, armed with an annotated version of the summary of appreciations which he had presented to Cabinet the previous day. He told Curtin, as Howe had advised him, that plans proposed to Fadden were similar to those proposed to the Curtin Government in the Mackay memorandum, and that he should see these plans before replying to Fadden's letter. Such proposals, obviously would protect the Government from any repercussions associated with the submission of the Mackay memorandum. As further proof of Opposition guilt, Forde noted

12. AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 1300. *Brisbane Line Strategy*. Howe to Forde 19.5.43.

13. MS 2396/13/123a. Ward Papers. Handwritten Note 19.5.43. NLA.

that under Fadden only one division had been provided for Queensland defence out of the resources placed at the disposal of the various GOC commands.^{14a} Shedden, who was present at the meeting, took Forde's annotated notes and gave them to his assistant Secretary, Vince Quealy, to examine in relation to other documents. After the meeting with Forde and Curtin Shedden and Quealy agreed that the only basis Ward could have had for his Brisbane Line allegations was Mackay's 4 February memorandum.^{14b}

By 5.50 p.m. Ward had still not received the promised papers from Forde, nor any indication Curtin was agreeable to his seeing them. Forde's publicity officer was ignorant of the arrangements to give Ward access to the documents, but promised to ask Forde to send the relevant papers on to Ward's Sydney office.¹⁵ Curtin and Forde had closed their doors to him.

The next day, Shedden, already having made up his mind about the advice he would tend the Prime Minister, decided, for safety's sake, to examine relevant documents pertaining to the 19 June 1941 War Cabinet memorandum and the alleged Sturdee memorandum on the 'Maryborough Plan'. Forde, for his part was conducting his own investigation on the existence of the Maryborough Plan within the Army. No trace of any such plan could be found. Nor was Howe able to produce documentary evidence to support his allegation. Yet he continued to assure Forde that Sturdee's plans 'provided for a limited defence similar to that proposed by Mackay in the 4 February memorandum'. He was careful, too, to stress that Spender had in fact rejected the 'Maryborough Plan' when it was proposed to him.¹⁶

The public service mandarins, for their part, decided
the first submission for the concentration of
military effort along a line drawn from Melbourne
to Brisbane is that made by Lieut.-General Mackay
on 4th February, 1942.

They categorically rejected Howe's claim of a Maryborough Plan because

14^a AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 1300. *Brisbane Line Strategy*.

Summaries of War Cabinet Agenda 285/1941 and 96/1942, 19.5.43;

^b AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Shedden to Quealy. Minute 20.5.43.

15. MS 2396/13/123a. Ward Papers. Handwritten Note. 19.5.43. NLA.

16. The details of Forde's investigations, with both Northcott and Howe are to be found in AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. Teleprinter message. Quealy to Shedden 22.5.43.

the relevant document could not be traced, and in any case, Spender had rejected it. The 10 June 1941 War Cabinet memorandum was not a 'conception of the total position' as required in the idea of a 'Brisbane Line' of defence. The directive that resulted from that Cabinet meeting had no bearing on a 'Brisbane Line' nor on a defeatist outlook or the abandonment of territory. Behind this advice was Shedden's intent that Labor would be saddled, with the Mackay memorandum as the 'Brisbane Line'. Shedden's political bias ensured that Menzies and Menzies' men would be blameless; more important, personal interest demanded his own part in devising a 'Brisbane Line' in February 1936 remain concealed.^{17a} Privately he was deeply angry that information on the so-called 'Brisbane Line' had come to public light and he ascribed the circumstance to an 'unprincipled cell' within the Department of the Army^{17b} - the target of his anger was Howe, on whom Shedden shortly would exact revenge. Lines drawn from Maryborough to Adelaide were uncomfortably close to lines of defence 'on a parallel just north of Brisbane', as recommended by Shedden while Secretary of the Defence Committee seven years previously.

Even before the investigation into the documents unearthed by Forde were complete, so sure was Shedden of the outcome that he had drafted a reply for Curtin that day. On the twenty-first he showed the draft to MacArthur in Brisbane. MacArthur thought the Opposition would let the matter drop. The Australian defence position as he had found it on his arrival in Australia was not arguable. It had been governed by entirely different strategical concepts. Judging by an appreciation he had seen shortly after his arrival, he believed the Australian plan had been defeatist both in outlook and preparation. Given his tacit approval of the vital area strategy, and his role in approving the denial of resources policy, the General was beginning to believe his own propaganda.

Shedden was defensive, pointing out the local Commanders had not had the resources to dispose for the entire defence of the Commonwealth at that date. This, MacArthur conceded, nevertheless, he thought the commanders had been extremely tardy in forming a new outlook on a

17a See *ibid.* for Shedden's actions regarding the assessment of the 10 June 1941 memorandum, the Maryborough Plan etc.;^b for Shedden's personal opinion that the Brisbane Line had come to light because of the existence of an 'unprincipled cell' in the Dept. of Army see: AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 770. Shedden Memoirs. Chapter 34. The 'Brisbane Line' Controversy, p.7.

desperate situation. He was especially critical of Royle, Burnett and Sturdee, the Chiefs of the Staff at the time. On and on he and Shedden bickered, Shedden concerned to cover himself. He insisted to the General the Curtin Government had not been without misgivings about the situation. Curtin had approved Shedden's opinion the Pacific War was a new war which required 'an entire review of our position and the extent and direction of our efforts'. He took the credit for recommending Blamey's recall from the Middle East as Commander-in-Chief of the AMF. All this was very wise, MacArthur conceded, but the final word on the Brisbane Line issue, so far as he was concerned, was his Brisbane Line statement of 18 March 1943.¹⁸

Jack Lang kept the controversy boiling in the pages of the *Century*. Expelled earlier in the year from the ALP for his refusal to accept conscription as ALP policy, and for subsequent diatribes against Curtin, he gleefully seized the opportunity to indulge his hate yet again. He observed

Every time Ward mentions [the Brisbane Line] the UAP gets hopping mad. It is particularly upset because Curtin has remained silent,

and asked how the Labor representatives on the Advisory War Council reacted when they first heard of the plan's existence and what happened to the military 'brass-hats' who had been responsible for the defeatist strategy. Perhaps not entirely by coincidence, General Sir Iven Mackay, author of the 4 February 1942 memorandum once more took up his post as GOC First Army, having completed his first tour of duty as GOC New Guinea.^{19a} Within a week, he was to become a central figure in the controversy - the military 'brass-hat' the politicians were seeking.

MacArthur's hope that the Brisbane Line would fade away had little chance of realization. On 24 May Shedden put before Curtin the advice that no Maryborough Plan could be found and that the 10 June 1941 Cabinet memorandum and subsequent Joint Planning Committee directive drawn up for guidance of subordinate commanders in preparing combined plans 'was extraneous to the Brisbane Line question'. Curtin agreed,

18. For the Shedden-MacArthur discussions on the Brisbane Line in the latter part of May, 1943 see AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 2. *Statements by the Minister for Labour and National Service. Mr Ward attack on Defence Policy of Previous Governments*. Notes of Discussions between MacArthur and Shedden, Brisbane 21-31 May 1943.

19. ^aFor Lang's contribution see *Century*, 21.5.43. ^bFor Mackay's pending return - it took him close to a week to get back to the mainland from New Guinea, see Chapman, *op.cit.*, p.285.

accepting that the only plan approximating a Line was that embodied in the Mackay memorandum.²⁰ The Labor Government was in a very difficult situation politically. No longer did the Brisbane Line bear the mark of Menzies and Fadden. Shedden had shown it was a plan submitted to the Labor Government.

Curtin now wrote the final draft of his reply to Fadden. It read:

With further reference to your telegram of 18 May ... the facts are that Sir Iven Mackay was appointed Commander in Chief of the Home Forces by the Menzies Government.

On Japan coming into the war, the Commander-in-Chief Home Forces, submitted to the Minister for the Army proposals relating to the defence of the vital parts of Australia. This involved holding what is known as 'The Brisbane Line'.

This Government rejected the submission and took steps to defend the whole of the continent. Included in these steps were the recall of Sir Thomas Blamey from abroad to take the post of Commander-in-Chief in Australia, the recall of the AIF Divisions abroad, the appointment of General MacArthur as Commander-in-Chief of the South West Pacific Area and representations for the despatch of naval, land and air forces to the Southwest Pacific Area together with aircraft and other supplies for the equipment and expansion of the Australian Forces.²¹

Curtin had a very selective memory and a good imagination. We have seen in a previous chapter that Curtin's Cabinet, with Curtin ill, had rejected the Mackay memorandum and instructed that the whole of Australia was to be defended. Yet the Army had been permitted to plan the defence of Australia on the basis of the scheme Mackay had proposed, up until late March. The steps taken to defend the whole of the continent which Curtin enumerated were taken after the memorandum was no longer considered operational by the High Command. Even so, plans to hold the enemy at Brisbane remained a contingency even after Blamey's appointment as Commander-in-Chief, AMF. Curtin was on very shaky ground with the assertions he made in the letter. Much of it was a fabrication, but not one that could be easily exposed, so cleverly was it combined with actual events.

20. For Shedden's advice to Curtin re Maryborough Plan, 10 June 1941 Cabinet memo, etc., see AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. Teleprinter message. Quealy to Shedden, 22.5.43.

21. For Curtin's 24 May letter to Fadden see MS 1633. Earle Page Papers. Quoted in press statement by Fadden 27.5.43. NLA.

Wanting as long as possible to delay the inevitable, Curtin mailed the letter to Fadden's Sydney office, well aware Fadden was in Brisbane.^{22a} Fadden's impatience for a reply to his protest prompted the Opposition Leader to release the text of his 14 May letter to the press, giving reporters the substance of the protest Opposition members had made in the Advisory War Council on 13 May. Himself confronted by the press about the reasons for delay in replying to Fadden, Curtin said blandly that a letter he had written to Fadden was in transmission.^{22b}

The same Wednesday, 24 May, Ward, responding to Fadden's demands for repudiation, cockily told the press 'If the nation had known the facts of the 'Brisbane Line' when it was adopted' - the facts which Fadden was demanding - 'the morale of the people would have been shattered'.^{23a} The Ward statement, well covered in the papers the following day, evoked yet another urgent telegram from Fadden on 26 May, again protesting against Curtin's failure to respond to Opposition demands that he repudiate Ward's allegations, and complaining emphatically at Ward's antics, which he believed Curtin was condoning. Curtin telegraphed Fadden that he had forwarded his reply to Fadden's Sydney office, whence it would be forwarded to Brisbane.^{23b}

Ironically, at the same time that Ward, and, by his silence, Curtin, were making capital out of the Brisbane Line charges Curtin was reaffirming to all State Premiers, in accordance with a decision of the Defence Committee earlier in the month, that plans for the denial of resources to the enemy had reached a sufficiently advanced stage to meet 'existing circumstances', and were to be carried no further for the present anywhere south of the Tropic of Capricorn. They were to be 'preserved and revised from time to time as required', should they need to be put into operation. Demands of manpower on 'tasks of more immediate priority' made the halt in planning for a denial policy desirable.²⁴

Fadden, meanwhile, had published his 26 May telegram. Reporters once more sought comment from Curtin. The matter was closed, Curtin

22.4 For the way Curtin manipulated the mails in sending the reply to Fadden see AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. Curtin to Fadden, 26.5.43.^b For Fadden's release of 14 May letter to the press and Curtin's response see *SMH*, 25.5.43.

23.a For Ward's statement see MS 4875. Spender Papers. Box 8. Miscellaneous Papers and Documents. Note dated 24.5.43, NLA.^b For Fadden's 26.5.43 telegram see AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. Fadden to Curtin 26.5.43; also Curtin's reply, AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. Curtin to Fadden 26.5.43.

24. For denial of resources policy operational under Labor at the time of the Brisbane Line controversy see AWM 54 243/6/123. *Denial of Resources* ... SM 1213. Lt. Col. Bamford for CGS to all Comds. except NT and NG. Forces, 17.5.43; and AWM 54 243/6/125. *Denial of Resources* ... Circular Letter to State Premiers from Prime Minister. 26.3.43.

told them, with the despatch of his letter to Fadden, and Fadden could decide whether to publish it or not.^{25a} Publish it Fadden did, on 28 May, with the vociferous objection that Curtin had avoided repudiating Ward's 'Brisbane Line' charges as requested by the Opposition Executive. He had made an attempt, 'unworthy of a Prime Minister' to give the public the impression that because the Menzies Government was responsible for the appointment of General Mackay as GOC Home Forces, it was somehow responsible for Mackay's 'Brisbane Line' plan. The first that Opposition members knew of the Mackay plan had been when it was mentioned at an Advisory War Council meeting in February 1942, four months after Labor came into power. Both Government and Opposition members of the Advisory War Council, he claimed, had rejected the memorandum - in fact, they had but glanced at it cursorily; no Labor member of the Advisory War Council had supported Ward's statement. Fadden ended his rider with a warning that the Opposition would take appropriate steps at the appropriate time to deal with the matter.^{25b}

But the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* declined to assist the conservative cause. Editorializing on the Fadden response, it alleged Fadden had blamed General Sir Iven Mackay for the Brisbane Line strategy and placed the responsibility for its existence on his shoulders.^{26a} Henceforth, the 'Maryborough Plan' would exist only in the corridors of Parliament House, and the Mackay memorandum, falsely, became the Brisbane Line. Curtin immediately leapt to Mackay's defence. He would refuse to allow the general to be made a scapegoat for the Brisbane Line controversy. But this defence of Mackay was tantamount to a confession that the whole of Australia would not be defended, and the Mackay memorandum was operable. It admitted that

With the forces at his disposal and the absence of aerodromes, roads and communication in the northern parts of Australia [Mackay] had the soundest of military reasons for avoiding the wide dispersal of an inadequate force.

Otherwise, Curtin agreed with Ward that Australia's defence unpreparedness was the fault of the Menzies Government. All those defences which had been provided in the North were the work of the Curtin Government.^{26b}

25 ^a *SMH* 27.5.43 for Curtin's attitude to Fadden's response to his letter; ^b for Opposition responses to the Curtin letter see MS 1633 Earle Page Papers. Press statement by Fadden 27.5.43. NLA.

Fadden's reaction to the *Telegraph* report was an angry one. He challenged the newspaper to find any words in his statement where he had pinned the responsibility for the Brisbane Line on Mackay. That had been Curtin's doing, not his. Mackay had submitted his proposals to Forde, Labor's Army Minister, not Spender, his UAP predecessor. The *Telegraph's* rival, the *Daily Mirror*, published Fadden's retort with glee. Equally angry with Curtin, Fadden wrote to him demanding he produce at the Advisory War Council meeting scheduled for 3 June all relevant documents in his possession pertaining to the Brisbane Line.^{26c} The political war had begun in earnest.

Attack and Counterattack

That evening on Melbourne commercial radio, Robert Menzies broke his long silence. After detailing Ward's allegations, he dismissed them as 'utterly untrue and unscrupulous', asserting that 'the policy of the Menzies and Fadden Governments was to defend Australia, should the need arise, to the last man and the last acre'. Once more, the argument that Ward was threatening national security was advanced. Menzies delved into the question of how Ward had obtained his information. Speculating that Ward might have obtained his information from members of the War Cabinet or Labor members of the Advisory War Council - the breaking of 'a solemn oath of secrecy' by Ward's informant - he seemed to imply Opposition knowledge that Ward had been given information by Forde, or, if through access to documents, Howe. It was a guess, but possibly close enough to the truth, if properly manipulated by the Opposition, to have serious repercussions both for Forde, and the Labor Government. He attacked Curtin for his continued silence. Henceforth, the press, too, pursued the Menzies view that Curtin was in some way implicated in Ward's lack of public responsibility.

Turning to the plans for the defence of Australia, he continued the Opposition theme that the responsibility for the 'precise disposition of local forces' had been left by his War Cabinet to 'the trained and experienced Service Advisors of the Service Departments'.

26. ^a*Daily Mirror*, 28.5.45 for details of the *Telegraph* accusation of Fadden and Fadden's denial; ^bfor Curtin's defence of Mackay see AA ACT CRS A 52711. *Brisbane Line 1943*. Statement by Prime Minister, 28.5.43; ^cfor Fadden's demand Curtin produce the Brisbane Line documents see AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 598. Fadden to Curtin, 28.5.43.

In explanation of the Mackay memorandum, and the Opposition role in its consideration he went on

certain views were entertained by the then High Command as to the feasibility of reinforcing certain of the remoter areas which might be the subject of attack

but no decision was made 'in favour of abandonment of any area'. Yet he did speculate on the existence of a 'scorched earth policy' for which 'even now' there were 'contingent plans', but asserted it would be criminal and reckless to use these as a basis of a charge of 'defeatism' and 'despair'.²⁷

Over the following days both the *Truth* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* supported Menzies' arguments, branding Ward's allegations as lies, blaming Curtin for bringing Mackay's name into the controversy, and emphasising that the Mackay memorandum had been submitted to the Curtin Government, and rejected by it, not to the Menzies-Fadden Governments. The *Herald* in particular was eager to stress that by revealing the existence of the Mackay memorandum, Curtin saw himself as rejecting the Ward claim. It made a tawdry attempt to play up factional discontent within the ALP by linking the Brisbane Line to rumours about Ward receiving support from the Lang faction, because of his efforts to have Lang once more re-admitted to the party at the forthcoming Federal Labor conference.²⁸

Curtin, undoubtedly mindful of the dangers for Labor inherent in the linking of the Mackay memorandum with his Government, was annoyed his letter to Fadden was not the last word on the matter. With the 'Maryborough Plan' in mind, when journalists broached him about Menzies' comments he snapped 'They will be bloody unhappy if I start talking'.²⁹

On the night of 1 June on radio station 2UE in Sydney Ward reacted to Menzies' Melbourne broadcast, setting about making the 'Brisbane Line' part of the Menzies myth. In a long speech, he linked Menzies' connection with the Brisbane Line with the former Attorney-General's enforced sale of scrap iron to the Japanese against the wishes of the Waterside Workers' Federation in 1938, out of which Menzies had earned the label 'Pig-Iron'

27. For Menzies 28.5.43 radio broadcast see AA ACT CRS ! 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 598. 'Broadcast by the Rt. Hon. R.G. Menzies, Friday 28th May 1943, on the Brisbane Line'. The speech was widely reported in the press.
28. For press support of Menzies' arguments see *Truth*, 30.5.43 and *SMH*, 31.5.43, which contained an article by Ross Gollan 'Why Mr Ward's Fable Failed. ALP Conference issue'. The article is especially significant for its reference to Ward's alignment with Lang.
29. For Curtin's response to Menzies' speech a la the Maryborough Plan, see MS 4675. F.T. Smith Papers. No.67. 1.6.43. ANL.

Bob'. He hammered, too, Menzies' public admiration of Nazi Germany in early 1939, and his apparent appeasement of Japan through the closure of the Burma Road. Lack of defence preparation in the air-force, he asserted, led to the defeat of Australian airmen in Rabaul in January 1942.

In the Full Cabinet meeting of 18 May, Ward had learnt about the 10 June 1941 War Cabinet memorandum. Menzies had been told by the Chiefs of Staff, Ward thundered, of the probable entry of Japan into the war that day, and this made nonsense of his claim that Australia was not 'actually or directly threatened by war with Japan at the time of the collapse of the Fadden Government'. Menzies, he insinuated, had purposely left Australia utterly defenceless against the threat of invasion by Japan, even when made aware of the danger.

Fadden's record, according to Ward, was little better. He had been attacked by members of his own party for failing to properly equip the Sixth Division. When the Curtin Government acceded to office it discovered there was no modern fighter aircraft in Australia, a shortage of rifles, light automatic guns and machine guns, and a lack of anti-tank ammunition and field artillery ammunition. The fact of defence unpreparedness under Menzies and Fadden was held up again, inextricably linked to Ward's Brisbane Line allegations.

Yet the Ward speech had a more serious intent. He was clearly worried by Menzies' charge that he was acting against the interests of national security for purposes of political gain. The dilemma was solved by appealing to MacArthur. Since MacArthur had, in the first instance, revealed the existence of the Brisbane Line, he too, was justified in emphasising not only its existence, but

the guilt of the previous Governments in bringing the country to such a state of crippled feebleness that a plan - under which large portions of the country were to be overrun by the Japanese - was even given serious consideration, let alone being offered as a strategic policy for the defence of our nation.

In contrast Menzies, he implied, who had failed to serve in World War I, was not at all fit to make military assessments. Yet Ward was exceedingly careful, because of the debate arising over the role of General Sir Iven Mackay, to exonerate military leaders from any blame in the conception of the 'Brisbane Line'. Interestingly, he made no effort to defend Curtin against Menzies' accusations of procrastination. He did not

'withdraw one word' of what he said about the Brisbane Line.^{30 b}

Ward's speech must have been perturbing to members of the War Cabinet. That very day, they had on their agenda an item discussing the responsibility of denial of resources policy as it pertained to the destruction of ammunition factories - Labor itself was examining the detail of a policy not at all different from the allegations of a policy of abandonment of parts of the country to an invader, Ward was laying against Menzies.³¹

General Mackay was himself quite disturbed by his recommendations being made a matter of public controversy. He wrote to Vasey

his letter ... of 4 Feb. 1942, has been pulled about by one Eddie Ward and is now used as a political weapon by the Government against the Opposition.

He asked Vasey, who had helped him prepare the 4 February memorandum, 'Did you ever hear of the Brisbane Line till lately?' The general was soon to find he had reason to be confused, and perhaps apprehensive.³²

At the afternoon meeting of the Advisory War Council in Sydney on 3 June, the Opposition was presented with documents pertaining to Curtin's letter, as they had requested. Apart from a brief consideration of evacuation plans approved by both the War Cabinet and Advisory War Council on 4 February 1942, the meeting saw little more than a repetition of previous complaints, made rather heatedly this time, over the Brisbane Line issue. Ward's 1 June speech, with its allegations that the Menzies-Fadden Government was responsible for Australia's defence unpreparedness, Fadden made clear, were particularly rankling as it could not be refuted without endangering national security. Curtin was castigated for failing to repudiate Ward, and criticisms of his 24 May letter to Fadden were repeated. Curtin admitted the only plan which could be labelled the Brisbane Line was the Mackay memorandum, which his Government had rejected. Ward, he admitted, had not seen this document and nor had War Cabinet members or Labor members of the Advisory War Council given him any information.

30 a For Ward's knowledge of the content of 10.6.41 Cabinet memo see MS 2396/13/123e. Ward Papers. Handwritten note Cabinet meeting 18.5.45 marked *Personal File*. NLA. b For the Ward broadcast see *The Century* 4.6.43. The transcript of the speech contained in the Ward papers in the National Library is incomplete, with some pages missing.

31. AA ACT CRS A 2671. Department of Defence. War Cabinet Secretariat. War Cabinet File. *Denial of Resources to the Enemy 1942* item War Cabinet Agendum No.182/1942. Ministry of Munitions to Sec. Dept. of Defence. Defence File No.14/308/73. 1.6.43.

32. MS 3782. Vasey Papers. Box 3. Folder 4. Mackay to Vasey 3.6.43. NLA.

he thought he had made his position clear in his letter of 24th May to Mr Fadden but he would look at the letter again.

Arrangements would be made for Fadden, Earle Page and Spender to look more closely at the documents provided at a later date.³³

For the moment, Curtin had staved off Opposition threats to withdraw from the Council.

For Menzies, the weakest point in the Government stand on the Brisbane Line was the fact that it had been the recipient of the Mackay memorandum. From Shedden, after the meeting, he queried the dates of Mackay's appointment as GOC Home Forces. Shedden telegraphed him the information on the fourth.^{34a} That day Lang published Ward's Brisbane Line speech of 1 June in full in the *Century*. A separate article, criticising Curtin for recommending Shedden for a knighthood in the birthday honours list, might have been cause for alarm for Shedden. Second-guessing, as was his wont, Lang pointed out, that in being identified with the framing of Australia's defence policy since 1934, Shedden was 'the one man with a continuity of knowledge of everything leading up to the Brisbane Line'. Despite this, and Cabinet's rejection of the strategy, Shedden had got his knighthood.^{34b} Lang had come close to stumbling on the Defence Sub-committee recommendation of February 1936!

Menzies, too, put his view on the Brisbane Line, that night, in reply to Ward, over 2UE. He expounded on the theme that Curtin was to blame for the continuation of the controversy, first proposed on 28 May:

it [was] quite absurd to believe that any Cabinet Minister can make public statements on political matters except on behalf of his Prime Minister and Government.

Curtin, he suggested, not only was attempting to blame his predecessors for the 'Brisbane Line' because they had been responsible for the appointment of Sir Iven Mackay as GOC Home Forces, but was either

33. AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. Advisory War Council Minute 1202. Brisbane Line of Defence 3.6.43; Inspection of AWC Minute by Fadden, Spender and Page. 7.6.43. The documents presented to Opposition members of the Advisory War Council were as follows: War Cabinet agenda for 17.2.42, wherein Forde had presented to Cabinet the Mackay memorandum, 4.2.42, and associated documents; War Cabinet request of 18.2.42 for COS to submit a new appreciation; Documents from the Advisory War Council Meeting of 18.2.42, where reference was made to plans and forces available for the defence of North Queensland; and a note was made for the matter to be dealt with in the requested review appreciation; COS appreciation of 27.2.42; AWC 5.3.42 discussion of the review; and 18.3.42 Advisory War Council request for further consideration of the 27.2.42 appreciation; and Advisory War Council Minute Books from 24.10.40 to 13.5.43. (See AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. Shedden to Curtin 3.6.43.)

34. ^aMS 4936. Menzies Papers. Series 14. Box 410. Folder 14. Telegram. Shedden to Menzies, 4.6.43, NLA; ^b*Century*, 4.6.43, pp.4 and 7.

attempting to make Mackay the scapegoat for the Brisbane Line, or was suggesting Mackay was in ~~some~~^{Some} way disloyal to the Labor Government by giving effect to the political or military views of the Menzies Government. After himself cleverly keeping alive the allegations that Mackay was to blame for the Brisbane Line, an aspect even Ward had been at pains to defuse in his own intemperate speech, Menzies judged the letter to Fadden was 'clearly designed to make more political capital out of the incident which Mr Ward had created'.

The Opposition, Menzies argued, could not refute Ward's claims of equipment deficiencies under Fadden, without endangering national security. The practice of quoting equipment deficiencies was a 'mean and contemptible' electioneering tactic devised by the Curtin Government against the conservative parties. Both Curtin and Ward, through allegations of a 'Brisbane Line', sought to appeal to 'left wing audiences', but would not appeal to 'the Australian people, who are fundamentally honest and fair-dealing'. The Menzies and Fadden Governments had made major contributions to Australia's defence, establishing munitions organisations, the AIF, aircraft manufacture, the restoration of compulsory military training and the militia, and the Empire Air Training Scheme. Labor had been either initially violently opposed to some of these measures, or otherwise indifferent to them.³⁵

Before his own party, at the N.S.W. ALP Annual Conference, held on 5-6 June in Sydney, Curtin took a much less conciliatory stand than he had in the Advisory War Council. 'Before the war with Japan' he told fellow-party members,

the primary consideration of former Government had been co operation overseas with the result that the home defence plan had been defeatist in outlook and preparation.³⁶^a

Ward, for his part elaborated on his previous claims, saying,

All the previous Govt. [sic] had was the defeatist plan to retire from position after position, abandoning the country, and, worse, the Australian people, to the Japanese.

Unable to counter successfully the Brisbane Line charges, the Opposition felt frustrated. Spender later wrote *apropos* of Ward's latest claim

35. For Menzies 4.6.43 radio broadcast see MS 1538. Hughes Papers. Brisbane Line File. *Truth*, 6.6.43. NLA.

Not a word of denial from Curtin - what was he doing - [?] ³⁶ b

Curtin was protecting himself under pressure from Ward, who had his own ambitions for the deputy-leadership as a step to the leadership itself. At the conference he may have pressed Lang's cause for re-admission to the ALP. Party politics left him no room for the rebuttal demanded by Fadden and his Opposition colleagues.

Their only salvation would be through the documents Curtin had tabled in Council several days earlier. These, when inspected by Fadden, Spender and Page on 7 June

did not reveal the slightest ground for any suggestion that the Brisbane Line concept had at any time come before the Menzies-Fadden Cabinet, or [Spender] as Minister for the Army.

They wanted to discredit Labor's war record. It occurred to them this might be possible when, looking through Advisory War Council records, they noticed there was an apparent discrepancy in the decision to evacuate Singapore, noted rather than endorsed by the Council. This did not accord with Fadden's recollection of events. He went so far as to query Quealy, the assistant secretary to Cabinet, on the accuracy of note-taking for Advisory War Council minutes. They asked to see records on events allied with the Far Eastern position, Far Eastern defence, the evacuation of Singapore, the return of the AIF from the Middle East, including the diversion of an ill-equipped 7th Division to Java, Curtin's association with the Japanese consul, his comments in August 1941 on the trustworthiness of the Japanese, and his interest in the Greek and Mediterranean campaigns. They were clutching at straws.³⁷ Quealy was to pass this request on to Curtin, with interesting consequences. Fadden made it public.

Curtin, meanwhile, had recognised the necessity to distance Labor from the political dangers inherent in charges that his Government had held a defensive policy, such as that typified by the Mackay memorandum. Discussions he and Shedden held with MacArthur on 7 June gave him the necessary means of doing this. Australia, MacArthur told him, was no

36 a For Curtin at 5/6 June N.S.W. ALP Conference see *Tribune*, 10.6.43, p.1; b for Ward, and Spender's reaction see MS 4875. Spender Papers. Box 8. Miscellaneous documents. NLA.

37. For details of Fadden and others inspection of AWC documents see AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. 'Inspection of Advisory War Council Documents by Mr Fadden, Mr Spender and Sir Earle Page. Sydney. 7th June, 1943'.

longer 'under the very great danger of invasion' it had been when he first arrived in the country. Though there might be marauding raids which could cause considerable damage and loss to the mainland, United States Naval supremacy in the Pacific, the flow of reinforcements to the SWPA and South Pacific area and the successful campaigns in New Guinea and the Solomons had made Australia safe. Once he had driven the Japanese from Truk and Rabaul, Australia's strategical position was assured and the ultimate offensive to decisively defeat Japan and bring her to unconditional surrender could be achieved.³⁸ Curtin thought the information might be useful.

On 8 June, at Prahran Town Hall, Eddie Ward returned to the attack. He asserted

the people should know who was responsible for Australia being defenceless in October 1941. Had it not been for the Labour Government Australia would have had no fighter aircraft, our cities would have been ravaged and the AIF would still have been abroad.

The allegations produced an uproar, led by a local Councillor, R.B.Hamilton, who charged Ward with cowardice and tried to turn the debate, unsuccessfully, to industrial disputes on the coalfields.^{39a}

Curtin was not impressed. He still saw his letter to Fadden on 24 May, as the last word in the controversy and was feeling bitter over Fadden and Ward pursuing it. The Opposition had fired its first shaft, criticising Curtin over his recall of the AIF in February 1942. Wearily, Curtin defended that action, saying he had 'the highest military reasons and advice' for it.

He did not mind being made the scapegoat for the country as he had been for the labour [sic] party, a fact which some people, even his own supporters did not recognise.

Journalists pressed him on whether he would provide Fadden and Spender with the further documents they sought. Probably with the 'Maryborough Plan' in mind, he said, 'if he opened his mouth somebody would get hurt'. Fadden's review of Labor's strategic decisions, he thought unfair, since the Opposition knew the reasons why the strategies had been adopted, and had themselves supported them.^{39b}

38. AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 2. Notes of Discussion with MacArthur 7.6.42.

39.a For Ward's Prahran Statement, see *SMH*, 9.6.43 and *Melbourne Age* 9.6.43; b For Curtin's reaction to Ward, and to Fadden's machinations see MS 4675. F.T.Smith Papers. No.68.1 9.6.42 [sic] NLA. (Smith's dating here is obviously incorrect in the doc. context.)

John McEwen, the former coalition Minister for Air, prepared an abrasive statement on Curtin's role in the Brisbane Line controversy, but did not publish it. Once more Curtin prepared a statement admitting the Mackay memorandum had been submitted to his Government, and asserting that his 24 May letter to Fadden 'had cleared up the matter'. This was not released.^{40^a} He was getting edgier. With a certain amount of glee, Fadden informed the press there was disruption in the Labor party over the Brisbane Line.^{40^b}

Using the information given him by MacArthur on 7 June, Curtin told the Australian people

The holding war imposed on us in circumstances of great difficulty has been an obligation under global strategy which has been discharged.

Though Australia would not be free from marauding raids, the country could be held 'as a base from which to launch both limited and major offensives against Japan'.⁴¹ This announcement of the commencement of an offensive war ensured the Curtin Government would suffer minimal effects from any repercussions linked with the strategy of the defensive war which had had to be fought in early 1942.

Fadden and Hughes immediately recognised the implications of an Australian offensive for their planned moves to take Curtin to task for Labor's defence record. Curtin, they said, had the propensity to warn the nation continually about the threat of invasion. His change of opinion was most convenient now that an election loomed.^{42^a} Curtin struck back angrily at a secret press conference on 14 June, explaining that the change of strategy had come about because the naval position in the Pacific was good, and because the recent Washington conference had decided to increase the ground crew and air strength in Australia.^{42^b} These planes, 475 by the end of 1944, were, in fact, of little military value. Alan Watt, the first secretary of the Australian Legation in Washington had astutely remarked they 'might' be useful for the forthcoming elections.^{42^c}

40. For the unpublished McEwen and Curtin statements see AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. Press Statement PM. 10.6.43. (The existence of the McEwen Statement is implied from the text of Curtin's proposed statement. Neither statement can be found in any of the major newspapers.)^b For Fadden on disunity in ALP over the Brisbane Line see MS 3668. Eric Tonkin Papers. Folder F5, SMH 10.6.43. NLA.

41. See Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1942-1945*, p.365 for Curtin's statement on taking the offensive.

42.^a For Opposition reaction to Curtin's claim that Australia was on the offensive see SMH, 11.6.43;^b and Curtin's response MS 4675. F.T. Smith Papers. No.69. 14.6.43, NLA;^c For Watt's view that calls for air reinforcements from US was an election stunt see Bell, *op.cit.*, pp.84-85. Admiral Leahy of the US Navy was, incidentally, of the same opinion.

When the Advisory War Council met on 16 June, Page and Spender did not attend. Fadden, possibly conceding Curtin had outwitted him, made no request for the additional documents the Opposition had asked for the previous week.^{43^a} For two days, the major onslaught on Curtin came from the Conservative press, rather than the politicians. The *Bulletin* unearthed the Moore River Line, revealed by H.V. Johnson in Parliament in July 1942, to throw doubt on Labor's claim that they had taken steps to defend the whole of Australia. The *Daily Telegraph* speculated the Brisbane Line controversy presaged an early election, attacked Curtin personally for lowering his high standard of public conduct through his involvement in the Brisbane Line, attacked Labor's pre-war defence record generally and emphasised that Labor's war achievements were built on the foundations laid by the Menzies Government.^{43^b}

Menzies, on 18 June, fed the early election speculation when he told an audience at Wahroonga he would be extremely surprised if there were not an election in six to eight weeks, forced by a bill for a non-contributory system of social service, which the Opposition controlled Senate would reject. One of the election issues would be the comparative war records of the Curtin versus Menzies-Fadden Governments; that is, the Brisbane Line controversy, and Labor's claim that they alone were responsible for the nation's safety and prosperity. These latter were 'doubly false' catch-cries.^{44^a} Curtin did not rise to the bait, but said he saw no reason why Parliament should not run its full term.^{44^b}

At an Opposition Joint Executive meeting on 20 June, unattended by most of Menzies' National Service Group, it was decided to force Labor to a motion of no-confidence, in the hope that they could win the vote of the Independents, Coles and Wilson.

In preparation, on 21 June, before the House of Representatives met, the UAP Speaker, Nairn, and Country Party Chairman of Committees, Prowse, resigned their positions so that Labor had lost its majority on the floor of the House. The UAP scheduled their main speakers for the

43.^aFor Fadden's failure to call for documents on Labor's war and pre-war record see AA ACT CRS A 5952. Shedden Papers. Box 568. Note. 16.6.43 by Shedden;^b for conservative press attacks on Curtin see *Daily Telegraph*, 17.6.43, and *Bulletin*, 16.6.43.
44.^aFor Menzies' election speculation see *Melbourne Herald*, 18.6.43;
^bCurtin's response, *Argus*, 19.6.43.

X proposed ^{No}-confidence debate on the morrow - Fadden, Hughes, Menzies and Spender. Hughes had a bad cold, and was not feeling up to the task. After some discussion Spender was given priority of place to the old man, possibly a reflection of Menzies' tightening grip as a contender for the leadership of the UAP.⁴⁵

The climax of the Brisbane Line controversy was approaching.

* * * * *

There was a pattern behind the event that contributed to the course of the Brisbane Line controversy during May to mid-June 1943.

Curtin, Forde and Ward when they spoke of 'defeatist' plans for home defence, or the Brisbane Line, were talking about the 'Maryborough Plan'. Ward alone made the connection between scorched earth policy and failure to evacuate civilians from threatened areas. All believed Howe's claim of a Maryborough Plan. This claim Ward connected with General MacArthur's Brisbane Line allegation of 18 March, 1943. From May 1943 onwards, when Ward spoke of a 'Brisbane Line' he meant the 'Maryborough Plan'.

At this stage the Opposition did not know of the Howe allegations. Opposition reaction to Ward's claims were especially outraged because they believed Ward was lying, and because they were convinced Curtin knew Ward was lying, but refused to stop him from alleging the existence of a Brisbane Line. They identified the Brisbane Line with Mackay's 4 February 1942 memorandum, because they reasoned that a plan of the type Ward alleged could only have been put before a Labor Government after the outbreak of war with Japan. This conclusion appeared accurate after Shedden had produced the Mackay memorandum to Curtin. None of the politicians of either party were aware that Shedden may have wished to conceal the existence of an earlier plan to defend Australia along a parallel north of Brisbane in which he and Sturdee had a part.

Apparently, the Howe 'Maryborough Plan' document was missing. Ward discovered this from Forde, who may have been angling for future left

45. For Opposition moves to force a no Confidence Debate see Spender, *op.cit.*, p.208; *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 175, p.7.

wing support should the Labor leadership become available in the near future. Ward would make good use of that snippet about a missing document. Yet, hours later, Curtin and Forde decided discretion was the better part of wisdom in dealing with their ebullient colleague. Possibly this was after Forde informed Curtin of what he had told Ward, but this cannot be proven. Nevertheless, as we shall see, much of Curtin's later behaviour over the Royal Commission was consistent with such knowledge. Curtin's principal dilemma, in May, 1943 was to prevent the Labor Party from being blamed for the Mackay memorandum. The Opposition had made demand after public demand that Curtin repudiate Ward's Brisbane Line charges. Ignorant of the 'Maryborough Plan', a creation of Howe's faulty memory, they were certain of their innocence.

There was no repudiation. There was an admission that General Sir Iven Mackay, a Menzies appointee, had submitted a Brisbane Line plan to the Curtin Government, and the Curtin Government had rejected it. What followed was politicking at its lowest. From Menzies, there were the appropriate counter-claims, that Ward was breaching national security, and there was opprobrium for Curtin because of his failure to discipline Ward. But worse, there was a hint that military planning was the province of Government military advisers. This insinuation came swiftly after press speculation that both Government and Opposition were attempting to make General Sir Iven Mackay the scapegoat for the Brisbane Line.

Only Ward was careful to avoid that inference. He was more concerned with making a personal attack on his great enemy, Menzies. Central to this attack was his charge that the Menzies and Fadden Governments, despite warnings from the Chiefs of Staff, had done nothing to defend Australia against a potential Japanese invasion. This was an accusation that could not be refuted without the Opposition breaching national security.

Inspired by MacArthur, Curtin told the nation Australia had gone on the offensive. The burden of the likely criticism of Labor's defensive policies of early 1942 had been nullified. The Opposition was unable to prove Curtin false. Curtin had brilliantly outmanoeuvred them. Faced with a Prime Minister who was rapidly assuming the trappings

of a national hero, and a Labor party well on the way to convincing the electorate that they, and they alone, were the saviours of Australia, the Opposition leaders determined to force Curtin to an early election, in the hope that the Opposition might win the seat of power.

CHAPTER 9

THE MISSING DOCUMENT

Press comment on the Brisbane Line controversy was hostile to Ward. As the controversy reached its peak before the recall of Parliament it was also becoming hostile to Curtin and his Government. This gave the Opposition hope that Ward's extravagances could lead to Labor's destruction.

The 'No-confidence' debate

Percy Spender was one of those who hoped the Brisbane Line controversy was the key to Labor's downfall. After Artie Fadden had moved the motion of want of confidence in the Curtin Government at 3.35 p.m. on the afternoon of 22 June, he sat impatiently on the front bench,^{1a} as his leader berated Labor for its domestic record, then went on to attack Eddie Ward's performance as Minister for Labour and National Service. This peroration was probably a tactical mistake, Spender thought, for it lessened the impact of what Fadden had to say about the Brisbane Line.^{1b}

Fadden, rising, told the Parliament the Brisbane Line was 'the Brisbane Lie'. His arguments were a repetition of Opposition rhetoric outside the Parliament in the preceding weeks. All Ward's allegations from October 1942 to June 1943 were part of a 'campaign of deliberate misrepresentation'. Curtin had evaded all demands that he repudiate Ward's charges, as his letter to Fadden of 24 May had shown. Fadden read the letter into the record, attacked Curtin for bringing General Mackay's name into the controversy, imputing a more sinister motive - possibly persecution of Mackay because he was a non-Labor supporter - and asserted Mackay's memorandum was proof that the 'Brisbane Line'

-
1. The 'no confidence' debate of 22-24 June 1943 was based on a variety of grounds, enumerated in the previous chapter. But during the debate it became clear that one of the main issues within it was 'the Brisbane Line'. The account which follows concentrates exclusively on those parts of the debate related to the Brisbane Line.
^a Spender, *op.cit.*, pp.208-209; ^b *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 175, 22.6.43, pp.10-16 for Fadden's attack on Ward's administration of his portfolio.

was first submitted to the Curtin Government some four months after it came to power. Deliberately untrue, interjected Ward, firm in his belief the Brisbane Line was the Maryborough Plan. But Fadden went on, using the argument first put by Menzies on 28 May, that the ultimate responsibility for the 'Brisbane Line' controversy was Curtin's, through his failure to discipline Ward. He demanded a denial from Curtin of Ward's claims.²

No denial was forthcoming. Much of Curtin's reply was an attack on the Fadden-Menzies Government for leaving Australia in a state of defence unpreparedness. That defence unpreparedness had forced Labor to adopt the strategy 'for the defence of the vital areas extending from Brisbane to Melbourne', urged on them by the Chiefs of Staff. The Curtin Government had rejected demands for the evacuation of three states (unspecified, but probably Queensland, Western Australia, and possibly Tasmania). A major cause of the danger to Australia came from the Menzies Government's lack of action in 1941, even though they realised the Japanese 'had commenced his movement' southward. Menzies had been particularly derelict in lacking foresight about the dominance of air power in modern warfare, and thus was partly to blame for the situation forced on the Government in 1942. This, one of the main points of Ward's accusations in early June, seemed to indicate that Curtin was supporting Ward in part of the Brisbane Line allegations. Equally infuriating to the Opposition was Curtin's use of information gleaned from Spender in the March 1941 secret session of Parliament, 'that one Japanese division could have walked through Australia'. Such a breach of national security the Opposition could not answer unless they themselves revealed information useful to the enemy. While Curtin had not actually referred to the Brisbane Line he had paraded allegations of defence unpreparedness and lack of attention to the development of an Australian air force that were associated with the Ward accusations. In a very clever speech, he remained untarnished by the 'Line', but at the same time implied his belief in it.

By the time Curtin's speech was drawing to a close, he faced a very incensed Opposition. Fadden, and E.S. Spooner, briefly Minister

2. *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 175, 22.6.43, pp.20-24.

for War Organisation and Industry under the UCP-UAP Government, challenged Curtin to answer Ward's accusations. Curtin, steadfast in his position that the 24 May letter was his last word on the 'Brisbane Line', said he admitted that the Mackay memorandum was submitted to his Government. But, to Fadden's chagrin, he did not dispose of the inference that the plan had initially been prepared for the Menzies Government.³

Curtin, as he had intended, had put the Opposition on the defensive. Menzies, their second speaker, ~~stressed~~ *stressed that the* Brisbane Line allegations were intended 'to cast a mark' on his Government's reputation for looking to Australian defence preparedness.

Those allegations he defined as a specific charge that a military plan to evacuate the North was submitted to the Menzies and Fadden Governments, and that plan was either dictated or approved by those Governments. No plan, before February 1942, had been found in Army or Advisory War Council records. He challenged Labor, and Curtin in particular, to deny this.

Concluding, Menzies once more attacked Curtin for supporting Ward's 'lie' by his silence. This 'miasma of miserable allegations' could only be resolved 'by the clear draught of a general election'.⁴ More so than Fadden, he had made the 'Brisbane Line' controversy a major part of the no-confidence debate. His imputations against Ward had left Ward smouldering. Frank Forde's contribution to the debate was uninspiring.⁵

Spender next spoke for the Opposition. He attacked Curtin for breaching national security by his revelation of the contents of Spender's speech in the March 1941 secret session, denied the existence of any plan on the part of the Opposition while in Government to abandon any part of Australia, upbraided Curtin for making Mackay a scapegoat in the Brisbane Line affair, twice demanded a denial from Curtin of Ward's charges and noted that because of the creation of the Advisory War Council blame for any decisions on defence strategy should be shared by all parties.

3. *Ibid.*, pp.25-33. For the Opposition view, where Curtin's use of information from the secret session of Parliament is described as a breaking of 'a clear obligation of secrecy' see Spender, *op.cit.*, p.209.

4. *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 175, 22.6.43, pp.36-40.

5. *Ibid.*, pp.44-45.

In a desperate ploy to turn the 'Brisbane Line' allegations against the Labor party he emphasised, as reported in the *Bulletin* on 16 June, that a Perth Line had existed in the West under Labor.^{6a} The attempt failed, when later in the night, H.V. Johnson, the Labor member for Kalgoorlie, who had first revealed the existence of the Moore River Line, 65 miles north of Perth to Parliament in July 1942, explained away the strategy as one forced on the Army by the fact that the Menzies-Fadden Governments had neglected the defence of Western Australia, in particular, the Northwest.^{6b}

Shortly after Eddie Ward rose, Curtin left the chamber, in keeping with the arrangement made with Ward in March 1943, to be absent when Ward made statements on the 'Brisbane Line'. Ward was going to give the Parliament the 'facts' about the 'Brisbane Line'. The facts according to Ward were:

it was the present Opposition parties, then in power, which were responsible for the state of affairs in this country which made it impossible to have any other plan than a defeatist plan. ... the plan was actually concocted while honorable members opposite occupied the treasury bench.

He cleverly confused Menzies' and Fadden's denials of the existence of a Brisbane Line to mean they had denied the existence of the Mackay memorandum, whose existence they had known of, and, as he had done in the past months, attacked the Menzies-Fadden Government's record of defence preparedness. Once more he cited the 10 June 1941 Cabinet meeting as evidence Menzies had known of the threat from Japan, but had done nothing to meet it. He alleged that at that meeting

the War Cabinet directed the Chiefs of Staff to evolve a plan for home defence. General Sir Iven Mackay ... was then in the Middle East. He did not return to Australia until August 1941. Lieutenant-General Sturdee was Chief of General Staff in Australia at the time. We want to know what plan was submitted to the Government of the day following that submission to War Cabinet. Is it not a fact there was an earlier plan than the proposal of 4th February, 1942. I am not contradicting that the available records disclose that the first plan was dated 4th February, 1942, *but I am most reliably informed that one important report is now missing from the official files.*

6. *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 175, 22.6.43, pp.51-55 for Spender. For Johnson's defusing of the Moore River Line allegation, *ibid.*, pp.87-88.

He further alleged the missing report had been submitted to Spender while he was Minister for Defence, an accusation which Spender immediately denied.

Ward then claimed the construction of the Tocumwal aerodrome on the Victorian border was part of the Brisbane Line plan, a plan put to the Menzies War Cabinet by Lieutenant-General Sturdee, not 'to completely evacuate areas in Western Australia and North Queensland', impracticable because of lack of transport, but to abandon them. He went on to support his latest charge by referring to an article in the prestigious American newspaper, the *Christian Science Monitor*, in which no less an authority than General MacArthur had described Australia's defence position as 'a forlorn hope'.⁷

That night, writing of Ward, Spender scribbled in his diary, 'He will stop at nothing. This will lead him into trouble.' Spender later wrote, 'The bone was pointed at me.'⁸

Ward had accepted the Howe/Forde allegation of a missing document completely, but with incomplete knowledge. His error, apart from belief in the Maryborough Plan itself, which even Curtin and Forde shared, was to attempt to connect the 10 June 1941 Cabinet instruction for a co-ordinated defence plan and the construction of the Tocumwal aerodrome with the Maryborough Plan. The Menzies Cabinet instruction bore no relation to either.

Charles Abbott, the Country Party for New England, who, as Chairman of the Administrative Planning Committee from 5 January, 1943, was responsible for fulfilling the requirements of US troops in Australia, ~~though~~, was quick to explain, when he rose, that Tocumwal had nothing to do with the Brisbane Line. It was initially part of a logistical plan, for an offensive air base near Townsville, but had been transferred to the south, for better protection of American Flying Fortresses, because of Townsville's vulnerability to air attack, despite the protest of the American generals.^{9a}

Some time that night, the Joint Opposition Executive met to work

7. *Ibid.*, pp.56-64 for Ward's speech, esp. pp.57-58 for major Brisbane Line allegations.

8. Spender, *op.cit.*, pp.210-211. Spender's diary is cited here.

out a plan of action. Their discussion was informal, but they were firm in their resolve not to sit on the Advisory War Council until Curtin had made an unequivocal retraction of the statement that there was a document missing from official files. Primarily, though, their attention was on seizing Government. They decided to use their Senate majority to partially block supply by reducing it from a three month to a two month period, thus forcing Curtin to an election.^{9b}

The Missing Document

Into the night the debate dragged on. The House emptied. Shortly after 6 a.m. Francis Baker, the Labor member for Maranoa in Queensland, ~~was~~^{was} ~~inspired~~ by Ward's new claim, produced for publication in *Hansard*

a map with a hachured area showing the section of Australia, the defence of which was contemplated by the adherents of the Brisbane Line. That line runs from Maryborough, slightly north of Brisbane, to Port Augusta in South Australia. [cf. Figure 13.]

He told the near-empty Parliament he had

distributed amongst some of my electors out in the west copies of [the] map ... I asked them to look at it, and said that the sergeant of police and his men, who were present could arrest me if I said anything wrong.

He intended

to distribute 10,000 copies of [the] map to my constituents, and I shall tell them what terrible consequences would have attended the invasion of Australia by Japan because of the application of the 'Brisbane Line' policy. 10^a

Baker's extravagant claims were to have repercussions, but, in the early hours of 23 June, they passed without a ripple. At 7.30 the House recessed, to resume at 10.30 a.m. Some conservative members were defensive on the Brisbane Line and charges against them about defence unpreparedness; some Labor members made capital out of the issue, while others ignored it completely. John McEwen, the Country Party former Minister for Air, was particularly angered. Arthur Coles, the Independent member of Henty, in Victoria, significantly in the light of his later

9.^a *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 175, 22.6.43, pp.73-74 for Abbott on Tocumwal. ^bSMH 25.6.43 for Opposition Executive meeting.

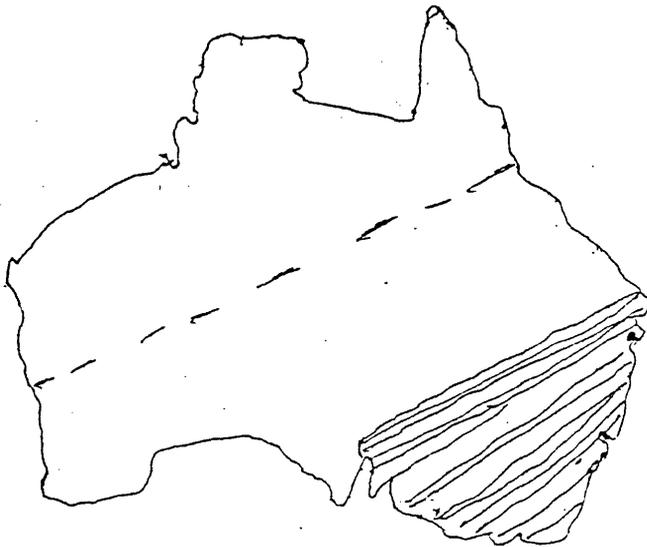


Figure ¹² ~~11~~. The Baker map, produced in Parliament
c. 6 a.m. 23.6.45.

actions, did not speak on the issue.^{10 a}

Outside the House, Menzies threatened to withdraw from the Advisory War Council.^{11 a} Fadden said that unless Curtin complied with his request for an unequivocal denial of Ward's allegations, including Ward's latest claim of a document missing from official files, future Opposition co-operation with the Advisory War Council was in doubt. Should Curtin fail to comply with his request, he personally favoured 'a full investigation by an independent judicial authority'.^{11 b} This was the first hint of the possibility the Opposition might demand a Royal Commission on Ward's Brisbane Line statements.

After Fadden had spoken to the press, he went to see the Prime Minister. He told Curtin the Opposition took a very serious view of Ward's latest statement, but made neither threats nor promises about Opposition participation in the Advisory War Council. Curtin told Fadden he regarded himself as the custodian of Commonwealth property, and was at once 'instituting enquiries as to whether any document was missing'. Fadden's complaint convinced him the Opposition intended to make an issue out of Ward's charge. This lack of action suggests he was well aware he would have to do very little to blame the 'Brisbane Line' on Menzies, probably to Labor's electoral advantage. Self-interest, however, demanded, once Fadden had complained, that he at least give the appearance of co-operation, if only to make a nonsense of Opposition and press charges that he was himself behind Ward's virulent campaign.

Before lunch Ward came to Curtin's office to discuss departmental business. Curtin gave him no indication that he was already aware from Quealy's advice that documents pertaining to the Maryborough Plan could not be traced. Probably he did not trust Ward sufficiently not to make use of the information publicly, and hoped the friction between the Opposition and the Government could be smoothed over. Rather, he told Ward that the Prime Minister was duty-bound, as custodian of the official

10. ^a*Ibid.*, pp.117-118 for Baker's speech. For the map see AA ACT CRS A 1608. item A52711, *Brisbane Line 1943*; ^bfor responses of Brisbane Line in morning session of Parliament on 23.6.43 see *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 175, 22.6.43, pp.142-152 for McEwen, pp.138-142 for Coles.

11. ^a*SMH* 24.6.43; ^bMS 2396/13/78. Ward Papers. Typed note. Undated, NLA. The account in *SMH* 24.6.43 gives an indication of the dating and timing of Fadden's visit to Curtin, mentioned below.

files, to find any documents reported missing. Ward refused to disclose the name of his informant, but denied it was a particular public servant.¹²

After his initial interview with Ward Curtin was questioned at a press conference on the statements by Fadden and Menzies. Annoyed, he stressed he had provided all the documents on the Brisbane Line to Fadden, and denied he knew anything of a missing document. He had not been in the House when Ward made his allegation. Later that day he promised an investigation into the Ward allegation, finally succumbing to the realisation that controversy over Ward's statement was unavoidable.¹³

At 5 p.m. Ward was summoned to Curtin's office, specifically to discuss his allegation of a missing document. Pressed once more to disclose the identity of his informant, he refused. But Ward agreed the question should be further discussed with Forde, as Minister for the Army. When Forde arrived Curtin told him, 'Eddie will not tell me who his informant is, and therefore I am at a loss to know what to do'. Obliquely, if he knew Forde was Ward's informant, he may have been telling Forde he was not going to name him. Ward insisted he would assist Curtin in every other possible way in an endeavour to clear up the question of a missing document. He volunteered that he had been advised that Lieutenant-General Sturdee, while Chief of General Staff, had submitted a memorandum or appreciation on a plan to meet a Japanese invasion to Spender when Spender was Minister for the Army. Spender had opposed the plan, which had 'included certain proposals in keeping with the Brisbane Line strategy'.

Both Curtin and Forde were well aware that Ward was referring to the 'Maryborough Plan', which Forde confirmed. For Ward's benefit, since Curtin had already seen the relevant documents, he repeated that Army Headquarters had been instructed to search for that particular plan, and had advised that 'no reports were missing from official files'. Ward knew Forde was lying to Curtin, for he had been told on 19 May by

-
12. AA ACT CRS A 1608. item A52711. Statement by the Prime Minister, Australian Defences. Brisbane Line. Press Statement 748, Canberra, 23.6.43; Ward's account of interview with Curtin 23.6.43 cited in Spratt, *op.cit.*, p.108.
 13. AA ACT CRS A 1608, item A52711. Press Statements by Prime Minister, Nos. 745 and 747, 23.6.43.

Forde and Howe that a document was missing. Forde said that when he took over from Spender as Minister for the Army, Spender had a committee consisting of Major Howe, Lieutenant Colonel Jennings and Dr Stanner. 'He understood this Committee had discussed Lt. Gen. Sturdee's appreciation'.

In fact, we now know that what was coming out was a confused recollection by Howe of events in April 1941, when Spender, to his alarm, had discovered Australia did not have the capacity to defend herself from invasion. Howe was referring to a conversation that never took place, but which Labor had accepted as truth.¹⁴

With Ward's agreement, Curtin asked Shedden to bring the relevant documents to his office. Queried whether he knew of any missing documents, Shedden explained that documents connected with the Brisbane Line had been twice examined, once in May 1943, and earlier in February 1943, when Ward had raised the matter with Curtin. The latter claim may have been more a sop to Ward, than accurate, for there is no trace of this February enquiry in the documents. Shedden 'was confident that the papers submitted to the Advisory War Council were full and complete

14. Ward's account of interview with Curtin 23.6.43 cited in Spratt, *op.cit.*, p.109. I have accepted Ward's account *in toto*. It is supported in part by a statement by Stanner, in 1968, to Dedman when Dedman was researching an article on the Brisbane Line, that 'he had no recollection of ever having discussed the Brisbane Line with General Sturdee or any-one else'. Shedden was not present at this part of the meeting. In an *aide-memoire* he noted that, in regard to Howe's allegation of a missing document, that the Chief of General Staff, Northcott, had told Forde, not that the document was missing, but that he was unaware of the existence of any report, and had been unable to discover it despite a careful search. In fact, as Curtin well knew, the Army headquarters had advised 'no such report can be traced'. A slightly different interpretation than that found in Quealy's memorandum to Shedden, which Curtin had sighted! Since Shedden, as we have seen, had reasons for covering up any allusions to a Brisbane Line type plan, perhaps his *aide-memoire* was composed more with an eye to future historians, than to an accurate account of what happened. Thus, I reject that part of Shedden's account of the meeting between Forde, Ward and Curtin at which he was not present, preferring Ward, and the interpretation that insofar as there was any discussion in 1941 under Spender of defence plans it had to do with defence deficiencies and manpower shortages. See Chapter 3 for this. (For Stanner's statement to Dedman, see Dedman, 'The Brisbane Line', pp.145-146; For Shedden's *Aide-memoire* AA ACT CRS A 5954. Box 568. Australian Defence Plan, *Aide-memoire* 23.6.43; This differs specifically from the content of the teleprinter message M 2114, Quealy to Shedden, 22.5.43 in *ibid.*)

and that none were missing'. Insofar as this did not refer to the Maryborough Plan, which had never come before the Advisory War Council, Shedden was correct. But Ward apparently disagreed. Shedden patiently explained that it had been decided the 10 June 1941 Cabinet agendum relating to the joint service plans was 'extraneous' to the Brisbane Line - (a proper decision, since the Brisbane Line they sought was the Maryborough Plan). Nevertheless, following Ward's linking of the missing document with that Cabinet agendum, the alert Shedden had ordered 'the papers to be examined as to whether any were missing'. He would provide Curtin with a report on that on the morrow.

Ward and Forde repeated what they had already told Curtin about the missing document. Forde asked Shedden whether the Defence Department would be aware of such a document and was told 'It would be essential for it to be submitted to the Minister for Defence and approved by War Cabinet before it could be claimed to be the policy of the time'. Shedden knew of no such submission. Again Shedden's reply was evasive. Ward was not impressed by Shedden's argument, which provided a way out of the Brisbane Line charge for the Menzies and Fadden Government. He repeated that he had been advised that a Brisbane Line type plan had been submitted to Spender by Sturdee, but that Spender had rejected it. Shedden agreed it was possible an unapproved plan may have been put before Spender. If not approved it would never reach the Defence Department, which was 'responsible for submission to the Military Board of Advice [sic].'. He added that he did not have all the necessary papers submitted to the Military Board of Advice, but would receive them from Melbourne the next morning. Shedden knew very well Ward was referring to Howe's 'Maryborough Plan'. But he had no intention of confirming its existence to the rebel Minister. Possibly by now he did not truly believe in it. Certainly, he was reluctant to see the conservative politicians he supported further discomfited by a further likely barrage from Ward, should Ward's suspicions be confirmed.

Having satisfied Ward that he accepted there was a possibility there might be a missing document, Shedden examined the documents he had with him, bringing to Curtin's, Ward's and Forde's attention Sturdee's 6 February 1942 concurrence with the Mackay memorandum. 'That,' Ward said, 'is the document I was advised was missing.' For Labor, the Brisbane Line again looked as if it might turn against them, as it was

now apparent that the supposed missing document had been submitted, not to the Menzies-Fadden War Cabinet, but the Curtin War Cabinet. Once more Shedden had effectively protected his former masters. Curtin protested that the Sturdee memorandum had not been presented to Cabinet until February 1942. Still distrustful of what use Ward might put to information giving him confirmation that the alleged Maryborough Plan document was missing, he suggested that perhaps Ward's informant had confused the dates. Ward agreed there could be confusion, whereupon Curtin suggested he should make a statement withdrawing his allegation of a missing document. Ward suggested he and Curtin could further discuss the matter in the morning, and that he would think the matter over. The conference finished about 7.15 and after dinner Ward prepared his statement of withdrawal.¹⁵

Because Ward's hunch that the 'Maryborough Plan' was connected with the 10 June 1941 Cabinet instruction was wrong, Shedden, having made sure no documents connected with those deliberations were missing from official files, was able to show that Ward was mistaken. On the morning of the twenty-fourth, he reiterated his advice to Curtin that the 10 June 1941 Cabinet instruction was 'extraneous' to the 'Brisbane Line', pointed out no document was missing from War Cabinet, Advisory War Council or Defence Department files, and gave a reassurance of security of access to these files. He was 'unaware of any document that is missing therefrom'.¹⁶

Curtin's dilemma over Ward's missing document allegation was compounded by several factors. Because of it, the Opposition had threatened to withdraw from the Advisory War Council. Should they do this, Labor had no rejoinder to their demand for a National Government. To confirm to Ward that that document that could not be traced might yet have existed, would encourage Ward to further allegations that might threaten the unity of the Government-Opposition war effort, and strengthen the grounds for the Opposition call for a National Government. While

-
15. AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. Australian Defence Plan, *aide-memoire* 23.6.43; Ward's account of interview with Curtin 23.6.43, cited in Spratt, *op.cit.*, p.110. What Ward called 'the Military Board of Advice', it is clear from AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568, Australian Defence Plans. Shedden to Curtin, 24.6.43, was the Defence Committee and the Chiefs of Staff Committee.
 16. AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. Australian Defence Plans. Shedden to Curtin, 24.6.43.

Curtin himself may have favoured such a course, it would be untenable to the Labor party's left wing, and extremely dangerous for Labor unity in the wake of the conscription debate. Insofar as Ward's claim of a missing document was connected with the 10 June 1941 Cabinet instruction, Ward was wrong, and the Opposition, who had had access to the relevant documents would be able to prove it. Furthermore, by claiming a document was missing from official files, Ward was impugning Shedden's reputation as Secretary to the Cabinet, Advisory War Council and the Defence Department. To mollify Shedden and maintain good relations with him, Curtin had no choice but to accept and advise that the files were complete.

The turn the Brisbane Line controversy was taking was making Curtin nervous. He had Dedman, the Minister for War Organisation and Industry, write the day after his interview with Ward, to J.J. McKell, the Premier of New South Wales, not to embark on a suggested propaganda campaign urging 'the public to remain in their homes in the event of invasion'. The Commonwealth was not taking any action to deal with contingencies for State evacuation, and 'the present stage does not appear opportune for such action by State authorities'.¹⁷ Curtin obviously wanted to protect himself from any likelihood of a Labor State campaign to encourage people not to evacuate in time of invasion, though that had been Federal policy since 4 February 1942. With one of the main points of the controversy that under Menzies and Fadden there was a plan to abandon parts of Australia to the Japanese in the event of invasion, a campaign not to evacuate if the Japanese invaded would be construed as a similar strategy. Unequivocally the policy of the ALP Government would be the same as the one they had severely criticised the Menzies-Fadden administration for having formulated. Thus, short-term political necessity resulted in McKell being instructed to ignore agreed Cabinet and Advisory War Council policy on evacuation.

Opposition members of the Advisory War Council met again, to formalize the decisions made by the Joint Opposition Executive the previous day. Probably at this stage, Menzies suggested the forcing

17. AA ACT CRS A 1608. item AO 39/1/3. P.I. Dedman for Curtin to McKell, 24.6.45.

of the appointment of a Royal Commission into the missing document allegation.^{18b} Ward had played into Menzies' hands, his actions seemingly shaking Country Party willingness to remain in the Advisory War Council. Before Question Time began on 24 June, Fadden informed Curtin of the Opposition meeting's decisions.^{18c}

Curtin was under no illusions of the Opposition's intent. But on the basis of the previous evening's discussion with Ward, he expected his Minister to retract the missing document charge, and knew he too would have to confirm Ward's denial. To his chagrin, Charles Morgan, the Labor member for Reid, queried whether Curtin had seen Sydney press reports of allegations by Captain W.C. Wentworth 'that a document dealing with the State of Sydney's defences disappeared from the office of the Minister for the Army late in 1941'. Morgan wanted enquiries made into Wentworth's claim, and asked if it could be ascertained if the missing document had any bearing on the Brisbane Line controversy.

Curtin snapped momentarily under the strain, accusing Morgan of acting irresponsibly by repeating Wentworth's *ex-parte* statements. Recovering himself after an Opposition interjection about Ward, Curtin launched a brief defence of the integrity of public service officers. Not offending Shedden's sensibilities was, for Curtin, a major factor in limiting repercussions from Ward's charge.¹⁹

Shortly after the interchange with Morgan, he made his statement on Ward's allegations. He had been informed Forde was unaware of any document missing from Army Department files. The records of the War Cabinet, Advisory War Council and Department of Defence were complete. No unauthorised person had ever had access to those records. Ward would withdraw his statement, which he believed had been based on reliable information.

Ward told the House, he had received and unreservedly accepted Curtin's assurance that no document was missing from official files. Nevertheless, he was 'satisfied that the document to which [he] was

18.^aSpender, *op.cit.*, p.211;^bFor Menzies' role in forcing the Royal Commission, see Sir Percy Joske, *Sir Robert Menzies. 1894-1978. A new informal memoir.* Sydney, 1978, p.136.^cFor Fadden's advice as to Opposition decisions see AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. *Royal Commission.* Certificate as to completeness of files on the Brisbane Line.

19. *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 175, 24.6.43, pp.315-316.

referring ... is still in existence'.²⁰ He had come to the conclusion that the 6 February 1942 concurrence by Sturdee, and the missing Brisbane Line document - the Maryborough Plan - were not one and the same. His enigmatic disavowal plunged the House into uproar.

Fadden warned that the Opposition was not prepared to let the matter rest with such an equivocal withdrawal. An angry Spender sought leave to speak, but Government members loudly refused the Speaker permission to grant leave. Spender protested, arguing that he was personally involved in Ward's allegation, as a former Minister of the Army. Curtin asked if Forde, the current Army Minister, was entitled to make a statement.^{21a} But Forde was not, at this point, in the chamber. Moving too swiftly for Curtin to put an end to Question Time, and thus prevent further discussion, Spender drafted a rough pencil motion, for adjournment, and passed it to the Speaker.^{21b} Outmanoeuvred, the Government was faced with the dangerous prospect of the Opposition winning a tactical advantage from Ward's claim that a document had been removed from official files.

Spender castigated Ward for alleging a 'document had been abstracted from the file by the previous administration for the purpose of covering up its political tracks', without having checked his information until after the event. His retraction meant either he had not received his alleged information from anyone, in which case he was not fit for a portfolio in any Government, or that he had received secret information from someone with access to official documents, or worse, from someone who was not supposed to have access to them. Parliament had to take immediate action to discover the identity of Ward's informant and deal with him immediately.

An embarrassed Curtin repeated that no document was missing, and that Ward's information was incorrect, amid cries from the Opposition

20. *Ibid.*, p.316. One might speculate whether, after seeing Curtin the previous night, and before writing his disavowal, Ward had contacted Howe, or even, still, Forde, and learnt that the Sturdee concurrence and the 'Maryborough Plan' were two different documents, the former proffered in 1942, and the latter to Spender in 1941. A possibility, but not an event for which I can find any evidence. Only Howe could throw absolute light on the role of the 'Maryborough Plan'. He died in 1983, so far as I can ascertain, before this work was begun.

21. *Ibid.*, pp.316-317 for Fadden. For Spender, pp.317-318.^b For Spender's drafting of the adjournment motion and how he outwitted Curtin see Spender, *op.cit.*, p.215.

that Ward had said the document was still in existence, and from Archie Cameron, a demand for a Royal Commission into the identity of Ward's informant. This call was taken up by other Opposition speakers. After Curtin had finished speaking, he and Ward briefly retired to Curtin's office, and discussed what could be done in response to the Opposition attack.^{22 b}

Back in the chamber, Ward sat silent amidst the torrent of abuse. The adjournment motion was put to the vote. It did not go unnoticed by Fadden that Arthur Coles, the Independent upon whose support the Labor Government's survival depended, hesitated before voting in Labor's favour.^{22 d}

As the tally on the adjournment motion was being counted, Curtin and Ward sought advice from the cautious Jim Scullin, former Labor Prime Minister from 1929 to 1931,^{23 a} on whom Curtin, much to the distaste of some more radical party members, often relied. In the House, Fadden, mindful that Coles was uncertain over what action should be taken about Ward's ambiguous retraction, had Spender assist him in drafting a motion for a Royal Commission into Ward's statement 'that he was most reliably informed that an important document was missing from official files'. Fadden gave notice to debate the motion in the morning.^{23 d} Their tactic was to attempt to persuade Coles by debate, and possibly direct approach, to side with the Opposition.

When news came to Curtin of the Opposition moves he may have felt his worst fears were about to be realized. He had himself privately told journalists of the Maryborough Plan's existence in September, 1942, and in March 1943 set Ward on its track. His Deputy Leader, Frank Forde, was implicated because Ward's informant, Howe, was Forde's adviser. Curtin possibly knew or suspected Forde had told Ward the document was missing. Since it was missing, the Government could not prove its

22.^a *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 175, 24.6.43, pp.318-325 for the adjournment debate.^b For the brief conference between Ward and Curtin, see Ward's account of interview with Curtin, cited in Spratt, *op.cit.*, p.110. Internal evidence indicates the date for this part of interview is 24.6.43.^c For Ward's mien during the adjournment debate, Spender, *op.cit.*, p.214.^d For Coles' hesitation to vote with Labor, Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1942-1945*, p.714.

23.^a For Curtin and Ward seeking advice from Scullin, see Ward interview and Curtin, cited in Spratt, *op.cit.*, p.110;^b For Labor attitudes to Scullin, see P. Hasluck, *Diplomatic Witness*, Melbourne, 1980, pp.126-127;^c for collaboration between Spender and Fadden in drafting Royal Commission motion see Spender, *op.cit.*, p.214.^d For Fadden's moving of the motion for a Royal Commission, see *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 175, 24.6.43, p.526.

unlikely existence. That it could not be proved might come out during a Royal Commission. Ward could be accused of misleading the Parliament, and both Curtin and Forde could be involved. Curtin was being placed in the position of agreeing to a Royal Commission that could seriously damage the Government's credibility.

Beyond the Commission, there was another danger, inherent in the kind of accusations Ward was making against the former Menzies-Fadden Governments. Labor acceptance of the vital area strategy, planning for 'scorched earth' policy, and determination not to evacuate civilians from areas other than target and contiguous areas, which approximated the very accusations levelled at Menzies and his colleagues, might become public knowledge.

If only to limit the danger the Government was placed in, Curtin had no alternative but to agree to Opposition demands, and to ask Ward to stand down from the Cabinet. Ward, though, did not want to relinquish his portfolio. ^{24 a} The Government Whip interrupted their discussion with the disturbing news that Earle Page, opening the additional Estimates Debate, was urging the refusal of supply in the Opposition-controlled Senate until the Government agreed to a Royal Commission. Ward, impervious to the threat to the Government should the UAP-UCP in the Senate force Labor to an election, refused all appeals from Curtin and Scullin to step down voluntarily. ^{24 b}

In the Parliament, Coles was being subjected to a barrage of Opposition argument that Supply should not be granted the Government unless Ward was relieved of his portfolio, since he was unworthy to hold a post in Cabinet until it had been resolved whether he had lied to Parliament or not. The only resolution to this dilemma was for the Government to grant a Royal Commission. Jack Rosevear, the Speaker, attempted unsuccessfully, to prevent the argument being put to the House by constantly cautioning Opposition speakers that motion of notice for a Royal Commission was out of order in the Estimates debate. But Coles was taking note. ²⁵

24. ^aWard interview with Curtin, 24.6.43 cited in Spratt, *op.cit.*, p.110-111; ^bFor Earle Page threatening blockage of Supply in the Additional Estimates debate see also *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 175, 24.6.43, p.526.

25. For the unruly Additional Estimates Debate before the 6 p.m. dinner break see *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 175, 24.6.43, pp.326-331. That the Opposition arguments were particularly addressed to Coles, see Spender, *op.cit.*, p.215.

When the House rose, Coles sent a message to Curtin that he wanted to see him. Scullin and Ward left him and Curtin alone. Coles told Curtin he was adopting the Opposition line, and unless Curtin accepted Opposition demands that Ward stand down and that a Royal Commission be established, 'he would not vote for Supply'. This would have meant the defeat of the Government on the floor. Curtin advised him Ward was not being co-operative, and again summoned the Minister to his office. Coles repeated his ultimatum to Ward, and appealed to him to suspend himself from Cabinet. Ward refused. He told Coles he 'had nothing to hide and his voluntary retirement was tantamount to admission of some form of guilt'.²⁶

After further discussion with Coles, Curtin resolved to call an immediate Full Cabinet meeting to discuss Ward's position. Unable to influence him privately to resign, he was bringing to bear the pressure of all the recalcitrant Minister's colleagues. At the hurriedly called meeting, the Cabinet was 'practically unanimous' in support of Curtin's decision that he proposed to announce the appointment of a Royal Commission. He would also tell the House that Ward had asked to be relieved of his position. Ward refused to agree to this, so Curtin said he would announce that Ward had been relieved of his duties.

When this extraordinary Cabinet meeting closed at 7.35 p.m., Curtin went to eat in the Parliamentary Dining room. He told Fadden that Ward had requested to be relieved of his portfolio. Shortly afterwards, a very upset Ward confronted Curtin over his meal, and loudly told him that he had better make sure when making his announcement that he did not say Ward had requested to be relieved of his position. On hearing that Curtin had already advised Fadden to this effect, Ward snapped, 'Well, you better correct it'. Curtin said he would.²⁷

When the House resumed at 8 p.m., Coles was ignored by the Speaker. Curtin rose and informed the House that he had told Fadden during dinner of his intention to announce a Royal Commission. 'In accordance with practice' he would 'consult him respecting the terms of reference. Ward had been relieved of his duties until the Commission's outcome'.^{28a}

26. Ward interview with Curtin, 24.6.43, cited in Spratt, *op.cit.*, pp.110-111, for the Coles, Curtin, Ward confrontation.

27. For Full Cabinet meeting on Ward, and the scene in the Parliamentary Dining Room see *SMH* 25.6.43, and Ward interview with Curtin in Spratt, *op.cit.*, pp.110-111.

At this Ward ostentatiously removed himself from the front bench, making it crystal-clear that he had, in fact, been dismissed by Curtin.

By announcing the Royal Commission before the motion put on notice by Fadden came before the House, Curtin had carefully ensured the authority for the Royal Commission had not issued from the Parliament. Consequently, parliamentary privilege was not waived for any parliamentarians called before the Commission. By pleading privilege, no parliamentarian, either from the Government or Opposition, could be forced to give evidence about the statements they had made in the Parliament. In one stroke, Curtin had ensured his own protection and the protection of Forde and Ward, over the debacle of the unlikely Maryborough Plan. Ward was formally advised after the announcement, that he was relieved of his Cabinet post until the Royal Commissioner's report had been received. Ward's only reaction was to decline all requests by the press for interviews.^{28c}

Now that Coles had been granted his demands, he no longer had reason to side with the Opposition and Labor could not be defeated on the floor. Once more the Joint Opposition Executive met, enraged that Curtin had outmanoeuvred them. They decided to block Supply in the Senate 'unless the Curtin Govt. [sic] consented to a dissolution of Parliament'.²⁹

Curtin consulted with several of his Cabinet colleagues about their reaction to a quick ending of Parliament. By 10.45 p.m. he had made up his mind to call for a dissolution. When he came into the House, it was almost empty. Very tired, he advised that he thought 'this Parliament has about exhausted its resources for constructive legislation'. Its capacity to serve the country 'might be submitted to a higher tribunal'. After supply was passed, he 'would then be disposed to give advice in accordance with the statements' he had

28^a For Coles' refused the call, Spender, *op.cit.*, p.215; ^b for legal significance of the Royal Commission not being called by Parliament but by Curtin, N. Rosenthal, *R. Lowe, A biographical Memoir*, Melbourne, 1968, p.124; ^c for Ward's suspension as Minister for Labour and National Service see MS 2396/13/9. Ward Papers. Curtin to Ward, 24.6.43, NLA; for Ward removing himself from the front bench, *SMH*, 25.6.43. ^d *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 175, 24.6.43, pp.333-334 for Spender, and Curtin's announcement that there would be a Royal Commission.

29. *SMH*, 25.6.43.

expressed.³⁰

The Royal Commission

Curtin's decision to go to the people did not mean the last of the Brisbane Line in Parliament. The following night, 25 June, McEwen, the former Minister for Air, with Fadden's support, secured a motion of adjournment in order to debate the claim by F.P. Baker, the Labor member for Queensland's Maranoa, made in the early hours of 23 June, that he had intended to distribute a map of the Brisbane Line to his electorate. In a heated atmosphere, with continual interjections from Ward, McEwen argued that Baker's intentions provided 'prima facie evidence of an offence against national security. What did Curtin intend to do about it?' Curtin agreed to bring the matter to the attention of the proper authorities.³¹

What should have been a tactical victory for the Opposition quickly became an embarrassment when Arthur Calwell, Labor member for Melbourne Ports and a supporter of Ward, reminded members of General MacArthur's 18 March 1943 statement. The House erupted, the strongest protest coming from Menzies, who demanded to know if Calwell was actually quoting MacArthur. Calwell pointed out that Baker's statement was but an intelligent assessment of the MacArthur Brisbane Line charge. '[Any] child could have drawn a map of that portion of Australia which extends from Brisbane to Perth after he had read what General MacArthur had condemned'.³² The last thing Menzies needed was a public due to go to the polls equating General MacArthur's line north of Brisbane with Ward's Brisbane to Adelaide line.

When Curtin had announced the previous night that he would appoint a Royal Commission into Ward's missing document claim, Ward had written to him demanding that he investigate 'all his charges' against previous governments. No decision on the terms of the investigation had yet been set. The north of Australia under Menzies, he asserted, ~~had been~~

30. Lead-up to dissolution of Parliament by Curtin, and Curtin's speech cited in Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1942-1945*, p.363. see also *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 175, 24.6.45, p.353.
 31. *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 175, 25.6.45, pp.372-574.
 32. *Ibid.*, pp.379-383.

had been without airships (possibly he meant barrage balloons), aerodromes, arterial roads and other defence preparations. The country had been dangerously low on fuel supplies. There was a plan to use Port Moresby and 'outlying points' as a means of holding the enemy, until the Brisbane Line was brought into action. He demanded that the proposed Royal Commission be given wide enough terms of reference to enable the content of his allegations to be completely examined.

We should be able to produce evidence in regard to the attitude of certain Ministers who previously held office, and of their associations with those against whom we are fighting. We would be able to show how they had left themselves open to questioning, as to whether, by their actions, they had not made it possible for the enemy to obtain information. The Japanese were not then at war with this country but Japan was a member of the Axis.³³

It was an extraordinary charge, tantamount to an accusation of treason. Unfortunately, Ward never elaborated on his insinuations further. And the conduct of the Royal Commission was not such that he was willing to give any further evidence.³⁴ Nevertheless, the Attorney-General's

33. *Ibid.*, pp.383-385.

34. Possibly Ward had in mind Menzies' advocacy of 'appeasement' of both Japan and Germany, an essential part of the Menzies myth. More arguably he may have been alluding to Communist allegations that Percy Spender was linked with the 'Australia First' Movement, and to rumours, which first surfaced in 1954, during the Petrov affair, that he had accepted Japanese funds for the UAP's election campaign in 1940, and, through family connections, was a possible Nazi sympathiser. (See R. Lockwood, *What is in Document J?*, Freedom Press, Everglades, Canberra, 1954, p.6 and *Tribune* 6.5.42.) On a wider level, Ward's speech provides the *only* evidence for the veracity of the New Left myth of the Brisbane Line being a political line established by a conservative government of traitorous bent in collaboration with the Japanese. This evidence is of the most non-specific kind and cannot be substantiated by other reliable surviving documents. For the most remarkable exposition of this argument see Drew Cottle, 'The Commanding Heights of Treachery': Sydney's Rich Appeasers, 1938-1942'. *1938 Bicentennial History Project WRONG WAY GO BACK CONFERENCE*, Sydney University, February 1979. Also, Humphrey McQueen, *From Gallipoli to Petrov*, Sydney, 1984, p.156. If anything, ^{the} claim has vague literary antecedents, derived from a 1938 novel by Erle Cox, *Fools Harvest*, Melbourne, 1938, *passim* and Xavier Herbert's epic novel, *Poor Fellow My Country*, published in 1975! See my article, 'The Brisbane Line in Australian Literature', *Notes and Furphies, Bulletin of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature*, No.17, October 1986, Armidale.

Investigations branch did interview Baker, as sought by McEwen, but the allegations were thought to be inconsequential.³⁵

The next day Shedden warned Curtin that all Ward's charges were open to refutation. The Royal Commissioner, he suggested, might assess them in a light unfavourable to the Government. The differences in views between the Government and the Opposition were 'matters of political policy which should be decided by the Australian people and not a Royal Commission'.^{36a} Nevertheless, Ward, once more had put Menzies and his colleagues on the defensive over the Brisbane Line.^{36b}

By Sunday, 27 June, at a Labor Electoral League meeting in Kings Cross, part of his East Sydney electorate, Ward was in full swing once again. After repeating variations on the charge that the Menzies-Fadden Governments had left Australia defenceless and intended to abandon north Australia to the Japanese, he called again for the Royal Commission to be given the widest possible terms, not limited to the missing document allegation, as the Opposition wanted, so he could give all the facts in his possession to the public. He would refuse categorically to disclose the name of the person who gave him information about the Brisbane Line and other military matters.³⁷

Mackay had returned to Moresby. However, upon hearing there was going to be a Royal Commission, on 25 June he cabled Blamey, Commander-in-Chief AMF

should terms of reference involve me would like to discuss my actions and representations with you.

That discussion took place in Sydney on 28 June.^{38a} Mackay was of the

35. AA ACT CRS A 1608. item A52711. *Brisbane Line 1943*. Director, Investigations Branch, Attorney-General's Department, to Secretary, Attorney-General's Department, 1.7.43; *SMH* 26.6.43; AA ACT CRS A 1608. item A52711. *Brisbane Line 1943*. Secretary, Attorney-General's Department to P.M., 2.7.43; and *ibid.*, Secretary P.M.'s Department to Secretary Attorney-General's Department, 8.7.43.
- 36.^a For Shedden's advice re Ward's desired terms of reference see AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 601. Notes on Election Campaign and Royal Commission, 26.6.43; ^b for Opposition reactions to Ward see Menzies in *SMH* 26.6.43; Hughes in *Daily Telegraph* 30.6.43.
37. For a report of Ward's 27.6.43 Labor meeting in Kings Cross see *Canberra Times* 28.6.43.
- 38.^a For Mackay's reaction to Royal Commission announcement and his consultation with Blamey see resp. AWM 3 DRL 6850/134. Mackay Papers. Mackay to Blamey 25.6.43 and AWM 4 DRL 6643. Blamey Papers. C in C Diary. Entry 28.6.43; ^b For Mackay's opinion on Ward's allegations see Notes on the Brisbane Line, 1943, cited in Chapman, *op.cit.*, p.288; ^c A handwritten notation on Mackay's letter to Blamey, 25.6.43, dated 29.6.43 indicates receipt of the news that the Royal Commission would not investigate military action.

opinion that Ward's charges were an erroneous interpretation from 'secret military documents' implying 'an intention to abandon the whole of Northern Australia to the Japanese, and set up the main defence line just north of Brisbane'.^{38b} The next day he heard a broadcast stating the Royal Commission would probably not include military action.^{38c}

Curtin's choice for Royal Commissioner into Ward's Parliamentary statements of 22 and 24 June was Justice Charles Lowe.^{39a} Lowe had headed the Royal Commission into the first Darwin bombing after 19 February 1942. Curtin had gone so far to persuade Lowe to postpone part of his annual holiday, to sit on the Commission.^{39b} It was to be a hurried affair, complete in two weeks. The Justice was favoured by several Labor Ministers, and from his work as Royal Commissioner into the Darwin bombing was already familiar with the niceties required in investigating matters of delicate national security. He was likely to present a report of little embarrassment to the Government.

Curtin had decided he would not include in the Commission terms of reference any clause remotely resembling Ward's request for a full-ranging enquiry into the Brisbane Line of defence policy under Menzies and Fadden. At a Full Cabinet meeting on 29 June Curtin announced Lowe's appointment and the probable terms of reference.^{39c} He had not, as he had promised, consulted with Fadden on the matter,^{39d} ostensibly because the Opposition Leader was absent from Canberra on business. Jack Beasley, acting Attorney-General in Evatt's absence in the United States, suggested that a Government Counsel should be appointed to assist the Commissioner. Ward would have to provide his own counsel.^{39e} Labor was keeping its distance from any of Ward's possible excesses, and taking every precaution against the enquiry getting out of hand.

So it did not need Dr H.V. Evatt - the Minister for External Affairs, currently in Washington negotiating for aeroplanes and equipment from the Americans, but with a keen eye on political developments in

39.^a For Curtin's selection of Lowe see AA ACT CRS A 463. item 58/1228. P.M. to Victorian Premier. Draft Letter, n.d.;^b for Lowe postponing annual holiday see Curtin to Lowe, cited in Rosenthal, *op.cit.*, p.122.^c For full report of Full Cabinet meeting on 29.6.43 see AA ACT CRS A 2700. Vol. I. Cabinet Secretariat (I) Minutes of Meeting 29.6.43.^d For Fadden's being absent from Canberra, and so not consulted about terms of Royal Commission see *SMH* 29.6.43.

Australia - to discover in his files, to his evident delight, a document which he believed proved Ward's Brisbane Line allegations. Lieutenant-General Sturdee, shortly after his appointment as military attache to the United States, had provided a brief review of Australian defence. This report, to Evatt, provided evidence that because of the disposition of troops overseas and the paucity of forces and equipment available on the Australian mainland, 'a temporary abandonment of North Australia' may have been necessary. Evatt thought he had found the 'missing document'. Curtin, embarrassed sufficiently by the existence of the Mackay memorandum, was not keen to have definite proof of a plan while he was Prime Minister which had as its 'main objective to secure the areas containing Brisbane, Sydney, Newcastle, Melbourne and Adelaide', with insufficient dispositions to cover Darwin, Moresby and North Queensland, and an inadequately equipped RAAF. Astutely, he ignored Evatt's brash assistance, probably thankful that the cablegram's distribution was restricted to the Secretary of External Affairs and himself.⁴⁰

On 30 June Curtin announced the terms of the Royal Commission to the House. Essentially, these embraced Ward's allegation of a missing document, how Ward had come by the alleged information that a document was missing, who his informant was, whether there was a document missing from official files, and what its content was.^{41a}

Another term of reference, enquiring into whether a plan on the Brisbane Line had been submitted to any Federal Government, or any member of any Federal Government responsible for the administration of defence prior to the submission of the Mackay memorandum, was omitted.^{41b} This would have opened up the question of the strategy for defending vital areas in time of war, which, of course, had been accepted by the Curtin Government in December 1941. Curtin's intention was to make the Royal Commission a non-event, because of its potential danger to

40. AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. Cablegram Evatt to Curtin 28.6.43. Rec'd 29.6.43. Dept. External Affairs.

41.^a *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 175, 30.6.43, p.572.

^b For the omitted clause see AA ACT CRS A 432. item 56/3036. Pt.(2) The Brisbane Line Dispute. Suggested Draft Terms of Reference. n.d. and *ibid.*, Terms of Royal Commission including omitted clause 5, prepared for Justice Charles Lowe.

the Government. The detail of the allegations Lowe would investigate was unimportant, and, because of the restricted terms of reference, a foregone conclusion. At the same time, Curtin could see that any adverse findings made by the Commission would affect Menzies and the UAP. Ward did not see it this way.

Hearing the terms of reference, he exploded. Curtin had not informed him of the restricted terms of reference which he branded as 'farcical' as they did not give him the opportunity to call witnesses and produce evidence which would prove beyond doubt the responsibility of the Menzies-Fadden Government for the Brisbane Line strategy. There was no need for a Royal Commission on a missing document, since both he and Curtin had agreed there was no document missing from official files. Later, in Question Time, he queried why Curtin had not extended the Royal Commission terms to cover all his Brisbane Line allegations. That, Curtin told him, reflecting Shedden's advice on 26 June, was a 'general question of the defence policy of this country ... a matter not for judicial investigation, but for decision by the Parliament and the people'.⁴² He had subtly given Ward the 'green light' to pursue the Brisbane Line as an election campaign issue.

Ward's main concern now was the testimony he would give before the Royal Commission. Once the venue and dates of the Commission - Melbourne Law Courts, from 5 July - had been set, Ward briefed J.V. Barry, K.C., to appear for him. Barry was a long-standing member of the ALP, and had probably been recommended to Ward by Maurice Blackburn, who was unofficially assisting Ward in the preparation of his case.^{43a} On 1 July, Blackburn, in Parliament, gave some indication of the way Ward would eventually plead before the Royal Commission, when he argued that the Commission's establishment was 'a practical invasion of the privileges of the members of the House'.^{43b}

42. *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 175, 30.6.43, pp.572-574.
See also *SMH* 1.7.43.

43.^a *SMH* 1.7.43, and AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568.
Hansard Pull, 17.7.44.^b For Blackburn 1.7.43 speech see
AA ACT CRS A 432 56/3036. Pt.2. pp.3-3a.

Shedden's main worry was that the production of secret files to the Commission, to which Counsel would have to be given access, did not work against the public interest. Ultimately, on 1 July, it was decided after consultation with Curtin, that because of the limited terms of reference, no secret papers should be produced by Shedden without the Prime Minister's authority. Curtin momentarily thought of appearing before the Commission himself, should any such document be produced.^{44a} Lowe would be allowed to see any document necessary on request. During the course of evidence Counsel would be briefed on the security aspects of disclosing information, but would be permitted to examine secret documents in the Commissioner's presence. Defence and Service department representatives would not need Counsel 'unless the production of documents was required and considerations of public security were involved'.^{44b}

The last days of the Parliament saw a considerable increase of polemic against the Labor party and Ward, in particular, in the press. Labor's designation of UAP-UCP defence policy as one leaving Australia unprepared to meet the Japanese onslaught were described as 'naked indecency'.^{45a} Jack Lang defended Ward in *The Century*, claiming he was making it possible for Labor to win the 1943 election on the Brisbane Line. Nor did he let the opportunity slip to continue his personal vendetta against Curtin, blaming the Prime Minister for giving the Opposition the opportunity to sidestep the issue by limiting the terms of reference, thus putting Ward in the position where he had either to 'squeal' and reveal the name of his informant or 'be accused of lying by his political enemies'. With characteristic vindictiveness he emphasised that Curtin had in fact supported Ward at the recent New South Wales Labor conference. He insinuated Curtin was possibly willing to allow McKell, the Premier of New South Wales, to give endorsement to another candidate for Ward's seat of East Sydney.^{45b} Thus the Brisbane

44. ^aAA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. *Royal Commission Brisbane Line. Aide-memoire* 1.7.43; ^bAA ACT A 432. 56/5036. Pt.2. Transcript of Royal Commission, pp.3-3a.

45. ^aFor the anti-Ward, anti-Labor press, see *Daily Telegraph*, 29.6.43, *Bulletin*, 30.6.43, *Melbourne Herald* 30.6.43. ^bFor the Lang diatribe *Century*, 2.7.43.

Line became a means for Lang to prolong his feud with those responsible for his fall from power. But the situation was not nearly so complex as Lang pretended.

Much of the press campaign was directed at praising Menzies' potential for leadership. A motion of no-confidence against Hughes and Fadden at a Joint Opposition Party meeting on 1 July, not proceeded with because of Menzies' intervention, nevertheless put both leaders on notice that they could not assume, should the Opposition win Government, they would be the leaders.⁴⁶ Henceforth, the outcome of the Royal Commission and the subsequent election campaign would be crucial to Menzies' return to power.

The Labor premiers of Tasmania and Queensland emphasised that the Brisbane Line had existed before the assumption of the Federal Labor Government, that there were no defence plans for the north of Australia, and that the only policy of defence had been the evacuation of the North.^{47a} Dwyer Grey, from Tasmania, was referring to the 'Maryborough Plan', but Cooper, from Queensland, probably on information from Hanlon, spoke of a plan 'in 1938' - possibly the Shedden defence sub-committee advice.^{47b} In Western Australia, the press spoke of military plans 'to fight to the last on lines prepared beforehand both north and south of Perth' in February 1942. Perth itself was to be defended '... and prepared against a siege until such time that help could come from elsewhere'. No evacuation of women and children was planned.^{47c} The press reports were not entirely accurate, but allusions to a policy of no evacuation, the vital area strategy in Western Australia, and no real plans for the defence of North Queensland, were close enough to the situation as embodied in the Mackay memorandum, evacuation policy followed by Federal Labor, and to the accepted vital area strategy to warn Labor that it was endangered by the Brisbane Line allegations, since they referred to plans operational when Curtin was in office.

The Hearing

Assisting the Royal Commissioner were Eric Miller and W.J. Dignam.

46. Spender, *op.cit.*, pp.218-219.

47. ^aMS 2396/13/71. Ward Papers. Typed copy of press statement 1.7.43, NLA; ^bMS 2396/13/80. Ward Papers. Typed Note 3.7.43; ^c2396/13/81-84. Ward Papers. Typed Note 2.7.43.

Appearing for Ward, with Barry was A.M. Frazer, and for the Menzies-Fadden Government, F. Villeneuve-Smith and P.D. Phillips. S. Moore was Secretary to the Commission. Menzies was the only Opposition spectator, while Calwell, Blackburn, and Frank Brennan, Brennan as Ward's instructing solicitor represented Labor.⁴⁸ All were members of the party's left wing faction, all anti-conscriptionists, and some, anti-Curtin.

Villeneuve-Smith and Phillips sought leave to represent the Menzies-Fadden Governments, on the grounds that the question whether any document concerning the Brisbane Line, and the particulars of that document, covered the interest of their clients. Lowe refused permission but allowed them to watch both public and *in camera* proceedings. They could re-apply to appear if any matter arose affecting the former Governments.⁴⁹

Barry pleaded privilege, on the grounds that only Parliament could investigate Ward's statement, made within the walls of Parliament. Parliamentary privilege covered all the Royal Commission's terms. Ward would refuse to give evidence on the grounds of that Parliamentary privilege. If compelled to give evidence he would not reveal the name of his informant. Miller, for the Commonwealth, counter-argued that whether Ward testified or not, Lowe still had to ascertain, by questioning all those who had access to official documents, whether they had divulged information to Ward, and to discover whether a document was missing from official files. Barry in turn put it to Lowe that only Ward who had used the terms 'official files', 'important report' and

48. *The Royal Commission Hearing*: Any assessment of the Royal Commission on the Brisbane Line is fraught with difficulty, as no transcript of the *in camera* proceedings survives. Justice Lowe did make a shorthand transcript, this has been either lost or destroyed. There is no list of witnesses called before the Royal Commission. However, by using the published transcript and material in the personal papers of some of the participants, notably Sir Frederick Shedden and General Sir Iven Mackay, and Justice Lowe's report, I have been able to reconstruct part of the *in camera* proceedings. While this reconstruction is necessarily speculative, it does permit some conclusions about the nature of the Royal Commission and the validity of its findings. Spratt, *op.cit.*, pp.122-123; AA ACT CRS A 432 56/3036. Pt.2. Royal Commission transcript, p.1. for Labor members attending.

49. AA ACT CRS A 463 item 58/1228. *Report of Royal Commission on the matter of An Inquiry into a statement that there was a document missing from official Files in relation to the Brisbane Line*, p.1, AA ACT CRS A 432 item 56/3036. Pt.(2). Transcript of the Royal Commission, pp.1-2.

'Brisbane Line', could interpret those terms. Lowe disagreed, arguing it was for the Commission to decide what an official file was from the evidence presented, discover their contents for the 'relevant period' and 'find whether they were intact'. Lowe ruled that the question of whether a document on the Brisbane Line was missing, and the particulars of that document, was one that could be considered by the Commission. He would reserve his decision on Ward's plea for parliamentary privilege.⁵⁰

The rest of the morning's sitting was taken up with Counsel to the Commission giving background information, defining the functions of the War Cabinet and Advisory War Council and detailing procedures for recording the documents that came before these bodies, and the Defence and Chiefs of Staff Committees. But otherwise, because of the secret nature of the documents to be presented, the hearing would be held *in camera*. Mackay's 4 February 1942 memorandum and documents relating to the 19 June 1941 Cabinet instruction would be placed before the Commission. There was debate on the definition of official files, and whether documents in such files would go before a Government if they were purely operational files, and discussion whether the Prime Minister himself would personally produce the Cabinet and Advisory War Council files. Lowe decided to resolve the difficulties of defining the Brisbane Line by reading Hansard. After lunch, Lowe said he thought it would also be necessary to inquire into the records held by General Sir Iven Mackay, from his appointment as GOC Home Forces.⁵¹

Sir Frederick Shedden was the only witness to testify publicly. Before taking the stand, he wrote to Miller, Counsel assisting the Commission, suggesting the types of questions Miller might ask him regarding precedents for the system he employed in record keeping, and on the broad organisation of the office handling of War Cabinet and Advisory War Council work.⁵² On the stand, he repeated 'that the Prime Minister need not necessarily approve of every action relating to the conduct of the war'. Approval rested with the appropriate Minister in War Cabinet. Otherwise his evidence was concerned primarily with record

50. AA ACT CRS A 463 item 58/1228. *Report of Royal Commission ...*, p.102; AA ACT CRS A 432 item 56/3036. Pt.(2). Transcript of Royal Commission, pp.2-6, 11-15A.

51. AA ACT CRS A 432 item 56/3036. Pt.(2). Transcript of Royal Commission, pp.15A-27.

keeping procedures, and steps taken to ensure the security of records. In particular he testified that he had received a certificate that no authentic records were missing from official files - the emphasis on 'authentic', in the light of later treatment, *in camera* by Lowe, of the missing Maryborough Plan document, was significant - and that he had personally sighted Mackay's memorandum and the 10 June 1941 Cabinet instruction.^{52 b} These two documents were obviously to be the nub of the Government, and Shedden's argument that no documents were missing from official files.

Barry declined to cross-examine the Secretary, explaining that 'at this stage we do not suggest any document is missing'. The remark was political, implying Barry might do so at a later stage. Menzies' Counsel objected to it, but Barry refused to withdraw the imputation. At 3 p.m. the Commission adjourned until 10.30 a.m. the next day. Henceforth, it would sit *in camera*.⁵³

That afternoon Lowe met with Curtin to examine the large number of documents relevant to the enquiry. That examination was cursory and did not go far beyond Lowe satisfying himself on how the documents were recorded, whether a document could be kept track of, and whether the record keeping system would disclose if a document was missing. He decided, too, to advise Menzies and Spender they might be required to appear before the Commission.^{54 c}

The next day, 6 July, fifteen witnesses testified before Lowe *in camera*. The course of the inquiry that day can be reconstructed to some degree through Lowe's Royal Commission report, and documents left by Shedden and Mackay. But the reconstruction is necessarily somewhat speculative, because of the nature of the evidence.⁵⁵

52. aAA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. *Royal Commission*. Shedden to Miller, 5.7.43; bAA ACT CRS A 432, item 56/3036. Pt.(2). Transcript of Royal Commission, pp.27-35.
53. AA ACT CRS A 432, item 56/3036. Pt.(2). Transcript of Royal Commission, pp.33-34.
54. aAA ACT CRS A 463. item 58/1228. *Report of Royal Commission ...*, p.6; bMS 4936. Menzies Papers. Series 14. Box 410. Folder 14 - Summons to attend Royal Commission. Deputy Crown Solicitor to Menzies 5.7.43 NLA; cMS 4875. Spender Papers. Box 1. Corres. 1939-49. Deputy Crown Solicitor to P.C.S. Spender, 5.7.43.
55. Rosenthal, *op.cit.*, pp.122-123. The account that follows of the *in camera* proceedings is gleaned from mostly undated papers in the Shedden Collection. Apart from Lowe's personal shorthand notes no transcript was kept of this part of the proceedings. The Law Librarian at Monash Law Library advised me on 27.4.84 that no papers relevant to the 'Brisbane Line' Enquiry were held in the Lowe collection there. Some documents from the Mackay collection and Blamey collections, and the Barry Papers in the NLA were also useful.

Shedden seems to have been incensed by Lowe's decision to investigate 'certain officers of the Government' to clear them from suspicion of being Ward's informant. That decision questioned his integrity, since he was himself 'quite satisfied with the completeness and accuracy' of the relevant War Cabinet, Advisory War Council and Defence Department records, and the soundness of his system. He was convinced 'there had been no leakage from this source'. Generally, because of the turn the enquiry took, he saw it as a potentially awkward situation, dangerous for the safeguarding of security aspects of the matters raised and discussed.⁵⁶

He seems to have assessed that Ward asserted in some cases that the supposed 'Brisbane Line' plan was prepared by the Opposition, and in others, by military authorities. Highly sceptical of Ward's dating of the adoption of the plan, he stressed that Ward had contradicted himself, first claiming that the plan was prepared 'after Japan came into the war'. Even though Menzies and Fadden were not in power at that date, Ward had been insistent the plan had been drawn up 'during the life-time of the previous Government' when Menzies was a member of that Government, at a time 'when the threat of invasion had increased'. This change was a response to the Opposition's pointing out that Japan had not entered the war until after Labor's accession to power. Possibly in response to questions on his own knowledge of the Brisbane Line Shedden fell back on Ward's conflicting claims about the existence of the alleged 'Line' showing Ward had managed to claim actual knowledge of the plan, inferred the plan's existence, and left it open to question whether in fact any such plan did exist.⁵⁷ His intention obviously, was to destroy Ward's credibility in the 'Brisbane Line' issue. Given Lowe's final report he seems to have been successful.

But the 'awkward situation', whereby Lowe doubted the integrity of both public servants, the members of the Defence Committee and of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, persisted. Though he was informed of the existence of the alleged 'Maryborough Plan', missing from the files,

56. AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. *Royal Commission*. Shedden to Curtin, Royal Commission with special reference to the aspect of allegations regarding the missing document. 9.7.43.

57. AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. *Royal Commission*. Comparative analysis of statements by Mr Ward. n.d.

failure of the Department of the Army to locate the file, and the fact that no reference to it could be found in the Chiefs of Staff reports for 1940 and 1941, seem to have convinced him that it probably did not exist. If it did it was irrelevant, since Spender had rejected the proposal. He did follow the Shedden argument that the Mackay memorandum was the Brisbane Line. On these grounds, especially he subjected public servants to searching scrutiny as to whether they had passed the memorandum to Ward. Each swore they had not. Most had not met Ward.

The Defence Committee and Chiefs of Staff Committee members admitted that they would have had to decide should the Japanese have invaded Australia, and 'driven back the Australian defence forces in Northern Australia' 'where a stand would have to be made'. Nevertheless they had not heard of the 'Brisbane Line' except in press reports. They knew only of the Mackay memorandum, but not of any other plan relating to matters Mackay dealt with. ^{58a} Both public servants and the military ^{58b} found Lowe's interrogation searching and were upset they had not been provided with Counsel. Later the Chiefs of Staff protested strongly at this shortcoming, and were reassured such a situation would not happen again. ^{58c}

Some time on the sixth, or early on 7 July, Lowe ruled that Ward's plea of privilege prevented the Commission from examining him on his allegation of a missing document. He decided, too, that he would not examine members of the War Cabinet or Advisory War Council, since he thought it inconceivable if any of those had given information to Ward, they would not have made some statement in regard to the allegation. ⁵⁹ They were not covered by parliamentary privilege, except in regard to statements made in the Parliament.

Lowe called neither Forde nor Spender, both of whom were linked with the plan, to testify.

58. ^aFor failure of Army, Defence Department to locate any missing document see AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. *Royal Commission*. Quealy to Shedden, 22.5.43; ^bFor testimony of unnamed public servants (among them, presumably, Quealy), the Defence Committee and Chiefs of Staff Committee see AA ACT CRS A 463. *Report of Royal Commission ...*, p.4; ^cfor lack of counsel for public servants and especially the Army, see AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. *Royal Commission*. Royal Commission with special reference to the aspect of allegations regarding the missing document, Shedden to Curtin, 9.7.43, and Shedden to Knowles, 22.7.43; 26.7.43; Also Knowles to Shedden 26.7.45.

59. AA ACT CRS A 463. 58/1228. *Report of the Royal Commission*, p.2 and p.5.

Mackay told Lowe he had submitted his 4 February 1942 memorandum to the Government of his own volition. The only 'Brisbane Line' of which he was aware was the one of which he had read in the press.^{60a} Possibly he went on to outline the revision of defence plans which took place when Japan entered the war, including the disposition of troops in 'selected areas' from which they could move to repel attack if Australia was invaded. This disposition, he explained, had been his responsibility as GOC Home Forces. Of talk of a 'Brisbane Line', 'Western Australian Line' and 'Tasmanian Line' he was especially critical. 'The requirement in defence of the Chiefs of Staff was such as to permit the continuation of AUSTRALIA in the war ... distortions of the plans such as talk of abandoning AUSTRALIA are only irresponsible and should be given no attention'. The Army was not on the defensive in discussion of its plans. Discussion of these plans was 'most undesirable' at the present time as revelation of the content of such secret documents could lead to them possibly being used by the enemy. Especially, he was highly critical of the time wasted by Commanders and Staff 'in post-mortems such as the present controversy in which no 'body' really exists'.^{60b} These views probably reflected the attitude of the Australian High Command to the 'Brisbane Line' controversy, and may have arisen out of Mackay's earlier conference with Blamey.

Lowe may have told Mackay that he intended to conclude there was no document missing that dealt with the 'Brisbane Line' pertaining to his February 1942 memorandum. On 6 July Mackay wrote to Curtin asking him to take steps to ensure that the term 'Brisbane Line' was discontinued in relation to that plan.^{61a} Curtin made no direct response to Mackay's appeal. A similar note was sent to the Chief of General Staff, Northcott,^{61b} who passed a copy of the letter on to Forde. Not until 8 August did Forde advise Curtin of Mackay's request. At the same time he issued a directive for the Department of the Army to give effect to Mackay's request.^{61c}

60. ^aAA ACT CRS A 463. 58/1228 *Report of the Royal Commission ...*, p.5;
^bAWM 3 DRL 3/6850 item 26. Mackay Papers. 'Royal Commission to Enquire into the Alleged loss of Documents referring to the so-called Brisbane Line' (revised copy) n.d.

61. ^aAA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. Mackay to Curtin, 6.7.43;
^bChapman, *op.cit.*, p.289; ^cAA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. *Royal Commission*. Forde to Curtin 9.8.43.

Whether Blamey, too, gave evidence to the Royal Commission is uncertain. In his war diary he recorded he was 'indisposed' for the duration of the Commission.⁶² Perhaps, if he did not appear before the Commission, he chose to go *incommunicado* to avoid questioning by the press, who took a lively interest in the proceedings. It will be shown that in 1944 he went to great lengths to distance himself from the 'Brisbane Line' controversy, possibly aware that should it ever become public, his acceptance of the vital area strategy in April 1942 was likely to hinder both his military career and political aspirations.

On 7 July, the Royal Commission was again open. Lowe had made known his ruling that he had no power, because the courts upheld the plea of parliamentary privilege, to compel Ward to give evidence. As the hearing drew to a close, Villeneuve-Smith, wanting to clear the Menzies-Fadden Governments from any taint associated with the 'Brisbane Line' proposed that Lowe include in his findings that

'no document concerning the ... Brisbane Line except the Iven Mackay appreciation of 4 February 1942 was ever in existence, and so could not be missing from official files.'

Barry, for Ward, argued it was not open for Lowe to make such a finding. Lowe informed Barry tartly that Counsel were handicapped in addressing him as 'a good deal of the evidence taken 'in camera' was known only to' himself. But he noted Barry's repudiation, and remarked he would report to the Governor-General on his findings. The hearing ended at 10.54 a.m.^{63a} That afternoon at Victoria Barracks, Melbourne, Curtin was briefed on the proceedings.^{63b}

Lowe wrote up his report on the eighth. He stated he was unable to investigate Ward's statements about the missing document because Ward had been granted Parliamentary privilege. No officer who had custody of official files, or any member of the Defence Committee or the Chiefs of Staff Committee had been Ward's informant. No answer was required to the particulars of the information provided Ward, nor as to the person who gave him that information, or the reason for it being given. Finally, no document was missing from official files.⁶⁴

62. AWM 3 DRL 6643. Blamey Papers. Blamey, C in C Diary. Entries for 4-7 July 1943.

63a AA ACT CRS A 432. 56/3036. Pt.(2). Transcript of Royal Commission, pp.36-40;^bFor Curtin's briefing see AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. McLaughlin, Note on Royal Commission, 8.7.43.

64. AA ACT CRS A 463. *Report of Royal Commission ...*, p.4, 8.7.43.

The Royal Commission findings were much as Ward had predicted before it began. Both he and Curtin had admitted in the Parliament that no document was missing from official files.⁶⁵

The Brisbane Line and the 1943 Election

Immediately the Royal Commission closed, the press demanded what action Curtin intended to take on Ward's position in Cabinet. Press reaction to Ward's pleading privilege was generally hostile.^{66a} Labor staff, on the other hand, were sympathetic to Ward. Curtin's secretary, D.K. Rodgers, even went so far as to suggest to Ward's secretary that libel action might be taken over a particularly scurrilous editorial in the *Sun-News Pictorial* which had accused Ward of cowardice.^{66b} But no action was taken despite threats by Barry.^{66c} Perhaps it was an oblique expression of Curtin's support. Curtin himself fobbed off newspaper demands to discipline Ward, wanting to have the report considered by Cabinet.^{66c}

Ward himself went on the attack at a public meeting at Sydney Town Hall on 8 July, upbraiding the press for their attitude to the Labor party and insouciantly repeating his Brisbane Line allegations. The meeting which was organised by the East Sydney Electorate Council and widely publicised, passed a resolution expressing 'complete confidence in Mr Ward and the Curtin Government'.^{67a} Jack Lang, in the *Century*, sought to embarrass Curtin by lobbying for Ward's reinstatement as Minister for Labour and National Service, and emphasised that the 'Brisbane Line' was an election winner for Labor. 'Curtin,' he wrote, may not use the Brisbane Line himself. But every other Labor candidate will'.^{67b}

68a

68b

Curtin ensured that Ward and Fadden saw copies of the Royal Commission report by 12 July. Early that evening, Cabinet had met to

65. See, for the likely course of argument that convinced Lowe, AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. *Royal Commission*. Quealy to Shedden, 22.5.43. Certainly, Curtin appears to have accepted this argument, if only through compulsion.

66. ^aSMH 9.7.43 and Editorial, *Sun-News Pictorial* 8.7.43; ^bMS 2396/13/2-3 Ward Papers. Rodgers to Murphy 8.7.43; ^cMS 2505/8/718. Barry Papers. J.V. Barry to Editor, *Melbourne Herald*, n.d.

67. ^aSMH 10.7.43; ^b*Century* 10.7.43.

discuss what should be done with Ward. After intense debate, it was decided he should remain suspended from his portfolio, because his plea of privilege had 'precluded a determination of the substance of the questions in the terms of reference'.^{68c} The investigations of his charges, therefore could not be completed, until a submission had been made to Parliament in the matter. That is, after the election. At a War Cabinet meeting the next day, Jack Beasley was particularly critical of his erstwhile colleague. All members agreed Ward's allegations about defence plans were 'ill-informed', and had led to a controversy, whereby 'the Government's plans for the defence of Australia might have to be divulged'.^{68d} But high-minded concern about national security was probably not the only cause of War Cabinet complaint about Ward. As Curtin had already realised, he had brought Labor to a position which, if it were not dealt with delicately could lead to political disaster.

Ward, despite his suspension, was allowed to retain his private secretary and one typist from his ministerial staff.^{69a} Immediately, Menzies pointed out that Curtin's refusal to dismiss Ward would support the growing belief that the Prime Minister was prepared to take advantage of the 'Brisbane Line' allegations. Ward would use his ministerial privileges, to secure priority of travel barnstorming Australia to repeat his 'miserable invention'.^{69b} Hughes was similarly critical, and both UAP leaders were supported in their cry for Ward's dismissal by the Melbourne *Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*.^{69c} (Figure 14.)

Lang castigated Curtin for suspending Ward, and was highly scornful of the Royal Commission findings. Never forgetting his enmity with Curtin, he wanted an enquiry into the 'culpability' of the Advisory War Council with respect to defeatist plans, whose existence Curtin, a Council member, had admitted.^{69d}

68.^a AA ACT CRS A 463. 58/1228. Curtin to Ward 10.7.43;^b Telegram, Curtin to Fadden 12.7.43, and Teleprinter Mulrooney to McLaughlin and McLaughlin to Mulrooney, 13.7.43;^c AA ACT CRS 2703. Vol. I. *Cabinet Secretariat (I) Curtin, Forde and Chifley Ministeries ... Minutes of Meeting 12 July, 1943*;^d Dedman, 'The Brisbane Line', p.145; AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. *Royal Commission*. War Cabinet Minute 2967. 13.7.43. AA ACT CRS A 463. 58/1228. Telegram Curtin to Ward, 13.7.43; Letter, Curtin to Ward, 13.7.43.

69.^a Spratt, *op. cit.*, pp.130-131;^b *SMH* 17.7.43; MS 2396/13/8. Ward Papers. Curtin to Ward, 22.7.43, NLA, for Ward's retention of facilities etc.;^c Menzies' criticisms are in Spratt, cited above; for Hughes see *SMH* 16.7.43;^d for press reaction, see *Age*, 14.7.43 and *SMH* 14.7.43;^e for Lang's support of Ward, see *Century* 16.7.43.



E. Wells, 44-74 Flinders St.

Figure 14. Cartoon from Melbourne Herald, 19. 7. 43.

Privately Curtin told journalists that the question of privilege was one to be prescribed by Parliament, but he was somewhat fearful of the dangers in starting to curtail it. He was not surprised at the result of 'the Ward business'.^{70a} Ward remained unrepentant. It had not been in dispute, he told the press, that a document was missing. In the course of the election campaign he would give the public the evidence regarding the defeatist strategy adopted by Menzies and Fadden, and leave it open to the electors to decide his case. The Royal Commission had 'turned out as well as could be expected'.^{70b} So far as he was concerned, the Brisbane Line was the election issue for 1943.

The Opposition, from the outset, were put on the defensive about their responsibility for the nation's alleged defence unpreparedness. To refute this both Menzies and Spender, counter-attacking Labor, had publicly referred to secret cablegrams between the Australian Government and Churchill. These dealt with Curtin's refusal to divert Australian troops to Burma in early 1942, and a proposal by Menzies, made to the United Kingdom Government in 1941, but attributed by Spender to the Labor Cabinet, that Australian troops might be withdrawn from the Mediterranean.^{71a} Hearing of this election propaganda, Churchill requested that Curtin take steps to ensure there were no further 'embarrassing and possibly dangerous disclosures' by those in possession of secret information employed in 'public' political controversy. Perturbed that Churchill might be alluding to the 'Brisbane Line' controversy, Curtin cabled him for further details. Churchill replied strongly that he was not bothered to any extent by the 'Brisbane Line'. He accepted Curtin's view it was a problem that had 'not involved and should not involve the policy of any Government except' the Curtin and Menzies-Fadden Governments.^{71b} Nevertheless, on 3 August, the U.K. High Commissioner requested copies of Justice Lowe's report, possibly for transmission to Churchill. Curtin heard no more of the Brisbane Line from Churchill.^{71c}

70.^aFor Curtin on privilege, Ward, etc. see MS 4675. F.T.Smith Papers. No.72. 14.7.43, NLA;^bWard is cited in Spratt, *op.cit.*, p.130.

71.^aAA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 601. *Election Campaign 1943*. Public references to secret cablegrams.^bFor the matter coming to Churchill's attention see Hudson and Stokes (eds), *DAFP*. Vol. VI, p.468, f/n 6, p.478, f/n 2. See also Shedden note, cited above.

^cFor Churchill's possible further interest AA ACT CRS A 463. 58/1228. McLaughlin to Secretary P.M.'s Department 3.8.43.

Menzies showed how serious a threat he viewed Ward's personal attacks on him, persistent throughout the campaign, and the Brisbane Line allegation itself, in his attempt to repudiate it at his opening campaign speech in Kooyong on 23 July. Labor, he told the UAP faithfuls, had made him 'the principal object of its attacks, with falsification of war history, spirited personal abuse, and the whispering campaign ...' But he declined to reply in kind to the Labor charges.^{72a} Lang, the same day, made Menzies' fears of the danger of the Brisbane Line to the UAP explicit, writing in the *Century*, 'The Brisbane Line was a real gift ... It will ... be used on every platform'. He predicted Labor would have a landslide victory and gain absolute control of the Senate after June 1944.^{72b}

Fadden took the Opposition repudiation to Queensland, his home state. At Ipswich on 24 July, he criticised Labor's record in pre-war defence planning, as 'a sad record of defeatism'. Yet it had the audacity to accuse the Menzies-Fadden Governments of leaving the country defenceless. The Royal Commission had proved 'No one officially, no one politically knew anything about a Brisbane Line until Labor came into office'. At Redcliff, in Brisbane, that night, before an audience of elderly people, he lambasted Ward - 'The only people concerned about the 'Brisbane Line' are people hundreds of miles south of the 'Brisbane Line'.'⁷³

The claim was untrue. Most concerned were the commanders responsible for the defence of North Queensland. They wanted clear direction about policy on the evacuation of civil population in Townsville.

In view of the existing political situation it is felt that any reference of the evacuation question to LHQ for determination of policy would not be welcome at the present time.^{74a}

Curtin made that clear in his opening campaign speech on 26 July, in Fremantle. Brief, but to the point, he blamed the Menzies-Fadden Governments for leaving Australia unprepared for war. Labor had

72.^a For Menzies on the Brisbane Line at Kooyong, 25.7.43 see AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 598. 'Opening Speech of R.G. Menzies, ... delivered at Camberwell Town Hall, 23 July, 1943';^b for Lang, see *Century*.

73. For Fadden in Queensland see, *Brisbane Courier-Mail* 24.7.43, *Sunday Sun* 25.6.43; *Sunday Telegraph* 25.7.43.

rejected the concept that the little islands to the north of Australia would be taken and that upper Queensland and the Darwin area would be overrun by the enemy.

His Government had determined the 'Battle for Australia would be fought in the islands to the north, north-east and north-west ... not in the environs of the peopled areas of the Commonwealth'.^{74^b}

Predictably, both Menzies and Fadden responded angrily, crying that Labor was unfair, and that Curtin had allied himself with Ward.^{75^a} But when Ward opened his campaign on 27 July, no Cabinet Ministers attended. Their absence was noted in the press, but it was more likely an indication, not of displeasure with Ward, but of proper political caution, after the Opposition outcry about Curtin's allusion to the 'Brisbane Line'. Though the meeting was poorly attended, Ward, as Curtin must have realised he would, referred to his leader's policy speech, claiming Curtin's support for all the charges he had made against the previous Governments.^{75^b}

UAP candidates around the country lamented the burden of the 'Brisbane Line' controversy as 'petty in their origins, malevolent in intent and without basis of fact'. Fadden continued to challenge Curtin over his claim of defence unpreparedness under a UAP-UCP administration. Weakly, the Opposition attempted to extol their part in the building up of the AIF.^{76^a} Ward, in turn, proceeded with vicious personal attacks on Menzies, sheeting responsibility home to him for the 'Brisbane Line' and warning that in the event of an anti-Labor victory, Menzies would again be Prime Minister.^{76^b}

Menzies, accepted a challenge by Ward to speak in favour of the endorsed UAP candidate, J.V. Brady at a meeting at St John's Hall, Darlinghurst on 29 July. Shepherded by police through a hostile crowd outside the hall, on his entering five hundred people rose and gave him the Nazi salute. Interjectors were repeatedly warned by both uniformed and plain-clothed police. Menzies was counted out by his audience

74.^a For military concern in North Queensland about the Brisbane Line's effect on evacuation see AWM 54 186/5/14. *Detailed plan of Evacuation of Civilians. Townsville Area*. Gen. A.J. Boase to York force.

Ref. G (O) 1176. 24.7.43;^b For Curtin's policy speech, *SMH* 27.7.43.

75.^a For Menzies/Fadden response to Curtin's policy speech, *SMH* 28/7/43;

^b The *Daily Telegraph* 28.7.43 for Ward's opening campaign speech.

76.^a *Argus*, 26.7.43; *Age*, 30.7.43; *SMH* 30.7.43 for Opposition responses; MS 2396/7/36 Ward Papers. Election pamphlet. 'To the Australian Fighting Men'. 28.7.43, NLA for attack on Menzies.

thirty times, and greeted by cries of 'Pig-iron Bob'. One member of the audience threw a lump of pig-iron wrapped in paper at his feet. Six hecklers were removed. After a considerable length of time, he managed to calm the crowd. Though Menzies was able to defend his Government's record in defence, the crowd broke into uproar when he branded Ward's Brisbane Line allegations a lie. He could not be heard when he tried to explain that Ward and Curtin were at variance over the missing document from official files.

when he tried to leave the meeting under police protection, his way was blocked. A struggle ensued when people tried to swing punches at him. A crowd of over 400 followed as he was escorted down Darlinghurst Road over Kings Cross to a waiting car. Though Menzies was not hit, a police sergeant was struck. The mob continued to shout insults as the car drove off. An impromptu meeting was held. Stan Moran, a prominent Communist, addressing the crowd from the top of a telephone box in Darlinghurst Road, told them Menzies had paid for his temerity in coming to East Sydney, and called for three cheers for the Curtin Government, Eddie Ward and the Communist Party.⁷⁷

In an editorial the *Daily Telegraph* thundered that behaviour of the kind witnessed at St John's Hall could provoke retaliation and turn a peaceful election into a civil war. Meanwhile, Fadden, Hughes and other UAP members were subject to rowdy heckling at their campaign meetings.^{78a} So frequently did this occur that Spender claimed in a radio broadcast that rank and file Labor party members had embarked on 'organised disruptionist tactics' at Opposition election meetings. Attempts to turn the election into a 'law and order' one had failed completely by the 'first week of August.'^{78b} Responsibility for defence preparedness and Opposition unity remained as the principal issues.

Arthur Calwell, speaking in Victoria on the Brisbane Line, the shortage of rifles and ammunition under Menzies and Fadden, and Tocumwal, reiterated in Labor's support the MacArthur statement of 18 March 1943.^{79a} Defence Department bureaucrats in Melbourne enquired of MacArthur's headquarters about the date on which the general had first said the

77. For Menzies' reception in Ward's electorate, see *Age*, 30.7.43 and *Daily Telegraph* 30.7.43.

78. *Daily Telegraph* 31.7.43; for heckling of UAP members by Labor rank and file see above reference and *Courier-Mail* 3.8.43, *SMH* 2.8.43. Spender's unsuccessful attempt to turn the 1943 election into a law and order one, see *Courier-Mail* 7.8.43.

battle for Australia would be fought in New Guinea. Colonel Diller told them that MacArthur had made no formal statement on the matter. He thought it may have been published in the press about 23 March 1942. The enquiry may have originated from Shedden, as it had initially passed through Canberra. Obviously both Shedden and MacArthur were still tetchy about the Brisbane Line.^{79b}

When the Queensland Parliament opened on 28 July, Hanlon, the Queensland Minister for Health and Home Affairs, claimed he was the sole author of the Brisbane Line statement and Ward had repeated it. The conservative INDEPENDENT FOR Cairns, L.J. Barnes, countered that nothing had been done for the defence of Queensland by Curtin's Government, notably North Queensland, until MacArthur had arrived in Australia. All this was preparation for Curtin's arrival in Brisbane the following day.^{80a}

Labor faced a difficult task in Queensland, because of the problems caused by the billeting of troops in private homes and the shortage of foodstuffs, liquor and cigarettes due to the size of the American Army. But Curtin's only allusion to the Brisbane Line was that his Government had passed the supreme test in time of war and held back the invader. His implication was that this could not have been achieved by the Menzies-Fadden Government.^{80b}

By 8 August Curtin was further discrediting the Menzies-Fadden war effort. He denigrated all Opposition claims that he had inherited a going concern from his predecessors because they had raised and despatched the AIF to the Middle East, reintroduced compulsory training, participated in the Empire Air Training Scheme and expanded munitions production. Rather, Japan's entry into the war, the fall of the Malay-Netherlands East Indies barrier, the state and condition of forces in Australia, the danger of the Japanese in New Guinea and Labor's recall of the AIF had saved the nation 'just in the nick of time'. His most

79.^c For Calwell, see *Age*, 29.7.43;^b for Defence Department queries re MacArthur see AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 1300. *Strategic Plans for the Defence of Australia following the arrival of General MacArthur*, copy of outwards teleprinter, Lendam to Weatherby 30.7.43. See also AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 2037. Statements by General MacArthur 1942-1943; Despite a search of major national newspapers around 23 March 1942, I have not been able to find any trace of this alleged 'Brisbane Line' statement.

80.^a For statements in Queensland Parliament, 28.7.43 see Lack, *op.cit.*, pp.220-221^b For Curtin in Queensland, and Labor's difficulties see *Daily Telegraph* 30.7.43.

telling charge was that the Opposition 'had not made adequate preparations in Northern Australia and New Guinea for troops of sufficient strength to be based to oppose the advance of the Japanese'.⁸¹

The bulk of this advice Curtin had got from Shedden. Shedden with the assistance of Sinclair, the Secretary for the Army, was also collecting all the minutes by Howe and Forde on the 'Maryborough Plan', recording them under a personal note headed 'Brisbane Line'. Then, he showed them to Curtin, with eventual unfortunate repercussions for Howe.⁸²

Menzies and Hughes in particular were becoming more desperate to refute the 'Brisbane Line' and associated charges as polling day approached. Curtin's charges of defence unpreparedness they stressed were 'ludicrous, impudent, scandalous lies'. In Adelaide, Menzies heaped scorn on Ward's 'poor little creature, 'the Brisbane Line'.⁸³

In the closing stages of the campaign the anti-Labor parties again resorted to criticising Labor's pre-war defence record, a ploy Curtin had effectively defused by his 8 August speech. Fadden, at Rockhampton in Forde's electorate of Capricornia, turned to personalities. Forde had unsuccessfully tried to cash in on the 'Brisbane Line' which was no longer an election issue. C.P. Ward, the UAP candidate, he introduced as 'Ward from the north of the Brisbane Line and not Eddie Ward from south of the Line'.⁸⁴

Lieutenant-General Sturdee, chafing for more active duty than his Washington post, wrote to Vasey, expressing such a hope in mid-August.^{85a} The findings of the Royal Commission, and the coming election may have stirred his hopes, should there be a change of Government. For another military man, Iven Mackay, there was no satisfaction. Responding to Forde's delayed note on Mackay's request the term 'Brisbane Line' be discontinued within the Army, Curtin quoted Lowe's report that no officer of the Army knew of the 'Brisbane Line' so-called. Because of the publicity accorded the Lowe Report, he felt the point raised by Mackay had been covered.^{85b} There would never be a public making of amends.

81. AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 601. The election campaign, August 1943; Notes on the Labour Government Part in saving Australia from aggression, as used by P.M. on 8.8.43.

82. AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 1300. Personal Note. F.G. Shedden. Brisbane Line.

83. *SMH* 7.8.43; *Age* 5.8.43; *Daily Telegraph* 16.8.43.

84. For Fadden in Queensland see *The Herald* 17.3.43.

85. ^aFor Sturdee see MS 3782. *Vasey Papers*. Box 3. Folder 3. July-December 1943. Vasey to Mrs Vasey 17.8.43, NLA. ^bFor Mackay see AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 568. *Royal Commission*. Curtin to Forde 16.8.43.

On 21 August, Australia went to the polls. Labor won 49 seats to the coalition's 23. The UAP-UCP lost Eden-Monaro, Hume, Morton, Parkes and Robinson to Labor in New South Wales, Lilley in Queensland, though they gained Maranoa, Francis Baker's seat. Baker's loss indicated the Brisbane Line may have been overridden by more local issues, since Baker with his rough-drawn map had figured briefly in the actual controversy. The problems Curtin had striven to negate on his Queensland tour, caused by the influx of US troops had not been overcome. Adelaide, Boothby, Grey and Wakefield were gained by Labor in South Australia. Forrest, Perth and Swan in Western Australia were lost by the coalition, and Denison in Tasmania. Labor had gained fourteen seats, with major swings occurring in New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia, and a lesser swing in Tasmania. Coles and Wilson, the Independents, retained their seats, though Coles won on preferences. Labor ran against him, possibly in retaliation for forcing Curtin to an election. In the Senate Labor carried all States, acquiring a majority from 1 July 1944.

The seats Labor gained in New South Wales, mostly in the west and far south coast, were immaterial to the Brisbane Line controversy, as they would not have been affected by any plans for abandonment. UAP losses in South Australia hit members of Menzies' National Service Group hardest. Conceivably, they were adversely affected by the slur cast on their factional leader, though there was a general dissatisfaction throughout the country towards the established conservative parties. This was reflected in the number of right wing Independents and small conservative groups which had stood for election, undercutting the vote for the established anti-Labor parties by about 15%. Denison was lost by the UAP in Tasmania,^{86a} possibly as a result of claims that the State would have been abandoned by the Menzies-Fadden Government.

Curtin increased his majority in Fremantle by four times the size gained by his opponent, an Independent Nationalist, F.R. Lee. He was on the one hand, praised for his loyalty in not disowning Ward, (or for that matter, the Ward allegations) or on the other, gained sympathy for the embarrassment Ward caused him.^{86b}

86^a Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1942-1945*, pp.366-370.

^b Spratt, *op.cit.*, p.132.

Ward retained his East Sydney seat with an absolute majority of 20,089 votes. He immediately claimed that a large part of Labor's victory was due to his stand on the Brisbane Line.⁸⁷ He may have been correct so far as this pertained to Tasmania and Western Australia. Even in South Australia, where Menzies' National Service Group was heavily defeated, the results could have been a reflection of his Brisbane Line allegations. But Baker's defeat in Maranoa suggests the credit he sought for his Brisbane Line revelations was not necessarily uniform throughout the country. Shedden attributed Labor's victory to the psychological advantage it had on being in power on the outbreak of war with Japan, its contrasting performance to its predecessors and Curtin's leadership qualities, the background of military success in New Guinea and the general improvement of economic conditions. Significantly, he gave no credit whatever to the Brisbane Line controversy. The Opposition failure he blamed on divisiveness within its ranks, the reactionary viewpoint of the National Service Group, which created a fear of conscription for overseas service, its thrust for power, Senate intransigence, and the forcing of an election at a time more advantageous to Labor than the coalition.⁸⁸

* * * * *

Essentially, the Brisbane Line controversy, excluding Ward's allegation of a document missing from official files, was made up of two components: the allegation that there was a Brisbane Line strategy approved of, or established by the Menzies-Fadden Governments; and an allegation that the Menzies-Fadden Government, and they alone, were responsible for allowing Australia to reach a state of defence unpreparedness that would have made it impossible to defend against a Japanese invasion. The latter contention, as an election issue in 1943, tended to cast the concept of a Brisbane Line into the background. Through it, Curtin, using the weapon forged for him by Ward, was able to distance himself in effect from allegations of an actual Brisbane Line.

87. Spratt, *op.cit.*, p.131.

88. AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 601. Notes on the results of the general elections, August, 1943.

Curtin, of course, was not distanced from the Brisbane Line behind the scenes. We have seen that he was the first politician to proclaim the Line's existence - the Maryborough Plan - in September 1942, albeit at a secret press conference. He had encouraged Ward, after MacArthur's 18 March 1943 'Brisbane Line' statement, to pursue the issue for electoral gain. Frank Forde, the Deputy Leader of the Labor party, was also implicated deeply in the controversy: on the one hand, because his ministerial assistant, Howe, was most likely Ward's informant, and on the other, because on 19 May, with Howe, he had told Ward that that document was missing from official files.

Thus, when Ward informed the Parliament on 22 June that there was a document missing from official files, he was endangering the leaders of his own party. Now the Opposition were convinced Ward had finally gone too far, and could be destroyed politically. Opposition leaders, Fadden, Spender and Page, having examined all War Cabinet, Advisory War Council and relevant Defence Department documents, knew there was no missing document.

They had reckoned without the Maryborough Plan. Yet, Labor could not use Howe's claims against their political opponents because its existence could not be proved. Ward compounded his error by connecting the Brisbane Line with the Menzies Cabinet instruction of 10 June 1941, which, Shedden had established with Curtin, was 'extraneous'. Thus when Menzies, Spender and Page clamoured for a Royal Commission into Ward's statement, Curtin grew apprehensive. An investigation as wide-ranging as a Royal Commission might, by destroying the Government's credibility, drag him, Forde, and the Labor party down.

A threat to delay Supply, and another by Coles, the Independent for Henty, to withdraw his support, crucial for Labor maintaining power, left Curtin with no alternative but to accede to Opposition demands for the Royal Commission and Ward's suspension.

Curtin, the masterly tactician, himself called the Royal Commission, taking its establishment out of the hands of Parliament. By doing so, he placed Ward in the position where he could plead parliamentary privilege, and avoid naming his informants, Howe and Forde. Labor, once more, was safe, and the Opposition damned, by Ward's excesses.

Curtin was also faced with the problem that Ward's claim of a missing document had angered Shedden. At the Royal Commission Shedden revenged himself, successfully destroying Ward's credibility before the Royal Commission. The Army too, were perturbed. General Sir Iven Mackay sought advice from Blamey as to how to approach the Commission. Mackay once more became the centre of attention of the Brisbane Line allegations, this time behind the closed doors of the Royal Commission. He reiterated the Army view to Sir Charles Lowe, a tame choice certain to produce findings acceptable to the Government in a time when national security was threatened, and willing to accept Ward's plea of privilege. This view was that in the days of crisis of early 1942, the Army had no choice but to institute the strategy for defending in vital areas, with the limits imposed by lack of trained men and equipment. The vital area strategy was *not* the Brisbane Line. So, Lowe found. And so, correctly, have the Army argued henceforth, angered by the MacArthur charge of defeatism.

Findings of the Royal Commission or no, MacArthur persisted in his claim, though not publicly, much to Shedden's disquiet. More alarming for Curtin were evacuation plans still in place in New South Wales. If put into effect they would add to the verisimilitude that there was a still active Brisbane Line plan, one analagous to Ward's allegations of abandonment of territory. In Queensland, such plans were, like the State New South Wales plans, put into abeyance by the Army for the duration of the election campaign. So politics, as the Army had always feared, affected military planning in mid-1943 election campaign, if only in a small way.

Curtin, nevertheless, benefited from the Royal Commission. Though it was a non-event, the Brisbane Line allegations stuck to Menzies and the UAP. An unchastened Ward cried 'Brisbane Line under Menzies' at every campaign meeting. War Cabinet members assiduously left their rebel alone. Curtin briefly urged the matter on once in his policy speech, then never again. He was brilliant enough to see it was working against his opponents, even with the Royal Commission a squib.

The Opposition were driven to the last resort of all conservative Governments facing defeat, that of 'law and order', but to no avail.

As an issue, the Brisbane Line had a minimum effect on polling day in New South Wales, Victoria, and surprisingly, Queensland. Only in Western Australia, Tasmania, and possibly South Australia, the home of Menzies' National Service Group, was it telling. Other issues militated against Menzies, Fadden and their colleagues.

CHAPTER 10

THE 'LINE' LINGERS ON

Despite Labor's victory in the 1943 elections, almost certainly in part due to the 'Brisbane Line' controversy, Eddie Ward still faced problems within the party. The conviction that he had put the Government in a position where their plans for the defence of Australia might have to be divulged, had grown within the party.

Before Parliament had reconvened on 21 June, there had been military plans evolved for the implementation of a denial of resources policy in Northern Queensland and Northern New South Wales.^{1a} Forces in Northwest Australia had been reduced, because of the improvement in the strategic position. Nevertheless, in the event of major operations, demolitions were to be carried out as ordered.^{1b} While there were no firm plans for either scorched earth policy or evacuation, the various contingencies were probably known to the War Cabinet. Moreover, in time of crisis, the strategy for priority of defence of the vital south-east and south-west areas, still stood, as did plans for the abandonment of Darwin.^{1c} Ward's Brisbane Line allegations were sufficiently close to actual current operational plans to be a risk to national security. The revelation of these plans, implemented under Curtin, would have been very damaging to Labor, since it had made charges of defeatism against Menzies and Fadden the lynch-pin of their campaign.

Post-electoral Consequences of the Brisbane Line Controversy

The New South Wales Trades and Labour Council from 26 August to 2nd September heatedly debated whether Curtin should be forced to re-appoint

1.^aFor the various defence plans, especially scorched earth being considered during the course of the Brisbane Line controversy see: AWM 54 243/6/123. *Denial of Resources to the Enemy, Directive for Guidance in formation of detailed plans, December 1941-September 1942.* Demolitions in First Aust. Army Area. Answers to questions by GS (ops). Adv. LHQ; Appendix A to G (O) 1079 of 13.6.43, in *ibid.*, and Appendix A to First Army G (O) 1123 of 28.6.43;^bFor Northwest Australia see AWM 54 243/6/21 3 Aust. Corps Op. Inst. No.59. 5.8.43.& For evacuation policy in Queensland see previous chapter. For vital area strategy and Darwin see Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

Ward as Minister for Labour and National Service. Finally, they decided to support Ward's case for return to Cabinet, but not exert pressure on either Curtin or Caucus to bring that return about.^{2a} Lang, with his pipeline into the inner councils of the ALP, applied pressure for Ward to be reinstated, exposing plans to isolate him in the forthcoming Caucus ballot.^{2b}

Curtin no longer wanted Ward in Cabinet. He let his feelings be known, but did not issue a ticket. Ward, nevertheless, was successful in the first ballot. He was allocated the lesser portfolios of Territories and Transport.^{3a} Probably because of this demotion, he and Curtin argued the next day. Curtin told him bluntly he had not wanted him in Cabinet. Ward spat back that he had not wanted Curtin as leader, so that evened matters between them.^{3b}

After being sworn in, Ward immediately assumed his Ministerial duties, despite the doubts about his position that remained because Parliament had not dealt with the results of the Royal Commission.^{4a} When Parliament resumed on 24 September, Curtin was ill, and the Opposition did not raise the matter of Ward's appointment. Curtin, when questioned on the matter, said that Ward's status would be a matter for discussion for the Cabinet.^{4b}

When Curtin tabled the Lowe report in Parliament on 28 September, Menzies moved the debate be adjourned. Menzies was now the new leader of the UAP, having supplanted Hughes after the election. Re-organisation of his party had prompted him to end the coalition with the Country Party, thus straining relations between the erstwhile allies.^{5a} By 15 October both Spender and Menzies believed the 'Brisbane Line' was a dead issue.^{5b} When, that day, the matter arose for debate both had appointments in Sydney connected with the UAP's re-organisation.^{5c} The matter was relegated to a junior Member, Harold Holt.^{5d}

2.^aSMH 27.8.43; and 2.9.43 and 3.9.43. *Daily Telegraph* 3.9.43. ^bFor Lang see *Century* 3.9.43 and 10.9.43.

3.^aFor the goings on in the Caucus meeting of 20.9.43 see MS 5977/15/518. Dedman Papers (ALP). 'The Selection of Labor Ministers 1941-1946', pp.3-4 NLA and Spratt, *op.cit.*, p.132; ^bfor the dispute between Ward and Curtin see D. Whittington, *The House Will Divide*, Melbourne, 1969, p.121.

4.^aSMH 25.9.43 and 28.9.43.

5.^aSpratt, *op.cit.*, p.135. ^bSpender, *op.cit.*, p.226. ^cAA ACT CRS A 463, item 58/1228. ^d*Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates* 28.9.43.

Holt made it clear the Opposition did not want to revive the 'Brisbane Line' controversy. He emphasised the Commission's finding that no document was missing from official files and the only strategy approximating the 'Brisbane Line' was that found in Mackay's 4 February 1942 memorandum. His main targets however, were Ward himself, and Curtin, for not continuing his suspension.

Ward abused Menzies and Spender for not being present at the debate, defended his plea of parliamentary privilege, criticised the Royal Commission's limited terms of reference, accused the Opposition of not wanting a full enquiry into the Brisbane Line, and repeated the bulk of his Brisbane Line allegations.

Speaking for the Country Party, Archie Cameron offered the usual refutation of Ward's charges. Both he and Fadden criticised Menzies and Spender for not being present at the debate, calling attention to the low attendance of Opposition members in the Chamber. Page took exception to Ward's retention as a Minister, and moved the debate be adjourned. The Parliament went into recess. Though the Brisbane Line debate continued to appear on the business paper for the next sittings, it was never resumed. Later Menzies defended his absence from the House, quipping he did not feel called upon to reply to anything said by Ward.⁶

One interested spectator at this last debate was Major Howe. Curtin felt his attendance was 'not without significance'. Three weeks later Curtin refused a representation from Forde that Howe be promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, on Shedden's advice,

that it was extraordinary that, at the time that the report of the Royal Commission was being considered by Parliament, such a step should be taken ...⁷

Shedden, of course, knew Howe was possibly Ward's informant.

Curtin must not have been pleased that Menzies, as soon as he became leader of the UAP had withdrawn from the Advisory War Council. While other factors influenced this decision⁸ the disruption of a working relationship between the Government and the Opposition caused by the Brisbane Line controversy must have played its part.

6. AA ACT CRS A 463. 58/1228. *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*. Debate on Alleged Missing Documents relating to Defence Plans Report of Royal Commission. 15.10.43.
7. AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 1300. Personal note of Sir F. Shedden - Parliamentary Debate of Report of Royal Commission on the Brisbane Line. 9.11.43.
8. Spender, *op.cit.*, pp.229-236.

Mackay, Blamey, MacArthur and Bennett

Inklings surfaced of Army disquiet about the allegations of a 'Brisbane Line', not entirely put to rest by the Royal Commission. An AIF officer, on 23 October 1943, told a Perth RSL audience that he had learnt at Duntroon in 1940 that the 'Brisbane Line' had originated with Lord Kitchener in 1911 during his visit to Australia to advise the Commonwealth on defence. Kitchener, he claimed, believed 'Australia had to fight within her coasts' as 'she would not successfully defend further north or west of what is now known as the Brisbane Line'.⁹ This would not be the last attempt to relegate Ward's purported accusations to the status of a historical curiosity, which had no foundation in fact.

Mackay had been on his second command in New Guinea since 22 September.^{10^a} Suggestions that the general might be appointed High Commissioner to New Zealand, Mackay himself saw as a 'kite ... being flown to ascertain local opinion'.^{10^b}

But instead, he was posted as High Commissioner to India at the end of October. This was not a well-regarded post. The Government, and sections of the Army, no longer had faith in his ability. This decline in Mackay's reputation can be dated from his presentation to Forde on 4 February 1942 of the memorandum on the defence of Australia, as can be seen by Blamey's placing him in command of the Second Army backwater.¹¹ The conclusion is inescapable that Mackay's advocacy of the February memorandum, and the resulting 'Brisbane Line' controversy, combined with encroaching age, led to a decline in his career.

By 1 November, Curtin had become engrossed in the revised war effort. Writing to MacArthur on the subject, he referred to the effects of the return of the AIF and the arrival of the United States forces in Australia. These, he told the General, had enabled MacArthur to transform his strategy 'from a defensive one on the mainland to a defence of the mainland from the line of the Owen Stanley Range'. MacArthur strongly disagreed with Curtin in his reply. He told the Prime Minister it was

9. *Canberra Times* 21.10.43.
10. Date of beginning of Mackay's second term in New Guinea in AWM 3 DRL 6643. Blamey Papers. C in C Diary. Entry 12.9.43; ⁶³DRL 6643. Blamey Papers. 170.3. DO Letters Mackay. Mackay to Blamey, 14.7.43.
11. MS 3782. Vasey Papers. Box 3. Folder 3. July to December, 1943. Vasey to Mrs Vasey 3.11.43 NLA; *ibid.*, Vasey to Mrs Vasey 10.11.43.

never his intention 'to defend Australia from the mainland'.

That was the plan when I arrived, but to which I never subscribed. I immediately changed to a plan to defend Australia in New Guinea.¹²

Curtin immediately realised MacArthur was again implying the existence of a 'Brisbane Line'. Obtaining a copy of MacArthur's 18 March 1943 statement, and the 'off the record' background advice by one of MacArthur's aides - which had surfaced during the 1943 election campaign after Arthur Calwell had raised the MacArthur statement - that MacArthur had decided to fight the battle for Australia in New Guinea three days after his arrival in Australia, he wrote Blamey on 16 November that this statement was untraceable. He told the Australian general he thought the matter of 'some importance at least, historically' and asked for an investigation of what the plans of the General Staff were in 1941, how they were changed with the increase of forces in Australia, what instructions MacArthur issued after his arrival, and at what date.¹³

Blamey, with his deep UAP sympathies, was immediately suspicious of Curtin's interest. He wrote to Shedden asking whether, since MacArthur had not arrived in Australia until February 1942 (in fact MacArthur had arrived in March) whether it was Curtin's intention to have him investigate General Staff plans in early 1942, 'not in 1941'.^{14 a} Shedden wrote back a week later that the reference to 1941 was a typographical error, and Curtin required an examination of the General Staff plans in early 1942.^{14 b} Typographical error or not, the 1941 date suggests Curtin still believed in the existence of the 'Brisbane Line'. Shedden, who had gone to great pains to demonstrate that no such strategy existed, could be guaranteed to advise Curtin of the futility of enquiring into 1941 General Staff plans.

The anti-Labor parties, notably the UAP, were becoming a potential threat to Labor. The efforts of Menzies and others since the August election debacle were resulting in a unification of the UAP, which was becoming evident by the end of 1943.¹⁵ It may have occurred to Curtin

12. AWM 3 DRL 6643. Blamey Papers. Vol. V. M (99). Curtin to MacArthur 1.11.43 quoted in Curtin to Blamey 16.11.43; AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 1300. General MacArthur's Op.Inst. No.2 quoted in Blamey to Curtin 28.1.44, p.3.

13. AWM 3 DRL 6643. Blamey Papers. Vol. V. M (99). Curtin to Blamey 16.1.44.

14. a AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 1300. *Strategical Plans for the Defence of Australia following the Arrival of General MacArthur*. Blamey to Shedden, 1.12.43; b Shedden to Blamey, 7.12.43.

15. For details, see, J.R. Williams, 'Emergence of the Liberal Party of Australia', *Australian Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No.1, March 1967. *passim*.

that there was a further possibility of discrediting Menzies if he could establish some substance in MacArthur's 'Brisbane Line' claims.

Blamey's eventual reply on 28 January 1944, put an end to such hopes. With a mass of supporting papers attached, showing that from 10 to 27 April 1942, it was his intention to defend the bulk of Australia, he pointed out that MacArthur's 'first directive relating to a general plan' was of 'an entirely different nature', concentrating on the prevention of enemy landings on the north-east and south-western coast of New Guinea, a protective role which continued from 25 April 1942 to 25 May 1942. There were no instructions located, despite an exhaustive search, substantiating MacArthur's statement that 'on assuming command he immediately changed existing plans for the defence of Australia'. MacArthur may have intended 'to ultimately defend Australia from New Guinea, as additional forces became available'. Blamey himself had recognised the importance of Port Moresby for 'future offensive operations' two days before MacArthur had issued his operational instruction of 25 April 1942. 'There is no justification for General MacArthur's statement'.¹⁶

Curtin received Blamey's explanation the following day. That afternoon, 29 January, possibly at Curtin's suggestion, Ward conferred with Blamey.¹⁷ There is no record of their discussion but possibly Curtin had asked Blamey to show his recalcitrant Minister what he had evidently accepted as incontrovertible proof that the Brisbane Line did not exist. At last, Curtin seems to have definitely realised that the 'Maryborough Plan' was a fallacy.

Possibly partly because of that recognition, Lieutenant-General Sturdee was recalled from Washington. Though he refused to be specific, Curtin gave the press the impression that Sturdee would receive an important position on his return.¹⁸

Blamey had not forgiven Bennett for his escape from Singapore in February 1942. In March 1944 he refused Bennett an active command.

16. AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 1300. Blamey to Curtin 28.1.44.

17. AWM 3 DRL 6643. Blamey Papers. C in C Diary. Entry for 29.1.44.

18. MS 4675. F.T.Smith Papers. No.90. 19.1.44, NLA. Sturdee was recalled before Curtin received Blamey's 28.1.44 letter. Possibly Curtin had been suspicious of Howe's allegations previously; Blamey's letter may have been the last nail in the coffin.

Bennett on 4 April asked to be relieved of his command. On returning to civilian life in May 1944, he alleged he had been 'sidetracked to the Western Australian command, when on his return from Singapore he had exposed the weaknesses of the Brisbane Line'.¹⁹

This allegation was taken up by Eddie Ward, as vindication for the charges he made during the Brisbane Line controversy. He made several unsuccessful attempts to see the Bennett resignation file, but both Forde and Curtin refused to co-operate with him. Not until February 1945 did he cease importuning them and Shedden on the matter, when Curtin told him there was nothing on the Brisbane Line in the Bennett file, and no need for Ward to see the file.²⁰

In the Cold War of the 1950's the Communist Party used allegations of the existence of a Brisbane Line under Menzies as part of their propaganda. Both Eddie Ward and Arthur Calwell, in the early 1960's maintained that Menzies was responsible for the Brisbane Line strategy during World War II. General Mackay however, insisted the Line was something created by politicians.²¹

19. AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 264. Retirement of General Gordon Bennett 26.5.44. *Daily Telegraph* 2.5.44.

20. See, for example, MS 2396/13/45-46. Ward Papers. Hugh Murphy to Ward 4.5.44. NLA, and MS 2396/13/45-46. Ward Papers. Australian Worker Extract of Press Cutting. NLA and MS 2396/1/61. Ward Papers. Press Release 22.5.44. NLA. The correspondence between Forde, Curtin, Shedden and Ward over Bennett's resignation is copious. See AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 264. *Lt. Gen. H.G. Bennett - Return to Civil Life* 21.4.44 - 4.10.45. *passim*. MS 2396/1/55-56, and item 58. Ward Papers. Ward to Forde 1.7.44 and Forde to Ward 13.7.44, Ward to Curtin 28.7.44 resp. NLA. See also AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 1300. Brisbane Line File. Personal note 19.7.44. AA ACT CRS A 5954. Shedden Papers. Box 264. Note by Shedden 12.2.45.

21. Communist Party Referendum Leaflet. September 1951.

* * * * *

There were immediate effects of the Brisbane Line controversy after the 1943 election. Curtin's main problem was what to do with Ward in the Cabinet. Opposition reluctance to pursue the 'Brisbane Line' in Parliament, partly because of the immense damage the allegations seem to have done them electorally, made his task not as difficult as he may have thought. The general hope, in the months following Labor's victory, was that perhaps the controversy would fade.

Menzies was ~~revivifying~~ the UAP. MacArthur, inadvertently, provided Curtin with a hint that the Brisbane Line might exist. The temptation to use it to vilify Menzies and his colleagues may have been too much. Blamey and Shedden were not co-operative. Blamey tried to provide what he believed to be incontrovertible proof that, MacArthur or otherwise, the Brisbane Line did not exist. Curtin accepted his explanation. Ward did not. As the war slowly drew to a close, he appears to have become obsessed with attempting to prove the 'Brisbane Line' did exist, taking his cue from extravagant claims from a disgusted Gordon Bennett, who had been refused active command by Blamey, and resigned his commission in retaliation.

CONCLUSION

What was the Brisbane Line?

What was the Brisbane Line? Certainly not the Kitchener Line of 1909-1910. That was as mythical as the 'Brisbane Line' itself and persisted for as long.

Eddie Ward claimed it was a plan under the Menzies-Fadden Government, to abandon the whole of Northern Australia to the Japanese without firing a shot. General Douglas MacArthur claimed it was a line of defence drawn just north of Brisbane. Both were wrong.

Certainly, the strategy to defend the vital south-east areas and south-west areas, did not plan for the defence of the North, partly because the General Staff recognised that for Australia to be able to wage war it was essential to protect the vital industrial and economic centres where war production took place, and partly because they did not have the trained men, arms and equipment necessary to protect the whole of Australia. But this did not mean that the North would be left undefended by local troops. Indeed, the strategy for defending the vital industrial areas was the only sound military strategy whereby Australia could be successfully held, if invaded. But it was not a Brisbane Line, as defined by either Ward or MacArthur.

On 21 February 1936, a sub-committee of the Defence Committee, of which Frederick Shedden was Secretary, wrote of a parallel of latitude 'just North of Brisbane' below which most forces would be concentrated. This line, which Shedden appears to have had a part in deciding, or at least knew of, is the only Line I have discovered which approximates a Brisbane Line.

So, how did the strategy for defence of vital areas come to be confused with the 'Brisbane Line'? Primarily, the confusion occurred through the fortunes of politics. The vital area strategy was partially operational only from February 1941, when Fadden was acting Prime Minister while Menzies was overseas. Not until 11 December, 1941, when Curtin was in power as Labor Prime Minister did it become fully operational, the prerequisite of full mobilization, without which the

concentration of troops to defend the vital areas could not take effect, not having been authorised until that date.

A little less than two months later, on 4 February 1942, General Sir Iven Mackay drew up a memorandum embodying a plan for the defence of Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania. This memorandum he submitted of his own volition to Frank Forde, Curtin's Minister for Army. It suggested that perhaps parts of Queensland north of Brisbane might have to be conceded to the enemy in the event of invasion. Forde rejected Mackay's suggestions and War Cabinet instructed the Chief of General Staff, Sturdee, that the whole of Australia was to be defended, a strategically impossible task. Curtin, hospitalized at the time the Mackay memorandum came before Cabinet, appears to have reversed the Forde-inspired instruction once well. The strategy henceforth remained operational, for the economic and strategic reasons outlined above.

When the Brisbane Line controversy was at its height in May 1943, Shedden advised Curtin that the only plan submitted either to his Government or the Menzies-Fadden Governments resembling a Brisbane Line was the Mackay memorandum. Falsely, Mackay's vital area of Brisbane to Melbourne was labelled the Brisbane Line. Shedden's advice was possibly partly prompted by a desire to hide his own part in devising the line mentioned in the 1936 sub-committee report, referred to above.

Concurrent with the Mackay memorandum, Curtin's War Cabinet, and the Advisory War Council, had clarified Federal evacuation policy to the State Premiers on 4 February 1942. Following the advice of the Chief of General Staff, Sturdee, they resolved *not* to evacuate the healthy from threatened areas unless these areas were actual target areas contiguous to the target areas. This policy, and a denial of resources to the enemy directive, not approved until April 1942, were similar to charges later made by Ward against Menzies and Fadden, that civilians and territory would be abandoned to the enemy. Yet concentration of forces at Brisbane and southwards, a policy of non-evacuation and scorched earth policy - strains of Ward's accusations - all occurred under the Curtin Labor Government, not under Menzies and Fadden. These three policies, taken together, could be said to make up the components of the Brisbane Line, under Curtin. Yet, they were not, in themselves, a Brisbane Line.

Shortly after American officers arrived in Australia in late 1941, early 1942, they asked the Australian Chiefs of Staff where they intended to place lines of attack or counter-attack. In early to mid-March 1942, before the arrival of General MacArthur, the USAFIA had drawn up such a plan, but do not seem to have put it into effect. Chronology dictates that these were the only plans MacArthur could have been advised of immediately after his arrival in Australia. They were not, and could not have been, Australian plans.

Yet it was an Australian plan MacArthur claimed was the Brisbane Line. He decided to misread the vital area strategy as the Brisbane Line, which he did not learn of until 24 March 1942, five days after 18 March, when he claimed he was first told of the Brisbane Line. The confusion between vital area strategy and the Brisbane Line, therefore, was maintained.

The Brisbane Line of the political controversy of 1942-43, that Ward continually alluded to, was none of the above lines. His allegations were initially concerned with the responsibility of the Menzies-Fadden Government for lack of defence preparedness. When he spoke of the Brisbane Line, he was referring to a claim made by Major Howe, one of Forde's ministerial staff, of an appreciation supposedly compiled by Sturdee while Chief of General Staff and submitted to, but rejected by, the UAP Minister for the Army, Spender, in 1941. This line ran from Geraldton in Western Australia to Maryborough in Queensland. Should that line be breached, another would be established from near Adelaide to Maryborough. All territory north of these lines would be abandoned to the enemy, and the enemy held along the lines. Howe's recollection was either confused, or he otherwise invested the Maryborough Plan in the hope of ensuring Menzies would never be re-elected. This plan most probably never existed. Nevertheless, its existence was taken as fact by the Labor party. It was the basis of most of Ward's Brisbane Line charges.

A final canard needs to be disposed of. Some New Left historians, notably Drew Cottle, and to a lesser extent, Humphrey McQueen, have proposed there was a plan by the Menzies 1939-1941 Government to hand over all of Australia north of a line drawn from Adelaide to Brisbane to the Japanese, voluntarily. A Vichy-like Australian state would be

set up in the south with Menzies at its head. There is no evidence in the available documents for this theory, which originated in an excess of Wardian rhetoric in the closing days of the Brisbane Line controversy.

* * * * *

One of the main thrusts of the Brisbane Line controversy (and the Brisbane Line myth) was that somehow the Menzies-Fadden Governments were responsible for Australia being in that state of defence unpreparedness that necessitated the 'Brisbane Line' strategy. This, I have shown was an inaccurate charge. The Menzies-Fadden Governments did as much as possible to look to Australia's home defence requirements. Where they failed was in not recognising the Japanese threat earlier (if that was possible), and therefore not making preparations to counter it. A greater failure was their reliance on Britain, and on Churchill in particular, and, to a lesser extent, on the Singapore strategy.

While the Labor party was critical of the shortcomings of the Menzies-Fadden Governments when Labor was in Opposition (especially on the question of the despatch of the AIF overseas, and the formation of the Empire Air Training Scheme) they generally agreed with many of the strategical decisions made by their predecessors, albeit sometimes behind a rhetoric of criticism of UAP-UCP policy. This assent was a major cause of the Opposition's fury against Labor during the Brisbane Line controversy, for it was seen that Labor was behaving hypocritically.

The irony of the Brisbane Line controversy itself was that in 1942-43 Labor had in place, and operational, the strategy of defending vital areas, (barring the dispute with Forde over the Mackay memorandum in February 1942), scorched earth policy, and a policy of not evacuating the able-bodied from threatened areas. Labor was putting into practice the same policies Ward was accusing Menzies, Fadden and Spender of.

This situation made the Brisbane Line controversy a double-edged sword for Labor, the dangers of using which John Curtin avoided by deft political footwork. Curtin's part in the Brisbane Line controversy was just as significant as Ward's. While Menzies and company pointed this out at the time (as did the press) in their criticisms of his continued silence, they possibly did not realize how deeply implicated Curtin had been initially in stirring up the controversy. This, Curtin possibly feared, might be revealed in a Royal Commission over which Parliament had control. By announcing the Commission himself, he ensured his, and Ward's protection.

By setting up the circumstance whereby Ward could avoid testimony before the Royal Commission by pleading parliamentary privilege, Curtin had made certain the Commission's findings would not rebound on his Government, as could have easily happened. Whether Curtin's behaviour during the Brisbane Line controversy was, as Hasluck claimed, 'below his customarily high standards of honesty and courage', or whether it was, in fact, characteristic of Curtin's whole style as a politician is not a question which could be determined within the limits of this thesis. His conduct in the Brisbane Line controversy certainly suggests that a more probing analysis should be made of Curtin's political career than has hitherto been undertaken.

No writer has previously come to terms with the identity of Ward's informant. Now we know that Ward had two informants on the Brisbane Line, Frank Forde's ministerial adviser, Major Howe, and Forde himself. Forde, Deputy Leader of the ALP, a member of the War Cabinet and of the Advisory War Council, by informing Ward a document was missing from the files, not official files, had inadvertently placed his own career, and the Government in jeopardy. Thus Labor had further reason to ensure the Royal Commission was a non-event.

Another characteristic of the controversy which was of importance was that Labor, and Ward in particular, were ready to believe that a plan like the Brisbane Line, which abandoned half of Australia to the Japanese, was of a type the UAP-UCP were eminently capable of adopting. Labor's ready acceptance of Howe's allegations was characteristic of the suspicion which the ALP viewed their political opponents.

The role of the senior public servant in the counsels of Government, if Sir Frederick Shedden is any example, needs to be reassessed. D.M. Horner has shown him in *High Command* to be an 'eminence grise' of great influence. But the Brisbane Line controversy suggests he was not entirely the relatively impartial adviser Horner depicted. Throughout the controversy Shedden gave advice to Curtin that was possibly partly motivated by a desire to protect himself, given his involvement in the 'Line' of 21 February, 1936, and partly by a desire to protect his former masters, the anti-Labor leaders. Moreover, concerning the specific allegation of the missing document he was understandably concerned to protect his own reputation as War Cabinet, Cabinet and Advisory War Council Secretary. In general terms, too, the position he assumed, demonstrates yet again his power in the determination of defence policy during World War II.

The story of the Brisbane Line strategy and the Brisbane Line controversy throws light on the inter-relationships between politicians and the military. The vital area strategy misdescribed as the 'Brisbane Line' was the only sound military strategy for Australian mainland defence in the dangerous years 1941 to 1943. Yet the politicians, for electoral purposes, were willing to instruct the Army to abandon that strategy, because if it was discovered, they thought it would endanger their seats. With great commonsense, the military ignored the strategical stupidity imposed on them by the militarily ignorant, looking, quite properly, to the effective defence of the continent, not the electoral well-being of their political masters. At the generals' insistence, the correct strategy was not abandoned.

But, of those courageous enough to propose such a politically unpalatable plan, several - notably Mackay - were made to suffer in their careers. Only Blamey, more astute politically, was able to avoid the displeasure of his civil superiors. This he achieved through maintaining the strategy, but distancing himself from the political repercussions.

Finally, the Brisbane Line controversy illuminates, through the actions of the US Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in the Southwest Pacific Area, the value of the American alliance in its earliest days. Contrary to popular myth, the United States Forces were not based in Australia to save the continent from Japanese invasion. The Americans in Australia were to launch an offensive to Rabaul, the Philippines and, eventually Japan. If that meant, especially, the loss of north and northwest Australia to Japan, to be later regained, then so be it. Curtin's protests at this grand strategical perception met from MacArthur a tawdry, if unsuccessful attempt at political blackmail.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. *Manuscript Sources:*

(a) *Mitchell Library. New South Wales*

H. G. Bennett Papers.

(b) *Australian National Library, Canberra*

Australian Labor Party Secretariat. 1936.

Australian Labor Party Secretariat. Includes material 1939-43.

R. G. Casey Papers.

Alfred Deakin Papers.

J. J. Dedman Papers.

W. M. Hughes Papers.

R. G. Menzies Papers.

Earle Page Papers.

Archdale Parkhill Papers.

G. Pearce Papers.

F. T. Smith Papers.

P. C. Spender Papers.

Vasey Family Papers.

E. J. Ward Papers.

(c) *Australian War Memorial*

i) *Personal Papers*

Major-General A. S. Allen Papers.

Field-Marshal Thomas Blamey Papers.

I. Chapman. Personal Papers for Mackay biography.

Item 31. [Major Howe Papers] Correspondence.

Minister for the Army and Prime Minister Menzies.

General Sir Iven Mackay Papers.

George Pearce Papers.

Lieutenant-General S. Rowell Papers.

ii) *Other*

A considerable number of files were consulted at the Australian War Memorial. Primarily, these were in the AWM 54 243/- series.

I have not listed them individually in the bibliography, but they can be found in the footnotes.

The following files were of particular interest for the light they threw on the strategy for concentration of troops in vital areas, scorched earth policy and evacuation policy.

AWM 54 183/5/14. Detailed Plan of Evacuation of civilians from the Townsville area, July, 1943. (covers instructions from c. June 1942).

AWM 54 243/6/60. "Copy of an extract from G3 Journal. Relative to a defined area in Australia (Brisbane to Melbourne) representing the vital area to be held by our limited forces in February, 1942.

Includes memorandum from GOC Home Forces (GEN. MACKAY) to the Minister for the Army, 4.2.42, relinquishing of certain areas of Australia to the enemy.

AWM 54 243/6/40. Combined Planning Committee Appreciation for the Defence of Northern Command, December, 1941.

AWM 54 243/6/41. Darwin Defence Scheme. July 1941.

AWM 54 243/6/119. Plans for the Defence of the Darwin Area.

AWM 54 243/6/123. Denial of Resources to the Enemy. Directive for Guidance in formation of Detailed Plans, December 1941 - September 1942.

AWM 54 243/6/148. Measures for Defence of Civilian Population. 1944.

AWM 54 243/8/159. General Staff Appreciation and Outline Plan, designed on basis concentration of troops, Sydney, Newcastle, Ballarat Areas, 1929-1930.

AWM 54 577/7/32. Documents and Notes used in writing Vol.5 Army. SWPA. First Year.

(d) *Australian Archives*

(i) *Personal Papers*

AA M141 6 5. Curtin Papers.

AA ACT CRS A5954 for Sir F.G. Shedden Papers. (This collection is over 2,000 Boxes. It is an invaluable source for any historian working in Australian History in World War II, ranging from c.1905 to the 1950's. Shedden kept War Cabinet and Advisory War Council Minutes, Personal notes, advice to Ministers and so on. Partly the material in the Shedden file was responsible for revealing the existence of the 'Maryborough Plan'.)

(ii) *Other*

AA ACT CRS A816. Department of Defence Correspondence Files. Multiple Number Series (Class 301) Classified.

AA ACT CRS A816. 14/301/238. *Defence of Queensland, 1942.*

AA ACT CRS A432. Item 56/3036. Pt. (i) and (II).
The Brisbane Line.

AA ACT CRS A463. 58/1228.

AA ACT CRS A1608. Item A52711. *Brisbane Line, 1943.*

AA ACT CRS A1608. Item AO 39/1/3. Pt.I. *Brisbane Line, 1943.*

AA ACT CRS 2684. Department Defence. *Appreciation on the Defence of Australia and the Anzac Area.*

Apart from the above files which pertained to the Brisbane Line, the Brisbane Line controversy, and the Royal Commission into the allegation of a missing document, I also consulted the following War Cabinet and Advisory War Council files.

AA ACT CRS A2670. Defence Department War Cabinet Secretariat.
 AA ACT CRS A2700. Vol.I. War Cabinet Secretariat (I).
 AA ACT CRS A2671. Defence Department III. War Cabinet Secretariat. War Cabinet Agenda.
 AWC ACT CRS A2682. Vol.VII. Advisory War Council Minutes.
 AA ACT CRS A2703. Vol.I. Cabinet Secretariat I. Curtin, Forde, and Chifley Ministries.

II. *Parliamentary and other Official Papers:*

Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, Volumes 159, May 1939; 172, December, 1942; 184, March 1943; 175, June, 1943; 187, June 1946; 7, September 1955; 38, May 1963.
 House of Representatives Debates. Senate Debate in June 1943, only.
Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia. No.14. Melbourne, 1921.
Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia. No.34. Canberra. 1941.

III. *Newspapers and Periodicals:*

The bulk of newspapers and periodicals listed below were in the period 1931-1945.

Adelaide Advertiser
Australian Worker
Age (Melbourne)
Argus (Melbourne)
Brisbane Telegraph
Bulletin
Canberra Times
Century
Courier-Mail (Brisbane)
Daily Mail (Paris)
Daily Mirror (Sydney)
Daily Telegraph (Sydney)
Herald (Melbourne)
Melbourne Sun

New York Times
Otago Daily News (New Zealand)
San Francisco News
Sun News Pictorial
Sunday Telegraph (Brisbane)
Sunday Sun (Brisbane)
Sydney Morning Herald
The Times (London)
Tribune
Truth

IV. *Document Collections*

W. J. Hudson and H.J.W. Stokes (eds) *Documents in Australian Foreign Policy 1937-1949. Vol.IV. July 1940-June 1941.* Canberra. 1980.

W. J. Hudson and H.J.W. Stokes (eds) *Documents in Australian Foreign Policy 1937-1949. Vol.V. July 1941-June 1942.* Canberra. 1982.

W. J. Hudson and H.J.W. Stokes (eds) *Documents in Australian Foreign Policy 1937-1949. Vol.VI. July 1942-December 1943.* Canberra. 1983.

H. Kenway, H.J.W. Stokes and P.G. Edwards, *Documents in Australian Foreign Policy 1937-1949, Vol.III. January-June 1940.* Canberra. 1979.

Neville Meaney (ed.) *Australia and the World, A Documentary History from 1870's to 1970's.* Melbourne. 1985.

J. Robertson and J. McCarthy (eds) *Australian War Strategy, 1939-1945. A Documentary History.* Saint Lucia. 1985.

P. Weller and B. Lloyd (eds) *Caucus Minutes. Vol.III. 1932-1949.* Melbourne. 1975.

V. *Contemporary Works and Memoirs*

J. P. Buckley, 'Sir Frederick Shedden, K.C.M.G., O.B.E., Defence Strategist, Administrator and Public Servant,' *Defence Force Journal*, 50, Jan/Feb. 1981.

J. P. Buckley, 'Lieutenant General Sir Vernon Sturdee', *Defence Force Journal*, 41, July/Aug., 1983.
(Buckley was close to Shedden, and was Sturdee's son-in-law.)

N. Carlyon, *I Remember Blamey*, South Melbourne, 1980.

A. Chandler (ed.) *Papers of Dwight D. Eisenhower. The War Years. I.* Baltimore. 1970.

A. Chester, *John Curtin*, Melbourne, 1943.

Erle Cox, *Fool's Harvest*, Melbourne, 1938.

J. J. Dedman, 'The Brisbane Line', *Australian Outlook*, Vol.22, August 1968.

J. J. Dedman, 'Defence Policy Before Pearl Harbour', in *Australian Journal of Political History*, 13, 3, 1977.

A. Fadden, *They Called Me Artie*, Brisbane, 1969.

P. Hasluck, *Diplomatic Witness. Australian Foreign Affairs, 1941-1947.* Melbourne, 1980.

Peter Heydon, *Quiet Decision. A Study of George Foster Pearce*. Melbourne, 1965. (Heydon was Pearce's secretary for several years.)

E. Holt, *Politics is People*, Sydney, 1969.

Sir Percy Joske, *Sir Robert Menzies. 1894-1978. A New Informal memoir*. Sydney, 1978.

J. Larcombe, *Defence of Australia*, Rockhampton, May, 1954.

R. Lockwood, *What is in Document J?* Freedom Press, Everglades, Canberra, 1954.

Enid Lyons, *Among Carrion Crows*, Sydney, 1977.

General Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, London, 1964.

Norman John Makin, *Federal Labor Leaders*, Sydney, 1961.

R. G. Menzies, *Afternoon Light*, Melbourne, 1967.

R. G. Menzies, *The Measure of the Years*, Melbourne, 1970.

L. L. Robson (ed.) *Australian Commentaries. Select Articles from the Round Table, 1911-1942*, Melbourne, 1975.

S. F. Rowell, *Full Circle*, Melbourne, 1974.

P. C. Spender, *Politics and a Man*, Sydney, 1972.

John Thompson, *On the Lips of Living Men*, Melbourne, 1962.

A. Watt, *Australian Diplomat*, Sydney, 1972.

D. Whittington, *Strive to be Fair. An Unfinished Autobiography*. Canberra, 1977.

D. Whittington, *The House Will Divide: A Review of Australian Federal Politics*, Melbourne, 1969.

VI. *Later Works*

E. M. Andrews, *A History of Australian Foreign Policy : From Dependence to Independence*, Melbourne, 1979.

E. M. Andrews, *Australia and China, the ambiguous Relationship*, Melbourne, 1985.

E. M. Andrews, *Isolation and Appeasement in Australia. Reactions to the European Crises, 1935-1939*. Canberra, 1970.

Australian Dictionary of Biography, 1891-1939. Vols. 8, 9, Melbourne, 1981, 1983.

- R. Barker, 'High Politics and Low Cunning', *Government and Opposition* 7.1. (Winter 1972) pp.9-107.
- John Barrett, *Falling In Australians and Boy Conscription. 1911-1915.* Sydney, 1979.
- R. J. Bell, *Unequal Allies : Australian-American Relations and the Pacific War*, Melbourne, 1977.
- C. Bridge, 'R. G. Casey's contribution to Australian war Policy, 1939-1942', *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, 9, 1981.
- C. Bridge, 'R. G. Casey and Origins of the Pacific War, 1940-42', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol.28, No.2, 1982.
- C. Bridge, 'Impact of India on British High Politics. The Limits of Cowlingism', *South Asia*, New Series, V. 2. (1982) pp.12-23.
- Paul Burns, 'The Brisbane Line in Australian Literature', *Notes and Furphies, Bulletin of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature*, No.17, October, 1986. Armidale.
- Brian Carroll, *From Barton to Fraser. Every Australian Prime Minister.* Melbourne, 1978.
- I. Chapman, *Iven G. Mackay. Citizen and Soldier*, Sydney, 1975.
- J. Costello, *The Pacific War*, London, 1985.
- Maurice Cowling, *Nature and Limits of Political Science*, Cambridge, 1963.
- Maurice Cowling, *Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution*, Cambridge, 1967, pp.5-6.
- Maurice Cowling, *Impact of Labor*, Cambridge, 1971.
- Maurice Cowling, *Impact of Hitler*, Cambridge, 1975.
- R. P. Davis, 'Edmund Dwyer-Grey' in *Australian Dictionary of Biography, 1891-1939*, Vol.8, Melbourne, 1981.
- I. Dowsing, *Curtin of Australia*, Blackburn, 1969.
- P. G. Edwards, 'Menzies and the Imperial Connection, 1939-1941', in C. Hazlehurst, (ed.) *Australian Conservatism. Essays in 20th Century Political History*, Canberra, 1978.
- George Fairbanks, 'Isolationism v. Imperialism : the 1937 Election', *Politics*, Vol.II, No.2, 1967.
- P. Firkins, *Of Nautilus and Eagles : History of the Royal Australian Navy*, Stanmore, 1975.
- R. F. Fitzhardinge, *W. M. Hughes, The Little Digger. 1914-1952. Volume II. A political Biography*, Sydney, 1979.

- R. F. Fitzhardinge, 'William Morris Hughes' in *Australian Dictionary of Biography, 1891-1939, Vol.9*, Canberra, 1983.
- Paul Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1939-1941*, Canberra, 1952.
- Paul Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1942-1945*, Canberra, 1970.
- C. Hazlehurst (ed.) *Australian Conservatism. Essays in 20th Century Political History*, Canberra, 1978.
- C. Hazlehurst, *Menzies Observed*, Sydney, 1977.
- Xavier Herbert, *Poor Fellow, My Country*, Sydney, 1975.
- John Herington, *Air War Against Germany and Italy, 1939-43*, Canberra, 1954.
- J. Hetherington, *Blamey ; Controversial Soldier, A biography of Field Marshal Sir Thomas Blamey, GBS, KCB, CMG, DSO, ED*, Canberra, 1973.
- D. M. Horner, 'Australian Estimates of the Japanese threat, 1905-1941' in P. Towle (ed.) *Estimating Foreign Military Power*, London, 1982.
- D. M. Horner (ed.) *The Commanders. Australian Military Leadership in the Twentieth Century*, Sydney, 1984.
- D. M. Horner, *Crisis of Command, Australian Generalship and the Japanese Threat, 1941-1943*, Sydney, 1977.
- D. M. Horner, *High Command. Australian and Allied Strategy, 1939-1945*, Canberra, 1982.
- D. M. Horner, 'Lieutenant General Sir Sydney Rowell: Dismissal of a Corps Commander' in D.M. Horner (ed.) *The Commanders. Australian Military Leadership in the Twentieth Century*, Sydney, 1984.
- D. M. Horner, 'Major-General George Alan Vasey: Commander, 7th Australian Division' in D.M. Horner (ed.) *The Commanders. Australian Military Leadership in the Twentieth Century*, Sydney, 1984.
- D. M. Horner, 'Lieutenant-General V.A.H. Sturdee: The Chief of the General Staff as Commander', in D.M. Horner (ed.) *The Commanders. Australian Military Leadership in the Twentieth Century*, Sydney, 1984.
- W. J. Hudson, *Australia and the League of Nations*, Sydney, 1980.
- Colin A Hughes, *Mr. Prime Minister. Australian Prime Ministers, 1901-1972*, Melbourne, 1972.
- C. Lack, *Three Decades of Queensland Political History, [1962], [n.d.]*
- N. E. Lee, *John Curtin, Saviour of Australia*, Melbourne, 1983.
- Frank Legge, *The Gordon Bennett Story*, Sydney, 1965.
- R. Lewin, *The American Magic*, Harmondsworth, 1984.

- A. B. Lodge, 'Lieutenant-General Sir John Lavarack: From Chief of the General Staff to Corps Commander' in D.M. Horner (ed.) *The Commanders. Australian Military Leadership in the Twentieth Century*, Sydney, 1984.
- A. B. Lodge, 'Lieutenant-General Henry Gordon Bennett : a model Major General?' in D.M. Horner (ed.) *The Commanders. Australian Military Leadership in the Twentieth Century*, Sydney, 1984.
- A. B. Lodge, *The Fall of General Gordon Bennett*, North Sydney, 1986.
- Gavin Long, *MacArthur as Military Commander*, Sydney, 1969.
- Dudley McCarthy, *The Southwest Pacific Area. The First Year*, Canberra, 1959.
- J. McCarthy, *Australia and Imperial Defence. A Study in Air and Sea Power, 1919-1939*, St Lucia, 1976.
- Philip Magnus, *Kitchener. Portrait of an Imperialist*, London, 1958.
- William Manchester, *American Caesar : Douglas MacArthur, 1880 1964*, Boston, 1978.
- Neville Meaney, *Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901-1914*, Sydney, 1976.
- Martin Middlebrook and Patrick Mahoney, *Battleship: The Loss of the Prince of Wales and the Repulse*, London, 1977.
- D. J. Murphy, 'Andrew Fisher' in *Australian Dictionary of Biography, 1891-1939*, Vol.8, Melbourne, 1981.
- Bede Nairn, 'Jack Lang', *Australian Dictionary of Biography, 1891-1939*, Vol.9, Melbourne, 1983.
- N. Rosenthal, *Sir Charles Lowe : a biographical memoir*, Melbourne, 1968.
- Steven Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars*, Vol.II, London, 1976.
- Lloyd Ross, *John Curtin : A biography*, Sydney, 1977.
- G. St. Barclay, 'Australia Looks to America: The Wartime Relationship 1939-42' in *Pacific Historical Review*, 46, 25, 1977.
- Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun. The American War with Japan*, London, 1984.
- E. Spratt, *Eddie Ward, Firebrand of East Sydney*, Adelaide, 1965.
(Contains some primary source material re allegations about the missing document made by Ward not found elsewhere, even in the Ward Papers.)
- F. S. ~~Stephenson~~^{Stephens} (ed.) *Racism : The Australian Experience. A Study of Race Prejudice in Australia. Vol.1. Prejudice and Xenophobia*, 1974.
- C. Thorne, *Allies of a Kind : The United States, Britain and the War Against Japan, 1941-1945*, London, 1978.

Robert Thornton, 'Invaluable Ally or Imminent Aggressor? Australia and Japanese Naval Assistance 1914-1918', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 12, 1983.

Robert Thornton, 'The Semblance of Security : Australia and the Washington Conference, 1921-1922', *Australian Outlook*, 32, 1978.

L.C.F. Turner, 'The Crisis of Japanese Strategy, January-June, 1942', *Royal Military College Historical Journal*, Vol.1, March 1972.

Guy Kerney, 'General Sir Brudenell White : The Staff Officer as Commander' in D.M. Horner (ed.) *The Commanders. Australian Military Leadership in the Twentieth Century*, Sydney, 1984.

Russel Ward, *A Nation for a Continent. The History of Australia. 1901-1975*, Melbourne, 1977.

Lionel Wigmore, *The Japanese Thrust*, Canberra, 1957.

J. R. Williams, 'The Emergence of the Liberal Party of Australia', *Australian Quarterly*, Vol.39, No.1, March 1967.

N. P. Willmott, *Empires in the Balance. Japanese and Allied Pacific Strategies to April 1942*, Maryland, 1982.

A. T. Yarwood, *Asian Migration to Australia. The Background to Exclusion*. Melbourne, 1964.

A. T. Yarwood, 'Attitudes toward Non-European Migrants' in F.S. Stephens (ed.) *Racism : The Australian Experience. A Study of Race Prejudice in Australia. Vol. I. Prejudice and Xenophobia*.

A. T. Yarwood, *Attitudes to Non European Migration*, Melbourne, 1968.

A. T. Yarwood and M. K. Knowling, *Race Relations in Australia*, Melbourne, 1982.

VII. *Theses and Unpublished Works*

Drew Cottle, 'The Commanding Heights of Treachery : Sydney's Rich Appeasers 1938-1942', *1938 Bicentennial History Project. Wrong Way Go Back Conference*. Sydney University, February, 1979.

Peter Love, *Labor at War : Australian Labor Party and Conscription 1942-1943*, B.A. Hons., Latrobe University, 1975.

Robert Walton, 'Japanese Espionage in Australia, 1909-41 : A Preliminary Survey of Types and Methods', Australian War Memorial History Conference, 11-15 February, 1985.

David Wilde, *Curtin and the Secret War in Australia 1941-42*. B.A. Hons. Thesis, Flinders University, 1980.