

Institute of Social Change and Critical Inquiry

SUMMER SCHOLARSHIP REPORT

The ISCCI summer scholarship gave me the opportunity to begin preliminary research for my honours thesis, examining why Jehovah's Witnesses were banned in Australia in World War Two. The topic appeared to me to be an important one because of its implications, particularly regarding state oppression of religion during wartime. On the surface, the matter seemed fairly straightforward: the banning an unpopular religion at the first opportunity. There did not appear to be much secondary material, and the archival material was of an unknown quality and relevance. The scholarship allowed me both to complete most of the secondary readings and discover the archives. As a result, my honours thesis has been transformed. Archival research piqued my curiosity and broadened the questions the thesis will examine. I am now sure that this topic is of interest as much for its own sake, as a window into a particular battle between religion and state during wartime, as for its implications for civil liberties. It is a much more interesting and important topic than the dearth of secondary material suggests, and I hope that my honours thesis will help to redress this imbalance.

SUMMARY OF SUMMER RESEARCH

Consultations and Contacts

One of the main benefits of the ISCCI summer scholarship for me has been regular consultation with my supervisor, Associate Professor John McQuilton. He has encouraged me to air my ideas and has helped me to refine them, in a very supportive environment. Attending the ISCCI summer scholarship presentation also led me into casual conversation with Associate Professor Greg Melleuish, who happened to have a copy of the only journal article in existence relating to the banning of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Second World War.

Whilst conducting research on Jehovah's Witnesses, I made contact with Mr Randall Watters, a prominent ex-Witness who is now head of an ex-Witness web-site www.freeminds.org. This website has old Witness publications for sale, including relevant material from the 1930s and 1940s. Mr Watters also introduced me via email to Dr Jerry Bergman of Northwest State College, Ohio, who has written a bibliography of material concerning Jehovah's Witnesses and has promised to send me anything he has that might be helpful. These contacts are valuable because they provide access to literature not available directly from Jehovah's Witnesses.

Secondary Readings

The secondary material available consists mostly of brief references to the banning of Jehovah's Witnesses in World War Two, and is therefore of assistance primarily on a contextual basis. However, the journal article mentioned above, 'The Closure of Radio 5KA, January 1941' by Peter Strawhan, was very helpful. Strawhan has not only given a history of the closure of radio stations owned and controlled by Jehovah's Witnesses which led to the banning, but also pointed me in the direction of archives housed in Melbourne and Adelaide.

Another secondary source of immense importance is those of Jehovah's Witnesses themselves. The histories written in 1983 and 1993 are helpful in that they outline the events that occurred according to their own position. Reading these histories has made me aware of the cat-and-mouse game played between religion and state, which made me wonder how much the Witnesses were implicated in their own banning. This will be a further line of research I will undertake using contemporary military intelligence files.

For more information regarding my secondary readings research, please see the attached Annotated Bibliography.

Primary Documents

The ISCCI summer scholarship enabled me to travel to Canberra to initiate research in the National Archives. Having never previously visited the National Archives, this enabled me to become familiar with the process of ordering and researching archives. Out of a possible 80 archives, I examined 13 on the basis of relevance to my core question. In doing so, I found that the files which were marked generally, such as 'correspondence' or 'statements, memos' were more valuable, in that they contained 'unofficial' information as opposed to nondescript official memos, papers and receipts. For my purposes, the files marked 'unofficial correspondence' were a goldmine, as they contained letters from members of the public and religious organisations regarding Jehovah's Witnesses, and also the replies to these letters from the Attorney-General's Department. These enabled me to build up a picture of the social aspect of the banning.

For more information on my archival research, please see the Summary: Canberra Archives attached.

Further Research

Now that I have completed preliminary research, I am aware of the amount of archival material that it will be necessary for me to examine in the course of my honours thesis. I now have a list of both archival material and two further secondary readings that I must peruse when I start my honours thesis. The

ISCCI summer scholarship has been invaluable in allowing me to set my course for my honours year. I now feel more confident that there is research material available, and I also now have specific questions to examine in order to construct my thesis.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY.

Beckford, James A, *The Trumpet of Prophecy: A Sociological Study of Jehovah's Witnesses*. Basil Blackwell & Molt Limited, Oxford, 1975.

This sociological study which focuses on Great Britain also contains historical information.

Bolton, Geoffrey, *The Oxford History of Australia: The Middle Way 1942-1988*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1993.

Bolton described the banning of Jehovah's Witnesses as 'harassment' and mentioned the exclusion of Jehovah's Witness children from Victorian primary schools for refusing to salute the flag.

Darian-Smith, Kate, 'War and Australian Society' in Joan Beaumont (ed), *Australia's War: 1939-45*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest NSW, 1996, pp 54-81.

This chapter provides the societal context in which Australia banned Jehovah's Witnesses and other minority groups.

Day, David, *Contraband and Controversy: The Customs House of Australia from 1901*. Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1996.

Day's history of the Customs Department contains some relevant information regarding the pressure from the Attorney-General's Department in November 1940 to declare Jehovah's Witness publications as 'subversive'.

Grizzuti-Harrison, Barbara, *Visions of Glory: A History and a Memory of Jehovah's Witnesses*. Robert Hale, London, 1980.

This book is an overview of the history of Jehovah's Witnesses written by an American ex-Witness, and includes her personal experiences.

Hall, Richard, *The Secret State: Australia's Spy Industry*. Cassell Australia, Stanmore NSW, 1978.

This book contains a letter from the American Consulate to the Secretary of State in 1941 outlining the reasons why Jehovah's Witnesses were banned in Australia.

Hasluck, Paul, *The Government and the People, 1939-1941*. Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1965 (1952).

Hasluck's history describes the National Security Regulations which were used to ban Jehovah's Witnesses.

Hasluck, Paul, *The Government and the People, 1942-1945*. Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1970.

Hasluck briefly mentions the banning of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Lee, David, 'Politics and Government', in Joan Beaumont (ed), *Australia's War: 1939-45*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest NSW, 1996, pp 82-106.

Lee's chapter contains information regarding federal politics during World War Two, which was valuable in providing an overall political context to the banning of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Massam, Katherine & Smith, John H, 'There Was Another Weapon: The Churches on the Homefront' in Jenny Gregory (ed), *On the Homefront: Western Australia and World War II*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands WA, 1996, pp 149-61.

This chapter details a fight which broke out between members of the RSL and Jehovah's Witnesses in Adelaide in 1945.

Oliver, Bobbie, *Peacemongers: Conscientious Objectors to Military Service in Australia, 1911-1945*. Fremantle Arts Creative Press, South Fremantle WA, 1997.

This book, which concentrates on the experiences of conscientious objectors in Western Australia, contains some information regarding the banning of Jehovah's Witnesses in World War Two.

Oliver, Bobbie & Latter, W S, 'Spooks, Spies and Subversives! The Wartime Security Service' in Jenny Gregory (ed), *On the Homefront: Western Australia and World War II*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands WA, 1996, pp 176-85.

This chapter contains a brief overview of the regulations governing the banning of Jehovah's Witnesses and their subsequent status as conscientious objectors.

Peet, Lindsay J, 'The Men Who Stayed Behind' in Jenny Gregory (ed), *On the Homefront: Western Australia and World War II*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands WA, 1996, pp 38-55.

This chapter contains a brief mention of the banning of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Penton, M James, *Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses*. 2nd Edn, University of Toronto Press Inc, Toronto, 1999.

Penton's comprehensive history of Jehovah's Witnesses includes an examination of their world-view and mentions the allegations of a link between the Witnesses and communism, and the Witnesses' belief that clergy opposition was the main factor behind their proscription in World War Two.

Strawhan, Peter, 'The Closure of Radio 5KA, January 1941', *Historical Studies*, Vol 21, No 85, October 1985, pp 550-564.

This most valuable article examines the radio station closures leading to the banning of Jehovah's Witnesses. Strawhan is critical of the government for their intolerance and for bowing to pressure. He concludes that there is no real evidence that the Witnesses were subversive.

Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society of Pennsylvania, Watchtower Bible & Tract Society of New York, Inc, *Jehovah's Witnesses: Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*. International Bible Students Association, Brooklyn NY, 1993.

This book is the official history of Jehovah's Witnesses and includes the organisation's view of the reasons they were banned in Australia in 1941.

Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society of Pennsylvania, Watchtower Bible & Tract Society of New York, Inc, *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*. International Bible Students Association, Brooklyn NY, 1983, p 34.

This yearbook contains a history of Jehovah's Witnesses in Australia, including their banning and subsequent underground activity during World War Two.

Yonan, Gabriele, 'Spiritual Resistance of Christian Conviction in Nazi Germany: the case of the Jehovah's Witnesses', *Journal of Church and State*, Spring 99, v41, i2, p 307(1).

Yonan's article describes the pre-millennial chiliastic thinking of Jehovah's Witnesses which led to their persecution in Nazi Germany.

SUMMARY: CANBERRA ARCHIVES

JWs – Investigations into Australian Activities – JWs – 7 Beresford Road, Strathfield – Taking Over By the Military. Series no A467, Control Symbol SF43/13, Contents date range 18.2.42-27.6.42. Barcode 99438. *Electronic*

- A-G's Department re Army using printery at Strathfield. Motor vehicles. Boats. Suitable premises for 5 Supply Personnel Company. Premises taken over "for purposes connected with the prosecution of the war".
- Dr Evatt: "If there is a law left in the land you will win your case".
- 24 hours' notice.
- JWs wanted emergency hospital in extra space (? – weird). Pg 33 – harsh letter by A-G. Pg 37 – no further consideration be given to JWs. Pg 38 – Letter by Rees.

JWs – Investigations into Australian Activities – JWs – Wireless Stations 5KA, 5AV, 2HD. Series no A467, CS SF43/29. Contents date range 20.6.41-27.7.42. *Electronic*

- Sport Radio Broadcasting (5KA) and Port Augusta Broadcasting (5AV). Shareholders accounts. Letter from Mayor of Port Augusta. NSW/Qld radio stations. Controlled by JWs. Colyer? 1937.

JWs – Investigations into Australian Activities – JWs – Control of Wireless Stations in Australia (2HD, 4AT, 5AV & 5KA). Series no A467, CS SF42/26. Contents date range 16.8.40-1.12.44. *Electronic*

- Statements of Rees etc.
- The companies owning above stations, together with the WT, have issued a writ against the Commonwealth and the P-G asking for an injunction and claiming damages.
- Letter to Sir George Knowles, Sec, A-G's Dept; report from P-G's Department.
- 1940 Yearbook.
- Letter re Methodist ministers approving re convention 1941. Letter from member of public.
- *Canberra Times* 10.1.41 re information being broadcast by JW stations 2HD Newcastle, 4AT Atherton Qld, 5KA Adelaide and 5AU Port Augusta. Navy accused. Not specific. *Canberra Times* 9.1.41.
- Letter from Hughes – negative JWs. From Hemsley, ex-employee. Records of Dep Commiss Fed Tax Adel re radios.

JWs – Investigations into Australian Activities – JWs – PMG’s Cabinet Meeting. Series no A467, CS SF43/19. Contents date range 4.2.41-7.2.41. Electronic

- Order issued by the Chief of Naval Staff under the Wireless Stations Control Order under National Security (Gen) Regs. 8.1.41 directed to cease transmission.
- 17.1.41 – JWs banned, WT, Int, Adel, Consolation Pub.
- Reports by Mil Int to the Chief of Gen Staff 21.11.40; by Dir Inv Branch to the Sec, Att-Gen, 27.9.40.
- 1940 Yearbook – 5 courageous radio stations vs Catholic-Fascists.
- Lots of extracts from various reports, memos re ownership of radios.
- Not disloyal – “*all* nations should cease to exist, as a necessary prelude to the return of the kingdom of Christ to this earth”.
- *Smith’s Weekly* – bitter campaign against JWs.

Prohibited Publications “Golden Age”. Calendars. JWs and WTB Society. Cabinet Minute. Prohibited Publications, Seditious. Series no A425 (A425/122). CS 1939/1345. Contents date range 1936-1940. Department of Trade and Customs, Correspondence File.

- Minute Paper, 2/1939, “designed to overthrow the existing order of religious matters in every country of the world”, “offensive to all Christians”, “religious bigotry coupled with suggestions of international political intrigue between religious denominations and the rulers of certain foreign countries”; “Communist propaganda designed to overthrow Christianity”.
- Cabinet Minute re (fortnightly) *Golden Age*: “Christianity and the State are attacked in wanton and unnecessarily insulting language”. Canada. Similar to communism, reaching “poor and ignorant”. Blasphemous? If banned = seditious.
- *Golden Age* contents – Labor and Economics, Social and Educational, Finance-Commerce-Transportation, Political – Domestic & Foreign, Science and Invention, Home and Health, Religion and Philosophy. Snide cartoons. Very provocative against Catholic Church. Very US-based. Quite political.
- Letter from Aus National Secretariat of Catholic Action 15.11.38 to MP Perkins. Minister for Trade & Customs: “disunity”.
- Letter 2.4.37 – man re Witness wife.
- Original complaint from St Vincent De Paul Society – 10.2.36.

JWs – Activities of – Correspondence from other than official sources re. Series no A472. CS W1125 Part 1. Contents date range 1940-1940. Att-Gen's Department.

- 30.9.40 letter re mob/clergy by JW. "Be British". Dr Mannix and Father Coughlin's Christian Fronters.
- WT Press. Pro-British. NZ banned JWs.
- Letter by N Clarke JW re Dorothy McAllan – "JWs are true Britishers".
- Declaring War Emergency Committee against JWs.
- Gilroy, Archbishop of Sydney, sent in 'Big Business and Religion' by J Best, Archdeacon of Ballarat re JWs. 12.40
- Letter by mad JW – predictions.
- Noosa Shire Council 14.11.40. "definitely inimical to the country's war effort and that they are more or less openly disloyal".
- MP Brand letter 13.11.40 against "Light".
- JWs say 'Fifth Column' is Vatican. Booklet 'Judge Rutherford uncovers Fifth Column'.
- *West Australian* 7.11.40. Politicians, magistrates against.
- Municipality of Kentish against.
- JW open letter to NSW Premier.
- Narraburra Grogan Farmers & Settlers Association.
- 29.10.40 letter to *The Advertiser* – "they are now carrying out an intensive campaign to undermine the war effort". Communists – war to kill off "lower classes".
- A-G & JW swap scriptures! Nov 1940.
- Hughes agrees with Kitcher's letter 31.10.40.
- Hughes: "They are a curious people, and we are watching them closely". 31.10.40.
- North Coast United Protestant Association – for Witnesses against Catholics. Hughes reproves.
- Letter 26.10.40.
- Bishop of Ballarat's Open Letter 31.3.37.
- Rev R F Tacon 12.10.40.
- Letter from Vacluse – mad JW!
- Archbishop of Sydney.
- Telegram from Ad JWs – "we are a hundred percent with you as defender of the faith".
- 6.7.40 returned soldier – "For God's sake put your foot down on such stuff".
- Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Aus, Orange Sub-branch. 18.6.40.
- Letter from Archbishop Mannix 30.4.40.
- Copies *Consolation*. Aus.

General – Procedure under National Security (Subversive Organisations) Regulations to Declare Illegal Organisation, To Wit:- JWs. Series no A373 (A373/1), CS 1551A Part 2. Contents date range 1940-49.

- Ethnic associations (Italian), Communist League of Australia, Revolutionary Workers' League, Australia Youth Council et al banned 1940/41.
- Two boats Sydney Harbour.
- Gazette.

General – JWs, Alexander MacGillivray – Head of Organisation in Australia. Series no A373, CS 1551A Part 3. 1940-49. Commonwealth Investigation Branch.

- Transfer of 7 Peace Officers from Strathfield because of being indiscreet. Commonwealth "been over generous to these people" 21.7.41.
- 11.7.41 "militant aggressive attitude now adopted". Assaults, refusal for bags to be searched and several minor occurrences. MacGillivray – bullet wound in arm.
- *SMH* 8.7.41. *Melbourne Herald* 7.7.41. *SMH* 7.7.41.

NSW – JWs, Boats – "Lightbearer" and "Lightray". Series no A373 (A373/1), CS 1551B Part 4. 1940-49.

- Auxiliary ketch "Lightbearer" and launch "Lightray" seized Jan 41.

JWs. Series no A11672, CS 1/175. 1940-44.

- 1944 letter from Chief Publicity Censor: "in the past ... out of step with the war effort".
- Ad for pen-friends in *New Idea* for witnessing! 1942.
- Ads in papers re legal position in US.
- Letter 22.10.40.
- 18.11.40 – "It's silly and offensive, but could hardly be described as subversive".

JWs – Activities of – Correspondence other than official sources re Series no A472, CS W1125 Part 2. 1940-46.

- Groups opposed to banning on freedom grounds.
- Hughes, March 41, funny letter re scriptures.
- Lismore Protestant Society – for.
- *The Herald* 24.6.41.
- Letter Feb 42: “so persistand [sic] and so mealey mouthed”.
- Vicar’s letter against.
- Letter from husband of witness against.
- MacGillivray died? (by 1944)

War Section – JWs – Policy. Series no A1608, CS 039/2/3. 1940-45.

- Letter 19.7.40 from Premier Tasmania to PM. Against. 30.7.40 from Premier SA to PM. 7.40 Premier NSW. Gov Fiji.
- SA Crown Sol’s report. Provocative, disloyal, subversive activity.
- NZ reasons – telegram. Against other religions and state – subversive, corrupt national unity, destroy national morale.
- 11.11.40 Premier NSW: “the feeling of indignation against the org is increasing rapidly”.
- 22.11.40 A-G letter. Already several prosecutions for subversive literature.
- 2.12.40 A-G letter – Section 116 of the Constitution: “the Commonwealth shall not make any law for ... prohibiting the free exercise of any religion ...” JWs state not a religion, but prob yes.
- Radio station stuff.
- NZ – policy advised. 1.41. Correspondence 17.7.41.
- Navy information – actual words of broadcast re *Stratheda* and *Mauretania*.
- Hansard 28.1.43 – still under ban.
- Letter RSL Glenelg re disturbance 11.5.45.

JWs – Investigations into Australian Activities – JWs – Statements, Memos etc. Series no A467 (A467/1), CS SF43/5. 28.6.40-30.8.40.

- Sets out who complained eg Premiers, Army.
- 4 page report of doctrines etc and more – draft minutes. History of org, US as well.
- Court docs re hawking 1940.
- Court re amplifying car 1940.