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GREAT AUSTRALIANS

Charles Hawker

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Charles Hawker

CHARLES ALLAN SEYMOUR HAWKER was born on 16 May 1894 at Bungaree, near Clare, South Australia, the son of Michael Seymour Hawker and his wife Elizabeth Begg, *née* McFarlane. His family came from pioneer settlers. One of his mother's grandfathers was a banker in Adelaide, the other held land at Mount Barker and served in parliament; her father acquired Wellington Lodge, a sheep station on Lake Alexandrina. Michael Hawker's grandfather, Rear-Admiral Edward Hawker, was granted 2,560 acres near Braidwood, New South Wales, in 1827 and later bought land in South Australia and New Zealand; he also gave generous support to missionary work of the Church of England and to the Colonial Bishops' Fund. He never came to Australia but sent three of his sons to Adelaide and lent them money to take up land. They settled in 1841 at Bungaree, a station ninety miles from Adelaide and then the northernmost settlement. The eldest son, George Charles Hawker, later bought out his brothers.

Through George's efforts the undulating hills of Bungaree became one of the wealthiest properties in South Australia. Sheep of Macarthur's Camden breed were brought overland from New South Wales and formed a stud of merinos that came into strong demand for their large frames and strong constitution. They were also particularly suited for the low rainfall pas-

toral country, where they stood up to dry conditions.

In 1845 George Hawker married Elizabeth, eldest daughter of Henry Conway Seymour of Killanoola station, Naracoorte. At Bungaree the first mud hut was replaced by a fine two-storied homestead with a pleasant garden. There George lived like a squire, reared a large family, endowed the church of St Michael and employed over a hundred shepherds. He bought and leased near-by land and rented more further afield. By 1870 he held over 2,500 square miles and was shearing 150,000 sheep. He also had a town house in Adelaide and was prominent in politics for twenty-seven years, serving as Speaker in the House of Assembly and later as a member of several ministries. Long before he died in 1895, rabbits, periodic droughts and taxes on land and income were restricting the big pastoralists. Bungaree was reduced to 80,000 acres and the hard pioneering was over.

George Hawker left his estates to his six surviving sons, who worked together for eleven years as Hawker Brothers. In 1906 when the properties were equally divided Michael Hawker drew a share of the stud sheep and a section which he called North Bungaree. There he followed his father's pattern, built a stone house, won repute for his sheep and acquired outback stations. His fortunes fluctuated; he never equalled his father's wealth, but prospered moderately. He retained much of the family tradition and a passionate loyalty to the Crown. He was a generous but particular employer and his quiet resolution contrasted with his wife's direct decisiveness and forthright speech; all these traits his son Charles richly inherited.

When he was three Charles went with his parents to Britain for two years. On their return to Adelaide they built a new home, Pirralilla, in the near-by hills of

GEORGE HAWKER'S HOUSE AT BUNGAREE

Aldgate. Pirralilla was spacious and well furnished, in the style of an English country house, with pleasant views, and acres of lawn and garden, planted with imported trees and flowering shrubs. As the family grew —there were four children—a tennis court and a large concrete swimming pool were added. Charles learnt to shoot and at his grandparents' station, Wellington Lodge, had his first swimming lessons from an Aboriginal lubra. Although an active child, he soon showed an interest in books. He went to the local school, often racing his pony against the butcher boy's. He always had plenty of assurance and took a leading part in all the youthful games, playing with great zest and laughter. He was checked from extremes by his father's firmness and his parents' special qualification for entertaining the young.

At ten Charles was of medium build, with dark hair

and hazel eyes. From an early age he had dined with his parents and learned to talk with adults naturally and without conceit. In 1905 he was sent to Geelong Church of England Grammar School, and spent the next eight years there. Each speech day he carried off prizes in divinity, history, maths or languages, besides distinguishing himself in swimming and performing well in athletics. He rowed twice in the senior eight, in his last year became a school prefect, librarian, editor of the school magazine, and corporal in the cadet corps, and served on many committees, taking a lively part in all the activities at school camps on the Barwon River and spending many free Saturdays rambling in the You Yang hills. He accepted cheerfully the boarders' spartan routine of early rising, cold showers, and unheated classrooms, and liked doing things that were rigorous, exciting and demanded endurance. Though full of fun, he rarely broke bounds; he did not look for trouble but never ran away when it came, and so won respect and liking from masters and schoolmates for his self reliance, fair play and open friendliness. He enjoyed the high quality of the teaching, absorbed the deeper art of self discipline and his spirit of service steadily developed. In generous and practical ways he retained his attachment to the School throughout his life.

So equipped he went to Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1913. His studies were stimulated by tutors, among them two socialists whose doctrines he vigorously criticized and from whom he won friendship and respect for intellectual honesty. He enjoyed college life, entertained in his rooms, rowed, played tennis, joined the University Regiment and regularly attended the College chapel.

For the summer vacation in 1914 he went to north Scotland, where his father had rented a fine house with a moor so that Charles could entertain friends and shoot

grouse. On 4 August, war was declared against Germany. Charles returned to London, joined the 6th Battalion of the Somerset Light Infantry, received his commission and moved with the regiment to Aldershot for hard training.

HAWKER — SOLDIER

In the delays and muddle of those early days equipment came through very slowly, sickness abounded and daily marches through the mud were monotonous. His regiment did not get machine guns for nine months and had little practice with them before moving to the western front on 21 May 1915. Charles had already won praise for consideration to his men, and was promoted first lieutenant on 1 August. On the 16th, after harrowing weeks in the trenches and several narrow escapes, he was struck on the head by shrapnel splinters. They were removed at a field dressing station and he returned to duty.

On 25 September at the battle of Loos, while leading his men in a diversionary attack against German positions, he was badly wounded by a shell which burst close to him. A strong man in his platoon carried him for two miles to a field ambulance which took him to a dressing station. Too ill to be moved at first, he was sent after two nights to a hospital near Le Touquet.

There he wrote to his father:

> Am rather knocked about but nothing, I am glad to say, is serious. Far and away the worst thing was my left eye—had an operation last night and they took it out.

In contrast the doctors thought him so dangerously ill that his parents were given special permission to go to France to be near him; even his colonel lamented the loss of 'the best platoon leader in the Regiment'. After six weeks he was moved to Lady Ridley's Hospital in London, where he was nicknamed Hook after the one-eyed pirate. More operations followed, one of the most serious on his left arm where a nerve had been severed: through the efforts of a clever young surgeon he regained the use of his hand. After fourteen operations and five months in hospital he was discharged.

While convalescing in 1916 he returned to Cambridge for the Easter term. He passed his second year exams and was then posted to a reserve training battalion, for the medical board had classified him unfit for further active service. Stationed at Swanage he broke the monotonous routine by studying for a special military course which he passed with distinction. Against the advice both of his fellow officers and of his family he regularly petitioned to be allowed to return to the front; his mother implored him to accept his position, but Charles was not to be shaken, even after many refusals from the War Office. In May 1917 his persistence was rewarded, for the loss of officers and men had been heavy and reinforcements were badly needed.

He was sent to France and attached to the 1st Battalion of his regiment, where he was given command of 'A' company and the rank of captain. On 4 October 1917, at the battle of Ypres, the 1st Somersets attacked German trenches and pillboxes near Poelcapelle. At the

head of his men, Hawker was severely wounded by a shrapnel bullet which injured his spine and paralysed him from the waist down. The stretcher bearers thought he was dead and passed him by, so he lay there for twelve hours before he was taken to a field station. From the 8th General Hospital in France he was transferred again to Lady Ridley's, desperately ill. For seven months he lay on a water mattress because the vibration of anyone walking in the ward aggravated his pain.

On 27 November a major operation removed much pressure on his spinal nerves. Later Charles was given physiotherapy and exercises, though at first he sometimes found massage almost unbearable. With great determination he rejected any suggestion that in the future he had to live as an invalid. An operation in February 1918 revealed movements in his legs under anaesthesia and ten weeks later he began exercising in a walking machine. He had to be lifted in and out of it and each attempt quickly exhausted him. His improvement was disappointingly slow and electrical treatment was tried without success. Charles faced each discouragement without grumbling and maintained the painful struggle. The nurses admired his unfaltering courage; in turn he won their affection and taught them to appreciate the Russian novels and Greek verse he was studying. Other patients, discharged while he was still at Lady Ridley's, had given him up as a hopeless case and a doctor who attended him in hospital later stated that 'it was only his natural moral fortitude plus a very strong physique that saw him through the results of his spinal injury'.

In October 1918 an aunt found him depressed because he still could not walk after a year in hospital. She invited him to stay with her for a month. Since his back was very weak he was accompanied by an attendant and

travelled by train sitting in his wheel chair in the guard's van. While staying with his relations he propelled himself everywhere in his chair and joked that it was much better than walking. One day he asked his schoolgirl cousin for his crutches: 'They say I'll never walk again, but we'll show them'. He was soon exhausted and she needed all her strength to get him back into his chair. The effort became a daily routine, his cousin standing by with a mattress to break his falls. He refused to give up and at last he walked—two steps, three, six—the first glimmer of hope.

In November Hawker went back to hospital for more treatment. At the end of January he returned to Trinity College, Cambridge. He was still very helpless and had an attendant to wait on him and massage him for several hours each day. This time he had a ground floor room in the Great Court. It soon became something of a salon where he entertained men from his own and other colleges, prompting lively discussions each evening. In his wheel chair he went to lectures and chapel, and on the towpath followed Trinity boats. In spite of all handicaps he passed his historical tripos with top honours in the second class (there were no firsts that year) and he was given a great ovation when admitted to his degree at the Senate House.

From Cambridge Charles went with friends by train to Cornwall. He greatly enjoyed his morning sea bathing; though he had to be carried into the water, he found that his arms could do all the work of swimming. Later he went to Paris where he was entertained by some nursing friends from Lady Ridley's Hospital. With them he went sightseeing in his chair, visiting churches and art galleries, and revelling in the style and colour of old masterpieces. The nurses enjoyed his company and gay sense of the ridiculous. At his hotel

AT LADY RIDLEY'S HOSPITAL

he made great fun of having to crawl to the bathroom down a passage too narrow for his chair. From Paris he went to Aix-les-Bains where sunbaking and more bathing and treatment brought him great benefit. When he decided to return to Australia he engaged Corporal Hughes of the Somerset Light Infantry as his masseur and chauffeur. Their first outing together was an evening visit to a doctor who was to teach Hughes how to massage. Snow was falling when they left the club and Hughes suggested a taxi. Hawker insisted on using his crutches. He slipped twice on the icy pavements and though Hughes managed to catch him, the walk proved an ordeal. They sailed for Adelaide early in 1920 and the voyage acted as a tonic to Hawker.

After they arrived, they lived with the family at Pirralilla. Despite his loyal attachment to Britain, Hawker was glad to be home. When out with Hughes one morning they came to a fine view and Charles exclaimed, 'That's a bit of Australia. Don't you think it was worth fighting for?' Though his legs were always in irons, he could now walk slowly with two strong

sticks instead of crutches. Regardless of pain he forced himself to walk a little further each day. He constantly fell but nobody was allowed to help him; he insisted that he had to learn to help himself. Determined to fit himself for life on the land, Hawker was soon attending classes in business method and wool classing, and at the University studied forestry in spite of having to climb steep stairs to the botany laboratory. He also began to take part in public life. In 1921 he was elected to the South Australian branch council of the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League, and soon became a vice-president. He was also, from its beginning, a generous council member and deputy-chairman of St Mark's College, affiliated to the University of Adelaide.

Corporal Hughes gave him three hours massage each day and often drove him to North Bungaree and other stations farther north. On these trips Charles was deeply moved by the sight of abandoned townships and deserted homesteads, reminders of tough battles lost in the past. His early ambition had been a large-scale opening up of new country in the far north. His war injuries made that impossible, but he constantly talked of the great opportunities in Australia with so much land and natural resources waiting for development. He resented the subsidiary place given to Australia in the League of Nations, and prophesied that she could be a nation among nations, and with a little assistance and much immigration could become wholly self-supporting.

Hawker's mobility was much improved by the end of 1921, although for the rest of his life he could walk only with his legs in braces and with the aid of strong sticks. He stayed at North Bungaree for longer periods and took part in the station work. He was determined to ride and at first had to be lifted on to his horse. Later he would refuse help, pulling himself up with his

NORTH BUNGAREE HOMESTEAD

arms. Getting into the saddle was a great effort; he sometimes fell and often had to try several times, but always won. He also set himself a special task: to climb a steep hill close to the homestead. He would take his sticks and go off alone, scorning the road, struggling over loose stones, sliding and falling, but reaching a higher point each afternoon. He ignored cuts and bruises and kept trying, so he succeeded again.

His family and friends, hurt at first because he refused their help, soon came to respect his independence and admire his pluck. Others in the district, especially returned servicemen, warmed to his friendly interest in their affairs. When Charles began to drive his own car, with special footrests and springs on the pedals, he became more widely known, for he always gave lifts and was as quick to help other motorists as to change his own tyres, frequently punctured on bad roads.

Steadily his days filled with activity. He always made

a point of keeping up with his correspondence and reading current books and journals. His enthusiasm to become familiar with the conditions of primary producers took him outside his own State. In 1922 he travelled through the Riverina visiting stations and staying with friends. He still had massage, for his back and limbs needed strengthening. He was advised to winter in warmer climates and made a long tour of Queensland stations and the Barkly Tableland in 1924. Next year he joined his family who were visiting England and there he had an operation to flatten his toes so as to give him better balance. He visited many close friends and relations and in his travels went to Bradford in order to widen his knowledge of the woollen industry. On his way home he spent several weeks studying modern farming methods in the United States.

On his return to Australia, Charles went north to three thousand acres, near Hallett, which he had bought earlier in the year. Many near-by town and station names ended in -owie, an Aboriginal word for water, so he called his property Dillowie. There he arranged for the necessary fencing and the building of an iron cottage. When it was ready he moved in, keeping four rooms for himself and leaving the others to the overseer and his family; the wife cooked for him. In this temporary home they used kerosene lamps, and had a chip heater in the bathroom and a lavatory in the garden. Soon he bought sheep and cattle, began growing wheat and oats, and settled down to work, sharing in whatever job was on hand. Nothing daunted him; he even crutched sheep, flopping to the ground with each animal to shear its wool. He insisted on catching and saddling his horse in the yard; when the day's work was done both horse and rider exulted in a full gallop for home.

In one paddock he built a large iron tank where he

used to swim, and he kept up his shooting which, he claimed, he could do better with one eye than when he had two. He went after wild duck in the season and bought a set of clay pigeons, often inviting friends and neighbours for a shoot. His gun was made so that he could use it with one hand while balancing on his stick with the other. He was always interested in his father's stud, attended the sheep-classing whenever he could, and ran North Bungaree stud sheep at Dillowie. There he also grew crops, planted lucerne and bred cattle and fat lambs. In the bitterly cold winters, he enjoyed big log fires, and when snow fell he would have great games with the overseer's children.

Charles intended to build a more comfortable house and meanwhile planned the garden that was to surround it. Before planting three thousand trees he carefully studied the height and width to which they would grow. The distance between seedlings was precisely measured and gelignite exploded in each hole to loosen the soil for spreading roots. Spaces were left for lawns, driveways and a swimming pool, and the trees were arranged to enhance distant views. Each seedling had to be strongly staked against the wind, and in dry weather the water cart was constantly at work. When a cousin suggested that harsh conditions might toughen the young plants Charles retorted: 'Is a child ever better for having a warped childhood?' His perseverance was rewarded and as the trees grew he enjoyed their beauty.

His garden was remarkable in spite of the harsh, dry years at Dillowie from 1927 to 1930. Although thought to be wealthy he had financial difficulties during the drought and they worsened when wool prices fell sharply in 1929. He had bought Dillowie in the boom years with borrowed money and now found even the interest hard to pay, but he kept his troubles to himself.

He was always generous and invited returned servicemen of the local branch to put their horses on his grass when feed was very scarce. When he found that a neighbour could not run stock in a well-grassed paddock because it had no water, Charles offered help from his own scanty supply and then found time to survey the line for piping the water to where it was needed. When the neighbour asked 'What if this finishes your water?' he replied, 'Then we'll both be out together'. On the road he talked everywhere to men at work: a small farmer grubbing out stumps, a drover with travelling sheep, a returned serviceman eking out a livelihood by trapping rabbits. To each his encouragement gave a sense of human dignity and he often followed up his words with a case of fruit and vegetables. Always he won respect for his friendliness more than for his good deeds. Reticent and reserved country people, who judged by actions and results, soon accepted this Cambridge graduate as their friend.

As a boy Charles had become interested in politics and used to read press editorials and argue about them. His ideas were always progressive but he could see no promise for socialism in Australia, believing that private enterprise offered the best hope for developing the country's resources. To him, Labor demands for a higher tariff, shorter hours and an increased basic wage seemed to offer a false security to trade unionists and their families. Some protected urban industries were inefficient and forced up costs for primary producers whose wool, wheat and minerals, as Australia's biggest export earners, were subject to world prices. He maintained that government attempts to help some men on the land by subsidies for their produce increased local food prices and thereby the basic wage. In his view, this circle became even more vicious when all the Australian

governments increased their borrowing, because most loans swelled the national debt without adding to the nation's ability to pay the interest.

In spite of his interest in rural affairs, Hawker was always a Liberal in politics, although after 1923 this was not a party name except in South Australia. In the Commonwealth Parliament, anti-Labor members belonged to the Nationalist-Country Party Coalition formed in 1923. Coalitionist representatives from South Australia called themselves Liberals in Federal elections as they did in their home State. There, most anti-Labor supporters had belonged to the Liberal Union but it dissolved in 1923 when some members broke away to form a separate Country Party. To meet this challenge, many more members formed the Liberal Federation of South Australia. The breach greatly weakened the anti-socialist front and Hawker was troubled by Labor victories in State elections.

HAWKER LOOKING AT A FRIEND'S STUD RAM

In September 1927 he was elected president of the Liberal Federation. Older and more experienced members paid tribute to his courteous and intelligent chairmanship, but the post involved much time and travel. His many addresses to local branches and women's

groups enlivened the Federation, but he and his colleagues had no success in attempts to reach closer union with the Country Party. Earlier in the year Hawker had been ill with severe pain in his hip, but in hospital the cause could not be diagnosed. He worked very hard in the campaign for the Federal election in 1928, and though racked by increasingly severe pain he would not seek treatment until the election was over. When he returned to hospital a piece of shrapnel from his 1915 wound was found pressing on his hip. Its removal was the last of his eighteen operations for war injuries.

The leaders of the Nationalist-Country Party Coalition in Canberra had made a pact not to compete against each other's sitting members at the Federal election in 1928. The coalition government won the election but in South Australia the pact had not worked well. In the Wakefield electorate, where Hawker lived, a Country Party candidate had unseated the sitting Liberal (Nationalist) member by wooing Labor votes. Hawker protested against this breach of faith and again appealed to the Country Party for union with the Liberal Federation. He offered generous terms but was rudely rebuffed, and so, when approached by a large deputation to stand as a Liberal (Nationalist) candidate, he agreed to contest the Wakefield seat at the 1929 Federal election.

This large electorate then covered a broad strip of South Australia from the tip of Yorke Peninsula to Renmark. He had visited most of its towns, agricultural shows and returned servicemen branches, and was already known as a man who kept his word. His policy was simple: to encourage rural industry by lowering tariffs and reducing production costs. He threw himself into the campaign and thoroughly enjoyed it. He spoke at fifty meetings and had a relay of drivers to take him

around, but his open personal canvassing won most support, for he had an amazing memory for faces and names and a sincere interest in people. In a three-cornered contest against the sitting Country Party member and a popular Labor candidate he had a remarkable victory, the only new Liberal member in an Australia-wide landslide for Labor. Even the Prime Minister, S. M. Bruce, lost his seat.

At Canberra Hawker soon found old and new friends, went for early morning rides on horseback and often swam in the Manuka pool. Six days after being sworn in he was complimented for a maiden speech that stressed South Australia's disabilities under Federation. But he did not confine himself to local issues, however important. The small Opposition in which he found himself was very united under Sir John Latham and, although he did not always agree with his leader, he discussed their differences with complete frankness. Latham in turn was impressed by Hawker's intellect, integrity and loyalty. Even the *Labor Daily* praised his vitality and moderation:

> Rarely does a debate occur without him taking some part in it, expressing his party's point of view, and to this he adds a generous readiness to appreciate the other fellow's case.

Parliament was not just a political arena for Hawker. While the spread of unemployment turned most men's minds to their own hardships, he thought in broader terms. He argued that depression must be met by equality of sacrifice throughout the whole nation, but he also opposed any selfish national policies that might embarrass Britain. When J. H. Scullin, the Labor Prime Minister, introduced large increases in the tariff schedules, Hawker fought them fiercely. They virtually closed Australia to British manufactures, and at the same time

forced up prices and costs in Australia and endangered the luckless man on the land whose world markets had collapsed. 'The simple truth', he declared, 'is that the export value of our primary produce is the infallible index to the prosperity of every home in the Commonwealth.'

The Scullin tariff became law, but in its struggles to find solutions for depression the Labor Party split, some of its members following J. A. Lyons into paths that led to union with the Opposition and formation of the United Australia Party. This party had an overwhelming victory at the Federal elections in December 1931, when Hawker beat his Country Party opponent in Wakefield by over 10,000 votes. He had already made such a favourable impression that many thought his inclusion in cabinet was a foregone conclusion. Next January, at Latham's request, the new Prime Minister, Lyons, invited Hawker to take the two portfolios of Markets and Repatriation. In April the department of Markets was renamed and he became the first Minister for Commerce.

The average age of the other twelve ministers in the cabinet was fifty-five, and Hawker, at thirty-eight, was the youngest by some years. Since the Country Party was not represented in cabinet, he was also the only expert on rural affairs and had many differences with his high protectionist colleagues. As his department was in Melbourne he had much travelling and was often unable to attend cabinet meetings. As a result he was sadly disappointed by the slow amendment of the Scullin tariff. He found his departmental duties absorbing, worked long hours and refused to allow needless delays. The department soon knew that it had a born leader at its head and his punctuality, courtesy and efficiency were soon reflected at all levels. In the House his answers to questions without notice showed an unusual grasp of

departmental detail and he rarely had to refer to office files.

His most demanding work was the preparation of Australia's case for the Ottawa Conference. During the depression the flow of world trade had been disrupted as each nation followed a policy of 'every man for himself'. Restriction of markets was followed by retaliation and trade became difficult even at low prices. Britain's object in calling the conference was to negotiate better conditions for trade within the empire. Raw materials like minerals and wool presented no difficulty; the chief problems for Australia were to find markets for sugar, butter and dried fruits and to come to terms on the import of British manufactures.

Hawker was not sent to the conference, but soon afterwards he faced a formidable personal challenge in debates on the 1932 Financial Emergency Bill. World-wide depression had placed Australia in a precarious financial position. Unemployment had risen to nearly thirty per cent and many thousands faced bankruptcy. Salary cuts of twenty per cent had already been applied to most public servants and had reduced the salaries of most parliamentary members to £800. The government was pledged to balance its budget without increasing taxation. To do this it was proposed to make further cuts in social services and to reduce members' salaries to £750. Hawker thought the economies disproportionate, for he was deeply concerned with the widening spread of unemployment, and at election meetings in 1931 he had promised to support the reduction of members' salaries to £600. When cabinet brushed aside his suggestion of an open vote on the salary question, he was left with a conflict of loyalties—to support his colleagues or to keep faith with his electors.

He had no wish to weaken the government but, after

CHARLES HAWKER — STATESMAN

defending it vigorously in South Australia for proposing to reduce social services, he was surprised to read in the newspapers next day that cabinet had withdrawn the pensions cut, a decision on which he had been neither consulted nor informed. He returned to Canberra knowing how he should act. When an independent member gave notice of an amendment to reduce parliamentary salaries to £600, Hawker prepared his letter of resignation to Lyons while colleagues tried to dissuade him from voting at all. These talks made it plainer than ever that he could not stay in the team with men whose connections with the party's manufacturing wing conflicted with his fundamental belief in fair play for every section of the nation. Resolved not to sidestep the issue, he handed his resignation to Lyons and at 1.45 a.m. on 23 September 1932, when the division on salary reductions was called, he crossed the floor—'the hardest walk in my life'—to vote with a minority of eight against fifty-five. His resignation as minister caused consternation on both sides of the House and throughout Australia, but his action won him enviable respect as a man to be trusted. One newspaper declared that his altruism would become as

historic as Lincoln's, and several others pronounced his graduation from politician to statesman for putting country before party.

Soon afterwards Hawker returned to South Australia to make a statement to his electors. He joined his family, then living on a northern station, and in November returned to Canberra as a back bencher. In debates on the Ottawa Agreement he was commended for his preparatory work behind the scenes. In turn he praised the departmental staff and loyally defended the Australian delegates who were under attack for failure to win better concessions. In a forceful speech said to be the climax of the debate he admitted some disappointment but attributed any failure to Australia's reluctance to reduce tariffs, and renewed his criticism of high protection.

During the summer adjournment a bushfire ravaged Dillowie and in Western Australia the movement for secession from the Commonwealth approached its peak. When parliament reopened in March 1933, Hawker condemned the government for a tariff that was neither fish nor fowl.

> If we continue to take this magnificent middle way—a sort of government of the feeble for the greedy—we shall give the very people who are suffering . . . no other alternative but to cut adrift.

With pointed severity he castigated the 'flabbiness' and 'flapdoodle' of so-called leaders whose national outlook was 'bounded by Collins Street' and 'who invariably believe that what they want to do is right'. His words were widely quoted but had little effect. Depressed by inaction, he went home, where his spirits were revived by early morning rides and a good gallop after a fox. Rain had brought on the feed, and his stock were in good condition.

There were other encouragements. The old breach

between the South Australian anti-Labor parties had at last been healed, its members united in the Liberal Country League. The depression was beginning to lift and markets for wool were slowly recovering. As usual he toured his electorate, keeping in touch with party branches, renewing acquaintances and talking to all he met. He felt optimistic about the World Economic Conference and its attempts to raise prices for wheat and other primary produce. More than ever he was convinced that Australia's best hope for a sound economy rested on reasonable tariffs, reciprocal trade agreements with other nations and a regulated internal system of marketing. On these subjects he read widely and lectured to economic societies.

In June 1934 Hawker went north with a parliamentary party for meetings in various places, for the boundaries of Wakefield electorate had been greatly enlarged. It was now bigger than the whole State of Victoria and stretched from the outskirts of Adelaide to the borders of the Northern Territory, Queensland and New South Wales. Hawker left the party at Marree and with a cousin motored to Alice Springs, Hermannsburg Aboriginal Mission, Katherine, Ord River and Wyndham, visiting cattle stations on the way and arriving in time to see the treatment of a trial shipment of chilled beef for England. They went on by plane over the north-west route to Perth and returned by way of a family station two hundred miles north of Kalgoorlie. They had travelled some seven thousand miles by the time they reached home.

Politically, Hawker was closer in some of his views to the Federal Country Party than to the United Australia Party policy, and he renewed his efforts for a composite government. He was a convincing speaker and the acknowledged leader of the South Australians

in parliament. As Federal elections were looming he was appointed campaign director for the Liberal Country League. In August he interviewed the Prime Minister, who explained some of the dangers that electoral promises of tariff revision might create in the more industrialized States and pleaded with Hawker not to make it a prominent issue in South Australia. Hawker agreed but made a strong appeal for coalition with the Country Party. Lyons then mentioned rumours that he was intriguing for a senior place in cabinet. This comment was unworthy and Hawker brushed it aside as mischievous gossip. Anyone who really knew his high standards would know the suggestion to be false.

A hectic month of canvassing followed and at the election on 15 September his energetic direction of the campaign assured that all the anti-Labor South Australians retained their seats in the House of Representatives and three Senate seats were wrenched from the Opposition. Hawker himself won three-fifths of the Wakefield votes—his highest majority and nearly twice the combined total of his two opponents. He even polled well in the Labor strongholds of Peterborough and Terowie, railway towns newly added to his electorate. The Lyons government was returned, but sections of the press advocated that Hawker should be Prime Minister. Although friends wanted him to take the Commerce portfolio, he was much happier to stand aside when Lyons was persuaded to form a composite government with the Country Party leader, Earle Page, as Deputy Prime Minister.

Hawker decided to visit Europe to study marketing problems. He sailed in March 1935 and in England visited many relations, high-placed friends and officials, inspected markets at Smithfield and Covent Garden, listened to debates in the House of Commons and was

given a seat at the jubilee service of King George V. He also spent five days in France seeking first hand information on economics and politics. At Lyons's request he acted as consultant on meat for the Imperial Trade Conference in London, after which even the high-protectionist Australian Prime Minister realized that drastic cuts would be made to British imports of Australian lamb and beef if tariffs were not lowered. Everywhere Hawker sought detailed information. What impressed him most was that growing anxiety about Hitler had revived interest in the need for empire unity. He had always been interested in defence, so he went to Camberley and sought advice on modern equipment and organization. Later he lectured to the Citizenship College at Ashridge on Imperial Defence. Well informed and master in many subjects, he was also in great demand as a guest, even for breakfasts, because of his infectious wit and lively conversation.

His whirlwind pace left time for only one theatre and no concerts or art exhibitions, though he swam each morning and kept very fit. By the end of May he was in Germany visiting vineyards, forests and farms. Then followed three weeks in Russia where he thought the leading people 'much abler and much more one-eyed and quite as ruthless as Canberra [left wing] enthusiasts'. Despite Soviet propaganda he managed 'limited peeps behind the blinkers' and was as impressed by efficiency in the factories as he was depressed by wasted labour on the farms. By way of Moscow and the Volga he reached the Black Sea, visited Istanbul, Smyrna and Cairo and completed a carefully planned tour at Port Said in time to catch his ship. He reached Adelaide in July and a month later, after touring his electorate, was in his place at Canberra.

Next year he published a revealing pamphlet on

Russian farms and his articles on Russia were printed in the *West Australian* and the Adelaide *Advertiser*. He also lectured widely on his travels in Russia and showed lantern slides, usually ending his address with ten trenchant minutes on why the electors should vote for his party.

HAWKER UNVEILING THE WAR MEMORIAL AT RENMARK

Charles planned next to tour Japan, but his visit was given an added purpose in May when Sir Henry Gullett, the Minister for Trade Treaties, announced a new trade policy. Among the countries most affected by it was Japan, whose cotton and rayon were rapidly driving British textiles from the Australian market. Imports from Japan were reduced by forty per cent, and their wool buyers in Australia retaliated by boycotting wool sales.

Relations between the two countries were far from friendly when Hawker left for Japan. His object was to gain understanding of the Japanese side of the dispute, and as usual he travelled at his own expense. From Sydney he went by train for two hundred miles and went on with a pilot in a primitive plane in heavy rain. Although Charles was wrapped in blankets he was soon blue with cold. They had no food and refuelled with difficulty at outback towns, but Charles insisted on reaching Cloncurry in time for the regular flight to

Darwin. In Tokyo, with help from able officers at the British Embassy, he interviewed some senior Japanese officials and influential manufacturers. He became convinced that fear of the ruthless militarists had driven Japanese manufacturers to compete more fiercely in overseas markets in hope especially of breaking down the preferential trade of the British empire. Hawker believed the dispute could not have been avoided, but although he disagreed with Gullett's methods, he thought any abject surrender would be fatal; a generous compromise was desirable but the timing of it needed careful and informed judgement.

On his return trip Hawker visited Peking and Shanghai, seeking everywhere to see how the poorer people lived. His first-hand information had profound effect in parliamentary debates and his article in the *Austral-Asiatic Bulletin*, April 1937, was widely quoted for it shed light on some of the mutual ignorance in both countries. In the proposals for trade quotas made at unofficial and government levels he played an important part, both through his new Japanese friends and through his influence on wool growers. The visit to Japan proved him to be an able negotiator, and made him an eager advocate for increasing the small Australian Department of External Affairs, a theme he used in his talks to university students.

In 1937 Hawker became deeply involved in the Marketing referendum. One major cause of it was the case of Frederick Alexander James, a dried fruit merchant whose resistance to any restriction of trade had been disallowed by the High Court, but upheld by the Privy Council. This decision undermined any legal control of orderly marketing by the Commonwealth Government. Although most of his friends and colleagues in Adelaide supported the NO campaign, Hawker thought in

national terms and favoured Commonwealth control of marketing, and of aviation, a second question to be decided in the same referendum. He was appointed chairman of the YES committee in South Australia and threw himself into the fight with vigour, but as usual voters seemed afraid of giving further powers to the Commonwealth and both proposals of the referendum were rejected.

Later in 1937 Hawker was canvassing again in a Federal election and trying to arouse the people to the threat of war. He won the Wakefield seat with a large majority, and as a campaign leader for his State his driving force played a large part in another anti-Labor victory that also saved the government's majority in the Senate. This time leading newspapers were outspoken when his name was omitted from the new cabinet. But Hawker had much else to think about. Letters from friends in England disturbed him by their growing anxiety about war in Europe. All over the world selfish nationalism seemed to be hardening into aggressive action, and his thoughts turned seriously to defence.

In 1938 Hawker attended parliament as usual. He kept himself informed on the latest moves in world politics and, since parliamentary secretaries were only provided for members of cabinet, he wrote most of his letters by hand although his mail had become voluminous. He also found time to start his stone house at Dillowie and to keep in touch with his electors. After parliament adjourned he toured the northern towns in his electorate and with two companions drove over the desolate Birdsville track, returning through western New South Wales; in these isolated regions too his friendliness made lasting impressions on the people he met. In August he was at Dillowie preparing a paper on Australian trade treaties for the second British Com-

monwealth Relations Conference, organized by the Institutes of International Relations. In September it was held at Lapstone, near Sydney, and for two weeks he revelled in stimulating discussions, always asking for facts and displaying a clear understanding of Pacific defence strategy.

In Canberra again at the end of the month he shared acutely in anxiety about Hitler's ultimatum. To Hawker, Chamberlain's visit to Munich spelt disaster and he wrote to his younger relations urging them to choose their service carefully in the coming 'big war'. At Dillowie he had three short but happy weekends moving into his new home, for which he had waited twelve years before he could afford to build it. At Canberra he was prominent in defence debates, pressing urgently for universal military training as the best preparation. Always busy and on the move he was in Melbourne on 18 October and in Canberra for the next two days. On the 21st he went to Dillowie for the weekend. On the 24th the *Advertiser* printed his outspoken condemnation of neglect in Australia's defence, and after a heavy day in Adelaide he was persuaded to address the Navy League's Trafalgar Day celebration, thereby missing the night train to Melbourne.

In clear sunshine next morning, the 25th, Hawker boarded the Douglas airliner Kyeema. Near Melbourne low cloud blotted out Essendon aerodrome where a radio beacon had been installed for over a year but not made operational. The plane, flying by dead reckoning, overshot its goal and crashed into the crest of Mount Dandenong. All the passengers and crew were killed instantly.

A State memorial service for Hawker was crowded at St Peter's Cathedral in Adelaide and his ashes were buried privately in the churchyard at Bungaree. Mess-

DILLOWIE, AND THE GARDEN PLANNED BY HAWKER, IN 1947

ages of sympathy poured in to the family. All the leading papers lamented his loss to Australia and reviewed his career in glowing terms; many were sure that he had been destined to become Minister for Defence or even Prime Minister. At Canberra both Houses paid warm tribute to his indomitable spirit and his firm grasp of national and international affairs. A leading senator said 'he had served his country well with every talent he had', and the Labor leader, John Curtin, spoke movingly of the Opposition's deep respect for him: for moral courage that was fearless and tolerant, for service that had 'the quality of immortality'.

Years later Harold Holt broadcast on Charles Hawker as 'my most unforgettable character', and Sir Keith Hancock envisaged him as 'the best that an Australian can do and be'. After his death his seat of Wakefield, which he had made a Liberal stronghold, was overwhelmingly lost to Labor, high homage to his personal

popularity. If he won ready sympathy for his injuries and his courage in overcoming them, he wanted no pity, and his sticks and leg braces were almost obliterated by the strength of his personality. Few men ever had his capacity to make and enjoy such a full life. Pain could not sour him, for he was master of his body. His mind was no less disciplined. He read and wrote quickly with shrewd discernment for the heart of the matter. His outspoken dislike of sham and half-truth was as frank as his clear reasoning and search for knowledge, and his voice was as purposeful as his words. To intense practicality he added warm humanity. He won firm friendship by giving it simply and sincerely to men of every class and creed. Generous to a fault, he gave spontaneously—food, clothes, money, time, energy—whether to friends, relations or anyone in need. Deeply religious, he never allowed church-going to become a habit that might blunt his sense of God. He won trust and affection by his high ideals of 'the living right'. He loved fun and wit but found his best satisfactions in serving his country as soldier and citizen, statesman and patriot.

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