



Objection 34

Doug Laing

2 pages

From: Doug Laing & Helen Lilley
To: [FedRedistribution - ACT](#)
Subject: Comment on proposal to name third ACT electorate "Bean"
Date: Monday, 16 April 2018 10:57:30 AM

To The Australian Electoral Commission:

Dear Sir/Madam

I am a little discomfited by the proposal to name the third ACT electorate "Bean".

There is no doubting CEW Bean's reputation as a preeminent historian of the First World War. It is also fitting that his name should be considered appropriate for the new seat, given its proposed boundaries and the fact that Bean completed much of his monumental work at the historic Tuggeranong Homestead. He is also due recognition as a founder of the Australian War Memorial.

However, I would draw your attention to criticism of Bean by former Deputy PM, Tim Fischer MP who, in his biography of General Sir John Monash, "*Maestro John Monash* (2014)", characterises Bean's intense dislike of Monash as fundamentally anti-Semitic. He states that Bean had been suspicious of Monash as a "pushy.....Jew of Prussian descent" from the time of their first meeting at Gallipoli. Bean's antipathy towards Monash, according to Fischer, persisted throughout the War. Aided and abetted by the influential Keith Murdoch in London, Fischer claims Bean conspired to influence Prime Minister Hughes to have Monash replaced on the Western Front by a less experienced senior officer. Hughes subsequently visited Monash and the troops under his command in France and was impressed by the respect in which Monash was held by those serving under him and took no action to have him replaced.

In his book Fischer reflects on the anti-Monash campaign, which reached its climax in late May 1918, as follows;

"The great CEW Bean was up to anti-Semite mischief, always critical of Monash and the way that Monash allegedly promoted his units and himself. Back in 1914 Bean had stated that Australians do not want to be represented by Jews.....because of their ability, natural and inborn in Jews, to push themselves. Bean was by his own admission doubting and critical of Monash right throughout World War One". (page 98).

According to Fischer, Monash remains under-recognised in the annals of the Australian War Memorial (AWM), this largely the legacy of Bean's prejudice against Monash and his influence and role in the founding of the AWM. Fischer writes "*For seven decades the AWM has downplayed Monash. This is in part a direct consequence of the actions and/or non-actions of CEW Bean as co-founding chairman but to be fair also a consequence of an underlying Tall Poppy syndrome ever present in the Australian nation*". (page 183).

Bean's explicit anti-Jewish views and his dislike of Monash partly based on his religion and origin may, these days, be considered faintly anachronistic, but, even a century on they do not sit well with the values embraced in a modern, generally pretty tolerant and multicultural Australia. It is ironic, perhaps, that Bean's nemesis, Monash, is now to be honoured by France in a new WW1 memorial and museum to be constructed at Villers-Brettoneux. Given the choice I would prefer

to have the federal seat in which I am likely to be included be given a name free from historical dispute and accusations of prejudice against a religious faith.

Yours sincerely
Doug Laing