



*Rev. John Dunmore Lang came close to pulling off a republican revolution against England.*

emancipated convicts, 24% were colonial born, and 37% were free immigrants. As in America, these free settlers were obviously some of the boldest and most pioneering spirits from the old country, which added to the republican aspirations set loose on the continent. However, an aristocracy had also been transplanted to the new colonies, in the form of the wealthy squattocracy that controlled the land. Naturally, this led to conflicts between classes of people, and not surprisingly, the wealthy landowning class were the strongest supporters of British colonial policy. This set the stage for the political career of the Rev. John Dunmore Lang, in the first of two waves of what British historians call “radical nationalism,” i.e., republicanism, which swept the country in the nineteenth century.

What follows here, is a preliminary account of the true story of the fight for a republic in Australia, beginning with the 1850s. The story continues with the awakening of a republican labor movement in the 1880s and 1890s, and moves on to the struggle against the City of London’s “money power” in the 1930s. It includes the extraordinary efforts launched during World War II, to mobilize the industrial potential of the nation for self-defense.

Throughout the narration, which highlights the great individuals who fought for the republic, a leitmotif emerges, which is the intimate intellectual as well as organizational connection of the Australian republicans, with the American tradition, from the early years to the fight for a Hamiltonian national bank.

The historical research which is summarized here, was presented at a conference of the Citizens Electoral Council, the movement associated with Lyndon LaRouche in Australia, on Oct. 22-24. The research was done from original sources, by Robert Barwick, Allen Douglas, Kelvin Heslop, and Noelene Isherwood.

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## The 1840s and '50s

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# The great republicans’ fight against Britain

by Noelene Isherwood

The spirit of national freedom and independence is one of the most generous and disinterested, as well as one of the loftiest and most ennobling passions of human nature; and when it once animates a people, they become capable of deeds, and sacrifices, and exertions, of which they could never have supposed themselves capable before. This spirit, moreover, is highly contagious; and it has only to take possession of some mastermind to communicate itself to the whole mass of the people.

Such was the conviction of the Rev. Dr. John Dunmore Lang, arguably the greatest true patriotic Australian of the last 200 years. Yet, precious little has been written about this man. It is as if one were to write about American history, without mentioning Benjamin Franklin, or George Washington, or Abraham Lincoln. What is said about Lang, is that he was just an egotistical character, who liked to get into lawsuits with everyone because he was just plain ornery, and was just too cranky to get his good ideas implemented. The historians who say this, are lying, in order to cover up the reality: that John Dunmore Lang came very close to pulling off a republican revolution in Australia in the early 1850s.

John Dunmore Lang was born in western Scotland of a farming family, and was sent to the University of Glasgow at age 13. By 22, he had graduated with an excellent education in Classical Greek, Latin, geometry, music, and astronomy, among other subjects. His brother George had emigrated to Australia, and was an official in New South Wales, so John Dunmore decided to follow him, arriving here in May 1823. He was a strongly built young man of 24, over six feet tall, with sharp blue eyes behind steel-rimmed glasses, and ready to take up his ministry.

### ‘Freedom and Independence’

Lang’s dream, from shortly after his arrival, was to see the British colonies of the great and golden lands of Australia, welded into a vibrant and dynamic sovereign nation, which he believed was the lawful and Divinely ordained destiny for all such colonies. He articulated this vision in his internationally esteemed book, written in 1852, *Freedom and Independence for the Golden Lands of Australia*:

“The spirit of colonial nationality, is no accidental feeling; it is unquestionably of Divine implantation, and designed, not for evil, but for good. . . . ‘Colonies’ says the celebrated William Penn, ‘are the seeds of nations, begun and nourished by the care of wise and populous countries, conceiving them best for the increase of human stock, and beneficial for commerce.’

“The feeling of nationality . . . comes down to us from heaven. It is the gift of God for the welfare and advancement of his creature man. . . . So far indeed from the feeling of nationality being a mere matter of the imagination, it constitutes a bond of brotherhood of the most influential and salutary character, and forms one of the most powerful principles of virtuous action. Like the main-spring of a watch, it sets the whole machinery in motion. Like the heart, it causes the pulse of life to beat in the farthest extremities of the system. It is the very soul of society, which animates and exalts the whole brotherhood of associated men.

“And must the young Australian be debarred from the exercise of that generous and manly feeling, of which every rightly constituted mind is conscious, when he exclaims, with deep emotion, ‘This is my own, my native land!’

“In one word, nationality, or their entire freedom and independence, is absolutely necessary for the social welfare and political advancement of the Australian colonies. Give us this, and you give us everything to enable us to become a great and glorious people. Withhold this, and you give us nothing.”

And for Dr. Lang, “nothing” was not an option. His vision of the possibilities and potential of his golden lands of Australia was seemingly unlimited. And there was nowhere he would not go and nothing he would not do to make it happen.

### **Lang’s vision for the development of Australia**

When J.D. Lang closed his eyes and dreamed his dreams for his native land, he saw a land bustling with industry and enterprise. He saw citizens of every nationality and social standing, hard at work, making a comfortable living free from the constraints of the old Mother-country, its aristocracy and its brutality. A land where people did not know poverty and tyranny—a land of freedom.

Lang delighted in technical progress. The utilization of steam power in transport and industry was the most auspicious phenomenon of the first half of the nineteenth century. He advocated a railway system for Australia to link the Gulf of Carpentaria and the southern provinces. He said this line would provide a bridge to the remainder of the world. He envisioned Carpentaria becoming the focus of the nation’s commerce. From here, Australian raw materials and influence would radiate throughout the world. Thus, he reasoned, it was indispensable for a railroad to link all the provinces.

He envisaged this major trunk route to run from a point on the Murray River equidistant from Adelaide and Melbourne, due north through Bourke on its way to the Gulf. Bourke was uniquely equidistant to the four existing capitals.

Lang wanted to offer migrants arriving in the colonies, an acreage of land equal in value to their passage money. In order to secure good land for this purpose, he suggested the reservation of a development corridor, seven miles’ width of country on each side of every navigable river, and on each side of every new railway. He had practical dreams of an enriching variety of occupations, centering in rising townships within easy reach of rivers and railways. It reminds you very much of the “development corridors” Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. has proposed for the Eurasian Land-Bridge. Lang also advocated developing plantations of sugar and cotton in North Queensland and enlisted the help of his friends in those areas to grow trial plots and to run scientific testing of the best crops and varieties to plant.

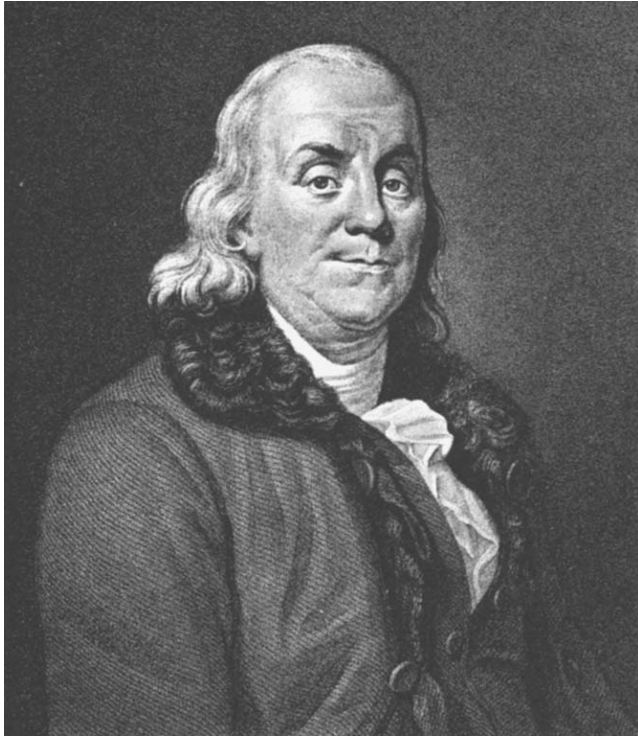
But these dreams were entirely dependent on the nation achieving its full freedom and independence. This became Lang’s life work and that of his close friends and collaborators of the day, the poet Charles Harpur, his fellow Member of Parliament and patriot Daniel Deniehy, and to a lesser extent his protégé, the painter and poet Adelaide Ironside. These people made their own unique and profound contributions to the fight for a true Australian Republic.

### **Lang’s early projects and colonization**

The individual about whom Lang constantly wrote, in some of his more than two dozen books, was Dr. Benjamin Franklin, the universal genius and political organizer who, more than anyone else, was the “father of American independence.” In the decades before America declared independence in 1776, Franklin built the institutions around which the 13 young colonies grew. For instance, if there were no public library, Franklin took up subscriptions, and founded one. If there were no university, he built one. If there were no postal service for the 13 colonies, he founded one, becoming the first postmaster general in the process. And, later, if there were no militias to defend the colonies, he organized them. And so on, and so on.

And so with the Rev. John Dunmore Lang. Shortly after arriving in 1823, Lang built the first Presbyterian church in Sydney. Since there was no system of primary education in the colony of New South Wales, which then covered all the eastern coast of the continent, he started a primary school in his church. Since there was no college, he sailed back to England and organized the British government to give him £3,500—a very large sum at the time—to start one. Even more importantly, since New South Wales was largely colonized by unskilled, convict labor, Lang handpicked a shipload of Scottish mechanics, artisans, weavers, and builders to emigrate with him. On Oct. 15, 1831, soon after Lang and his skilled workmen arrived, the *Sydney Gazette* gave him credit for “the most important importation the colony ever received, and certainly the boldest effort ever made by a single individual to ‘advance Australia.’”

It was this skilled working class, created by Lang, which



*Benjamin Franklin was a continuing inspiration to Australian republican Rev. John Dunmore Lang, who followed Franklin's example in creating schools and other institutions to upgrade the labor force.*

was to build the industrial and agricultural working class movement that conducted the fight for republicanism in the 1880s and 1890s.

Soon, the new workers had not only built Lang's university, the Australian College, as he named it, but they had changed the face of Sydney with their building projects. Since there was no popular newspaper to educate the population, he started *The Colonist*, in 1835, which gave him rapidly increasing influence in the colony. That same year, he convinced the British government, for the first time ever, to pay the passage money of selected groups of immigrants to Australia. Not content with the British government's slow pace, Lang soon was making plans to bring out many more boatloads of, not only skilled mechanics, but small farmers, who could begin to settle and cultivate the new land. In his book *Freedom and Independence for the Golden Lands of Australia*, first issued in 1852, Lang described the ideas which motivated what he called "the heroic work of colonization":

"For God made the earth to be inhabited — not to lie waste, as so much of it has done hitherto, through the folly and perversity of man — and his first command to the human race, even in the Garden of Eden, was 'Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth.' Now colonisation, with all that leads to it, whether in the laws of nature or the necessities of men, is merely the carrying out of this divine ordinance."

This divine ordinance, Lang stressed, was best understood by the Greeks, who instead of dispatching their destitute and "dregs" to their colonies, populated them with a cross-section of the most talented and noble individuals of the land. He also stressed that the Classical Greeks' culture, as reflected in their colonization projects, paved the way for Christianity:

"The field of Grecian colonisation was the scene of the earliest and greatest triumphs of Christianity. The seven apostolic churches were all planted in Grecian colonies; and the New Testament, including even the epistle addressed to the Romans themselves, was written in the Greek language, because Grecian colonisation had made that language the language of the civilised world."

Lang counterposed to the colonization of the Greeks, which uplifted and enriched the world, that of the British, which degraded and impoverished it.

### **America as the model**

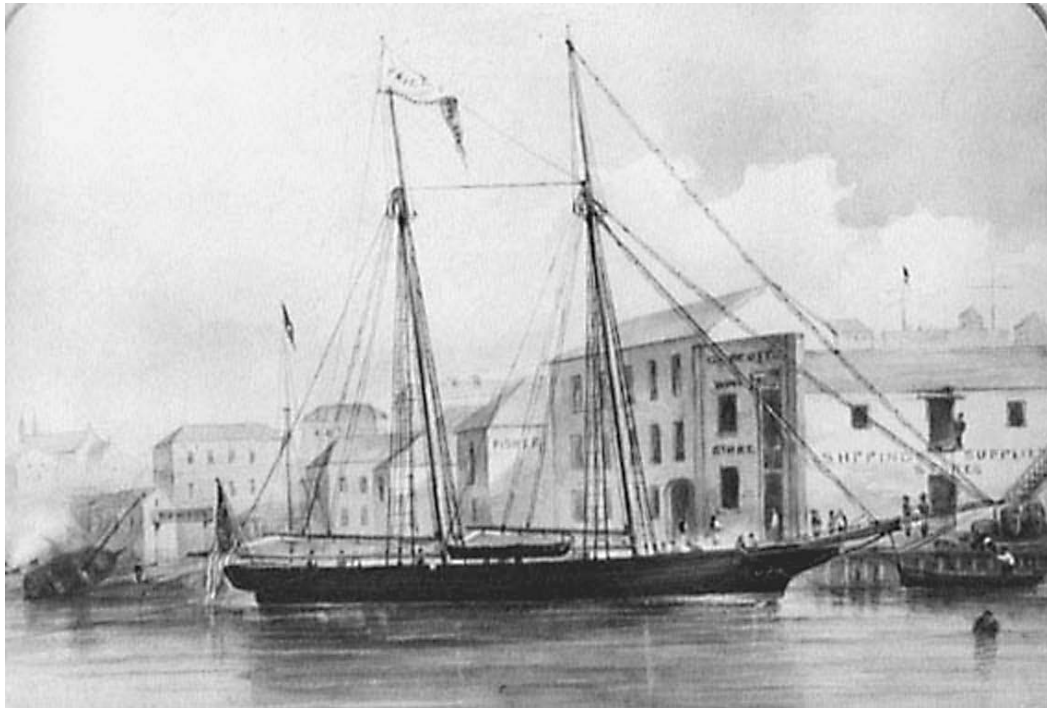
In all that he did, Lang had before him the shining example of the United States of America. In 1837, he wrote that Australia must surely follow her northern cousin in becoming a republic:

"It is natural that Australia should look upon the United States with more than ordinary interest. Throughout the whole of her history, there are certain broad features bearing no imaginary resemblance to our own. America was once a British dependence; Australia is now. America receives her language, her manners, her literature and the germ of her laws and political institutions, from the British Isles; so also has Australia. America at length outgrew the trammels of national juvenility, and asserted the prerogative of matured manhood which she in the end compelled her reluctant parent to acknowledge. It is perfectly consistent with loyalty and with common sense to predict, that at some future period — far distant no doubt it is — Australia will pursue a similar course with similar success. . . ."

"I have taken it for granted that in the event of Australia becoming free and independent, she would adopt, as a matter of course, a Republican form of government. I look upon this as a settled point, in the present circumstances and conditions of a civilised world — not however, as being the result of reasoning from abstract principles, but simply . . . from the necessity of the case."

In 1840, on the way back from still another trip to England to organize more immigration, Lang visited the United States for the first time. He told Americans that his purpose was "to ascertain the state of morals, of religion and of education, in this favoured land and to solicit your friendly assistance and your Christian cooperation, for the intellectual the moral and the spiritual advancement of the future America of the Southern Hemisphere."

Shortly after his return to Sydney, he stood for the newly instituted Legislative Council of New South Wales, and won. He travelled widely, and agitated, among other things, for the



*A ship bringing immigrants to Australia. It was Lang's policy to organize for increased immigration, including skilled workers and farmers, who could begin to settle and cultivate the new land.*

separation from New South Wales of both the Port Philip district, which is now Victoria, and of the Moreton Bay District, which is now Queensland. The colony of New South Wales was too large, he reasoned, to adequately represent the aspirations of these districts. He had seen, in the United States, how effectively the state governments represented their citizenry, under a federal system. It was largely because of his organizing, that the Port Philip district was given its own government not long after.

In 1846, he once again set sail for England, where he was to spend the next three years attempting to organize the British government to implement his plans for greatly stepped up immigration. Lang was also attempting to secure changes to the Squatting Act of 1846, by which the British locked up almost the entire land of the continent under the control of a tiny handful of super-wealthy pastoralists, the squatters.

The British Colonial Office under Earl Grey rejected almost all of Lang's plans, though he did organize another dozen or so boatloads of emigrants to come out, largely at his own expense, some of whom did, indeed, help settle the territories to be known as Victoria and Queensland. Upon leaving England, Lang issued a remarkable open letter, which was published in England and in New South Wales, in which he blasted Grey, one of the most powerful individuals in the mighty British Empire, in the following terms:

"I am now returning to Australia with the bitterest disappointment and the deepest disgust, cherishing precisely the same feeling as the celebrated Dr. Benjamin Franklin did, when he left England as a British subject, for the last time.

"In reviewing the intercourse I have thus had with your

lordship's department for the last three years I cannot but express the extreme regret, not unmingled with indignation, which I cannot but feel as a British colonist, when I reflect that I have myself experienced much more courtesy and attention, merely as a British traveller, from the President of the United States of America, in his marble palace at Washington, than I have done as a representative of the people of New South Wales from the paltriest underlings of Your Lordship's department. Like the mutes in the Sultan's palace at Constantinople, these familiars of your lordship regularly strangle honest men and every honest measure connected with the colonies, in the dark recesses of their political inquisition; and the people of England never hear of the matter any more than the Turks used to do of those hapless victims whose bodies were thrown at midnight into the waters of the Bosphorus. . . .

"Very moderate concessions would have satisfied the colonists three years ago, but such concessions will not satisfy them now. To use a vulgar but expressive phrase, which Your Lordship will excuse, they will now 'go for the whole hog' or for nothing at all. . . .

"For three years past, you have been knocking on the gate of futurity, for the President of the United States of Australia. Be assured, my Lord, he is getting ready, and will shortly be out; and will astonish the world with the manliness of his port and the dignity of his demeanour."

The die was cast. Immediately upon his return, Lang set up an organization, The Republican League, which was dedicated to achieving independence. In April 1850, he gave three lectures which were attended by thousands, in which he called for the establishment of a republic in Australia. The first two

of these were reprinted as a pamphlet called “The Coming Event,” which was widely circulated, and was later expanded into his famous book, *Freedom and Independence for the Golden Lands of Australia*.

### **The fight against the squatters**

The big political problem for the British, ever since they started sending boatloads of people out to the Australian continent in the immediate wake of the American Revolution—people whom they knew very well to be “infected” with the virus of republicanism—was how to make sure that they did not do what their American cousins had done—create a republic.

Until 1823, Australia was under military rule, which made control rather simple. In that year, a Legislative Council was set up, which consisted, at first, of five to seven government officials nominated by the Governor, with a few nominated representatives of the colonists added later. Being nominated by the Governor, the Councillors were all responsible to him, and not to the population, while the Governor was, in any case, all-powerful, and not responsible either to the population, or the Council, but only to the Crown.

In 1837, the British got the shock of their lives, probably second only to that of the American Revolution, when a military rebellion erupted in Canada. The rebellion was put down, but the British became obsessed with how to prevent any future such outbreaks. They gave John George Lambton, the Earl of Durham, and one of the leading oligarchs in Britain, unprecedented powers as High Commissioner and Governor-in-Chief of British North America, as Canada was known.

Durham appointed a commission to study the problem, the most important member of which was Edward Gibbon Wakefield. Wakefield argued that the colonies should be merely transplantations of British society, and, in order to keep them that way, land prices should be kept very high, so that no class of small farmers could be created, but only great landowners closely tied to the Crown. Wakefield’s ideas were used as the basis to set up South Australia and parts of New Zealand, among other places. Wakefield’s second recommendation was to offer the Canadians so-called “Responsible Government.” Under this scheme, an Executive composed of Ministers appointed by the Governor from an elected assembly, would be “responsible” to that Assembly. Not only did the Governor appoint them in the first place, but they would only hold office at his “pleasure,” notwithstanding their supposed responsibility to the assembly.

In addition, the consent of the Governor was still required for legislation passed by the assembly to become law, and the Governor could dissolve the assembly. The system was intended to give the appearance of local control, whilst control still, in fact, was vested in the British Crown, since the Governor was appointed by, and was the representative of the Crown. As Wakefield put it, it “would tend more than anything to preserve an intimate connection between the colony and the mother-country.”

This concept of Responsible Government was one of the most insidious and corrosive schemes ever devised by the British Empire. Its main importance, as stressed by Justice Isaac Isaacs of the High Court, a framer of the Australian Constitution and subsequently a Governor-General of Australia, in a High Court judgment in 1920, was that it did not follow the model of America. He said:

“It is essential to bear in mind two cardinal features of our political system which are interwoven in its texture and . . . radically distinguish it from the American Constitution. One is the common sovereignty of all parts of the British Empire [that means the Crown, of course]; the other is the principle of responsible government . . . the institution of responsible government, a government under which the Executive is directly responsible to—nay, is almost the creature of—the Legislature. This is not so in America. . . .”

No, indeed, it is not so in America, which has a popularly elected President, who is not a creature of the legislature. And it is precisely the notion of an American-style popularly elected President, which terrifies the Anglophile establishment in Australia. It is also clear, from Isaac’s account, that the Federation granted in 1901, was just an updated form of this “responsible government” scam foisted on Australia in the mid-nineteenth century, in order to stop the republican organizing of John Dunmore Lang.

But, back in the 1840s, one of the keys to the “Responsible Government” fraud, was to set an extremely high property requirement to even be considered as a candidate for the Council, at least £5,000, which was a fortune in those days. So, here you had it: a John Locke-style scam of “life, liberty and property,” instead of the Leibnizian and American “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” And this is exactly the way John Dunmore Lang saw it—as a fraud against the fundamental rights of mankind.

Lang was elected to the first Legislative Council in Australia in 1843, set up along the lines of Wakefield’s “responsible government” scheme. However, from at least the time of his return from England in 1849, Lang campaigned relentlessly to dump the “responsible government” fraud, declare independence and elect a House and a Senate, with an elected President and Vice President modelled largely upon the U.S. system.

Lang counted people like Benjamin Franklin, Cotton Mather, George Washington, and Thomas Paine amongst his greatest heroes and constantly quoted from their writings and expounded their ideas.

### **The gold rush**

In 1851, gold was discovered in both New South Wales and Victoria. This brought a massive increase in immigration. Five thousand people a week, or a quarter-million people per annum, poured into Australia, coming from every part of the globe, including many shiploads from the gold diggings in California. Lang was delighted. He said that “a country which is being peopled at the rate of 5,000 a week by men nursed in

freedom will soon be able to demand as a right that which she now entreats as a favour.”

However, whilst Lang was overjoyed about the influx of wild “freedom-loving” fortune hunters, his colonial masters saw the potential for rebellion in the wind. It is therefore hardly a coincidence that only a few months after the discovery of gold, Lang was sentenced to four months in prison for libel. He was considered Australia’s most notorious republican troublemaker, the leading advocate of radical reforms, and they wanted to make an example of him.

They had good cause to worry. When Lang travelled to the gold diggings around Bathurst, to see for himself the conditions, he preached the Gospel before 3,000 people in the open air. The diggers honored him in an address, saying: “Your name will henceforth be associated with human progress, a watchword for liberty and will occupy a distinguished place in the history of your adopted country. You are the apostle of the independence of Australia and this will be the foundation of your future fame.”

The standard historians invariably talk of Lang as some sort of eccentric, and always attempt to downplay the absolutely enormous popularity he had with the masses. Lang himself always attributed that popularity to the fact that he was openly, vigorously fighting for exactly what they wanted: republican self-government.

For instance, shortly after one of the times which he had been thrown in jail, with enormous slanders and libels being circulated against him in the major press, he decided to run for office yet again. Not only was he elected, but he topped the poll, an astounding feat under the circumstances. When he walked to Parliament to take up his seat, a crowd of 10,000 escorted him, cheering him all the way — this at a time when only 51,000 people were living in Sydney.

With the sort of explosive republican ferment under way in the goldfields and elsewhere, under the leadership of Lang, the British clearly had to act to forestall an American-style republic being declared, which many newspapers and journals of the time admit was being intensively discussed — a fact rarely acknowledged in the history books of today. The British passed a new act for an expanded form of “responsible government,” to take the wind out of the republicans’ sails.

This Constitution Act of 1853 contained a clause excluding from Parliament all ministers of religion, a clause engineered by Lang’s political enemies in order to exclude him from membership; and so, when “responsible government” was inaugurated in 1856 he had no seat. The following year, however, this clause was repealed, and from 1859 to 1869, Lang was again a member of the House as a representative of West Sydney.

But by far the most determined effort to lay Lang low, came in 1854, just as the Eureka rebellion was erupting on the goldfields of Ballarat. The oligarchy framed up his son George, and convicted him of stealing £10,000 from a branch of the Bank of New South Wales on the goldfields, which he was in charge of. George was sent to jail for five years.

Determined to prove his son’s innocence, Lang pursued every avenue, including through the press. It was during this time that he particularly rankled the establishment and they brought a number of libel and slander suits against him, eventually leading to his imprisonment for six months.

Through the frameup of George Lang, and the related lawsuits, enormous damage was done to the republican cause. Just when support was coming from many unexpected quarters, both in Australia and even in Britain itself, for Lang’s dream of a republic, the indispensable organizer to actually attain a republic, was taken out of the picture. The time that was then ripe never came again, at least not in Lang’s lifetime.

## Lang’s image of man

John Dunmore Lang not only had the soul of a poet, in his ardent conviction regarding the nobility of man, and mankind’s ability to perfect itself, as the crown of God’s creation, but he was also an actual poet, with at least one volume of verse to his credit. He wrote the following poem in 1826, when he was 27 years old, just three years after he had arrived in Australia:

Australia! Land of hope!  
Thy sons shall bear thee up  
even to the skies!  
And earth’s exalted ones  
Shall hail thee from their thrones,  
Queen of the southern Zones.  
Australia, rise! . . .

O be it then thy care,  
From Superstition’s snare  
And Slavery’s chain,  
To set the wretched free;  
Till Christian liberty,  
Wide o’er the Southern Sea,  
Triumphant reign!

Lang devoted his life to fighting for “Christian liberty,” which he viewed as the birthright of all human beings, since all were created in the image of God, and were therefore “born free and equal.” When he visited America in 1840, for instance, he told a meeting in New York on May 13, 1840:

“I trust I am under no obligation to conceal from this assembly my own cordial abhorrence of slavery, as a civil institution, and my own earnest desire for its immediate and entire abolition. I have ever regarded slavery as an evil and bitter thing for the country in which it exists, as well as for its miserable victims. It is the grand calamity of this country, that such a system was entailed upon it from a bygone age. It constitutes the only dark spot in your star-spangled banner — the only gloomy and portentous cloud in the firmament of your glory.”

He also blasted the hypocrisy of the supposedly anti-slavery British:

“Besides, it is the rule that Great Britain herself, in her pride of place, has again and again prescribed to the Americans in regard to the emancipation of their negro slaves—and, for my own part, I do not object to her applying it in that case by any means; but it is the last rule she ever thinks of applying to herself, in regard to her ill-governed and oppressed colonies. Oh no! Save Great Britain from acting upon the Golden Rule towards Colonial insignificance! The law of Christ may be good enough for the Americans; but only think of applying it to us here in England! Pooh! Pooh! Nonsense!”

From the time of his visit to America, Lang spent a great amount of time in a personal mission to end slavery in the United States, by attempting to start large-scale cotton production, using free labor, in Queensland, whose production would undercut the price of slave-grown cotton, and thus put slavery in America out of business. When the ministers whom he had brought over from Scotland were sent out around the country, he had all of them conduct experiments growing cotton, and he sent their samples of cotton to Manchester to have them tested for quality.

Not surprisingly, the supposedly anti-slavery British Colonial Office, which was trying to start a civil war in the United States on the issue of slavery, did not want to back Lang’s plans, which had advanced far enough by 1852, that he could say:

“And as it is now no longer a matter of doubt that we can grow cotton of superior quality for the British market, at a cheaper rate than the same quality can be grown by the American slaveholder, we should in all likelihood compel the latter to break every yoke, and to let the oppressed go free.”

Not surprisingly, Lang was therefore against a proposal by one cotton lord who wanted to import a quarter million Chinese into Queensland to grow cotton for Manchester. Lang said: “Perish all their mills, say I, rather than consent to anything of the kind. It would completely ruin the hopes and prospects of the country.”

However, unlike what happened when the labor movement opposed Chinese immigration in the 1880s and 1890s on racial grounds, Lang opposed it on the grounds that no slave labor should exist anywhere. Indeed, after first supporting a poll tax, which had been put on individual Chinese to stop them from immigrating to Australia, in 1866 Lang reversed himself, and fought vigorously to repeal the tax. At his funeral in 1878, a delegation of 500 Chinese marched, calling Lang “our great Liberator.” Lang also foresaw, at some point, that it was likely that northern Australia would be inhabited by Aborigines, Malays, and Chinese, which populations he proposed to elevate “by means of a European education, and the extension of equal rights and privileges to all.”

He also denounced the kidnapping then going on in islands of the western Pacific, the so-called Kanaka slave trade, and was a great supporter of Australia’s Aborigines and New Zealand’s Maoris. As his main biographer (who is by no

means entirely sympathetic to Lang) has written:

“Unlike many of his contemporaries, Lang firmly believed that the Australian Aborigines were just as much human beings as were Europeans. He repeatedly drew attention to the fact, attested by scripture, that ‘God hath made all men everywhere, for to dwell upon the face of the earth.’ Equally frequently he denied what some people affirmed, that the black man of the Australian forests was no better than the orang-outang or monkey. Lang, in fact, had a considerable admiration for this free and independent race of black men and women who owed no allegiance to Great Britain but who, most lamentably, were fast disappearing from existence as white men occupied their country and diminished their means of subsistence.”

Lang’s beliefs on these so-called “racial issues” were all located within, first, his knowledge that all men were created in the image of God, and second, the glorious mission that the Australian nation was destined to play within mankind as a whole. As he said to an American audience in 1840:

“It must be evident to every intelligent American, that the series of colonies that have thus been successfully planted on the shores of the Australian Continent . . . will, in all likelihood, exceed all former precedent, will, at no distant day, exert a mighty influence, either for good or for evil, on a large proportion of the whole family of man.”

Though acknowledged as a towering giant for his greatness of spirit, John Dunmore Lang was not alone in his struggle to uplift Australians, in order to bring about the true freedom and independence of the golden lands of Australia.

### **Charles Harpur, republican poet**

One of his closest associates was the poet Charles Harpur.

Charles Harpur, the second son of convict parents, was born in 1813, and like Lang, he had a mission, clearly outlined in his simple, but powerful poem, “This Southern Land of Ours”:

With clowns to make our laws, and knaves to rule us as  
of old,  
In vain our soil is rich, in vain ’tis seamed with virgin  
gold;  
But the present only yields us nought, the future only  
lours,  
Till we have a braver manhood, in this Southern land  
of ours.

What would pygmean statesmen, but our new-world  
prospects blast  
By chaining Enterprise and Thought to the  
misyielding past;  
With all its misery for the masses and fraud-unholden  
powers,  
But we’ll have a braver system in this Southern Land  
of ours.

And Lo! The unploughed future boys! May yet be all  
our own,  
If hearts that love their native soil, determine (this  
alone);  
To sow its years for crops of truth and border them  
with flowers,  
Till we have a nobler manhood in this Southern Land  
of ours.

Harpur wrote hundreds of poems, numerous prose pieces on most issues of contemporary interest, as well as a play, all of them dedicated to creating “a nobler manhood.” But, historians claim that, aside from a tiny handful of similarly high-minded intellectuals of the day, Harpur was largely disregarded by a population more intent on exploiting the seductive and bountiful riches of their new land, than creating a nation of true wealth and prosperity for the benefit of generations to come. However, like similar claims made about John Dunmore Lang, that may well be a lie.

Like Robert Burns and other poets whom he greatly admired, including Shakespeare, Shelley, Keats, and Milton, Harpur was a passionate republican. So much so that he named his first son Washington, after that famous American founding father, as well as writing a patriotic poem in his honor.

Harpur believed that the common man had the potential to participate in his nation’s destiny, that he was the equal of the so-called upper classes and indeed that he was individually responsible for the future course of the nation. He said of himself: “I am not only a democratic Republican in theory, but by every feeling of my nature. Its first principles lie rudimentally in the moral elements of my being, ready to flower forth and bear their proper fruit. Hence, as I hold myself, on the ground of God’s humanity, to be politically superior to no fellow being, so, on the same ground, I can feel myself inferior to none.”

### **On freedom and necessity**

Harpur wrote in the *People’s Advocate* in March 1851: “I sometimes think myself fortunate in the worldly experience of the last five years, but at other times, I can scarcely forbear accusing Providence of something akin to malignity in inflicting it upon me. . . .” He laments the “pretence—mean, miserable, mouthy pretence” of society. The “cold preachments of mere church systems, the stale ethics and frothy legalities of mere class schools and colleges, the meagre moralities of mere conventions, social and political.” And asks, “Must we even heave our humanity overboard, as a radical deformity—a thing incorrigible? Let us first try another remedy.”

He then goes on to restate, in his own words, the very essence of that historical giant of republicanism and true freedom from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries,

the German Friedrich Schiller’s life-governing idea, that “mankind possesses the capability of exercising reason in order to transform the world of necessity into his free choice and to elevate physical necessity to a moral.” Schiller spelled this out in considerable detail in his *Aesthetical Letters*. Listen to how Harpur spoke of this idea, that one’s reason and one’s emotions could be brought into harmony:

“The brave unfaltering habitude of perfect, educated, social equality—of absolute, instructed, soul-ennobling individual liberty—that is to say, entire freedom from all false, fashionable, and juggling necessities, would assuredly work out for it, in all truthful regards, a more effectual and abiding redemption: To shackle it down is but to cramp and straiten it into falsehood. To liberate it thoroughly, were to give it, at all events, its best remaining and most honest chance of escape into truth.

“But would an individual enfranchisement, thus extensive, tend in any wise to relax our sense of social obligations—such as grow naturally out of our humanity, and are sanctioned both by affection and reason? In no wise would it do so. But it would infinitely exalt our moral willinghood. The righteous discharge of all our true duties would be more than ever the conscious glory of our manhood: because, by being separated from all false and mystifying requirements, their essential sacredness would be but the more clearly discernible. . . . But no obediencial necessities, imposed by the selfishness of mere authority, could any long be juggled into the place and dignity of duties. And here lies the prime difference between the moral world as it is, and as it should and might be.”

But Harpur did not just concur with Schiller’s view of the universe. Lyndon LaRouche’s historical friend and mentor, the great eighteenth-century scientist and philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, is renowned for developing the philosophical idea of “the best of all possible worlds.” Charles Harpur was, without doubt, very familiar with the work of Leibniz, as exemplified in his poem “Theodic Optimism.” And in the *People’s Advocate* of Dec. 27, 1851, he had this to say on the subject:

“In all matters of moral and social judgment, the world of now must be wiser, [through] the very pressure of its progressive necessities, than the world of then could possibly have been. . . . In other words, the fulfilling nature of man and the real nature of things, becoming more and more developed in their mutual relations, by virtue of there being a course of time for the prolongation of thought and action, become also more readily perceptible, and are thenceforth matter of fixed or fixing knowledge, out of which a present wisdom is extractable transcending accumulatively all the boasted wisdom of the past.

“As manhood must be more enlightened, speaking generally, through the prolongation and enlargement of the mere consciousness of being, than youth or boyhood possibly can be, however otherwise favoured; even so must it hold of the race collectively in the maturing tendency of its ages.



“With every century, society is making good riddance of the manifold hallucinations of its minority; and so too, for many centuries to come, the spirit of its progress will have to forget for truth’s sake, even more perhaps than it will have to learn notwithstanding all the ‘wisdom of our ancestors,’ and our own in addition.”

Charles Harpur lived for his country. He fought for it in the most profound way, but, tragically, his life ended with an unrealized dream. Despite this deep disappointment, he never relinquished his hope that one day, his vision of having a “Nobler Manhood in this Southern Land of ours,” would be realized. He wrote:

“At this moment I am a wanderer and a vagabond upon the face of my native Land—after having written upon its evergreen beauty strains of feeling and imagination which, I believe, ‘men will not willingly let die.’ But my countrymen, and the world, will yet know me better. I doubt not, indeed, but that I shall yet be held in honour both by them and by it.”

These heroic and determined individuals from the 1850s not only did a great service for their fellow countrymen of their time, but they indisputably laid the foundation for our comparable fight today. Without their courage and just plain hard work; without the benefit of their noble orations and art; without their vision of something higher and better and more noble for their fellow man, beyond what they would see in their own lifetimes; we would be a poorer and more intellectually impoverished band of patriots.

We must take up their struggle, and this time, we must win.

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## The 1880s and 1890s

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# A republican labor movement awakens

by Robert Barwick

After the partial defeat of John Dunmore Lang, through the establishment of the fraud of so-called “responsible government” in 1856, the next great opportunity to profoundly change Australia’s form of government, came as a result of the rise of the labor movement during the 1880s and 1890s. For it was during these years, that the issue of what form the coming Federation of the Commonwealth of Australia would take, was fought out.

### **W.G. Spence, union organizer**

The towering figure in Australian unionism during this time, was William Guthrie Spence, the driving force behind

the two great “bush unions,” the Amalgamated Miners Association and the Amalgamated Shearers’ Union, the latter soon to become known as the Australian Workers Union, the AWU, the most influential union in Australian history.

The young W.G. Spence was a founder of the Amalgamated Miners’ Association, which was first established in Bendigo in 1874. Spence became the head of the AMA in a Victorian town named Creswick, where the future Prime Minister John Curtin would be born and raised. The Creswick branch of the AMA was by far the union’s most dynamic. By 1882 Spence had become general secretary of the AMA, and he directed an explosion in its organizing. Within a few years, the AMA had 23,500 members across all the Australian colonies and in both islands of New Zealand, to become the first truly federal, even intercolonial union, which had been Spence’s concept from the outset.

Many miners were also part-time sheep shearers, since both were rural occupations. In 1886, as the pastoralists moved to cut back the shearers’ wages drastically, a young member of Spence’s AMA, who also did shearing, came to him, and asked him to organize a union for shearers. Many earlier attempts had been made to organize shearers, but all had failed, in part due to the structure of the industry, where small groups of shearers were constantly on the move. Their lives were miserable, both because of their horrid living conditions, their low pay rates, and also because of the practice called “raddling,” whereby a pastoralist would not pay for an entire pen of shorn sheep, if there were only one not shorn to his satisfaction.

The atomized shearers faced the all-powerful pastoralists, who were in fact just the same squattocracy against whom John Dunmore Lang had fought 30 and 40 years earlier. And wool was Australia’s most important export item, by far, making what happened in this sector of the economy of importance beyond all proportion to its small number of workers. Upon being asked in 1886 to organize the shearers, Spence took up the challenge. Within one year, he and only three organizers working with him had enrolled over 9,000 shearers in the union, to total 44,000 by the turn of the century. Spence would travel over 15,000 miles a year, and his organizers would go through eight or nine horses, so quickly would the animals wear out at the pace the organizers were doing their recruiting rounds. As Spence described their work in his book, it was long hours, little sleep, and a lot of travel.

By 1889, Spence and the AWU had won an extraordinary series of victories, in terms of working conditions, pay rates, hours of labor, etc. But, that same year, the City of London began to pull its capital out of Australia, and, at the same time, the price of wool began to fall sharply. In 1890, the mighty Barings Bank, the backbone of the Empire, which had financed the purchase of the Suez Canal, among many other things, had gone bankrupt, though it was later bailed out. Squeezed by falling prices for wool, the pastoralists decided to unite and form the Pastoralists Union, while other employ-