

Depression, War and Recovery : Western Australian Economics, 1935 to 1963

Ray Petridis

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**Honorary Research Fellow, University of Notre Dame.
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Email: rpetridis@nd.edu.au**

Abstract

Edward Shann finally resigned his professorial post at the University of Western Australia in 1934 after a period of disquiet about his frequent absences. Satisfaction evaporated at the appointment of his replacement, A.G.B.Fisher as Fisher moved on after 23 months. Economics was left rudderless for almost four years as financial constraints and the onset of war further depleted the academic staff. The appointment of F.R.E.Mauldon as Professor in Economics in 1941, heralded a gradual improvement in course content, research activity and staffing and by 1945 the threat to the survival of economics was averted. In the immediate post-war period a pool of talented students was recruited through war service schemes and from younger matriculants. Many of those in the early post-war cohorts made their mark as original researchers and in academia. After several false starts the Faculty of Economics was established in 1954 under the stewardship of Mauldon and in 1961 the Faculty of Economics and Commerce was established under the leadership of Mauldon's successor, Ivor Ian Bowen. Interaction with the business and the wider community was mainly instigated by the professors and later by two of the younger academic staff, D.W.Oxnam and A.M.Kerr but was never as close as in the Shann era. Participation in the Economic Society of Western Australia by the academic staff was sporadic and in the post war era only a minority of the staff were especially important in raising the public profile of the Society.

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1 Introduction

The history of teaching and research in economics and the reach of economics into the Western Australian community through the Economic Society of Western Australia can be divided into three phases. Phase one is the Shann phase dominated by the academic brilliance and enormous energy of E.O.G.Shann, foundation professor of economics and history from 1911-1935. Phase two from 1936 to 1963 is a story of a struggle for survival in the first decade after Shann's departure followed by a steady but not spectacular recovery between 1942 and 1963. Phase three is the period from 1964 to the present which is examined in Michael McLure (2009).

This paper deals with the second phase which is divided into three parts. The first part chronicles the financial and associated difficulties of staffing the teaching of economics at the University of Western Australia (UWA) after Shann's departure and up to 1941. The second part is concerned with developments after the much debated decision to fill the chair in economics which had been left vacant for four years. F.R.E.Mauldon arrived in 1941 and carried economics until 1945 with miniscule staff and student numbers. However, he laid the foundations for the emergence of a Department of Economics, a Faculty of Economics and eventually a Faculty of Economics and Commerce. Apart from these developments the third part is also focussed on some significant research contributions by academic staff and a group of highly talented students between 1946 and 1963². The final section of the paper briefly examines the interaction between academic economists and the Western Australian branch of the Economic Society focussing on the period 1935 to 1963².

¹ I am grateful to the University Archivist, Maria Carvalho and the Archives staff, Mim Congdon and Narelle Crighton for their guidance and assistance. I am especially grateful for their prompt and courteous responses to my requests for Archival material. I am also grateful to the Director of Human Resources and the Manager of Human Resources for their permission to examine some personnel files.

² Although the major historical events will be detailed such a chronicle would necessarily be brief and 'as dry as dust'. For this reason the chronicle will be humanised by focussing on the personalities and contributions of individual members of the academic staff as well as the professors in economics who were of greatest importance in each period. This emphasis is justified by the fact of very small academic staff numbers which meant that the staff were thrust into significant academic and management activities at a much earlier point in their careers than otherwise.

2 Struggle for survival 1935-1941

Edward Shann had periods of leave between 1913 and 1930 mainly related to his research culminating in several important publications in Australian history and economic history. Between 1930 and 1933 he was granted leave, renewed each year, to act as an advisor to the Bank of New South Wales and to participate in a range of government related advisory activities. In the small, parochial, and therefore well informed academic community and in the wider community disquiet about Shann's absences rapidly mounted. Such disquiet was at the political level because of his perceived close association with a private bank and at the policy level because of his participation in deliberations on what some regarded as controversial monetary, fiscal and wages policy. These were linked to the Premiers' Plan and the Wallace Bruce Committee (Alexander, 1963; Millmow, 2005; Snooks, 2007). There was also mounting concern at the relative neglect of the educational interests of students .

During these absences Shann was undoubtedly involved in making important contributions to Australian economic policy discussions but it seems to have influenced his attitudes to criticisms emanating from various academic and administrative levels at UWA. In a letter to the Vice Chancellor, H.E. Whitfeld, Shann who had a close and personal relationship with Whitfeld, insensitively referred to 'a mild protest against my absence' from the Senate (Shann, 1932). The effects of the depression on State finances from which the 'free' UWA was funded³ seems to have muted the negative response to Shann's absences since his salary savings appeared to be redirected elsewhere in the university. The problem was almost entirely related to the quality of the degree in Arts with a major in economics on offer. There had been only minor changes to the course content for almost a decade and after 1930 all of the teaching relied on casual staff not all of whom were well qualified, especially in economic theory. Furthermore some teaching was apparently provided according to Whitfeld by 'our graduate and senior students who voluntarily tutor' (Whitfeld, letter to A.G.B. Fisher, 1934) In the event Shann was pressured to return to UWA for a further four academic terms and in June, 1934 he resigned with effect from the end of that year.

Shann's last year at UWA was a less than happy one because his absences alienated him from some of his colleagues. In 1931 history and economics had been separated into independent departments and Shann's designation changed to professor of economics. It was also in 1931 that the subsidy to the university was cut by twenty percent with concomitant cuts in academic salaries. In the 1935-36 financial year the State government subsidy was restored and an additional small one-off grant provided to the university. The improvement in the university finances did not automatically lead to a decision to fill the vacant chair in economics because the finances of the university were still stretched to the limit and because goodwill towards the economics discipline had dissipated. Behind the scenes Shann, D.B. Copland and A.C. Davidson were suggesting that the well credentialed and highly regarded A.G.B. Fisher should be offered the post.

³ During his tenure Shann was closely associated with two unsuccessful attempts to introduce tuition fees (Alexander, 1963, especially pp.107-113).

Fisher had apparently replaced Shann as economic consultant to the Bank of New South Wales in 1934. In November, 1934 Whitfeld responded to an inquirer about the Shann vacancy advising him that 'no decision (had been made) whether to carry on the department' (University Archives, file 1753). The survival of the department was a close call but ultimately in December, 1934 the Senate resolved to fill the chair after several months of discussions. The offer to Fisher was made by the Vice Chancellor, Whitfeld in December, 1934 and Fisher responded promptly indicating that he would be unable to take up duties until January, 1936 because of his contractual obligations to the University of Otago where he occupied the chair in economics⁴.

Acceptance of Fisher's starting date meant that the chair was kept vacant for two years after Shann's departure. Once again the department of economics had to advertise for casual and temporary staff⁵. The intention was to leave a 'free hand for Fisher in 1936' (University Archives, file 1792) Two significant appointees for the 1935 academic year were H.C. Coombs and M.Harris⁶. Harris had completed a Ph.D. at the London School of Economics on 'British Migration and Settlement in Western Australia, 1829-1850' and was given a part time appointment. Coombs had completed an M.A. in 1934 on the 'Development of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia as a Central Bank'. However, by the end of the second term, August, 1935 Coombs had departed to the post of Assistant Economist at the Commonwealth Bank in Sydney,. Fisher recommended the appointment of a less qualified and experienced person, T.G.Wilsmore as a temporary tutor in economics to replace the talented Coombs.

In mid-1935 the university advertised for a lecturer in economics 'to work under Professor Fisher'(University Archives, file 1793) . Fisher was in close contact with Vice Chancellor, Whitfeld throughout what became a tortuous process to select just one lecturer. The thirty one applicants were eventually sorted into three groups according to domicile in Western Australia, the Eastern states and New Zealand and the Northern hemisphere. Whitfeld was also in touch with Douglass Copland who for the next decade played a significant role in encouraging applicants to UWA and informally advising on their suitability. Ultimately, Fisher chose J.O.Shearer from his shortlist which included Merab Harris, J.G.Crawford, R.Plummer and H.W.Singer. Shearer was a colleague of Fisher's in New Zealand and arrived at UWA soon after Fisher in early 1936.

There was a sense of anticipation at UWA that Fisher would be the leader to rescue the economics department from extinction. He had just turned forty years of age when he arrived in 1936 with an already established and distinguished academic career (Hogan,

⁴ This prompted the professor of mathematics A.D.Ross, a noted polymath and earlier in his career Vice Chancellor, to again press for the chair to be left vacant 'and to advertise for a lecturer in charge' (Ross, 1934). The professor of civil engineering, O.F.Blakey vehemently opposed the proposal to fill the chair by direct invitation to one man which he described as 'an atrocious procedure' creating 'an extraordinary precedent' (Blakey, 1934).

⁵ Shann advised on these appointments and tellingly commented about one applicant that 'his interests are on the institutional side and I think you would be better served by a man strong in economic theory' (University Archives file, 1792)

⁶ For a detailed discussion of Harris' career at UWA see below, pp.8-9.

2007). Fisher's first objective was to revise the economics major about which he had consulted both Copland and Coombs prior to his arrival at UWA. The Faculty of Arts approved the revisions proposed so as to 'make available a full course in economics comparable to that given in most universities'. Henceforth students would have to enrol in three full (one year) units in economics as well as economic history. The choice of optional units for economics majors was reduced from four to three but this was seen as a small price to pay for the achievement of a higher quality degree. Because of limited staff qualified to teach in the revised, more theoretical third year unit, approval was granted to teach this unit in alternate years, a practice which persisted for a period in excess of a decade.

In addition to his professorship Fisher was also appointed Director of Adult Education a position he had also filled at the University of Otago⁷. He was a reluctant Director not only because of his preference for teaching, research and administration in economics but also because he was charged with the responsibility for the Diploma of Commerce. This Diploma had been strongly supported by Shann but when teaching commenced in 1930, Shann had departed on leave without pay. Fisher was called upon to write a report on the foreign language requirement for Dip.Comm. students. In an irritable comment he wrote that 'the majority of them are people with inadequate general educational background...(which would)... make it difficult to maintain proper standards in other subjects' (Fisher 15 March, 1937 in undated file '*Proposed Faculty of Economics*'). Because of his heavy workload in his short stay at UWA he published one paper in *Economica* (Fisher, 1937) which appears to have been a by product of his excellent book on *The Clash of Progress and Security* (1935).

Very few students had been prepared for research work and just one came under Fisher's close supervision. J.H.Goodes had completed an honours degree in 1937 on 'Pricing in a Planned Economy' and subsequently was employed as a research assistant in the Department of Economics funded by a Commonwealth grant to the university. Under Fisher's direction he commenced a project on 'The Community Income of Western Australia'. Goodes conducted a survey to obtain estimates of components of State income not available from official sources. This research was of great significance as Fisher noted in a Preface (Goodes, 1938, p.25) 'Mr.Goodes careful survey of the existing material will be an extension of the ground upon which later estimates of National (sic) Income in Western Australia can be based'. His prediction was well founded because after 1940 numerous honours and graduate students undertook related research⁸ on variants of state and regional income. Thus began one of only a few distinctive streams of research by economists at UWA. The policy implications of the research were of substantial financial importance to the Western Australian economy since the Commonwealth Grants Commission determined grants on a needs basis. Western Australia was a 'claimant State' for almost fifty years and its claims were in part prepared using some of the income estimates made by UWA economists over the years. These

⁷ Adult education had languished at UWA and appointing Fisher to the Director's post was used as an inducement to persuade the Professorial Board and the Senate to maintain the Chair and Department of Economics.

⁸ See below pp. 15-16.

claims to the Grants Commission were also based on estimates of balance of interstate trade and capital flows data, similar to the estimates in Goodes' paper.

Barely eighteen months after his arrival at UWA Fisher wrote to the Chancellor of the university in July, 1937 to tender his resignation. He had been invited to fill the prestigious research only post of Price Professor of International Relations at the Royal Institute of International Affairs based in London. As he explained the attraction '...is the unusual opportunity for independent work, in large measure free from routine responsibilities which makes me anxious to accept'(Fisher, personal file). Three days before his departure for London on 29th November, 1937 Fisher filed a report on the future of the Diploma of Commerce⁹. There was an unedifying exchange between the administration of the financially struggling university and Fisher over the 'matter of two years salary for two years work' with the issue eventually being settled amicably. In August 1938 J.O.Shearer who was Fisher's preferred candidate for a permanent lectureship and had been paid at a higher rate on Fisher's parting recommendation, also departed to a post at Victoria University College in Wellington, New Zealand.

The decision was made not to fill the vacant chair in economics and once again the department was bereft of any well qualified permanent staff. In the event the staffing problem was ameliorated by the employment of several talented academics on very short term lecturing appointments. Most noteworthy were H.P.Brown for a term in 1938, Colin G.Clark who lasted for one term in 1938 and R.I.Downing for a term in 1939¹⁰. Undoubtedly the most influential of these was the appointment of Colin Clark on the recommendation of Fisher. In a memo to the Vice Chancellor in August, 1937 Fisher had concluded that discussions at recent Senate meetings indicated there was no intention to fill his chair in economics in the near future and suggested the temporary appointment of 'a distinguished young English economist, Colin G. Clark' (Archives file, 3322). Fisher described Clark as a talented statistician who was 'equally distinguished in economics'. He wrote persuasively to Clark who was also considering an offer from the University of Adelaide that "Perth is the more fertile and attractive field for the labours of an economist'. Clark was appointed for terms 1 and 2 of 1938. Unfortunately for the Department of Economics Clark stayed for just the first term. He then moved to Queensland to replace J.B.Brigden as Director in the Bureau of Industry and State Statistics in Brisbane .

Colin Clark appears to have had a profound impact at UWA. Goodes' (1938) fulsomely acknowledges the guidance of Clark in his research on national income accounting and he was introduced to the estimation methodology pioneered by J.T.Sutcliffe and later revised by Clark (Patmore, 2007). Goodes was an active researcher who in 1939 was

⁹ The Diploma of Commerce stumbled along until 1940 when it was permanently shelved, never to be revived until a fully fledged and staffed Bachelor of Commerce degree was established in the 1960s.

¹⁰ These arrangements reflected the remarkable goodwill towards UWA by Douglas Copland and other senior academics at the University of Melbourne. However, in December, 1939 the Acting Vice Chancellor at UWA wrote to G.L.Wood then head of Commerce at the University of Melbourne and to L.F.Giblin who had moved to the Treasury in Canberra requesting Downing be seconded again for the 1940 academic year. The request was politely refused.

seconded from the State Treasury to take some lectures and tutorials at UWA. Reflecting the financial stringency still facing the university he was only paid a modest honorarium by the university and the quid pro quo was that one or two graduates would work on some research involving economic material, presumably of interest to the State Treasury¹¹.

While at UWA Clark presented a widely promoted public lecture on 'The Economist and Rearmament' (Clark, 1938) sponsored by the University and attended by the usual collection of dignitaries and politicians. He made use of his own early estimates of national income and its distribution to argue that rearmament should be financed by taxation when there is full employment and by borrowing when there is unemployment.. His reasoning was expansionist and reflected his close association with Cambridge economics in the 1930s. He strongly disputed the view of Copland, who was one of his sponsors on his visit to Australia, that the States should reduce their loan expenditure when the Commonwealth increased its expenditure.

By June, 1938 disquiet about the vacant chair in economics began to mount. There was a clear inference that this was associated with student dissatisfaction about the teaching arrangements. Early in June a letter signed by 45 students urged the university to fill the post in order to provide the students with an inspiring but not necessarily 'a long staying appointee' (Archives file, 3322). Less than three weeks later the Western Australian branch of the Economic Society forwarded a resolution to the acting Vice Chancellor expressing 'deep concern (at) the continued vacancy in the chair of economics' and urging 'the Senate to make an early appointment' (Archives file, 3322). The Acting Vice Chancellor promptly responded to the Economic Society indicating that a Professorial Committee was considering the matter. A response to the students had to wait almost two months when they were advised that the Senate was waiting for advice on funding from the State government for 1939.

By October, 1938 it was clear that the university had no intention of filling the chair in time for the 1939 academic year. The university proceeded to invite applications for a temporary lecturer in economics, the appointee to be a senior member of the Department of Economics and paid at a higher rate. This elicited a much more combative response from the Economic Society and the Federated Chambers of Commerce¹² both of whom presented similar arguments and resolutions to the Vice Chancellor. The Economic Society began with a preamble stressing the importance of the teaching of economics and the great benefits derived by those who had come into contact with Shann, Fisher and Colin Clark. Much to the chagrin of the Economic Society it seemed that since Fisher had been appointed for seven years and departed after just two years, '...these funds (are) being spent elsewhere in the University' (Archives file, 3322). The Vice Chancellor

¹¹ Goodes moved to the University of Melbourne to further his postgraduate studies, proceeding from there to the Commonwealth Treasury and eventually occupying the position of Director General of the Commonwealth Department of Social Services (Alexander, 1963, pp.221-2).

¹² The interest of Chambers of Commerce was in the teaching in economics and more specifically 'the lack of leadership for the Diploma of Commerce' after '...the work done by the late Professor Shann' (Archives file, 3322) After all, the Chambers had helped to fund the Diploma of Commerce which was discontinued after 1940. For reports of the protests of both organisations also see *The West Australian*, 4 October, 1938.

(A.D.Ross) sent similar, aggressive replies to both organisations. He stressed that a Lecturer and Assistant Lecturer had been appointed, but did not mention that they were temporary appointments. He then commented ‘...why you should imagine that the University has transferred money from the Department of Economics ...I cannot understand’ (Archives file,3322). In any case he went on the University had a ‘stationary’ grant so that everyone was economising. Doubt is easily cast on this disingenuous response by the Vice Chancellor because the State Under Treasurer had written to the University several months before hinting that the University’s grant might be reduced if the chair was not filled. An even more telling sign of financial stress was the letter sent to the Under Treasurer by the Vice Chancellor in December, 1939 proposing that an Economic Advisor be appointed to the State Government. Such a person it was proposed should also fill the role of Professor on a part time basis¹³.

Pressure to fill the Chair in Economics at UWA also came from its academic friends at the University of Melbourne. Merab Harris and the UWA Vice Chancellor had written to the Head of the Department of Commerce at Melbourne to request the secondment of a lecturer for 1940. Harris received a personal reply dated 16 December, 1939 from Professor G.L.Wood in which he wrote as follows : ‘The existing situation with respect to Economics in Western Australia is not attractive to capable men in comparison with the opportunities in the eastern states. Your University authorities will have to take the problem of teaching and research in Economics into very serious consideration if the University is to play the part which it should be playing in the investigation of Australia’s economic problems’ (Archive file, 3322) Wood suggested to Harris that she forward his letter to the Vice Chancellor. She duly extracted the relevant passages and forwarded them. Two days later the University Senate accepted the strong recommendation of the Special Commissioner, the Vice Chancellor of Sydney University, to fill the chair (Alexander, 1963, p.,158). The new Professor of Economics did not take up his post until March, 1941.

In the meantime Merab Harris continued to manage all aspects of the activities of the Department of Economics. It is a period which deserves some scrutiny because of the decisions made relating to Harris. Born in Western Australia in 1901 she had a solid academic record, gaining a BA. in 1923, MA in 1931 and went to the London School of Economics as a Hackett Research Scholar. In less than three years she had successfully completed a Ph.D. From 1935 to 1937 she was a part time lecturer and tutor in economic history. In 1938 she was a temporary lecturer in economics now lecturing three courses, in introductory economics, the new more advanced course in third year economics introduced by Fisher as well as in economic history. After the return of Shearer to New Zealand she was left as the only academic with any significant experience and virtually by default she assumed responsibility for administering the Department of Economics program. In 1939 this role was formalised when in the absence of any other well qualified applicants she was made Temporary Lecturer in Charge of the Department of Economics and was listed in the *University Calendar* (1939) as the only member of the Department.

¹³ It has not been possible to trace the response, if any, by the Under Treasurer, A.J.Reid who later became Pro-Chancellor and then Chancellor of the University.

Temperamentally Harris may have been unsuited for the task thrust upon her. She assumed responsibility for organisation of the teaching program between 1939 and 1941. Remarkably, the successive programs were submitted for approval by the Vice Chancellor each year. On matters of recruitment of temporary academic staff she was in close touch both with the Vice Chancellor and with academics at other Australian universities (Archives file, 3322). Being the only senior member of the teaching staff she provided directions and guidance to other staff in her gentle, laissez faire, hands off manner. After the appointment of F.R.E.Mauldon as professor and before his arrival, she was in frequent communication with him about the teaching arrangements, about the 'many criticisms' of the suspended Diploma of Commerce, and about aspects of teaching method raised by Mauldon and related matters. Shortly before Mauldon's arrival she commented in a letter '...a very great deal waits to be done both in the Department of Economics and in the community, and your coming will be very welcome' (Archives file, 3322). Before Mauldon arrived she had become concerned about her own academic future.

In January, 1941 she wrote to the Vice Chancellor asking for his support in her application for an Assistant Lectureship at the University of Tasmania. The Vice Chancellor replied that he would support her but noted that Professor Mauldon would like her to stay on at UWA. In the meantime the University of Tasmania had offered her the advertised post. A similar post was offered to her at UWA at the top of the salary range. After confirming that the appointment was for three years she very promptly accepted (Merab Tauman nee Harris, Staff File 329, vol.1). Her prompt acceptance points to some insecurity about employment in the war time environment, nevertheless her reward for four years (apart from a two month absence due to ill health) of sustained and single handed effort seems meagre, indeed.

Mauldon thought highly of her efforts because six months after his arrival on delivering his inaugural lecture he acknowledged 'Merab Harris's role during the preceding three difficult years' (F.R.E.Mauldon, Personal File). During the 1942-3 vacation period H.C.Coombs invited Harris to work with him at the Rationing Commission and applied to the Vice Chancellor for leave on her behalf. Leave was extended into the first half of the academic term in 1943 with Mauldon's strong support as he took over her teaching. In July, 1943 Mauldon recommended the creation of a Lectureship to which Harris should be appointed. He noted that '...she does her teaching thoroughly and competently. Research students find her a source of considerable help'. (Harris nee Tauman, Staff File 329, vol.1). Despite Mauldon's support the university reappointed her as an Assistant Lecturer for a further three years¹⁴. Remarkably, at about the same time in 1943 she was appointed to the Professorial Board. The long wait for a permanent post ended in 1946 when she was promoted to Lecturer from the beginning of 1947. Her last promotion, to Senior Lecturer came just three years later, an application for study leave in

¹⁴ Harris' referees uniformly praised her academic qualities and supported her various job applications at UWA. From the earliest reference by W.H.Beveridge in 1934, from her Ph.D. supervisor who coupled her with H.C.Coombs as '...(one of) my two best pupils' (Archives file, 1795), from A.G.B.Fisher and Fred Alexander, later Professor of History, they were uniformly supportive.

1960 was refused ‘... (because there were) no special circumstances justifying her application’ (Staff file, 329, Vol.1). She retired in 1965.¹⁵

3 The Mauldon Era : War and Gradual Recovery

When Mauldon arrived at UWA aged 49 in March, 1941 he found that he and one other person, Joseph Gentilli¹⁶ a geographer were the listed Department of Economics staff in the *University Calendar* for 1941. Harris was appointed as an Assistant Lecturer shortly thereafter and the three of them constituted the permanent lecturing staff of the Department of Economics until 1946. Honours and research students together with some casual staff made up the rest of the teaching numbers.

As an undergraduate Mauldon had studied at the University of Sydney and the London School of Economics achieving an excellent record which he maintained when he completed an M.Ec. at Sydney University before appointment as a resident tutor in the Hunter Valley. In 1926 he was appointed to a senior lectureship at Melbourne University where he was associated with the leading academic economists in Australia. This was his most formative period as he excelled in applied industrial studies, among them a study of the Australian coal industry. For that work he was awarded the university’s Harbison-Higinbotham research scholarship and shortly after in 1928, a Litt.D. His research efforts made his academic reputation and in 1935 he was appointed to the Chair in Economics at the University of Tasmania. Appointed as an economic advisor by the Tasmania government he began to work on aspects of regional economics including estimates of State income which were required for submissions to the Commonwealth Grants Commission (Petridis, 2007).

¹⁵ Harris undoubtedly was a shy, unassertive and retiring person who was described by Alexander in one of his references as ‘... (keeping) too much of her light under a bushel’ (Staff file 329, Vol.1). This does not detract from her contribution to the Department for which she received scant recognition. For many years she worked towards the establishment of a University Women’s College. When St. Catherines College was finally established she served on its Council for twenty five years.

¹⁶ Gentilli (1912-2000) was a Jewish refugee from Italy who arrived in Fremantle in September, 1939. His eclectic education at the University of Venice began with economics and commerce but his interests quickly led him to law, history, languages and geography. At UWA his initial appointment in 1940 was as a part time, temporary lecturer in statistics and in 1941 he was made a full time assistant lecturer in statistics and economic geography. Classified as an enemy alien he spent a few weeks in prison and 3 years later in November, 1943 he was reclassified as a refugee alien which permitted him to own a camera and to pursue one of his major interests in physical geography. He had to wait until 1947 for his position as a lecturer in economic geography to be regularised. In 1953 he was promoted to senior lecturer, still in the Department of Economics, moving to the new Department of Geography on its foundation in the 1960s. He assisted with the early teaching of statistics to students majoring in economics and for many years taught a highly successful course in economic and social geography. His subsequent academic career in biogeography and climatology led to many accolades including the creation of university prizes and a Memorial Lecture in his name (Armstrong, 2001).

Three years later Mauldon moved on to the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics as Economist and Research Director. This was a brief, unhappy work period for him. He wrote to the Vice Chancellor on two occasions inquiring about the vacant chair at UWA before it had been advertised. In these letters he indicated that he was interested in the economic aspects of research rather than the statistical ones which he felt 'hemmed' him in¹⁷ (F.R.E.Mauldon, personal file). Thus he arrived at UWA having created the expectation that he would raise the profile of economics and guide economics to a secure and permanent future. In the beginning he pursued this task single handedly and with considerable vigour.

Six months after his arrival at UWA he had the first public opportunity to examine the role of economics in a civilized society and to argue the case for a university department of economics¹⁸ (Mauldon, 1941). He examined in detail four justifications in terms of the contribution of economics to the community. These covered the content of subjects taught, the training of research workers and the value of research undertaken, the participation of academics in adult education and similar outside activities and the advisory activities of staff on behalf of various levels of government (see also Mauldon, 1935).

He also presented the unsuccessful case for a degree in Commerce incorporating economics to the Royal Commission on the University of Western Australia (Wolff,1942). The inclusion of economics and statistics in a Commerce education were essential to raise the standards so they were 'comparable to those at the University of Melbourne and the University of Tasmania' (Archives File, Proposed Faculty of Economics). In 1943 he was proposing the possible establishment of a Faculty of Commerce along the lines of the University of Melbourne incorporating majors in economics as well as in the usual commercial subjects. Once again he was pushed to justify the maintenance of a Department of Economics¹⁹. His proposals in 1943 were ill timed because student numbers had declined to sixty percent of pre-war numbers and finances were tight. However, he succeeded in raising the profile of economics in the University and there were no subsequent challenges to its existence²⁰.

¹⁷ Mauldon was selected for the Chair in Economics from a list which included three much younger men in their early thirties, Horace Belshaw, Nicholas Kaldor and Wilfred Prest, all of whom eventually made their marks in academia.

¹⁸ Mauldon was a quietly spoken, mild mannered man who always tried to present all sides of an issue, sometimes to the detriment of his own case. But he was also quietly determined and persistent so that his contributions to the development of economics at UWA were substantial. His conciliatory approach led to the mistaken impression that he lacked leadership qualities (Alexander, 1963, pp.736-7, Petridis, 2007, p.185).

¹⁹ The detailed justification followed his earlier statements above but he also referred to a 'general justification ... in terms of what it contributes to the University is included in whatever justifies the Faculty of Arts and its contribution in the way of a liberal education' (Archives file, Proposed Faculty of Economics).

²⁰ In Mauldon's early years at UWA he gave a number of talks and papers to meetings of the Economic Society, to Adult Education groups and to church related organisations, especially the Congregational Church. The latter talks focussed on economics and religion.

On the teaching side Mauldon gradually reworked the content of the core courses in economics in order to raise their standard in line with that at other Australian universities. After assuming responsibility for the full first year course in economics he added more theoretical content. He strongly favoured the issue of synopses of lectures to students, a practice which he always followed, but which most of his colleagues at the time and later, shunned. Longer lists of references were issued for all economics courses. The students were expected to consult them as copies of all references were purchased by the library and placed in a restricted reserve section. Material on statistical methods taught in the core economics course was revamped to include less descriptive statistics and more analytical statistics. New courses sponsored by Mauldon included Introduction to Social Studies and Public Administration. The former was never taught. The latter was a special interest of Mauldon's as he developed similar courses at the University of Melbourne in the 1920s. This course was promoted to public servants who were permitted to enrol 'not for degree'. The public administration course and its staffing by a specialist remained part of the Department of Economics until the creation of a Politics Department in the 1960s.

Although he later returned to some research relating to the coal industry in the war years Mauldon's main focus was on regional issues such as those he had pursued when based in Tasmania. He was a member of the Western Australian Industry Expansion Commission and an advisor to the Department of War Organisation of Industry. Working with G.B. Lindsay he initially produced a survey of the Western Australian economy for the period 1936-7 to 1941-2 (UWA, Scholars Manuscript). Thereafter they jointly produced studies for each subsequent year up to and including 1945-46 (Industry Expansion Commission). During this period he became acutely aware of the deficiencies of regional economic data, an experience which was preparing him to guide and encourage a large number of postgraduate students to concentrate on regional issues²¹.

4 The Postwar Mauldon Era 1946 to 1958

At the war's end University finances were expected to improve because of the promise of Commonwealth funding under the new taxation regime and also because State funding was expected to increase following the recommendations of the Wolff Royal Commission. However, between 1946 and 1958 only four appointments were made to the permanent lecturing staff. One of these appointees D.W.Oxnam was appointed in 1946. Over the next decade there was great reliance for teaching resources on a talented pool of honours and graduate students, a number of whom eventually carved out distinguished careers in academia or in public service.

Oxnam was preferred ahead of another candidate, who eventually became Professor of Economics at the Australian National University. According to Mauldon, Oxnam at the age of thirty had superior teaching and research experience and excellent references. In fact between 1940 and 1944 Oxnam had won a succession of academic prizes at

²¹ Between 1941 and 1945 there was just one graduate student (S.K.Rowley) who was working on the economic and physical aspects of agricultural in Western Australia and eventually transferred to the School of Agriculture.

Canterbury University College and the University of New Zealand. He had also worked as a Research Assistant with a leading academic in New Zealand in the field of Industrial Relations, an interest of Mauldon's which had also led him to lecture on this topic in 1944 and 1945, and may have swayed his preference for Oxnam. Thus Oxnam was a versatile lecturer who at first taught in several of the core economics courses as well as in the statistical methods course. In 1948 Statistical Methods was substantially revised, including practical work and renamed Economic and Social Statistics²².

Oxnam lectured in the core courses in economics for several years including on economic theory²³. In a recent interview with one of his students²⁴ I was informed that Oxnam lectured on monetary theory to advanced students at a very good standard. For many years he also lectured on the theory of wages and the history of the Australian arbitration and wages system. He published widely, mainly in Australian journals on wage relativities, wage movements in relation to productivity, methods of wage payments and payments by results, hours of work, the Australian Arbitration system, strikes and other aspects of industrial conflict. He gave evidence in basic wage cases heard by the Commonwealth Arbitration Commission (CAB) in Melbourne in the early 1950s, and later to cases heard by State Arbitral tribunals. The Commonwealth Arbitration Commission were so impressed with his data analysis that they encouraged him to update his data and the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics was asked by the Commission to facilitate this. A short time later the CAB offered him the position of Economic Advisor to the Commonwealth Arbitration Court, which he did not accept (Archives file S590).

Increasingly Oxnam's interests were in industrial relations and by 1957 he introduced a full second year course in Industrial Relations which apart from the usual material, incorporated philosophical and psychological material on the nature of work while still retaining the labour market material which he had earlier taught in the core economics courses. Eventually the latter became part of a unit taught by a specialist in labour economics. Four years later he introduced a third year industrial relations unit which incorporated the most recent theoretical material on industrial relations systems. In 1964 Oxnam called a meeting with a newly arrived lecturer in economics and the Director of the Western Australian Employers Federation at which steps were taken to inaugurate the

²² Mauldon had proposed a similar course in Economic and Social Statistics two years before. He urged the Faculty of Arts to appoint a specialist to teach the course, and linked the proposal to '...the increased number of ex-servicemen' (Archives file 459, part 1). Oxnam's interest in this course continued after he no longer participated in its teaching and some years later he wrote to Mauldon expressing disquiet about its content.

²³ In reviewing Oxnam's role in the early developments in the Economics Department I have come to the view that many of his later colleagues misjudged him. This may have been because of Oxnam's slow speaking manner and his almost indolent presentation. It may have been because of his single minded pursuit of causes whether on his own behalf, on behalf of a student, or on behalf of a colleague (for many years he was an office bearer, including President, of the Academic Staff Association).

²⁴ R.W.Peters was on the Economics staff between 1959 and 1989 and published a major paper on monetary theory in the *Economic Journal* (1966).

Industrial Relations Society of Western Australia²⁵. In the 1970s he worked assiduously toward the introduction of a coursework Master of Industrial Relations degree to which he was appointed Course Controller in 1978. The appointment of a Professor of Industrial Relations waited on Oxnam's retirement after 1979. The first Professor of Industrial Relations elected to take Industrial Relations out of the Department of Economics and into a separate Department in the Faculty of Economics and Commerce.

In 1947 a remarkable young man aged 25 was appointed as a graduate assistant at the same time as he was completing his Honours degree and thesis on 'Trade Union Structure in Western Australia'. In his BA with a major in economics out of nine full year courses he had obtained distinctions in eight of them in an era when distinctions (there were no high distinctions at that time) were severely rationed. Arnold Cook was remarkable because he had been blind since 1940 as a result of the disease, retinitis pigmentosa²⁶. A Hackett Overseas Scholarship took him to the London School of Economics in August, 1948. For two years he studied advanced economic theory and mathematical method and worked on his Ph.D. topic, "The Implications of Wages Theory for the Pricing Policy of the Firm" which was supervised by E.H. Phelps Brown. His thesis was failed at the LSE and also failed some time later when he submitted a different version at UWA. He returned to UWA as a temporary lecturer in 1950 and in 1952 he was appointed to a permanent lectureship in economics. In 1957 he went to Harvard University as a Fulbright Scholar on a years study leave followed by a years leave without pay. In those two years he completed the course work and residential requirements for a Ph.D. which was supervised by Arthur Smithies. Less than two years after his return to UWA his dissertation on 'Some Aspects of Central Banking in Australia with Special Reference to the Special Accounts System as a Central Bank Weapon' was submitted and passed by the examiners, Smithies and J.S. Duesenberry. Thereafter he lectured at an intermediate level in microeconomic theory and monetary theory as well as successfully supervising a number of students in these same areas of economics²⁷.

Alex Kerr came to his studies at UWA via a most unusual route. After three years at the selective State high school, Perth Modern School, he briefly enrolled for a Diploma in Journalism at UWA in 1939, before enlisting in the armed forces in 1940. Between 1941 and 1945 he was a prisoner of war in Germany where he made three escapes and on the third occasion he evaded recapture. Under the auspices of the Swedish Red Cross while a prisoner of war he had earlier enrolled externally at both Oxford University where he completed an Intermediate Diploma in Social Science and at London University. Back in Western Australia in 1947 he completed a B.Sc. (Hons) as an external student at London University and the following year he completed a BA (Hons) at UWA. Barely a year

²⁵ The three persons mentioned were elected to the positions of President, Secretary and Treasurer of the I.R. Society with a delicately balanced Committee (reflecting Oxnam's approach to industrial relations) consisting of equal numbers of academic, employer and trade union representatives.

²⁶ For more details of Cook's blindness and his later career see MacLure, 2009. It should be noted that he had a wife Enid Doreen Cook nee Fuller who was also his carer, his guide and his reader for much of his academic career. However, in later years the Department of Economics provided him with a reader /secretary.

²⁷ Cook prepared all his lectures in braille. His delivery was loud and clear and all his lectures included discussion of relevant diagrams and the mathematics of the economic models. His output of published papers was small.

later he had completed an MA on the topic of Personal Income of Western Australia. By 1951 his MA thesis had been published as a monograph with the same title and shortly thereafter it was prescribed as a textbook (Kerr, 1951).

Research on regional aspects of income accounting was now in full swing at UWA. Beginning with Goodes' research but now encouraged by Mauldon whose interest in regional economic aspects dated back to his research in the Hunter Valley. In a memo to the Faculty of Arts in 1952 Mauldon wrote that he had been '...furthering research in this field for the past twelve years, with selected graduates...' (Archives file 2702, part1). Alex Kerr has indicated²⁸ that he too was encouraged into regional economic research, including income accounting by Mauldon. In 1952 Kerr and Mauldon presented a joint paper at the ANZAAS Congress on '*The Estimation of Regional Income*'. In the meantime Kerr had been hired by H.P. Brown to work at the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics in Canberra on the annual White Paper on National Income and Expenditure and more specifically to develop State based estimates of personal income along the lines he had developed for his MA thesis. He also met and consulted with Colin Clark who was a frequent visitor to Canberra.

On his return to Western Australia he taught as a temporary lecturer in economics, embarked on a project on *The Resources of the South West* for the Commonwealth Department of National Development and in 1956 successfully completed his PH.D. on *The Theory of Regional Development*. Also in 1956 he presented a paper to the WA branch of the Economic Society on current economic conditions. Responding to the strong interest of the business community in this topic he produced a newsletter called *Economic Activity in Western Australia*. Within six months he changed the format to a quarterly journal with the same title, paid for by subscribers.²⁹ Kerr's regional interests expanded to aspects of economic development and underdevelopment, he undertook research on a range of less developed countries and spent sabbaticals in various international agencies while he rapidly progressed from lecturer to senior lecturer and reader before being appointed inaugural Professor of Economics at Murdoch University in 1975.

In the decade between 1946 and 1956 a stream of talented honours and graduate students were guided into research in regional economics with the main emphasis being on aspects of state and regional income estimation³⁰. Although Mauldon played an initiating role for much of this research it appears that this group of students were highly motivated 'self starters'. Among this group of students were some who because of their subsequent

²⁸ Phone interview, 25 June, 2009.

²⁹ The subscription list grew rapidly and in 1959 the University recognised the journal as 'an official publication of the University, partly funded by the Publications Committee'. Subsequently *Economic Activity* also carried other research based articles predominantly about the Western Australian economy.

³⁰ Almost all of the persons mentioned in this and the following paragraphs also supplemented the meagre teaching resources of the Department of Economics by tutoring and less often, lecturing to undergraduates. A notable member of this group was R.J. Hawke who according to the official information tutored for a very short time in 1953 although I have been assured by those who were there that he was also tutoring in 1954.

careers became well known³¹. Those who produced major pieces of research included R.L.Gray, A.S.Holmes, M.Newton, J.Nevile, R.Pelham Thorman and W.E.G.Salter. Salter's early work on the measurement of factor incomes and the construction of an index of industrial production were more firmly based in economic theory than some of the other research mentioned above. Despite his life being cut short at the age of thirty four his contribution to the body of economic knowledge has always been regarded as the most outstanding by any economist from Western Australia (Harcourt, 2007 and Weber, 2009).

A smaller group encouraged by Merab Harris worked on demographic and immigration issues. Among them were R.T.Appleyard, C.Gamba and H.F.Goerke. Reg Appleyard has continued to research in this area since 1955 when he completed his honours thesis at UWA, his PH.D. at Duke University, as a Senior Research Fellow at the Australian National University and as Professor of Economics (economic history) at UWA. There is therefore a direct line to the establishment in 1987 of the Centre for Migration and Development Studies with Appleyard as its inaugural director. The research emphasis of the Centre was on aspects of the impact of immigration on the Australian economy and society as well as the impact of immigration on socioeconomic change in less developed countries³². The final group of distinguished students from this period undertook research in a diverse range of subjects. Among them were J.R.H.Johns on local government, R.W.Peters and J.S.G.Wilson on money and banking, K.S.Frearson on demand for primary products and W.E.G.Salter on construction of an industrial production index³³.

At last as Mauldon approached retirement after many unsuccessful attempts approval was obtained for the creation of a Faculty of Economics. Mauldon's first attempt was in 1943, proposing a Faculty of Commerce along the lines of the Melbourne Faculty to also include a Department of Economics. In 1945 there was an unsuccessful public appeal for funds for a Faculty of Commerce, followed in 1952 by another proposal, this time for a Faculty of Economics. Some members of the Faculty of Arts strenuously opposed this latter proposal, openly arguing that it would damage the growth of their Faculty. In 1953 Mauldon's fourth proposal for a Faculty was submitted with support from the Dean of Arts and two other Professors in that Faculty. The inaugural meeting of the Faculty was held in 1955 with the permanent staff in economics present. Academic staff from other parts of the University were then nominated, including the Senior Lecturer in

³¹ The scope of this paper is limited and no attempt is made to provide detailed biographies here.

³² In 2003 it was renamed the Trade, Migration and Development Research Centre with a wider range of research areas such as tourism, globalisation, trade, gender equality, good governance and development. The centre's current director is Dr. A.Siddique who supplied this information.

³³ Johns' MA thesis after publication was a prescribed textbook for many years, Peters' research on the creation of the Australian money supply was used extensively by H.W.Arndt in successive editions of his book *The Australian Trading Banks* (1957) and Wilson was appointed Professor of Economics at Hull University and later at Edinburgh University, where he continued to publish extensively in the field of money and banking.

Agricultural Economics, H.P.Schapper³⁴. Despite increasing ill health Mauldon reluctantly agreed at the request of the University to remain on the academic staff for an extra twenty months beyond the mandatory retiring age, electing to retire in the month before the new Professor of Economics was due to arrive.

5 The Bowen Era 1959-1963

Ivor Ian Bowen was a Welsh born Oxford educated scholar, a Fellow of Balliol College, an active researcher of the old school despite his links with the Oxford Institute of Statistics, and Professor of Economics at Hull University until he took up the chair at UWA in 1959. He was a Welsh amateur boxing champion and a champion chess player. His pugilistic talents he never used at the University and his chess talents seem to have been of little use in the tactical battles of University politics³⁵. Such skills were not required for a 'modernisation' of the economics degree. In a short period of time as student numbers increased Bowen was able to attract six new staff, including one Western Australian, all of whom had been researching and or teaching in the United Kingdom. The economics core full year courses were revised to reflect the latest theoretical developments and there was an increase in the quantity of applied research which students were required to study in those courses. The mathematics requirement for a pass degree was made more stringent although students were able to escape it by taking out an Arts degree instead of an Economics degree.

All of the honours courses were revamped with the emphasis on 'advanced' economic theory, including theories of economic growth and underdevelopment which were fashionable at the time, also partly reflecting the interests of Bowen and Kerr, who lectured in the Honours program. Mathematical economics and/or econometrics/economic statistics were now required for Honours although loopholes were left for those students who were under prepared for advanced quantitative work³⁶.

³⁴ In addition to Schapper the agricultural economists between 1954 and 1963 also included M.L.Parker, R.G.Mauldon and B.Davidson. They were an extremely active, innovative, research and policy oriented group. 'Relegation' to this footnote should not be regarded as down playing their important work. On the contrary, much of their research, farm management service and contributions to policy debate occurred outside the time frame of this paper and deserve a long and careful treatment, especially as some members of the group were involved in several major public controversies.

³⁵ When a young Indian graduate student, later appointed to a lectureship arrived in the Department, Bowen heard he was a good chess player, and invited him to a game. In short time he was defeated and assuming the defeat was an aberration invited him to a second and last ever game, as he was again beaten.

³⁶ The basis for the quantitative reforms was a Study Leave Report by W.T.Dowsett a senior lecturer in economics with a strong mathematical background. Dowsett visited fifteen universities in the United Kingdom and his recommendations were substantially followed (W.T.Dowsett, file S185/A and Scholar's University, UWA). Dowsett's book (1959) was the prescribed textbook for Mathematical Economics for some years.

Honours students were required to write three major research essays as well as up to four papers for seminar presentations. These changes were fully implemented for the 1962 academic year when two academically outstanding new appointees became available to teach in the Honours program. One was N.F.Laing who at the age of twenty eight was appointed to a senior lectureship. Laing arrived at UWA from the University of Sydney via the University of Cambridge where he had been a prize winning student. The other was H.F.Lydall, Rhodes Scholar, Fellow of New College, Senior Research Officer at the Oxford Institute of Statistics since 1951 and with an outstanding research record. An additional optional semi-formal seminar was arranged on a weekly basis in the evenings, rotating between the homes of Bowen, Lydall and Kerr and the homes of some of the honours students. Some of these seminars were presented by the students and some by the academics involved. The intellectual ferment and stimulation was reflected in the year end results. Of the eleven students completing Honours, five were awarded first class honours and five upper second class honours. One of them won a Rhodes Scholarship, another was awarded the J.A.Wood Prize as the outstanding graduand among the Faculties and eventually nine of these students had successful academic careers.

H.F.Lydall was initially appointed to the Readership in Economic Statistics but he had been a reluctant candidate because he suggested in a letter to Bowen that such a posting represented 'a move sideways'. Bowen who knew Lydall from his own time at Oxford responded to Lydall pointing out that '...I moved sideways ... and I certainly have not regretted the move' (Bowen to Lydall, 4 April, 1960, Lydall personal file). Bowen supported his view by arguing that 'rapid growth' (in Australia) would provide 'many opportunities' and in addition Lydall would have 'greater freedom of action'. Within seven months of his arrival in December, 1960 Lydall had been appointed Professor of Commerce responsible for the new course in Commerce starting in 1962. At the same time the Faculty of Economics was reconstituted as the Faculty of Economics and Commerce on 24 July, 1961³⁷. Bowen's view that Lydall would have many opportunities in Australia was confirmed by Bowen's own actions in ensuring the appointment of Lydall (by Invitation) to the Chair in Commerce. It was further reinforced less than two years later when Lydall moved to a Chair in his preferred field of economics at the University of Adelaide.

It was indeed regrettable that Harold Lydall departed so soon because he was an outstanding researcher and an excellent teacher despite a slightly abrasive manner. His ability to stimulate advanced students in economics, economic statistics and mathematical economics is unquestionable. In the short time he was at UWA one of his contributions was the major revision of the Economic and Social Statistics course which was a required course for the B.Ec. degree. Students were required to complete ten major statistical assignments most of them requiring the extraction of raw data from original sources and the performance of complex statistical manipulations using hand

³⁷ Bowen had achieved the extension of the Faculty to include Commerce. Mauldon failed at several attempts. This was Bowen's major achievement in the field of academic politics and was achieved despite a fund raising effort by the business community which provided less than fifty percent of the funds the University said were required before it would support the new Faculty structure (See Alexander, 1963, pp. 387-95).

held mechanical calculators. As a result of the large work load and the high standard imposed there were high failure rates in the course. After Lydall's departure this course was taught with substantially the same content by his successors with the result that year after year many students were left stranded without a B.Ec. degree because they had passed all required courses except Economic and Social Statistics. The problem persisted for over a decade until the semester system led to the rearrangement of the full year courses.

When Bowen arrived at UWA he was relatively uninformed about most aspects of the Australian economy, university system and society. He set about rectifying this deficiency by an extremely full travel program visiting many Eastern States universities and by establishing contacts with a wide range of State and Commonwealth Government departments as well as local and interstate business and community leaders. In short time he consulted with a range of Government departments and some of Australia's largest companies in the steel and motor vehicle industry³⁸. Emboldened by the generous funding support he received at the personal level he decided to seek the approval from the relevant University authorities for the establishment of an Institute of Economic Research. Delays which were not entirely Bowen's fault resulted in him preparing a ten page pamphlet nearly two years after he had gained in principle support from the University. By now the Australian economy was in deep recession and support from the business community evaporated. By mid-1961, two years after he had initiated the proposal the university authorities withdrew their support. For a time Bowen tried to proceed independently by approaching the heads of large national business organisations for support, which was not forthcoming. He then went on study leave, deferring and eventually shelving the proposal³⁹.

Two significant developments occurred in 1963, the last year covered by this paper. Arnold Cook had been pressing for the introduction of a new course in monetary economics, his special area of interest after completing his Ph.D. at Harvard. His argument for this was not only its importance in a B.Ec. degree but also the need for equitable treatment visavis other staff members who had introduced courses in their special areas of interest. The second development was the introduction of a first year course in Economic History sponsored by Lesley Clarkson, one of Bowen's six United Kingdom appointees. By the end of 1963 Clarkson had obtained Faculty approval for a full year course in economic history in second year. One year earlier a new course in the History of Economic Thought was introduced as a third year course. Thus the history of economic thought and economic history which had previously been taught as part of the core economics courses were totally removed from them. The rearranged and enhanced

³⁸ Most of this paid consultancy work was not published, however two major and related Reports were published (Government of Western Australia, 1962 and 1964).

³⁹ One notable success achieved by Bowen with the help of an economist colleague with good local contacts was the appointment of a Rural and Industries Bank Research Fellow in Marketing, an idea which was originally proposed by the agricultural economist, H.P.Schapper. The research was published as a book (Hutton, 1966). The researcher reported on the uncompetitive and inefficient performance of Western Australian industry. Such commentary was unacceptable to the Government of the day and led to the rapid departure of the Research Fellow. As Bowen observed in a foreword (Hutton, 1966, page unnumbered) there was '... a local tendency to confuse discussion of issues with criticism of policies'.

teaching program remained until the early 1970s when the Economics Department moved to a semester system before the move by the University to semesters.

6 Economists and the Economic Society⁴⁰

When the Economic Society of Australia and New Zealand was inaugurated in 1925 under the leadership of D.B.Copland, the business community and a handful of economists in Western Australia promptly responded to the opportunity to form a Western Australian branch (hereafter, the Society). Shann like Copland had excellent relationships with the business community and saw the Society as a vehicle for the dissemination of knowledge about economics and its practical application to important policy issues. These objectives were enshrined in the Society's constitution which was adapted from the Central Branch's constitution and has changed only slightly over the next eighty four years. As is well known Shann was highly respected by the academic community and his leadership by virtue of his energetic participation in the WA Society laid the foundations for its early success. For the first three years (1925-27) of the Society he was Vice President and for the next five years (1928-32) he served on the Committee (Karasinski, 1981, pp.25-6). Shann was still a member of the WA Society at the time of his death and presented seven papers in the ten years after the Society's formation (Paper Read at Farewell Dinner to Professor Shann, 9th November, 1934). As far as can be ascertained the 'paper read to Shann' was prefaced by the President's remarks about Shann's contribution to the Society followed by a list of the papers presented at all meetings between 1925 and 1934, showing the large contribution made by Shann's seven papers.

There can be little doubt that Shann set the tone for the Society meetings. Although those Shann papers which have been sighted were entirely literary, with minimal reference to economic theory, and the data were usually in raw form, the papers were quite rigorous and analytical. His papers all had a very strong free market orientation which he implied or explicitly claimed would generate the greatest benefit for the greatest number. The flavour of Shann's papers can be gained from some of the titles: "Marketing Schemes and Schemers"; 'The Growth of the Australian Tariff' and 'A Truce to Fatalism'. L.F.Giblin on a visit to Perth presented a paper ('Who Pays the Piper', in note form) examining the impact of various forms of protection, including subsidies, on a wide range of Australian products. Papers on related topics were presented by other participants at Society meetings. The one group who were much less confident about a free market orientation were those involved in the field of banking and monetary policy. Most prominent in this group was H.C.Coombs who served on the Committee in 1935. He gave papers dealing with monetary policy and economic recovery and problems of what he labelled as

⁴⁰ There are significant gaps in the information relating to the history of the Economic Society as may be seen from the Directory of Members in Karasinski, 1981. There is limited material in the State Library see Records, 1975.

'Dominion Exchanges'. In the first decade of the Society the only other academic economist member (F.A.Alexander, later Professor of History was a member) was S.F.Limbrick, a lecturer in economics who presented a paper on 'Budget Equilibrium'.

There is only sparse information available relating to the five years after Shann's departure. Membership details (State Library, Records, 1975) show that the principle office bearers and the rank and file, as in the first decade of the Society, were predominantly from business, industry and government. Among the government members were a number of agricultural scientists who took an active part in the Society and presented some of the papers on commodities marketing and market controls. A.G.B.Fisher joined the Society soon after his arrival in 1936. He was immediately elected to the Committee and added to the proposed speakers program for 1936. It has not been possible to ascertain whether he delivered his paper. Colin Clark joined almost immediately after his arrival in 1938 as did J.R.Cairns who served as Treasurer of the Society for a year and was also Australian Treasurer for an even briefer period in 1975. Several honours and graduate students joined in the late 1930s. Among them were H.J.Goodes who later served as Secretary of the branch and K.Laffer, later Associate Professor in Charge of Industrial Relations at the University of Sydney.

At the onset of war the activities of the Society languished with membership numbers around 45 persons⁴¹. F.R.E.Mauldon joined the Society soon after his arrival in 1941 and was immediately co-opted to the Committee, serving as an elected Committee member and /or President through to 1947 as well as being elected President for part of 1944⁴². Mauldon now became the active leader of the Society. He presented at least one paper every year, participated in several symposia and was the leader of discussion after paper presentations, his comments often recorded in the report of meeting proceedings. Most of these papers dealt with aspects of the economic impact of war and preparation for its aftermath. He presented six papers dealing with aspects of the following topics: industry problems in war and peace; post war economic objectives; the white paper on full employment policy; and international economic problems after the war⁴³. During the war members of the Commonwealth Grants Commission made annual visits to Perth. Professor R.C.Mills presented papers on the 'National Minimum' and 'The Future of Education' and Professor G.L.Wood papers on 'The Place of the USA in the World

⁴¹The puzzle of Merab Harris' failure to join the Society was resolved when research unearthed a motion by Mauldon at the Annual General Meeting for 1943 which was adopted: 'That members have the right to bring ladies to meetings subject to the President's approval'. Merab Harris did not join the Society until 1950.

⁴² Mauldon replaced Benjamin Rosenstamm a foundation member in 1925 and President 1932-1943. Rosenstamm died on 18th July, 1944. The Society funded a prize in Rosenstamm's name for the best student in the first year economics course, the inaugural prize being awarded in 1945.

⁴³Mauldon and the Professor of Philosophy, A.C.Fox together with the Archbishop of Perth and six ministers of religion prepared a Report known as the 'Nine Point Declaration' setting out the Christian viewpoint on the social and economic change considered necessary for successful post war reconstruction. Mauldon and Fox led a discussion of the Report at a meeting of the Economic Society.

Economy' and 'Financial and Trade Relationships Between the U.K. and the U.S.A.' In quick succession H.C.Coombs and L.Ross from the Office of Post War Reconstruction also gave papers on some of the problems and issues that their Office was grappling with. Interest in how to deal with the aftermath of the war and an increased sense of unity and community led to a growth of membership and more active member participation, so by the end of the war membership exceeded seventy persons.

In 1946 Mauldon once again found himself elected president of the Society. In successive months Mauldon, D.W. Oxnam and J.Gentilli, academic staff in the Economics Department presented papers on the Australian coal industry, on the New Zealand economy and the study of economic geography respectively. The newly appointed Chairman of the Commonwealth Grants Commission also presented a paper on cost accounting techniques and economic efficiency. There now seems to have been a distinct decline in interest in participation in activities of the Economic Society and membership declined up until the mid 1950s. Unfortunately, the records of meetings of the Society for the period between 1947 and 1963 are missing.. The only reliable information available relates to the book keeping entries which show the names of persons who paid membership subscriptions and some information on special events organised under the auspices of the society.. The decline in membership to 1955 seems out of line with the lively academic environment created by cohorts of distinguished students who undertook undergraduate and graduate studies in this period. However, these students were interacting with each other and had other forums in which to present their research efforts. Clearly, their future careers did not depend on participation in the Economic Society.

The five years after the nadir in membership in the mid 1950s was associated with a rapid rise in membership, rising progressively from 70 to a peak of around 125 in 1962 and 1963. In large part this is attributable to the energetic promotion of the Society by academic staff who in this period were the major office bearers and/or served on the committee. Three of these are noteworthy, they were D.W.Oxnam, I.I.Bowen and A.M.Kerr, each of whom was President for at least two years. Coincidentally there was a rapid increase in enrolments in economics, much more rapid than the rate of growth of University numbers as a whole (Alexander,1963, pp.794-5). At the same time there was a rapid growth in the numbers of Commonwealth public servants based in Western Australia, especially in the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics and the Department of Labour and National Service. These people were provided with time off and other incentives to study part time. The academic staff actively promoted membership of the society among these students who were also less constrained by finances.

By the early 1960s most honours students, predominantly full time students, were also becoming members⁴⁴.

⁴⁴ The UWA Students Economics Society founded in 1959 also encouraged Economic Society membership and was producing a periodical in which articles on economic topics written mainly by the students were published, including lively debates between students about contentious theoretical and policy issues (see *Costs and Curves*, 1960).

D.W.Oxnam was elected President of the Society in 1959 and re elected In 1960 after serving on the Committee for several of the preceding years. In his first Report he noted the ‘upsurge of interest’ in the Society. In addition to his promotion of the Society, Oxnam was largely responsible for the raising of the endowment funds for the establishment of the Shann Memorial Lecture, a lecture first proposed in 1951 (Archives file, 472, part 1). This was no mean feat as the economy went into recession during the Shann Appeal period. A capital sum was raised sufficient to yield an annual income to cover costs, occasionally with a surplus (Report of Council, 1961). The rules for the Shann Lecture provided for the nominee of the Economic Society and the Professor of Economics or his nominee to select the speaker. Oxnam and the Professor of Economics duly chose R.F.Henderson, a Fellow of Corpus Christi College Cambridge, later director of the Institute of Economic and Social Research at the University of Melbourne. The inaugural lecture on ‘Monetary Policy in Australia’ was delivered before a very large audience in July, 1961⁴⁵.

The decade of the sixties saw a greater participation by UWA economists in the Society. Between them Bowen ,Oxnam and Kerr held the Presidency for nine years and the Committees also had a disproportionate number of academics on them. Locally based academics were frequent presenters at the approximately bi-monthly meetings and Bowen’s international contacts led to visits and presentation of papers by prominent international economists. The major innovation in this period was the programming of one day seminars with invited academic ‘experts’ from interstate and overseas, as well as leaders in industry and finance. Early in the decade the seminars covered such topics as ‘Industrial Research and Development’, ‘Decentralisation of Industry’, Pace of Industrial Development’ and ‘The Economics of the Ord River Scheme’. Local participation in the seminars was enthusiastic and substantial thanks to the carefully orchestrated public relations campaign for each seminar by embers of the Society’s Committee. The local media reported on the seminars and the public profile of the Economic Society was substantially increased⁴⁶.

Conclusion

This paper provides a narrative history of teaching and research in economics in Western Australia between 1935 and 1963, a period which coincides with the history of the subject at the University of Western Australia. The departure at the beginning of 1935 of the brilliant Edward Shann, first Professor of Economics at UWA after 1927 (prior to that first Professor of History and Economics, 1913-1927) left economics without academic leadership and political influence within the University. Threats to the survival of economics began in the early 1930s because of the prolonged absences of Shann who was in great demand on the national scene. These problems might have been resolved by the arrival of the equally talented and more competent economic theoretician,

⁴⁵ In six out of the next seven years the lectures were delivered by D.Copland, H.C.Coombs, F.T.deVyver, R.S.Sayers, J.R.Hicks and J.G.Crawford.

⁴⁶Of course, several of these seminar themes were very contentious at the academic and the policy level, not the least was the issue of the economic benefits of the Ord River Scheme which split the academic and political community. A dispassionate history, with the benefit of the effluxion of time, waits to be written.

A.G.B.Fisher. His all too brief tenure of twenty three months left economics stranded. The so called 'free' university which was actually a 'low fee' university relied on State government funding at a time when the State's rural based economy was subject to wide variations in growth due to fluctuations in international demand. Economics might have been shut down until after the war had it not been for the campaigns by the business and student communities for a replacement professor in economics. In the meantime the lack of qualified staff was compensated for by the very short term loan of economists from the University of Melbourne.

The most striking feature of this history of economics is the key roles played by individuals thrust into leadership positions and as initiators of change by virtue of the minimal numbers of academic staff. Merab Harris is the most noteworthy example for she worked tirelessly between 1938 and 1941 to retain and manage every aspect of an economics program which might otherwise have been placed into long term abeyance. For this she received scant reward from the University. Even after the arrival of Mauldon as Professor of Economics in 1941 there were just three full time academic staff during the war. Mauldon was a tireless worker, an active researcher and speaker mainly on regional issues who by the war's end had raised the profile of economics sufficiently to eliminate any threat to its existence.

After the war there was a slow growth in academic staff who taught and guided a generation of highly talented students many of them making their mark in the academies and in Government. The major in economics was progressively improved starting with A.G.B.Fisher's changes and followed by Mauldon's. Thereafter, the catalyst for change seems always to have been the response of the small numbers of academic staff to stimulus from one of their number. This was true of the modernisation of the core theory in micro and macro economics, the increased mathematics, statistics and later econometric requirements and the increased choice of specialisms in monetary economics, public finance, economic history and industrial relations. On the research side the two main streams of emphasis were on regional economics including income accounting and on immigration and demographic studies. A generation and a half of honours and graduate students made their mark in research in these two streams as well as in a varied range of other research areas. The teaching and to a lesser extent the research reputation of economics was by then firmly established and prepared the ground for the era of rapid growth in academic staff and student numbers which followed.

The history of the Economic Society of Australia, Western Australian branch can also be firmly sheeted home to individuals within academia. Beginning with Shann's early efforts in the twenties and followed by Mauldon and Bowen in the following two decades. Other individual academics also played an important part including Oxnam, who also ensured the success of the Shann Memorial lecture and Kerr, who led the society into the sixties and beyond, a period when the Society's public profile was at its highest.

***Honorary Research Fellow, University of Notre Dame. Prepared for the 22nd Conference of the *History of Economic Thought Society of Australia (HETSA)* at the University of Notre Dame Australia, 14-17 July 2009 Email: rpetridis@nd.edu.au**

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