

**With an Olive Branch and a Shillelagh:
the Political Career of Senator Paddy Lynch
(1867-1944)**

by

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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not been previously submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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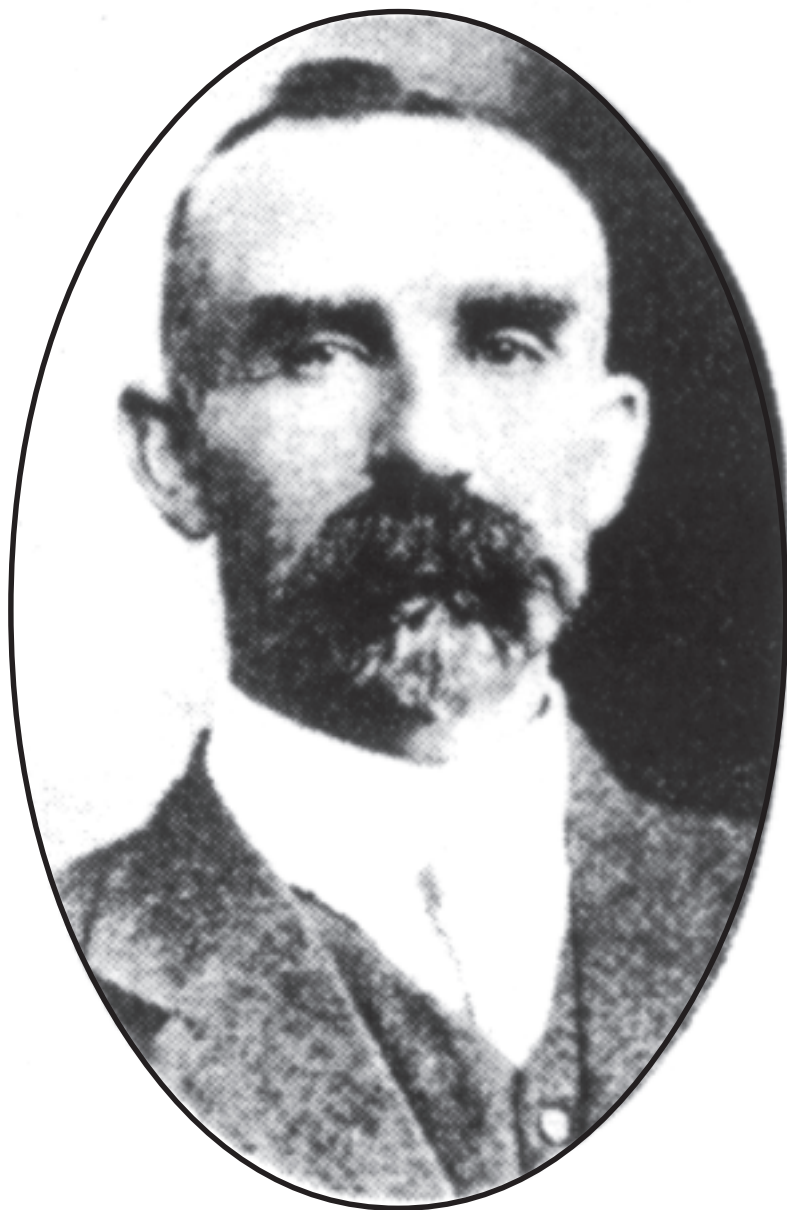
ABSTRACT

As a loyal Empire man and ardent conscriptionist, Irish-born Senator Paddy Lynch swam against the prevailing Irish Catholic Labor political current. He was one of those MP's who followed Prime Minister W.M. Hughes out of the Federal Labor caucus in November 1916, serving out the rest of his political career in the Nationalist ranks. On the face of things, he represents something of a contradiction.

A close examination of Lynch's youth in Ireland, his early years in Australia and his subsequent parliamentary career helps us to resolve this apparent paradox. It also enables us to build up a picture of Lynch the man and to explain his political odyssey. He emerges as representative of that early generation of conservative Laborites (notably J.C. Watson, W.G. Spence and George Pearce) who, once they had achieved their immediate goals of reform, saw their subsequent role as defending the prevailing social order. Like many of these men, Lynch's commitment to the labour movement's principles of solidarity and collective endeavour co-existed with a desire for material self-advancement. More fundamentally, when Lynch accumulated property and was eventually able to take up the occupation which he had known in Ireland – farming – his evolving *class* interest inevitably occasioned a change in political outlook. Lynch is shown to have been an essentially conservative Meath farmer whose early involvement in the labour movement in Australia can be largely explained as a temporary phase consequent on emigration.

A single-minded and robust politician, Lynch was able to reconcile first his Irish and then his Australian nationalist loyalties with the cause of the Empire as the best

guarantee of Australia's future security and advancement. He both *represented* and *reinforced* the more conservative Irish Catholic political climate which prevailed in Western Australia, compared to the more populous eastern states. The relationship of the Catholic Irish to the early labour movement in Australia was more complex and problematical than orthodox thinking has allowed. As someone who straddled both political camps, Lynch encapsulated many of the inherent ambiguities of the immigrant Irish. A study of his career allows us to gain a deeper insight into the complexities of the Irish-Australian experience.



PATRICK JOSEPH LYNCH (1867-1944)

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PREFACE

I first “discovered” Senator Paddy Lynch about twenty years ago when I stumbled upon his entry in an Australian dictionary of parliamentary biography. He originally struck me as something of an enigma. As a conscriptionist who parted company with the Labor Party in 1916 and served out the rest of his career in the Nationalist ranks, he defied all my preconceptions. Hitherto, I had shared the general perception that Irish Catholics in the Labor Party had been solidly anti-conscriptionist and had stayed with the party during the subsequent Split (making it a much more Irish Catholic party thereafter).

My own curiosity about Lynch was crystallised when in 1999, after fourteen years living in Ireland, I was presented with the opportunity of returning to my native city of Perth to take up a scholarship with the Centre for Irish Studies at Murdoch University. By the time of my departure, I had chosen Paddy Lynch as my thesis topic and completed research on his Irish background. He was a logical choice: the seeming paradox of an Irish Catholic Labor conscriptionist had long intrigued me and I was determined to unravel the mystery.

There is, however, another reason for my interest in Lynch: my own personal connection with the part of Ireland from which he hailed, the north-western corner of County Meath. My paternal grandfather, Hugh Cusack, and three of his siblings emigrated to Perth in the early 1900s from Kilmainhamwood, the adjoining parish to Lynch’s home parish of Moynalty. Yet another sibling, my late grand-aunt Helen Cusack, married Michael Finnegan of Petersville, Moynalty, in which locality they farmed for many years before retiring in the mid-1960s. Their location at Petersville found them at the Newcastle end of Moynalty parish and hence neighbours of the Lynches of Skearke (Paddy’s homeplace). Furthermore, an exact namesake of the senator—Patrick Joseph (Paddy) Lynch, of Meath Hill, barely ten miles distant from Skearke—married Lizzie Cusack, sister of the aforementioned Helen, and one of the four Cusack siblings who emigrated to Western Australia. This Paddy Lynch, my grand-uncle, died (aged 52) in July 1944—coincidentally only six months after Senator Lynch—when he was knocked off his bicycle in Fremantle. Paddy Lynch, lumper, died leaving an estate with a gross value of £536; Paddy Lynch, farmer and ex-senator, died a relatively wealthy man leaving an estate worth some £67,000.

To be able to undertake a study which linked Ireland and Australia in this way offered much promise; the fact that it involved a specifically Meath-Western Australian connection was indeed a bonus. During my years in Ireland, I had come to spend a considerable amount of time in north Meath, particularly in the parishes of Kilmainhamwood and Moynalty. This bond was cemented when, in 1998, I wrote the history of Kilmainhamwood for the centenary of the parish church. I came to share in the community life of these rural parishes and in some of their private joys and sorrows. I developed an affinity with the people and, I believe, at least some understanding of the mindset of the farming community which spawned Paddy Lynch. Moreover, I retain a deep affection for north Meath.

Unlike many such political biographies, this study was *not* motivated by an ideological affinity with the subject. However, far from being a handicap, this lack of affinity served to produce a creative tension which actually furthered the process of discovery and understanding. Further, while sympathy may not always be possible, I believe that a certain *empathy* for the subject is always desirable in a study of this kind. As I discovered more about Paddy Lynch, so I came to recognise in him some familiar inherited characteristics of the Meath farmer. Not only did I see Lynch the *immigrant* through the eyes of a West Australian, I came to follow the career of Lynch the *emigrant* with all the curiosity of an honorary Meathman.

Only after my return to Perth in mid-1999 did I become aware of yet another personal connection. Ex-senator Paddy Lynch died on 15 January 1944 at *Killowen*,* then part of the well-known St. Anne's Hospital and Nursing Home, overlooking the Swan River at Mt. Lawley in Perth. As it so happens, in this very same building, and only a few yards from where Lynch last drew breath, this writer entered the world a decade or so later. The circle was complete.

**Killowen*, a fine old double-storey red-brick edifice, which formed the original St. Anne's Nursing Home before being progressively surrounded by a complex of modern hospital buildings, was acquired by the Sisters of Mercy in 1937. It was built in 1911 as the residence of yet another Irishman, R.T. Robinson, a Protestant native of Ballybay, Co. Monaghan, prominent Liberal politician and sometime Attorney-General of Western Australia.

GLOSSARY

ABBREVIATIONS

ACEDA	Amalgamated Certificated Engine-Drivers Association
ACTS	Australian Catholic Truth Society
ADB	Australian Dictionary of Biography
ALF	Australian Labor Federation
ALP	Australian Labor Party
AMA	Amalgamated Miners Association
ANA	Australian Natives Association
ARA	Alluvial Rights Association
AWA	Amalgamated Workers Association
ANU	Australian National University
CAA	Catholic Archdiocesan Archives (Perth)
CPD	Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates
CPP	Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers
EGDC	Eastern Goldfields District Council [ALF]
FPLP	Federal Parliamentary Labor Party
IWW	Industrial Workers of the World
LISWA	Library and Information Service of Western Australia
MHA	Member of the House of Assembly
ML	Mitchell Library (Sydney)
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
MLC	Member of the Legislative Council

MHR	Member of the House of Representatives
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NLA	National Library of Australia
NSW	New South Wales
PLL	Political Labor League
SROWA	State Records Office of Western Australia (Alexander Library, Perth)
TLC	Trades and Labor Council
UAP	United Australia Party
WA	Western Australia
WAA	Western Australian Archives (Battye Library, Perth)
WAPD	Western Australian Parliamentary Debates

SPELLING: Labor/Labour

This is a vexed and a perennial problem. In this thesis the following practice has been adopted: **Labor** (capitalised) has generally been used to refer to the political organisations using that name, e.g. Australian Labor Party, Political Labor Leagues; **labour** (uncapitalised) has generally been used to refer to the broader “labour movement”.

For convenience sake, **Labor** has been used to refer to the Labor Party from the 1890s onwards, even though this spelling was not officially adopted until 1927. In reality, both **Labor** and **Labour** spellings were used from the 1890s. The exception to this practice of using **Labor** is direct quotations (e.g. from parliamentary debates): in these cases, where the **Labour** spelling was used in the original it has been retained. The **Labour** spelling has also been retained for the occasional references to the British and New Zealand Labour parties.

In Western Australia, the ALF did not officially become the ALP until 1919, but for convenience sake the political organisation (at both State and Federal level) is sometimes referred to as the ALP before that date.

FOOTNOTES: Newspaper page numbers

Relevant page numbers of newspapers are included wherever possible in the footnotes. However, there are numerous cases where this was not possible because page numbers either were not shown or could not easily be discerned from the microfilm copy.

DRAMATIS PERSONNAE

It is assumed that people such as William Morris Hughes (Prime Minister of Australia 1915-23) and Dr. Daniel Mannix (Archbishop of Melbourne 1917-63) will be well known to the reader. Other significant figures are generally introduced as they enter the story. There are, however, several key characters who re-appear frequently in the text and whose basic biographical details are included hereunder:

Hugh Mahon (1857-1931)

Irish-born journalist and newspaper editor. Land League activist in Ireland. Committed Catholic and Irish nationalist throughout his life. Arrived in Australia 1883, on the Western Australian goldfields in 1895. Labor MHR, first for Coolgardie then for Kalgoorlie, for most of the period 1901-20. Minister in several Labor governments. Stayed with the Labor Party during the 1916-17 Split. (In)famously expelled from the Federal Parliament on 11 November 1920 by motion of Prime Minister Hughes for “disloyal and seditious utterances”. It was alleged that Mahon, in a speech at a public meeting in Melbourne a few days earlier, had referred to “this bloody and accursed Empire”. Retired from politics after losing the subsequent by-election. Died in Melbourne in 1931.

Hugh de Largie (1859-1947)

Scottish-born Protestant. Arrived Australia 1887. Miner. Active in the Western Australian goldfields labour movement. An early colleague of Lynch’s. Labor senator for Western Australia 1901-16. Sometime assistant secretary of Labor Caucus. A conscriptionist, expelled from the Labor Party in 1916. Nationalist senator 1917-23. Government whip in the Senate 1910-13 and 1917-22. Died at Randwick, New South Wales in 1947.

Edward Needham (1874-1956)

Born in Lancashire of Irish Catholic parents. Arrived in Western Australia in 1901. Worked in various manual occupations. Labor senator for Western Australia 1907-20, 1923-29. Leader of the Opposition in the Senate 1926-29. MLA for Fremantle 1904-5, Perth 1933-50, North Perth 1950-53. A leading anti-conscription campaigner who stayed with the Labor Party in 1916. A devoted Catholic and Irish nationalist. Died in Perth in 1956.

George Pearce (1870-1957)

South Australian-born Protestant. Arrived in Western Australia 1891. Carpenter and active trade unionist. Labor senator for Western Australia 1901-16. An active conscriptionist, expelled from the Labor Party in 1916. Nationalist senator 1917-1938. Long-time parliamentary colleague of Lynch's. Minister in various Labor and Nationalist governments. Minister for Defence during the 1914-18 War and acting Prime Minister for a time in 1916. Died at Brighton, Victoria in 1957.

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Last but not least, I wish to express my appreciation to the Centre for Irish Studies at Murdoch University for the opportunity to return to my native Perth after a fourteen year sojourn in Ireland, courtesy of the special scholarship announced when Mary McAleese, President of Ireland, opened the Centre in September 1998.