

Maurice Blackburn: Champion of the People, By David Day
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Five model. Personality is not a dichotomy, although we often make it one to understand, but rather it is a continuum between various aspects. But there is little to no mention of the Big Five or any other recent model of personality. Basically, Emre is willing to discount all psychometrics based on the failings of MBTI, even though there are measures that are accurate, such as intelligence. She admits she does so because such measures support those in power and because there is racial/sexist bias with measures. Of course, personality is usually free from biases, unlike other measures such as intelligence.

Mostly, the book reads like a psychology book written by an English Professor; a stylish, well-written, and an engrossing story but one that lacks depth and nuance. It is a much better biography of Briggs and Briggs-Meyers than a history of the MBTI. The world can be divided between those who understand psychometrics and those who do not. Unfortunately, Emre falls in the latter category.

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Maurice Blackburn: Champion of the People

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The problem with undertaking a biography is knowing how to organize material. Should one pursue a chronological or thematic approach? What should be the balance between background/contextual material and more narrowly focused information on the subject of the biography? What should be the balance on information between the different orbits which our protagonist inhabited? These issues are relevant in examining David Day's biography of Maurice McCrae Blackburn (1880-1944), a lawyer, politician and early Australian advocate of what we would now

call liberal and human rights. Blackburn was involved in many of the major events that dominated Australian politics and industrial relations from prior to World War I to his death in 1944.

Blackburn is an early example of an educated person who represented and advocated on behalf of workers, the less fortunate and those subject to victimization by various arms of the state. He joined the Australian Labor Party and was elected to the Victorian Parliament in 1914. Blackburn was heavily involved in successfully opposing two referenda on introducing conscription by Prime Minister Billy Hughes during World War I, in 1916 and 1917. His stance on conscription cost him his seat in the 1917 election. In 1919, he opened a legal firm under his name. It still operates today, and it appears that this book, commissioned by the firm (p. 251), is designed to celebrate its centenary.

Blackburn was elected to the Victorian Parliament for a second time in 1925. He was too independent to be offered a ministerial position. He became Speaker of the Parliament in 1933, a position he held for a year before resigning and winning a seat in the Federal Parliament. He oscillated between representing Labour and being an independent member until he was defeated by an official Labour candidate in 1943. Twice he was expelled by the Labor Party during the charged times of the 1930s. The first was in 1935 because of his membership of the Movement against War and Fascism; the second in 1937 because of his membership of the Australia-Soviet Friendship League.

If we can put to one side Blackburn's family, his childhood, education and obtaining a law degree, there are four areas in which he is of importance to Australian history. They are his involvement with the Labor Party and election campaigns; his involvement and work as a parliamentarian—that has two elements; his Victorian and Federal periods of office—; the work

and activities of the legal firm Maurice Blackburn; and his overall intellectual and philosophical position.

The problem with this book by David Day is that it only focusses on the first of these four areas. He provides a basic summary of major political events that occurred in these years, especially machinations within the Labor Party and the various battles that Blackburn had with the party machine and conservative political opponents. There is hardly any information on Blackburn as a parliamentarian (there are only six references to Hansard for a person who was a parliamentarian for 20 years). There are only a few passing references to the work of his legal firm. In a short aside near the end of the book, Day suggests that there were problems with the operation of his legal firm, it "needed the attention of a fit and focused barrister" (p. 245). It is difficult to test the veracity of this aside/claim given the scant information provided on the operation of Blackburn's legal firm.

Blackburn was a prolific writer and speaker on a wide range of issues. Day has made no attempt to work his way through this material (including whatever his contributions were in parliament) to discern Blackburn's broader intellectual position. What we have is a pedestrian chronological account of his life, which other than for details on his personal life, is more concerned with providing information on the context of the times in which Maurice Blackburn operated rather than delving into his thinking and activities in Parliament and his work as a lawyer. He deserves a fuller and more comprehensive biography.

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