



Comment on objections 18

Peter Rees

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Accusations that Charles Bean had “a clear record of racism throughout his life and most particularly was stridently anti-semitic” are fundamentally wrong.

Bean, like several senior figures in the AIF, at times had a difficult relationship with John Monash during WWI. Largely, this stemmed from his doubts about Monash’s capacity to command at Gallipoli. Bean later acknowledged that he and Keith Murdoch were wrong to oppose Monash’s elevation to general officer commanding the AIF.

Post-war Bean and Monash developed an amicable relationship and by the early 1930s Monash not only supported the conferring of a LittD from Melbourne University on Bean, but also praised his Official History as a “great work”.

Later still, Bean was very critical of the “inflammatory, racist vilification of the Japanese” in official Australian WW2 propaganda.

Most tellingly, he repudiated the concept racism and anti-semitism in a letter to *The Sydney Morning Herald* in January 1953.

This was not a late conversion. Before WWI he lamented the displacement of Aborigines from traditional lands and recognised that European Australians had an obligation to acknowledge Aborigines as the country’s original inhabitants.

It is appropriate that the man who wrote and edited the Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, and was the guiding light behind the establishment of the Australian War Memorial should be recognised in this way.

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