

Ancient cricket matches and the 60th anniversary of the Melbourne Institute

On November 10, 2022, the Melbourne Institute (an economic/social research group at the University of Melbourne) held a dinner at the Melbourne Town Hall to celebrate its 60th anniversary. As its second director (1984-1991), Peter Dixon was invited to make a few comments. In answer to a question about the most significant changes in direction at the Institute during his period, he answered that:

“A significant thing we did during my period was not to change direction. To understand why this is significant, you have to understand a bit of the history. When I joined the Institute on March 1, 1984 almost all the staff were in the process of leaving with quite a few members going off to create a rival institute. Overnight the number of effective workers at the Institute fell from about 50 to 10, although it took some time for the number on the payroll to fall that far. Those of us who remained were determined to maintain all of the products that had been established at the Institute during the Henderson era. These included: *The Australian Economic Review*, the poverty updates, the consumer sentiment surveys, and the business forecasting conferences.

That we were able to maintain these services owes a lot to Daina McDonald who became editor of the *Australian Economic Review* and was ably supported in that role by Nellie Lentini. Daina was also the key to the business forecasting conferences. David Johnson took over the poverty updates and John McDonnell continued with the consumer sentiment surveys.”

As new directions during this period, Peter mentioned Ern Boehm’s work, which led to the establishment of the Westpac-MI Leading Index. He also mentioned Tony Meagher’s work on income distribution and the development at the Institute of dynamic CGE modelling and CGE forecasting.

Peter concluded his comments by telling the story of the Graeme Lowe Shield. Graeme was a member of the Commerce Faculty at the University of Melbourne. He died in a cricket accident in the early 1980s. His friends organized a shield in his memory for an annual cricket match between the Faculty and the Melbourne Institute. The first match was in 1986 and was won by the Faculty. The Faculty continued winning until 1989. In 1990 the game was tied, 147 runs each. While his claim to the shield was rather doubtful, Peter nevertheless carried it off to the Institute. In 1991, Peter took the shield with him when he moved to the Centre of Policy Studies (CoPS) at Monash. Much along the lines of “The Stuff the British Stole”, Peter resisted legalistic demands for the return of the shield: it had to be won on the field. Peter Dawkins enthusiastically took up the challenge when he arrived at the Institute in 1996, and an annual competition thrived. Peter Dawkins’ Institute team happened to win in 2005, his last year as Director at the Institute. Following precedent, he took the shield with him to his next job and the CoPS/Institute competition languished. However, in 2010 Peter Dawkins was visiting the Institute and he put the shield on the line. CoPS triumphed, Peter Dixon grabbed the shield and Peter Dawkins went off to his next job. The 2010 match was the last. Peter Dixon kept the shield sequestered at his home for 12 years. Perhaps like the Britts, his conscience was not altogether clear. So, at the 60th anniversary dinner he returned the shield to Abigail Payne, the current Director of the Melbourne Institute. The shield will

now be an item of memorabilia to be puzzled over by future generations of Institute staff and visitors.

The pictures show the shield and Peter Dixon and Glyn Wittwer (the keenest CoPS players) with the shield on the day it was handed over. Careful inspection of the shield shows that CoPS was victorious on 9 occasions.



