

# Ray Evans

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## “Ray’s Career as an Advocate”

Bob Day

Let me begin with a few of Ray’s own words recorded in introductory remarks he made some 20 years ago at the 1994 Conference of the HR Nicholls Society held in Perth.

*“It is nearly twelve months since our last conference and it is appropriate to consider from a strategic perspective what has happened in these last twelve months. This paper then is an attempt to evaluate, without embellishment or distortion, the significance of the very important events which have taken place since May, 1993.*

*“The title to this paper comes from a poem I learnt at school, “Say not the struggle naught availeth”, by Arthur Hugh Clough, an early Nineteenth Century poet.*

*Say not the struggle naught availeth,  
The labour and the wounds are vain,  
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,  
And as things have been, things remain.*

*For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,  
Seem here no painful inch to gain,  
Far back through creeks and inlets making  
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.*

*And not by eastern windows only,  
When daylight comes, comes in the light,  
In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly,  
But westward, look, the land is bright.*

*“The H. R. Nicholls Society has been engaged in a political struggle, if you like, since its inception in 1985, to bring freedom into the Australian workplace. The Commonwealth Industrial Relations Reform Act (1993), the Brereton Act, has brought into Commonwealth law virtually everything which The H.R. Nicholls Society has argued would harm Australian workers, and greatly diminish their capacity to make Australia a prosperous society.*

*“An outside observer, who considered only what was on the statute books, would have to come to the conclusion that our Society had suffered a grievous blow, perhaps a terminal blow, with the passage of this Act, and that we would be well advised to pack up our tents and steal away into the night, leaving behind as little trace of our existence as possible.*

*“The attendance at this conference, and the tone of the papers that are to be presented, indicates that there is much more to life than the passage of a Bill through the Commonwealth Parliament. It is important therefore to consider the history of the Bill, what the political consequences are likely to be, and whether we can turn what has been done to advantage.*

*“We should always remember what Lord Salisbury, the great British Prime Minister of the late nineteenth Century told us:*

*“History is the record of a series of reactions in the strong workings of mens' passions. In any great conflict what will be seen as the aim of Providence? Our foes will say the stroke; our friends the rebound.*

*“The Brereton Act is the stroke. We must prepare for the rebound.*

*“Soon after the election of March 1993, the newly confirmed Prime Minister made a speech to the Institute of Company Directors (21/4/93) in which he lamented the levels of unemployment and foreshadowed major changes to industrial relations law designed to speed up enterprise bargaining. Let me quote from the Prime Minister's speech:*

*“Success in the coming decade certainly depends on things we must do in Canberra.*

*“It also depends crucially on Australian workers, who must continue to adapt and change and win for themselves the increasing incomes that are within their grasp. Under the workplace bargaining system we have adopted and which we will entrench this year, employees themselves are for the first time in our history able to create the circumstances of their own prosperity.*

*“That is the sort of language we would expect to hear at an H. R. Nicholls conference.*

*“This volume of proceedings brings together the papers given to the Society's XVth conference, 'A Matter of Choice'. These words were used in October 1993 by the Secretary of the Commonwealth Treasury, Ted Evans, in describing the tragic level of unemployment which now threatens the social fabric of Australian society.*

*“The conference was held at Scarborough, a beach suburb of Perth, on the weekend of April 15-17, 1994. It was attended by members and friends who came to Perth from all over Australia.*

*“Some five months previously the Brereton Bill had been enacted by the Commonwealth Parliament. This Act entrenched the legal privileges and monopoly powers of trade unions in their role of representing employees in arbitral tribunals and vis-à-vis employers, regardless of the wishes of employees. It sought to supersede the authority in industrial relations matters of the States, notably Victoria, by relying on the external affairs power of the constitution and on certain ILO conventions, some of which were signed by Australia at Executive Council meetings immediately prior to the 1993 elections.*

*“One is reminded immediately of the mediaeval church, which enjoyed a monopoly position of mediating between God and the people of Europe, regardless of whether the people wanted this mediation service or not. It took the religious wars of the sixteenth century, and much shedding of innocent blood, before that monopoly was given up.”*

Ray's career as an advocate was so extensive it is hard to know where to begin.

One might begin by saying that Ray was a superb networker long before that term became trendy.

Ray's networking took several forms;

First, in moving to set up the several organizations with which he was most involved, he invariably sought out prominent people to head them, or be closely associated with them and then persuade them to give papers to the various Conferences that those bodies held thereby gaining publicity for the organisation.

Second, he continually drew upon the great literary works in which he was so steeped – the King James Bible, The Book of Common Prayer and John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, which added both drama and imagery to the many speeches and publications which he authored.

The five organisations Ray's name is most often associated are:

- The HR Nicholls Society;
- The Samuel Griffith Society;
- The Galatians Group;
- The Lavoisier Group; and
- The Bennelong Society.

When in 1985, Ray moved to set up **The HR Nicholls Society**, he reached out to three people having a degree of public prominence at that time – John Stone – who had not long resigned as Secretary to the Commonwealth Treasury; a young barrister called Peter Costello, who had recently won a number of significant cases in the industrial relations jurisdiction and Barrie Purvis Director of the Australian Wool Brokers Federation. Unfortunately, Barrie is unwell and Peter and Tanya Costello have a longstanding obligation in Zurich and very much regret they are not able to be with us today. But John Stone is here. Following the establishment of the HR Nicholls Society, at Ray's urging, John became its inaugural President. When John became a Senator for Queensland in 1989, Ray himself assumed the role and remained the Society's President for the next 21 years.

Although Ray was not the principal founder of **The Samuel Griffith Society**, which grew out of a discussion at an HR Nicholls Society conference he was present at the creation and it was Ray who suggested Samuel Griffith's name for the Society's title.

In setting up **The Galatians Group**, which held its first conference in 1994, Ray set out not merely to promote debate about the role of the churches in addressing society's problems, but also to provide a forum for assorted clerics from various denominations whose views were no longer wholly in sympathy with those of their respective church hierarchies.

Again, when Ray moved, in 2000, to set up **The Lavoisier Group**, to show up the "global warming" scam for the scientific fraud that it was, and still is, he reached across the political divide to recruit, as its inaugural Chairman, former Labor Senator for Western Australia Peter Walsh. Peter lent enormous stature to that body right from the start.

As to **The Bennelong Society**, at the outset Ray achieved a double. Not only did he persuade Peter Howson, a former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, to become its inaugural President, but he also enlisted the support of Paddy McGuinness, then Editor of *Quadrant*. Later, after the sad death of Peter Howson, Ray persuaded Gary Johns, a former Minister in the Keating Government, to take his place.

Finally, as custodian of the Bert Kelly legacy, Ray was instrumental in the establishment of The Bert Kelly Research Centre in Adelaide with The Ray Evans Library a key part of the Centre.

Once these bodies were established, Ray was tireless in seeking to round up prominent speakers to address them.

Activism and polemics are often closely related, and it can be said without fear of contradiction that Ray, whether in his own right or via the many speeches that he helped to draft for Hugh Morgan, was no ordinary polemicist! It was here that he gave full play not only to those cherished literary sources I mentioned earlier, but also to his own deeply held

Christian faith. To take but one of a myriad of examples, consider the title of Ray's Lavoisier Group pamphlet, *Thank God for Carbon!* which I have on good authority was the basis for a history-changing question asked at a gathering in September 2009 in the country town of Beaufort, Victoria attended by then Shadow Minister for Family & Community Services Tony Abbott.

Wearing his trade mark HRN tie, Ray was an enormous presence at literally hundreds of important and what seemed at the time not so important events which have helped shape our country into the nation it is today. None more so than that meeting in Beaufort.

But Ray's favourite gathering was his Tuesday Lunch Group at the Savage Club. Some tributes to Ray from that group.

*"Our ever-genial friend, fervent apostle for liberty under the rule of law and one who was instrumental in changing the climate of opinion in Australia and beyond on workplace relations, climate alarmism and the value and morality of the free-market order."* Tom Bostock

*"Always "Valiant for Truth", it was appropriate that when the Charles Copeman Medal was bestowed upon him, the citation inscribed thereon read as follows: "RAY EVANS: In recognition of his unparalleled contribution to public policy discourse in Australia, including (but not confined to) his central part in the formation of the HR Nicholls Society and its role throughout the 25 years of its existence. A rock of constancy in a sea of corporate cowardice, he has always placed principle above personal advancement. A steadfast friend and an honourable opponent, he is epitomized in John Bunyan's everlasting words: 'Who would true valour see,/Let him come hither;/One here will constant be,/Come wind, come weather'". Adam Bisits*

And from others:

*"Ray was a powerhouse in argument for the good society both here and in overseas conferences, never reticent in explicating his ideas, always on the attack against the red and green enemies of a free and humane society."* Wolfgang Kasper.

*"People of Ray's intellect are rare and people of his courage even rarer."* Michael Kroger.

*"The thing to remember about Ray is that he was only really interested in causes when they were unfashionable. He was against the Apology to the "stolen" generation, he was against the theory of global warming, and least fashionable of all, he supported orthodox Christianity in the Anglican Church! If the whole of Australia was "in Accord" on industrial relations policy then Ray just had to be out of it. In a campaign to end wage regulation he had the genius to seize on the irascible H. R. Nicholls and promote him as an Apostle of freedom - an antidote to the "father" of arbitration Henry Higgins. He wanted no less than to turn a century of thinking about Australian industrial relations on its head! But the thing to remember about Ray was that he was brave. You have to be if you want to stand up and turn public thinking. Which he did. Because he was such a tireless advocate for unfashionable causes some of them began to generate support, perhaps even become popular. I suspect that secretly he did not approve of his success. "Worse is better" he was fond of saying. Peter Costello.*

Ray believed that when you boiled it all down, the world could be divided into two groups – those who believed in each human being's God-ordained right to freedom and those who wished to control society and impose their views on others. So whether it was an Australian Republic, Urban Planning, Same Sex Marriage, the United Nations, Aboriginal Land Rights, Trade Protection, Malthusianism, Renewable Energy Targets or A Charter of

Rights, and many others. Ray was on one side and his opponents on the other. It's a useful checklist and I am proud to say I was on Ray's side on every one of them.

It's impossible to describe how important Ray was in making the case for freedom and calling out the rent-seekers and bootleggers who sought power and preferment.

That was Ray. Not only did he change the national conversation, he changed people's lives. Mine one of them.

My life would have taken a completely different path had it not been for Ray Evans. He was my teacher, my mentor, my friend and my hero.

If Ray had a hero or mentor it was Bert Kelly, The Modest Member from South Australia. Bert was the epitome of the type of advocate Ray admired most – a lone voice, relentless opposition, intellectual consistency, moral uprightness, dogged determination and of course ultimate victory.

But Ray's influence was not confined to Australia. Travelling with Ray was always a great experience, particularly in the US. Ray and I were in Texas a few years ago looking at how cities operate free of any urban planning or zoning laws. We were in Houston and met up with a group of Texan home builders who took us out to dinner. If you haven't been there, Texas is a great place to go out on the town. When you enter a bar they frisk you to see if you've got any guns. And if you haven't got one, they give you one! Just kidding. But Texans do love freedom, so you can imagine how well Ray was received. ***"We like you Ray"***, I remember one of them saying in the broadest Texan accent imaginable. People who like freedom, liked Ray.

Economist, scientist, theologian, electrical engineer; politics, Australian history, British history, American history, indigenous affairs, federalism and the constitution, the origins of western civilization, you name it, Ray had an encyclopedic knowledge of all these things. But it was his theology that was at the core of who he was. We saw Ray's deep faith in all that he did. Glancing back through proceedings of the HR Nicholls Society for example we see conference titles like *'The Labourer is Worthy of his Hire'* - a quote from St Luke's gospel, *"Standing Fast"* from St Paul's epistle to the Galatians, *"In all things we are more than conquerors"* from Romans chapter 8, *"The Pearl of Great Price"* a New Testament parable, and extracts from hymns, *"Faith in thy name O Lord I go, my daily labour to pursue"*.

In the Old Testament book of 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles, King David spoke of 'The Men of Issachar', men who, and I quote, *"understood the times and what needed to be done"*. Ray was a modern day 'Man of Issachar'. He understood the times and what needed to be done. It is this that was at the heart of Ray's implacable opposition to the global warming scam and its accompanying anti-human rhetoric. Rhetoric that says mankind is a blight on the planet, a plague, a virus and we should all be condemned. Ray however believed that mankind was God's highest creation and that God loved His creation. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through him might be saved"*. John 3:16, 17.

Albert Einstein once said, *"I want to know the thoughts of God. The rest is merely detail"*.

We all owe Ray a great debt, and honour him today and celebrate his life and say in unison, with our Texan friends, ***"We like you Ray"***.