



Inaugural Sir Walter Murdoch Memorial Lecture

A Centenary Tribute

Delivered in Perth on 17 September 1974

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As a Western Australian, I deeply appreciate the invitation of the Vice-Chancellor of Murdoch University to speak on the day, 17 September 1974, that Murdoch University has been formally inaugurated by the Governor-General of Australia. And may I say to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Western Australia that it is a pleasure to speak about Walter Murdoch in the Winthrop Hall where, at its first graduation ceremony, I was presented as a candidate for admission to the degree of Bachelor of Arts, though indeed *in absentia*.

Walter Murdoch began to write an autobiography at the age of eighty-five, but he did not get far, because, he said, 'I find I have had a terribly uneventful life'. Here it is.

He was born on 17 September 1874, in the Free Church Manse in Rosehearty, a fishing village in northern Aberdeenshire, Scotland. Ten years later he and his parents arrived in Melbourne. After graduating from the University of Melbourne he was first a schoolteacher, then a lecturer at the University. He came to Perth early in 1913 to be the first Professor of English in the new University of Western Australia. He retired in 1939. From 1943 to 1948 he was Chancellor of the University. He lived quietly in his home in South Perth, where he died on 30 July 1970. He was well-known as a writer of essays and articles, and as a broadcaster. A few-weeks before his death it was announced that Western Australia's second University would be named after him.

Yes, that was an uneventful life, when we compare him with the men whose names have been given to other Australian Universities. Macquarie and Monash were

soldiers and administrators, accustomed to command. Cook and Flinders were naval officers, voyagers through strange seas. Griffith was premier and Chief Justice of Queensland, first Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia, a man set above other men. Latrobe, least remembered in our history, was a traveller, a mountaineer, and a governor before whom sentries sprang to attention.

Walter Murdoch's first memorable adventure occurred in France, when he was eight years old. He was knocked unconscious to the ground, from the back of a bolting donkey. As a young man living on a sheep-station he once helped to hoist up buckets of water to save the roof of the woolshed from a grass-fire. At the age of ninety, in his greatest adventure of all, he set out to visit Italy for the last time. For the rest, he lived in a suburb nearly all his life, and I suppose the only people who ever came to something like attention in his presence were little boys when he was a school-teacher, and the audiences on graduation days when he was Chancellor. He was the least granitic of men. As he said, he had to be dismissed as 'no better than a University bloke'.

He would have been quick to observe that it is by an accidental coincidence that we meet tonight. The span of one hundred years, a century, is one of the few units of measurement whose magic in the English language has not been lost forever in a miasma of metrification. It happens that the centenary of his birth falls conveniently close to the time when Murdoch University will open its doors to students. What more natural than that to honour his memory his old University should tonight come together with the younger sister to whom for centuries 'Murdoch' will at least mean a local habitation and a name?

But any student of Murdoch's must be careful in talking about him. At a memorial service, four years ago, Sir Paul Hasluck said, rightly, 'We will not Honour him by being over-solemn.' How well we remember the look of innocent bewilderment which caused the splendours of one's most eloquent prose to dissolve suddenly into mere Fine Writing. We would never have dared, in his presence, to call Murdoch a sage. We could imagine too well his muttered variation on a famous title: 'Sage and Onions!' We would never in his presence have referred to his venerable old age. Had he not once brought a nest of elderly hornets about his ears by remarking that old age in

itself, was no more venerable in a human being than in a cheese? It is true that unless he is an Archdeacon, or a potential Saint, a man cannot be venerable without being old; but whether he deserves veneration depends on how he has lived his life. Many of us knew Walter Murdoch more or less well, at different ages and in different relationships. Let us recall him; but let us always remember one of his favourite quotations: 'Take rhetoric and wring its neck'.

As a schoolboy in South Perth in the early 1920s I was familiar with the sight of an unpretentious figure ambling to or from the Mends Street jetty. I knew that he was the writer of some lines which I had learned by heart. They were the lines on the Elephant, in the little book called *Anne's Animals*:

This creature cannot climb the trees,
Nor swing from branch to branch with ease.
To put it brutally, but shortly,
His figure is extremely portly.

In recollection Murdoch always seems to have worn a crumpled grey suit, and a grey felt hat with turned-up brim. I may have muttered a few embarrassed words when, occasionally, he would stop to chat with my mother; but I never really *talked* to him until I became a University student in 1929. After I had left Perth we exchanged letters, intermittently, for nearly forty years, and we met from time to time as visitors to Perth or Melbourne. I

last saw him in June 1968, waving from the door of 'Blithedale' in South Perth as I turned to say goodbye, and I last heard from him in May 1970.

Many of us, I said, in some sense knew Murdoch. But which ' Murdoch did we know?

Historians think in periods. No-one alive today knew the Walter Murdoch of Period 1, the boy who spent his first eight years in a Scottish fishing village on the rocky coast of a dangerous sea. He was the ninth son, and the fourteenth and last child, of the Reverend James Murdoch and his wife Helen. As a young man of twenty-six, James had 'come out' into the Free Church at the disruption of the Church of Scotland in 1843, and in 1846 had accepted a call from the Rosehearty congregation in the parish of Pitsligo. An impressive preacher, much respected by the fisher-folk,

he was a great reader of theology and literature; a sound man on the doctrine of everlasting punishment, but mercifully reserving express and lengthened exposition of it for rare occasions; a little old-fashioned, it was thought, in his warnings about the Pope of Rome, in a parish where there was but one Papist, a ship-wrecked and dissolute Irishman; but altogether James was a good, earnest and learned Minister.

His last child was baptized as Walter Logic Forbes - the last two being family names on the mother's side. Walter never went to school in Rosehearty, for his father, like himself in later times, did not believe in too early a beginning for formal education. His older sister Lizzie taught him to read. His father taught him the rudiments of Latin, pulling his hair (but gently, one suspects) when he got his declensions wrong.

Some older children had left home, or died, before Walter was born. But we can glimpse a happy life; the Reverend James reading aloud from Robert Burns on winter evenings; snowballing; summer picnics to romantic caves along the coast, visits to a great-aunt, born in the year that the First Fleet reached Botany Bay, who remembered the illuminations for Trafalgar and Waterloo.

There was something else, never to be forgotten when we try to understand the Victorian family; the memory, or the expectation, of death. Every family in Scotland, probably, was then exposed to tuberculosis. The question was not whether you escaped it, but whether you survived it. A number of the Murdoch's did not survive it.

In 1881 the Reverend James resigned his ministry, in order, he said, to emigrate for the sake of his family's health. They spent two years in the south of England. Then the Reverend Patrick Murdoch, the oldest son, accepted a call from a congregation in Melbourne, 'the Metropolis of the Southern Hemisphere'. His parents, their three surviving daughters and Walter sailed with him and his own family. They arrived in October 1884. Walter was ten years old. Within a month his father died.

No doubt his Scottish childhood had affected Walter Murdoch to many subtle ways. But quite certainly it provided him with one invaluable asset. He left Scotland at the age of eight. He was well into his fifties before he first returned, briefly and as a visitor, to his birthplace. Yet in eighty-six years as an Australian he could, if he chose,

legitimately call himself a Scot. His Scottish birth was his extra trump, the joker in his hand; some would say up his sleeve. Throughout a long life he played it with great skill.

In Period 2, Walter Murdoch is a schoolboy, a university student, a schoolmaster, he marries; in Victoria he begins to be known as a writer on literature. The years are 1885 to the end of 1903.

After the death of the Reverend James there was enough money, it seems, to provide for some years a life of modest suburban comfort in Melbourne for Helen Murdoch, her daughters, and young Walter. He was a fairly good student at school and surprisingly he recalled in old age that though no athlete he considered himself a fair gymnast. He went on, in 1892, to become an outstanding student at the University. Though his family wished him to do Medicine, he began with a preliminary year in Arts. Then came the Victorian Bank Crash of 1893, and the loss of most of their income. It was the end of any medical career for Walter. He did not regret it. 'There are probably people alive,' he once reflected, 'who would not be alive if I had been their physician.'

Grants and scholarships helped him to finish his Arts degree. He graduated in 1895 with First Class Honours in Logic and Philosophy; an asset with no market-value at all in that period of deep depression in the Victorian economy. He was lucky, he felt, to get a job on a sheep station as tutor to the owner's son, at £40 a year. Then he became an assistant master at a country school, at £80 a year. Fifty years later he found, to his high glee, that the shrewd headmaster, a fellow-Scot, had paid £20 less to his successor, who turned out to have been Murdoch's old friend Sir John Latham.

He returned to Melbourne at the end of 1897 to marry Violet Hughston. All I need say here about his domestic life can be said in three sentences. Some time before Violet Murdoch's death he wrote of their 'unmarred companionship' of fifty-seven years, counting the years of their engagement. They had three much-loved children, a boy and two girls. His second fortunate marriage, in old age, made possible the serenity of his last years.

In 1898 there was the problem of a job for a married man. He solved it for the time being by creating one. He started a private school of his own in Camberwell, a Melbourne suburb where he was well-known. Its advertised attractions included 'Train Fares Paid', but its three years' existence were not highly successful. Next, from 1901 to 1903, he took over a private school in the coastal town of Warrnambool. There survives a photograph, dated 1901, of a school football team, eighteen earnest youngsters in striped guernseys and knickerbockers, their arms folded to enlarge their biceps. Beside them stands a keen-faced, dark-haired young man, neatly-dressed as becomes a senior master: Walter Murdoch, the football coach. One feels thankful that it was Australian Rules Football.

In these six years of schoolmastering he began to write for publication. Surely he could do as well as many of the writers whose stories, verses and articles were accepted by contemporary journals? And so he could. Editors did publish some of his stories and verses. They were written competently enough, but they were competent imitations. The Murdoch who had something of his own to say was neither novelist nor poet but a critic and expositor of new and old literature.

In 1899, the Melbourne Argus newspaper accepted a critical article on contemporary Australian verse. It was a little too smart. In places it trailed a coat. But it did have something to say, fresh and challenging. In Melbourne it provoked replies from the literary establishment. In Sydney, the great A. G. Stephens of the *Bulletin* condescended to demolish it in a Red Page article. The Argus was now anxious to publish anything on men and books that Murdoch found time to write.

This kind of writing must be done in a certain way. It must be concise. It must be clear. It must get straight to the point. It must sufficiently hold the attention of an educated reader who is not himself a specialist. The writer must first think out what he wants to say; he must then set it down fluently, without prolonged revision of words and phrases. Murdoch, the essayist of later years, began to learn his trade in his early years as a literary journalist.

Period 3 begins in 1904. An unexpected opportunity made Murdoch Lecturer in English in the University of Melbourne, and he was virtually in charge of that

department until 1912. In these years he came to occupy a distinct place in the literary and cultural life of Melbourne. Among his professorial colleagues who came to Western Australia in 1913, perhaps only his fellow-Victorian, Edward Shann, could fully appreciate that.

In those days teachers in the University of Melbourne were more closely in touch with people of similar interests outside it than they ever were in later times. Murdoch was in this period the only university teacher of English Literature. The people in Melbourne most familiar with old and new literature, and most eager to discuss it, were writers, critics, and other well-read men in various occupations outside the University. Murdoch came to know, as friends or acquaintances, the most interesting of these men, and he was a respected figure among them as writer, critic, and companion.

Consider the names of eight men who dined together one evening in this period. I take them from an entry in a diary. They are: Walter Murdoch; Frederick Sinclair, clergyman and literary scholar; George Knibbs, statistician and translator; Ernest Scott, historian; Robert Garran, federalist, lawyer, translator of Heine; Archibald Strong, literary scholar and critic; Morris Miller, philosopher and bibliographer. The diarist himself was Alfred Deakin, best-read of Australian prime ministers.

That entry has a peculiar interest for me. Murdoch and Sinclair were my teachers. I met and corresponded with Garran and Miller. I once occupied a university chair named after Scott; I wrote a biography of Deakin, I may add that I was born on the day they dined together.

Murdoch sorely missed this kind of company when he came to Western Australia. And in Victoria he was well known, also, to hundreds of men and women who had never met him, as 'Elzevir' of the Argus whose weekly articles on Books and Men were eagerly read and discussed. In a fluent and witty commentary they kept readers in touch with new writing in English, French and Australian literature, or sent them back to writers of the past. Thus when he came to Perth he was already a well-known man of letters; and he came - it would be foolish to pretend otherwise - to what was then a cultural desert. If it is greener now, that is partly his doing.

The long-vacant chair of English at Melbourne was advertised in 1911. Most people interested in such matters, including his colleagues and students, expected that Murdoch would be appointed to it. He was not. That was certainly a blunder by the Melbourne University Council, but a Western Australian can hardly deplore it.

Within a few days of the announcement Murdoch was offered a full-time job on the *Argus*, which he accepted. Doubtless he could now have continued to earn a living as an excellent literary journalist. But his rejection by the University had been a blow to his pride. Many years later he wrote to a friend: 'I suspected myself of being a nobody and I wanted a chair as evidence that I was a somebody'. Evidence, that is, not only for himself, but for some others whose opinion he cared about. At the end of 1912 Hackett's new University in Western Australia provided it for him.

Speaking at a reception for the first professors in 1913, John Forrest told them that in his opinion the University was fifty years before its time. Professor Alexander's jubilee history provides pretty solid evidence that his judgement was wrong. That fascinating record of half a century necessarily has much to say about Murdoch. Administrator, teacher, friend and helper of younger colleagues in times of trouble, he was also held in affectionate respect by undergraduates. And if his colleagues could tell some rueful tales of causes lost under the fire of his ironical criticism, they could also tell some tales of desperate causes won with his support.

But with considerable self-restraint, and perhaps to your disappointment, I do not propose to recall in detail Murdoch's academic career in the University of Western Australia. Many of us could spend hours in reminiscent chat about the old days, and about Murdoch as we knew him in our different situations. But in the first place this would do less than justice to his colleagues; to such men as Wilsmore, whose encyclopedic range he greatly respected; to Whitfeld, his closest friend; to Edward Shann, of whom he wrote to me in 1935: 'I seem rather old to be learning lessons, but Shann's death has taught me one: you don't realise how much affection you have for a man until he has gone where you have no chance of telling him'. And in the second place it would be discourteous. Two universities meet here tonight. Private talk about only one of them would be simply bad manners. If Murdoch's

name appropriately links the old and the new, it is not because he was the first Professor of English in the University of Western Australia, but because of what, as a Western Australian, he wrote and said over many years. So let me talk of him as a writer whose name was known throughout the continent.

Hackett had urged the first professors to keep in touch with the public, and Murdoch thought he could best do so by writing. He continued to review books for the Melbourne *Argus*, but his articles for the local press in his early years in Perth tended to be concerned with public issues: particularly the problems of the University, and of education generally. One example is his celebrated 'Thoughts on a Kerosene Tin', published in 1922, but not, I think, reprinted. There it lay, the kerosene tin, overflowing with garbage, near the Weld Club, mislaid perhaps by some absent-minded member, and there it lay for a week. That observation led, through various by-ways, to a powerful plea for the proper housing and proper equipment of the University, still in its tin sheds at Irwin Street, so that in time, through the leaders it would train, there might be some alleviation of the cost to the community of dear old, complacent, Western Australian amateurishness.

I see three likely reasons why Murdoch began about the mid 1920s to write more frequently on general subjects chosen by himself, rather than those set for him by a book to be reviewed, or a particular and immediate public question. He was fifty in 1924. He was not unhappy in Western Australia, but he still greatly missed the friendships and the literary atmosphere of Melbourne, and he was still prepared to move back East. Then one promising opportunity to move faded; and he never sought another. Secondly, in 1923 he published his book on Alfred Deakin, his first *real* book, as he said later. He had put much hard work into it. Yet he must have realized that in this kind of work he was writing against the grain of his talents; that the constraints of close, documentary work necessarily suppressed his gifts of wit, of fancy, and indeed his compulsive desire to preach, to draw a moral. And thirdly, he found himself, in middle-age, out of sympathy with much of the new writing of the 1920s. It was becoming more difficult for him to write with enthusiasm, if not about new books, at least about the new novels and poetry of that time, and he knew that good criticism springs from fundamental sympathy.

Yet he still had many things to say, and when he said them he found that readers liked to hear them. He was now settled in Western Australia for life. He would write as he chose, and perhaps he could disturb a little that complacency of thought and action which he called the suburban spirit. So, I think, emerges the Murdoch essay.

The essay as a literary form has a long and honourable lineage, and Murdoch is so far the best of Australian essayists. The formula looks easy. If you want people to think about what you have to say, you must first hit on some perfectly concrete word or thing or personal experience to arouse their interest or curiosity, and so lead them on to the lesson you wish to impart. You will perhaps remember Murdoch's rising politician who suddenly found that he had a real halo, for which his wife made a cardboard shade so that it could be used as a reading lamp. Or the lift-boy who expressed the essence of democracy in his peremptory cry to the obviously important person who got out at the wrong floor: 'Hi, bloke!'

It looks easy. 'Why, I could write that sort of thing myself, if I cared to', you may say. Well ... could you?

Murdoch's Saturday morning essays were read as eagerly in Perth as his 'Elzevir' articles were read in Melbourne. When his first collection, *Speaking Personally*, was published as a book we saw the extraordinary phenomenon of a set of more or less literary essays becoming a best-seller. And so it was with the similar collections which followed it from time to time. It was a phenomenon which I commend as a subject for study by Murdoch University's School of Human Communication.

The Murdoch of the 1930s wrote more than entertaining essays which made readers think. He ventured, many people said, further than was decent in a Professor of English, into writing about public affairs in that decade of depression and the threat of war. He was often criticized. We need not agree with all he had to say. He did not think we would.

It was a hazardous business to attack him. With what surprise would he learn that his public opinions could possibly be thought to be dangerous. That anyone took notice of an ageing sheep like himself! Gently, humbly, and not always fairly, he

would slice little pieces off a clumsier but often well-meaning critic. He once suggested that none of the existing political parties seemed to have any solution for the economic problems of the time; a new party appeared to be needed. He was told sternly and at length that in political matters he didn't know what he was talking about. He replied that his critic, 'having disposed of me to his satisfaction, assures you that the active members of existing parties can sleep easily. He appears to believe that the main objectives of political life is undisturbed sleep - the balmy slumber of innocent and healthy children. It seems a strange occupation for active members. It is plain that he and I entertain quite different notions of the main aim of politics'. And so on. But he had been provoked.

We think of Murdoch as characteristically kind and tolerant, and so he generally was. But in one way he was a dangerous animal - when attacked, he defended himself; and when school or university education was in question, he became the attacker. There was an eminent Western Australian who proposed that as an economy measure the university grant should be discontinued and the State secondary schools closed. If I were that man's biographer I would not relish the task of explaining away the article, entitled simply 'A Bright Idea', in which Murdoch, as he said, 'proposed to give him a piece of my mind, such as it is '... at this moment of economic shipwreck [he wrote], when every sound practical man is tasking his wits to find some way of making somebody else bear the brunt of the disaster, a number of distracted passengers have hit on the happy idea of making the younger generation suffer for the bad pilotage that has brought us on the rocks. . . . There is no crime more cowardly than the crime of robbing children. We can sink into no lower slough of dishonour than this into which [he] invites us to descend - this of making our young people pay, now and all their lives long, the price of our own follies'.

Murdoch retired from the chair of English at the end of 1939, the year in which he reached sixty-five, though he could have stayed on for some years if he had wished to do so. He explained that he had lost his zest for teaching, and in the sense of class-room teaching that was no doubt true. But in another sense he was to remain a teacher for nearly thirty years more. One wonders who drafted the Senate's

resolution when he gave notice of his retirement; it was probably Hubert Whitfeld, his friend who was to die some weeks later:

The Senate feels that as a teacher, writer and speaker of English his influence has been felt far beyond the walls of the University and has helped to mould the development of thought in this State and indeed in the whole of Australia.

That was well and justly said. For some years he was still a figure in the University, as Senator and Chancellor. And there *were* times in the 1940s when the University was fortunate that its ceremonial head was a man of Australian standing who would be listened to when he spoke his mind.

It seems an astonishing thing to say, but it is probably the case, that Murdoch's writing was read even more widely after he was seventy than it was before. In 1945 he began to write his weekly 'Answers' to readers' questions; a doubtful experiment, he thought at first - which in the event was carried on for nearly twenty years. He said, after some months of the experiment, that 'such a lot of people have said or hinted to me that to write such things is beneath my dignity. I explain that I haven't any dignity. Anyhow, those disjointed notes are bringing me into contact with a lot of minds the reverse of academic, and it's doing me good, whether it does *them* good or not.'

I have been looking at some of these 'Answers' again. They do really constitute a remarkable performance, extending until nearly his ninetieth year. Of course, he selected the questions he chose to answer. I suspect he even made some up, so that he could, for instance, speak out on that Constitutional Referendum of 1951 which presented a cruel dilemma to men of liberal and democratic mind. Serious questions were taken seriously, difficult questions were not shirked. Some of the 'Answers' provoked virulent or even libellous abuse, since Murdoch honestly asserted his own humane and liberal values. But as he knew too well, the suburban spirit takes many forms.

In the 1960s he was slipping quietly into extreme old age. He once wrote that he had known old people who had seemed to him truly venerable; people who gave

reality to Wordsworth's vision of 'An old age serene and bright'. He was of that company.

This was the Murdoch remembered by many people still young, the sage of South Perth who refused to be labelled a sage. He was still writing, the oldest working journalist in Australia, in his nineties; and he could still teach a thing or two to young journalists. His mind remained open and inquiring. He writes in 1962 of the 'tremendous power' of Patrick White's *Riders in the Chariot*; he comments shrewdly in 1967 on England and the Common Market. He is not happy about the high rectangular tenements springing up in South Perth. 'The whole district is bristling like an unshaven chin', he says, while on his own little plot of land nothing is going up but the rates.

His private letters are as shrewd and entertaining as ever. 'Do you cultured people', he asks in 1967, 'pronounce Sibelius to rhyme with contumelious, - or would you say "Poor old Sibelius, this is one of his failures"? And the old teacher pounces on that morning's newspaper headline. "Heat-wave broken by cool change." 'What else a heat-wave could be broken by they didn't say.'

One of Murdoch's Melbourne friends had been the poet Bernard O'Dowd. In his poem *The Bush* there are some fanciful stanzas foreseeing a future Australia in which some of the real people of his own time have become myths, folk-heroes and heroines. Among these he named Murdoch. In reviewing the poem, Murdoch imagined the unfortunate schoolboy of the future poring over the footnote to his own name. '. . . an obscure literary hack, eighteenth century, doubtful character, facts of his life unknown . . . '.

Since a University now bears Murdoch's name, it seems tolerably certain that it will go down to a far-distant future. He would have found considerable amusement in composing a footnote about himself for a History of Murdoch University supposed to be written for its thousandth anniversary. But he would have been distressed and embarrassed if we in this generation deliberately gave currency to myths about him.

Let me suppose, then, that I am questioned by a young member of Murdoch University who knows nothing about the man. He asks, was Walter Murdoch one of the founders? - I reply, no, he was well over ninety at that time. But if he had been asked to join them, he would surely have replied in the words of a Sydney professor invited to attend the funeral of a certain high officer of the University: he could not attend, but he was in favour of it.

Was Murdoch, then, a distinguished scholar? - No. He would have smiled at the question. He respected what an academic man means by scholarship, but he knew that it was something that could not be practised in Western Australia fifty years ago, even if he had wished to practise it. He was a learned man, a man of letters, concerned to promote a humane literacy in others - a writer, a teacher, and with apologies, a preacher.

What was he good at? - First, at being himself. Second: *he* said he wrote newspaper articles which others were pleased to call essays. But they were the best essays yet written in Australia. Third, he expounded certain ideas; consistently, clearly, sometimes with a nice irony, always so skilfully that people listened to him.

What were these ideas? - Read his books. And if you translate into his lucid prose Murdoch University's original statement of its 'Educational Objectives', you will find that they are much the same as his. But here are two of his ideas, in his own words. The first may now seem trivial, but it was written before you were born:

Do not tamely acquiesce in what your elders say, and meekly imitate what your elders do, and unquestioningly adopt the life mapped out for you by the wisdom of your elders.

The complement of that idea may be harder to accept:

... there are two sides to every question. I have always believed [he wrote] that to insist on this truth, in season and out of season, is to play one's humble part in civilizing one's country. For a civilized country is a country which weighs, without heat, without passion, without violence, both sides of a question.

Is his a worthy name for a university? - We who knew him think so. But *he* would have said that names don't matter much - that there is something else for a new

university to worry about. Twice he expressed it very emphatically. Let me tell you what it was.

On Wednesday 12 February 1913 Professor Walter Murdoch was interviewed by a representative of *The West Australian*. Upon the preliminary work of the first professors, he said, would tradition be based. It amounts to this, he continued, 'Western Australia has to decide whether she is to have a real University, . . . It is essential ... that the University idea should be insisted upon from the very start. On our work our status will depend.'

On Friday 10 July 1970 the same newspaper reported that the Premier had announced yesterday that Western Australia's second university would be named after Sir Walter Murdoch. He had not been well enough to be interviewed, but Lady Murdoch had said that he was deeply touched and felt that it was a great honour.

He had indeed said that, when he was given the Premier's message. But I have first-hand authority for stating that he said something more. He said, 'Well, it had better be a good one'.