

Research Directions

Office of Research Services

Right-Wing Depression Movements

Associate Professor Andrew Moore from the School of Humanities and Languages is exploring the social history of right-wing movements in Australia's Great Depression under a three year ARC Discovery grant.

'The project is studying the social roots of political extremism in Australia in the early 1930s, and will seek to explain why decent, law-abiding citizens joined organisations which flouted the conventions of liberal parliamentary democracy' says Associate Professor Moore. 'Within a broad social history framework, the study will focus on political and material lives of "ordinary people" at a time of great crisis and place Australian fascism and proto-fascism into an international context.'



Employing empirical historical and genealogical research in libraries and archives, the research will shed fresh light on two right-wing paramilitary groups, the New Guard and the Old Guard, active in NSW during the Great Depression. Despite ongoing debate in journalistic circles, the New Guard, in particular, amply qualified for the mantle of fascism. Associate Professor Moore intends to study 1200 members of the two organisations to illuminate their social backgrounds and the reasons individuals joined the movements.

At a time when the issue of "home grown terrorism" looms large in public debate and concern, it is important to understand the appeal of political extremism in Australia and to explain how and why decent and respectable people considered following a course that amounted to sedition and seditious conspiracy. As was suggested by events at Cronulla in December 2005, the history of groups like the New Guard may suggest that it is not simply marginalised groups that promote violent, terrorist solutions.

Project Title: *A study of right-wing movements during Australia's Great Depression*

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