
   John Curtin was born in the state of Victoria in the year 1885. He did not receive much formal education because his family moved from town to town. He loved reading and learning. His favourite sports were football and cricket. When his father became too ill to work, Curtin left school and took a job. He was only 14 years old.


   As Curtin grew up, he became involved in politics, protesting against the government’s attempt to introduce conscription (compulsory military service) during World War I. The issue divided the Labor Party, of which Curtin was a member. He had become a journalist and moved to Perth as editor of the Westralian Worker Labor party newspaper in the year 1917, so through his newspaper writing he tried to rebuild ALP (Australian Labor Party) unity. He also joined the Australian Journalists Association and became its president.

   Through politics, Curtin met his wife, Elsie Needham. They married, moved to the Perth suburb of Cottesloe and had 2 children.


   In the year 1928, Curtin stood for election to parliament and won the seat of Fremantle. He had not long been a member of parliament when the great economic disaster, known as the Great Depression, began. He lost his seat in parliament and returned to journalism. He regained his seat in the year 1934. A year later he was also elected leader of the Labor Party.

World War II began in 1939 in Europe. By 1941 it had spread to the Pacific region. Now Australians feared an invasion by Japanese forces.

The Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, was replaced by Arthur Fadden, but this did not solve the conflict in the United Australia Party and Country Party. Independent ministers shifted their support to the Labor Party, so that John Curtin became Prime Minister on the date of 7 October 1941.


Curtin became Prime Minister shortly before Japan attacked Pearl Harbour on the date of 7 December 1941. Japan then attacked Singapore on the date of 15 February 1942 and four days later, they bombed the Australian city of Darwin.


Curtin now turned to the United States to help defend Australia. Its troops were able to use Australia as a base from which to turn back the Japanese advance. Both countries shared the same goal of defeating Japan.


In 1942, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill demanded that Curtin lend Australian troops to protect British colonies in Asia. Curtin refused because he wanted to keep those troops to protect Australia. He finally succeeded in doing so.

8. The Prime Minister is Dead – http://john.curtin.edu.au/manofpeace/funeral.html

Being Prime Minister during wartime strained Curtin’s health and he became seriously ill. He died on the date of 5 July 1945, just 6 weeks before the end of World War II. Thousands of people watched his funeral procession pass by. He was buried in Karrakatta Cemetery in Perth. He had given his life for his country.