

# CENTRE FOR ECONOMIC HISTORY

## RESEARCH SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

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Australian  
National  
University

Friends of the ANU Centre for Economic History,

Welcome to this issue of the CEH newsletter. It includes a report on the CEH workshop on Australia before Federation. Also included are some other news items, features and announcements. Once again, thanks for your interest in the CEH.

Tim Hatton, CEH Director

### ***CEH Workshop Report: Australia before Federation***

Experts on Australian economic history gathered on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June for a Centre for Economic History workshop on 'Australia before Federation'. First up, Sumner La Croix (Hawai'i) examined the transition to responsible government in four colonies that, in the 1850s, established constitutions leading to universal (white) male suffrage. He pointed to reasons why the British government supported this development, which included the Canadian precedent, the transition to free trade, and a fiery speech delivered in the House of Lords. Within the colonies, in response to popular clamour, the conservative-dominated legislative councils agreed to universal suffrage on the assumption that they could still dominate policymaking. Members of the audience queried the power of legislative councils and pondered the enduring legacies of the constitutions that were established. John Wilson (South Australia) followed with an analysis of compensating differentials for urban disamenities in Tasmania. He found that population growth, household crowding and infant mortality (a proxy for the disease environment) were linked positively to the wage differential between districts. The disamenity premiums made a significant contribution to the wage gaps of Hobart and Launceston over more rural districts. Participants asked about the prospect for including rent in the cost of living index and for using height as a measure of health.



Speakers: Sumner La Croix, John Wilson, Frank Liu and Monica Keneley

## ***Australia before Federation, Contd.***

The second session focused on investment and insurance. Frank Liu (Western Australia) examined data on 85,000 individuals who invested in mining companies in the gold mining booms between 1857 and 1886. He found that, contrary to much conventional wisdom, the most experienced investors were less likely to invest during a boom and those with recent investment experience were more likely to participate. There was also evidence of persistence in investment behaviour. Participants wondered why the results differed in the boom of the early 1880s and asked about the involvement of female investors. Next, Monica Keneley (Deakin) examined the growing participation of UK insurance firms in the Australian market from the 1860s. Among the challenges were lack of knowledge of the local market and moral hazard among their agents. High rates of entry and exit were followed by firmer establishment in the market as branch structures were introduced, mergers were undertaken and a common tariff was established. Questions from the floor included the role of government in the insurance industry and the changing composition of risks insured.

The lunch interval saw the launch of Cameron Gordon’s new book: *Many Possible Worlds: An Interdisciplinary History of the World Economy Since 1800* (Palgrave McMillan). Launching the book, Martine Mariotti praised it for avoiding the ‘triumph of capitalism’ narrative that is common to so many accounts, as well as for taking seriously the interdisciplinary approach, and for providing valuable sign-posts for navigating through the material. In his response, Cameron related how the book grew out of teaching undergraduate economic history, what the book aims to achieve, and how his thinking had evolved during the writing process.



Book launcher and launchee



Launch and lunch

## ***Australia before Federation, Contd.***



The third session focused on technology and communication. Simon Ville (Wollongong) marshalled Australian patent data from the 1850s onwards to measure revealed technological advantage (relative to comparator countries) in different economic sectors. He found that Australia had generally specialised in sectors where there was local economic advantage and potential for growth. This pattern persisted over time but with some deviation in the middle decades of the twentieth century. Members of the audience asked whether it would be possible to compare revealed technological advantage with revealed comparative advantage in trade and also discussed the role of universities and the defence sector in patenting activity. Florian Ploeckl (Adelaide) examined the postal service of each of the states shortly after federation. Focusing on individual post offices, he examined the variation in the services that they provided. He also found differences across states in the distributions of populations served by post offices, stressing the importance of head post offices. Participants asked about the reach of different post office branches, their geographical distributions, and the mechanisms through which new post offices were established.



In the final session, Rohan Alexander (Toronto) analysed votes in favour of federation in the New South Wales referendums that took place in 1898 and 1899. Regressions across individual polling booths suggested that the share of females and the rate of literacy in a county were positively related to the degree of support for federation but the proportion who were born in NSW had a negative effect. More important, distance from Sydney was positively associated with the share of 'yes' votes but this effect vanished when low turnout in remote areas was taken into account. Participants asked about the correlation between distance and other explanatory variables and how the role of the labour movement, which was firmly against federation, could be accounted for. Finally, Tim Hatton (Essex/ANU) examined the determinants of colony/state assisted immigration policies from 1862 to 1813. He found that active policy was positively related to budget surpluses and to local prosperity as well as to variables reflecting widening participation in the legislative assemblies. The evidence also suggested that the take-up of assisted passages depended on economic conditions in the UK. Participants asked about possible influence of working class protest against assisted immigration and about the dynamics of migration.



Speakers: Simon Ville,  
Florian Ploeckl and  
Rohan Alexander



## Featured Economic Historian: Sumner La Croix

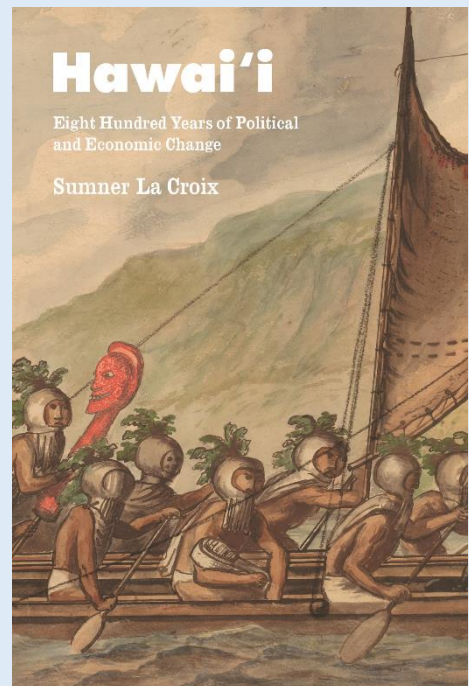


Sumner La Croix

We were pleased to welcome Sumner La Croix as the opening speaker at our CEH workshop. After completing his PhD at the University of Washington, Sumner moved to the University of Hawai'i-Mānoa where he served twice as Head of the Department of Economics among many other senior administrative roles. He is now Professor Emeritus in the Department of Economics and is a Senior Research Fellow with the University of Hawai'i Economic Research Organization. Along the way he has held visiting positions in a variety of prestigious universities and he has been a frequent visitor to Australia.

Sumner's research spans a diverse range of topics that

include economics and policy in Hawai'i, intellectual property, health, electric vehicles, climate change, and carbon pricing, on all of which he has published widely in leading economic journals. But his abiding interest is in economic history, with a focus on the political economy of property rights, land and labour. His book on Hawai'i's economic history, *Hawai'i: Eight Hundred Years of Political and Economic Change*, was published by the University of Chicago Press in March 2019. In 2016, the Cliometric Society presented its Clio Can Award to Sumner for exceptional service to the field of cliometrics, i.e., the application of economic theory and econometrics to the study of history. Sumner has also served on the editorial boards of a wide variety of journals and is an associate editor of the *Asia-Pacific Economic History Review*.



Sumner has long-standing interests in Australian economic history. His paper with Edwyna Harris, "Australia's Forgotten Copper Mining Boom: Understanding How South Australia Avoided Dutch Disease" was awarded the Best Paper of 2021 in the *Economic Record*. The judging committee noted "its sound economic analysis combining theory and empirical research, originality (collecting historical data), and its relevance for understanding Australia's most recent resource booms and the benefits of active migration policies." Sumner and Edwyna are wrapping up work on a book manuscript on the economic and political history of colonial South Australia, from its founding in 1836 to its transition to responsible government in 1857. The working title of the book is *Without Original Sin: An Economic History of Colonial South Australia, 1829-1857*.

***New Book: Toward a Free Economy,  
by Aditya Balasubramanian***

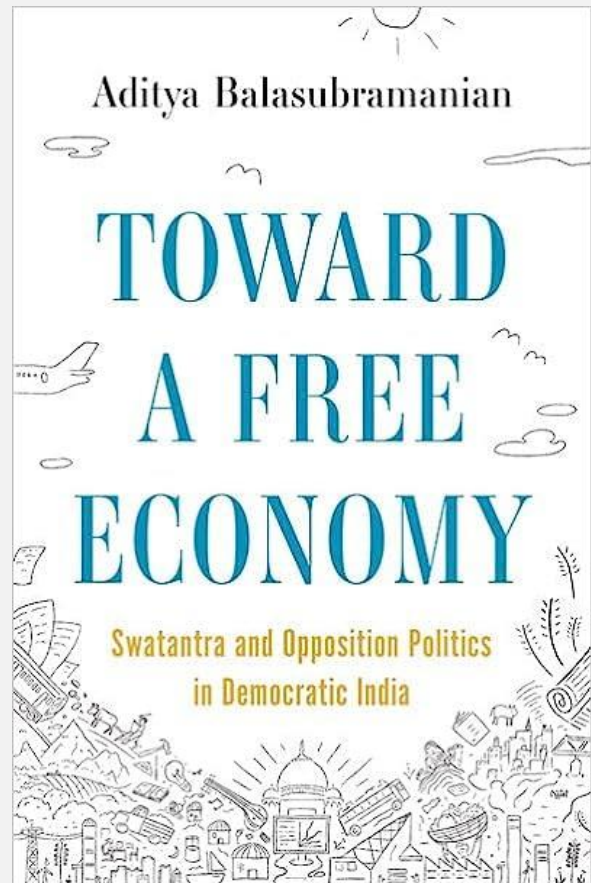
The ANU's Aditya Balasubramanian's new book, focusing on the unknown history of economic conservatism in India after independence, is just published by Princeton University Press.

Neoliberalism is routinely characterized as an antidemocratic, expert-driven project aimed at insulating markets from politics, devised in the North Atlantic and projected on the rest of the world. Revising this understanding, *Toward a Free Economy* shows how economic conservatism emerged and was disseminated in a postcolonial society consistent with the logic of democracy.

Twelve years after the British left India, a Swatantra ("Freedom") Party came to life. It encouraged Indians to break with the Indian National Congress Party, which spearheaded the anticolonial nationalist movement and now dominated Indian democracy. Rejecting Congress's heavy-industrial developmental state and the accompanying rhetoric of socialism, Swatantra promised "free economy" through its project of opposition politics.

As it circulated across various genres, "free economy" took on meanings that varied by region and language, caste and class, and won diverse advocates. These articulations, informed by but distinct from neoliberalism, came chiefly from communities in southern and western India as they embraced new forms of entrepreneurial activity. At their core, they connoted anticommunism, unfettered private economic activity, decentralized development, and the defense of private property.

Opposition politics encompassed ideas and practice. Swatantra's leaders imagined a conservative alternative to a progressive dominant party in a two-party system. They communicated ideas and mobilized people around such issues as inflation, taxation, and property. And they made creative use of India's institutions to bring checks and balances to the political system.



## ***10th Australasian Cliometrics Workshop: Call for Papers***

The 10th Australasian Cliometrics Workshop will be held on Monday, 6th November 2023, at the University of Adelaide. AusClio follows the established Clio format of short presentations, discussant comments and substantial discussion by the audience; accepted papers will be distributed in advance to participants with the expectation of an engaged contribution.

There is no workshop theme, submissions to all topics in economic history are welcomed. The workshop is hosted by the School of Economics and Public Policy at the University of Adelaide and supported by the Economic History Society of Australia and New Zealand.

Extended abstracts or full papers will be accepted now through 16th July 2022. Notifications will be made shortly afterwards, and full papers will be due by 22nd October (two weeks before the workshop). To submit an abstract or paper as well as to RSVP to attend (including willingness to serve as a discussant), please send an email to Florian Ploeckl, [florian.ploeckl@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:florian.ploeckl@adelaide.edu.au). Early career scholars and graduate students are particularly encouraged to apply.

If you need an earlier decision for travel, visa, or funding reasons, or due to planned attendance at the APEN workshop at Monash on Nov 3rd or the WA Economic History summit at UWA on Nov 10th please contact [florian.ploeckl@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:florian.ploeckl@adelaide.edu.au).

Registration is free and lunch and coffee will be provided. All other costs will need to be self-funded, such as travel and accommodation. An informal dinner or get-together on Sunday or Monday evening will be organized.

Thanks, and we look forward to seeing you in Adelaide.

## ***34th HETSA Annual Conference, September 20-22 2023***

Registrations are now open for the 34th History of Economic Thought Society of Australia Annual Conference, September 20-22 2023. Register either on Eventbrite under the title: '34th History of Economics Thought Society of Australia Annual Conference' or click on this link: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/34th-history-of-economic-thought-society-of-australia-annual-conference-tickets-651533192317?aff=erelexpmlt>.

If you wish to offer conference paper please contact the convenor, John Hawkins at: [john.hawkins@canberra.edu.au](mailto:john.hawkins@canberra.edu.au).

The conference opens with a reception on the evening of Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> September and runs until Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> September. The conference venue will be the **Ramada Encore Belconnen**, 110 Benjamin Way, Belconnen, Canberra, about 10 km from Canberra civic centre.

The conference dinner on Thursday evening, 21<sup>st</sup> September will be held nearby at the **Bella Vista Restaurant**, 84 Emu Bank Rd, Belconnen, which overlooks Lake Ginninderra. There will be an after-dinner address by Dr. David Gruen, the Australian Statistician.

The registration cost for this 2-day conference is \$290 and the conference dinner is \$85. If you wish to come, you can pay this on the first day at the conference when we will take bookings.

John Hawkins & Alex Millmow



## ***APEBH Conference 2024: Call for Papers***

The next edition of the Asia-Pacific Economic and Business History Conference will be held at the University of Hawaii-Manoa on 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> February 2024. The organisers welcome proposals for contributions on any topic in economic, social, and business history, including proposals for complete sessions on particular themes.

A particular interest is in contributions to the conference theme, *Institutions and Organizations in Economic History*. We welcome papers that investigate the sources of institutional change, use theory to provide a context for a detailed narrative of how and why institutional change occurred in a particular historical context, or empirically analyze the impacts of institutional change, particularly changes in property rights, election rules, establishment of parliaments, or authoritarian rule. Papers investigating institutional change within the context of colonial economies and polities in the Asia-Pacific region are encouraged.

Researchers across a broad range of disciplines are warmly welcomed. Early career researchers and graduate students are particularly encouraged to attend. Registration fees for conference attendance and events will be waived for graduate students with the support of the Economic History Society of Australia and New Zealand. Competitive travel support to Hawai'i will be available to a limited number of junior scholars and graduate students.

All abstracts (175–250 words) and proposals for sessions should be emailed to Sumner La Croix [lacroix@hawaii.edu](mailto:lacroix@hawaii.edu) by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023. If you require special consideration (such as refereeing or early confirmation for visa application), please note so with your submission. If you are a graduate student and are applying for travel support, please send your paper abstract and cv and arrange for your faculty advisor to send use a letter of recommendation by 15<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

Questions regarding the conference or travel support? Email Sumner La Croix at [lacroix@hawaii.edu](mailto:lacroix@hawaii.edu) or Florian Ploeckl at [florian.ploeckl@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:florian.ploeckl@adelaide.edu.au).

We encourage participants to submit their work to the *Asia-Pacific Economic History Review* (previously the *Australian Economic History Review*). For information on the journal, go to: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/2832157x>

