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❖ **A Biography of Sir Charles Moses**

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Introduction to a biography of Sir Charles Moses

Fate had clearly taken a hand when I was invited in October 2005 to write the short biography of Sir Charles Moses for the Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 18 (1981-1990). He knew that I had written a university thesis on the ABC and spent an additional number of years developing this work into a book on the ABC. The upshot was that, during the last seven years of his life, he invited me to accompany him on trips to three overseas broadcasting conferences and to a number of Sydney lunches. So we spent much time together talking about the ABC as he, and I, had known it prior to his retirement as General Manager in 1965. I always had the feeling that he was divulging information with a view to publication. He desperately wanted someone, a media scholar by preference, to write his biography. So he selectively gave several media academics like myself, copies of the 230 page transcript of his oral history tape recorded for the ABC in 1971. I was too preoccupied with my own book, eventually published in 1993, so the opportunity was lost until now.

The oral history tape was useful but it is essentially a hagiographical exercise and much more had to be teased out of files still held by the ABC, some of his papers deposited with the Mitchell Library, books on ABC history and interviews with significant players from the past.

In my 26 years with the ABC as newsman, ten as foreign correspondent, it was difficult to escape the Moses presence. In my early days as a trainee sports broadcaster, he first came to my attention by ordering that the rugby tests in South Africa between the Wallabies and Springboks in 1953 be broadcast as 'synthetic' broadcasts. The broadcasts would be manufactured on air from the briefest cables from the grounds, which would be in code. The broadcasts would appear to be 'live', in the same way as the 'synthetic' cricket tests between Australia and England in 1934 were apparently 'live' but in fact broadcast from a Sydney studio. It was Moses himself who first invented this kind of broadcast and, when informed that short wave broadcasts from South Africa were technically impossible, thought the solution lay

in the old 'synthetic' model.

I was despatched to sit in the AWA headquarters in the city where I would be handed the cables and would read them to someone in the studio for handing to Bob Richardson, the ABC sporting commentator, who performed heroically under great difficulties. Unfortunately due to delays in transmission in South Africa long gaps appeared between the arrival of cable with Bob forced to invent interminable rucks and mauls, scrums, penalties and other diversions while he desperately waited. Then suddenly an ABC radio news bulletin gave the final score with Bob still describing the match, leaving him in the embarrassing position of admitting his broadcast had been faked. The remaining tests of the series were not broadcast.

While based in Singapore I saw Sir Charles brilliantly use a regional broadcasting conference as a platform for launching his plan for an Asian Broadcasting Union. A year later, he suddenly turned up at the Asian Games in Jakarta, where I and an ABC colleague, Tony Cane, were providing short-wave summaries of events for Radio Australia. Arriving at 1am by Thai Airways he produced six bottles of Johnny Walker Black Label whisky in his hotel room and declared that nobody could leave until they were consumed. A mix of Asian assorted hangers-on and air hostesses were involved, all passengers on the Thai flight. Tony and I staggered to our rooms around 4am. Somehow, and in a very sorry state, we managed to get ourselves out to the Merdeka Stadium next morning at 8am for the start of the Games. Several people were sure they had seen Sir Charles jogging around the Hotel Indonesia at the very same time. The myth of his indestructibility grew.

I was more privileged than most, however, to see him at the height of his powers. The first ever international conference in 1973 bringing together major broadcasters from developed and developing countries and international news and newsfilm agencies was a tribute to his persuasive skills and far-sightedness.

MOSES, SIR CHARLES JOSEPH ALFRED (1900-1988), broadcaster and broadcasting executive, was born on 21 January 1900 at Westhoughton, Lancashire, England (now Greater Manchester). He was the second son of a family of five children born to Joseph Moses, an estate manager, and his wife Elizabeth, nee Henderson. The family moved to Oswestry, Shropshire, in 1902 when Joseph began work as a manager on Lord Harlech's estate, Brogyntyn. Moses attended Oswestry Grammar School from 1912 and was accepted for the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, in 1917. He joined the 2nd Border Regiment just before the armistice and then saw service in Germany in the Army of Occupation. His regiment was then sent to western Ireland as part of the British attempt to curb the increasing political violence in rural areas.

His love for an Irish girl, Kathleen (Kitty) O'Sullivan, of Castlebar, County Mayo, meant he was forced to regularly cycle up to 30 kilometres on remote and lonely country roads to meet her through terrain controlled by the anti-British IRA. Fearing an ambush, a loaded Webley revolver was always in his belt.¹ Moses and Kitty were married on 3 June 1922, according to Roman Catholic rites in Dublin and immediately made arrangements to join his family who had emigrated to Australia in 1919. Although Joseph Moses had brought with him expert knowledge of English cattle and sheep, sheepdogs and old English game, he floundered initially in the different environment.² The family's tomato and citrus fruit growing enterprise near Bendigo

turned out to be a disaster. Charles Moses had invested his considerable Army payout in the venture and lost the lot within 18 months.

In Melbourne he tried his hand at real estate, at being a physical training instructor and then lied about his qualifications to obtain a job selling cars, which he did for six years until the Depression struck and he was once again out of work. The rapidly expanding radio industry seemed an attractive proposition as he had a well-modulated, soft Southern English accented voice which avoided class-based extremes. His was the kind of voice which Australian radio stations thought ideal at the time. Also he mixed well socially with Australians. Many months after what he believed was a successful audition with the Australian Broadcasting Company he was beginning to despair when he was suddenly asked to help out in an emergency by describing a game of ice hockey. He claimed untruthfully that he knew the game. In the few hours remaining, he desperately searched for and found a book of rules. The broadcast went so well he joined the regular staff a week later in August 1930.³ Not for the last time Moses had displayed an instinct for pragmatic, quick-thinking opportunism.

When the ABC began operations in July 1932, and took over the Australian Broadcasting Company stations, Moses already had a growing reputation as announcer, news commentator, sports broadcaster and describer of outside events. His knowledge of sport was prodigious and gave authority to his broadcasts. He represented Victoria in rugby, was a champion discus thrower and held the Victorian amateur heavyweight boxing championship. In the Army he had also played cricket and hockey.⁴ He became the ABC's star cricket commentator during the 'synthetic' descriptions of the 1934 tour of England, when briefest ball-by-ball cables were transformed in the studio into running commentary, apparently 'live' from the ground. His imposing physical presence was a related characteristic remembered well by those who first met him. He was over 180cm tall and weighed about 15 stone. He prided himself on his physical fitness.

Within the ABC he had a meteoric rise becoming Sporting Editor in Sydney in January 1933, Federal Controller of Talks in September 1934, when he was obliged to give up his sporting broadcasts, Federal Liaison Officer in August 1935 and General Manager, at age 35, in November of that year. Like his Chairman, W. J. Cleary, appointed in July 1934, Moses wanted to shape the ABC along the lines envisaged by the legislators who had brought the organisation into being. He would bring a sense of national purpose and make the ABC a genuinely national enterprise. It would bring high culture to all Australians just as the BBC was doing for those in Britain and would be a force for drawing the nation together by allowing them to share in appreciating the best there was to offer in music, drama, and informative talks while fostering Australian talent. Radio dramatists were encouraged for the first time. A range of quality speakers was developed in consultation with academics on a national advisory committee, and talks began to be relayed for the first time on newly available landlines and through newly established ABC transmitters in capital cities. He organised the first school broadcasts on a national scale and began programs designed for women and children. To achieve this it was necessary to coordinate output and set uniform standards across all states by creating Federal departments, Talks, Drama, Music, run by specialists. Moses recalled that it was a time when the day of the all-rounder was passing.⁵ These departments still provided the core framework of the ABC when Moses retired in 1965.

Moses's appointment as GM brought together several key personnel who were to lay the foundations for the ABC to become one of the world's biggest concert-giving agencies. Sir Bernard Heinze, ABC Musical Adviser, W.G. James, head of the Music Department and Cleary, a classical music enthusiast himself joined Moses in setting in train moves to establish small orchestras of professional musicians in each state, augmented by gifted amateurs when needed. This was a promising start but visiting conductors began to complain about uneven standards.⁶ Also the ABC began bringing outstanding musical artists out to tour. Elizabeth Rethberg and Ezio Pinza were the first followed by Malcolm Sargent, Lotte Lehman and Artur Rubenstein. The ABC's first concert season was in 1936. Moses then had to fight hard to prevent the monopolistic entrepreneurs J. & N.Tait from ending this essay into music making. They argued that the ABC had no right to give public concerts. The response of Moses was that the ABC had a responsibility to let Australians hear for the first time great overseas artists and conductors. Finally a compromise was reached in 1937, the ABC agreeing to broadcast any concert for which admission charges were made.⁷

Access to news was however a problem that he could not be solved for many years. The public's demand for news from the ABC could not be satisfied. The supply of news to the ABC was governed by agreements with the press, which allowed them to control times of broadcast and durations of bulletins. Until 1939 the ABC could not gather its own news in Australia and even then it was limited to a single reporter in Canberra. Twice Moses defied the press on this issue. On his first day as GM in 1935 he unilaterally decided to broadcast news before the times allowed. At the outbreak of War in September 1939 he did the same. He tried on both occasions to obtain public and Government support for the ABC's position. Each time he failed. Australia's most powerful newspaper magnate, Sir Keith Murdoch, had too much influence with the conservative governments of Lyons and Menzies.⁸

Moses recalled on his departure from the ABC that all he had ever wanted to be was a soldier. His second army career was triggered by the German invasion of Holland when he decided to enlist at the age of 41. With Japan threatening Moses left for Singapore as a Company Commander with the AIF's 22nd Brigade. His obsession with physical fitness, his extraordinary mobility for a big man and his razor-sharp reflexes enabled him to survive two Japanese ambushes in Malaya and avoid capture in Singapore. Just days before the capitulation to Japan on 15 February 1942, Moses met General Gordon Bennett, the Commander of the 8th Division, for the first time and persuaded him that escape was possible. Moses was immediately invited to join the three man escape party which commandeered a sampan and reached Sumatra after six days.⁹ Flown to Djakarta, Moses was knocked down by a taxi and badly injured and then caught what doctors later diagnosed as 'scrub typhus'. He was now dangerously ill and was put aboard what he believed to be the last Dutch freighter to leave Java before the Japanese occupation. Hospital doctors in Perth did not expect him to live and his wife was rushed from Sydney to be with him.

Determined to get back into action Moses made a rapid recovery in Sydney and directly approached the Army Minister Frank Forde, and Allied Land Forces Commander, General Sir Thomas Blamey, in order to obtain an active command. Once again demonstrating his fitness in a foot race by beating other officers up an 800 metre 'hill' at Port Moresby, Lieutenant-Colonel Moses was given command of the 7th Division Cavalry Regiment, fighting as infantry. He subsequently saw fierce fighting over six weeks at Sanananda in Eastern Papua. A war

correspondent later recalled seeing Moses in battle, and described him as blithely searching the treetops for snipers, cradling his .303 as though it might have been his favourite axe.¹⁰ While recovering from malaria in hospital in Port Moresby Moses received a letter from Prime Minister John Curtin, asking him to return to head the ABC, which had encountered difficulties with the Government. Moses remembered that Curtin had said the ABC was 'between wind and water'.¹¹

The root cause of Curtin's concern were the indications that the ABC intended to abandon its own limited news gathering activities and return to total reliance on the press for its Australian news. When Labor came into power in late 1941 it told the ABC to ignore the agreements it had with the press and employ its own staff to gather news of Commonwealth Government activities to offset the anti-Labor bias of press proprietors. In a major news conference on 26 May 1943 coinciding with the return to duty of Moses, Curtin urged that ABC be used to develop a national consciousness and culture and reject derivative programs and information.¹² Curtin was concerned too that in the absence of Moses ABC executives had failed to meet the wartime needs of factory workers and servicemen and women. Moses was asked to act on this, which he did immediately. Entirely new programs of 'first-class quality entertainment' were aired from 25 July 1943. The accent was on gaiety, variety and quality.¹³

Moses's return had however accelerated the decline in his relationship with his Chairman. Cleary had long believed that Moses had involved himself in confidential meetings with Government and Opposition leaders in Canberra, the aim being to give him greater powers as General Manager, and to explore ways of ensuring that the Chairman treated his position as part-time only and did not involve himself in administrative matters.¹⁴ Cleary now believed that Moses had used his political contacts to facilitate his return from active service. Moses always strongly denied this but there is evidence, from one of his senior political reporters in Canberra, that he was brought back because of secret representations to Curtin by Syd Deamer, a prominent newspaper editor who had become the ABC's Controller of Public Relations, and who was a member of Curtin's Advisory Committee on National Morale.¹⁵ Deamer was Moses's closest friend and confidant in the ABC and an esteemed drinking companion. Moses deplored the fact that he had heard nothing from the ABC in his first three years in the Army and it seems very likely that he relied on Deamer for information and that the conspiracy between Deamer and Curtin had his full support.

Moses admitted much later that he was foolish to boast of his political contacts in Canberra while angrily admonishing another senior officer. News of this got back to Cleary who believed that it was proof of Moses's disloyalty and was the trigger for Cleary's resignation on 30 March 1945.¹⁶ In later years Moses regretted greatly his break with the Chairman, calling him the most impressive man he had ever met and acknowledging how much he had done for him. The reality however was a tension-riddled relationship, dominated by Moses's belief that Cleary was too paternalistic, and an obstacle preventing him from taking the reins as CEO in the way he wanted.

On his return to Australia Moses found also there was a bitter controversy over General Gordon Bennett. Moses was not only a key element in his escape but greatly admired the man's courage and his determination to help Australia in the war by providing first-hand details of Japanese tactics. Instead some accused Bennett of deserting his men and two inquiries

supported the contention that Bennet had left his post without permission.¹⁷ Throughout his life Moses defended Bennett and his reasons for returning to Australia, accusing his critics of being bitterly jealous and of conducting a vendetta against a man whose ability and courage exceeded theirs.¹⁸ He could not understand why the American General, Douglas Macarthur, had been hailed a hero in his own country after escaping from the Japanese at Corregidor while Bennett had been victimised for taking the same course.¹⁹

In February 1945 Moses attended the Empire Broadcasting Conference in London and was then invited to see how the BBC was reporting the War in Europe. Moses was delighted to have such an opportunity, delayed his return to Australia and became a temporary member of the BBC's war reporting unit. In this capacity he observed at close-hand and reported on Field-Marshal Montgomery's attack on Wesel on the Rhine and then joined the commandos crossing the river. He was the first correspondent to do so.²⁰ The following day, while observing the fighting in Wesel, he and two companions barely escaped with their lives when they were shelled while sheltering in a factory building by German 88 millimetre self-propelled guns. The building was totally destroyed but they had survived by diving under the only steel-topped workbench. Moses later said that getting involved with someone's else's war, after surviving his own, 'was one of the most foolish things that I'd ever done'. He added 'I really was scared stiff under that workbench'.²¹

In late 1945 Moses successfully reached agreement with the NSW Government and the City Council of Sydney to establish a permanent full-sized orchestra in Sydney. This exemplified, says one music historian, the outstanding leadership quality he displayed at this time.²² This became the model which he successfully applied to other states as well so that within a few years the ABC had five permanent orchestras and was able to negotiate with prominent overseas conductors and artists on the basis that it could offer them Australia-wide tours. Eugene Goossens was so impressed with ABC musicians and management on his first visit in 1946, that the famous conductor and champion of innovative programming accepted an offer to be Chief Conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. This, the formation of the orchestras and the attendant arrivals of famous musicians from overseas caused a great deal of excitement and helped thrust Moses into the social spotlight. Furs and dinner suits were much in evidence at major concerts as the political and social elite and ABC top brass mingled. Moses was very much at ease in the company of famous artists and gave many memorable parties in their honour. Observers noted that was an easy extrovert with erudite repartee who revelled in the success of the ABC's concert-giving.²³ His Director of Publicity, Charles Buttrose, would later declare that Moses was a showman at heart, equipped with remarkable powers of persuasion. ²⁴

But the high-profile of Moses in the music field did not meet with universal approval within his organisation. Some executives, most notably the Assistant Controller of Programs (later Assistant General Manager), Clem Semmler, has claimed there were rumblings of criticism over the years. This was because, he claimed, the glamour of the incursions into the music field gave music and concerts a disproportionate significance within the ABC and made less money available for other forms of programming. He attacked, what he called, the appalling socio-musical snobbery attached to ABC symphony concerts.²⁵ This criticism was rightly seen as an attack on the Moses management style. It could also be linked with the view that Moses in the 1940s and 1950s did not involve himself as much in program matters, outside music, as he

might have.

On the odd occasion when he did intervene directly the results were immediate and could be far reaching. In 1961 he was approached by producer Bob Raymond and announcer Michael Charlton who wanted his support for a new type of television program, based on the BBC's Panorama, which would deal with contentious social and political issues and add the interpretation, which was lacking on the ABC. The idea for the program, which became known as Four Corners, was strongly opposed by both Programs and Talks, which believed that there would be too much work involved in vetting the contents, so as to avoid trouble.²⁶ Moses overruled them and it went ahead with the co-producers reporting to him directly. While he applauded the ground-breaking approach of Four Corners, in later years he deplored, what he called, the pushing of personal opinions by members of the staff of This Day Tonight. ²⁷

Another instance of the way in which he could be decisive, when an idea caught his imagination, was his instruction that ABC Television broadcast an appeal for 5,000 pounds to preserve the cottage of poet, Henry Kendall, in West Gosford. This was unprecedented. The ABC had never associated itself with such an appeal before. Moses had been approached directly by comedian Spike Milligan to help with this appeal, after his parents, who lived on the NSW Central Coast, had reported to him that the cottage was in disrepair and in danger from developers. On 27 September 1959, Spike and his father Leo appeared in a 20 minute program which showed the cottage and surrounding bushland and which included a reading of his poem, Bellbirds. In December, with the help of the funds raised, the cottage was purchased by the Brisbane Waters Historical Society who currently manage it.²⁸ Milligan wrote to Moses from London thanking him for his immediate and unhesitating interest.²⁹

What was particularly satisfying to Moses were the occasions when he acted in secret on his own initiative to thwart decisions of his Chairman, the Commission and the Government itself on matters which he thought were very important in terms of principle. He secretly saw Postmaster-General Davidson in 1956 to ensure he received his backing for the ABC's decision to become a partner in the British Commonwealth International Newsfilm Agency Limited (later Visnews), together with the BBC, CBC, Reuters and J. Arthur Rank, which was to become a major supplier of newsfilm to television stations around the world.³⁰ This had been opposed by the Chairman, Sir Richard Boyer.

When Prime Minister Menzies banned the showing in 1963 on ABC television of a BBC interview with Georges Bidault, a former Prime Minister of France, and bitter opponent of President Charles de Gaulle, living in exile, Moses was angry that, in doing so, the Prime Minister was overriding the ABC's unfettered right to broadcast political and controversial subject matter under Section 116(1) of the Broadcasting Act. He was also annoyed that the Chairman, Dr Darling, did not object to the order on these grounds. Determined to make the public aware of the Government's unprecedented action Moses rang Sir Frank Packer, owner of channel 9, Sydney, and offered him the film on the proviso that he did not disclose its source. As the ban had not applied to commercial stations, Channel 9 showed the interview, the Government had to capitulate and the interview was widely broadcast. There was considerable press support for the ABC.³¹

After the War Moses quickly found himself adept at promoting the ABC and himself through contributions to the press. His articles were about a range of ABC activities and invariably on

important anniversaries.³² He was particularly interested in publicising new activities, which were drawing increasing audiences to the ABC. The newly established Rural Department, with its 'Country Hour', had been a great success right from the start, he proclaimed, and had contributed very much to the establishment of the ABC as a truly national service. Its aim was to keep rural families in touch with marketing trends, new farming methods and the latest weather information.³³ Also attracting a large new country audience for the ABC was its independent News Service, which began in 1947, and which was obliged, under the Act which established it, to gather all its own news in Australia rather than rely on the press.³⁴ Its establishment came as a complete surprise to the Commission which had to engage some 250 journalists nation-wide and a further 900 stringer correspondents in the country, paid on a usage basis. Importantly the ABC now had Rural and News staff attached to all its country regional stations giving it a physical presence and a range of local contacts, which was entirely new. Although opposing the service in 1945 - 46, before the Act was passed, Moses very quickly saw what huge dividends it was paying, offering an apparently impartial choice of news in comparison to the press news which was widely seen as reflecting the views of proprietors. It also drew attention in an unparalleled way to what was happening in Federal and State Parliaments. Moses was proud of its integrity, which added to the stature of the ABC. Much later, after his retirement, he came to view ABC news as being far too conservative and rigid in its failure to upgrade its presentation and newsgathering techniques.³⁵

Other circumstances were pushing Moses into the public spotlight. He became a Councillor of the Royal Agricultural Society and a Director of the Elizabethan Theatre Trust. He was a foundation member of the five-man Sydney Opera House Committee appointed by the NSW Government in 1952 after he and Eugene Goossens had been the first to urge the Premier J. J. Cahill to take steps to create an opera house for the city. He was subsequently heavily involved in planning the worldwide competition for the design won by Joern Utzon.³⁶ He was appointed to the Sydney Opera Trust when it was established in 1961.³⁷

For relaxation he turned to woodchopping. Introduced to the axemen of Western Australia at Pemberton while on holiday in 1944 Moses enthusiastically took up the sport as his main hobby. He became Chairman of the RAS Woodchopping Committee and in this capacity met Tom Kirk, the world standing block (15") champion.³⁸ From then on he regularly travelled to properties in the Blue Mountains where Kirk lived to wield axes with him.³⁹ He came to regard Kirk as one of his greatest friends. It was their ability to maintain accuracy despite their high speed and also their perfect rhythm that impressed Moses. He found their stamina too remarkable. There was in addition a certain mystique about the sport, which fascinated him. One interviewer found he regarded a fine racing axe in the same light as an art collector would view a rare Ming Dynasty vase.⁴⁰ Axemen, he told reporters, were the salt of the earth and rattling good blokes.⁴¹ He kept in his office a collection of fine axes and regularly invited visitors to allow him to shave their arm or leg to demonstrate how sharp they were.⁴²

This unlikely partnership between the head of Australia's largest cultural enterprise and the roughneck RAS champion appealed greatly to the press. So too did his feat of walking fifty miles on his fiftieth birth day.⁴³ However his postwar honeymoon with the press and public opinion began to pall in the late 1950s. Notably his claim to have the confidence of both sides of politics was shown to have no foundation when he was the subject of a furious verbal assault by the Opposition Leader, Arthur Calwell, on 24 October, 1957. While acknowledging Moses's

war record, Calwell declared that he had been 'sickening' and 'slimy' in deliberately withholding until Parliament had gone into recess the announcement that an Englishman, Peter Homfray, an unsuccessful Liberal candidate for the Tasmanian Parliament, had been appointed to the position of Director of Radio Australia. This amounted to 'skullduggery', he said, because Moses was aware that Labor would have protested. Alleging that Moses was really an Englishman, who was preventing Australians from securing promotions within the ABC, he listed four other recent senior appointments, which had gone to Englishmen. "I would facilitate his departure to the BBC, where he properly belongs' Calwell said.⁴⁴ Moses had every reason to be less than happy with the reply by Postmaster-General, Charles Davidson. While saying that the attack on Moses was 'unwarranted' and that he enjoyed the confidence of the Government, he relied on a technicality in his rebuttal, that the men were on contracts and were not on staff, without specifically countering allegations about Moses's Anglocentrism.

Calwell's attack must have been based on leaks from within the ABC. It seems apparent that they came from some senior newsmen who had been involved in secret lobbying with the ALP prior to 1947 to bring about the independent news service and who bitterly resented the opposition to it, at that time, by Moses and his support for the contention that the service revert to reliance on press sources. This bitterness lasted well into the 1950s.⁴⁵ Moses had always claimed that his opposition was based on the apparently prohibitive costs involved but, in reality, he had become alarmed by the close contacts between journalists and the ALP.

Moses's last years in the ABC were clouded with controversy. There was considerable staff bitterness and distrust in 1958 over his very severe cross-examination of his senior officers at a hearing before the Assistant Public Service Arbitrator over their claim for more money. Their case was based on the extra work required because of the advent of television in 1956.⁴⁶ ABC corridors were awash with stories about his pitiless questioning and the pain and anger, which it generated. Over the six months duration of the case⁴⁷ Moses was aware that he had been put in a very unfortunate position by refuting the claims of good friends and colleagues and claimed that, although he was reluctant, the Commission had insisted. It was 'one of the most unpleasant times' he had had in the ABC. ⁴⁸

The officer who worked closely with him on the case now believes that Moses was inexperienced in this area and tended to test the personalities rather than the work value of their positions. Moreover, as he had given assurances to Treasury that the ABC would curb costs as it expanded its television service to states beyond NSW and Victoria by simply extending its use of radio facilities and staff to take in the requirements of the new medium, he had to demonstrate that the workload of senior staff had not appreciably risen, certainly not to the extent they claimed.⁴⁹ In the same year he pointed out that the ABC was constantly watching its radio programmes to see how they could be modified for use in television.⁵⁰ He made the claim that the ABC had grafted television on to sound broadcasting in a way that was almost unique in the world.⁵¹ For Moses this remained a sensitive issue for many more years. At the launch of *This is the ABC* by historian Ken Inglis in 1983 Moses angrily confronted him and told him he would sue for defamation because of what he had written about the senior officers' case.⁵² This however did not eventuate. Cooler heads prevailed and in his final years he told close friends that he deeply regretted the accusations he made against his senior staff.⁵³

An important factor in the threat made to Inglis was the spectacular success Moses had enjoyed only two years earlier in legal action he took over references to him in Semmler's book, *The ABC – Aunt Sally and Sacred Cow*. Semmler had incorrectly claimed that Moses had been a member of the Black and Tans in Ireland in the early 1920s. This was the common name given to new British recruits for the Royal Irish Constabulary, mostly army veterans, who were accused of brutal reprisals against the IRA and their sympathisers. The Second Border Regiment, to which Moses belonged, had no connection to the Black and Tans and, in order to avoid action for defamation, Semmler had to make a most abject apology, which he himself called 'grovelling', in the book review pages of the eleven major Australian newspapers, either by way of letter or paid advertisement. He was also forced to acknowledge that Moses had been a man of integrity and ability, a distinguished broadcasting authority and administrator. The error had arisen, Semmler claimed, because of his ignorance of Irish history. He had thought all British forces in Ireland belonged to the Black and Tans.⁵⁴

Charles Moses was invited to become the first Secretary-General of the newly established Asian Broadcasting Union at the time of its first General Assembly in Sydney in November 1964. His conditions were that the secretariat should be in Sydney and that he should have the services of Betty Cook, his personal assistant for many years and Executive Liaison Officer to the Commission. It was to this post that he moved after retiring from the ABC in January 1965.⁵⁵ Thus ended a two year period in which all his energies had been directed towards establishing firmer ties with Asian broadcasters and countering what he perceived to be increasing Japanese influence among them. Japan had organised three conferences for Asian broadcasters but had not invited Australia. Using his extensive External Affairs and diplomatic contacts Moses secured an invitation to the Fourth Conference in Kuala Lumpur in 1962, despite Japanese suspicions of Australian motives.⁵⁶ Although only invited as an observer Moses used all his charm and persuasive skills to play an active role at this meeting, successfully proposing the creation of an Asian Broadcasting Union and then, at subsequent meetings in Tokyo and Seoul was the driving force in drawing up statutes and defining the ABU area. Over a bottle of Scotch, which Moses produced in his hotel room in Seoul, delegates discussed the location of the first General Assembly meeting. M. P. Bhatt, Director-General of All India Radio, suddenly said that Sydney might be an ideal location. What happened next was a supreme example of the unethical duplicity of which Moses could sometimes be guilty. As NHK executive Ichiro Matsui began to speak, proposing that Japan host the first Assembly, Moses pretended not to hear, talking over him, and moving to top up glasses of Scotch. In doing so he urged Bhatt to make a formal proposal, which was immediately seconded. He wrote later "the important thing was to get in first and I just refused to hear him (Matsui)".⁵⁷ This incident was recounted with relish, and no embarrassment, by Moses in his oral history recording. He admitted nothing to NHK in his lifetime. Indeed, when writing the history of the ABU (now the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union) twelve years later, he expressed gratitude to NHK for not proposing Japan host the inaugural meeting, even though he had expected them to do so.⁵⁸ So was history rewritten. But equally Moses had to make a concession. In his own version of events there can be no question that he regarded the conferences of Asian broadcasters convened by NHK from 1957 to 1962 as meaningless, with very restricted membership and leading nowhere. However such was the influence and strength of NHK within the ABU that by 1977, in his official history of the organisation, Moses had to go along with NHK's claim that it had all along been planning an Asian union, even before the arrival of Moses on the scene.⁵⁹

The ABC's success in Seoul was due, according to Moses, to the extraordinary abilities of Betty Cook as Conference Secretary. In organising many major meetings over the years in Australia she had been infallible in preparing minutes, papers and reports.⁶⁰ Her efforts in Seoul were paid for by External Affairs and helped boost the impression that any conference in which she was involved would be run very efficiently. She amazed delegates by working until the early hours each morning to produce reports of the day's activities. These were on the desks of every delegate as they arrived. It was the beginning of an enormously productive international partnership between the two. As her fame spread, so did requests for her attendance, including some from UN agencies, when she would send a list of what steps had to be taken, what committees established to whoever was in charge. Host countries were happy to leave things in her hands.⁶¹ Travelling with her to ABU related meetings, Moses would be the charming host, but always with his own agenda, seeking to ingratiate himself with delegates with after hours parties, when he would press drinks onto delegates from countries little used to alcohol. He claimed he thus broke down cultural barriers but it was also a way in which people were encouraged to confide in him. Some were indiscreet in doing so. This was particularly so when he produced a particularly heady brew, made himself from kumquats from his garden pickled in brandy, called 'Mosquat'. It is not exactly clear how he managed to smuggle this through customs barriers in various countries though it was commonly thought bribery might have been involved.⁶²

While his methods may at times have been questionable, his effectiveness in rapidly giving the ABU a very high profile in world broadcasting is incontestable. It joined on an equal footing its sister organisations EBU (Western Europe), OIRT (Eastern Europe) and URTNA (Africa) and was particularly effective in pushing for inter-union co-operation to obtaining a better balanced and comprehensive world wide exchange of news and newsfilm. At ABU Asian News Workshops it became clear that was concern about the flow of appropriate newsfilm and the necessary background material to and between developing countries and lack of feedback to the international agencies supplying it. Moses therefore planned and put into effect the first ever international conferences which brought together major broadcasters and suppliers of news and newsfilm around the world , including North America and developing countries. The first such conference, in Cologne in April 1973, was enthusiastically endorsed by participants for the new perspectives on TV news which emerged . However it took place only after Moses badgered his high-level contacts over many months for monetary and moral support. There had been little initial enthusiasm. The second conference was held in Tehran in 1975.⁶³

Some who worked closely with Moses thought he was a born leader with an innate generosity of spirit. Others recognised that he wanted total control over whatever task he was involved in and he liked to have the edge over people. This perhaps accounts for his habit of being heavy-handed in serving alcoholic drinks while drinking very little himself. He topped his own drinks up with water so that it appeared as if he drank a lot.⁶⁴ Even those who admired him greatly thought he was very capable of subterfuge and trickery, if the end seemed justified, and also that he could be very ruthless.⁶⁵ Semmler thought he was a bully. Particularly memorable was his fiercely competitive nature and his extraordinary energy and single-mindedness.

Charles Moses was made a CBE in 1954 and was knighted in 1961. He died on February 9, 1988, only weeks after attending the ceremony in which one of the ABC buildings in its Gore

Hill complex was renamed after him. The Sydney Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Stuart Challender gave a Memorial Concert in his honour in the Sydney Town Hall on 29 March 1989. Some who attended thought it was unfortunate that a work by Sibelius was not included, as one of the highlights of his life had been a long interview with the 86 year old composer at the time of the Olympic Games in

Helsinki in 1952. A park was named after him in 1989 alongside the Mittagong Bypass, at Welby, in the Southern Highlands of NSW in recognition of the dedicated service he had given to the Remembrance Driveway Committee over 38 years, first as inaugural committee member and then as President, a post he still held at his death.⁶⁶ Lady Moses and a son, Tom, survived him. A daughter, Kathleen, died in 1960. A portrait by Clifton Pugh is owned by the ABC and hangs in the vestibule of its building in Ultimo.

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