

PEERAGE FOR ARCHAEOLOGIST

Christopher Chippindale

Colin Renfrew is coming to Australia in late 1992 to give the second in the series of Mulvaney Lectures, following the first in this new series of distinguished lecturers, Desmond Clark on the significance of hunter-gatherer societies for human evolution. The Editors of AA asked me, as a colleague of Renfrew at Cambridge University, to write a few words about him.

Who is Professor Lord Renfrew of Kaimsthorn BA PhD ScD FSA FBA? The Lord had better be explained first. Distinguished British archaeologists have been knighted before — there was Sir Mortimer Wheeler and Sir Max Mallowan; more recently, Sir John Boardman, the classical archaeologist and Greek-vase wizard who is professor at Oxford. And there have been peers who were archaeologists: Lord William Taylour who died a couple of years ago was a celebrated Mycenaean archaeologist. But Colin Renfrew is the first archaeologist in recent times, and probably ever, to have been made an English lord for who he is himself. As a member of the House of Lords, the upper house of the British Parliament, he is now a British legislator. He has always been interested in politics (see inset this page), and once fought Sheffield Brightside for the Conservatives; friends and contemporaries who chose politics for a full-time career rather than academia made it to the House of Commons and the Cabinet. So he was made a Life Peer and went to the Lords in 1991 as a committed Conservative. This note was written as the British General Election campaign of April 1992 was being fought; its author would not vote the Conservatives in, but if they must govern,

he would be happy with Lord Renfrew as Minister for the Arts or for Higher Education (see inset from *The Independent*).

Colin Renfrew took undergraduate and graduate degrees at Cambridge, then taught at Sheffield and Southampton before coming back to Cambridge as the Disney Professor of Archaeology in 1981. (The Disney is named for the Victorian gentleman who endowed the chair: no relation to Walt.) Renfrew's own interests centre on the prehistoric Aegean, and in particular the archipelago of Cycladic islands that lie between the

Greek mainland and Crete. He was one of the first European prehistorians to explore the full consequences of radio-carbon calibration, which he used to show that important elements like monumental building and metalworking were not diffused into Europe from west Asia, but autonomous European inventions. Recently, he has been looking at the relations between archaeology and language, in the puzzle of Indo-European origins. There is an equivalent question for Australia, in the nature of the relationship (if any) between the historical pattern in the archaeology and the historical pattern inferred from the modern languages.

Renfrew, consistently advancing that variant of American New Archaeology he calls 'processual-

ism', has been particularly interested in pushing the essential principles of uniformitarian science further into the abstract realms of art and religion — a programme he calls 'cognitive archaeology'. The chief reaction to processualism resides only a few yards down the corridor in the person of Ian Hodder, leader of the countering

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**LEFT SWEEPS IN :
RIGHT WALKS OUT**

by Colin Morris and Harvey Marcovitch

BRIAN POLLITT has been elected President of the Union by a convincing majority. In Wednesday's Union elections Pollitt polled 357 votes and Simon Rocksborough Smith, the retiring Vice-President, 235 votes.

Colin Renfrew announced the result at 8.45 to the small crowd gathered outside the Union Committee Room, and a half-hearted cheer was raised by the Pollitt supporters present.

Mark Cuddey was elected secretary and Oliver Weaver, Clive Mason and John Toulmin were re-elected to the committee. New members of the committee are Angus Calder (King's), Sam Valentine (St John's) and Manj Aiyar (Trinity Hall).

Pollitt is the first Communist to become President of the Union. Valentine and Aiyar also belong to the extreme left wing. Calder is a member of CND.

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(Supplied by RJ)

'post-processualism'. Residents and visitors to Cambridge enjoy the continuing battle in seminar discussions between 'p's and 'pp's, and good may come of it in the end.

As well as running much of Cambridge and of British archaeology and — now — a bit of British government, Renfrew is Master of Jesus, one of the Cambridge colleges. (When he was made a Lord, the conjunction of Lord and Jesus made many people smile, remembering a Cambridge precedent in a chemist called Todd who — once made a Lord — was called God as often as Todd.) Between cheering the rowing eights from the tow-path, he finds time to write a great deal, including last year a fat textbook of archaeology in which Australia figures as largely as it should. None of us really understand how he manages all this, and also finds the time to remember and to care for so many colleagues and students. No theory, processual or post-processual, has yet been advanced to explain this paradox: perhaps he is really a pair of identical twins, or perhaps he never sleeps and settles down to a night's real work just as the rest of us slump from bar to bed.

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Pledges given on academic freedom

THE GOVERNMENT yesterday bowed to intense pressure from universities and polytechnics to give guarantees of academic freedom against potential interference by ministers.

In the face of a revolt by Conservative peers during the committee stage of the Further and Higher Education Bill, Lord Belstead, a Government education spokesman in the Lords, promised to bring forward amendments that would allay their fears. He said that the Government was only seeking a "long-stop" financial power over large amounts of public funds and did not wish to lay down what should be taught.

The attack on the Government over the Bill's controversial clauses 64 and 77 was led by Baroness Young, a former Conservative minister, who said that the

same powers to intervene in specific institutions had been removed from the 1988 Education Reform Act.

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Another Conservative, Lord Renfrew of Kaimsthorn, Disney Professor of Archaeology at Cambridge and Master of Jesus College, called the measure "illiberal and authoritarian". It would permit a minister to intervene and say he did not like a course. It could, in other hands, be used to devastate the independence of the universities, he said.

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17 December 1991

(Supplied by RJ)

VISIT OF LORD RENFREW

Lord Renfrew of Kaimsthorn, Disney Professor of Archaeology at Cambridge and Master of Jesus College, will give the 1992 Mulvaney Lecture at the Australian National University.

This lecture was established by the Faculty of Arts to honour its Foundation Professor of Prehistory, John Mulvaney, on his retirement in 1985.

Lord Renfrew's theme for the Mulvaney Lecture will be 'Archaeology, genetics and evolution'. His research in this area is well known in his publication *Archaeology and Language – the Puzzle of Indo-European Origins* and last year was recognized in his being awarded the Royal Anthropological Institute's Huxley Medal. The Mulvaney Lecture will be presented on the evening of Monday 7th September. Later in the same week Lord Renfrew will lecture on 'The Archaeology of Cult' based on his research and field work in Greece. Lady Renfrew (Dr Jane Renfrew) a distinguished researcher in the archaeology of plants will present a seminar on Friday 11th September on this theme. We look forward to this week very much indeed and hope that many of our colleagues will be able to join us here in Canberra.

Lord and Lady Renfrew will only have a short time in Australia, but hope to visit as many other centres as possible in that time.

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