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## Economic mind devoted life to political debate

**Bruce Miller, 1922-2011**[MORE](#)[RE](#)[TWEET](#)

Bruce Miller was an economist who advocated peaceful trade through state-managed, humane capitalism. For him such a system promoted peace over war. He was at once opposed to the utopian rhetoric of collectivism and the selfish cant of neo-liberalism.

He spoke out powerfully against the attempt to ban the Communist Party in Australia but also supported the American war in Vietnam - something he later regretted. He opposed the invasions of the Suez Canal and Iraq and saw the invidious impact of neo-imperialism in Latin America and nationalistic racism in the Middle East, but he disliked what he regarded as disingenuous ideological posturing by the global south.



Pioneer ... Bruce Miller is thought to have been the first Australian-born newsreader hired by the ABC.

He hated the Soviet Union for the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact with Germany, was incredulous that people he knew remained in the Communist Party and mistrusted Marxism for what he saw as its

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inexorably Leninist tendency towards unwavering dogma and centralised violence.

John Donald Bruce Miller was born in Sydney on August 30, 1922, the son of Donald Miller, a bank officer at the Bank of NSW (now Westpac) and his wife, Marian. He went to Bondi Public School and recalled that there he was the only child with shoes because his father had a job throughout the Depression. He later attended Sydney Boys High.

He was also in continuous employment from the age of 16. His early working life found him, unhappily, as a teller with the Bank of NSW, then, happily, as a radio announcer and talks officer with the ABC in Sydney and Canberra during World War II.

Miller is thought to have been the first Australian-born newsreader hired by the ABC. The politician H. V. Evatt tried to get him sacked for having "an anti-Labor voice" but Miller continued to broadcast throughout his career, and he continued to vote Labor.

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As well as working at the ABC, he enrolled in the University of Sydney, where he was forced to study economics because he had inadvertently disqualified himself from studying literature and history by dropping classics at high school.

When the ABC did not like him studying and working at the same time, he left and became an academic at 24, holding various tutoring and lecturing positions at the University of Sydney and the Workers' Educational Association from 1946. In 1952 he moved to the London School of Economics, initially to study and then, after a few weeks, to work.



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In the mid-1950s he accepted the University of Leicester's foundation chair in politics, aged 35, and became dean of social sciences in

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1960. During his time at Leicester, which were years of great happiness, Miller also held visiting professorships in Delhi and New York.

He was appointed professor of international relations at the Australian National University in 1962, after it was put to him that as a patriotic Australian he should return to help to develop the country's intellectual capital. He declined a chair at Oxford, offered at the same time, and went to Canberra. He gave the Boyer Lectures in 1963, on "Australia and Foreign Policy", and remained at the ANU until his retirement in 1987. During those years he was frequently a visiting professor at Chatham House, Cambridge, Princeton and Yale and was offered a chair at Yale, which he turned down.

As well as being a member of the Academy of the Social Sciences from 1967, Miller was recently made a life member of the Australasian Political Studies Association.

He also chaired the Editorial Advisory Board for Australian Documents on Foreign Relations and was a member of the Australian Research Grants Committee, the Australian National Commission for UNESCO and the Australian Population and Immigration Council. He also convened a luncheon club where Canberra mandarins and the professoriate could discuss matters of state. As well, Miller spent years as the anonymous Canberra correspondent of *The Economist*.

Miller also wrote and edited books, articles and journals, covering political theory, Australian government, the Commonwealth of Nations, military alliances, economic relations, the Third World, state power and the relationship between Britain and Australia.

Bruce Miller married three times. His wives predeceased him. He is survived by his sons Don and Toby and stepchildren Suzun, Sim and Steve.

## **Toby Miller**

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