



Optimism: Reflections on a Life of Action

Bob Brown

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"It is a fortunate life if a person feels more optimistic than ever before. That's me." - Bob Brown.

Bob Brown, former Senator and Parliamentary Leader of the Australian Greens, is one of Australia's most thoughtful and recognized public figures. Since his retirement from public life in 2012, Bob has had time to consider the things that are truly important. One is the power of human thought to influence change and this book, the first time that Bob has spoken about his life since retirement, illustrates through his stories why he remains optimistic about the future. Optimism reflects on the simple things, the moments that are meaningful, and the big questions that have concerned Bob Brown. It is a powerful read as well as a meditation on the great and the small. Inspirational, compassionate and outraged, Bob's stories are rich with metaphor, entertaining and full of warmth. His stories reveal a complex man with a quick wit, a passion for activism and a joy for life.

Optimism: Reflections on a Life of Action Details

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Elaine Searle says

This is a memoir in the form of short chapters which each consist of anecdotes about Bob Brown's life, his experiences in work and in the environmental movement, his coming out as a gay male and so on. It's an easy read and Bob is good company. I took it on holidays and it was perfect to pick up and dip into. Certainly worth a read for its insights into the environmental movement and into politics generally in Australia, whether you agree with all of his opinions or not.

Michele Mason says

3 1/2 stars - lovely read. A fascinating man who has given so much to the people of Australia. It was a very lucky day when he first came to Tasmania and I for one am ever grateful. But, one wonders if he will be one of the last politicians with intelligence, sense of community and ethics that we will see?

Tamsin Ramone says

Oh Bob. How can one man accomplish so much against so much diversity and discouragement and still be so upbeat and positive? I feel physically and emotionally exhausted after reading Bob Brown's memoirs but he really does inspire one to do good even if the world is against you.

This book is well written and entertaining. Bob is a visionary and his books are a must read for anyone who cares about equal rights, the environment or global politics.

And just incase Bob reads his reviews; thank you for making this world a better place for my babies. You are an inspirational man.

Steph says

Adorable

Mike says

I picked up the book in Tasmania, based on recommendation and my own sense that the book is going to be a sentimental journey of rural Tasmania.

The author is accomplished. A trained physician, active in Green politics, whose life style was not the norm in 70's and 80's Australia. This book started as a 5 and ended as a 3, because it reads like a diary. Reading about Australia's political evolvement in the last 40 years is ok, but how does one write a autobiography and

reveal so little about his persona and soul ? There are some nice scenes in Tasmania. There are sections that relate to his contributions to the Green Party, a major part of his life. The man has a heart, but you have to dig deep to find sentimentality.

Benjamin Farr says

I purchased this book with high hopes as I love political biographies (from all political persuasions).

I found this book disjointed and unfortunately not as "meaty" as I would have liked. Having recently read Julia Gillard's excellent autobiography I was left feeling underwhelmed by this book.

I really hope Bob Brown returns with a far greater detailed account of his time in politics. It will serve political enthusiasts and future historians well.

Peter Ayscough says

I liked this book a lot, but then I like Bob Brown a lot. This book gives you the opportunity to get to know Bob, beyond the public figure, through a series of varied short anecdotes he presents from throughout his life. He is disarmingly open, frank and honest. At no point does he attempt to dazzle you with his intellect or literary prowess. It isn't that kind of book, and Bob isn't that kind of bloke. I found getting to know him better to be a really nice experience.

The book contains over 50 little stories drawn from Bob's life of medicine, environmentalism, politics, and friendships. I was really interested to learn more about the early days of the Australian Green movement in Tasmania - if you're looking for a good first-hand account of those years you probably can't do better than this book. Bob calls the book "Optimism" because, as he explains, he decided early on to let optimism to be a guiding principle for him. And some of Bob's optimism can't help but rub off on you as you're reading.

Green politics is a divisive beast. Many people are firmly for it and many are firmly opposed. If you sit in the latter camp I doubt there's much in this book for you to enjoy, because Bob certainly doesn't compromise his views or standpoint at any point - and I would have been disappointed if he had. But for those who have admired Bob, I'd heartily recommend this book!

Agnes says

Loved reading this book. What a great human being Bob is. Highly recommend this book.

Rich says

Real good Bob.

Lyn Ryan says

What really strikes me about Bob's book, and his life, is his courage. Apart from imprisonment, petty harassment by political enemies, he faced death threats because he interrupted during W's speech in the Australian parliament. He appears to bear no malice, even for the dirtiest of political tricks. He is a great example of a man standing up for what he believes. In these days ICAC hearings make you think that politicians of all stripes all have their snouts in the trough, Bob is a shining example of integrity and good will. His book is inspiring.

Kerry says

For me Bob Brown is probably the most inspirational person I have ever met and one of the very few Australian politicians that I have any respect for. This collection of anecdotes is very quirky and really a collection of personal reminiscences from his life. If you haven't read any of his other books, I wouldn't recommend that you start with this one. Better to read Memo for a Saner World to get some context. That said, if you like this personal anecdote style of memoir you will probably enjoy this. In the end Australians will judge the book in the same ways that they judged the man.

Sean Kennedy says

Bob Brown is a hero of mine. The day he retired from politics was a sad one, and it will be an even sadder day when he retires from the Earth as it has been so much better for having him in it. This series of recollections from a unique trailblazer give us a true insight into his character and what shaped him. A must-read.

Aden Date says

Bob Brown's gentle but revolutionary spirit emanates through the pages of this book. He has the quiet confidence of a man who knows that he will be remembered well by history and that the long arc of time bends towards justice. Political anecdotes are balanced by his encounters with nature and Bob's reverence for it. It is softly written and occasionally funny, but with enough penetrating insights to let you know that a real intellect wrote the book. It also loosely tracks the Green movement, born in the Franklin River Dam protests, and the early friendships that continue today.

Another striking feature is the remarkable bi-partisanship for various atrocious policies across history - from the disrespect for East Timor's Sovereignty (and Tibet's, for that matter) to progressive gun legislation (that would later be introduced under Howard *after* the Port Arthur massacre).

The book made me proud to be a Green.

Calzean says

A book of Bob Brown anecdotes, some are personnel, some are funny, some on events that changed him, some on his thoughts and beliefs. I have always wondered how a person who is a Green can retain any hope when the consumers just keep consuming so we maintain economic growth ahead of all other goals. If Bob Brown can stay hopeful there must be a message there but it is getting harder to see a light at the end of the tunnel.

Judy says

Bob Brown, a man I hold in very high esteem.

So far the book has given me a sense of Optimism, something that can be pretty hard to maintain in current times.

Best chapter so far is not one full of Optimism however, it is absolutely cuttingly sarcastic. Brilliant. Chapter 14. The New Religion. I would love to quote the whole chapter but I hope you read it for yourself. The chapter finishes with are part of Drew Dellingers poem Hieroglyphic Stairway:

it's 3.23 in the morning
and I'm awake
because my great great grandchildren
ask me in dreams
what did you do while the planet was plundered?
what you do when the earth was unraveling?
surely you did something
when the seasons started failing?
as the mammals, reptiles, and birds were all dying?
did you fill the streets with protest
when democracy was stolen?
what did you do
once
you
knew?

If you ever want a concise summary of the damage of fossil fuels on the environment to pass on to others have a read of Ch 25; Blackwater

Really great read. There is a few chapters of political hi jinxes in the middle that are so so, but then get on to the Green Oration in the final chapters and be inspired.

I am going 5 stars for the importance of the subject material and it being a great read
