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AUSTRALIA CHOOSES

SPEAKERS IAN HARPER (Professorial Fellow at the Melbourne Business School – formerly a member of the Wallis Committee) & JOHN QUIGGIN (Australia Research Council Senior Fellow, ANU)
TOPIC *Foreign Investment: What is at stake?*
DATE Tuesday 3 April 2001 **TIME** 5.30 for 6.00 pm
VENUE Clayton Utz Seminar Room (Level 34), 1 O'Connell Street, Sydney

SPEAKER ALICE SPIGELMAN (Author, *Almost Full Circle – The Life of Harry Seidler* [Brandl Schlesinger])
TOPIC *Harry Seidler: A Life*
DATE Tuesday 10 April 2001 **TIME** 5.30 for 6.00 pm
VENUE Clayton Utz Seminar Room (Level 34), 1 O'Connell Street, Sydney

SPEAKERS SENATOR JOHN TIERNEY (Liberal Senator for NSW) & STEVE TONEGUZZO (Managing Director, GGS - AU)
TOPIC *Online Gambling: Is there a problem?*
DATE Wednesday 18 April 2001 **TIME** 5.30 for 6.00 pm
VENUE Clayton Utz Seminar Room (Level 34), 1 O'Connell Street, Sydney

SPEAKER PROF. ALLAN FELS (Chairman – ACCC)
DATE Monday 23 April 2001 **TIME** 5.30 for 6.00 pm
VENUE BT Training Room (Room 401) Level 4, 2 Chifley Square, Sydney

AUSTRALIA CHOOSES

SPEAKER DR. ANN CAPLING (Author, *Australia & the Global Trade System*, CUP 2001)
TOPIC *Trade & Down Under's Tyranny of Size*
DATE Monday 30 April 2001 **TIME** 5.30 for 6.00 pm
VENUE 41 Phillip Street, Sydney **LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**

SPEAKER ROB JOHNSON (Author, *Cash for Comment: The Seduction of Journal Culture*, Pluto Press) & PILITA CLARK (Senior Writer, *Sydney Morning Herald*)
TOPIC *Critic Critique Thyself: The Media and Self-Delusion*
DATE Tuesday 8 May 2001 **TIME** 5.30 for 6.00 pm
VENUE 41 Phillip Street, Sydney **LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**

SPEAKER THE HON PHILIP RUDDOCK (Minister for Immigration & Multicultural Affairs)
DATE Wednesday 16 May 2001 **TIME** 5.30 for 6.00 pm
VENUE Mallesons Conference Room, Governor Phillip Tower (Lvl 60)

SPEAKER BOB BREEN (Army Reserve Officer and Author)
TOPIC *Peace Keeping Lessons – The ADF in East Timor and Bougainville*
DATE Wednesday 23 May 2001 **TIME** 5.30 for 6.00 pm
VENUE 41 Phillip Street, Sydney **LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**

AUSTRALIA CHOOSES

SPEAKERS BARRY JONES AO (Former ALP President), DR KATHARINE BETTS (Assoc Prof, Social & Behavioural Sciences, Swinburne Uni of Technology), MEREDITH HELLICAR (CEO, Corrs Chambers Westgarth) & KEVIN ANDREWS MP (Liberal Member for Menzies)
TOPIC *Australia's Population: The Options*
DATE Thursday 31 May 2001 **TIME** 5.00 for 5.30 pm
VENUE BT Training Room (Room 401) Level 4, 2 Chifley Square, Sydney

SPEAKERS DR ANN HARDING (Director, NATSEM) and PATRICK McCLURE (CEO Mission Australia & author of "The McClure Report")
TOPIC *Where for Welfare?*
DATE Tuesday 5 June 2001 **TIME** 5.00 for 5.30 pm
VENUE BT Training Room (Room 401) Level 4, 2 Chifley Square, Sydney

For non Associates, tickets to be purchased in advance.

SPEAKER JONATHAN SHIER (Managing Director, ABC).
TOPIC *To be advised*
DATE Tuesday 19 June 2001 **TIME** 5.30 for 6.00 pm
VENUE Mallesons Conference Room, Governor Phillip Tower (Lvl 60)

SPEAKERS REV JOHN SHELBY SPONG (former Bishop of Newark, NJ) & FR. PAUL STENHOUSE (Editor, *Annals Australasia*)
DATE Tuesday 26 June 2001 **TIME** 5.30 for 6.00 pm
VENUE BT Training Room (Room 401) Level 4, 2 Chifley Square, Sydney

SPEAKER WILLIAM COLEMAN (Co-author, *Exasperating Calculators* [Macleay Press])
TOPIC *The Campaign Against Economic Reform*
DATE Tuesday 3 July 2001 **TIME** 5.30 for 6.00 pm
VENUE 41 Phillip Street **LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**

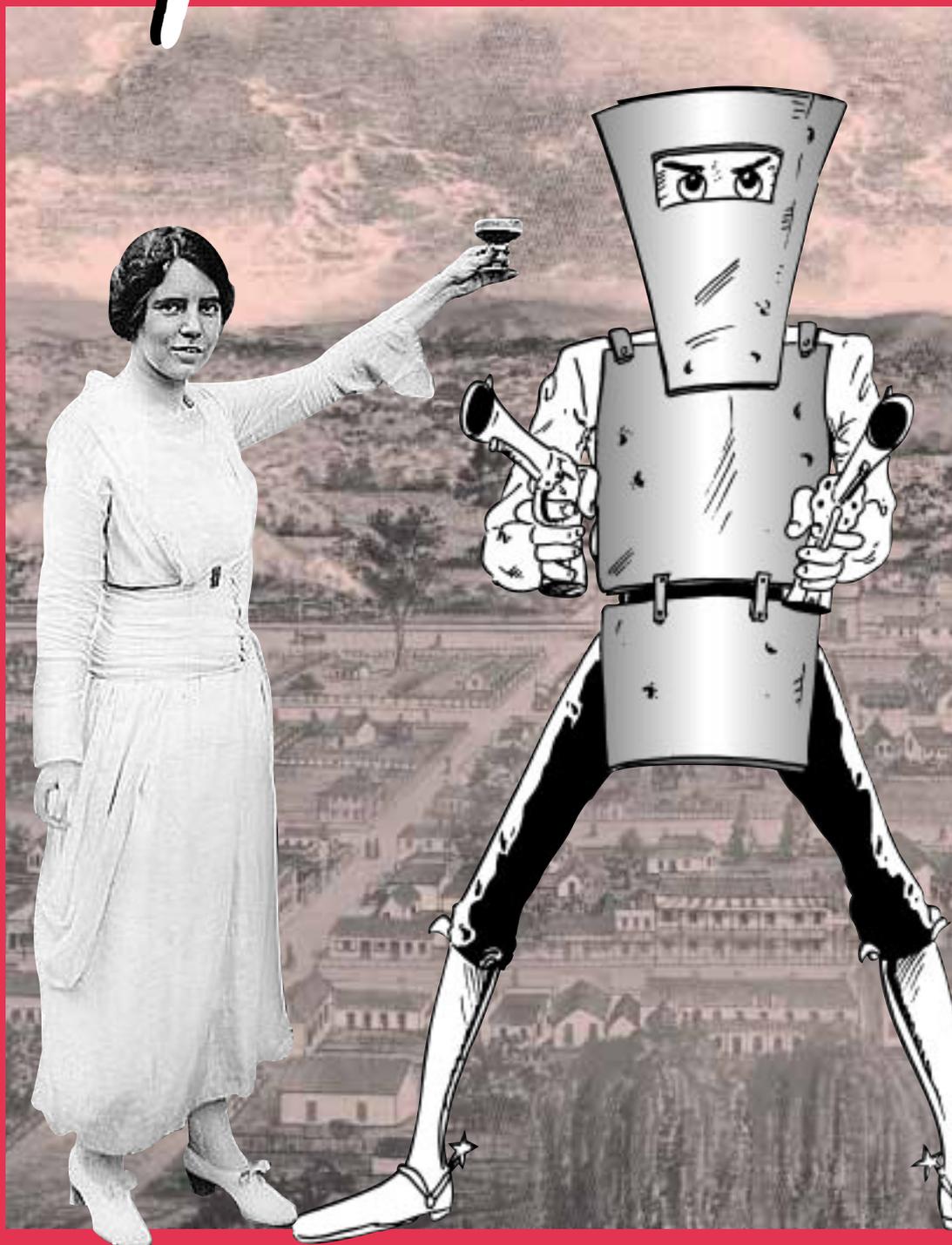
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THE

Sydney Institute

QUARTERLY



*ISSUE 13 VOL. 5 NO. 1
APRIL 2001*

STEPHEN MATCHETT
rides with Ned
and Ethel

ANNE HENDERSON
speaks up for the
English language

JOHN McCONNELL
on Bob Birrell and
Denis Warner

GEORGINA GOLD
on Viral Marketing

IAN HENDERSON
looks at preselections
and the Ryan
by-election

MEDIA WATCH
takes on Murray Sayle,
Piers Akerman and
Mary Kalantzis plus
Mark Latham

*Published by
The Sydney Institute
41 Phillip St.
Sydney 2000*

with Gerard Henderson's

MEDIA WATCH

Ph: (02) 9252 3366

Fax: (02) 9252 3360

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Cover Design by D T Graphics

The Sydney Institute Quarterly is edited by Anne Henderson and Gerard Henderson. Editorial Assistants are Lalita Mathias and Astrid Campbell.

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Website: www.sydneyins.org.au

Layout and typesetting by DT Graphics Pty Ltd, 202A Lyons Road, Drummoyne 2047.

Tel: (02) 9719 1424 Fax: (02) 9719 1415

The views expressed in *The Sydney Institute Quarterly* are those of the designated authors. They do not necessarily reflect the views of The Sydney Institute or of its governors.

Registered Print Post No : PP255003/02934

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TAX - A CORE POLITICAL PROBLEM

The New Taxation System (NTS) sounded like a good idea at the time. To John Howard, at least. On 14 August 1997, just after the Howard government's tax initiative was announced, the Prime Minister appeared on the ABC Radio AM program. Declaring that he wanted to share this NTS "great adventure with the Australian people", due for implementation on 1 July 2000. Contemporary reports indicate that, at the time, the Prime Minister's "great adventure" was well received in the Coalition party room. At the final meeting of the Liberals and Nationals before the end of the 2000 financial year, John Howard was described as gung-ho. During his speech to the party troops, he received two spontaneous bouts of applause. That was less than a year ago.

There is little point in electoral prophecy. Especially when the electorate is so volatile and the election is not due until late 2001. However, recent opinion polls and the anti-government swing in the Ryan by-election on 17 March 2001 – along with the Howard government's policy reversals on the NTS reporting requirements and the indexation of petrol excise – suggest that all has not gone as well as planned. At the end of 2000 the Howard government was doing relatively well in the polls. Yet its support seems to have collapsed early in 2001. It is far too early to say that the government is in a terminal condition. Any recovery, however, will depend on an accurate assessment of what seems to have gone wrong around the commencement of the new year. At this stage, the answer seems to turn on the NTS. In early February, millions of small businesses and self-funded retirees had to submit their second Business Activity Statement (BAS) and Instalment Activity Statement (IAS) respectively. By then the compliance costs, and bureaucratic requirements, of both the BAS and IAS had become evident. Maybe not to some politicians, public servants and business leaders. But certainly to those rank-and-file Australians who had to collect the GST and meet the Australian Taxation Office's exacting reporting demands.

Early February also saw the indexation increase in the fuel excise. It was the Fraser government which introduced world parity pricing for oil. And the Hawke government which decided to increase the excise in accordance with the Consumer Price Index inflation measurement. Australian fuel prices are low by world standards. Even so, the February excise increase served as a reminder that, contrary to John Howard's pre-election promise, the introduction of the GST had led to an increase (albeit small) in petrol prices.

In other words, the Howard government's current political woes can be traced back to the implementation of the Prime Minister's great adventure. The NTS always contained an element of political risk – in spite of the personal tax cuts and abolition of several taxes. Under the pre-July 2000 system, some 70,000 businesses collected the wholesale tax. Under the NTS, around two million businesses (many of them small) were required to collect the GST. Moreover, over a million self-funded retirees were roped into the reporting requirements of the NTS. In spite of the fact that they did not collect the GST.

This would have been politically difficult in any circumstance. All the more so because small businesses and self-funded retirees constitute the core of the Coalition vote. Never before in Australian political history has a governing party so inconvenienced its core constituency. The political impact of John Howard's great adventure, along with the apparent economic downturn, provide additional evidence that there will be no early election. It will be a long (political) year.

GIVE DEMOCRACY A CHANCE

Ian Henderson

To anyone with an interest in applied democracy, there should have been something deeply disturbing about the reaction of aficionados to the relatively high turnout of voters in the Liberal Party's internal ballot to pick the party's candidate to contest the Queensland federal seat of Ryan.

About 900 party members were eligible to take part in that ballot, and the majority did so. Yet that number – large by the standards of an average pre-selection ballot conducted by any of Australia's major parties – was cause for alarm both within the party itself and among interested bystanders.

The involvement of such a large number of people was read – doubtless accurately – as evidence of branch stacking to a notorious degree by some party powerbrokers, whether it was within the Liberal Party's rules in the state of Queensland or not.

But if the party were more committed to democracy, in practice, a mere 600-700 participants in a ballot in an electorate with something more like 30,000 Liberal voters at large in Ryan should have been seen as a disaster, an abrogation of a mainstream party's obligation to at least represent its supporters.

Leafy and well-heeled Ryan is widely-regarded as Liberal heartland, a prize for any ambitious party member with an eye to a federal parliamentary career. In that sense, Ryan's mirror image is Bundamba, a safe working class Labor seat in the Queensland state parliament.

A former long-serving ALP member for Bundamba - located in the Brisbane-Ipswich corridor - is said to have actively discouraged the growth of party membership beyond a mere handful in his local branches as a way of ensuring his own return as the party's candidate, and virtually inevitably as Bundamba's MP.

If branch stacking by the people angling to become John Moore's successor was the problem in Ryan, the opposite was the problem in Bundamba: an incumbent MP maintaining his hold on the local party by ensuring (no doubt within the party's rules) that no internal rivals could emerge by keeping the

membership numbers low and under his control.

Different parties; different strategies. But with a common result: that the exercise of democracy is severely limited.

Back in late 1998, Labor's federal leader Kim Beazley stated – or re-stated – an old aim of a well-intentioned political leader seeking to wrest seats from an incumbent government. Beazley said he wanted to run ALP candidates with a track record of service to local communities. The usual way by which that laudable goal is achieved is by state and national factional leaders making the effort to select, and to throw their weight behind such people as local business leaders, successful sporting personalities or local government representatives.

But that is a much more limited and much more limiting process than what is possible and, arguably, desirable. Indeed, running candidates – whether Labor or Liberal – with a proven track record in the local community will remain no more than wishful thinking so long as the parties remain inward-looking when picking their parliamentary representatives.

As a number of recent general elections - including the 1998 federal election, and the latest state polls in Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia - confirm, voters are less than enthusiastic about the mainstream political parties.

As Macquarie University professor of politics Murray Goot has recently pointed out, the minor party vote at the 1998 House of Representatives election was the highest in percentage terms in any such election since World War II.

But Goot's more telling analytical point is this: that public opinion polls suggest that "voters are no more disengaged from politics now than they were in the years before Whitlam; if anything, the interest they have shown since the 1960s has been greater."

In a presentation last November in the occasional lecture series hosted by the Senate, Goot noted that the data points to a decline in the reputation for ethics and honesty among parliamentarians, as is the case among other high profile groups; a growth in electoral cynicism around the credibility of election promises; and a weakening of party identification. Goot then argues: "Nonetheless, as much as they ever have in the post-war years, voters continue to think that elections matter, they continue to think of the two major parties as different, and they are still influenced by the parties in their judgements of political issues."

Indeed, it would not be difficult to make the case based on the rise of One Nation that, far from turning off politics as many analysts believe has been the

case, voters are becoming even more discriminating. They are not merely disenchanted with Labor and Liberal, but are willing to express that disenchantment at the ballot box.

One way in which the mainstream parties could seek to combat that shared problem – and to, at the same time, act with democratic interests in mind – would be to open up their procedures for selecting parliamentary candidates, to canvass the views of supporters in the wider public as well as those of party members

A move along these lines would be resisted by Labor, where party members jealously guard what they regard as their well-earned rights, among which most would count a privileged role in candidate selection. Nor would it be popular among powerbrokers in the two Coalition parties.

But it would represent a significant step forward on the path to increased public involvement in the nation's political processes and therefore to a more democratic national polity. It would also offer practical evidence that the main parties had decided to act on the signals coming from voters that the public is increasingly fed up with "Canberra".

Labor, Liberal and National parties currently pick their candidates using some form of internal ballot – more or less democratic, but still the preserve of party members. They would all be better served, and so would the political process as a whole, if they junked that system and switched to one in which their supporters in the community were closely involved.

That would mean taking one leaf from the book of US political practice, in which the primaries select the candidates of both the Democrat and the Republican parties from ballots of registered voters. It would not necessarily mean copying the details of that US process, nor would it necessarily mean adopting any other elements of the USA's political institutions or culture.

For example, parliamentary party caucuses could remain in Australia the ultimate forum of day-to-day party policy-making that was, in effect, binding on any party's representatives. Nor would it necessarily mean the end of political parties as we in Australia know them. Party members would, if they so chose, retain unfettered control of such vital matters as party rules, party policy and internal party management.

But it would probably mean a change, probably a weakening, in the role of faction and clique leaders, depending on just how a plebiscite of party supporters were incorporated into the overall candidate pre-selection process.

One option, probably the simplest, would involve such a plebiscite replacing the range of internally

focussed pre-selection methods now in operation. The only caveats would be that the candidates in the ballot must be members of the relevant party according to some simple precept and that they must pledge to obey its rules if they are successful.

Less adventurous options would include using a vote of party supporters to narrow a field of candidates for an internal party body to have the final say, or even to make a single recommendation to such a body.

What's in such a change for the parties themselves? For one thing, it could reinvigorate them. A formal move outwards would drive an informal move to encourage more people to take an active interest in the parties, with the possibility that the currently pathetically small number of people propping up one of the cornerstones of parliamentary democracy might be sharply increased. And democracy strengthened as a result.

Provided the parties picked appropriate plebiscite methods to replace the current systems of selecting their candidates for public office, at least part of the motive for branch stacking would vanish because the numbers of voters who were party members would be, potentially at least, overwhelmed by the number of party supporters in the wider community. The unsavoury aspects of the Ryan-like situation would become less likely.

As well, party powerbrokers who sought to stay in office by artificially holding down the numbers of party voters would find themselves dealing with a fresh and potentially tougher challenge: the need to handle many more voters than in the past, most of whom could not be safely assumed as committed to the incumbent. No more Bundambas might be a bit too optimistic, but they would become less likely.

Perhaps just as important as those effects of making the jump to more democracy, the change might push party members to take a closer interest in the rest of the community, to which it must ultimately appeal for support.

And it would push party leaders, both parliamentary and organisational, to upgrade their efforts to take the pulse of an electorate that is evidently disenchanted with the politics offered by those very leaders.

Ian Henderson is political correspondent, The Australian



VIRAL MARKETING

Georgina Gold

Companies are embracing viral marketing as an easy and cheap way to advertise on the internet. So what exactly is viral marketing? How is it affecting web surfers? And is it one of the most powerful arguments for censorship on the internet? Georgina Gold takes a look.

Two years ago a one-time unknown and perpetually sex-starved Turkish man named Mahir sat alone in his room in Istanbul, thinking of what the world could offer him. On 15 December 1999, international celebrity Mahir, embarked on a tour of the United States where he was greeted by the flashes of cameras, microphones and requests to appear on the *Roseanne* show. He went on to conduct interviews with the *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times*. Hoards of women, and quite a few men, crowded around to see Mahir play ping pong, tinkle on his accordion and greet the crowd with his famous, "I kiss you" line.

You may not know who Mahir is, but most seasoned net junkies would know exactly who this smarmy, quixotic Turk is ... and most people who use email, even on the very odd occasion, would probably recognise him instantly.

Mahir is a Turkish-born "journalist" with a "psycolojy doctora". Although he appears to have the personality of a male chauvinist fish, he has (probably unintentionally) used the internet more skillfully and successfully than any other individual in history; indeed in the romance stakes, Mahir has almost overnight taken the lead in seduction marathons from Don Juan. How? Simply by creating a personal website (http://members.nbci.com/_XOOM/primall/mahir/index.html) and sitting back.

Mahir was fortunate, because viral marketing came into play, and within days, his truly awful, yet totally charismatic, website had so shocked and amused people that they've flocked to it in their millions - hence his celebrity status. Looking at Mahir's website is a bit like the compulsion to stare at a fascinating yet hideous spider, with pictures of himself wearing tight pants, a seventies style polyester shirt, and a "Village People" handle-bar moustache - Mahir is the antithesis of panache and style. Mahir has an agenda though, which becomes quite clear on his homepage ... "Who is want to come TURKEY I can invite ... She can stay my home ...".

In 1999 an enterprising net surfer stumbled across Mahir's personal home page, moved it to a more accessible and visible location and then proceeded to

email the internet address to a few of their friends as a friendly laugh. A few days later Mahir's homepage had been visited by thousands. A few weeks after that, millions.

Mahir's site, now in the *Guinness Book of Records* as the most visited personal site in the world, has had over four million hits and Mahir estimates that 120 million people know of him. Mahir, perhaps as famous as many American presidents, was surprised and chuffed when Meg Ryan sent him an email with a message saying, "I kiss you".

How is this possible? How can an unknown individual with a slightly quirky homepage in broken English become transformed overnight into an international superstar with five movie offers, two coming from Hollywood.

In early 2000, a new "Mahir" erupted into internet culture. A new face that was even more clueless and more charismatic. Supergreg (www.supergreg.com), a Latino DJ, invites all "home boys and home chicks" to check him out while he scratches his decks. There's a movie to download called "Da Number One" (in reference to Supergreg's talent) which shows Supergreg at a gig DJing and scratching at his records. Supergreg is gloriously tacky, cheap and very nasty.

But there is a very big difference between Mahir and Supergreg. Mahir's homepage is an authentic, personal site that rocketed into superstardom. Supergreg.com, however, is a created site, developed by Lee Jeans to reinforce its television campaign. Lee Jeans developed the characters Supergreg, Curry (a fine male specimen with a long, blonde mullet whose site features a video that describes his best methods to pick up chicks - www.rubberburner.com) and Roy (who likes breaking things - www.bornntodestroy.com).

The sites of these three characters have the look of an amateurish personalised homepage, in that they are shoddily designed and incomplete. In fact, there is nothing on any of the pages that indicate they are linked with Lee Jeans. But these created characters, almost as well known as Mahir, are cleverly designed to familiarise people with a product and to subliminally link their offbeat personalities with the culture of Lee Jeans.

The method that Lee Jeans used during this campaign was simple - it was basic word of mouth - or, in Internet terms, word of email. Viral marketing, the technical term for this style of product familiarisation is taking over the internet as one of the foremost method of sales, for the simple reason that the internet is the perfect medium for viral marketing.

Mahir's site is a virus which has unintentionally spread around the world. Lee Jeans' viral marketing campaign, in comparison, is a calculated advertising strategy formulated by big business to rope in consumers in a non-intrusive, non-advertisement format. Lee Jeans has tapped into the culture of the internet and, therefore, the culture of the internet devotee.

The internet is driven by people power and this deliberate marketing invasion is more likely to rebound adversely on the company, rather than its benefit. The internet, which originally developed as a portal for intellectual exchange, democratic freedoms and independent media, thrives on individuals to create itself. The net is not an entity, it doesn't really exist and no one owns it. Anarchic in its origins and make up, the internet, and its users, tend to resist corporate control.

Viral marketing, however, needs a web-like system to work to its fullest. And the internet, or the World Wide Web, is the perfect medium for this. The web relies on a complex flow-on effect for communication and is quite organic in the way it expands. The web is rather like a living organism. And the message communicated is the virus.

Messages, via email, websites, and some banner advertising, contain concepts within them that are absorbed by the people that come into contact with them, and, like a virus, are often passed on to others. And the more catchy the message the more potent the virus.

Hotmail, free web based email, is perhaps one of the most successful examples of viral marketing on the net. At the bottom of each Hotmail email it reads "Get your private, free email at www.hotmail.com". This means that every Hotmail user passes on messages to everyone they come into email contact with, enticing them to join up with Hotmail. In Hotmail's first year, 12 million people signed up for free accounts.

Viral marketing is becoming increasingly popular purely for reasons of ease and inexpense. Whole social networks have migrated to the net and are contactable virtually for free and instantly and with one mere click. This method of marketing is distinct from other forms of marketing as it relies on consumer-to-consumer communication rather than marketer-to-consumer communication and so the advertiser must make sure that the message being passed on will appeal to the consumer - appeal enough to pass it on, or, appeal enough so that the message is not manipulated.

Recently Nike began an advertising campaign to personalise Nike shoes by offering to stitch a requested word on a customer's shoe below the "swoosh" (i.e the Nike symbol). Jonah Peretti, a graduate researcher at the Explanation Architecture group at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Media Lab, sent to Nike his \$50 and asked if the word "sweatshop" could be stitched on his Nike shoes. A Nike representative wrote back to him saying that, under the Nike guidelines, his request for that particular word was cancelled as the word "sweatshop" did not concur with Nike's guidelines.

The guidelines which were emailed to Jonah, included legal issues such as intellectual property (using

another company's logo or the name of an athlete Nike did not have rights to) and addressed other issues, such as profanity. The word "sweatshop", however, did not fit into any of the guidelines.

Jonah emailed back arguing that his word did not violate any of the guidelines, citing Nike's website where it advertises "the freedom to choose and freedom to express who you are". He repeated the request for his personalised shoes. An extensive dialogue between the Nike representative and Jonah then occurred, with Nike refusing to stitch "sweatshop" and Jonah questioning Nike's guidelines. Finally, the request was dropped and Jonah merely asked Nike to send him the photograph of the ten year old girl from Vietnam who had personally made his shoes.

A few weeks after this dialogue with Nike, Jonah from the United States, who had emailed this exchange to a few of his friends, was on ABC's JJJ radio. On 28 February he was interviewed by NBC's *Today Show*. The written dialogue with Nike had spread across the internet and became a worldwide embarrassment for the company.

Recently, Nike released a statement saying that they had taken part in a survey of nine of their contract factories in Indonesia and reported that several workers had been physically abused by supervisors, coerced into sex and forced to work overtime (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 February 2001). The survey was conducted by Global Alliance, a group comprised of private, non-profit groups and public companies, including Nike.

In the survey it was alleged that the "deaths of two workers were related to denial of medication" and nearly 90 per cent of workers had complained "it was difficult to get time off to go to the (health) clinics" (*SMH*). Ms Maria Eitel, a Nike vice-president and senior advisor for corporate responsibility, said: "While the messages are tough, we welcome them."

Jonah's email probably had nothing to do with Global Alliance's survey of Nike's workers and Nike's subsequent statement, but it is a prime example of negative viral marketing - with the consumer being the power broker and the marketer virtually powerless.

Another issue to be raised regarding viral marketing is the line between product familiarisation and an obligation by marketers to inform consumers of advertising. The Lee Jeans' characters, Supergreg and his mate Curry, incensed net junkies when it was realised that they were not quite as genuine as Mahir from Turkey. Email lists all over the globe "chatted" about the issue of advertising ethics and an alarm was raised about the authenticity of other quirky sites.

For example, <http://www.pixyland.org/peterpan> features photos of a middle age man sporting a Peter Pan pudding bowl haircut (and Peter Pan outfit) who is desperately searching for his Tinkerbell. There are photos of him in different fairy outfits (he insists,

though, he is a boy fairy) and of him flying in front of his garage (the miracle of PhotoShop). He explains that he is 47, divorced, young at heart and has "Guitarist, Engineer, Inventor, Eternal Child" written on his business card.

For a net surfer to stumble across this Peter Pan site is a like finding a pot of gold (or maybe some pixie dust) - he is funny, totally sincere and totally screwball. However, as a savvy net surfer, the validity of Pixyland must be questioned. No longer can one just pass on this website to the entirety of one's email address book just in case Pixyland is some subliminal marketing tool for a major mining corporation.

Debates regarding the distinction between editorial and advertorial are raging in newsgroups and chat rooms around the net. The same debate hit the Australian press two years ago when the "cash for comment" debacle was uncovered. This debate resulted in a clear line demarcating the distinction between advertising and editorial comment in the Australian media.

Should the same be applicable to the internet? Should viral marketers inform users that websites are advertisements and email messages are promoting a particular product? Should there be a regulatory body controlling content and advertising on the web? The internet, however, was developed on the principles of freedom of expression, non-regulation and, most importantly, self-censorship.

The proliferation of big business advertising on the internet might be the final clincher in the debate regarding censorship on the internet - perhaps even more potent an argument than pornography, violence or profanity.

Georgina Gold is a freelance journalist and is currently completing her Masters of Public Policy at Macquarie University.



NIKE PERSONAL ID GUIDELINES

1. Your Personal iD contains another party's trademark or other intellectual property.
2. Your Personal iD contains the name of an athlete or team we do not have the legal right to use.
3. Your Personal iD was left blank. Did you not want any personalisation?
4. Your Personal iD contains profanity or inappropriate slang, and besides, your mother would slap us.

ENGLISH RULES THE WAVES

Anne Henderson

Queen Victoria ruled over a British empire on which the sun never set. Yet it took Bill Gates and the USA's dominance of the IT revolution to achieve what Her Majesty never could - English as the world's lingua franca. What's more, with the spread of English, multilingualism is back in vogue. There's a message here for Australians - Anglophile and other.

British English has long been a minority form among the multilingual English usage now worldwide. So much so the pressure is on, at global forums (or should I say fora?), for an international norm, a style of English that is least misunderstood by the many who gather from such different backgrounds. A style of speaking and writing, which can be modified later to particular audiences - British, Indian, US, Australian and so forth.

English rules the waves none the less and English speaking nations suddenly have an historically unique comfort zone. From travellers on holiday to graduates seeking professional opportunities, the language they speak opens doors, whether they be further education, employment, social position or easier movement through non-English speaking countries. Even without leaving home, the advantages are numerous. At present, 90 per cent of internet hosts are based in English speaking countries.

Migrants seeking entry to the melting pots of Canada, the USA or Australia are told that proficiency in English adds points in their favour. Countries where British colonialism has left vestiges of its language and culture, from Nigeria to India to Singapore, have produced a family of "new Englishes", variants of the mother language that now have their own dictionaries. No language has ever been so widely taught, read or spoken as English is today.

English language is now an industry in itself with the study of English reaching well beyond the semantics of the spoken or written word. Scholarly debates over English touch on anything from idiom to the socio-economic flow on effects of the global spread the language has had.

Take Sue Butler from Australia's *Macquarie Dictionary*. She believes the work done by its publishing group, The Macquarie Library, is that of intermediary, a sort of cultural bridge for relationships in a region where Australia is the major English speaking country. Macquarie has just

produced a dictionary of South-east Asian Englishes. "To enter into this kind of discussion about language is to come to grips with the culture of our neighbours," says Butler.

Macquarie University has joined the debate. In collaboration with The Open University and Routledge publishers, the third volume in the series "Teaching English Language Worldwide" has just been launched. *Analysing English in a Global Context*, edited by Anne Burns and Caroline Coffin, is a meaty read. But it takes the study of English way beyond consideration of grammar and pronunciation.

English, as global lingua franca, has become the world's most successful coloniser of all time. And, with such a rapid rise to fame, not surprisingly some query the apparent success of what is a phenomenon. Questions are being asked. What good has this done the global community? How long might such hegemony last? What traps lie ahead for complacent English speaking countries? And, has the ability to speak and write English become a divide between the haves and have nots?

Then there's a secondary issue, fascinating linguists. Just what is the global spread of English doing to the spoken and written language? Under strain from hybrid mixes of local idiom, along with technical and generational jargon, email abbreviation, bureaucratic and commercial acronym and trade marks, English can be a foreign language to old world purists. It's curtains for the split infinitive monitors.

The plural of "mouse" can now be "mouses"; "Pepsi" and "Coke" are concrete nouns; "I am knowing" is not correct in Standard English but perfectly acceptable in Indian English. "It all depends on what is meant by an error," says language guru David Crystal. For example, can everyone fluent in English understand what follows?

"Things are going well baby. Les has got double exponentials from his Monte Carlo simulations and Neher's latest work directly implicates buffers with slow binding kinetics. As you can imagine, I am pretty excited. Love ya."

Some say that, with the number of varieties and hybrids that are accepted, English is crumbling at the edges. David Graddol, of The English Company U.K., takes a more constructive view.

In a discussion by email with Barbara Wallraff after her cover story piece, in November 2000's *Atlantic Monthly*, "What Global Language?", Graddol argues all that is happening is the "fusion between English and other languages. The type of language switching and word borrowing that typically goes on in any multilingual community is now happening on the internet on a massive scale, and it is difficult to know what any long term impact this might have on the way the international community will use English."

It's fashionable for academics and traditionalists to pull their wagons round in defence of compulsory

study of Shakespearean plays in English literature, forgetting that when the plays were staged, English was itself regarded as an inferior tongue in England. John Dryden, poet laureate to the English court, 1668-1688, translated his poems into Latin before they were accepted as quality pieces. By the late nineteenth century, at the height of the British Empire, French was the northern hemisphere's lingua franca.

Global English, at 2000 and beyond, partly owes its new found success to the tentacles of the once great British empire, but mostly it's due to US global prominence after World War II and the IT revolution.

Some 372 million people, globally, speak English as their mother tongue. Another 350 million speak it as a second language and anything up to a billion people speak some sort of English as a foreign language. But it's not the numbers that tell the story really, when you consider that 1,113 million speak varieties of Chinese as their mother tongue and that the first language categories Hindi/Urdu, Spanish and Arabic are each predicted to overtake English in coming decades.

"For the world may be under the international English language umbrella today, but it is far from clear how long this might last."

The ascendancy of English has more to do with power. David Crystal believes the reason is fundamentally the political power, or military power, of a country's people. The influence of the United States' military umbrella, and presence in strategic summits for global peace, has speeded up the status of English. This is true, but there's more.

Trade, commerce and communications technology, emanating from the US global presence and the strategic efforts US investors have put into production of IT products and services, have significantly projected common English usage. Money power and communications power, CNN and the internet, rather than military power, have made English the global language.

Alastair Pennycook, in *Analysing English in a Global Context*, writes, "When we look at history and present conjunction of English and many discourses of global power, it seems certain that those discourses have been facilitative of the spread of English and that the spread of English has facilitated the spread of those discourses. It is in this sense that the world is in English. The potential meanings that can be articulated in English are interlinked with the discourses of development, democracy, capitalism, modernisation, and so on."

Braj Kachru and Cecil Nelson, in the same volume, make the point that, "There is a great range of proficiency evidenced by the users of English in every country, from Asia to the New World. Even people who have very little proficiency in English use it in their daily business or personal lives." From this they conclude that no language comes close to

English in the extent of its usage. And while there are many varieties of English used, this, they say, actually enhances its importance globally.

So far so good. But, the story is not so easily concluded here. In fact, Barbara Wallraff suggests, in the November 2000 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*, there's probably just a bare 50 years in which the English language will dominate. Many would take issue with this but it's conceivable. In other words, make the most of it commercially and culturally while it lasts. There's no time for complacency. What's more, for the very reason that English is the international language, those who live in nations where English is a first language are in danger of depleting their potential language base. In time, it is argued, these societies may fall behind because of this.

Britons may be comforted that English is the most widely used language in European forums. Even monetary discussions are in English and Britain has not yet joined the single currency or euro. The downside, however, is that Britons are now fast becoming the last of the monolinguals in Europe. Everyone else is bilingual as local languages in Continental Europe are coupled with the need to speak English. Internationally, this is also happening. So, the linguistic skills of the non-English speaking world are advancing while those in the English speaking world are falling out of step.

"It's monolingualism that is peculiar," says David Graddol. "The whole point about multilingual societies is that you really need to speak more than one language to participate fully. ... [the] question is whether monolingual English-speaking Americans will in future need to learn to speak Spanish in order to participate fully in American society." This point would not be lost on recently elected President George W Bush, who has made his affinity with Hispanic Americans and their Spanish language an electoral plus.

Taken into an Australian context, there is clearly no point boasting of our multi-ethnic society, made up largely from 1960s to 1980s immigration numbers, or of the number of languages migrants have brought to Sydney or Melbourne, if we then close the doors to future non-English speaking settlers by an over emphasis on their ability to speak English on arrival. In a country as isolated and Anglophile as Australia, from where else can it absorb multilingual skills, now recognised as a necessary enrichment for citizens in a global, service driven market place.

The world is undoubtedly under the international English language umbrella today, but Barbara Wallraff makes the point that, "the relationship between science and technology and English is, essentially accidental. ... If the United States were for the most part French-speaking, surely French would be the language of science and technology ... Future technology may well originate elsewhere. In the rapidly advancing field of wireless communications devices, for example, Scandanavia is already the acknowledged leader."

David Graddol's English Company U.K. reported in a newsletter, in 1998, that non-English speakers were the fastest growing group of new internet users. It is estimated that internet traffic in languages other than English will outstrip English-language traffic within the next few years. And, with the rise in the fortunes of Spanish globally, trading groups like Mercosur and Safta and the expectation of some sort of Latin American merger with North America's trade group Nafta in the next decade, a bilingual English-Spanish zone at the hub of the Western world is seen as a possibility within a decade or two.

Other statistics point the way to but a temporary era for English as global lingua franca. By 2050 it is estimated that the world's proportion of native English speakers will have shrunk in a century from over eight to less than five per cent. India has the third largest population of English-speakers (if Nigeria's pidgin English speakers are not counted), and yet only around five per cent of Indians speak English. Most Indians who speak English use it as a second language. Meanwhile, English is spoken as a foreign language in places where English is not used in a formal way, and those who learn it, use it with people from elsewhere.

"Certainly, English speaking nations are streaking ahead, torpedoed forward by the US economy."

All these factors impact on the way English is used, the expressions and grammatical forms allowed and accents that grow out of local pronunciations. In many instances, native speakers of English can find fellow English speakers hard to understand. For example, an Australian watching episodes of Scottish TV's, Glasgow based *Taggart* can have trouble keeping up with the plot, so thick are the accents. Yet, the same viewer might easily understand an English speaking Indonesian commenting on the Wahid Government, and without the help of subtitles so kindly provided.

Anne Soukhanov, American editor of the *Encarta Word Dictionary*, challenged traditionalists of English language in 2000 with an article published on the web called "The King's English It Ain't". Wrote Soukhanov, "Some English words mean very different things depending on your country. In South Asia, a "hotel" is a restaurant, but in Australia, a "hotel" is an establishment selling alcoholic beverages. In South Africa, a "robot" is a traffic light." Australians know exactly what she's talking about. Here we move from one state to another and words change their meanings; "federation architecture" north of the Murray is "Edwardian architecture" south of the river. In New South Wales, it's "swimmers" children wear to the beach; in Victoria, it's "bathers". And so it goes.

When the corners and territories English now commands across the globe are factored in, the future, if not the present, reality is obvious. Should English

remain the international lingua franca, there is no guarantee speakers of the language in different regions of the world will necessarily understand one another without interpretation, or learning. In the same way travellers have had to adjust to foreign languages in earlier centuries. Of course, the adjustment from one form of English to another will never be as difficult as from one language to a quite different one.

If English does have an advantage, it's the ease with which it can be picked up. Michael Henry Heim, professor of Slavic literatures at the university of California speaks some ten languages but maintains that English is the easiest to learn poorly. "If Hungary were the leader of the world, Hungarian would not be the world language. To communicate on a day-to-day basis – to order a meal, to book a room – there's no language as simple as English," he told Barbara Wallraff. Which is also one other reason it has been so easily moulded into hybrids across the globe.

Still, most of the world does not share in the conquest English has achieved in the last half century. Some argue that English is rapidly sectioning off a new global elite. The wealthy nations and professionals who share in the communications and technology affluence.

Certainly, English speaking nations are streaking ahead, torpedoed forward by the US economy. Only time will tell, though, if this development can be sustained for more than decades. Already real estate prices are forcing the relocation of many Silicon Valley operators to cheaper sites across the USA. It can only be time before the developing and third world attract large investment in IT into their markets. Bill Gates is now dabbling at the edges of the Indian sub continent. Like other revolutions in communication, from the wheel to the printing press to radio, invention doesn't stay where it begins.

As for the chances of the English language keeping its precedence in world communications, it will be a case of what is most accessible. English may well remain the language of leaders and elites for some time to come. On the other hand, from Indian movies or Bollywood, to the massive market in dubbed film and television in local languages like Italian and Spanish, to the possibility of huge local populations in China and India logging on in their local languages, to the probable invention of gadgetry that will mechanically translate the spoken word instantly without the need for us to learn another language, all these suggest that a multilingual world will remain. Distance not only lends enchantment, it also promotes difference.

But, it's certainly true that for speakers of English the world is at present their oyster. Having said that, however, whether that turn of phrase would be readily understood by most global users of English is doubtful.

Anne Henderson is Editor of The Sydney Papers



CORRESPONDENCE - LES MURRAY'S LIFE IN PROGRESS

20 January 2001

Professor Peter F Alexander
School of English
The University of New South Wales

Dear Professor Alexander

I refer to your letter of 8 January 2001. It's disappointing that, due to work commitments, you will have to cancel your talk (scheduled for February 2001) at The Sydney Institute on *Les Murray: A Life In Progress*. And that, consequently, *The Sydney Papers* will not be able to carry your views on Les Murray. Perhaps another time.

I am currently reading the biography. I have also used the index to dart in and out of the text. As discussed in our brief phone conversation, I wanted to draw your attention to your coverage of Australia Council funding as it relates to Les Murray. I had intended mentioning this privately to you at the Institute in late February. This will no longer be possible – hence this letter.

At Page 284 of *Les Murray: A Life in Progress* you write:

In 1997 the Sydney Morning Herald was still taking what Murray called "the Aust. Council's line against me",³⁹ alleging [emphasis added] that he had had huge amounts of Literature Board support and deserved no more.⁴⁰

Footnote 39 refers to Les Murray's annotation to an earlier draft of your book. In other words, it is Les Murray who refers to the Australia Council's "line". Footnote 40 reads as follows:

Gerard Henderson's column, making this argument, appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald' at the end of February 1997.

It is not clear from the text whether or not you had read my *Sydney Morning Herald* piece (which you did not date) before writing the biography – or whether you simply reproduced Les Murray's interpretation of same. For the record, the *Herald* column in question was published on 1 March 1997 – not as you (falsely) assert "at the end of February 1997".

The facts are as follows:

- I write a weekly column or the *Sydney Morning Herald* each Tuesday. In 1997 I also wrote a shorter weekly piece on Saturday. I am *not* a *Herald* staff member. In over a decade, no one at the *Herald* has ever told me what to write on any issue. If there is a *Herald* "line", it would be found in the paper's

editorials. It is a gross simplification to allege that, somehow or other, I speak for the *Herald*. Moreover, it is little more than a conspiracy theory to claim that those who write for the *Herald* are expected to run a *Herald* "line". Such a claim could only be made by those who do not know how newspapers actually work.

- I have *no* connection whatsoever with the Australia Council or its Literature Board. Unlike Les Murray, I have never received – nor applied for – funding from the Australia Council. I am not aware that the Australia Council has, or had, a "line" on Les Murray – and, if so, where and how this would be expressed. In other words, it is disingenuous for you and/or Les Murray to allege (without evidence of any kind) that my comments on Les Murray simply followed an Australia Council line.

- The suggestion that I *alleged* that Les Murray had received significant support from the Australia Council over the years is misleading. This is not an allegation. This is a fact. I have attached a copy of a small article I wrote in the July 1999 issue of *The Sydney Institute Quarterly* (see Appendix A). It demonstrates that between 1973-74 and 1992-93 Les Murray received, in total, some \$448,510 from the Australia Council. Note this is a raw – not an indexed – figure. The amount includes three Australian Artist Creative Fellowships (commonly known as Keatings) in a row – i.e. 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

In *The Sydney Institute Quarterly* piece, I wrote that no Australian writer or poet had received so much financial assistance over so many years per courtesy of the Australian taxpayer. In my *Sydney Morning Herald* column of 1 March 1997 I commented that "on a word-written-for-dollar-granted basis", Les Murray was "Australia's most subsidised literary figure". In *Les Murray: A Life in Progress*, mention is made of Rodney Hall having received about \$500,000 in Literature Board grants. I have not checked this claim but, if accurate, it suggests that Les Murray and Rodney Hall are at the top of the ladder when hand-outs from the Australia Council are calculated. It does not contradict my comment that Les Murray has received substantial funding from the Australia Council – or that, on a word written for dollar granted basis, he remains Australia's most subsidised literary figure.

- Contrary to your assertion in *Les Murray: A Life in Progress*, I have *never* said that Les Murray "deserved no more" funding from the Australia Council. By the way, what is your source for this assertion? What I have written (in the *Herald* on 1 March 1997 and elsewhere) is that someone who fed from the taxpayer subsidised drip for so long should not be regarded too seriously when he lectures at large about the evils of feeding from the taxpayer subsidised drip.

There is one final point. In the biography you write that, circa 1993, Les Murray "decided that he would never again accept a grant from the body on which he had depended for so long, and whose funding he had put to such good use". This is consistent with Mr

Murray's comment in his 1996 essay "The Noblesse Trap: The Ills and Possibilities of Arts Patronage" that he had "resolved never to accept Australian government funding for...work in the future, except maybe in the form of prizes".

Once again, the claim in *Les Murray: A Life in Progress* is inaccurate. And, once again, the error is caused by your apparent uncritical repetition of Les Murray's self-image. As a scholar of Les Murray, no doubt you are aware that his poetry is published regularly in *The Adelaide Review*. I have attached a copy of a piece I wrote in the December 1999 issue of *The Sydney Institute Quarterly* which documented that a poem published in *The Adelaide Review* in June 1999 had been assisted by the Commonwealth of Australia through the Australia Council (see Appendix B).

A quick phone call to the Australia Council would reveal that Christopher Pearson (*The Adelaide Review's* editor) has successfully sought funding from the Australia Council in order to make payments to several contributors to *The Adelaide Review* – including Les Murray. The first application to fund Les Murray's poetry was made in 1997 for 1998. Mr Murray received Australia Council money (via *The Adelaide Review*) in 1998, 1999 and 2000 - a further payment will be made in 2001. The December 2000 issue of *The Adelaide Review* carries Les Murray's full-page "Poems the size of photographs" under the Australia Council logo. I was surprised to learn, during our recent phone conversation, that you were unaware that, once again, Les Murray is in receipt of the Australia Council funding. It is not that difficult to discover this. It's called research.

I first met Les Murray a quarter of a century ago and am on the record as praising his skills as a poet with a well-deserved international reputation. However his (often hyperbolic) non-fiction is another matter. As Les Murray now concedes – and as you have reported - he suffered a serious depressive illness for many years. This suggests that it would be advisable, from time to time, to check his claims and memory against the written record or the individual recollection of others. The available evidence does not support your belief that Mr Murray has a "memory...as attentive as a mousetrap" and one which is "still more tenacious than of anyone else he knew". That's theology, not analysis. Les Murray cannot even accurately remember what – or when – I wrote about him as recently as early 1997.

In conclusion, I note for the record that your single reference to me in *Les Murray: A Life in Progress* is erroneous. Moreover, the fact that you did not document your (alleged) source means that it would be very difficult for any reader to check your claim against the written record. This is disturbingly unprofessional. For the record, I have attached a copy of my *Herald* column of 1 March 1997 – see Appendix C

It's pleasing that a well written biography of Les Murray has been published. However, among others,

I would suggest that – for any future editions - it would be wise to check Les Murray's claims. It's called scholarship. When I was an academic a quarter of a century ago, undergraduates were taught to check facts. Professors should know better.

Yours sincerely
Gerard Henderson

PS : If your work-load eases during the year, you are welcome to address The Sydney Institute on Les Murray.

31 January 2001

Mr G Henderson
The Sydney Institute
41 Phillip Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mr Henderson

I have received your letter of 20 January on my return to my desk after a brief absence.

Thank you for pointing out that I got the date of one of your articles, referred to in a footnote in my book, wrong by one day. I shall correct this if I get the opportunity of a reprinting.

You seem angry that I have quoted Les Murray's view that the *Sydney Morning Herald* was taking what he called "the Australia Council's line against me". LM as you know has many such strong views, and of course I quoted them. They're part of his life, and my book is a biography: get it?

You have repeatedly over years, complained that LM has had more taxpayer subsidies (meaning grants from the Australia Council) than anyone else. You go on doing so in this letter to me. On 1 March 1997 you alleged that LM had received "an estimated \$700,000 in grants from the Australia Council". This claim is false, as your own piece in the *Australia Institute Quarterly* (sic) of 2 July 1999 makes amply clear. Will you apologize to LM in print as you ought?

Even if you were right in this untruth, would it not be fair to point out that no recipient of literary grants in Australia has made better use of the funding than LM has, and that this would be true if he'd had twenty times the sums you false claim?

As to your recent claim that he is once more receiving Australia Council funding, I would have thought that even you could see the difference between LM applying for a grant (which he has not done) and the *Adelaide Review* applying for a grant to publish poetry, and using some of that to pay LM among others. Will you apologize to LM in print as you ought?

Your pursuit of a deeply depressed man is looking increasingly vindictive and obsessive, and is betraying you into some very shabby journalism. Surely it's time to lay off the greatest poet Australia has produced?

Yours sincerely
Peter Alexander

2 March 2001

Professor Peter F. Alexander
School of English
The University of New South Wales

Dear Professor Alexander

I refer to your letter of 31 January 2001. I have delayed responding because I was attempting to locate Les Murray's important conversation with Richard Zachariah's which was shown on the Lifestyle Channel's "Life Changes" program in 1998. This has now been achieved.

Contrary to your assertion, in my letter of 20 January 2001 I did not say that you "got the date" of one of my articles which referred to your book *Les Murray: A Life In Progress* "wrong by one day". What I said was that you had failed to provide any specific date for the article in question. From this, I assumed that you had not actually read my *Sydney Morning Herald* column of 1 March 1997. But, rather, had relied on Les Murray's interpretation of what he believed I had written. However, I left open the possibility that you may have misunderstood my comment.

The tone of your letter makes it clear that you only read my 1 March 1997 column *after* I sent it to you. Hence your new reference to the fact that, on 1 March 1997, I maintained that Les Murray had received "an estimated \$700,000 in grants from the Australia Council". Apparently you were not aware of this when writing your biography. You know this now because I told you. For the record, this estimate was based on information supplied to me at the time. As soon as I found out what the actual figure was, I recorded the correct figure. Both on the ABC Radio National Breakfast Program and in *The Sydney Institute Quarterly*. By the way, the \$448,510 which Les Murray received from the Australia Council over almost two decades has not been indexed for inflation – in today's prices it would be substantially more than that.

In your letter, you advise that I "ought" to "apologize to LM in print" concerning this error. This overlooks the fact that Les Murray made his own correction in a letter which was published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 5 March 1997. He wrote that he "had never received \$700,000 in funding from the Australia Council" – and left it at that. He satisfied himself with an emphatic denial and did not elect to state the amount which he had actually received. Some readers could have obtained the impression that Les Murray was contesting my claim that he had ever received substantial funding from the Australia Council.

I note that, quite properly, Les Murray was able to have his response to my comment printed in the *Herald*. However, there is no recourse whatsoever to me to correct the manifestly false claim made about me in your authorised biography.

In your letter of 31 January 2001, you have repeated the error concerning me contained in *Les Murray: A Life In Progress*. In my letter of 20 January 2001, I

asked you to cite the source of your claim that I had said that Les Murray "deserved no more" funding from the Australia Council. The fact is that I have *never* written, or said, this. You have not provided any source for your invented claim – preferring, instead, to ignore the request for documentation.

Indeed, you simply repeat the falsehood in your letter of 31 January 2001 – where you assert that I "have repeatedly, over years, complained that LM has had more taxpayer subsidies (meaning grants from the Australia Council) than anyone else". This is manifestly false. Rather, my objection is to the fact that Les Murray readily took subsidies from the Australia Council – and then, subsequently, advocated that no artists should receive like grants. In other words, this is not a complaint about the distribution of taxpayer funded subsidies. But, rather, about the double standards involved in Les Murray's particular stance.

In our recent phone conversation, it was evident that you were totally ignorant of the fact that Les Murray is currently receiving Australia Council funding for his poetry which appears in *The Adelaide Review*. Your current argument here is quite disingenuous. You, somewhat patronisingly, suggest that I should apologise to Les Murray. Why? Apparently for not acknowledging "the difference between LM applying for a grant (which he has not done) and *The Adelaide Review* applying for a grant to publish poetry, and using some of that to pay LM among others".

Once again, you have not done the necessary research – and seem all too keen to present unchecked, of course, Les Murray's interpretation of reality. The facts are as follows. Christopher Pearson, *The Adelaide Review's* editor, did not apply to the Australia Council "for a grant to publish poetry" and subsequently decide to use "some of that to pay LM among others". Rather, Mr Pearson applied to the Australia Council for a grant to publish Les Murray's poetry in *The Adelaide Review*. Subsequently Les Murray has accepted his poetry being published in *The Adelaide Review* under the Australia Council's logo. Once again, just one phone call to the Australia Council would have established the facts.

In conclusion I should make several points.

- Contrary to your assertion, I am not in "pursuit of a deeply depressed man". Les Murray made it clear in his 1998 "Life Changes" interview with Richard Zachariah that he had not experienced depression "for a year or so".
- The fact is that Les Murray's past depression helps to explain why he has projected on to some – myself included – views about him which they do not hold. As Les Murray told Richard Zachariah: "Depression tends to send you paranoid...". Quite so. As a biographer, you would have been well advised to consider whether some of Les Murray's past criticisms of others, uncritically repeated in your biography, might have been the product of the poet's

previous depressive state. This past condition may also explain why Les Murray is on record as alleging that many of his peers are "jealous" of him.

- Certainly Les Murray is a fine poet with a well deserved international reputation. But the man you call "the greatest poet Australia has produced" is no wilting-violet. It's not so long ago since (writing in *The Australian* on 24 July 1996) Les Murray accused John Howard of "insensitive cowardice". Why? Because, presumably acting on security advice, the Prime Minister wore a bullet-proof vest when addressing a rally of firearm owners. Around this time Les Murray went on the record in support of Pauline Hanson (see his letter in *The Australian's Review of Books*, February 1997) and was reported as having described Australia as the world's last Stalinist state (*London Weekly Telegraph*, 22 January 1997). It all sounds rather paranoid to me.

- Les Murray can certainly dish it out - in a non-fiction sense at least. In view of this, he really does not need the assistance of a biographer (however authorised) to protect him from the (non-fiction) criticism of others.

As you will recall, Les Murray's friend Robert Gray launched your *Les Murray: A Life In Progress* in Sydney in December 2000. As you are aware, Robert Gray is a fan of Les Murray's poetry. But, not apparently, of your scholarship as a biographer. During his speech at the launch, Robert Gray described *Les Murray: A Life in Progress* as close to "hagiography".

And that's the point. The problem with your biography is that it depicts Les Murray's life - as seen, almost exclusively, by Les Murray. Because of your evident intellectual infatuation with your subject, you did not bother to verify Les Murray's claims by cross-checking alternative sources. That's why the one reference to me in *Les Murray: A Life In Progress* is manifestly false. But, in spite of the evidence, it stands uncorrected. The proper role of a biographer, literary or otherwise, is to check facts – not to act as a barracker for his or her subject. Had you adopted such an approach, then most of the problems which delayed the publication of *Les Murray: A Life In Progress* could have been avoided.

As far as I am concerned, this correspondence is closed. Of course, you are still welcome to address The Sydney Institute on Les Murray. At the Institute, we are prepared to listen to divergent views on important topics. A practice you could benefit from when – and if – you decide to write another literary biography. Or, indeed, to update *Les Murray: A Life In Progress*.

Yours sincerely
Gerard Henderson

Note: This is the entire correspondence - as of the time of publication.



BOOK REVIEWS

John McConnell

PATHFINDER IN THE AIR – ON THE GROUND THE PETER ISAACSON STORY

By Denis Warner

Information Australia, hb 2000, rrp \$38.45
ISBN 1 86350 301 3

Imagine a large publishing firm with an autocratic boss. The proprietor believes in dictating editorial policy. He likes to be in control, so much so that he hems in his managers. They have titles rather than real authority or power. Secretaries issue daily office "weather" bulletins. Turbulence on the flight deck is code for stay out of the way today. An outburst of employer temper is looming. One day, a daring – or is it foolish – employee returns copy for the next edition to the boss. A note is attached. The memo informs the boss that his copy arrived too late to be included. Back shoots the response: "I own the bloody company."

Pathfinder is the story of Peter Isaacson - the man "who owns the company". Peter Isaacson, of course, is the highly decorated World War Two pilot who subsequently established a very successful publishing company. *Pathfinder* opens with a wartime bombing mission over Germany. A Royal Air Force Lancaster is damaged and the pilot – Peter Isaacson – is struggling to pull the plane out of a dangerous descent. The crew just make it back to England. It is not the only time that Peter Isaacson employs all of his resources and that of his crew to nurse a damaged plane back to base.

Denis Warner has written Peter Isaacson's biography. He has more than one dozen books to his name, including a number written with his wife, Peggy. A former journalist, Denis Warner specialised in writing on Australia's relations with Asia and defence policy. *Pathfinder* traces the tale of Peter Isaacson as he transfers from the RAAF to RAF Bomber Command, and then moves back into civilian life after the war. Skill, luck, daring and a feeling of personal invincibility combined to enable Peter Isaacson to survive many dangerous flying missions. This, despite the odds and the loss of many comrades. He gained a reputation for his style of evasive flying. He

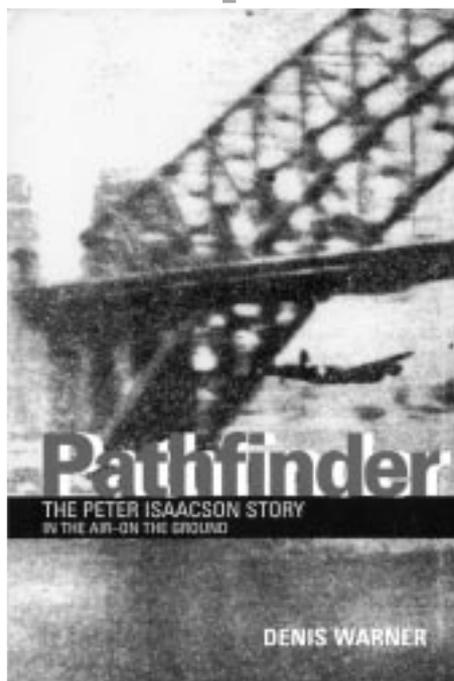
received bravery awards. Returning to Australia, Peter Isaacson flew a Lancaster under Sydney Harbour Bridge – without the approval of authorities.

Subsequently, Isaacson developed a successful publishing enterprise, maintained contact with wartime comrades, married Anne (who suffered polio bravely), raised a family, lost his parents (Arnold and Caroline) and contributed to the community in a number of ways. Denis Warner captures the very close relationship between mother and son. Generally, he paints a sympathetic portrait of the man "who owns the company". Peter Isaacson is a perfectionist. He possesses a demanding eye for detail. He is a tough negotiator, but acts with compassion to employees in their moment of need. He opposes intolerance in the wider community.

Denis Warner hints – as does Dr Francis Macnab in an interesting foreword – at occasional marriage difficulties, but private matters remain that way – appropriately so. Peter Isaacson Publications became a multi-million dollar business. Initially based on

suburban newspapers, country newspapers, trade publications, television stations and a metropolitan Sunday newspaper were added along the way. Peter Isaacson's commercial reach also extended into Asia. By 1987, there were more than 60 publications in Australia and New Zealand and 14 in Asia Business Press in which Peter Isaacson held a sizeable stake. The payroll numbered in the hundreds.

However, business difficulties emerged with the onset of the early 1990s recession. Coincidentally, personal and family matters led Peter Isaacson to reassess it all. Peter Isaacson Publications was sold to Australian Provincial Newspapers. In the concluding pages, we meet a reflective Peter Isaacson adjusting to life away from business.



FEDERATION: THE SECRET STORY

By Bob Birrell

Duffy & Snellgrove, pb 2001, rrp \$19.95
ISBN 1 875 989 79X

Bob Birrell places enormous importance on Alfred Deakin's policies in *Federation: The Secret Story*. He sees federation era policies as a positive expression of a distinctive Australian identity and as a sign of genuine independence from Britain. It concerns Birrell that "revisionist" historians have succeeded in obscuring the significance of Australia's federation era. And he regrets that members of Australia's "elite" have dismantled the legacy of protection during recent decades.

This, in Birrell's opinion, undermines Australia's

national heritage. Indeed, he goes so far as to argue that the "soiling of the early years of our national experience has helped to undermine Australians' faith that there is anything in their heritage worthy of inspiration". A big claim indeed. He links this up with the Australian Republican Movement's appeal to change Australia's Head of State and the defeat of the 1999 referendum.

Bob Birrell is a Reader in the Department of Sociology and Director of the Centre for Population and Urban Research at Monash University in Victoria. Longman published an earlier version of this book in 1995 under the title of *A Nation of Our Own*. Birrell rejects the view that Australian nationalism was constructed on "Anglo centric values". Native-born colonists, he argues, were intent on improving their status in comparison with British-born residents. Meanwhile, economic opportunity provided the possibility of adopting egalitarian ideas. Significantly, Australian egalitarianism represented a distinct break with British hierarchical values.

Birrell invites the reader to consider the contribution of the Deakinite liberals. They legislated a set of interrelated policies, namely arbitration, protection, immigration control, defence and social welfare. To Dr Birrell, this interrelated set of policies signal genuine independence from Britain. Hence, the federation era provided a decisive impetus to the process of building a distinctive Australian nation. It represents "progressive emancipation from British imperial control." And White Australia? Well, we need to understand that at heart, this was an expression of Australian egalitarianism. Birrell argues that words such as race were used differently a hundred years ago.

Race, he says, was used not in the genetic sense. Rather it had a social meaning. The primary aim was to exclude people who would not fit in socially. Here is Australia as a society of equals where particular races were excluded mainly for social reasons. This is a very charitable interpretation of White Australia. Too charitable, in my opinion. Nor should we forget that the egalitarian vision failed to embrace the indigenous population. Or the Irish for that matter.

Bob Birrell favours an Australian citizenship based on a shared national identity. This is superior, he believes, to a citizenship based on shared values. After all, shared values may not even be distinctive to the nation. But "the thicket of negatives now associated with the phenomenon of nationalism" assist "revisionist" interpretations. Birrell argues that the "revisionists" have succeeded in displacing what should be a celebratory account of the achievements of federation since the 1960s. They have been intent, he argues, on according a proper place to women, indigenous people, non-Anglo migrants and exploited workers. An historical caricature has taken over.

As a result, Birrell applies the questionable label – "The Secret Story" – to his version of Australian history, a version close to the one that was triumphant prior to the 1960s. Ultimately, the author extends his argument to explain the defeat of the 1999 republic referendum. In so doing, he links the publicised rationale for a republic to a lack of appreciation of a distinctive Australian identity.

The author refers to a 1999 Constitutional Referendum Study in which 70 per cent strongly agreed and a further 19 per cent agreed with the proposition that our Head of State should be Australian.

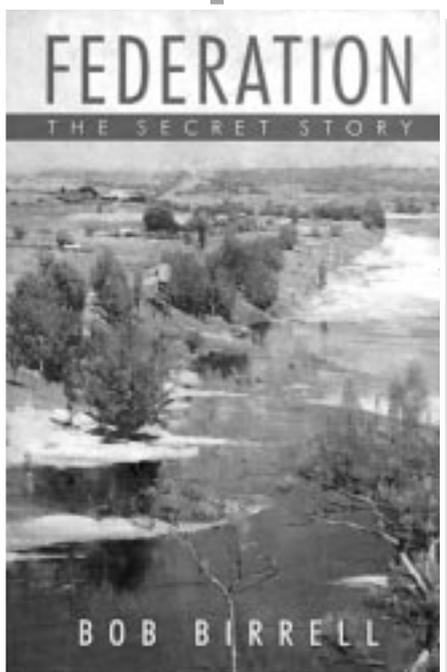
The referendum's defeat therefore represents something of a puzzle, he suggests. He proceeds to identify the main reason for the defeat of the referendum as the gulf between elite opinion and ordinary Australians. In so doing, Birrell underplays the importance of the way the republic question was framed. The choice was limited to a "politicians" republic or the status quo. A number of personalities including parliamentarians encouraged the Australian tendency to distrust politicians. Republicans divided over different models of determining Australia's Head of State. Australians for a

Constitutional Monarchy aided by direct election republicans were able to divide and conquer.

This is crucial to any explanation but Birrell treats it as secondary to the elite opinion versus ordinary Australians divide. Ordinary Australians, he argues, want a sheltered community with a common identity. Elite opinion, he says, has discredited protectionist Australia and federal leaders such as Deakin. This explains why ordinary Australians defeated the republic. Or does it? It overlooks John Howard's role in the referendum. Is not John Howard a member of the so-called elite?

It may well be laudable to seek to provide a coherent and celebratory account of Australia's federation era. My reservations about this particular interpretation revolve around the extent to which genuine independence from Britain was established during the federation era, an interpretation of White Australia that underplays race, and an underestimate of the significance of the limited and divisive option presented to the Australian people in the 1999 referendum. In addition, there is the issue of celebrating a protectionist Australia given the problems I believe that it posed for subsequent generations of Australians.

John McConnell is the author of several senior textbooks



ARE JOURNALISTS LISTENING?

According to Rob Johnson, author of *Cash for Comment* (Pluto Press), journalists operate within a culture of self-delusion, even though they paint themselves as crusaders against power and privilege. The so-called quality media, he says, the broadsheets and the ABC, are just as compromised as the tabloid shock jocks they criticise. Pilita Clark, a working journalist at *The Sydney Morning Herald* over a decade, doesn't agree with Johnson. And she took issue with him, in the *Herald's* Saturday "Spectrum". They'll now meet head to head at The Sydney Institute to work out their differences. A discussion not to miss.

SPEAKER : ROB JOHNSON (Author, *Cash for Comment: The Seduction of Journo Culture*, Pluto Press) & PILITA CLARK (Senior writer, *The Sydney Morning Herald*)

TOPIC : *Critic Critique Thyself: The Media and Self-Delusion*

DATE : Tuesday 8 May 2001

TIME : 5.30 for 6.00 pm

VENUE : 41 Phillip Street, Sydney
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REVIEW OF THE REVIEWERS

Stephen Matchett

The past isn't a foreign country, in fact it's remarkably like the present, except with weird hairstyles and poor personal hygiene. At least that's what the boom in historical fiction shows us; pasts, lots of pasts, all conveniently packaged into self-contained narrative. Pasts that are inhabited by people just like us; people who care about the issues that interest us and whom we can judge by our values.

It's a convenient way to take one's history and certainly saves all the bother of having to struggle to understand the lives and language, beliefs and aspirations of people who can be manufactured to appear just like us but who inhabited worlds utterly alien to our own.

But the vanity of any generation is always sufficient to want to see its past as a dress rehearsal for its own more interesting time. The chance to see ourselves mirrored is probably why fictionalised history is such a hit, particularly when there is a glimpse of contemporary politics. This might account for Peter Carey's very good novel *True History of the Kelly Gang* being the media's pick of the summer where Frank Moorhouse's equally good *Dark Palace* wasn't.

Carey's book addresses the issues of the hour; the fate of the small farmer, the rapacity of the capitalist class, the corruption of public administration and the disinterest of government in the needs of ordinary people. If a redhead called Pauline had turned up in the book Ned would have stolen any horse she desired.

Moorhouse, in contrast, published his second volume on the life of Edith Campbell Berry, an Australian working at the League of Nations. It's an overstuffed rambling yarn with many stories to tell and unlikely characters who have absolutely nothing to say about why the referendum on the republic failed.

If the redhead had turned up at the League of Nations Edith would have sneered at her dress sense.

They are both engaging, entertaining novels by master craftsmen but their different reception by the chattering classes is most interesting both for what it illuminates about the way the cultural elites look at Australia's past, and for the apparent assumption that the role of history is to validate our own opinions.

Historical fiction has always been popular in family-history, with dialogue or swashbuckling adventure

for lads' kinds of ways. It fostered the reenactment boom which extends the costume drama by assuming that by acquiring enough detail on the way generations long past lived, we can become them.

The Americans are particularly fond of historical fiction and reenactments. A visit to any Virginian paddock in summer will show the slaughter of the Civil War admirably recreated. Now that the Americans have discovered Hornblower, it won't be long until Trafalgar is annually presented on the Grand Coulee Dam.

But beyond this amiable antiquarianism, in the last 30 years historical fiction has expanded to become explanation rather than entertainment. Novelists have filled the vacuum left by those academic historians who find it too much of a fag to write well for lay readers.

In some cases the novelists do a much better job than most historians ever could. Pat Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy communicates the horrors of the Western Front and the way it shattered a generation far better than any campaign monograph. Some of her most important characters, notably psychologist W.H.R. Rivers and Sigfried Sassoon are drawn from the life and Barker's interpretations of what they were like, what they thought, how they spoke is convincing and compelling.

Hilary Mantel's extraordinary novel of the Terror, *A Place of Greater Safety*, fleshes out the monstrous egotists who cheerfully supervised the murderous factionalism that ultimately consumed them all and makes Danton, Robespierre, Marat, and their attendant monstrous lordlings, credible if not particularly likeable.

With their deep reading in the sources, both authors could have produced works of conventional history on their subjects. But they chose not to, precisely because fiction gave them the room to explore and create rather than just recount events as the records show them. But what they wrote was fiction. Certainly it could serve as a firm foundation for any reader who wanted to explore the historical Western Front or French Revolution, but it could not replace the work of scholars who try to establish what actually happened, whether or not it makes for an entertaining plot.

Other novelists are less modest in their ambitions and seek to re-tell history as they have decided it was, or just as often, should have been.

Probably the most notable example of fiction as revisionist history is Gore Vidal's seven-volume cycle on the American Republic, *Narratives of Empire*. Beginning with a fictionalised biography of the third Vice-President Aaron Burr, Vidal has charted a massive cycle of American history focused on three themes; the corruption of democratic institutions, the adulation of wealth and punishment of poverty and the meaninglessness of the rhetoric of the founders of the Republic.

It is vastly entertaining and lightly carries the burden of enormous erudition. But it is not history. Vidal is writing to entertain and convince. He creates characters and conversations that cannot have existed. He has his cast act in ways that are understandable to us but would have been meaningless to their real life contemporaries. In short, Vidal is not bound by the evidence, particularly that which does not suit his case.

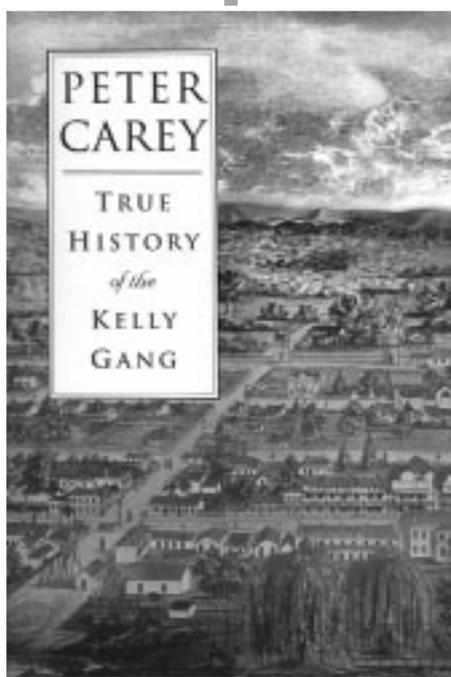
Of course none of this matters if historical novels are reviewed as entertainment. The problem is that because most writers of quality historical fiction are infinitely better and more entertaining than the run of academic historians, it is easy for readers to let themselves mistake what they enjoy for fact.

The point is even more pronounced when it comes to film. After *Braveheart* many young Scots probably believe that Sir William Wallace was an Australian. Ted Turner's film *Gettysburg* turned the battle of the same name into a middle American version of a Greek tragedy. (It is known as THE MOVIE on the Gettysburg Discussion Group chat site where

you praise it at your peril). The problem with fictionalised history, be it film or fiction, is that it is not bound by the professional historian's credo of sticking to arguments that the evidence supports.

In some ways this does not matter, but when we take our history from fiction we are susceptible to manipulation. When people get their history through fiction, it can be exactly what they want it to be. This does not mean that novelists are sloppy with the sources, but the unavoidable fact is that history is there to tell the truth, a burden not placed on the novelist.

Peter Carey's novel demonstrates exactly this problem. Hundreds of thousands of people will read it, far more than will ever look at Ian Jones' magisterial, *Ned Kelly: A Short Life* (which Carey



acknowledges as his major source). A close reading of the two makes it plain that Carey is true to Jones' record and that the novel is utterly dependent for detail, sense of place and history on the biography. But this does not detract from Carey's achievement; his capacity to make Kelly live through his dialogue and descriptive writing is profound.

But Carey did not seem to understand that his Kelly is not real and wants to turn his fictional version of the man into a national hero. Thus he told Romana Koval in 1997

(Americans) try to understand quickly as you tell the story and they say, oh well, it's like us and Jesse James. I say no, it's more like you and George Washington. By which I mean the size the story occupies. I mean we don't have a George Washington story. Is there a story in the big culture about a political figure, Billy Hughes? I don't think so. Parkes? I mean, who's going to occupy that space? Ned Kelly comes close to occupying that sort of space in a national story." (Books and Writing, 12 Sept 1997) <http://www.abc.nt.au/rn/ars/bwwriting/stories/s97268.htm>)

It's a spectacularly ludicrous comparison. About the only thing Kelly and the first president of the United States shared, was their condition as bipeds. However you cut it, Kelly was a horse thief and robber where Washington was a bad general, a great leader and a reluctant statesman of such rare moral courage that he willingly surrendered office at the height of his power for the good of the country.

In another interview Carey compares Kelly to Thomas Jefferson which is drawing an even longer long bow in defence of the former's forensic skills compared to the author of the Declaration of Independence (*Herald Sun*, 14 October 2000).

The only people likely to agree with Carey's comparison of Kelly and Paul Keating are members of the Liberal and Labor parties, but probably for different interpretations of the same reasons. (7.30 Report, 13 October 2000 <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/s19297htm>).

Carey has created a convincing version of north east Victoria 120 years ago. For any reader not expert in 19th century Australian social history, the demotic and folkways he created for Kelly are engrossing.

But Carey had broader ambitions that go beyond the novel's narrative. He wants readers to see his Kelly not as a fiction character but as an icon for Australia, then and now. Thus he compared the rapturous support from a Sydney Olympics crowd for a bravely failing African swimmer to the values his version of Kelly espoused.

...there's this whole crowd of people who are cheering this man. Now that's culturally

distinctive. No-one's suggesting it's Anglo-celtic. Australians who are standing up and cheering – that's Australia in all its diversity cheering that man, and it seems to me that the roots of that sort of passion go right, right back to the foundation of the colony that we're in now, and have roots that are very like related to the Ned Kelly roots. (7.30 Report op cit.)

Cynics might wonder whether Ned Kelly believed in a fair go which did not suit him and cavaliers could suspect that he would not have had any opinion at all on competitive swimming. And, as for the glib line about Australia's continuing colonial status, the regime that Carey-Kelly hated was just reaffirmed in a referendum, largely on the votes of the working class Australians, the people Kelly supposedly stands as an icon for. But none of this needs matter to Carey, because his Kelly is not shaped by the record.

He made this perfectly clear in his 7.30 Report interview with Maxine McKew, when he replied to her question whether he expected his book to be read as literature or history:

That's very like history, isn't it – a mixture of fact and imaginative speculation. ... I think if we begin to imagine the emotional life of this important character in the way that I've written it, I think it will be no bad thing. Of course, it's open to argument, and people will, I hope, continue to imagine and re-imagine Ned Kelly in other ways. (7.30 Report ibid.)

It must make what's left of the historical profession shudder; there can be as many Kellys as writers to imagine him, and if the record is silent on what he thought of Olympic swimmers then it's the job of the novelist to inform us all. The problem is that when the powers of creative imagination are valued more than those of historical research, whatever a novelist can convince his audience happened did happen and to hell with the historical record.

As Simon Catterson put it in *The Age*:

Every time a major book on Ned Kelly appears, reviewers seem inevitably to reach for the cliché that such and such an author has newly revealed the man behind the iron mask. But what if Kelly, who has inspired more than 100 books, to say nothing of the plays, films, music and paintings, is all the things people say about him and at the same time, none of them. His name is known throughout the land and his deeds revered by many, and yet with each new layer of myth and interpretation he becomes even more elusive and enigmatic. (23 October 2000)

In 50 years time perhaps scholars will read Carey's novels for what it tells about republican opinion at the

beginning of the century rather than for anything it has to offer scholarship on a bushranger two centuries past. For an historian like Ian Jones it must be a bit perplexing; after spending years mastering the sources he now sees that a novel, which has no basis in primary research, will become the popular source of information on Ned Kelly.

Of course it's always harder to force a real figure to conform to a particular political line when there is ample evidence of what they actually thought and did. In this, the season of Bradman's death, there is ample evidence that national heroes do not have to be creatures of fiction. And where there is a factual record there is always room for debate. Thus the hagiography in the days after Bradman's death was tempered by Paul Kelly's measured analysis of Bradman as icon (*The Australian*, 28 February) and Alan Ramsay's critical piece (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 February).

Ian Jones' sympathetic biography of Kelly sticks to what the records can show. But Carey chose to go the extra yard to create an acceptable hero for our time, and to do that he needed the guise of fiction.

Which did not bother many of the reviewers much at all. Almost all of them liked the book, not just for the quality of the writing and the creation of Kelly as a credible character, but also for the way in which Carey shaped history to his purpose. Most of them didn't seem to mind the blurred distinction of demonstrable recorded fact and fiction to create some sort of conflated "truth". Thus Michael Fitzgerald's review (*Time*, 30 October 2000) admired the way Carey offered an "energised confabulation of man and myth" and freed Kelly from "the straightjacket of fact":

Where his previous novels have skirted around Australian history, (this) jumps right in and assumes the guise of truth. It's a fabulous performance.

It's a glibly written ("energised confabulation" indeed!) example of the common theme, that historical truth can be whatever the author, or even the reader, wants it to be.

There is a great deal more of this sort of relativism, such as Katherine England's piece (*Advertiser*, 14 October 2000) which argued that because Carey produced a credible fictional character his book is not necessarily fiction at all:

Certainly Carey convinces with his "True History" ... that Kelly could well have been this passionate, personable politically naive young man ... Carey has at least done us the service of putting in most of the full stops – the frequent re-adjustment of phrasing required makes a memorable microcosmic

metaphor for the larger process of constantly readjusting one's concept of what is or might have been historical truth

It's an extraordinary statement, certainly there are as many interpretations of history as there are writers and readers but those that are credible are the ones based on the sources, all sorts of sources to be sure but not fictional diaries.

Barry Oakley was more interested in Kelly as a myth or perhaps it was a metaphor, for something or another, in a piece which was characterised by some spectacular writing such as; "the iconic helmet suggests interior steel" and "the circle of the Kelly story now snaps shut like a handcuff". With prose like that Mr. Oakley could get a gig with *Time*.

Oakley thought it was a marvellous novel but saw its greatest importance as asserting the values of the national character:

By digging down into a profoundly Australian character, Carey releases reserves of feeling, an artesian Australianness – as Henry Lawson did with Joe Wilson, Joseph Furphy with Tom Collins, George Johnston with Jack, Patrick White with Stan Parker and Albert Facey with himself. Mythic energy is tapped. They become the tales of the tribe. (*Australian's Review of Books*, 8 November 2000)

Or at least the right-thinking left-leaning tribe of Anglo-celtic men over 60.

John Hay (*Courier Mail*, 28 October 2000) agreed that it was the creative writers rather than the men and women who merely make or record history who are important in shaping the national character.

... it is the novelists and artists whose imaginative achievements provide those lasting insights into the lives of people and nations rather than the words of historians or politicians.

Assuming of course that they are ideologically sound novelists and artists. The insights into national character from a Hansonite writers' version of Australian history might not be to everybody's taste. Matt Condon (*Sun Herald*, 15 October) also produced some dazzling insights in yet another review which seemed to imply that it is the myth which matters:

Carey's novel operates very much like the Kelly myth itself. There is always and always will be a blurring of fact and fiction. It is, in the end, what makes a myth a myth

But whether intentional or not, by comparing Carey to American novelist Cormac McCarthy, Condon also demonstrated that it is possible to meditate on national character without seeking the sanction of history.

McCarthy's *Border Trilogy* is a great work of imagination which captures the lives of cowboys on the American-Mexican frontier early last century in a world where their skills and values were becoming obsolete. It is an apt comparison with Carey; both novelists have a great ear for language and create credible characters whose fates are worth caring about. The difference is that McCarthy is writing fiction and does not need the sanction of an ersatz history to make his characters believable.

It was left to Morag Fraser to carefully set out what appeared to be Carey's purpose in a piece that did not judge but merely exposed.

Carey is an unabashed apologist – a romantic apologist what's more – for Kelly and his clan, but he is also too much the ironist not to be alive to the density and contradictions of the historical record. He seems almost as interested in why Ned Kelly matters to Australia, what he says about what we have been and what we want to believe about ourselves, as he is in revising or revisiting the old story (*Australian Book Review*, November 2000 (extracted at www.vicnet.net.au))

Fraser's point goes to the heart of the issue. Carey's novel occupies contested ground but those who dare to question whether there is anything in Kelly's historical record worth celebrating can be dismissed as lacking the imagination to understand the truth.

It's probably not surprising that few critics stood up to criticise Carey's celebration of Kelly. Andrew Bolt anticipated Carey's approach a year before the novel appeared (*Herald Sun*, 4 October 1999). Bolt made the point that the "Kelly dreaming" is as Australian as whingeing: "that politicians are scum, and judges, laws and police their agents of oppression. As for footy umpires ... (sic)".

Frank Devine went further in a piece that lightheartedly suggested there was nothing in the Kelly legend that should make Australians of Irish descent proud.

Ned Kelly has always been an embarrassment to me. He is the kind of Irish-Catholic hero the (19th-century) Masons might have made up to humiliate us.

Devine argued that Ned was less bandit folk-hero than a spectacular whinger whose "Jerilderie Letter" was not so much a revolutionary manifesto as an exercise in "boastful lying, paranoid self-aggrandisement (with) visions of horrifying violence". (*Australian*, 30 October 2000).

But it was the particularly understated conclusion that made Devine's case:

Kelly was 25 when he was hanged. The blood chills on the basis of the Jerilderie letter

alone at the idea of his living another 20 years. This is fruitful unexplored territory for imaginative literature. Kelly would have become the Pol Pot of north-east Victoria.

It was an astute, if over-the-top, remark. Men convinced that they alone stand up for justice and rely on violence to make their case are not always all that respectful of the rights of others. But it brought a venomous response from the keeper of the Kelly flame, Ian Jones (*Australian* 1 November 2000).

Devine's bile-green anti-Kelly tirade is enough to make every Australian with a drop of Irish blood – and millions more who can't claim that distinction – spring to the barricades for Kelly.

Most of the piece consisted of Jones' calling Devine names, refuting his arguments and justifying Kelly's behaviour, largely along the lines that society did him wrong. But the curious thing is that, for all the one-eyed barracking, Jones is too much the scholar to deny that understanding Kelly depends on the historical record:

Something about Kelly impels Australians – whatever their ancestry or religion – to see Kelly in simplistic terms: as wholly good or evil. To dismiss Kelly as a horse thief and cop killer is on a par with seeing Jesus as an executed rebel who doesn't seem to have got on terribly well with his mum. In fastening on such convenient details, one completely loses sight of the far more complex human and historical picture where the truth of the life may be found.

Which is exactly the point; Jones' take on Kelly is sympathetic but based on the evidence in the records. While Carey relied on the Jones biography for an historical context, his Kelly is a complete work of imagination. To assume the two are the same, as so many of the reviewers did, demonstrates that while they may believe there is no such thing as objective truth they are desperate to ensure that it is their version of Kelly, redolent with hatred for elected government, the agencies of the law which support it and competitive free enterprise which prevails. It's a fortunate thing that the Hansonites are not bookish; they would love Peter Carey's version of Ned.

Frank Moorhouse produced a very different kind of historical novel which did not receive anywhere near the coverage nor generate the silly speculations on the flexibility of historical truth. *Dark Palace* is the sequel to his 1993 *Grand Days*. The dust jacket announces that the former is "a companion" to the latter but reading them in sequence is the only way to do justice to the complex world Moorhouse has created.

Where Carey attempted to capture all that is good and true, if murderous, in the Australian character. Moorhouse was far less ambitious. But the heroine of both his novels, Edith Campbell Berry from Jaspers

Brush in the Shoalhaven, is just as convincing as Carey's Kelly. Edith does not stand for anything particularly significant, which in some ways makes her credibility as a character all the more an achievement.

Between Ian Jones' research and the fact that most Anglo Celtic Australians know the bones of the Kelly legend Carey was saved much of the trouble of setting the stage for his hero. Moorhouse had to work much harder at least for Australians under 50 who are likely to think that the League of Nations is a Euro-pop band.

Grand Days and *Dark Palace* chronicle Edith's decades of service for the League as small participant in its failed struggle to establish a world peace and a major player in its internal bureaucratic struggles. The private life Moorhouse creates for Edith is much more fun; she is sexually curious, dispassionately promiscuous, emotionally reserved, but very confident of her innate right to a good time.

Dark Palace is a very traditional novel, a collection of sometimes over-stuffed set pieces where its characters participate in tableaux of public life. Some of the cast are less believable than others; the host of the louche nightclub Edith and her cross-dressing bi-sexual lover frequent just turns out to be a hero of the Red Cross and an important anti-Nazi agent. Neither the character nor role ring true; but no more or less than Carey's attempt to turn Ned Kelly into a working-class hero wanting nothing more than a fair go.

But only very traditional diplomatic historians would be able to fault Moorhouse on the detail of the League or the life of the people who served in its Geneva headquarters. Through Edith, he discusses the politics of disarmament; the League's increasing impotence in the face of fascism and the refusal of the United States to join and the final tragedy when its work was completely ignored at the San Francisco Conference that established the United Nations.

Moorhouse clearly did an enormous amount of work to get Edith's context right, but he never implies that his book is anything more than a novel or that Edith stands for something definitive in the Australian character.

This novel is historical fiction of the Barker and Mantel kind. Real and imaginary characters intermingle. Edith is a protégé of Australian Tory John Latham and warns English Tory Anthony Eden about the Holocaust. When she comes home on

leave, she addresses the League of Nations club at Sydney University and takes a question from a young James McAuley .

It is far different from the historical fiction of Vidal or Carey in that Moorhouse advocates no cause and makes no claim for Edith other than to render her as a credible character with an interesting story to tell.

As with Barker's World War One Britain and Mantel's Revolutionary Paris, Moorhouse creates an historical stage for his characters to act upon, but not to declaim their creator's politics. Moorhouse used history as a backdrop for his characters and did not presume to preach. He was telling a story not calling down the judgment of history on the villains in his book.

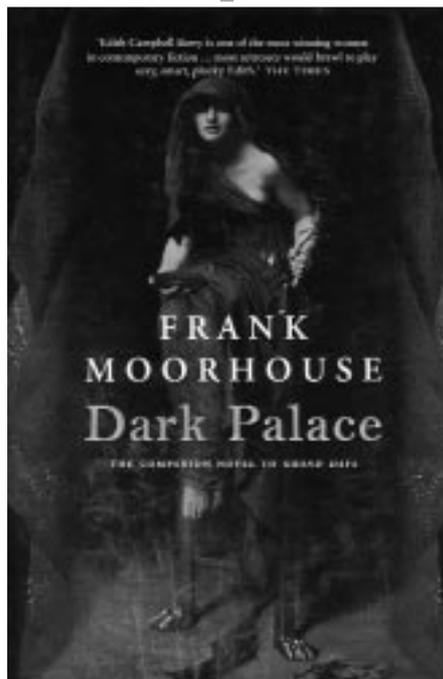
Dark Palace did not generate anywhere near the media interest of Carey's *True History* and, contingently, probably did not sell as many copies. This may be because Edith is not a conventionally attractive character compared to a folk-hero bushranger. She is an ambitious woman who makes her own way in the world and declaims no specious declarations about freedom and fairness. She steals nothing and murders no one and her creator makes no claims that she is anything more than a fiction. It may be because it is an

unfashionable novel, carefully plotted and playing no tricky games to blur events that can be demonstrably proven to have occurred and those that an author decided should have.

Perhaps it was because the novel makes no claims to offer an alternative truth on Australian history and does not play to the gallery of left-wing causes, no corrupt coppers persecute Edith and she makes no speeches for a Republic. In fact, she actually takes pride in being a British-Australian.

Dark Palace is an Australian novel in the tradition of Martin Boyd. Edith Campbell Berry is a character that Lucinda Brayford would have understood, and probably envied and she is as much an Australian creation as Carey's Ned Kelly. If she seems less real it is because the world and values she represented are out of fashion in a time when the Kelly legend is far more appealing.

Whatever the reason, Moorhouse did not receive anywhere near the comprehensive response that was Carey's. Perhaps Carey enjoyed the better publicist, or perhaps his writing and values were more to the taste of the reviewers. Whatever the reason,



Moorhouse was poorly served. Some were short and some were just mean-spirited

Peter Craven was not entirely dismissive (*Australian*, 2 December 2000) of the novel but did think that it was slow, Edith was not a credible character and Moorhouse can't write:

The prose of *Dark Palace* is best read in great rapid gulps. Like an airport novel. If it is read slowly, for the grain of the voice, the cadence and the syntax, what becomes apparent is a level of infelicity, highlighting the book's crudeness of effect.

What was worse, according to the ever-youthful Craven it did not even deliver for older people:

There is something deeply attractive for people of middle years about the idea of a large-scale historical novel set during the period of black romance before their own births, and incorporating the blood-sniffing portents of the war as well as the what-the-hellism of a kind of Dorothy Parker-Algonquin sensibility. But Moorhouse points towards it rather than brings it to life. This is not to deny that the book has charm, constantly milked and creamed and sometimes curdled as it is.

There was more of the same from Ivor Indyk, (*Age*, 25 November) who considered it as a failure compared to *Grand Days* and praised it with faint damns:

Moorhouse's strengths are as a comic writer. Since provincial comedy depends on a discrepancy of scale, his characters are in the habit of seeing the small in terms of the great and the great in terms of the small. ... In its appreciation of these absurd disproportions, which aren't after all so absurd, *Dark Places* (sic) puts a powerful case for the provincial perspective.

Indyk's major complaint was that the novel was about failure, about the betrayal of hope and about people having the moral courage to cope with circumstances:

His characters are essentially comic – they strive to have noble thoughts and perform heroic actions, they soar, they stumble, they are awkward, they are taken for fools and dreamers. The grander the theatres in which this drama of aspiration is performed, the greater the comic effect.

Some readers might think that this is in fact a mark of Moorhouse's success in creating characters who deal with life pretty much as most of humanity experiences it. Moorhouse's achievement in capturing the sheer futility of much of human existence also annoyed Indyk:

What made me not just critical, but angry when reading it, was the sense that failure was already built into the novel's aesthetic.

The interminable conversations about sanctions or disarmament or drinking; the apparent deliberate banality of some of the staged scenes ... the sheer length of the novel itself: these give the impression that Moorhouse is exercising the provincial's right to be as tedious or long-winded as he wants to be once he has the attention of the world - and is going to make it listen,

Perhaps Indyk would have preferred an Edith who made long speeches about justice, wearing home-made armour.

It was left to Andrew Riemer to produce the only elegantly argued and balanced review of *Dark Palace*. Where others saw faults Riemer saw an "admirable novel" that was to scale with its subject:

***Dark Palace* is a fine achievement. There are some splendid set pieces here of a kind that would cause problems of balance and proportion in a shorter, more compressed work.**

It was a novel that mastered complex material:

Moorhouse pulls off a spectacular feat of sleight of hand in pitching Edith's personal history against the political upheavals of mod-20th century Europe.

And it was a novel based around a credible central character:

Edith's personality holds this sprawling narrative together as effectively as it did in *Grand Days*. Yet both the character and the structure of *Dark Palace* are more complex and more confidently handled.

Most importantly it was a novel not a manifesto; Riemer suggested that Edith's ambivalence about Australia may echo, however faintly, Moorhouse's own view since he has lived abroad for some years but qualifies the suggestion, "these are of course no more than the sentiments of a character in a work of fiction".

Certainly Moorhouse could have created Edith as a feminist opponent of all things British who campaigned at the League against the Empire and who yearned for an Australian Republic. *Dark Palace* probably would have been more praised if he did. As it stands, it is a novel with a memorable heroine and a sense of the League of Nations but history it is not.

But then again Moorhouse did not try to create a past to suit his own beliefs. The fact that Edith seems so enormously antique is a mark of his success in creating a world very different to our own.



LISTENING TO THE BARTONS

To celebrate the centenary of Federation, Radio National is broadcasting a lecture series. Stephen Matchett has been listening to the Barton Lecturers and found some unsurprising themes.

With no compelling foundation saga to define us nor a common ethnicity, the question of what it is to be an Australian has exercised the opinion elite at the centenary of federation, not least Radio National's Barton Lecturers series.

As we approach the halfway point of the ten lecture series the speakers have demonstrated a surprising consensus, sometimes with more optimism than hard evidence, that it is our diversity that unites us. It is a hopeful argument, one that seizes the high ground by painting ethnic triumphalists of any persuasion as bigots; an argument designed to portray Australia as a nation based on a commitment to ideals.

It may be optimistic but in an environment where the forces of prejudice and reaction stalk the marginals, it is also fiercely political. By setting up the ideal of a fair go for all as the definitive national virtue the first three lecturers all sought to seize the high ground on what should have made Australia a just society in the past and what can make it one in the future.

Donald Horne's inaugural lecture (11 February), which modestly covered other issues beyond his achievements as editor of the *Bulletin*, argued that we need to assert our core values to overcome the ideological fragmentation he detected in the 1990s.

Horne did not see ethnic conflict between the Anglos and the migrants as the problem. Rather it was the rise of the populists who wanted to shout down the voices of indigenous Australians or advocates of the environment or the poor.

Horne's solution is one which, if practised, would have already helped shorten the Hansonite Terror by putting its special pleading in context.

He spoke up for a civic state, based not on ethnicity or geography but on support for a set of universal values best encapsulated in the time-honoured, Australian phrase, "a fair go". For Horne, to be Australian should have little to do with ethnicity and everything to do with commitment to the rule of law, a universal franchise and fair elections and a recognition of the unique status of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. His conclusion made the point:

And the alternative? What should we call someone who believes that the government

is above the law, that opinion should be standardised, that majorities are born to rule, that minorities endanger social cohesion, that the wellbeing of the Australian people is not a concern of government and that there was not a prior Aboriginal occupation of Australia? One might also be tempted – although of course one would resist the temptation – to call them "un-Australian".

John Hirst (18 February) produced a less cerebral but more optimistic version of the same argument. According to Hirst the great Australian achievement is to accommodate millions of migrants who have shaped the culture of their new land and in turn been shaped by it.

The core value that made this possible is the belief that everybody should receive a fair go.

This sense of tolerance is, according to Hirst, a bottom up phenomena, the official line may change from assimilation to multiculturalism but people will work out for themselves what sort of Australia they want. They have already decided on a nation not just where people of different ethnicities and religions happily coexist but where they inter-marry to create an entirely new people who are not defined by their ancestry but are simply Australian.

To give a framework for this creation of a new people Hirst, like Horne, believed we need to codify what Australians stand for. Where Horne hoped for statements of abstract principles Hirst thought we can do it by creating a canon that all school students should be familiar with, ranging from Henry Lawson's *The Drover's Wife*; to an extract from Sally Morgan's *My Place*. In a world where books are artifacts his reliance on literature is touching, but at least he didn't include *Sea Change*.

While he did not define it as such, the greatest challenge Hirst saw, for his vision of an Australia where different races and cultures gradually dissolve in the continental melting pot to create a new Australian nationality, is the unsolved conundrum of indigenous Australians. Hirst's position was gently expressed and his unorthodoxy surprisingly went unchallenged. What he suggested was that ever more government money will not resolve the problems isolated indigenous communities face. Nor will a Treaty, which he argued is impossible when Aboriginality is based on social acceptance rather than genetics. "The division and the bitterness would begin with the act of defining who the Aborigines are," he claimed.

But there is little to fear, argued Hirst, because Aboriginies, just like migrants are gradually blending with the rest of Australia through intermarriage. The proud optimism of his conclusion said it all:

The marrying and partnering of people of all sorts across all sorts of boundaries is the great unifying force in Australia. The United

States never saw such a rapidly melting, melting pot. It will produce, before too long, a new people who will have darker skins, much better suited to this place and our sun.

Which is all well and good for everybody apart from indigenous Australians, whatever their genetic make-up, who still believe that their land was stolen by force of arms and who don't want to blend in with the descendants of their conquerors.

Mary Kalantzis was less impressed by the Australian achievement, seeing the act of Federation as inherently racist, a compact between the working and ruling classes to protect wages and conditions by excluding Asian and Pacific Island workers. Unsurprisingly, she also argued that the treatment of Aborigines throughout Australia's first century was a national shame.

It was a shame, she argued, that was the equivalent of Nazi Germany's, ("nor were the technologies of race management so dissimilar"). It is an appalling argument. Australian governments and peoples down the generations have much to answer for in the attempt to end distinct Aboriginal ethnicities and cultures, but however bad their behaviours, it does not merit comparison with Auschwitz.

But while Kalantzis found little in the past to celebrate there was much in contemporary Australia in which she saw reasons for pride; the success of mass immigration, the creation of a globalising economy and the engagement of ordinary Australians with the spirit of Reconciliation. Like Hirst she believed it was the tolerance of the Australian people that is the foundation for a new nation:

Negotiating diversity is now the only way to produce social cohesion. Pluralistic citizenship is the most effective way of holding things together; and an outward looking, internationalist approach to the world is now the only way to maintain the national interest.

And, as Hirst did, she concluded with an anecdote of the Australia of the 21st century by describing a wedding she had recently attended between a woman of Irish background and an Aboriginal man:

The cultural heritages were interwoven: clapsticks and brolog dancing; larrikin exuberance and Irish irreverence; all mixed with lace and flowers and pale blue bridesmaids. This is Australia, a place of sometimes easy diversity.

After all the gentle optimism, the strident rhetoric of Lydia Miller's fourth Barton (4 March) was pronounced.

Miller focused on the incontestable need to resolve the nation's relationship with Indigenous Australians and to address their unjust deprivation but she went

further. In particular she argued that "democracy is still an oxymoron for Australia" and that the Lockean compact between government and people was broken.

If those who constitute the State are not prepared to act in a manner that enfranchises the polity then why should Aborigines as a polity, entrust their autonomy in such a dangerous institution. An institution that conducts itself on the whims of political opportunism and expediency and actively seek to disenfranchise the rights, freedoms, and accordingly, the very existence of Indigenous people, has no validity.

For those who accept that Aborigines have a separate political identity, as distinct from unique social and economic needs, Ms Miller did not offer much hope. After all, nothing much changed between the 1890s when,

The self proclaimed ruling elites and the squattocracy, managed to ensure that their powerbase was firmly entrenched, their economic interests consolidated and their determination over Aborigines, Women (sic) and others was determined.

and the 1990s when

the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation in a parallel ten year period from 1991 to 2001, failed to gain the necessary endorsement from the same ruling elites.

Yet, even Miller was optimistic and placed her faith in the Australian people. She argued that a popular movement could achieve Reconciliation, which certainly did not mean some anodyne national apology. Rather Reconciliation meant "Indigenous self-determination".

It is not about mimicking non-Indigenous determinations of what is good for us; it is about the right to determine our future as a fundamental premise of asserting our authority and autonomy as Indigenous peoples.

It was a fighting piece, one redolent with bitterness for past wrongs but one which, for all its strident rhetoric, shared the faith of the other lecturers that ordinary Australians can build a tolerant, inclusive nation.

Whether opposition to change will come from Miller's ill-defined elite (which evidently does not include people with unfettered access to the national broadcaster) or from ordinary Australians is a question for which the Barton Lecturers can only have one answer. Whether it is shared by those who would make us One Nation is the question.



GERARD HENDERSON'S **MEDIA WATCH**

The essential problem with anniversaries is that they keep re-occurring. One after another. Or, rather, decades – or quarter centuries – after each other. Late 2000 saw the twentieth anniversary of John Lennon's death and the twenty-fifth anniversary of Governor-General John Kerr's dismissal of the Gough Whitlam Labor government. The occasions were welcomed with the usual amount of hyperbole and false memory. What's new?

GIVING MURRAY SAYLE A CHANCE

In Japan Peter Martin interviewed Tokyo based Australian journalist Murray Sayle for the ABC *PM* program on 8 December 2000. Why? Well, apparently, Mr Martin is a fan of the Beatles and all that. And Mr Sayle has a theory about why John Lennon was murdered in New York in 2000. But, then, he has lotsa theories.

In introducing the segment, which went to air just before the conclusion of the program, compere Mark Colvin struggled to find something, anything, to hang the story on. So he tried this. Tokyo is "the site of the museum that celebrates Lennon's life and work and it is the Japan Society Gallery in New York that is hosting an exhibition on his wife Yoko Ono". Really. What's more, Mark Colvin went on to inform listeners that none other than Murray Sayle HIMSELF had "written the introduction to the program of that exhibition". Truly. And that "Sayle argues that it is impossible to understand the work of Lennon and Ono without first understanding Japan at the end of World War II". So there.

And then it was over to Murray Sayle. He referred to Yoko Ono as coming, on her mother's side, from "a family connected distantly with the [Japanese] Royal Family". And, "on her father's side, from a Samurai family who became very wealthy in banking". And she went to "a school that was set up for princes and princesses and people of approaching...social rank". Including, apparently, the present Emperor of Japan. So, what's all this got to do with Mark Chapman's decision to murder the Beatle in New York many decades later? Well, hold on – if you please.

Here is the Sayle point. If point it is. Because of her privilege, the young Miss Ono did not suffer as much as her contemporaries in the privation that afflicted Tokyo during the aftermath of World War II. However, because United States occupying forces "on

the whole behaved very decently as occupiers", Yoko Ono "came to a simple conclusion that the enemy was war itself". As in, give peace a chance. Moreover, an unintended consequence of Japan's military defeat was to demystify Japan's "male...warrior values". As in, give feminism a chance.

Then Yoko met John. He of the "happily bored marriage". She of the "message that it's war itself that's wrong, that women are being oppressed". So it's out with *Love Me Do*. And it's in with *Give Peace a Chance* and *Woman is the Nigger of the World*. All due to Yoko Ono, it seems.

But, alas, tragedy was just around the corner. According to the Sayle version-of-life, when John Lennon met Yoko Ono "he was signing his death warrant". Here's the explanation. Post Yoko Ono, John Lennon became a performance artist. According to Sayle:

The performance artist is a person who is looking to influence the opinions of millions of people. It's a form of power, in other words. Assassination is a form of performance art. It's in a way, the ultimate performance art.

So there you have it. Ono turns Lennon into a performing artist and he, in turn, is assassinated by Mark Chapman – in performance artist mode – who, according to Sayle, "wanted...Lennon's power". Then Peter Martin put the big, really big, question: "So if Lennon [had] stuck to writing *Love Me Do*...?". The implication in the question was that *Love Me Do* singers do not get murdered. The answer, according to Murray Sayle, is that Mark Chapman would not have bothered to shoot any of the other Beatles. Because they were not performance artists. Spoke Sayle:

Could you imagine anyone trying to assassinate Ringo Starr? Was anybody going to try to assassinate Paul McCartney? The composer of sweet times is not a performance artist. Lennon made himself a performance artist and brought about his death...

Interesting theory. To be sure. But weren't there four Beatles? As in John, Paul, Ringo and George? The latter being George Harrison. Now, according to The Thought Of Murray Sayle, George Harrison is not a performance artist. Yet he was the victim of a serious

AUSTRALIA CHOOSES

FOREIGN INVESTMENT - FORTRESS AUSTRALIA OR BRANCH OFFICE?

The setting up of the Foreign Investment Review Board and the creation of the "national test" for foreign acquisitions and takeovers, suggests successive federal governments believe foreign investment is good for us.

The Melbourne Business School's Ian Harper, author of the Shell Report on national Issues relating to the proposed merger with Woodside, believes that it is appropriate to have a process in place to check the national interest. But he also feels that there is little point in complaining about foreign takeovers "when foreigners pay for the right to control the enterprise when they take it over". Payment that gives companies a chance to grow and prosper – and benefits shareholders.

John Quiggin, Australian Research Council Senior Fellow, ANU, and occasional columnist with *The Australian Financial Review*, is not opposed to foreign investment as such, but is concerned that Australia might become a branch office economy, if unfettered foreign investment is allowed to take place.

SPEAKERS : AN HARPER (Professorial Fellow at the Melbourne Business School – formerly a member of the Wallis Committee) & JOHN QUIGGIN (Australia Research Council Senior Fellow, ANU)

TOPIC : Foreign Investment: What is at stake?
DATE : Tuesday 3 April 2001
TIME : 5.30 for 6.00 pm
VENUE : Clayton Utz Seminar Room (Level 34), 1 O'Connell Street, Sydney

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assassination attempt. Only recently. But if Murray Sayle had acknowledged this before his *PM* interview, he would not have got a run. And we all would have been deprived of his latest insights from Tokyo – including the gem that "assassination is...the ultimate performance art". Well done Murray.

QUIET ON THE TEICHMANN FRONT (CIRCA 1975)

Meanwhile in Australia, the twenty fifth anniversary of The Dismissal received considerable media attention. Albeit somewhat scaled down on the 1995 experience. Once again, the Gough Whitlam Fan Club rushed in to person the (ideological) trenches. For example, on ABC metropolitan radio in Melbourne on Friday 10 November 2000, Virginia Trioli interviewed historian Stuart Macintyre. Professor Macintyre ran out the traditional leftist critique of The Dismissal. When talk-back time arrived, neither the interviewer nor her subject saw any reason to query the analysis of callers who equated John Kerr's actions in 1975 with those of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party in the mid 1930s.

In 2000 there was, however, some good news. It was all quiet on the Max Teichmann, Ross Terrill front. At least. Unlike 25 years ago.

Remember Mr Teichmann? In the 1960s and 1970s, when an academic at Melbourne's Monash University, he was a barracker for various leftist causes and something of a cheer leader for Gough Whitlam and the Australian Labor Party. However, these days, Max Teichmann is a born-again political conservative. Writing in the *Australian Financial Review* on 19 July 1999, Christopher Pearson (another born-again type) listed Max Teichmann as one of several contemporary Australian political conservatives who had commenced on the left. Along with P.P. McGuinness, Bill Hayden and, of course, C.P. himself.

C.P. maintained that "Teichmann's position evolved primarily in response to the Left". So much so that his "critique of parasitism in the institutional Left, old and new, made him a heretical presence at Monash". Maybe. But quite late in the day. So to speak. When the left was at its most fashionable in the 1960s and 1970s, your man Max was a leftist. Of the hyperbolic kind. Which brings us back to The Dismissal, 11 November 1975.

In November 1975 the Melbourne University Students Representative Council sounded the ideological alarm at The Dismissal and all that. It called on Max Teichmann to rally to the cause. Mr Teichmann responded with one of the most hysterical pieces of pamphleteering in modern Australian history. Here's a glimpse of the Melbourne SRC flyer which was headed : "Don't Let

History Repeat Itself!" and signed "Max Teichmann – Senior Lecturer Politics – Monash University". It commenced with a comparison between Germany in the 1930s and Australia in the 1970s:

At the beginning of 1932 Germany was a Weimar Republic semi-democracy. By the end of 1933 she was a dictatorship. One crucial turning point in the terrifyingly rapid collapse of the German democratic system occurred on 1st June 1932. On that day Hindenburg, the president of the German Republic, dismissed its prime minister [Von Papen], although he had suffered no defeat in the parliament... Von Papen did not have the confidence of parliament, nor was he able subsequently to win an election. But in terms of a narrow, legalistic interpretation of the German constitution, Hindenburg's action appeared justified. Within eight months Adolf Hitler was to be prime minister of Germany.

We are not arguing that Sir John Kerr is a Hindenburg, Malcolm Fraser a von Papen, or that there is a Hitler waiting in the wings of Australian politics to seize power. But it is clear that without the events of June 1, 1932 – without the manipulation of the German constitution by the wire pullers of the parliamentary opposition, without the dismissal by the President of the prime minister, without his appointment of a prime minister who lacked parliamentary support – German democracy might have survived.

The similarities between Germany 1932 and Australia 1975 do not end there. The Nazis gained support by exploiting people's fears about inflation and unemployment; by promising all things to all men, in terms so vague so as to defy analysis; by kicking the communist can; by posing as defenders of the constitution and of law and order, while busily subverting all these things.

And so it went on. And on. Leftist political cliché followed by leftist political cliché – all attempting to compare Adolf Hitler's coming to power in 1933 with Malcolm Fraser's appointment as caretaker prime minister in November 1975. So much so that your man Max actually prophesied that Malcolm Fraser and his deputy Doug Anthony might use victory in the forthcoming December 1975 election (which followed The Dismissal) to overthrow the Australian Constitution and become self-appointed Aussie dictators. Yes, really. Here, again, is Max Teichmann at his hyperbolic best. Or worst. Depending on your point of view:

Australians coming from countries like Greece, Italy, Yugoslavia or pre-war Central

and Eastern Europe can see the developing forces quite easily. Other Australians who believe that our extreme right can be ejected at the following election should not be so confident. Given the lengths to which the Fraser-Anthony group are going to in order to seize power - how likely is it that they will meekly surrender office in three years time?

The caretakers have already moved against the only impartial section of the media, the ABC, have already started dismissing or transferring some public servants, while pressuring others to fabricate a case against their former Ministers. If elected, these people can be expected to re-activate ASIO, to purge education, the Public Service and the media, to attack the unions. Senate rules will be changed to prevent a future Labor majority blocking their legislation, and wholesale gerrymander of the Lower House can be predicted. How far and how fast these processes will go will depend upon how easy, or how difficult, our new Conservatives find it to stay in power – indefinitely. This fearsome prospect has never faced Australians before, either in peace or in war. It faces us now.

All that was a quarter of a century ago. At a time when leftism was all the rage on Western university campuses. Then, your man Max was a committed leftist – and an angry one as well. Now that political conservatism is much more prevalent, your man Max is a political conservative. His work appears regularly in the late Bob Santamaria's *News Weekly* and in Christopher Pearson's *Adelaide Review*. Now Mr Teichmann has junked any historical comparison between Australian conservatives and the Nazi real thing. Now, instead, he targets what he terms the "new class" (see his article "Closet Maoists", *The Adelaide Review*, November 1997).

These days Mr Teichmann defines the "new class" as the "they" who "went out to become teachers, public servants, journos or Labor polities...". Come to think of it, this is the very group that your man Max attempted to appeal to in his "Don't Let History Repeat Itself!" missive of circa November 1975.

MARY AND PIERS - AN UNUSUAL UNITY TICKET

Alas, it seems that the Nazi-Germany-Equates-With-Democratic-Australia fallacy is alive and well. A quarter of a century after Max Teichmann's encyclical *At the beginning of 1932*. (In the best Vatican tradition, the first few words of Max Teichmann's epistle/pamphlet have been turned into the title – but without the customary Latin).

On 13 February 2001 Piers Akerman pontificated at some length on Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party in his column in the *Sydney Daily Telegraph*. And, guess what? Yes, Piers A. found a (possible) link between Germany in the 1920s and Australia circa 2001:

One Nation...presents an interesting dilemma for both major parties in the lead-up to the next federal election, expected in November. As the party of the disaffected, those on fixed and lower incomes, the less-well educated, the disappointed, the frustrated and the threatened, it stands for little but against a lot.

There are indeed parallels that can be drawn between the electorate's reaction to One Nation and Germany's reaction to the emerging Nazi Party in the 1920s, which was also weak on policy and strategy but strong on the appeal to those who felt their leaders had let them down in a rapidly changing world.

Hitler was regarded as a crank, his speeches were ridiculous and regularly mocked, he had no organisational base, no policy base and he spoke gibberish. But every time he was attacked by the media or by thinking opponents, his popularity increased. So, too, does that of Ms Hanson

This is rather a unique double. For it suggests that Mr Akerman is abysmally ignorant about history – both past and contemporary. Adolf Hitler was not a democratic politician who benefited from counter-productive attacks initiated by "the media" and "thinking opponents". Rather, he was a revolutionary leader of a revolutionary party. It is ludicrous to compare Hitler's Nazi movement of the 1920s with any politician in a pluralist, democratic society. Including Pauline Hanson.

Moreover, if One Nation were the "party" of all the groups which Piers A. maintains (i.e. including "those on fixed and lower incomes" and "the less well-educated") it would be scoring markedly higher than it is in the national opinion polls. And it would have gone close to winning government at the recent Western Australia and Queensland elections. After all, Australians on fixed and lower incomes (to take but two of Piers A's categories) constitute a lot of votes.

Shortly after the Akerman treatise, Mary Kalantzis entered the my-Nazi-comparison-is-more-appropriate-than-yours competition on 20 February 2001. Delivering the third in the Barton Lecture series (which were broadcast on ABC *Radio National* and excerpts of which were published in *The Australian* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*) she described "race" as "the only thing distinctively Australian about

Federation". From here, it was back to Germany in the 1930s and 1940s.

Professor Kalantzis then went on to describe the "story of Federation" as a "modern story that in its fundamental shape is not dissimilar to Germany's". There was more, much more:

The big picture ideas are no different to those of the German 1930s and 40s: of the necessity to create "one people, without a mixture of races" (to use Deakin's words); of unbridgeable racial inferiority; of races destined to die out; and of the eugenics of progress. Neither were the technologies of race management so dissimilar: the enforced separation in concentration camps; the petty regulation of freedoms of movement and association. Nor were the effects so different – in the Australian case, a genocide in which 90 per cent of the Aboriginal population died during the period of a century, and the wholesale destruction of people with distinctive languages and ways of life.

So there you have it. According to Mary K's (apparent) analysis, Alfred Deakin equals Heinrich Himmler, the South Australian Colebrook Children's Home equals Auschwitz-Birkenau and death by typhoid equals death by poisoned gas. Or something like that. Few would dispute the fact that Aborigines experienced an appalling fate in the decades after European settlement in 1788. Due to disease, mistreatment and, on occasions, murder. But it is counter-productive hyperbole to compare the situation faced by Australian Aborigines in 1901 with that experienced by Europe's Jews and gypsies in 1941.

Piers A. and Mary K. have little in common, in a political sense at least. Except for an ability to engage in historical hyperbole. In the Max Teichmann tradition, class of 1975.

ROSS TERRILL ON PAULINE HANSON AND WHATEVER

Unlike Piers Akerman, Ross Terrill does not see parallels between the disaffected in Germany circa 1925 and those in Australia circa 2001. But, like Mr Akerman, Ross Terrill has attempted to analyse the One Nation vote. And he, too, considers, the media responsible for helping to "build One Nation up".

In a recently lengthy piece entitled "Why PM must do a Hanson deal" (*Australian Financial Review*, 21 February 2001), the Harvard University based research fellow offered John Howard some advice. Namely that "he should make the reasoned case to One Nation that they are better off with the Coalition in power than they would be with the ALP in power". And that the Prime Minister "should be honest about the policy overlap between part of One Nation and part of the Coalition".

Ross Terrill sees it this way:

For One Nation, as a small party on the Right, to give its preferences to the Coalition is simple political rationality....For the Coalition to return the favour, however, is no more than a courtesy.

Accordingly, the Coalition's proper approach to One Nation is evident. Namely "embrace them to death". This overlooks the fact that any preference deal between the Coalition and One Nation could cost the Liberal Party votes – especially in the capital cities of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. Moreover, there is no evidence to support the claim that there is a "policy overlap" between One Nation and the Coalition. Indeed, on many economic issues, Pauline Hanson's positions are much closer to the anti-globalisation left than to John Howard's economic reform agenda.

So, should the Prime Minister take notice of Ross Terrill's all-the-way-from-Harvard advice? According to *Media Watch* – no. Not on your nelly. All John Howard has to do is to wait his time – and Ross Terrill's advice will change. According to his track record, that is .

As explained in *The Sydney Institute Quarterly* Issue 12, Ross Terrill is best regarded as a whateverist. A tactic which he perfected when a China scholar – sometimes termed a China expert – in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Put simply, whateverists were wont to follow the official line emanating from Beijing. Whatever it was. When Mao Zedong was in power, Mao was basically OK. Ditto with the Gang of Four. Then Hua. Then Deng and the economic reformers. And so on.

Ross Terrill seems to have followed the same practice when writing on Australian politics. In his 1987 book *The Australians*, published when Bob Hawke was at the height of his influence, Labor emerges as the appropriate government for Australia. The Hawke government had rejected Whitlamism and was implementing much needed economic reform. However, the 2000 edition – written at a time when John Howard seemed to be in the political ascendancy – implied that the Coalition government was just the ticket for Australia.

Which brings us back to The Dismissal. In *The Australians*, Ross Terrill wrote that in 1976 he attended a rally in Melbourne "commemorating the first anniversary of the Whitlam dismissal". He recalled:

It was all froth. The Whitlam age of reform was over. The Australian people had turned the page, and the revolutionary talk was as meaningful as a Latin chant to Aussies alarmed by the rapid onset of high inflation and high unemployment. The average citizen had interpreted democracy differently from the Whitlam intellectuals.

It's just that Ross Terrill neglected to point out that, in

JONATHAN SHIER

at The Sydney Institute

Reforming the ABC has become something of a political football in recent years. Everyone seems to know what's wrong but changes underway have not eased the outcry. What's Aunty up to? Hear the ABC's Managing Director, Jonathan Shier on what he thinks is being done, why it has to happen and what sort of ABC will emerge.

SPEAKER : JONATHAN SHIER (Managing Director, ABC)

DATE : Tuesday 19 June 2001

TIME : 5.30 for 6.00 pm

VENUE : Mallesons Conference Room, Governor Phillip Tower (Lvl 60)

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Harry Seidler - A LIFE WITH ALICE SPIGELMAN

As she was about to publish her biography of Harry Seidler in 2000, Alice Spigelman found the largely unknown early years in his life in Europe were a bone of contention for Sydney's most well known architect. Over months they conferred and the story is now on the bookshelves. From Vienna, to the years of Anschluss, to Sydney, Harry Seidler has chalked up a colourful past. Interned in Canada, enrolled at Harvard and a forty year love-hate relationship with his critics. Alice Spigelman was born in Hungary in 1946 and has lived in Australia since 1956. She has written plays about Freud, Virginia Woolf and Miles Franklin. Her biography of Harry Seidler, *Almost Full Circle* (Brandl Schlesinger) is her first biography.

SPEAKER : ALICE SPIGELMAN (Author/
*Almost Full Circle – The Life of
Harry Seidler* [Brandl Schlesinger])

DATE : Tuesday 10 April 2001

TIME : 5.30 for 6.00 pm

VENUE : Clayton Utz Seminar Room (Level
34), 1 O'Connell Street, Sydney

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the mid 1970s, he was a "Whitlam intellectual". So much so that on 12 December 1975, the day before the 1975 Federal election, *The Age* published a letter from none other than Associate Professor Terrill of Harvard University. The missive from Harvard urged Australians not "to turn the clock back" to the 1950s. Rather the Australian born Harvard professor – as he then was – positively barracked for Gough Whitlam:

Three years of Labor foreign policy have given Australia the best standing she has ever had in the world. Whitlam moved us up to be a middle power which thinks for itself, and sees trends before they occur rather than limping behind them.

Living overseas I have seen (not least in the USA) the new respect for Australian diplomacy. Our vital tie with the USA has been redefined by Whitlam in a realistic way that has been completely accepted by Washington and will prove an historical turning point in the alliance.

We now have open windows to all the major powers in the world. We are constantly consulted as a respected third party on vital international issues. Our race blind-spot has been reduced and our image in the Third World has shone for the first time. Far from going out on a limb with communist powers, the Labor Government blazed a trail that other Western nations are following. As Nixon followed Whitlam to Peking, so the Americans will follow us into post-war Hanoi and Phnom Penh.

After the winter blight of an L-CP foreign policy that was bleakly negative, only half-Australian, and led to disasters like Vietnam, all this amounts to a re-birth for Australian foreign policy.

Needless to say, there is no reference to Ross Terrill as a barracker for Gough Whitlam in *The Australians*. Convenient that. Now, just a mere quarter century later, Ross Terrill is maintaining that John Howard "should give One Nation credit for raising" such issues as (i) the cost of "compensatory justice for Aborigines", (ii) the "outrage of busy-body UN committees from New York lecturing us on social justice, (iii) the "ravages of political correctness" and (iv) the "importance of preserving cohesion as Australia grows and changes" (*AFR*, 21 February 2001). Moreover, Ross Terrill now alleges that Labor favours "social engineering". Unlike, of course, when he was a Whitlam intellectual.

There is nothing wrong with anyone – including academics – changing their minds. It's just that somewhere in the 318 pages of *The Australians* (2000 edition) the author might have seen fit to acknowledge that he had changed positions – from a Whitlam intellectual to a Howard supporter – and explain why.

MARK LATHAM - AND OTHER TRIVIA

- It's interesting to note that, in his letter to *The Age* of 12 December 1975, Ross Terrill urged the United States to follow the Whitlam government "into post-war Hanoi and Phnom Penh". At that time, the communist regimes had been in power in Vietnam and Cambodia for around eight months. Professor Terrill's letter contained not one whiff of criticism of the rule of either the Vietnam Communist Party or the Khmer Rouge.

Writing in the *Australian Financial Review* on 22 January 2001, Christopher Pearson welcomed Ross Terrill's *The Australians* (2000 edition) and, quoting Michael Duffy, referred to him as "another decent Lefty who just got mugged by reality". Maybe. Or, maybe, by fashion. Certainly they share something in common. In 1975 C.P. also saw no problems with the Khmer Rouge rule in Cambodia. Like R.T., he later changed his mind.

- Meanwhile, Christopher Pearson has qualified for entry into a subsequent edition of the book *They Never Said It* (OUP, 1989) which was compiled by Paul E. Boller, Jr. and John George. In his *AFR* column on 5 February 2001, C.P. quoted Oracle chief executive Larry Ellison as having told Harvard Business School graduates that business school graduates were "fit only to be wage slaves". Interesting quote. But it's not from Larry Ellison. As David Emery pointed out in a letter to the *AFR* published on 7 February 2001, Ellison never said it. The full story is at www.snopes.com/quotes/ellison/htm

- From New York comes news of something that Robert Hughes actually did say. Namely that, for all he cared, Australia could be towed "out to sea" and sunk. (See D.T. Max "The Critic in Exile", *New York Times Magazine*, 14 January 2001). Hasn't anyone told Mr Hughes that Australia is an island continent and, consequently, already "out to sea"?

- In Melbourne Sarah Hudson reports (*Herald-Sun*, 3 February 2001) Greek singer Nana Mouskouri's account of her friendship with the late Frank Hardy. According to Ms Mouskouri: "We had a real friendship, but I really only can say I saw him four times; mainly, we talked on the phone". Funny that. Frank Hardy used to imply that their friendship was of the nudge/nudge-wink/wink variety – as Pauline Armstrong reported in *Frank Hardy and the making of Power Without Glory* (MUP, 2000). But, then, Hardy always had a difficulty in separating truth from fiction.

- Morag Fraser commences her regular column in the *Sunday Age* (7 January 2001): "Rock pools, like the deep one I am dangling my feet into at the moment, are home to strange fish and odd reflections". It doesn't get any better.

- Keith Suter advises readers of the *International*

Herald Tribune (21 February 2001) that 18 year-olds in Australia "see politics as irrelevant." All of them, apparently. While "their cynical parents see it as a source of disappointment – or crime". Yet another candidate for the-most-hyperbolic-comment-of-the-year award, no doubt.

- Labor backbencher Mark Latham debates Christopher Pyne (a Liberal counterpart) on the ABC *Lateline* program. The date is 23 February 2001. Latham tells *Lateline* compere Tony Jones that Pyne is complaining too much about his (alleged) recent intimidation by ALP politicians at a Canberra pub. Mark Latham moved quickly into mate/blokey mode - so beloved by the right wing machine of Labor in New South Wales. Declared Mark Latham:

I grew up in the Western suburb of Sydney and, in the culture of mateship, what was said in the pub stayed in the pub. And, if you couldn't handle it yourself, don't go tattling on like a little school boy coming into the Australian Parliament to tell tales about what happened in the pub the night before. Goodness gracious. Grow up and handle it like a man. Handle it like a man Chris.

Then, in response to a question from Tony Jones as to whether it might be a good idea if the Federal MPs should be counselled on bullying/bastardisation, Latham M.P. rejected the proposal, stating:

Well, Tony, no-one stuck anything up Chris's bum down at the pub. All they did is have a few choice words. If he can't handle that, he shouldn't be in Federal politics".

Goodness gracious, to use a Lathamism. This is the very same Mark Latham MP who wrote in the *Daily Telegraph* on 19 February 2001:

People aren't silly. They have seen decades of broken promises and have grown cynical about election campaigning. They have seen enough of Question Time on TV to regard it as little more than a national joke.

So there you have it. The recorded television performances of politicians at Question Time have led to the Federal parliament becoming a "national joke". But telling *Lateline* viewers that a parliamentary counterpart did not have anything stuck up his "bum down at the pub" is quite okay. Goodness gracious.

