

# FORTHCOMING FUNCTIONS AT THE SYDNEY INSTITUTE

**SPEAKERS** MICHAEL McKERNAN (Author, *This War Never Ends* [Penguin])  
& DIANE ARMSTRONG (Author, *The Voyage of Their Life* [Flamingo])  
**TOPIC** *Trauma and Memory in Australian History*  
**DATE** Wednesday 7 November  
**VENUE** 41 Phillip Street, Sydney  
**TIME** 5.30 for 6.00 pm  
**LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**

**SPEAKERS** DEWI ANGGRAENI (*Australian correspondent Tempo*)  
& DR WILLIAM MALEY (Research Associate, Centre for Arab & Islamic Studies, ANU)  
**TOPIC** *Islam and the Afghanistan Crisis*  
**DATE** Tuesday 13 November 2001  
**VENUE** 41 Phillip Street, Sydney  
**TIME** 5.30 for 6.00 pm  
**LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**

**SPEAKER** DAVID DAY (Author *Chifley: A Life* [Harper Collins 2001])  
**TOPIC** *Remembering Ben Chifley*  
**DATE** Tuesday 20 November 2001  
**VENUE** 41 Phillip Street, Sydney  
**TIME** 5.30 for 6.00 pm  
**LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**

**SPEAKER** JAMES JUPP (Adjunct Professor, RMIT, Melbourne and Editor,  
*The Australian People: An Encyclopedia of the Nation* [CUP 2001])  
**TOPIC** *The Australian People*  
**DATE** Tuesday 27 November 2001  
**VENUE** 41 Phillip Street, Sydney  
**TIME** 5.30 for 6.00 pm  
**LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**

**SPEAKER** PRU GOWARD (Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner & author,  
*A Business of Her Own* [Allen & Unwin])  
**TOPIC** *The Success of Women in Business*  
**DATE** Tuesday 4 December 2001  
**VENUE** 41 Phillip Street, Sydney  
**TIME** 5.30 for 6.00 pm  
**LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**

**SPEAKER** ANNA LANYON (Author of *Malinche's Conquest* [Allen & Unwin]  
& winner of the NSW Premier's Award for History 2000)  
**TOPIC** *Mexico's Art and Politics - from Malinche to Frida Kahlo*  
**DATE** Tuesday 11 December 2001  
**VENUE** 41 Phillip Street, Sydney  
**TIME** 5.30 for 6.00 pm  
**LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**

## AUSTRALIA CHOOSES

**SPEAKER** JUSTICE G M GIUDICE (President, Australian Industrial Relations Commission)  
**DATE** Tuesday 12 February 2002  
**VENUE** Clayton Utz Seminar Room (Level 34) 1 O'Connell Street, Sydney  
**TIME** 5.30 for 6.00 pm

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# Sydney Institute

## QUARTERLY



*ISSUE 15 VOL. 5 NO. 3  
OCTOBER 2001*

**STEPHEN MATCHETT**  
on writing about the  
Anzac Legend

**LEADERSHIP-** Donald  
Horne & Dorothy  
McCrae-McMahon

**LIBERAL PARTY  
CENTENARY  
HISTORY-** no women  
please

**GEORGINA GOLD**  
on Cyber Hacking

**IAN HENDERSON** on  
the Mood of the Nation

**JOHN McCONNELL**  
reviews Sean Carney &  
Colin Tatz

**MEDIA WATCH**  
tackles Miranda  
Devine, Murray Sayle  
& Germaine Greer

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*with Gerard Henderson's*

# *MEDIA WATCH*

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# PIERS - FOLLOW JANE

These days Piers Akerman likes to bang the loyalty drum. The *Daily Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph* columnist, who appears regularly on the ABC TV *Insiders* program, regularly describes commentators who oppose his views as "fifth columnists". When the term "fifth columnist" had real meaning, it was used to describe persons living in the west who supported communist regimes in Europe and Asia. Also Akerman likes to query the loyalty of individuals least able to defend themselves. For example, Muslims living in Australia in the wake of the 11 September terrorist mass murders in the United States. Writing in the *Daily Telegraph* on 13 September he asked: "How, for example, do Muslim residents in Australia differ in their views from those of the Taliban or others capable of ordering these atrocities?". It was the case of guilt by non-association. Akerman's implication was clear. Namely that all Muslims in Australia, potentially at least, are supporters of the Taliban. He did not offer even one piece of evidence in support of this most serious allegation.

In other words, Piers Akerman is all too quick to challenge the loyalty of others. But none too keen to defend his record the last occasion when Australia had substantial forces in the field against a well trained and well equipped force. Namely, the Vietnam War – when the Australian Defence Force took on the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army (which was supplied by the Soviet Union).

Piers Akerman was born in June 1950. So he was no teenager when, in November 1971, he lent his name to an advertisement placed by the leftist Association for International Cooperation and Disarmament in *The Review* (formerly the leftist *Nation Review*) on 27 November 1971. These days, when Akerman's one-time association with the AIDC is raised, he invariably goes into denial. By attempting to pass-off the AIDC advertisement as merely "a petition opposing Australia's participation in the Vietnam War" (*The Age*, 8 May 1998) and/or a mere manifestation of his "involvement with the Moratorium movement in opposition to the Vietnam War" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 September 2001). But was much more than that.

There were many Australians who opposed Australia's Vietnam commitment. If that is all that Piers Akerman had done at age 21, no one could object to his position – even if they disagreed with it. It's just that the AIDC petition went well beyond criticism of the Coalition government's policy on Vietnam and actually cast aspersions on the Australian Defence Force itself. It commenced by accusing Australia's conservative political leaders of the day of making Australia "an accomplice in one of the most obscene crimes of the 20th Century". Among those politicians named as (allegedly) involving Australia in criminality were Robert Menzies, Garfield Barwick and William McMahon. But the AIDC petition did not stop there. The signatories claimed that Australia's involvement in Vietnam had "cost us our...self respect", "made mercenaries of our Armed Forces" and sent Australia "careering into another cesspool of American imperial politics". Members of the Coalition government of the day were labelled "cynical sycophants". Piers Akerman's fellow signatories included communists (Laurie Aarons, Pat Clancy, E V. Elliott, Jack Munday) leftists (Jim Cairns, Alex Carey, Jennie George, Lionel Murphy and Helen G. Palmer) along with assorted serial anti-Americans.

In the early 1970s Piers Akerman was yet another fashionably leftist journalist. At the time it was all the (leftist) rage to label members of the Australian Defence Force serving in Vietnam as "mercenaries". In other words, Akerman's stance circa 1971 is understandable - albeit regrettable. Three decades later, however, he should have the courage to admit that the reference to ADF personnel as "mercenaries" was wrong. Akerman should not attempt to deny his contempt for the ADF at the time by now claiming that he was merely opposed to Australia's Vietnam commitment. In the US, Jane Fonda has publicly apologised for her opposition to US forces in the field. If Piers Akerman, circa 2001, intends to continue to beat the drum and query the loyalty of other Australians, he should at least publicly regret his past comments falsely labelling Australian service men and women of three decades ago as "mercenaries". Piers - follow Jane.

# ON VISION, MOVING FORWARD AND OTHER (LEADERSHIP) CLICHES

The call for “vision” and a requirement to “move forward”. They are among the key clichés of our time. Invariably accompanied by a demand for leadership – to implement visionary policies in the moving forward process. So to speak. Yet the search for a leader is not matched by a willingness to follow. Not in most modern Western societies, at least. And certainly not in Australia.

## THE CULT OF LEADERSHIP

The best known leaders in human history have been dictators. Of both the totalitarian (Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, Mao Zedong, Ho Chin Minh, Castro) and autocratic (Cromwell, Elizabeth I, Louis Napolen) kind. There have also been a range of military dictators. Democratic societies which regularly change their governments rarely experience the cult of leadership. There are exceptions – usually associated with war or social trauma. In the United States George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Franklin D. Roosevelt are stand-outs in the leadership stakes. Would this be the case without – respectively – the War of Independence, the Civil War and the Great Depression? Almost certainly not.

It's much the same in Britain. Winston Churchill was a political disappointment before the outbreak of World War II and was defeated in the general election of 1945. He is much admired for his wartime leadership. Churchill's qualities of courage and leadership, which John Lukacs has documented in *Five Days in London*, could not have been demonstrated without the existence of extreme crisis. Margaret Thatcher did not experience similar military threat – even though the Falklands tested her courage. Her leadership skills were proven by changing the culture of a nation in economic decline.

Australia's most recent prime ministers have reflected on political leadership Down Under. One in private before he obtained Australia's top political job. The other publicly as prime minister on the occasion on the Centenary of Federation. In

December 1990 Paul Keating addressed the Canberra Press Gallery's annual dinner (the talk was published in Mark Ryan's edited collection *Advancing Australia*). He reflected that “the United States has had three greater leaders – Washington, Lincoln and Roosevelt” – and declared that “our problem is we've never had one leader like they've had”. True. But, then, has Australia not experienced a war of independence or a civil war. What's more, a nation of six million circa 1931 was in no position to give leadership to the world during the depths of the Great Depression.

During his address to the Joint Commemorative Ceremonial Federation Sitting at Melbourne Exhibition Building in May 2001, John Howard specifically honoured Robert Menzies and John Curtin as “political leaders of the past”. Certainly the Liberal Party founder was a successful leader in the 1950s and into the 1960s. However, as Allan Martin has reported, it “was widely believed” that Menzies “was not a good wartime administrator”. In any event, Menzies's inaugural prime ministership lasted only from April 1939 to August 1941.

John Curtin became prime minister in October 1941. He has been praised for his wartime leadership. Yet David Day's biography is open to the interpretation that, psychologically, Curtin was not up to the task. It was just that in those days an elected leader's personal life was not subjected to widespread media scrutiny. That's why the serial adulterer John F. Kennedy was regarded during his lifetime as the embodiment of family virtues. Whereas the part-time philanderer William J. Clinton is recognised for his personal weaknesses as well as his public strengths. In Western democracies, at least, political leadership is not getting any easier.

It's not difficult for totalitarian leaders, or authoritarian rulers, or military despots to create enthusiastic followers. This can be achieved by a range of measures, from pure terror to mass propaganda. It's much more difficult for democratically elected leaders to develop a dedicated following. Believers invariably latch on to ideologues. As Bernard Crick has argued in his *In Defence of Politics*, democratic politics is the anathema of ideology. That's why in, Western societies, fanatical followers are found invariably in sects. Not in mainstream politics which, of necessity, works on the basis of compromise and coalition.

The leadership phenomenon is likely to diminish further in our time. Modern communications make it all but impossible for a Lenin/Stalin/Hitler/Mao to hide their crimes. Likewise, in contemporary Western societies it is increasingly unlikely that elected politicians will be able to cover their imperfections. From Winston Churchill's drinking

habits, to Francois Mitterand's war-time collaboration with the French Vichy regime, to J. F. Kennedy's womanising and so on. The real achievers of our (democratic) time are those who can obtain widescale support – for a while at least - on the basis of a “Come follow me, with all my imperfections” plea.

The task is particularly difficult in Australia. Due to the fact that this is an immigrant society without deeply embedded roots of hierarchy or class. And on account of the fact that many of the early settlers – including those of Irish and Cockney backgrounds – brought with them an ingrained sense of irreverence to authority. Especially to the prevailing ascendancy or establishment.

Australians tend to be respectful to their political leaders. Meaning that they are generally polite and non-confrontational. Yet this usually is accompanied by a continuing irreverence. This makes it especially difficult for Australian politicians to develop a following. All are profiled in Michelle Grattan's edited collection *Australian Prime Ministers*. Of a total of 25, only two were genuinely popular for large parts of their tenure. Namely Joseph Lyons (1932-39) and Bob Hawke (1983-91). Still, both were treated with a degree of irreverence - in spite of their popularity.

Even in war-time, Australia's prime ministers have not been able to captivate the nation. This was true of Joseph Cook, Andrew Fisher and Billy Hughes during 1914-1918. And of Robert Menzies and John Curtin during World War II. Curtin has been the beneficiary of a good press since his death in office in July 1945. His authority was not so evident in life. In spite of the genuine threat to national security after the Fall of Singapore, Curtin was not able to introduce universal national service and, for a time, suffered the ridicule of his Caucus colleagues Arthur Calwell and Eddie Ward.

Australians, or some Australians at least, are capable of recognising - and responding to - leaders. Including the likes of military commander John Monash. But even he never enjoyed the acclaim of a George S. Patton or a Douglas MacArthur in the United States. Certainly some prominent Australians - including Mary MacKillop, Manning Clark, Bob Santamaria and Gough Whitlam - have had their fan clubs but all four also engendered strong opposition. The late Don Bradman is perhaps the only Australian tall poppy who was never cut down - even if his personality was criticised by fellow cricketer Bill O'Reilly. Moreover Howard Florey, perhaps the most influential Australian, is scarcely known in his country of birth - despite his important contribution to the development of penicillin. This is not a land for heroes. There are just too few hero worshippers. Or followers.

Donald Horne and Dorothy McCrae-McMahon, two of Australia's best known social commentators, have recently entered the leadership debate. The prolific author of a score of tomes has just written *Looking for Leadership: Australia in the Howard Years*. And the social activist and former Uniting Church minister has made her own particular contribution with *Daring Leadership for the 21st Century*.

Both want leaders. Neither shows any inclination to follow. *Looking for Leadership* contains much advice of the “John Howard should” genre. In other words, good leaders should follow Donald Horne. Likewise, this is the suggestion contained in *Daring Leadership* as to how a “good political leader” should handle “struggling people” who hold intolerant positions on Aborigines/immigration/welfare recipients etc: “I hear your fear, I see your pain.” It turns out that this is a tactic to get all-fearful pain-feelers on side so that, in time, they will come to agree with McCrae-McMahon's teachings.

The common assumption behind *Looking for Leadership* and *Daring Leadership* is that Australia is failing on leadership. And that this is understood by Australians - or, certainly, most Australians. Donald Horne craves for direction, of the public policy kind. Dorothy McCrae-McMahon has more a caring-sharing-luvvy agenda. She maintains that “we are a society that lives unsatisfied in our soul” and that this can only be resolved by the creation of a new community.

## DONALD HORNE - NOT A FOLLOWER

*Looking for Leadership* is an empirical book with names, places, facts, and so on. And sources. Although it will come as no surprise to followers of The-Thought-of-Donald that the sage quoted most frequently is, er, Horne Himself. Particularly his *The Lucky Country* - along with *Money Made Us*, *The Great Museum*, *The Public Culture*, *The Avenue of the Fair Go* and more besides. In Chapter 8 he even quotes a Hornism that appeared as recently as Chapter 2. Donald Horne is certainly no follower - of anyone other than Horne Himself. In the policy debate at least, he has been a leader since the publication of *The Lucky Country* in 1964. So he is entitled to be taken seriously.

*Looking for Leadership* is contemporary history with much autobiography and a touch of prophecy. The author gives the impression of regarding “the Howard years” as a past event. It is of no particular moment that Horne regards Howard as a “political freak”, “an apparition from the Dreamtime Fifties” with his “compass...set backwards” who happens to be a “disgrace” to the Liberal Party's “liberal and... pragmatic traditions”. But it is of concern that, in a

book published some months before the 2001 Federal election, Horne can refer to “the lessons from the Howard era” and comment that “one of the defining characteristics of the Howard years was [sic] an attempt to change the agenda backwards...”. Horne-the-Prophet may be correct. It would be wise for Horne-the-Commentator to assume that the Coalition has at least a fighting chance to hold on to office.

*Looking for Leadership* is not an anti-Liberal diatribe. Sure, the author is super-critical of John Howard. However, the contemporary Australian politician who emerges most positively from the book is Liberal deputy leader Peter Costello. It’s just that Donald Horne is unhappy with Australia’s political leadership for the past three decades or so. As readers of *The Lucky Country* will recall, he had few kind words for Australia’s leaders in the Commonwealth of Australia’s first six decades. The combined assessment of *The Lucky Country* and *Looking for Leadership* that Australia has been lacking in political leadership for most of its inaugural century.

Donald Horne believes that, in the 1980s “many Australians again began to feel frustrated by their leaders - especially their political leaders - because they didn’t seem able to talk sense about the changes in economic policy that began in the Hawke-Keating years”. He believes that “no political leaders – not one - could speak to their fellow citizens about what was going on in words those citizens could understand”. As a result, Australia’s leaders “seemed to be steering without a compass” and this, in turn, “began to produce so much political itchiness”.

Is this the case? There is an alternative scenario. Namely that, in the past quarter century or so, Australians have adapted more readily to economic or social change than any comparable society. From Robert Menzies’s retirement on Australia Day 1966, political leaders began to dismantle the political legacy of Federation. Namely White Australia, protection all round and one of the most highly centralised industrial relations systems in the Western World.

On any analysis, this is a substantial body of change. In a social and economic sense, Australia is significantly different in 2001 than it was even two decades ago. This suggests that there have been leaders willing to lead (even if, at times, change came about due to lack of a ready option). Along with followers ready to follow, albeit grudgingly. Sure in the 1998 Federal election minor parties (One Nation, Democrats and the Greens) scored some 20 per cent of the total House of Representatives vote. This means that eight out of ten Australians are still willing to vote for the Coalition or Labor - in spite of the changes of the 1980s and 1990s. This is all the

## The Australian People

One in four Australians was born outside of Australia. According to Dr James Jupp, this is exceptionally high by international standards. In 1988 James Jupp edited the first edition of *The Australian People: An Encyclopedia of the Nation, Its People and Their Origins* (CUP, 2001) - from the Aboriginal people, to the early settlers and on to post World War II immigration. The 2001 edition contains much fresh material (one third of both topics and authors are new) and takes account of events since 1988. Including the demise of the Soviet Union (leading to the creation of new nations) and the fracturing of Yugoslavia - in addition to developments in the immigration/multi-culturalism/reconciliation debate in Australia. Hear James Jupp on the rich diversity that is contemporary Australia.

**SPEAKER: JAMES JUPP** (Adjunct Professor, RMIT, Melbourne & Editor, *The Australian People: Encyclopedia of the Nation* [CUP 2001])

**TOPIC: *The Australian People***

**DATE: Tuesday 27 November**

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more remarkable in view of compulsory voting in Australia - which compels the disaffected, and even the seriously alienated, to at least turn up at the polling booth and collect a ballot paper. Also, we know that over 95 per cent of votes cast are formal.

*The Lucky Country* was - and remains - an important book. So it's understandable why Donald Horne would want to refer to it in his most recent work. As the author remembers his tome today: "*The Lucky Country* said we should abandon the White Australia Policy, reduce tariffs, back away from Britain, welcome relations with Asian countries, relinquish attempts to force assimilation of the indigenous people, pursue a more independent foreign policy, de-Anglicise the Australian imagination in cultural and economic life - and we did". It also campaigned against wowsers and censorship and called for "a greater public easing of manner among Australians". Donald Horne concedes that his 1964 book was a "bit weak on women" but proudly relates how he was out in front of the debate on such issues as technological change, the republican cause and the dispossession of Aborigines. He did, however, miss the need to dismantle the culture of the Industrial Relations Club which presided over the continuation of Australia's highly centralised industrial relations system.

Donald Horne argues that "the many changes from the early 1960s to the early 1990s might have left residual resentments among some people but their overall peacefulness was a victory for Australian liberal-humanist optimism and a workable kind of tolerance". It is the thesis of *Looking for Leadership* that, by the mid 1990s, this "workable kind of tolerance...went publicly dead". For this the author blames John Howard and, to a lesser extent, Kim Beazley. The Opposition leader is criticised for not being into Paul Keating style "big pictures". Donald Horne concedes that Peter Costello, if he becomes prime minister, might be the kind of leader who can "appeal to public spirit". And Kim Beazley's views are consistent with Horne's demand that Australia "improve services that people want...such as education and health". So the future is probably not so grim after all.

Donald Horne has identified certain necessities for effective political leadership. Making "people feel they are part of events they can understand". Demonstrating "competence in public performance - speaking clearly and persuasively and, at times, touching the imagination". Seeking "the good in people and...making it stronger". Articulating "for people what is already partly in their minds". And so on.

Even on Donald Horne's criteria, some of Australia's leaders must have met a few of his benchmarks. Otherwise the recent changes, post *The Lucky Country*, would not have taken place. The only

Australian leader who comes in for any praise at all is Bob Hawke. However, Malcolm Fraser was talking the talk of economic reform before Margaret Thatcher or Ronald Reagan. And Tony Blair has acknowledged that New Labour was influenced by the governments of both Bob Hawke and Paul Keating. In view of this, Donald Horne's assertion that Australia has been so lacking in leadership that its leaders have followed "the latest overseas ideal" seems unfair - and inaccurate.

## **DOROTHY McRAE-McMAHON - THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION**

Once upon a time the term spiritual used to equate with religion. Not any more. In modern parlance, the use of spiritual as an adjective frequently implies a non-materialist stance. As in, "Surfers Paradise is commercial - Byron Bay is really spiritual" - even if coastal property prices in northern New South Wales are outpacing those in southern Queensland. In other words, it is fashionable to be spiritual. In the non-religious sense. So it comes as no surprise that Dorothy McRae-McMahon devotes a whole chapter to the concept of "spiritual leadership in a secular context". Readers of *Daring Leadership* will learn that "people who connect their endeavours with energies, corporate or spiritual, beyond themselves are usually enhanced in life and hope". And that "those who believe that there is higher power, whether this lies in the corporate endeavour or in some transcendent energy beyond themselves, are automatically placing themselves in a larger perspective". And, oh yes, "spiritual leaders look people in the eye and share in their pain and grief as they face reality". Well, of course.

Donald Horne's attitude to leadership is empirically based. Dorothy McRae-McMahon's approach is, well, spiritual. *Daring Leadership* contains very few names and the author is keen to point out that this is "not a manual for leadership". Instead readers travel on a spiritual journey to a conclusion that, in essence, challenges the Christian understanding of the Fall. The Catholic and Anglican churches taught that salvation, in the next life, came through God's grace. But to Dorothy McRae-McMahon, "all of us will be to some degree sick in our souls until we have as our goal and purpose in life the search for the creation of true human community".

So, just how can true community be achieved? On this earth, no less. The thesis of *Daring Leadership* is that "being a leader is to assume the responsibility of taking people beyond where they believed they could go". In one of her few empirical comments, the author assesses "the level of visionary leadership that we can tolerate". She identifies Gough Whitlam and Paul Keating as visionary leaders - conceding

that they “possibly frightened us with their moves for change and their new images of our future”. And recognises that “in response, the electorate turned to much more conservative leaders such as Malcolm”. Unlike Donald Horne, Dorothy McRae-McMahon does not state whether she prefers a Keating style leader to a Howard style one. Instead she asks: “Were Whitlam and Keating...not ‘good’ leaders or were their visions for us flawed? Did we choose not to move forward in a radically different nation for the future?”

## LEADERSHIP WANTED - BUT WHO WILL FOLLOW?

It's relatively easy to have a “vision”, to “move forward”, even to address communal “pain” when there is an unambiguous job to be done. Today's elected politicians are unlikely to attain the charisma that results from handling successfully a major military or economic crisis. Due to ever increasing media coverage, however, they have fame. In the 21st Century, this may do.

As for leadership, Australia and other Western nations will probably muddle through. After all, that's the democratic way. Leadership is a fine concept. It's just that, emergencies aside, most of us don't like being led for very long. That's why Paul Keating and Jeff Kennett are ex-leaders. And that's why neither Donald Horne nor Dorothy McRae-McMahon are followers.

### Books discussed:

Donald Horne *Looking for Leadership: Australia in the Howard Years*, (Viking, 2001).

Dorothy McRae-McMahon *Daring Leadership for the 21st Century* (ABC Books, 2001).

John Lukacs *Five Days in London: May 1940* (Scribe Publications, 2001).

Mark Ryan (ed.) *Advancing Australia: The Speeches of Paul Keating, Prime Minister* (Big Picture Publications, 1995).

A. W. Martin Robert Menzies: *A Life - Volume 1 1894-1943* (MUP, 1993).

Bernard Crick *In Defence of Politics* (Pelican, 1964)

David Day *John Curtin: A Life* (HarperCollins, 1999)

Michelle Grattan (ed). *Australian Prime Ministers* (New Holland, 2000)

*This review article was written by Gerard Henderson in August 2001 and published in "Spectrum" section of the Sydney Morning Herald on 8 September 2001.*



# HaCk Th3 PLaN3t

Georgina Gold

In August 2001, Upper House Labor MP, Tony Kelly, found himself embroiled in a computer hacking case. Files belonging to Liberal Party MLC, Charlie Lynn, were found on a computer from Mr Kelly's office. It was alleged that Tony Kelly's son had installed programs onto the office computer that provided the dual purpose of protecting his father's computer from security invasions and, potentially, enabling the user to crack passwords and unlawfully enter other users' systems. However, an independent IT report concluded that absolutely nothing illegal had occurred and the files belonging to Mr Lynn had been accidentally placed on the Member's computer by IT staff.

The “hackergate” controversy has been one of many to rock our governments. Just before the last federal election in July 1998, a handful of Labor Party workers spread information on how to hack into the Liberal Party's campaign site. No major damage was done, except, perhaps to the egos of the Liberal Party's technical support.

Another recent example is Real Jeff.com - a site that mirrored Jeff Kennett's imaginative internet venture and launched prior to his losing the Victorian state election in October 1999. Many internet users visiting the satirical site mistook it for the “real” jeff.com site. They were greeted with “alternate” Liberal Party philosophies and personality attacks directed at the then premier. And, of course, the most famous of alternative sites can be visited at [www.whitehouse.org](http://www.whitehouse.org) the alternative site for [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov) which is a soft porn site that pictures American presidents in embarrassing sexual positions.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, stories about geek kids hacking into government and company computers littered the press. A hacker crackdown ensued, with harsh penalties and laws being put into place in an attempt to divert others from following suit. More recently, “hacker attacks” have made headlines and the stories that are reported are no longer localised stories of “script kiddies” making an ATM across state lines spew out thousands of dollars but are rather on a larger, even global scale. And even more worrying, those being affected are not

necessarily security experts in communications companies but anyone connected to the internet.

In the last few years email inboxes have been inundated with warnings about new viruses invading our computers. The Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs virus, the Love Bug and the most recent Code Red Worm have been the most prolific of viruses to hit our PCs. The recent Code Red worm, which caused increased traffic from thousands of worms threading their way through data, was anticipated to slow down internet traffic possibly grinding the net to a complete halt.

However, the fear and hype that accompanied the worm was far more destructive than the actual worm itself. The first version of the Code Red worm vandalised websites leaving behind the message, "Hacked by Chinese". Chinese computer experts quickly denied any Chinese involvement maintaining that the worm's appearance and its trail validated that it could not have been instigated in China.

In recent months, however, hacking attacks have emanated from China. And from America. After the mid-air collision on 1 April 2001 that eventuated in the death of a Chinese pilot, the capture of a US spy plane and its crew, the escalating global tension drove the political battle to the cyberspace. "Script kiddies" from the US and China went to war vandalising each others countries' websites. Mr Jeffrey Carpenter, manager of the Computer Emergency Response Team of Carnegie Mellon University, claimed no rise in hacking attacks over the net but that the attacks were focussed on Sino-American relations.

In a similar vein, the NineMSN Australian website had to be closed down a week after the recent plane hijack attacks on New York and Washington due to a mass of racial hatred commentary that hit the chat rooms. Politics is no longer the domain of houses of parliaments but truly rests in the hands of the masses.

In a report entitled *Computer Hackers: Juvenile Delinquents or International Saboteurs?* Sulette Dreyfus outlines the possible motivations for a hacker. She cites examples from the famous Australian hacker crackdown of the late 1980s highlighting psychological similarities between cases. Hackers, Dreyfus maintains, are usually highly gifted and incredibly bright, they did not quite fit in at school or university, most were introverted, antisocial and even awkward with more often than not a dysfunctional family background and most hackers had a strong anti-authoritarian, anti-establishment view.

In many cases, Dreyfus noted that hackers described the activity as an addiction or an obsession and an intense adrenaline rush accompanied successful maneuvers. And, more interestingly, many hackers believe that what they were doing was ethical, although not law abiding.

## ETHICS AND HACKING

Can a hacker have ethical motivations? Firstly, it must be noted that there is a clear distinction in the hacker world between hackers and crackers. Crackers are individuals that enter unlawfully into another's system in order to wreak havoc and steal information, in some extreme cases, for financial gain. Hackers, in the strictest sense, are highly qualified, elite computer programmers who are inherently inquisitive and enjoy seeking out information.

It is this quest for information that finds them entering into networks or testing their skills to see if they can break down security systems. This definition of hackers, however, is a rather optimistic one; as Douglas Rushkoff demonstrates in his book *Cyberia*: "While the true hacker ethic is not to destroy anything, most young people who get themselves into a position where it's possible to inflict damage find it hard to resist doing so".

In July 2001, Raphael Gray, a Welsh teenager, was sentenced with three years of court-ordered psychiatric treatment. Gray confessed that he was on a mission to reveal the lack of security when shopping over the internet. The "saint of e-commerce" collected 23,000 credit card numbers, including that of Bill Gates which he used to send a package of Viagra to the computer mogul's home.

Gray published the credit card numbers after he cracked thousands of companies' databases, after firstly contacting the companies and warning them of insufficient security measures in their system. Gray, more often ignored by the companies he notified, proceeded to highlight those companies' holes in the security systems.

At the sentencing hearing, Judge Garth Davies stated that Gray "demonstrated some sense of humour by sending Viagra to Bill Gates to mock him" and was commended in court for his whimsical humour. Gray posted a poll on his credit card site and 56 per cent of pollsters voted that Gray was acting ethically. Since his hearing, Raphael Gray has been offered a security consultancy job for an unnamed software company.

Dreyfus suggests that true hackers have a "code of honour". This moral standing restricts the hackers' actions to a "look-see" scenario - that is, hackers tend

to enter into a system to learn about the system without doing any intentional damage. These hackers do not delete any data files, would not sell or profit from the information they may obtain and the only changes they would make to the system would be to alter or delete logs to cover their tracks.

The motivations behind this type of hack is purely for interest or the thrill of the hack; a testing of one's skills. In a CNN interview with Emmanuel Goldstein, the editor-in-chief of *2600: the Hacker Quarterly* maintains that there is nothing nefarious about hacking. He suggests that hackers possess an "unrealistic naivete" in that they reveal the secrets they uncover disregarding corporate secrets or government cover ups.

Hackers, with their anti-authoritarian views, tend to believe that information should be readily available and that equitable access to this information is paramount to a free society. Interestingly, it is hackers that are the strongest supporters of strong encryption and high security measures if information is sensitive. The hacker ideology seems to be, if a hacker can break in then security is not up to scratch.

Hacking is not merely about information retrieval or breaking through security measures. The anti-authoritarian, anti-corporate ideology espoused by many hackers permeates their actions. Many hacks are intended to highlight the perceived hypocrisies of corporations and governments. In this way it is similar to the culture jammers that subvert messages in advertising or billboards.

Probably the most well known examples of these are the subversions of the Nike logo to read Pike or McDonalds logoed t-shirts that read McDeath. This subversion harps back to the original hacker ethos espoused by people like Abbie Hoffman. Hoffman, a dynamic 1960s activist, disseminated a newsletter called *The Youth International Phone Line*. This circular explained the technicalities of phreaking; the act of using the phone service for free. Simply by blowing a whistle down the phone line, it was discovered that the 2600 megahertz tone could be reproduced. In the 1970s, John Draper found that the Cap'n Crunch breakfast cereal giveaway whistle perfectly duplicated the required tone.

The philosophy behind phreaking, which more often than not goes hand in hand with hacking, is that phone calls emanate from an unlimited reservoir and, therefore, should be free. Similarly, hackers believe that information and, more importantly, the accessibility of information and the software that allows that information to be used, should be free, or at least, readily accessible.

In the late 1960s, when computers were mainframes and took up whole rooms, they were slow and laborious machines. Programmers came up with programming short cuts to reduce time wastage. These short cuts were called hacks. In 1969, Dennis Ritchie and Ken Thompson created a hack while they were working at Bell Labs' think tank. Their new operating system which resulted from the hack was called UNIX. UNIX is still a widely used operating system that enables the user more freedoms than offered in other systems such as Windows.

Most of the computer technology used today is derived from hacking exploits. Steve Wozniak learnt how to phreak from Draper and a few years later went on to build the first Apple computer. In 1978, Randy Seuss and Ward Christiansen, two hackers from Chicago, wanted to establish a cyber clubhouse where hackers could "meet" and discuss their ventures. They created the first computer bulletin-board system which is still in use today.

Hackers are mostly computer programmers that venture into new realms within the computer world. Most of the teenage hackers that were caught in the hacker crackdown of the late 1980s in Australia went on to become highly paid security experts in computer firms.

## SENATE INQUIRY

The 2600 Australia group, a hacking collective that describes itself as a "loose-knit group of people interested in computer security, electronic gadgetry, communications and just technology exploration in general", recently released a paper entitled "2600 Australia submission to Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee Inquiry into the Provisions of the Cybercrime Bill 2001". This paper outlines the definition of cybercrime, the state of computer security in Australia and solutions to security problems.

The submission maintains that aspects of the Cybercrime Bill 2001 will "unintentionally place computer security industry professionals at risk" due to broad, sweeping definitions; that law enforcement personnel are in dire need of training in the area of computer security; and a national body should be formed to oversee computer security matters. In the submission, *2600 Australia* suggests that the computer security industry tends to have a wide range of people involved and that many of the technologies used have dual purposes. That is, technology can be used to both strengthen and undermine computer security.

# TRAUMA AND MEMORY

In the stories of Australia's war heroes and those who have sought new lives Down Under as refugees, there is much to learn. Diane Armstrong as a young girl sailed to Australia on the overcrowded and clapped out *Derna* from Marseilles. On board were displaced people from camps in Germany, death camps in Poland, labour camps in Hungary, gulags in Siberia and stony Aegean islands. The epic journey lasted almost three months. In *The Voyage of Their Life* (HarperCollins), Armstrong records the pain, the trauma and the rebuilding that followed their embarkation and arrival in Australia. Michael McKernan, on the other hand, in *This War Never Ends: Australian Prisoners of War Come Home* (Penguin) has charted the experience of hundreds of returned servicemen after World War II. In our own times of extraordinary upheaval there is much to learn from the stories.

**SPEAKER: MICHAEL MCKERNAN ( Author, *This War Never Ends* [Penguin]) & DIANE ARMSTRONG ( Author, *The Voyage of Their Life* [Flamingo])**

**TOPIC: *Trauma and Memory in Australian History***

**DATE: Wednesday, 7 November**

**TIME: 5.30 for 6.00 pm**

**VENUE: 41 Phillip Street, Sydney  
LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**

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The Cybercrime Bill 2001 targets these technologies as they are perceived to be a danger and they can potentially be misused. It is these technologies, *2600 Australia* contends, that also protect the computer security industry and allow it to progress; making these technologies illegal would ultimately harm the security industry. The suggestions that *2600 Australia* made in the submission aim to increase computer security without compromising the industry or the professionals within the industry.

Interestingly, since the advent of computers and therefore the beginnings of computer hacking, the societal view of hackers has changed. Perceived initially as weak-sighted programmers that spend days and nights stuck in front of machines, they are now primarily perceived as weak-sighted pimply kids that spend days and nights stuck in front of machines and modems.

Spurts of pro-hacker sentiment have emerged with the release of a number of Hollywood hits about the computer underworld that present funky looking teenagers with dyed blonde spiky hair wearing silver glo-mesh singlet tops and rollerblades. But predominantly, society has viewed the hacker as being a menace to society that seeks to undermine the routine and ordered structure that we are dependent on.

However, computer companies and governments are now starting to realise the skills involved in hacking and that there exists a need to harness and utilise these skills. Hackers are also realising that their skills, if honed properly, are in great demand. Maybe a working relationship could be developed between the hacker world and the legitimate world of the computer industry if the technologies and motivations on both sides were understood more fully.

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



# LIBERALS AND HISTORY - WHAT ABOUT THE WOMEN?

Anne Henderson

Whatever happened to the women of the Liberal Party? As of August 2001, if the party's contribution to centenary history is any guide, apparently they're going nowhere.

The Liberal Party's *Liberalism and the Australian Federation* (Federation Press) has just been published as part of the centenary of federation. Launched by Prime Minister John Howard at the end of August (after a delay), it brought together 200 party faithful in a rousing display of solidarity. It also marked a new mood in Liberal Party circles of taking history seriously. But, for the 150 who bought the book at the launch, it poses more questions than answers about Australian Liberals.

The volume suggests that Australian Liberalism can accommodate just about any point on the political spectrum. The mercantile theories of Adam Smith and individualism, the Corn Laws, free trade and Robert Peel, protectionism, Alfred Deakin and economic intervention all the way to pragmatic defectors from the Australian Labor Party like Billy Hughes and Joe Lyons.

Just one thing in this political smorgasbord unites all. And that's winning elections. This is a book about winners. There is some welcome analysis of the theory and philosophical underpinning of Liberalism - but events, personalities and achievements in the Party, aside from Liberal government, are not covered. Not surprisingly then, in this glossy record of Australian Liberalism over a century, women in the Liberal Party don't get a guernsey. Which is something of a travesty. And at taxpayers expense.

In fact, Liberal women have contributed at crucial moments to the history of the Liberal Party. At its formation, in 1944, Elizabeth (May) Couchman took her numerically strong Australian Women's National League in to bat for Robert Menzies. Her organisation made possible the well oiled electoral machine the Liberal Party then became. Without this, it's debatable whether the party would have succeeded in the way it did at the 1949 election.

In 1996, an unprecedented 25 Liberal women MPs

took up seats in federal parliament thanks largely to the work over a number of years of the Liberal Women's Forum. At the time, Prime Minister John Howard proudly posed with his women MPs for photos, happy to smile at their success. Labor, he could proclaim, was no longer the major party where women could achieve political aspirations. He'd closed the gender gap. At the 1998 election, most of these women held their (overwhelmingly marginal) seats in spite of a huge backlash against the Howard Government.

Neither Elizabeth (May) Couchman nor the Liberal Women's Forum are mentioned in *Liberalism and the Australian Federation*. In an eleven page index there are the names of just seven women among whom Margaret Guilfoyle is the only Liberal. The others include writer Ayn Rand, One Nation's Pauline Hanson and a handful of one time conservative women operatives in Victoria who are named in a quaint chapter devoted to "Alfred Deakin and the Australian Women's National League".

Women listed in the index get just ten references between them. And while Margaret Guilfoyle is mentioned just once, Pauline Hanson gets to appear twice. For the rest, it's all about a host of Liberal chaps and how and when they ran the nation. In 100 years, you might say, nothing much has changed as recorded in so-called Liberal Party official history.

Unlike Labor's centenary history, *True Believers* (Allen & Unwin) planned some three years out, the Liberals have admitted to some haste in cobbling together their own centenary volume when they realised funding was available. Something of this was explained at the launch of *Liberalism* when Tony Staley joked, "The book was planned sort of in response to the Labor Party getting \$100,000 from the Centenary of Federation Fund and we thought if they're in for it we ought to be." The comment no doubt explains how in his and editor John Nethercote's introduction they write that it "has not been possible for this book to cover all fields of Liberal contribution to Australian development during the twentieth century".

Areas that the book does not cover are matters described as those where the Liberal Party has pushed legislative action. "New administrative law", multiculturalism, Aborigines and the environment are then listed ahead of "discrimination against women" which eventually gets a mention. This implies that women might have been included in the volume but only as a cause for legislative reform. The editors don't seem to have noticed that many women in the Liberal Party have been successful for some decades both as colleagues and party activists.

How different with *True Believers* which, taking Labor Prime Minister Ben Chifley's "light on the hill" reference, begins with a foreword from Opposition leader Kim Beazley. He quotes Chifley who saw the Labor movement as a "mass of people" rather than a

party to make “somebody Prime Minister or Premier”. And in recording this mass there are wins and losses, factions and splits, men and women, young and old. In *True Believers*, Labor women are players with causes, not simply a cause to be put on the legislative agenda. Labor women MPs take their place in caucus as much as they push issues of importance to women voters. What’s more, they are well represented in the index and the photographs.

The editors of *Liberalism and the Australian Federation* acknowledge there has been a lack of a tradition for recorded history in Liberal Party ranks. They write, “In very recent decades the literature about Liberalism and its various organisational manifestations has been growing, though it still has some distance to go before it rivals that devoted to its major challenger [read Labor Party].”

In spite of this they go on to argue that since the conservatives have governed Australia for more years than their opponents, their literature is nonetheless “a more important literature”. It’s a debatable conclusion. But if the proposition has merit, it is all the more unfortunate for the women of the Liberal Party. In the (self declared) important history that follows Tony Staley and John Nethercote’s introduction to *Australian Liberalism*, Liberal women are virtually absent.

And yet, as Winsome Roberts briefly suggests in her essay “Liberalism – the Nineteenth Century Legacy”, it can be demonstrated that women formed much of the backbone of colonial liberalism in their participation in civic agitation at the grass roots level. Involvement of women with the popular temperance movement, the right to vote, co-operatives, voluntary associations, local societies fostering self improvement and civic behaviour was immense. And, in conservative circles, it was a tradition that underpinned the vastly popular Australian Women’s National League, the aims of which were loyalty to the Empire and the throne, fighting State socialism, the education of women and protection of the “purity of home life”. The League could also claim a membership that represented women of any class or religion.

The story of the AWNL is a fundamental of Liberal Party history. Founded in Melbourne in 1904, after only two years its membership had grown from six to 15,000 with branches throughout Victoria. In 1903, Australia-wide, women voted in federal elections for the first time. Thereafter in Victoria, where voting was not compulsory, the League set out to organise women’s votes for non-Labor. After the 1906 elections it claimed success for a six per cent rise in Victorian women’s votes for non-Labor, the only state where more than 50 per cent of women voted. The AWNL was a force in conservative politics right up to the 1940s.

In 1927 Elizabeth (May) Couchman was elected unopposed as president of the AWNL and remained president until it folded in 1944-45 when its

membership became part of the newly formed Liberal Party. Couchman’s political work with the League was notable. In 1932, she was appointed to the inaugural ABC board, a post she held for ten years and her membership of social welfare and patriotic organisations were reported as too numerous to mention.

In February 1934, Prime Minister Joe Lyons, Acting Premier of Victoria Robert Menzies, Premier Stevens of NSW and Federal Attorney General John Latham left their premiers’ conference to farewell Couchman who was about to leave for North America. The political heavies recognised the AWNL could pull in the votes.

At the Albury conference in December 1944, the AWNL agreed to become one of the conservative forces amalgamating to become the Liberal Party of Australia. This was Couchman’s achievement from her close alignment with Robert Menzies. The AWNL gave to the new Liberal Party an invaluable political structure that became the skeleton of its Victorian branch network.

In *Afternoon Light*, Robert Menzies praised just two among those who helped form the Liberal Party - William Anderson and Elizabeth (May) Couchman. He wrote, “May Couchman (as I knew her) had a clear mind and a practical grasp of politics. She had for a long time been president of the Australian Women’s National League in Victoria. It was a fine body; its members did far more electoral work than most men ... it was not easy for it to merge itself into a new nation-wide organisation.”

When the Liberal Party absorbed the AWNL, it gained not just members and assets, but also the most effective political machine outside Labor politics. No history of the Liberal Party is anywhere near complete without a record of the achievements of Elizabeth (May) Couchman and her AWNL and their importance to Australian liberalism.

Likewise, the work of the Liberal Women’s Forum in present day Liberal Party politics is a fundamental part of the evolving picture of Australian Liberalism. There is a marked philosophical divide between Labor and Liberal Parties as to how women can be included in the parliamentary process. Both parties express a desire to see more women MPs enter federal and state legislatures. But the way each party goes about this is quite different.

Labor has chosen a policy of targets to ensure a significant proportion of its parliamentary teams are women - 35 per cent of candidates for winnable seats to be held by women by 2002. Liberals reject this approach as not allowing women to make it on merit. They argue that it should be individual effort and talent rather than intervention which determines a woman’s right to a seat. This is a classic illustration of Liberalism’s approach. Which is why the sudden crop of new federal women MPs in Liberal ranks

# ISLAM AND AFGHANISTAN

In the conflict and confusion following the World Trade Centre tragedy in New York, the West has begun to acknowledge that the world of Islam is as complex as any other. As the war against terror evolves, what do we understand of the many faces of Islam? Dr William Maley, academic, barrister and author of *Regime and Change in Afghanistan: Foreign Intervention and the Politics of Legitimacy* (Boulder:Westview Press) and Dewi Anggraeni, Australian correspondent for *Tempo* magazine and regular contributor to *The Jakarta Post*, are two Australians who know more than most about Islamic culture and politics, whether in Afghanistan or Malaysia or Indonesia. Hear them discuss the many facets of Islam and how we might interpret our response to the war against terror.

**SPEAKER: DEWI ANGGRAENI ( Australian correspondent *Tempo* ) & DR. WILLIAM MALEY ( Defence Force Academy)**

**TOPIC: *Some Facts About Islam - Middle East to Jakarta***

**DATE: Tuesday, 13th November 2001**

**TIME: 5.30 for 6.00 pm**

**VENUE: 41 Phillip Street, Sydney  
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after the 1996 election cannot be ignored in any writing about Liberalism in Australia.

After the 1996 election, and without the help of quotas or targets, Liberal women MPs increased in significant numbers in federal parliament. This was well before Labor women MPs caught up in number after the 1998 election. Women MPs in the federal parliament are now around 24 per cent of the two legislatures.

The sudden increase in numbers of Liberal women MPs in 1996, however, didn't just happen. For some years, Liberal women like Joan Hall in South Australia, Margaret Guilfoyle in Victoria and Chris McDiven in New South Wales had led other Liberal women party operatives in a carefully devised training program to ensure that women candidates were ready for preselection. It was a deliberately thought out policy, one which party officials like Michael Kroger in Victoria and Barry O'Farrell in NSW encouraged. Women, they had recognised, had electoral appeal.

The Liberal Women's Forum began their operation by advertising in major daily newspapers for women who were interested in Liberal Party preselection. This was a novel and free market approach and very different from Labor's more rank and file style. It certainly could be seen as another step in the development of Australian Liberalism. As women came forward with candidates like Helen Coonan (now Senator), the Liberal Women's Forum coached groups of women in the art and techniques of political life. It was a hands on approach, often carried out by simple networking and with few resources. But it worked.

Nearly a decade on, the NSW Liberal Women's Forum is already into a more advanced stage. Robyn Parker has launched a new two year course called "The Pathways Program" where women will be trained for more than just parliamentary life. Robyn Parker believes women can often have expectations easily dashed if parliament is the only goal. Now women will be skilled, as Liberals, to enter all manner of community leadership roles.

This marks a new step for the work of the Liberal collective. Labor has its unions and rightly sees itself as much a movement as a party. But since the demise of the Menzies Liberals, and the women around organisations like the AWNL, the Liberal Party has had difficulty fostering its wider spirit, the Young Liberal Movement being one notable exception.

For all this and much more, it's a great pity that in the haste to finalise a publication for 2001, the editors of *Liberalism and the Australian Federation* forgot to include the real contribution of significant women to Australian Liberalism.

Anne Henderson is editor of The Sydney Papers



# SETTING THE AGENDA

Ian Henderson

**P**inch-hitter slams home run.

That was more or less how the federal Labor Opposition saw the washup of Bob McMullan's effort in mid-August to steer the political debate away from John Howard's agenda and onto Kim Beazley's.

Sure, the ALP team copped a few bruises along the way, when McMullan's comments made it obvious that he rates spending on health and education more highly than rolling back the GST, if there is any fiscal room to move during the election. And that McMullan - the third member of Beazley's "kitchen Cabinet", along with shadow Treasurer Simon Crean - prefers to speak not of "GST rollback" but of "GST tax cuts."

On both scores, there is a minor difference of emphasis between McMullan on the one hand and his leader and his deputy leader on the other. Minor. Not large enough to justify the amount and intensity of media probing of the words that McMullan, Crean and Beazley were using. Indeed, that scrutiny managed to distract too many observers from the more serious problem facing Labor: that it had become a captive to Howard's tax cut election agenda, rather than spending its time and effort on what it wants to promote as the main issues facing the nation.

Five weeks before McMullan's intervention, Beazley had managed to become diverted from his own priorities - promises to spend more on health, education and age care, and the so-far nebulous "knowledge nation" - by a simple question from Melbourne radio journalist Neil Mitchell. Two days before the Aston by-election, Mitchell began an interview with Beazley on radio station 3AW by asking whether the voters of Aston were paying too much income tax.

"Everybody feels that they pay too much tax," was Beazley's first stab at a reply. His second - after the question was repeated - was as follows: "No, I don't believe so and I will say that with some vigour. I think the critical issues in this country now are whether we have got the right public investment in education, the right public investment in our public hospitals."

From that day until mid-August when a poll reported in *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* showed that many more voters claimed to want any budget

surplus ploughed back into spending on either health or education than wanted it to fund either GST rollback (Labor's tax cut) or lower income taxes (Howard's and Peter Costello's first choice), the election campaign debate was focussed on tax.

As one Labor insider put the problem for the opposition, "There was a view that we needed to get the focus back onto spending" but "it just drifted".

Come in McMullan. Despite the apparent differences of emphasis within Labor's leadership trio, as far as the party is concerned, the emergence of McMullan from Beazley's and Crean's shadow was a plus for the Opposition's campaign - and it is obvious that Labor will use its Aboriginal Affairs spokesman much more often in times to come in a role like that he adopted on 15 August.

It all began early on a Tuesday morning when Beazley - in Perth and about to leave home for the eastern states - decided that McMullan was the party's best option to exploit the favourable AC Nielsen survey results. That 70 per cent of the voters interviewed preferred any budget surplus to be spent on health or education while only 27 per cent opted for either income tax cuts or rolling back the GST, was good news for Labor.

It suggested that the so-far vague Howard-Costello promise to go to the polls on a "lower income taxes" platform might not be as attractive as the Coalition leadership hoped; and it offered a way out of the tax debate for Labor: that its promises seemed to be more or less in line with the public's wishes.

But, had the ALP used Beazley to kick along the favourable poll results, there was still at least one tactical problem for Labor: that its leader would have been expected by the media to be just as available to comment on any future unfavourable poll results. So, with Crean out of Canberra, Beazley's staff opted to call in a substitute when TV reporters rang the leader's office for a comment.

The Canberra-based McMullan - an experienced party operator, frontbencher and member of the small inner ring of Opposition strategist - faced the cameras. Talk of tax cuts rather than increased spending on health and education was nothing more than "elite prattle," he said. The recent focus on tax cuts by the Howard Government and the Canberra press gallery showed they were out of touch with the priorities of ordinary Australians, McMullan declared.

"We have had a bit of a contest in Australia about whether the (federal election) debate will be about health and education, or whether it will be about tax, and a number of people thought that the debate had shifted to tax. But in fact that has only been elite prattle," he said. "People in their daily lives see that

there is a crisis in health and a crisis in education, and they can't understand why the Government can't see it."

For the rest of that week, Howard and Costello tried to focus on whether McMullan had switched the Opposition's priorities, given his firm statement that "we will be delivering a GST tax cut but it's not as important as funding health and education services." The ensuing few days proved a little messy for the ALP. But at least they had - after McMullan's intervention into the debate - managed to get the arguments back into their own territory.

If a separate survey conducted by Newspoll for *The Australian* can be taken at face value, it would seem that the ALP has long been on the more popular track with voters. Asked which issues they would rate as important in deciding how they would vote at a federal election, voters have consistently ranked education, and health and Medicare more highly than they rank taxation. And more people have rated Labor better at handling both education and health than have put the Liberals and Nationals first on that score.

(In June, for example, some 27 per cent said one or the other of the Coalition parties would be best to handle education while 42 per cent nominated the ALP; comparable figures for handling health and Medicare were 30 per cent and 42 per cent respectively. And, incidentally, the same survey reported that Labor - with 35 per cent support - had eased in front of the Coalition - with 33 per cent support - for the first time in recent memory as the best party to handle taxation.)

At the very least, those Newspoll findings suggest that voters are likely to be willing to listen sympathetically to Labor's message, a conclusion that must be raising questions among the Opposition's strategists as to why the ALP is not - at this very time - well ahead in the polls. After all, Howard and Costello will be as constrained as are Beazley, Crean and McMullan during the election campaign when it comes to making fresh promises for the next parliamentary terms.

One further thing must be worrying ALP strategists. And that is whether McMullan's success in getting the election campaign debate back onto Labor's agenda after the Opposition had allowed the debate to drift out of control for a month was wasted or exploited by Beazley's comments about the treatment of his daughter Hannah at a Perth public hospital.

There can be little doubt that Beazley's loose words to a meeting of his party's Caucus not long after McMullan's politically helpful remarks proved an embarrassment in the short-term. But Labor's hope will have been that they have backed up McMullan's efforts to steer the Labor ship back into its own

territory - if only by forcing the public debate away from Howard's tax agenda and onto Beazley's spending agenda.

## THE COST OF REFUGEES

Asylum seekers may have stolen the federal election from Kim Beazley and handed it to John Howard.

Labor's problem is not so much that Beazley has adopted an attitude towards the recent influx of boat people that is unpopular with the electorate, a policy stance that is, in other words, costing him votes.

The problem now faced by Labor and Beazley is that, in the lead-up to the calling of the federal election, the time and energy devoted to debate about public affairs has been consumed by the issue of asylum seekers rather than by the issues that Labor wants to highlight: the costs of the GST; the crisis in public hospitals; the growing disparity between the funding available to private schools and public schools; and age care.

Asked in mid-September - a few days after the Tampa crisis standoff at Christmas Island and as the Australian navy boarded and took over a second ship carrying mainly Iraqi asylum seekers nearer to Indonesian waters - about the electoral impact of the refugee issue, one senior ALP strategist replied: "It's blocking out other messages."

An equally senior Liberal Party strategist was even more blunt, saying "there's the opportunity cost of relevance and the opportunity cost of irrelevance." Sure, the asylum seekers issue is likely to dissipate before the election campaign gets into full swing. But meanwhile, John Howard is able to fully exploit his position as the nation's leader to advocate solutions to what is a real problem, whatever people think about the solutions he has been putting forward.

By contrast, Beazley - Opposition leader rather than Prime Minister - lacks that standing on the refugee issue. And moreover, Beazley's policy agenda is regarded by the public as off the mark while the coastline is seemingly under attack by hundreds of boatpeople.

Neither side of politics expects the refugee issue that has preoccupied most of the public - and, more important, virtually taken over the media - during late August and the first half of September to last throughout the coming election campaign or even to be a major influence on how people cast their votes on polling day.

It's not that Howard's hardline stance on the issue is unpopular. After all, a poll conducted by AC Nielsen for *The Age* newspaper on 4 September showed overwhelming public support for Howard's refusal to allow the MV Tampa to enter Australian waters

carrying its load of asylum seekers and for Howard's general handling of that particular situation. And a Newspoll survey conducted for *The Australian* newspaper on August 31-2 September showed that 50 per cent of voters supported turning back every boat carrying asylum seekers and a further 38 per cent supported allowing some boats to enter Australia, "depending on the circumstances." Only nine per cent said they supported allowing all such boats into the country.

Despite these findings – from surveys conducted at the peak of the recent public frenzy on the issue – the situation in what might be regarded as more "normal" times suggests that most Australians are relatively little trouble by the issue.

There is little if any recently published opinion polling whose results would cast any direct light in that matter. But there is some that might give a lead. Every three months or so, Newspoll asks about 1000 voters two questions: first "Which one of the ALP, Liberal and National Coalition or someone else do you think would best handle each of the following issues?" and second, in relation to each of the 15 issues nominated by Newspoll, "Which party do you think would best handle the issue?"

Putting it simply, as recently as June this year, only 30 per cent of voters named immigration as an influence on their decisions – compared with the top figure of 80 per cent who named education and the bottom figure of 29 per cent who named Aboriginal and native title issues. Immigration rated very low down the scale of vote determining issues. Further, voters were split equally on whether the Coalition (31 per cent) or Labor (30 per cent) would be best at handling the issue.

By 7-9 September – Newspoll survey – the picture had changed radically, with 50 per cent of voters nominating immigration as an influence on their vote decisions and with the Coalition opening up a large lead over the ALP (43 per cent to 24 per cent) as the best party to handle the issue.

In other words, whatever the most recent influx or threatened influx of asylum seekers might mean – or which more in a moment – generally speaking, immigration ranks well below issues like education, health, unemployment and various economic issues as influences on people's votes.

That conclusion tends to back the assessment of Macquarie University politics professor Murray Goot, that, since the 1998 federal election, public opinion on immigration has shifted to suggest the public has become less anxious - more "relaxed and comfortable" - about the level of the intake. Putting that conclusion and the usual Newspoll findings

succinctly, it appears that the Australian public generally regards immigration as being "in safe hands" under Howard's stewardship.

It's a long shot in the absence of any specific evidence, but it is likely to be the case that the vast majority of voters also believe the perceived refugee crisis is also "in safe hands" at present. At the very least, all the opinion polling undertaken during the Prime Minister's handling of the asylum seekers issue during the period late August to mid-September strongly suggest that voters are satisfied with Howard's approach.

The point is not that they are likely to be more or less satisfied with Howard's than with Beazley's approach - the fact of Howard's incumbency renders that question all but irrelevant to most voters, given that most like what they have seen and heard of his actions and decisions. The latter have completely overshadowed Beazley's efforts to carve out a distinct position for Labor.

Some observers have argued that Beazley has suffered from what has been, or what has appeared to be, his indecision or even his changes in position towards Howard's policy positions. But there is no need to go that far: all that is needed is to see that the Prime Minister's leadership has been highlighted - even enhanced - by his incumbency allied with his popular hard line towards the asylum seekers.

That is one cost being exacted on Beazley by the current refugee issue. The other is probably even more serious: the campaigning opportunity lost to Beazley by the national preoccupation with the asylum seekers issue for at least the several weeks of late August to mid-September.

In early September Liberal and Labor election campaign strategists shared the view that the issues that had been expected to dominate the election - tax, and government spending on health and education - were virtually certain to resume their leading places on the political agenda once Howard named the poll date. But, whether Labor will be able to make up for the time and effort lost to the asylum seekers issue is a moot point. And whether Beazley will be able to make any inroads into Howard's national leadership, bolstered by the asylum seekers issue, is just as open to debate.

*Ian Henderson is Political Correspondent, The Australian*



# BOOK REVIEWS

John McConnell

## PETER COSTELLO: THE NEW LIBERAL

By Shaun Carney

Allen & Unwin, pb 2001, rrp \$29.95

ISBN 1 86508 325 9

It is Friday 27 July, 2001. The ABC current affairs radio program, *AM*, is about to interview federal treasurer Peter Costello. Linda Mottram begins the lead-in: "A new biography of Peter Costello," Mottram declares, "is set to anger the Prime Minister and hurt the government with its revelation of Mr Costello's past criticisms of his leader. *Peter Costello, the New Liberal* was penned by *Age* newspaper journalist Shaun Carney. It reports that in 1999 the Treasurer despaired of Mr Howard in private, telling a friend that he believed Mr Howard had run out of puff and had unofficially retired."

In the interview that followed, Peter Costello commented that this represented Shaun Carney's interpretation of his view. He said that he had never been of that view himself. Predictably, other media picked up the item and ran with it (it appears on page 298 of Shaun Carney's book).

The slightest hint of any division between political party leaders is sufficient to guarantee an item media coverage. Ironically, Shaun Carney writes in his (unauthorised) biography that he encountered difficulty in persuading Peter Costello to open up and discuss his innermost thoughts.

This is hardly surprising. Despite publication of this (second) Peter Costello biography, there remains considerable public uncertainty about the policy direction and fine detail of much of Peter Costello's political vision. That so much attention is focused on Peter Costello reflects widespread belief that here is a prime minister of the future. It is very reminiscent

of what used to be said about Bob Hawke (who made it to the Lodge) and Andrew Peacock (who didn't).

Carney's biography, which is interesting and well researched, is divided into parts.

The first part reports the pattern of the Costello family life. It is about a close and caring family, school years, the Baptist church and (Australian Rules) football, in particular support for the Essendon Football Club.

Part two moves to when Peter Costello began to turn his mind to politics in a serious way. This occurred during Peter Costello's final school year in 1974. At that time, Gough Whitlam had decided to "crash through or crash". Richard Nixon resigned over Watergate. There was a significant oil price hike. And stagflation was undermining John Maynard Keynes' policy prescription to stabilise the economy.

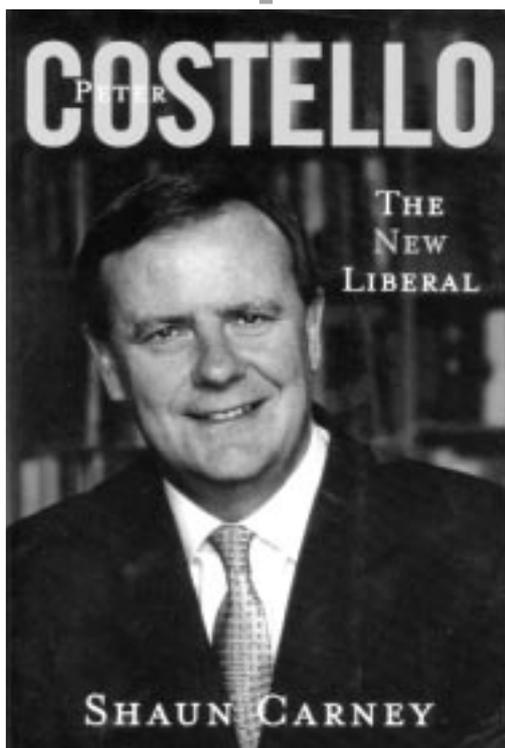
According to Shaun Carney, it was the study of Year 12 Politics that year that brought such issues alive and fired Peter Costello's political imagination. Of course, there had been innumerable family political discussions over the years. While *AM* was broadcast on the car radio each morning as the Costello family drove to school.

So it was at the end of 1974 that Peter Costello changed his intended tertiary direction away from medicine to Monash University's law faculty - where Peter's brother Tim was two years into tertiary studies. There followed involvement in the Evangelical Union as well as opposition to left wing student activists.

Peter Costello and Michael Kroger received the kind of political education that many Liberal Party politicians missed on the way to parliamentary life. Shaun Carney then moves chronologically through the

political stages of Peter Costello's adult life to the present. Along the way, Carney covers Michael Kroger's reform of the Victorian Liberal Party as well as the formation of the H.R.Nicholls Society - which challenged the "Industrial Relations Club" - as Gerard Henderson named it in a September 1983 *Quadrant* article.

Carney's focus is mainly on Peter Costello's political decisions and relationships within the Liberal Party. He does not seek to advance our understanding of



the treasurer's fiscal strategy or of his relationships with key officials of Australia's central bank, for example.

A number of themes emerge in the book. One is the Costello's family resistance to the notion that their two sons ever place themselves in a position of public disagreement. To avoid the possibility of Peter and Tim being in conflict or competition with each other, the viewpoint prevails, apparently, that there is room for only one politician in the family.

Another theme centres on Peter Costello and Michael Kroger upsetting the old order (left-wing politics on university campuses, cosy industrial relations club arbitration arrangements, and unsatisfactory preselection processes in the Victorian Liberal Party) and through intelligent resolve reform their surroundings.

Yet another is Shaun Carney's presentation of Peter Costello as someone so talented that golden opportunities open automatically to place him at the front of the pack. Peter Costello, he says, is not inclined to participate in the grubby business of undermining others to gain leadership positions. Anyway, he does not need to. Sensing his leadership potential, others provide Peter Costello with pathways to the top.

Will this scenario re-emerge sometime in the foreseeable future with regard to the top parliamentary job in the Liberal Party? Time will tell.

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**ABORIGINAL SUICIDE IS DIFFERENT: A Portrait of Life and self-Destruction**  
By Colin Tatz  
Aboriginal Studies Press, pb 2001, rrp \$33.00  
ISBN 0 85575 371 4

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Australia's suicide rate is bad enough but Aboriginal suicide is even worse. Much worse. Professor Colin Tatz argues that in all probability, Aboriginal suicide is under-reported and under-recorded. He believes that it is vital to view Aboriginal suicide as a distinct phenomenon. Aborigines comprise the least healthy and poorest sector of the population. Proportionately, they are "the most arrested, the most imprisoned and the most convicted group in our society"

Many Aboriginal communities are in crisis. Basic communal values have been lost. Many Aboriginal communities, as a result, are deprived of structure, cohesion and meaning. Colin Tatz argues that an understanding of Aboriginal history is essential to an understanding of Aboriginal suicide.

Tatz interviewed close to 400 people mainly in Australia and New Zealand on suicide among Aboriginal, Islander and Maori people. His research, he says, is based on an anthropological and political approach. He conducted hundreds of interviews, visited many locations, made observations, checked documents.

Tatz rejects scientific method as inappropriate in this instance. Quantitative analysis has too many limitations when inquiring into suicide, he believes. Aboriginal youth suicide is very high, indeed abnormally high, particularly among males.

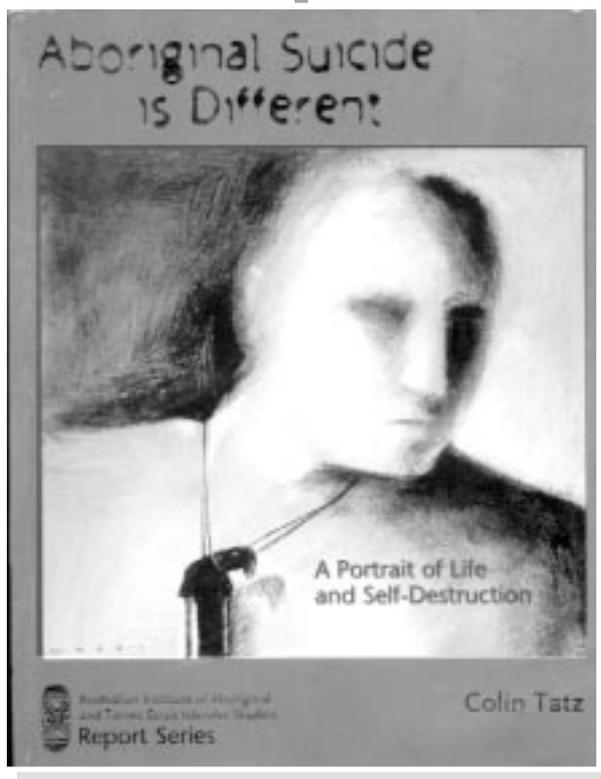
Yet youth suicide was unknown among Aborigines three decades ago, the author points out. Aboriginal youth suicide, he argues, does not match conventional profiles. Attempts to understand the nature of the problem by seeking to diagnose clinical depression,

mental illness, etc, are missing the point.

Far better, Tatz believes, to note the meaninglessness and purposefulness that characterises so many Aboriginal lives. A sense of hopelessness about the present and the future is all too common. Alcohol abuse and drug use in the form of cannabis - especially among Aboriginal youth - signify a retreat from reality.

Colin Tatz believes that Aboriginal youth suicide is commonly associated with cannabis use. He sees hydroponically grown cannabis as particularly dangerous. It magnifies behavioural change, he says, is probably more addictive and results frequently in a form of psychosis.

Sadly, many Aboriginal youth think that they will be able to witness the upset and the sorrow they will cause following their self-destruction. They believe they will gain revenge by taking their own life. Professor Tatz believes that much Aboriginal suicide represents protest against the forces of authority and



institutionalism. A range of factors within Aboriginal communities unites to form a deadly and destructive force.

Colin Tatz nominates a number of factors including lack of a sense of purpose in life, a shortage of suitable role models and mentors, ineffective parenting, widespread sexual assault, alcohol and drug dependence, grief experienced all too frequently, illiteracy and involvement with the police.

The composite picture is depressing and distressing. It is of a people struggling for survival within a wider society that communicates ambiguity about their worth. Tatz discusses several aspects that contribute to this ambiguity which he considers undermines social cohesion in many Aboriginal communities.

Behavioural patterns reflect frustration and alienation. Disorder replaces order. Circumstances deteriorate. Professor Tatz has written extensively on Aborigines and sport, an issue he returns to within this context of Aboriginal self-destruction. He is convinced that sport possesses the potential to make a difference. A major difference.

Sport is far more important, he believes, in sustaining Aboriginal life than in society in general. He stresses the advantages that sport offers. It has simple clear goals and established methods to achieve these goals. It provides a sense of belonging, membership, and equality. It provides support groups. It promotes improvement and the promise of rewards.

Without sporting competition, Professor Tatz believes that Aboriginal delinquency problems magnify. This leads him to emphasise the provision of and access to sporting facilities - to an extent that goes beyond likely funding practicalities.

The book's final chapter - chapter 10 - is entitled "Towards alleviation", a term that Colin Tatz prefers to prevention. (The author prefers also to avoid using the term "indigenous".) Professor Tatz rejects any notion of genetic and biochemical causes in explaining Aboriginal suicide. He proposes research into several categories of youth suicide, arguing for the main attention to be placed on the 12 to 18 or 19 age group. His suggestions include a region-by-region, community-by-community approach and the abolition of the term "mental health" in this context.

Professor Tatz dedicates his book to the memory of "two friends and mentors" - Pastor Sir Douglas Nicholls and Dr Charles Perkins. Both had and valued purpose in life, he notes. If only this could be shared more generally.

*John McConnell is the author of several senior textbooks*



# REVIEW OF THE REVIEWERS

Stephen Matchett

That many Australians know as much about Gettysburg as Gallipoli is hardly surprising. The education system has abandoned narratives of military heroism for more comforting tales of the crimes of white men against indigenous Australians, Asians, women of all ethnicities and creeds and the continent's flora and fauna. The consequence is that few Australians under 50 are likely to have any idea of what the Gallipoli campaign was about or the experience of the men who fought it.

The ludicrous strategic conceit that compelled Australian infantry and dismounted light horse to storm the heights of this distant peninsula are forgotten. The misery of poorly planned trench warfare is unknown. That men would live for months under shellfire and willingly advance over open ground against entrenched machine-gunners beggars belief for generations that take no pride in organised slaughter.

The history might be forgotten but Gallipoli and the experience of the first AIF on the Western Front and the Light Horse in the Middle East, conveniently tagged as the Anzac legend, are revered for what many still believe they presaged for a national character.

However this is contested ground. That characteristics Australians like to claim for themselves, egalitarian tolerance, laconic courage and a capacity to get on with the job, are defined by the work of white men fighting in an imperial side-show, drives the academic left nuts.

The party line is that a multicultural Australia should have no place for a foundation myth based on the work of male oppressors fighting in a distant war. Professor Stuart Macintyre makes the entirely reasonable point that World War 1 is long forgotten and of no relevance to contemporary Australia:

**... was it Australia's war? As Australia has drifted further away from Britain and Europe, it has become increasingly difficult for later Australians to understand**

**why an earlier generation travelled half-way round the world, to fight a distant foe. We forget that many Australians believed Britain was endangered, and rallied to its support - they might now be almost extinct but Anglo-Australians were once a legitimate ethnic group. ... Younger Australians are hard-pressed to distinguish the combatants, much less the passions that animated them. (A Concise History of Australia, 1999,164)**

But while the cause the First AIF served is forgotten, the values that impelled its members to fight and the way they conducted themselves still engages Australians. Gallipoli, and the Australian experience of war in general, remains a foundation for a popular sense of Australian identity.

It certainly has a great appeal for ordinary Australians. Visit Canberra's War Memorial and the new National Museum on the other side of the Lake and compare the visitors. The long-open War Memorial, with its ancient narratives of heroism and celebration of Australian courage, seems as popular as the new and generously endowed Museum with its capsuled history of, among other things, Anglo-Australia's offences against the environment and indigenous Australians.

Since the failure of communism, left-wing scholars have concluded that if the liberal nation state has won the political struggle then the fight cannot have been worth it. It is now fashionable to deny the importance of national identity and to argue that it is too often an artificial construct that ignores the needs of oppressed minorities. And that means that the Anzac experience, as revered by old Anglo-Australia, is no longer relevant.

In a notable example of the eccentricities of academic life, a Sydney historian is reported as suggesting that because the Anzac legend excludes everybody who is not an Anglo male, the Gay Mardi Gras is a far more appropriate icon of what Australia should stand for (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 July 2001).

And of course, the original Anzacs were just brutes, as historical masculinity expert Martin Crotty makes clear:

**The demands of Australian nationalism, along with the culture of the bush legend, played a major role in shaping Australian masculinity, and infected it with the same xenophobic and destructive qualities. Aboriginals, homosexuals, Chinese immigrants, intellectuals and women were**

**excluded by the increasingly rigid racist, misogynist and anti-intellectual hegemonic constructions. (Australian Humanities Review, June 2001 @ [www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR](http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR))**

The greatest academic disdain is reserved for C.E.W. Bean, both because he used history to create a legend and because the values of egalitarian loyalty amongst a body of men, which is at the heart of the Anzac foundation tale, exclude women:

**Egalitarianism and the loyalty of mateship extend only so far as those fitting the standard of "Australian manhood", and as such represent an exclusive, divisive, and oppressive ideology. (Megan Hirst, Access History, 2 II, June 1999@[pandora.nla.gov.au](mailto:pandora.nla.gov.au))**

This sort of commentary demonstrates the vast gap between academic fashion, with its emphasis on gender and distaste for anything that validates an Australia which is unrepentantly patriotic and those Australians who enjoy Mardi Gras but believe the Dawn Service is a reverential occasion. Miriam Dixson makes the point that contempt for the values and beliefs that contemporary Australia has inherited from the Anglo-Celt society that existed prior to the mass migrations from 1945 is at the heart of new-class contempt for the mass of Australians:

**After the 1970s, spearheaded by intellectuals, the symbolic and ideological kit of the new class homed in on shortcomings of the core culture. In this, they were remarkably successful. There is a deeper gulf between mainstream Australia and the intelligentsia than exists in other Western countries, so a certain relish may tinge the onslaught made by the latter on old-identity Australia and its self-belief. That onslaught might still undermine old-identity core cultural confidence at profound levels. (Miriam Dixson, *The Imaginary Australian: Anglo-Celts and Identity - 1788 to the present*, p 170)**

A distaste for patriotic display is understandable when national identity is expressed in murderous assaults against ethnic rivals. But when it comes to defining what liberal democracies stand for, a sense of national character based on ideals is crucial. In a world of warring tribes, the nation state, with citizens united by adherence to a set of common ideals, surely offers the best hope for stable democracies. And it is not entirely surprising that Australia's foundation myth is military. When a nation is created

by nothing more dramatic than a popular vote and where the great national achievements are the incremental creation of reasonably well-distributed wealth and a successful mass migration program, grand symbols of nationhood are light on.

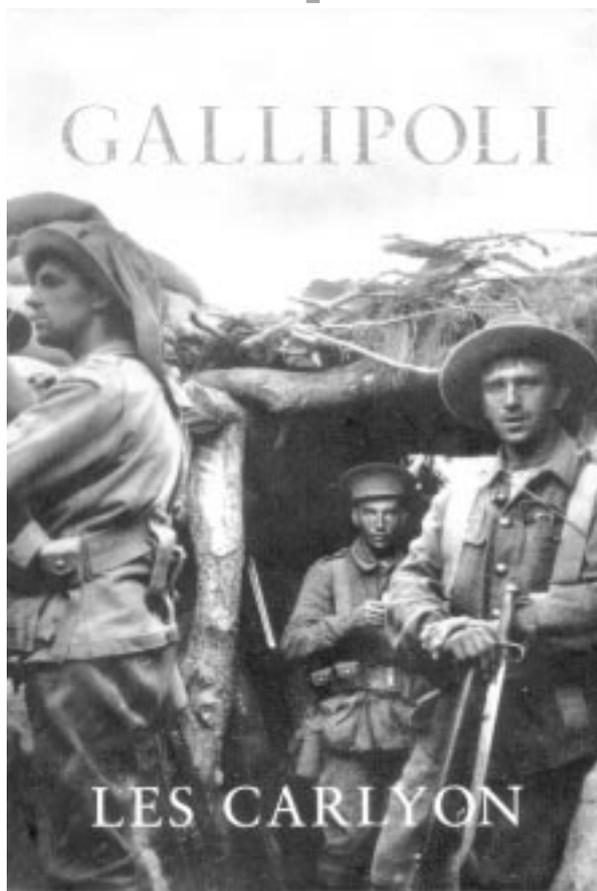
A walk around the Potomac basin in Washington takes you past various monuments to the three men whose achievements set out the ideals of the American Republic. The Jefferson Memorial celebrates a statesman who demonstrated the power of philosophy to express people's right to control their own political destiny in the Declaration of Independence. The Lincoln Memorial, engraved with the texts of the Gettysburg and Second Inaugural addresses, sets out the core faith of the United States democracy as the best hope of humankind. The Roosevelt Memorial celebrates the people-focused pragmatism of the greatest democratic politician of the twentieth century. Roosevelt understood that if the compact between government and people was to hold, the state was obliged to assist all its citizens rather than govern in class interest.

There are no comparable memorials around Lake Burley Griffin. Perhaps Curtin and Chifley merit them for their courage and commitment to the Australian people. But the modest nature of the foundation and building of the Australian nation provides little reason for grand marmoreal celebrations of our leaders. Instead, we have the celebration of an Australian experience of sacrifice in war as measured throughout the twentieth century against the defining horror of Gallipoli and the Western Front.

And this is where the vitality of the Anzac legend is remarkable. The ethnic mix of the battalions that served at Gallipoli is completely different from that of contemporary Australia. While the Australians who served there were almost universally British by adoption or birth, the Australian people a century on are far more diverse. Some of the political assumptions the First AIF held, notably White

Australia and a belief in the Empire, are obviously long gone.

But we still find many of their values, self-reliance, determination and sticking to your mates, utterly admirable. The Australian divisions did not win the war on the Western Front in 1918, but with the Canadians they made a contribution that far outweighed their numbers. Their success was due in no little measure to the social characteristics that made them very good infantry. And a visit to the War Memorial will demonstrate the pride of Australians today in what Australia's first major force of citizen soldiers achieved.



Historian Ken Inglis suggests that the cult of Anzac is fundamental to the informal Australian civil religion which has traditionally used the slaughter of the First World War to express a core value of Australian public culture. (*Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*, pp 458-471). The greatest Australian achievement is that this sense of simple values is now taken on by successive generations of migrants so that Vietnamese veterans participate in the Anzac Day march.

Nor does it matter all that much if the campaign detail is not well understood. But while people may have the history wrong they have the sentiment right - the great Anzac achievement of

working together and putting loyalty to Australia first is an excellent symbol for a nation that hopes to accommodate people of diverse races and faith. Paul Keating, no friend to the memory of an Australia loyal to the empire, put it well in his 1992 Anzac Day speech:

**These days there is a relatively new memorial to the Anzac legend in Australia. Sitting on the hill near the new Parliament House, it is a modest monument inscribed with these words: "Look around you - these are the things they believed in". In the end they believed in Australia - in the democracy they had built, in the life**

**they had made there, and the future they believed their country held. Not all generations are called on to risk and sacrifice their lives for their beliefs - but all generations need to believe. (@www.pandora.nla.gov.au)**

Which is explanation enough for why control of the Anzac legend is still politically very important and a subject of enduring interest amongst readers of Australian history.

Four new books on the experience of Australia and Australians in wars throughout the twentieth century, Dale Blair, *Dinkum Diggers: An Australian Battalion at War*, Les Carlyon, *Gallipoli*, Peter Cochrane, *Australians at War*, and Peter FitzSimons, *Nancy Wake: A Biography of our Greatest War Hero*, demonstrate the significance of the military experience in providing one foundation for a sense of national identity.

They are radically different books of widely varying quality. FitzSimons' reads like a potboiler. At best, Cochrane's comprehensive summary will be dipped into by people who feel they should know something about Australia's military history and Blair's transformation of a Ph.D. dissertation into a monograph is unlikely to generate much attention beyond the refugees camped in the ruins of academic history. In contrast, Les Carlyon has produced a masterful work of popular history in which he both engages the Anzacs on their own terms and sets out their extraordinary achievements by the highest standards of any age.

Peter FitzSimons' biography of Nancy Wake, the girl from Neutral Bay who parachuted into occupied France to serve with the Resistance, does not chart new historical ground. Russell Braddon's biography (1957) and Wake's own memoirs (1985) are surely still circulating in libraries and a cyber-shrine maintained by votaries in her hometown, Port Macquarie, (<http://nancywake.homestead.com>) sets out her formidable military career.

Nancy Wake is a consciously old-fashioned book, written in a breathless style that captures the patriotism of a simpler time. It begins with FitzSimons' dedication: "To my late parents, who proudly served Australia in the Second World War ... and to all the brave men and women who served with them. We dips our lids." It's an unquestioning affirmation of the old exclusively Anglo-Celt Australia, now 50 years past, where people actually talked like that and where war service was an unquestioned virtue.

FitzSimons' straightforward patriotism is based in the very masculinist sentiments that the academic-

left loathes. Thus, in a generous explanation for those of his readers who have unaccountably missed hearing about World War 1, FitzSimons' explains that the AIF did well on the Western Front:

**The Australians were widely regarded as fine fighters with a noted fierce refusal to submit even against superior numbers. ... by way of example, a young Australian soldier in charge of a machine-gun company received instructions to hold the post at all costs. "If the section cannot remain here alive, it will remain here dead," he wrote in his diary which survived the subsequent carnage, "but in any case it will remain". (47)**

This sort of simplistic celebration of courage shapes the book and places it in a long tradition. At times, it appears that FitzSimons' antique style is a deliberate parody of a Victorian tract. Nancy's mother recovers from, "the searing waves of pain that had been washing over her during the supreme effort of giving birth" (3). The British merchant marine, was "easy prey for the ravenous packs of the infamous German U-boats" (163). After a hard day biffing Jerry, Nancy found that "the arms of blessed Morpheus awaited" (228).

FitzSimons' research is equally sweeping in its scope and certainly ensures that the vigour of his story is not overwhelmed by petty detail. A machine gun company is compressed into a section in the space of a sentence (47). The Allies only introduced a convoy system for merchant shipping in 1943 (163). According to Fitzsimons, British General Montgomery not American General Eisenhower commanded the Allied invasion of North Africa, Operation Torch (126). The Resistance stops 50 German divisions reaching Normandy after D-Day (224) when their order of battle for 6 June 1944 lists barely this many German divisions in the entire French theatre at the start of the campaign. (<http://www.feldgrau.com/index.html>)

Similarly a photo (facing 87) purports to show Resistance fighters being executed by a firing squad of French Nazi collaborators. It is a dramatic, if unlikely, photo given that an Australian War Memorial expert quoted in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (13 June) suspected it was a staged, not least because the collaborators were equipped with American weapons.

But these errors are incidental to FitzSimons' description of Nancy Wake's individual courage. It is her memories - not the historical record - which are the substance of the book and it sets out the Anzac

code of personal courage and a belief that respect is due to bravery and ability under fire rather than social rank. It is an extraordinarily old-fashioned book that connects readers with the mindset that established and maintained the Gallipoli legend. And the fact that it stayed on the best seller lists for months demonstrates that the values it propounded are not forgotten.

Peter Cochrane's *Australians at War*, published in conjunction with an ABC television series, is a less enthusiastic book and a far more serious text than its coffee table format implies. The homefront in the nation's wars and the role of women in wartime are considered as well as combat history. Surprisingly, Aboriginal resistance to European occupation does not merit a chapter but Cochrane is no jingo. The book does not simplistically celebrate the success of Australian arms and details the division and social turmoil that accompanied the conscription plebiscites of World War 1 and the opposition to the Vietnam War.

Cochrane is a professional historian who lives from his pen and it shows in his carefully written, balanced judgements and comprehensive research. Inevitably, there are errors, some basic, such as the description of the first HMAS Sydney as a battle cruiser when it was a light cruiser (44). He mentions a discipline collapse on the Western Front in 1917 but no mutinies in 1918 (72). But overall this is as comprehensive a single volume narrative history of Australia's military record as a lay reader will need for a generation. And it is a history in a direct line to the foundation of the Anzac legend: "Gallipoli was a secondary affair in military terms yet a defining moment for Australian national consciousness, the gallantry of the Anzacs' failed adventure registered at home." (53)

Many of the key components of the legend appear in Cochrane's text. British incompetence in World War One killed Australians just as surely as enemy fire:

**The Australians had been butchered and gassed, even shelled by British artillery at times ... neither keenness nor professionalism could transcend the bungling of high command and the efficiency of German resistance(67-68).**

Australian citizen-soldiers were effective and not imprisoned by social rigidities:

**On the parade ground the Australians were casual and indifferent; on the battlefield they were now professional and uncommonly deadly. ... At Chipilly, an**

**English regiment had been held at bay by machine gun fire for two days. A squad of six Australians arrived, stalked the machine-gunners and killed them, then cleared the village, captured about 300 hundred prisoners, called up the English regiment and returned to their own battalions. (77)**

It is as if Cochrane cannot help himself; he knows that Australia's military performance is far more ambiguous than this sort of praise implies. Australians have not always been united in support of the nation's wars and our combat record is not uniformly successful. But he also knows how deep Anzac runs in the Australian popular consciousness:

**The Anzac legend is a romance of initiative and individuality, of egalitarianism, and above all of character, a romance made all the more powerful by the limits set on these qualities by the nature of modern war. Perhaps that is why it has endured so long. At the heart of our foundation myth is the idea that ordinary Australians can, metaphorically speaking, move mountains. (258)**

Cochrane acknowledges the left's various attempt to destroy the legitimacy of Anzac but while he cannot adequately explain it, he is quite clear that "time has favoured the resurgence of the Anzac legend". (261)

But not for everybody, as demonstrated by Dale Blair's study of the First Battalion, First AIF. Blair's study is based on his Ph. D. dissertation and it shows. The prose is clumsy, the documentation exhaustive and the book suffers from the worse failing of the doctoral thesis, the desperate desire to refute the established wisdom.

It appears that Blair was particularly anxious to do this, if only because the substance of his book - the military performance, political beliefs and social order of the definitive AIF battalion which served from Gallipoli to the Hindenburg line - is at the core of the Anzac legend. Thus he argues that the mythic qualities of the Anzacs, egalitarian and democratic soldiers making little distinction between ranks, tough men whose contempt for oppressive authority shaped their attitudes to the British, do not accurately portray the First Battalion.

In particular, Blair does not like the chauvinism and celebration of success in battle that he sees at the heart of the Anzac legend. Of course he wants to demolish the Anzac legend for the highest motives, stating that "the misrepresentation of the soldiers'

experience through false eulogy is bad history" (4). However it is equally apparent that he is uncomfortable with the sort of values that leached from the Australian military legend into the community and which still survive close to a century later:

**... if the Anzac legend is to maintain its prominence in a society that is presumably developing a more inclusive and increasingly globalised outlook, then it, too, must broaden its scope. Myopic and xenophobic nationalism ought not to sustain it. (4)**

But sadly, according to Blair, the very chauvinism that perverted the history of the First AIF is still shaping Australia's understanding of its military experience 90 years on:

**The sycophantic back-slapping triumphalism that politicians and media displayed in relation to the Australian military intervention in East Timor is a timely reminder that, as a nation, we have still not outgrown our penchant to uncritically equate nationalism with military endeavour. (16)**

Of course, it could also demonstrate the pride Australia takes in the skill of its military in defending a new democracy and assisting vulnerable people.

But a scholar of Blair's standing would never seek to use the historical record to support his own political opinions - the evil deed he sees in the cultivators of the Anzac legend. Rather, he relies on the record to demonstrate that there was nothing special in the performance of the First Battalion and by extension the First AIF, and that the only national characteristic it demonstrated was a taste for big-noting:

**If a national character trait was discernible it may well lie, not in the physical prowess of the Australians, but rather in the**

**inflated view the soldiers held of themselves. (133)**

Throughout the book, Blair relentlessly rebuts every aspect of the Anzac legend. The Battalion was class-riven without affection or trust between officers and men. It did not perform extraordinary feats of arms at Gallipoli only to be let down by the badly led, poor quality British. Its performance on the Western Front in 1916-1917 was no better than the norm of British units. And while the Australian divisions may have played a small role in the defeat of the German army in the west in August-November 1918, this had more to do with resources and staff work than the infantry's pluck. In fact, elements of the Battalion actually mutinied by refusing to mount an attack.

Blair supports all his arguments with ample evidence and his mastery of the sources is beyond question. Nevertheless, his case is not overwhelming and for every incident of poor performance and ill discipline he cites, a reading of Bean's Official History can provide alternative examples of feats of arms and disciplined courage. The military performance of the First AIF did not win World War I but the Australians carried a share of the burden that was out of all proportion to their numbers. They came from a society where social mobility was far more the norm than in Europe and it showed in the self-confidence of the troops. And while Blair may not like it, volunteer citizen soldiers - well trained and properly led who can articulate a reason for war service - make excellent troops.

At its heart Blair's book is concerned with the dispute over national character and he concludes that in believing in the self-reliance and courage of the Anzacs, generations of Australians have been sold a pup by, "historians, writers, journalists and film-makers":

**Although these opinions are diverse, they still in the main perpetuate the qualities of egalitarianism, initiative**



**and resourcefulness attributed to the Australian soldier. They do so because the actual experience of Australian soldiers is considered less important than the advancement of a positive national self-image. (187)**

The contrast between Blair and Les Carlyon's extraordinary study of the Gallipoli campaign is pronounced. Both books are based on comprehensive readings of the sources but, where Blair writes to correct, Carlyon writes to inform; to explain the history of the campaign and the Australians who fought it, in their own terms. He is careful not to talk of great national traditions and lets the soldiers speak for themselves. In one paragraph he makes the case for the truth of the Anzac legend and warns against its misappropriation by spivs more clearly than Blair managed to do in an entire monograph:

**There is such a thing as the Anzac spirit or tradition, although no-one can define it neatly. It is compounded of many ideas: refusing to give up no matter how hopeless the cause, dry humour and irreverence, mateship, fatalism, stoicism and more again. Sometimes the spirit is misappropriated. The Australian yacht was trailing by three races to one in the America's Cup of 1983. Alan Bond, leader of the Australian syndicate, still thought victory possible. He made reference to Gallipoli, then said: "We had our backs to the wall there, and we won that one."**

Carlyon presents his history as a narrative story and speculates on what men thought beyond what the written record can support. His imaginary description of the Gallipoli expedition's commander Ian Hamilton's walk from Horse Guards to receive the command from Kitchener probably goes beyond what the sources specifically state. It is also a masterpiece of historical imagination that captures

the reason for the failure at Gallipoli - and the misery of the Western Front for good measure.

Carlyon has a scholar's ability with the primary sources but they do not imprison him. He is an elegant writer who captures individual character and motivation with a brilliant capacity to describe the circumstances of the campaign. All readers of military history know that it is very difficult to

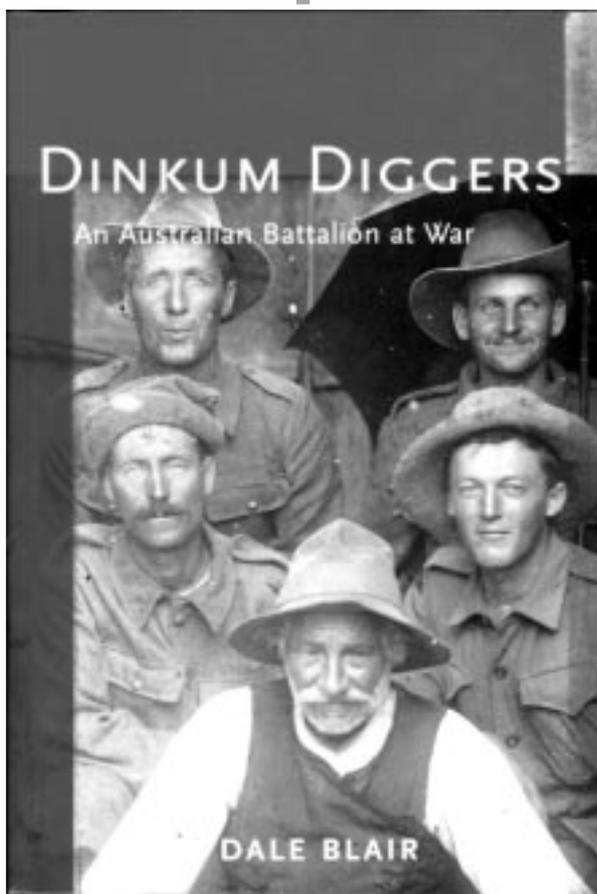
understand a battle without walking the ground. In the case of Gallipoli, Carlyon's book comes close to making it possible.

Undoubtedly the tactical antiquarians will find errors in his detailed descriptions of particular engagements but readers whose second-hand experience of the ground comes from Bean's Official History or Robert Rhodes James' campaign study will generally have a sense that he has got the military detail about right. Above all, he describes the sheer horror and folly imposed on British, Australian, New Zealand, French, Senegalese and Turkish troops by the failure of Churchill and Kitchener to properly plan or resource the campaign. Their folly was matched by

the incompetence of the senior generals on the ground who ranged from brave but incurably optimistic to brave but unremittingly stupid.

Carlyon is careful not to get into a brawl over the Anzac legend and its relevance to Australia a century on. His is a study of Australia's first campaign - and the men who fought it - but amongst people who look to the past for a sense of what defines Australia the FitzSimons of the world will find more comfort in this marvellous book than the Blairs.

The reviews of the four books reflected the debate over the meaning and relevance of the Anzac legend. The simple story of heroism in FitzSimons went unchallenged but Brenda Niall (*Age*, 4 June) and Ros Kidd (*Courier Mail*, 9 June) were less than impressed by the writing. Niall called FitzSimons' style, "irritatingly bouncy, breathless and over-emphatic" and suggested that there was enough



drama in the story without his attempts to "nudge the reader to respond to Nancy's exploits". Kidd thought the same:

**FitzSimons' rendering of indirect speech and thoughts slips at times into a self-conscious superficiality which is not found in her direct quotes or her nonsense autobiographical writing.**

In contrast, David Day was not prepared to let tales of military heroism go unchallenged. In a cumbersome and contentious review essay of Peter Cochrane's book and the related television series (*Australian's Review of Books*, June), he argued that a foundation story based on violence can only beget violence:

**A nation that searches for faith and finds it in the sacrifice of troops sent off to fight in such struggles will surely repeat the tragedy of their sacrifice anew. No disservice is done to the dead, or to the survivors, by questioning the sense of their sacrifice. Too often during the past century, it made no sense at all.**

When he did not pontificate, Day grumbled. He conflated the book and the related television series and alleged that Cochrane's text was subject to government approval, a claim warmly disputed by Cochrane and his publisher Matthew Kelly (*Australian*, 20 June).

Most important, Day understood that perpetuating the Anzac legend reinforced a sense of national identity - but one which he did not approve of. Thus he criticised the way Cochrane and the television series emphasised the sacrifice of Australians in "distant wars" and argued that they helped perpetuate the irrelevant Anzac tradition, "in a society made up increasingly of postwar immigrants who have little or no connection with it". He argued that there was no sense in arguments that Australia's national day should change from the date when the British began their occupation of the continent to the anniversary of the Gallipoli landings.

Rather the national day should celebrate the arrival of the first postwar immigrants, or the High Court's Mabo decision or when the "concentration camps" at Woomera and Port Headland are closed - at least until we can celebrate the foundation of the Republic.

It is an argument over how Australians should perceive themselves and, with Cochrane's book and the TV series, Day gloomily detected a coherent plan to prop up a selective and morally self-indulgent Australian identity which ignores the fact that the nation was created through military conquest:

**It is disappointing when this government - financed documentary perpetuates this myth-making by omitting, save for one sentence, any mention of the drawn-out**

**frontier war that killed so many Aborigines and allowed the British slowly to secure the continent. A free copy of the eight-hour program will be sent to every Australian school and help to keep that myth alive. Gallipoli can provide a satisfying creation-story for modern Australians in a way that the war on the frontier simply cannot.**

Day would take little comfort in an ABC TV exchange between Blair and Anzac-legend booster Jonathan King (24 April, transcript @[www.abc.net.au/lateline/s281903.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/s281903.htm)). While Blair tried to make the unremarkable point that not all Australians performed brilliantly at Anzac and that

the AIF did not go on to win World War 1 by itself King indulged himself with simplistic rhetoric and contestable generalisations:

**They were a race apart, because they were bred in the country. The bulk of them came from the country, they were horsemen, they were a breed apart and they were volunteers ... they were determined to win, and that's why they did so well. If there is one thing that stands out from the First World War, its how much better**



**Australians were as [sic] fighting. ... They were by far head and shoulders above all the other troops.**

Apart from King's unsustainable attack, Blair's book has not generated main media attention. This is unsurprising given its super-specialist topic and less than engaging style, but regrettable in that Blair's explicit rejection of the Anzac legend as irrelevant to modern, multicultural Australia could become the orthodoxy of those who see little reason for pride in Anglo-Australia's history, if only by default.

The reviews of Carlyon's book are also scarce. The only substantive review being from Robert Murray and Peter Ryan. Murray praised it as:

**...that rarity, a wide-ranging, attractively written account for the general reader that cuts through military technicality ... Although he does not add a lot that is sensationally new, such a thorough, readable and modern account that is essentially but not narrowly Australian is new in itself." (Australian, 1 September)**

Ryan (*Quadrant*, September 2001) praised it for meting the unfashionable ideal of scholarly objectivity:

**Maturity and fairness permeate Carlyon's work and this, added to manifest mastery of immense and varied sources, gives the whole work a quiet authority. He seeks to prove no partisan theses; he just wants us to know what happened.**

But, these aside, the absence of reviews is probably due to the absence of fashionable interest in military history. However, while Carlyon was true to his task of writing a brilliant campaign study, Virginia Trioli (*Bulletin*, 14 August) used the book to make a point in the continuing debate over Australia's history and national identity. In a clever rhetorical exercise she managed to enlist Carlyon in her argument that there is nothing worth commemorating in Australia's military history:

**Carlyon regretfully echoes the views of the soldiers themselves .... That WW1 was an ugly and wasteful conflict with little achieved and much lost. Why is that, to this day, these unhappy observations are still quoted under headlines discordant with pride: ones describing heroes, legends and the making of nations?**

These are Trioli's words not Carlyon's and they demonstrate just how contentious is Australia's military history. Thus she attacked the final episode

of the companion television series to Cochrane's book as:

**...propaganda so outrageous it would have made Chairman Mao proud. Was it the sober, often exploited history of a small, colonial country buffeted by powers beyond its control that was told? No, we are a nation of bold, proud never-say-die diggers with a league of professional soldiers carrying on the Anzac tradition.**

The simple fact that one statement does not exclude the other and that good men may have served with honour, dignity and respect for their fellows does not appear to have occurred to Trioli.

Australians may not be much interested in military history but the debate over the meaning of Anzac and its relevance to the debate on the nation's identity has a long way still to run.



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# BEN CHIFLEY

- A LIFE -

David Day, author of the acclaimed biography of Prime Minister John Curtin, has now produced an equally comprehensive biography of Labor Prime Minister Ben Chifley. The son of a blacksmith who went on to become a train driver, Chifley as politician became one of Labor's most revered leaders. As Australia's sixteenth prime minister, Chifley announced Japan's surrender. Hear David Day on the life of Ben Chifley at the Sydney Institute

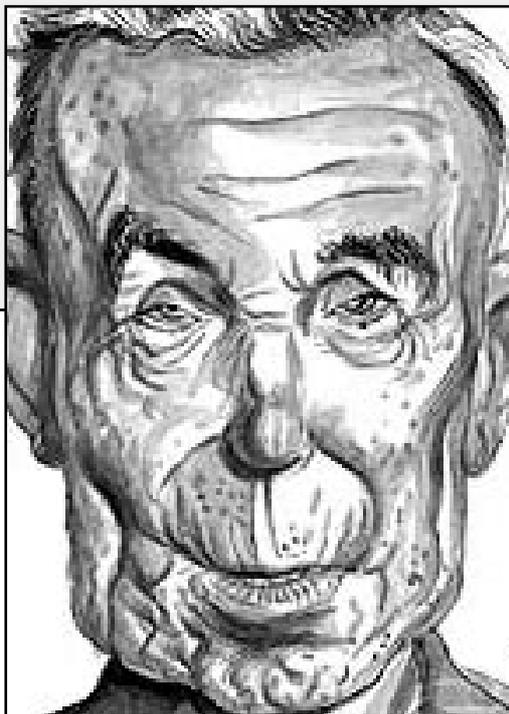
**SPEAKER:** DAVID DAY ( Author *Chifley: A Life* [Harper Collins 2001])  
**TOPIC:** *Remembering Ben Chifley*  
**DATE:** Tuesday, 20 November 2001  
**TIME:** 5.30 for 6.00 pm  
**VENUE:** 41 Phillip Street, Sydney  
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## TRIAL BY MEDIA OR FREEDOM OF THE PRESS?

Stephen Matchett reviews media reaction in the wake of *The Age's* publication of allegations against ATSIC's Geoff Clark.

On 14 June *The Age* published allegations that ATSIC Chair Geoff Clark raped four women in the 1970s and 1980s. The report catalysed a brutal, anarchic debate on indigenous affairs that quickly outran the original claims.

It was an extraordinary few weeks in the media, with the ethics of publishing the Clark allegations quickly subsumed in a running brawl in the media on a bewildering range of issues. The debate included the level of abuse of women and children in indigenous communities, accusations that other indigenous leaders had committed sexual assault and suggestions that ATSIC was supremely indifferent to the condition of its most vulnerable constituents.

Members of the commentariat joined indigenous leaders and politicians in the affray with the usual suspects running some familiar lines.

Paul Sheehan (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 June) suggested that there was much hypocrisy and human misery in the dark debate unleashed by the original allegations but added to the tensions with a few gratuitous serves of his own: *The Age* has "more information on his (Clark's) violent past"; Pat O'Shane "who suffers from rhetorical bulimia, spewed out a stream of bile"; Stan Grant provides "a lecture on morality". Sheehan argued that the problem of sexual violence in indigenous Australia, illuminated by *The Age* allegations, was the consequence of "the suffocating romanticism of Aboriginal culture which has been force-fed to Australians for 20 years":

**If a single thread links all these sad and angry stories of the past two weeks it is the danger of low standards. The existence of double standards speaks to the enduring paternalism towards Aboriginal culture in this country.**

Sheehan came back for another go (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 July) to claim that domestic violence has always been endemic in Aboriginal culture, which accounted for the past and present removal of Aboriginal children from their families.

Miranda Devine (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 June) presented a similar case. She quoted examples of violence against women and children in indigenous communities and suggested that they would be left to their fates because no one would dare try to remove Aboriginal children from abusive environments since Sir Ronald Wilson's report on the Stolen Generation: "This is the legacy of Wilson and his chorus of bleeding hearts: abused children and women ignored by a cowardly white community."

And Piers Akerman (*Sunday Telegraph*, 24 June) weighed in, claiming that the Clark allegations had finally placed violence against Aboriginal women on the agenda - no thanks to his usual villains, politically correct whites:

**The intellectual elites, smug in their view that somehow being wrapped in moral idealism will nurture them and keep them pure, should be ashamed of the manner in which they have willfully permitted the issue of violence in Aboriginal communities to be camouflaged, and by omission have allowed it to claim more victims.**

A criticism which he could not have intended to apply to Rosemary Neil, a long-time critic of violence in indigenous communities, who brought the debate back to fundamentals (*Australian*, 22 June):

**A treaty could serve as a symbolic restoration of lost or stolen indigenous rights. But the right to feel safe in your community is also a fundamental human right that Aboriginal women have been denied for too long.**

The next week (*Australian*, 29 June) Neil attributed blame for what she called "the indigenous violence epidemic":

**That the Howard Government has turned the Aboriginal Affairs portfolio into a part-time job, when its own report says the violence is deepening, is a scandal in itself. ... It is also true that this country has not come to terms with how widespread white men's sexual exploitation of black women has been. It was this, along with assimilationist zealotry that spawned the tragedy of the stolen generations.**

But she had no doubt that the indigenous political establishment was culpable:

**This does not obviate the contemporary reality that most indigenous violence and sexual abuse is black on black. Nor does it excuse the abject failure of ATSIC - which controls half of the federal funding on indigenous affairs - to show leadership in this area ... hard questions must be asked about to what degree violence has become normalised in indigenous Australia.**

Margo Kingston (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 June) did not comment on *The Age* allegations against Geoff Clark, but argued that ATSIC had failed in its responsibility to work to protect indigenous women and children from sexual abuse:

**... this discredited ATSIC which cannot see that the safety of Aboriginal children is its top priority, has lost its authority to speak to the Australian people on behalf of the Aboriginal people of Australia.**

In contrast, Stan Grant (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 June) wished a plague on all the critics. According to Grant, the motivations of white journalists were variously a wish for a return of "the dark days of assimilation" or simply to attack Aboriginal leaders: "... implicit in these articles is an insidious attack on the legitimacy of the Aboriginal political movement." Grant's argument was not always clear and at times disappeared in a fog of rhetorical outrage:

**Aborigines are the victims of a violent dispossession, compounded by extermination, exploitation, the denial of our humanity, the loss of our liberty and the destruction of our culture. You cannot separate Aborigines from the effects of our history.**

In fact the "white journalists and social commentators" do not know what they are talking about and should butt out:

**Many of the writers have launched their attacks under the guise of concern for the Aborigines. They expose themselves as having little or no understanding of their subject, and risk hardening negative stereotypes and prejudice in the wider Australian community.**

Grant accepted that violence was endemic in the Aboriginal community, as it was in white Australia, but argued that Aborigines should be left alone to sort out the problem themselves:

# MEXICO ART & POLITICS

Anna Lanyon's prize winning book, *Malinche's Conquest* (Allen & Unwin) is a journey across Mexico in search of clues to the life story of Malinche, the Amerindian woman who translated for conquistador Hernan Cortes and from whose lips came the words that triggered the fall of the Aztec Emperor Moctezuma in 1521. Echoes of Malinche's words still haunt Hispanic culture. Mexican identity likewise haunts the works of artist Frida Kahlo, who dated her birth from the outbreak of the Mexican revolution because she wanted her life to begin with modern Mexico. At either end of the spectrum, Malinche and Kahlo express the passion, sensuality and cultural traditions pressing against, but captured by, Western invasion. Hear Anna Lanyon on the forces that underpin Mexican culture.

**SPEAKER:** ANNA LANYON (Author of *Malinche's Conquest* [Allen & Unwin] & winner of the NSW Premier's Award for History 2000)

**TOPIC:** *Mexico's Art and Politics- Malinche to Frida Kahlo*

**DATE:** Tuesday 11 December 2001

**TIME:** 5.30 for 6.00 pm

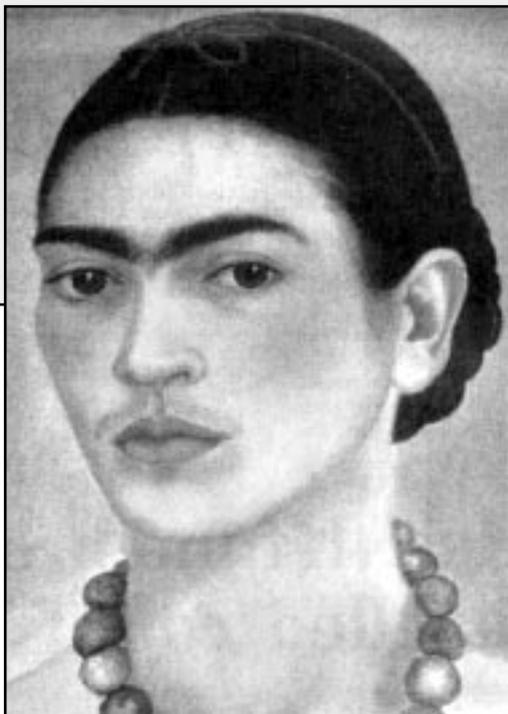
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We need to reclaim this debate with a legitimacy and a clarity of purpose missing at the moment. ... Black leaders must explore and articulate solutions through greater Aboriginal responsibility and autonomy.

To which Peter Ruehl replied (*Australian Financial Review*, 28 June):

**Stan Grant may have a point but that doesn't mean anybody who criticises what goes on in the Aboriginal community is an intellectual butthead. I can't figure out why Stan Grant feels there is much for the Aboriginal community in his damn-the-critics approach. This is the you're-either-stupid-or-bigoted angle.**

But was *The Age* right to publish the Clark allegations? A magistrate had dismissed one matter and the police had not charged him over the others.

Which did not bother Adele Horin who had no doubt the paper did the right thing (*Sydney Morning Herald* 23 June). In a rambling piece she suggested that the test for criminal conviction, that an offence must be proved beyond reasonable doubt, did not apply in protecting children from suspected pedophiles and that the same standard should apply in this matter:

**The fact that charges have not been proven "beyond a reasonable doubt" in a criminal court does not mean the women are liars and conspirators."**

According to Horin, the absence of a conviction was no reason not to publish and *The Age* acted in the public interest:

**Clark has not been convicted in a criminal court but that is not the same as saying the women have made the stories up.**

An argument that empowers the media to judge circumstances and characters which may alarm some people in regular contact with journalists.

Frank Devine (*The Australian*) argued that journalists worked for the public good by investigating and publishing stories powerful people did not want made public - which was what *The Age* had done with the Clark allegations:

**The media does not try and convict. It reveals what it believes to be misconduct by public figures. Then it is open to the legal system, as with Clark and *The Age*, to put on trial and punish either the publisher or the public figure.**

Miranda Devine (*Sun Herald*, 17 June) did not offer an explicit judgement on whether *The Age* was right to publish but did suggest that the allegations were a too rare example of investigative journalism:

**Australia's draconian libel and contempt laws make for a tame media. ... Powerful public figures are the biggest beneficiaries of this "chill" on investigative journalism. The public are the biggest losers, yet most Australians don't treasure free speech and take pride in a sort of cynical hostility towards the media.**

Terry Lane (*The Age*, 15 June) agreed and claimed that a free, investigating media was essential, "to tell us the things that someone, somewhere, doesn't want us to know about". With Adele Horin, he held that the axiom that a person was innocent until proven guilty should not prevent publication of allegations that were properly researched and believed by a paper to be true:

**The independent media stand against those whose ambition it is to rule over us and to pay themselves from our money. The job of the journalist worthy of the name is to scrutinise, criticise and to be sceptical about the public face of propriety that politicians, business people, journalists, judges, trade union leaders and Aboriginal activists wear.**

He concluded that public interest was paramount and that if allegations went to the heart of an individual's fitness to hold public office then the community had a right to know.

Robert Manne (*The Age*, 18 June) was more cautious and criticised the paper for presenting "highly plausible new allegations" as "established facts". However, he supported publication on four grounds: public interest, the rigor of the investigation, his belief that Clark was not singled out because of his race and to provide some justice, if the allegations are true, to the women who made them.

Manne accepted that the allegations against Clark could, "give comfort to the opponents of the apology and the treaty, and to the new assimilationists who are opposed to the idea of Aboriginal self-determination" but saw a higher obligation to publish:

**... would it not be a far greater disaster for all Australians if our media began to choose what stories it deemed fit to print on the basis of political considerations of such a kind?**

# AUSTRALIA CHOOSES 2002

## INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS FOR A NEW CENTURY

Justice Geoff Giudice is President of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission and a judge of the Federal Court of Australia. The reduction in union membership - and the increasing focus on individual contracts between employees and management - has led to a decline in influence of trade unions and employer organisations alike. However, the Australian Industrial Relations Commission will remain a key player in industrial relations - irrespective of whether the Coalition or Labor wins the 2001 Federal election. Hear Geoff Giudice on the state of play of Australian industrial relations at a time of enterprise bargaining and workplace agreements.

**SPEAKER: JUSTICE G M GIUDICE**  
(President, Australian Industrial Relations Commission)

**DATE:** Tuesday, 12 February 2002

**TIME:** 5.30 for 6.00 pm

**VENUE:** Clayton Utz Seminar Room (Lvl 1)  
1 O'Connell Street, Sydney

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# WOMEN AND BUSINESS PRU GOWARD

Women are currently entering business at three times the rate of men. Former head of the Office of the Status of Women and now Australia's Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Pru Goward, has just released a book on success strategies for businesswomen, using the experiences and advice of past award winners of the prestigious Telstra Businesswoman of the Year. It's a moving, inspirational and practical guide. *A Business of Her Own* (Allen & Unwin) is set to become an invaluable resource for women aiming for leadership positions in business. Hear Pru Goward on how to lead as a business woman at The Sydney Institute.

**DATE:** 4 December 2001

**TIME:** 5.30 for 6.00 pm

**VENUE:** 41 Phillip Street, Sydney  
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Chris Maxwell (*The Age*, 15 June) fundamentally disagreed with all the arguments in favour of publication. The presumption of innocence applied to Clark, one matter was dismissed in court and police had not charged Clark over the other allegations.

It was irrelevant that Clark is a public figure - the paper had treated him unfairly. And while Maxwell did not use the phrase, his meaning was clear, *The Age* had done a hatchet job:

**The gross unfairness of the article is made worse by the gratuitous inclusion of graphic details of the allegations. The description of the incidents, which are presented as if they were established fact, are calculated to portray Mr. Clark in the most unfavourable possible light. ... lurid and emotive material of this kind is the antithesis of fair reporting and balanced discussion.**

It was left to Michelle Grattan to provide a cautious and carefully thought through comment that ambivalently came down for publication (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 June). However she was far from comfortable with the way the allegations were presented. She disliked the way claims were presented as facts and Clark's family background critically presented while his accusers were presented as credible. And while Grattan scrupulously avoided taking sides, she recognised the dilemma he faced:

**If there are no further developments, Clark is left with his reputation shot to pieces and the media saying "we did it in the public interest". It is said that Clark could sue, but this is unlikely to be practical because his past is such that he would probably be reluctant to have it raked over in court and because suing newspapers takes potentially deep pockets.**

Which is where, in October, the matter rests. But the way, *The Age* allegations generated so much anger and so many accusations reaching far beyond the claims made against Mr. Clark sadly suggest that indigenous Australian politics are as much about power and personality as policy. Like politics everywhere else.



# GERARD HENDERSON'S MEDIA WATCH

## LES MURRAY'S (TYPO) CONSPIRACY THEORY

Kim Beazley has had the most critical media as Australian Federal Opposition leader – since John Howard led the Liberal Party the first time round between September 1985 and May 1989. Over the past five and a half years, Kim Beazley has copped criticism aplenty – in the print media (broadsheet and tabloid alike), on radio (particularly commercial talkback radio) and television. Some media critics do not believe the Opposition leader is doing a good job. Others are political conservatives – in the North American sense of the term – who disagree with the political program of social democratic parties.

Once upon a time there were few, if any, conservative voices in the Australian media. Not any more. Now there is a plethora of political conservatives. Particularly on radio and TV – the Sydney based Alan Jones, for example. But also in the print media. To name names – Piers Akerman, Andrew Bolt, Frank Devine, Miranda Devine, P.P. McGuinness, Christopher Pearson, Paul Sheehan, Imre Salusinsky. Some of this lot are predictable barrackers. Others are genuine social conservatives who do empirical research and write considered critique.

The question is – has anyone told *Quadrant* poetry editor Les Murray about this lot? Apparently not. According to Les Murray's views on the Australian media which poured out - in somewhat incoherent form - during an interview with Mick O'Regan on the ABC Radio National's *The Media Report* on 14 June 2001.

Set out below are some samples of The (Media) Thought of Les Murray – as told to Mick O'Regan:

- "...our quality press in Australia, I think, is the equivalent of the gutter press in England – it tends to be the most prejudiced and the most destructive"

- L. M. provided no examples of what he had in mind.

- "...it's quite clear that the media are in too few hands in Australia and they're not diverse enough. You don't get any diversity of opinion. You're going to be on the left or you're going to be more on the left. And no other opinions are allowed"

- L. M. did not state how the likes of Frank Devine, Miranda Devine, P. P. McGuinness and Paul Sheehan get a run in a print media which allows for no diversity of opinion and only publishes those "on the left" or "more on the left".

- "...they demonised Pauline Hanson...Pauline Hanson was ideal. She was gauche, she didn't have posh pronunciation, she hadn't been to the right school, she was every kind of thing they could despise and they had no shame about it. They went for her like dogs. Now they're holding off on her – only because they think that, in the coming election, she may divide the Coalition and bring it unstuck"

- L.M. seriously believes that the Australian media speaks and acts as one and, consequently, can be bracketed together as "they". Simple, eh?

- "...if you oppose something the media's doing, you get ridiculed. You'll be misquoted. If necessary, you'll even be misinterpreted. I mean, *The Age* at one stage – to get rid of me as a poet – used to misprint poems"

- Your man L. M. is not one to accept the "stuff up" theory as an explanation of human error. Not at all. He's a real conspiracist. So much so that he maintains – without citing any evidence – that *The Age* deliberately inserted typos into his published poetry. Really.

- "...I know in fact no other country has so narrow a band of permitted opinion"

- Yes folks. L. M. seriously maintains that there is no more diversity of opinion in, say, Afghanistan, China, Cuba or Iraq than there is in Australia. Fancy that.

- "...I'd love to have [in Australia] a general interest magazine in which no politics were allowed, no Letters to the Editor, no reviews or anything....just good essays and good poetry and good stories...[Magazines like] *Harper's* and *Atlantic* and *New Yorker* ...those are the best"

- Interesting recommendations – except that *Harper's*, *The Atlantic* and *The New Yorker* all carry Letters to the Editor and reviews.

So just what is Les Murray on about? Who knows?

## MURRAY SAYLE - COUNTING BONKS IN JAPAN

While on the subject of (self induced) confusion, consider the (on-going) case of Murray Sayle. In the *Sydney Institute Quarterly* No 13, Mr Sayle's views on John Lennon's murder were reported – as told to the ABC Radio *PM* program. Remember. The (Sayle) theory went something like this. Step One – the "performance artist is a person who is looking to influence the opinions of millions of people". Beatle John Lennon was a performance artist. Step Two – "assassination is a form of performance art". Mark Chapman murdered John Lennon because Chapman was a run-of-the-mill performance artist who "wanted ...Lennon's power". Step Three. Alas, there was no third step – except that Murray Sayle got a run for his views on ABC Radio.

It was much the same on 4 May 2001 when Mr Sayle obtained another interview on the *PM* program. This time the subject was sex – and rape – in Japan. Murray Sayle has lived in Japan for decades without speaking or reading Japanese. Quite an achievement, when you think about it. This means that he is dependent on the English language media, relatives, friends, translators etc for his understanding of what is going on in his preferred country of residence.

Let's go to the audio-tape. As Murray Sayle tells *PM*'s Peter Martin about sex, rape and all that in Japan. The embellished Sayle theory commenced with just one fact. A number of Japanese men have been convicted recently of using cameras to film under female shirts:

*Murray Sayle:* **I haven't personally looked up too many Japanese women's skirts. But my wife, she's visited by an underwear saleswoman frequently, and she says that what Japanese women wear under their skirts is the sort of thing that Australian women might have thought a bit old fashioned 30 or 40 years' ago... There's nothing sexy under there... The chances of getting an interesting picture up a woman's skirt on a Tokyo railway platform are about one in 10 million.**

*Peter Martin:* **Why would it be such a popular and apparently...growing activity?**

*MS:* **It has a certain amount of sporting contest in it because the magazine *Focus*, I think it was here, had a couple of pieces a while back in which people had taken shots of women relieving themselves in**

**corners around Tokyo... As Japanese critics have said, if Western people went to see pornographic movies they want to see people having sex. It is school-boy dirty humour. It is infantile.**

*PM:* **But carried on by adults.**

*MS:* **By men of 40 and 50.**

*PM:* **Are you suggesting there's something in the development of many men in Japan which hasn't taken place which does take place in other places?**

*MS:* **Absolutely. It is almost impossible for young people in their 20s to set up independently. They stay with their parents and they stay mother's boys and then they're looking up women's skirts.**

So where do we go from here? So to speak. From this (somewhat slim) evidence, Mr Sayle reached the following conclusions. If conclusions they be. According to The Thought of Murray Sayle:

- ... "Japanese couples are having less sex than anyone else in the known world – 37 times a year. And Americans have, or claim the record of, something more than 142 times...". Interesting theory. But perhaps the Japanese are too busy bonking to keep an accurate count.

- "...a person who took parenthood seriously [could not] be interested in peeping up women's skirts". Follow the manouvre? The logic, for want of a better word, goes something like this. Japanese men look up women's skirts. Men who look up women's skirts are not interested in parenthood. Which explains why Japan's population is declining. So there.

- " ... the Japanese population in 800 years will be 45,000...[and] just about fit into the Tokyo Dome...". Most demographers are reluctant to make population projections beyond a generation. But Murray Sayle is prepared to make population prophesies for the year 2801. Based on the activities of a few peeping male Japanese circa 2001.

Anyrate, if Murray Sayle's analysis is correct, there is an easy answer to Japan's declining population. Simple really. Just ban video cameras in Japan and/or compel Japanese women to wear trousers. But what will happen to Mr Sayle when he comes to realise that video-peeing-toms are not confined to Japan? And have been detected in Australia, no less, among other places. Who knows? Who cares?

## DR GREER REMEMBERS – SELECTIVELY

It is a (sad) fact that many prominent Australians living abroad have attained media attention by becoming heavy hitters in the hyperbole stakes. So to speak. Murray Sayle fits into this group. And so does Germaine Greer.

In January 2000 Dr Greer obtained international headlines following her "I am an honorary Australian Aborigine" (*Sunday Age*, 16 January 2000) declaration to a meeting of the National Liberal Club in London. The speech was originally reported in the *Evening Standard*. Then in July 2000 Germaine Greer took part in the Aussie Rules writers forum which was held in conjunction with the taxpayer funded Centenary of Federation knees-up in London. Here she spelt out in some detail what it meant to be an honorary Australian Aborigine. She told the Aussie Rules audience that when she visits the land of her birth she returns to "black Australia, not white Australia". According to Greer:

**Whenever I arrive, I do a deal. The traditional owners of the land on which I am arriving come to meet me and I won't leave [the airport] until they allow me in. They are always there – one would be enough but I get nine, 12 or 15. (*The Australian*, 3 July 2000)**

That was in July 2000. In August 2001 Germaine Greer visited Australia to address the Powerhouse Festival of Ideas in Brisbane. She used the platform to declare that she had never described herself as an honorary Aborigine – her position had been "massively misrepresented" (*Courier Mail*, 20 August 2001). G. G. then posed the question: "What kind of a gross and stupid statement would that be?". Good point, to be sure. The denials did not end there. G.G.'s arrival at Brisbane Airport came to the attention of the traditional owners. The Turrbal people have been acknowledged in this context. Yet, on this occasion, the Turrbal were not advised of G.G.'s arrival at Brisbane Airport. Or anywhere else.

G.G. used her address at the Powerhouse Festival of Ideas to deny that she had ever said that her entry to Australia was dependent on permission of Aborigines:

**What I have said was for sometime I have tried to set up a situation where, when I make my landfall in Australia, I recognise the fact that it is an Aboriginal country.**

So what did G.G. really say about this matter? Well the *Courier Mail* did a couple of clicks and came up

with a transcript of a discussion between Germaine Greer and Nell Schofield on the ABC Radio National *Arts Today* program on 25 July 2000. During the interview, Nell Schofield put it to G.G. that she had mentioned having been made an "honorary Aborigine" and asked as to "how this came about". G.G. did not dispute this claim – and went on at some (incoherent) length about what this meant:

**Well, when I came to Victoria, one year, I do this thing of having the Aborigines greet me, so that I can be admitted into the country. I go through all the other nonsense, the people in shorts and everything... then I go and I'm usually met just outside Customs by a group of Aborigines, who belong to the place, they usually try to make contact with the people who actually own the land the airport is built on. You can imagine how rich they'd be if their rights to it were recognised. So that's sometimes very easy to do, as it is in Queensland for example, where the actual people from the Brisbane Airport area came to meet me, nine of them. The white people would say: "Oh, you've got to be joking, you won't get Aborigines out of bed. Your flight comes in at 5 o'clock." And they were always there, because that's the point; to them it's important.**

G.G. went on. And on. You can check it out on the Radio National website. But the essential point is that G.G. did not deny having claimed that she only entered Australia after receiving formal approval by Aborigines. It was much the same with the claim that G.G. had declared herself an honorary Aborigine. Let's go to the audio tape:

**N.S.: So when you say that you're an Honorary Aborigine -**

**G.G.: Well what happened was, it turns out that adoption is very normal in Aborigine society, because they're a nomadic people and because you need children, and if you don't have children you can't survive. When there is infertility for whatever reason, children are very readily adopted, because no-one can have more than one child that cannot keep up walking you see. So if you've got two littlies, you look to give one away, and you look for somebody who needs one. So they said, "Oh, we'll adopt you." And I said, "You will?" They said, "Sure." And I said, "Well what do you**

**have to do?" They said, "That's what we have to do, we've adopted you. It's done."**

As G. G. asked the assembled throng at the Powerhouse Festival of Ideas in August 2001 – "what kind of gross and stupid statement" would it be to claim to be an honorary Aborigine? The answer is, er, the kind of statement which G.G. made in January 2000 and repeated in July 2000. And precisely what kind of person would deny in Brisbane in August 2001 that she had ever declared that she would not set foot on Australian soil without being welcomed by traditional owners? Answer – precisely the same person who declared – in January 2000 and again in July 2000 – that, on returning to Australia, she will not leave the airport until she is granted permission by traditional owners. But then Germaine Greer did not get where she is today by consistency.

### **ROBERT MANNE FORGETS – STRATEGICALLY**

While on the issue of consistency, consider the case of La Trobe University academic and *Sydney Morning Herald/Age* columnist Robert Manne. Associate Professor Manne has just released his most recent collection of previously published columns. Entitled *The Barren Years: John Howard and Australian Political Culture* (Text Publishing, 2001), the tome represents the author's "attempts to find an explanation for the strange temper that came to dominate Australian politics during the late Howard years – the narrowing of the national vision and the souring of the popular mood". In his introduction, Mr Manne expresses considerable displeasure with the Prime Minister – along with much warmth for his predecessor. Paul Keating is described as "a prime minister of unusually powerful imagination" who was intent on achieving "the transformation of Australia from a postcolonial British settler society to fully independent nationhood".

Readers of Robert Manne's *The Barren Years* may wish to reflect on precisely why – according to the Manne analysis – Australia is so barren right now. According to R.M., it's all John Howard's fault. What's more, paradise could be restored – so to speak – if only Paul Keating was back in the Lodge. All this overlooks a couple of central facts. In the lead-up to the March 1996 Federal election, Robert Manne used his *Age/Sydney Morning Herald* column to advocate a vote for John Howard. That's right. Moreover, around this time, he was most critical of Paul Keating. For example, in April 1993 Manne told Gideon Haigh: "My central image of Keating has always been one of a man riding a bike with no hands while smiling at the audience". At the time R. M. was

anything but impressed with Paul Keating's imagination.

Still this has always been the Robert Manne way – as documented in the December 1999 issue of *The Sydney Institute Quarterly*. Your man Manne was once a monarchist – then a republican; once an opponent of Australia's Vietnam commitment – then a (latter day) convert to the Allied cause in Vietnam; once an opponent of multiculturalism; then an advocate of multiculturalism; once a supporter of economic reform – then an opponent of economic reform; once an opponent of war crimes trials – then an advocate of war crimes trials. And so on. Stand up for a possible (new) Robert Manne tome – perhaps to be titled "The Glorious Years: John Howard and Australian Political Culture".

### **KATHY LETTE JOKES – CHRONOLOGICALLY**

Perhaps Robert Manne could learn from Sydney born – and London based – author Kathy Lette. Recently in Australia to promote her latest novel *Nip 'N' Tuck* (Picador, 2001), Ms Lette was interviewed by Mike Carlton on Radio 2UE followed shortly after (28 August 2001) by Richard Glover on Radio 702. The time was late afternoon. The jokes were well scripted.

**Jokes That Kathy Told Mike** – in chronological order.

- *Jeffrey Archer*: "the man who put the con into conservative; ... his son has been banned from trading [and is] following in his father's fingerprints".
- *Prince Charles*: "Oh, I love Charles. I've loved him ever since he wanted to be a tampon. Although I do think it sums up his entire life. He's always in the right place at the wrong time".
- *Camilla Parker Bowles*: "she's got lines on her face; you can read between her lines".
- *The British*: "they...all graduated from Oxford Advanced Condescension".
- *British Female Put Downs*: "One woman said to me the other day: 'Oh, it's so awful having men that are so attracted to me because of my body – I wish I could make myself less attractive. How do you do it?' "
- *Age*: "I'm now about to turn 40 for the third time".
- *Women*: "suffer not from racial, but facial, prejudice".
- *Female Attraction To Men*: "... for us, wordplay is foreplay. If a man is witty, he's gorgeous. I mean, does Woody Allen still get laid?"

- *Plastic Surgery Recipients* : "They take fat out of their bottoms and inject it into their lips – so they're literally talking out of their arse".
- *Sex Assistance* : The "dimmer switch...greatest sex aid known to womankind".
- *John Mortimer* : "John Mortimer is my best friend and he's 78...so he thinks I'm a nymphette".
- *Female Exercise Fads* : "Those women who get fit by doing step-aerobics off their own egos".

**Jokes That Kathy Told Richard** – in chronological order.

- *The British* : " ... a lot of them have taken a pretension pill. They've been at Oxford so long they've got ivy growing up the backs of their legs and they've graduated in Advanced Condescension".
- *British Female Put-Downs*: "...One woman said to me...'Oh, it's awful being followed because I've got such a beautiful body. I wish I could make myself less attractive to me. How do you do it?'"
- *Jeffrey Archer*: "The man who put the con into conservative. ...His son has been banned from trading. So his son is actually following in his father's fingerprints".
- *Age* : "Now that I'm turning 40 for the third time".
- *Women* : "The trouble is that women suffer not from racial but this facial prejudice".
- *Female Attraction To Men*: "I mean, for women wordplay is foreplay. I mean, how else would Woody Allen get laid?"
- *Prince Charles*: "We love him ever since he wanted to be a tampon. Although I did think it summed up his entire life. You know, always in the right place at the wrong time".
- *Female Exercise Fads*: "...girls who get fit by doing step-aerobics off their own egos".
- *Plastic Surgery Recipients*: "I'm just saying – 'Girls ... don't take the fat out of your bottom and inject it into your mouth so you're literally talking out of your arse'."
- *Sex Assistance*: "Dimmer switch – greatest sex aid known to woman kind."
- *John Mortimer*: "My best friend is John Mortimer ... [and he is] 78...He thinks I'm a nymphette."
- *Not Necessarily Mrs Parker Bowles*: "...Read between my lines...my whole life is on my face.

Then there were the one-off puns. As told to Mike Carlton. Or Richard Glover. Or the *Good Weekend*

(on 8 September 2001). Or as found in Kathy Lette's special column in the *Sun-Herald* (2 September 2001). They included "clit lit", "my knight in shining Armani", references to "silicon from tips to toenail" and claims that "living in London means learning to conquer the Great Indoors". Kathy Lette – Have pun. Will travel (between media interviews).

## MIRANDA DEVINE'S (BIG BROTHER) U-TURN

At least Kathy Lette's humour is deliberate. Not so that of *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Sun Herald* columnist Miranda Devine. Consider, if you will, Ms Devine's coverage of the top rating Channel 10 *Big Brother* "reality TV" program.

- **3 May.** M.D. commences a series of columns and part columns on *Big Brother* with a large slice of hyperbole. As in "no one really disapproves of anything these days". Except, of course, M.D. – who disapproves of reality television where "shamelessness is an art form". Especially the Australian version which, according to M.D., has got off to a bad start:

**The *Big Brother* inmates are not embarrassed about anything. Not the mess in their dormitory bedrooms, the banality of their conversation, their late-night drunken ramblings, their indiscriminate bed-hopping, their liberal use of the f-word. They are the fully evolved embodiment of their vulgar era: people utterly without shame.**

- **20 May.** M.D. rejoices that "Australians aren't taking *Big Brother* lying down". In fact, Aussies are "showing the immense good taste latent in our characters" since "most of us aren't watching the show". Except for M.D. of course. An avid *Big Brother* watcher, she advises her readers that "Dominatrix" Andy has been evicted from the *Big Brother* house – along with Sharna. M.D. predicts that the next evictee "will be the tragically slutty stripper Sara-Marie...".
- **24 June.** M.D. reports that "Jonnie is up for eviction on *Big Brother* for the first time". She maintains that "his flatmates think he is considerate but viewers dislike him, having observed a Machiavellian streak...". Fancy that.
- **19 July.** The *Big Brother* reality TV spectacular has concluded. And M.D. has had a change of heart:

**In the end, the Australian public redeemed *Big Brother*. What had obviously been intended by its producers to be a smutty, trash-fest of reality TV was redesigned**

**into a sweetly innocuous show about platonic love and friendship by the 3 million viewers who phoned the eviction line each week.**

M.D. rejoices that Aussie viewers knew just who to vote out of the *Big Brother* house. Out went the "gummy, leering 'discipline mistress'" Andy. Hooray. Then "out went Sharna, "the foul-mouthed flight attendant". Good show. Followed by Gordon (the "smug sleeze with spiked hair"), Peter (who behaved "like a cad to Christina"), and "pushy, bratty Anita". Beauty. All of which demonstrated that "after the audience began weeding out contestants, all was sweetness". Wacko. Ben "the most deserving guy" won – ahead of the decent Blair. So, according to M.D., *Big Brother* was okay after all:

**A show starring twentysomethings for twentysomethings, it may represent a generation which has reacted to the divorce and social instability that have plagued their lives by simply being loving and supportive of one another. As it turned out, *Big Brother* wasn't the "boot stamping on a human face" that George Orwell envisaged in 1984, but a big loving group hug. What a relief.**

Phew. But followers of George Orwell may have been surprised to learn from M.D. that the author of 1984 had in mind reality TV – rather than Josef Stalin endorsed communist totalitarianism.

- **22 July.** In a final *Big Brother* wrap-up, M.D. checks out the *Big Brother* stars – now that they are well and truly out of the house. Peter, Christina, Jemma, Blair and Ben all get a mention. Along with Sara-Marie who M.D. describes as "charmingly natural". Whatever that might mean. But at least it is better than being labelled by M.D. a "tragically slutty stripper (20 May) or a "loud-mouthed overweight strip-club manager". (19 July).

## LOOKING BACK IN CONFUSION

- **May Day 2001** - *The Bulletin*: The subject of "Lunch with Maxine McKew" is British public policy analyst Tom Bentley. Ms McKew quotes Mr Bentley's reference to the (then) UK Conservative leader as follows: "Haig is seen as weird William – he looks strange, talks funny". And has his name spelt incorrectly, to boot. No wonder William Hague failed to make an impact.

- **29 September 2001** - *Sydney Morning Herald*: Veteran columnist Alan Ramsey recalls the October 1998 Federal election. He recounts how, on the night before polling day, "Howard phoned his deputy, Peter

Costello, at his Melbourne office". According to A.R., "two days earlier, Ralph Willis, Paul Keating's treasurer, had released his infamous Jeff Kennett letter critical of the GST which turned out to be a forgery". The story, as told by A.R., was that John Howard wanted Peter Costello to appear on the *7.30 Report* on the eve of the 1998 election to refute the allegation that the forgery had been a Liberal Party dirty trick.

Interesting (historical) reflection. Alas, wrong election. The events that Alan Ramsey recalled so vividly took place on the eve of the March 1996 Federal election. Paul Keating was not prime minister in 1998, nor was Ralph Willis treasurer. How time flies.

- **5 October 2001** – ABC Radio *The World Today*: The Federal election is about to be announced. ABC Radio journalists are looking for an agenda-setting comment on the (likely) campaign. Who better to ask than veteran Canberra Parliamentary Press Gallery journalist Rob Chalmers? And so it came to pass – with Mark Willacy on the other end of the microphone:

*Mark Willacy*: In one of the many offices along the Canberra Press Gallery rabbit warren works the parliament's longest serving political observer. Rob Chalmers is the managing director of the newsletter *Inside Canberra*. He joined the Press Gallery 50 years ago when Robert Menzies was Prime Minister. And this election campaign will be his 21st. So how does he rate Kim Beazley's chances?

*Rob Chalmers*: I can't think of any other occasion when timing has been such a key point except perhaps back in the 1958 Petrov election when, all of a sudden, we had a Royal Commission running into a communist spying in Australia down at the Albert Hall here in Canberra as the campaign was kicking off. So that certainly didn't help Evatt. But I don't think Evatt was as unlucky as Beazley is now with the way events have unfolded. Although, let's be clear, the PM has seized the opportunity that these events have presented him with and has certainly taken advantage of them.

It's true that Bert Evatt led Labor to three losses – in 1954, 1955 and 1958. It's just that the Petrov Royal Commission commenced in 1954. Again, interesting reflection. Pity about the election cited.

## GEORGE NEGUS TALKS

In spuiing for his new ABC TV weekly program *Australia Talks*, compere George Negus declared: "If I were a politician in this country, I would be doing nothing else on a Thursday night but watching this

program". Who knows? Maybe politicians have little to do with their time other than to watch your man George. In any event, the first series of *Australia Talks* contained just two stories over a total of 13 programs. George Negus was excited to tell viewers, on separate occasions, that they had just witnessed: (i) Bob Katter declare that he would run as Independent for the Federal seat of Kennedy and (ii) Pauline Hanson announce that she would contest the Senate election in Queensland. The only problem was that both "scoops" were known before either edition of *Australia Talks* went to air.

#### **4 CORNERS REMEMBERED - PITY ABOUT MICHAEL CHARLTON**

The 40th Birthday Party of *4 Corners*, held at ABC TV's Gore Hill studios on Sunday 14 August, did not offer many scoops. Apart that is, from a heated discussion between ABC managing director Jonathan Shier and *4 Corners* producer Quentin McDermont which was reported in the print media on the morning after the night before.

It was a drawn out affair. Kick-off time was 6.30 pm but nothing much happened until 7.20 pm when the only female to have a role in the evening's proceedings attempted to say that she was the MC. Alas, the microphone did not work and had to be replaced. Some 20 minutes later, the woman MC said, well, that she was MC – and then handed over to the blokes. There followed long – and often repetitive speeches – by *4 Corners* star Chris Masters, Max Uechtritz (director, ABC news and current affairs) and *4 Corners* executive producer Bruce Belsham. There was also a short, and non-repetitive, address by ABC chairman Donald McDonald.

The night went on and on. As the audience stood to attention – or looked desperately, and usually in vain, for a seat. A seat, a seat, my ABC contract for a seat. When the speeches concluded after about an hour, the audience was invited to stand on. This time to view the highlights of *Four Corners* over four decades. The first such "highlight" featured the late John Temple copping a cream cake in the face, circa 1972. Funny, eh? And certainly the big event of the evening. Departing guests were provided with a complimentary copy of the tape of *4 Corners: 40 Years* which went to air as a 90 minute *4 Corners* special on 20 August 2001. Early on in the documentary, Bob Raymond (the program's inaugural director) was interviewed. And footage was shown of Michael Charlton – who came up with the *4 Corners* concept and was the program's first presenter.

The (long standing) audience at the Gore Hill bash was told on a couple of occasions that Michael Charlton and Bob Raymond were in the audience. But neither was invited to the podium to say a few words – and neither could be seen through the (all standing) crowd. The treatment of Michael Charlton was particularly odd – since the ABC had paid a return air ticket London/Sydney for him to attend the birthday bash.

Michael Charlton left the gathering just before the re-run of the John Temple-gets-cream-cake-in-the-face scenario. On departure, he was heard to reflect that the similar messages of the three ABC staff speakers reminded him of a political rally in East Germany during the Stasi period. Meanwhile back at Studio 22, the self-congratulatory *4 Corners* alumni were at it – congratulating one another. Completely oblivious to the fact that the evening's organisers had passed up a chance to hear Michael Charlton and Bob Raymond. But they did get to hear Chris Masters - on around four occasions. A genuine *4 Corners* repeat, to be sure.

#### **QUADRANT'S SON (OF AN ILLEGAL IMMIGRANT)**

The editorial in the October 2001 issue of *Quadrant* magazine is titled "Compassion, Illegal Immigration and Hypocrisy". The first paragraph repeats the message in the heading – running a tough line on "unauthorised arrivals claiming to be refugees, especially those arriving by boat". *Quadrant* editor P.P. McGuinness (who resides in inner urban Balmain and earns his income as a chatterer) re-states his oh-so-familiar critique of "contemptuous inner-urban elites", the "chattering classes of the world" and so on. He maintains that all this lot - except, presumably, P. P. himself - support those attempting to reach Australia by sea.

These days the chairman of *Quadrant* is once-upon-a-time leftist Bill Hayden. As readers of Bill Hayden's autobiography will be aware, his father George Hayden "left his ship while in Australia, became an illegal immigrant and never changed his status" (*Bill Hayden: An Autobiography*, Angus & Robertson, page 7). So, in P. P. McGuinness's terminology, Bill Hayden's old man was an "unauthorised arrival...by boat". In other words, without the illegal immigration of old, today's *Quadrant* would have a different chairman.

Fancy that.

