

# FORTHCOMING FUNCTIONS AT THE SYDNEY INSTITUTE

- SPEAKER** DON WATSON (Author, *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart - A Portrait of Paul Keating* PM [Knopf 2002])  
**TOPIC** *Writing about Paul Keating*  
**DATE** Wednesday 31 July 2002 **TIME** 5.30 for 6.00 pm  
**VENUE** BT Training Room (Room 401) Level 4, 2 Chifley Square, Sydney
- SPEAKER** LINDY EDWARDS (Author, *How to Argue with an Economist*, [CUP]) & CHRIS ENRIGHT (Author, *Legal Technique*, [Federation Press])  
**TOPIC** *Getting a Message Across - Language, Economics and the Law*  
**DATE** Tuesday 6 August 2002 **TIME:** 5.30 for 6.00 pm  
**VENUE** 41 Phillip Street, Sydney **LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**
- SPEAKER** SUSANNA DE VRIES (Author, *Blue Ribbons Bitter Bread* [Hale & Iremonger 2001])  
**TOPIC** *Heroine in the Shadows - The Search for Australia's Most Decorated Woman*  
**DATE** Tuesday 13 August 2002 **TIME:** 5.30 for 6.00 pm  
**VENUE** 41 Phillip Street, Sydney **LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**
- SPEAKER** DR JUDITH BRETT (Reader in Politics, La Trobe University & Author, *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People*) & JEFF KILDEA (Barrister & Author, *Tearing the Fabric: Sectarianism in Australia 1910-1925*)  
**TOPIC** *Sectarianism, Politics and Australia's Catholics*  
**DATE** Wednesday 21 August 2002 **TIME:** 5.30 for 6.00 pm  
**VENUE** 41 Phillip Street, Sydney **LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**
- SPEAKER** JUNE DUNCAN OWEN ( Author, *Mixed Matches: Inter-racial Marriage in Australia* [UNSW Press, 2002])  
**TOPIC** *Mixed Matches: Inter-racial Marriage in Australia*  
**DATE** Tuesday 27 August 2002 **TIME:** 5.30 for 6.00 pm  
**VENUE** 41 Phillip Street, Sydney **LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**
- SPEAKER** SENATOR AMANDA VANSTONE (Minister for Family & Community Services)  
**TOPIC** *The Public Death of Public Discourse*  
**DATE** Tuesday 3 September 2002 **TIME:** 5.30 for 6.00 pm  
**VENUE** Clayton Utz Seminar Room, Level 25, 1 O'Connell Street, Sydney **LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**
- SPEAKER** DR ASHTON CALVERT (Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade)  
**TOPIC** *To be advised*  
**DATE** Tuesday 10 September 2002 **TIME** 5.30 for 6.00 pm  
**VENUE** BT Training Room (Room 401) Level 4, 2 Chifley Square, Sydney
- SPEAKER** BRENDA NIALL (Author, *The Boyds* [Miegunyah Press 2002])  
**TOPIC** *Writing about the Boyd Family*  
**DATE** Tuesday 17 September 2002 **TIME:** 5.30 for 6.00 pm  
**VENUE** 41 Phillip Street, Sydney **LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**
- SPEAKER** DR JOHN KUNKEL (Commentator and Author, *America's Trade Policy towards Japan: Demanding Results* [Routledge 2002])  
**TOPIC** *Free Trade Hypocrisy in America and Europe: what can Australia do?*  
**DATE** Tuesday 24 September 2002 **TIME:** 5.30 for 6.00 pm  
**VENUE** 41 Phillip Street, Sydney **LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**
- SPEAKER** KEVIN RUDD MP (Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs)  
**TOPIC** *to be advised*  
**DATE** Monday 30 September 2002 **TIME:** 5.30 for 6.00 pm  
**VENUE** Clayton Utz Seminar Room, Level 34, 1 O'Connell Street, Sydney **LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**
- SPEAKER** IAN MACFARLANE (Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources)  
**TOPIC** *Australia's Industry Outlook*  
**DATE** Wednesday 9 October 2002 **TIME:** 5.30 for 6.00 pm  
**VENUE** BT Training Room (Room 401) Lvl 4, 2 Chifley Square, Sydney]
- SPEAKER** PROFESSOR BOB GREGORY (Research School of Social Sciences, ANU) & THE HON. BRONWYN BISHOP (former Minister for Aged Care)  
**TOPIC** *An Aging Australia - Some Answers.*  
**DATE** Monday 4 November 2002 **TIME:** 5.30 for 6.00 pm  
**VENUE** Clayton Utz Seminar Room, Level 25, 1 O'Connell Street, Sydney

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THE

# Sydney Institute

## QUARTERLY



ISSUE 17 VOL. 6 NO. 2  
JULY 2002

**GEORGINA GOLD**  
on the web and  
terrorism.

**GERARD HENDERSON**  
on the Left's double  
standards over  
refugees

Why older Australia  
must work for it's  
future

**ANNE HENDERSON**

**STEPHEN MATCHETT**  
on the demise of the  
long essay

"Illegals" or refugees?

**MEDIA WATCH**  
tackles Bob Ellis,  
Miranda Divine,  
Andrew Clark and  
Paul Sheehan

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*with Gerard Henderson's*

# *MEDIA WATCH*

## CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>Editorial</b>  | 2  |
| <b>A Left View From Byron Shire</b><br>- Gerard Henderson                 | 3  |
| <b>Europe's Democratic Deficit Disorder</b><br>- John Kunkel              | 7  |
| <b>The Politics of Economic Reform</b><br>Ian Henderson                   | 10 |
| <b>Warnings on the Web of Hate</b><br>- Georgina Gold                     | 12 |
| <b>Aging Australia -<br/>Don't Rush to Retirement</b><br>- Anne Henderson | 15 |
| <b>Book Reviews</b><br>- John McConnell                                   | 18 |
| <b>Review of the Reviewers</b><br>- Stephen Matchett                      | 22 |
| <b>When Refugees become "Illegals"</b><br>- Stephen Matchett              | 30 |
| <b>Gerard Henderson's<br/>Media Watch</b>                                 | 33 |

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## DONALD'S AUNTY

The term "culture wars" – meaning the on-going conflict between left-liberalism and conservatism, is well known in North America. In more recent years it has been brought to Australia and popularised by, among others, the conservative commentator Christopher Pearson. Australia is not as ideological a society as the United States. Consequently, culture wars are less evident in Australia than the US. However, if there is such a conflict Down Under, it would most likely involve the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. Certainly John Howard is on record as expressing the view that the ABC needs to find one or more "right wing" presenters to match the leftists in its current stable. And prominent ABC board member Michael Kroger, who has Liberal Party connections has complained that "there seems to be an underlying agenda [within the ABC] to find fault with John Howard wherever possible".

Whatever the state of the culture wars with respect to the ABC, the time has come to end the Coalition inspired culture of complaint against the ABC. For, whatever the ABC's current faults, they can no longer legitimately be blamed on anyone except the Howard government. Look at it this way. John Howard hand-picked Donald McDonald as ABC chairman. In turn, Donald McDonald chose Russell Balding as ABC managing director. Moreover, every member of the current ABC board - except for the staff elected director - has been appointed by the Howard government.

During Malcolm Fraser's government, few - if any - spoke of culture wars. However, it is a matter of record that the Fraser government did nothing to reform the ABC. Sure, it appointed the conservative Dame Leonie Kramer as ABC chairman. However, she soon became subsumed by the ABC culture. So much so that she declared publicly that the ABC presented "the fairest reporting of news and current affairs" and bagged critics of the organisation as "uninformed and ignorant". Leonie Kramer went so far as to describe a conservative critic of the ABC's leftist culture at the time as a "dubious witch-hunter".

Now it is Donald McDonald's turn. However, like Leonie Kramer before him, he does not seem to believe either that there is an in-house culture at the ABC - or, if it exists, that anything needs to be done about it. In an address to the National Press Club on 30 January 2002, the ABC chairman mocked the view that a group of "chattering, beatnik, Trotskyite, left-wing...politically correct" types were running the ABC. Well, it is certainly true that the ABC is more pluralist than it was a decade ago - and that a diversity of views is now heard on most programs. But it is not correct to assert that significant cultural change has occurred at the ABC.

Six years after the election of the Howard government, the likes of Phillip Adams, Kerry O'Brien and George Negus are as entrenched as ever within the ABC. David Marr was chosen by the new management to present the revamped "Media Watch" program. And so on. Meanwhile Russell Balding is on record as telling the Senate Estimates Committee on 27 May 2002 that there was no problem of any bias within the ABC. How did he know this? Well, everything is satisfactory because the ABC managing director has been told this by the ABC's head of news and current affairs and by the bureaucrats at the National Audit Office. So it's all okay, then.

# A LEFT VIEW FROM THE BYRON SHIRE

Gerard Henderson

As the maxim goes, on occasions no cause is seemingly lost until a certain individual or organisation publicly joins it. Like, say, the leftist commentator Mungo MacCallum.

Right now, the shelves of Australian bookshops contain two new tomes by Mungo MacCallum. Namely his memoir *Mungo: The Man Who Laughs* (Duffy & Snellgrove, 2001) and *Girt By Sea: Australia, the Refugees and the Politics of Fear* (Quarterly Essay, Number 5, Black Inc. 2002). In the former, the author declares that he is “one who has remained committed to the ideals of the left”. In the latter, he opines that “if it is by their Acts that you shall know them, [John] Howard deserves the name of racist”.

As he makes clear in his memoirs, Mungo MacCallum remains a political activist – albeit with constrained aspirations. Once he believed that the left could change the world; now he contents himself with the hope that “Byron Shire just might be ...ready for the left”. This might surprise visitors to the enclave in north east New South Wales where discussions on property prices seem as obsessive as in Sydney, Melbourne or Brisbane.

Two issues emerge from the Ocean Shores based activist’s attack on the Prime Minister. Is the put-down politically smart? And, is it true? But first, some history.

Speaking in the House of Representatives on 8 October 1996, John Howard claimed that “early in 1992” he had been “bucketed...as racist” by Paul Keating. However, there is no evidence in the *Hansard* that the former Labor prime minister had ever called John Howard a “racist”. Nor is there any newspaper report or transcript to support the allegation. Nor has the Prime Minister’s Office been able to back the claim with documentary evidence. It is true that, during an interview with John Laws on Sydney Radio 2UE on 21 January 1992, Paul Keating criticised the Coalition’s policy on Asian immigration of some years previously (when John Howard was Opposition leader). But he did not mention Howard by name and he did not use the “r” word.

Now, few would dispute that John Howard is a very clever politician. Moreover, like the rest of us, he would not enjoy being termed a racist. So, why did the Prime Minister claim that the insult had been used against him in public by Paul Keating when, in fact, this was not the case? Who knows? But it is possible that the politically astute John Howard may believe that there is some benefit in being labelled a racist by your political opponents. It’s all about unintended consequences. The perpetrator of invective may believe that an unflattering label will always do damage. Sometimes, no doubt, this will be the case. On other occasions, the allegation may prove counter-productive. There is evidence that Australians do not like being called racist. If this is the case, then it may be that the use of the “r” word as a term of abuse actually re-enforces established beliefs on immigration, multiculturalism, asylum seekers and so on. It is much the same with the debate over Aboriginal reconciliation. References to past genocide, however well intentioned, are invariably a turn-off.

In *Girt By Sea*, Mungo MacCallum makes a number of sensible points about Australia’s history as an immigrant nation. Namely that “the Sydney of the 1940s was already a multicultural society” – the same could be said of Melbourne. What’s more, there is considerable evidence to support his claim that “given face-to-face contact, Australians remain tolerant and easy going about race – if their politicians give them half a chance”. And he is correct in comparing John Howard’s occasional stridency with that of Bill Hughes – rather than Liberal Party founder Robert Menzies. None of these points are new – all are well made.

Yet, every now and then, *Girt By Sea* goes over the top. For example, there are references to detention centres as “isolated and degrading gulags” and to Alexander Downer’s “gulag archipelago”. Clearly legitimate criticisms can be made of mandatory detention in Australia – which, as Mungo MacCallum acknowledges, was introduced by Labor - and of the Coalition’s so-called “Pacific solution” for asylum seekers.

Yet, whatever may be said about Australian detention centres, they cannot properly be compared with the forced labour camp system invented by Josef Stalin to maintain the Soviet Union’s repressive state. The terms “gulags” and “gulag archipelago” were popularised by the Russian writer Alexander Solzhenitzyn to describe the reality of labour camps in the totalitarian communist system. They have no valid application to contemporary Australia. Not if words are to have real meaning. In serious debate, hyperbole is not helpful. It’s too easy to dismiss.

There is considerable evidence that the administration of mandatory detention in Australia is in dire need of reform. The policy was administered harshly by former Labor ministers Gerry Hand and Nick Bolkus (both of the left faction, no less) and even more harshly by Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock. But mandatory detention in Australia, however reprehensible, should not be equated with the worst excesses of Stalinism.

When discussing the issue of “whether Howard himself is a racist or not”, Mungo MacCallum reverts to a cliché: “If it waddles like a duck and it quacks like a duck then it probably is a duck; it’s certainly safest to treat it as a canard.” The evidence for so serious an assertion is based on John Howard’s August 1988 comments – where he called for a reduction in the Asian component of the immigration intake. And on his statement during the 2001 Federal election campaign – namely that “we will decide who comes into this country and the circumstances in which they come here”.

Well, on these criteria, the label racist could also be thrown at quite a few of Australia’s Labor leaders. *Girt By Sea* makes no mention of Ben Chifley. Yet, as David Day points out in his biography *Chifley* (HarperCollins, 2001), in November 1928 the ALP hero lamented that “Australia was supposed to be a white man’s country but Mr Bruce and his Government were fast making it hybrid”. Ben Chifley’s chief complaint about Stanley Melbourne Bruce and his colleagues was that (allegedly) they had given “preference to Dagoes – not heroes”. At the time, Chifley wanted to defend White Australia from even southern Europeans, including Italians and Greeks. The tactic appears to have worked. The Coalition lost seats to Labor in the November 1928 Federal election.

Later, as prime minister in the late 1940s, Chifley supported Immigration Minister Arthur Calwell’s decision to deport refugees from Asia who had settled in Australia. Some had served with Australian forces during World War II. As David Day comments, in the late 1940s “the Labor Party seized upon a handful of Asian refugees who had been allowed refuge in Australia during the war and who had married Australians and who were now resisting repatriation”. *The Wartime Refugees Removal Act* was introduced by the Chifley government to facilitate this end.

*Girt By Sea* is critical of former Labor leader Arthur Calwell. But not of his successor Gough Whitlam. MacCallum records that in 1975 Whitlam “famously declared” that he was “not having hundreds of fucking Vietnamese Balts coming to this country”. The source (which is not provided in *Quarterly Essay* No 5) is Clyde Cameron’s *China, Communism and*

*Coca-Cola* (Hill of Content, 1980). The quote has not been denied.

Cameron also recorded that Whitlam had rejected the plea of Foreign Minister Don Willesee that “Vietnamese who had been employed by the Australian Embassy” should be granted entry as refugees. Willesee was also defeated in his attempt to allow “re-entry to students who had returned to Vietnam after completing their studies in Australia”. Clyde Cameron, who was Minister for Labor and Immigration during the first half of 1975, supported the Whitlam position. According to Mungo MacCallum this “was one of the few occasions when the Left, including its charismatic leader Jim Cairns, gave Whitlam unswerving support”. That’s all he says.

Mungo MacCallum rationalises Gough Whitlam’s 1975 position by describing his mention of “Vietnamese Balts” as “a reference to previous escapees from communism who invariably voted for the conservatives”. In other words, Whitlam did not like the fact that anti-communist refugees/displaced persons, who had settled in Australia from Eastern Europe after 1945, tended to vote for Robert Menzies and the Coalition. He was determined to deny anti-communist Vietnamese admission to Australia because, according to his view, they would also support the Coalition.

To MacCallum, this is reason enough. But is it? The fact is that it was the anti-communist Vietnamese who were the refugees/asylum seekers in 1975. They were the ones who lived in genuine fear of persecution following the fall of Saigon to Hanoi’s Soviet supplied forces in 1975. The Whitlam government wanted to keep genuine Vietnamese refugees out of Australia in 1975 – because the Prime Minister of the day and some senior Cabinet members did not like their politics. This stance was totally at odds with Australia’s international obligations.

Just imagine what Mungo MacCallum would have written in *Girt By Sea* if John Howard had made a similar comment about, say, Muslims. Just imagine that a reliable Cabinet source had revealed that the Prime Minister had declared circa 2001: “I’m not having hundreds of fucking Muslims coming to this country with their religious and political hatreds against us”. Just imagine. In his memoirs MacCallum refers to warnings he once received from Richard Walsh that he was heavily into idolatry of Gough the Great. On the available evidence, the condition still exists.

It’s much the same with Bob Hawke. In November 1977, just before the Federal election of that year, the HMAS *Ardent* intercepted a boat containing some 180 Vietnamese refugees, heading for Darwin. Bob Hawke was ALP Federal president at the time. In

words that sounded remarkably similar to John Howard's over two decades later, the (then) ALP president opposed the arrival on Australian shores of queue-jumping boat people. Bob Hawke told a media conference in Hobart on 28 November 1977:

**Obviously there are people all around the world who have a strong case for entry into this country and successive governments have said we have an obligation, but we also have an obligation to people who are already here...Of course we should have compassion, but people who are coming in this way are not the only people in the world who have rights to our compassion. Any sovereign country has the right to determine how it will exercise its compassion and how it will increase its population.**

Bob Hawke was reported as calling on the Coalition government to make it clear that the asylum seekers had no right to land in Australia. Fortunately Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser rejected his advice. He said that Australia needed to make sure that the Vietnamese boat people were refugees but felt that the situation was under control. You can read all about it in the broadsheet press of 29 November 1977 and after. But, alas, not in *Girt By Sea*.

It is true that Bob Hawke was not alone in calling for a tough line on asylum seekers a quarter of a century ago. According to a contemporaneous report in *The National Times* (12 December 1977), Hawke's position was shared by senior Fraser government minister Peter Nixon. The Coalition Transport Minister was reported to have told a media conference that refugees arriving illegally by boat in Australia would be turned around and sent back. Peter Nixon was quickly hauled into line and the Immigration Minister (Michael Mackellar) issued a statement declaring that "Australia will continue to accept Indo-Chinese refugees". The Fraser Government went to the December 1977 Federal election with this policy.

The (then) Labor leader's position was ambiguous, to say the least. Gough Whitlam never repudiated Bob Hawke's statement. Moreover, while acknowledging that "any genuine refugees should be accepted", he maintained that "the Government has a responsibility to ensure they are genuine refugees" and that "it should also see that they don't get ahead in the queue over people who have been sponsored and who are already coming here" (*The Age*, 29 November 1977). Sounds familiar, eh? *The National Times* reported that, speaking in Darwin, Whitlam had blamed Lee Kuan Yew for the boat people reaching Australia's shores. He was quoted as alleging that Singapore

## THE BOYD FAMILY AND AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

Brenda Niall's 1988 biography of Australian writer Martin Boyd met with protest that she had not recorded the question of his sexuality. In her new book, *The Boyds*, Niall makes clear that there almost no evidence about Martin's sexual life. So she refuses to speculate. But there's plenty of stories on the Boyds - that talented and renowned Australian family - to make a page turner anyway. Hear about the Boyds with Brenda Niall at The Sydney Institute.

**SPEAKER:** BRENDA NIALL (Author, *The Boyds* [Miegunyah Press 2002])

**TOPIC:** *Writing about the Boyd Family*

**TIME:** 5.30 for 6.00 pm

**DATE:** Tuesday 17 September 2002

**LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**

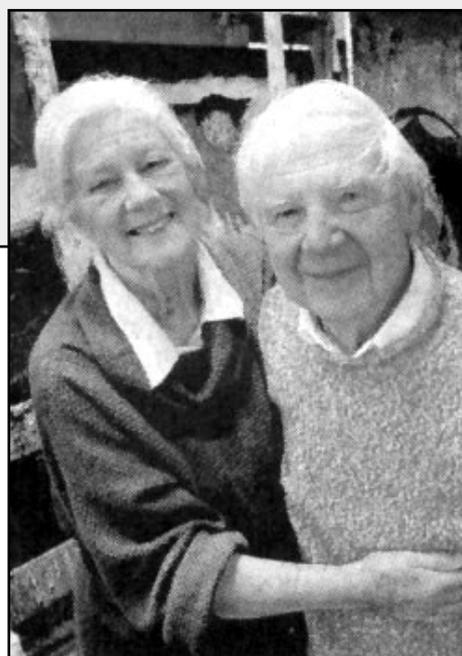
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supplied the Indo-Chinese boat people with the “plans and petrol and the maps to get here” (*The National Times*, 12 December 1977). Shades of November 2001 when some Coalition political operatives hinted that Indonesia was directing boat people to Australia.

Soon after joining John Howard’s personal staff in January 1984, I spent time in the Parliamentary Library digging up the evidence concerning the stances taken by Bob Hawke and Gough Whitlam when the boat people arrived in Australia after the end of the Vietnam War. I gave this material to John Howard and he used some of it in his speech in the House of Representatives on 23 August 1984. On that occasion Howard took a strong stance for immigration and opposed any attempts to use boat people/asylum seekers to win political points during election campaigns - as Labor had done in 1977.

Subsequently John Howard changed his position on immigration and, eventually, asylum seekers. In separate radio interviews on 1 August 1988 with John Laws (Radio 2UE) and Paul Murphy (ABC Radio PM), Howard maintained that “the pace” of Asian immigration “has probably been a little too great” and advocated that Asian immigration to Australia should be “slowed down a little” in the interests of what he called “social cohesion”. In a written statement, issued on 11 August 1988, John Howard specifically quoted Bob Hawke’s 1977 comments in support of his position viz : “Any sovereign country has the right to determine how it will exercise its compassion and how it will increase its population”.

I did not agree with John Howard in August 1988 or November 2001. Or with Bob Hawke in November 1977. Or with Gough Whitlam in mid 1975. But I do not believe that the actions of any one of these men warrant the accusation of “racist”. In *Girt By Sea* Mungo MacCallum maintains that, due to his various acts, “Howard deserves the name of racist”. But he ignores Hawke’s acts of 1977. And he simply refers to Whitlam’s acts of 1975 as “famous”. Instead there is reference to the fact that Gough Whitlam wrote to Labor leader Kim Beazley on 4 September 2001 rebuking him for failing to carry out Labor’s policy concerning Australia’s international obligations with respect to asylum seekers/ refugees. Whitlam’s letter (which was quoted in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 12 November 2001) also criticised previous governments – including the Hawke and Keating administrations – of not doing enough to bring about the implementation of various human rights conventions in this area. Yet the fact remains that when Gough Whitlam had a chance to be magnanimous about refugees/asylum seekers in the mid 1970s he conspicuously failed to grasp the opportunity.

From time to time various governments, Coalition and Labor alike, have acted without empathy concerning refugees. At other times they have demonstrated considerable compassion - especially the administrations headed by Malcolm Fraser (November 1975 to March 1983) and Bob Hawke (March 1983 to December 1991). Mungo MacCallum, correctly, acknowledges the successes in this area of the Fraser and Hawke years. And MacCallum is quite realistic about the fact that Kim Beazley and his advisers had little option in 2001 but to support the Howard government’s pre-election legislation. He maintains that the belief that the alternative would have amounted to “electoral suicide” is “probably right”.

*Girt By Sea* also makes the valid point that John Howard used the issue of asylum seekers - following the *Tampa* affair and the genuine concern about terrorism after the events of 11 September - as the core of the Coalition’s election campaign. Clearly the Prime Minister and Liberal Party Federal Director Lynton Crosby exhibit some self-doubt about the legitimacy of this tactic. Which explains why, after the event, both have attempted to establish the myth that the election was not fought on border protection. It may be that, after *Tampa* and 11 September, the Coalition could have defeated Labor without running on the asylum seeker issue. Maybe. But that is not what happened - and Mungo MacCallum is correct in drawing attention to this.

It’s just that, at times, *Girt By Sea* goes over the top. The term “racist” does not adequately fit any Australian prime minister - past or present. What’s more, as John Howard recognises, branding those who exhibit little empathy for asylum seekers as “racist” does not do real harm to the non-empathetic brigade. Such an insult is sometimes readily worn as a badge of honour. Similarly demonstrations outside detention centres, which sometimes turn violent, do not help the asylum seekers’ cause. Symbolic politics may be enjoyable for those involved but rarely produces constructive outcomes.

As the German sociologist Max Weber understood, successful democratic politics is about slow boring through hard boards. In so far as the case against Pauline Hanson’s One Nation has succeeded, this was brought about by moderate argument supported by empirical evidence. Not by (verbal) fire of the this-I-believe genre in *Green Left Weekly* or even *The Byron Shire Echo*.

As the modern Labor Party understands, the left’s critique has little to offer those who want to bring about social change in democratic societies. Even in the Byron Shire.



# EUROPE'S DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT DISORDER

John Kunkel

Europe's political leaders have a problem. They sort of realise it, but their interminable communiqués after every European Union (EU) summit just can't seem to deal with it candidly. The problem is the EU's lack of popular support and political legitimacy - or, as it is more fashionably termed, its "democratic deficit".

This year's discussion topic of choice in European salons has been the continent's "lurch to the right". Populist, anti-immigration politicians have shaken up political establishments, most notably in France and the Netherlands.

Conventional wisdom puts this down to extremists exploiting xenophobia deep in European soil, combined with community fears that globalisation is undermining social protections. There is a certain amount of truth to this, especially in France where Jean-Marie Le Pen is the embodiment of ugly nativist reaction. Attempts to stem this populist backlash have focused on toughening policies against illegal immigration, the main topic for discussion at the EU summit in Seville in June.

But Europe's cosy political class is losing the battle for hearts and minds not simply because of illegal immigration, globalisation and latent xenophobia. A more fundamental reason is their failure to explain to ordinary citizens where the whole European venture is heading.

Of course, folks grumbling about busy bodies in Brussels is hardly news. And the European Commission - a hybrid of executive and bureaucratic power - has long been a rich vein for British sarcasm. (*Yes Minister* on the definition of the Euro sausage is perhaps the famous example.) What is news is the degree to which feelings of alienation towards the EU have deepened among the continentals.

Brussels regularly tracks public opinion on EU issues with a "Eurobarometer" survey. The most recent survey shows that barely half of EU citizens (51 per cent) believe that their country has benefited

from its membership of the EU. As usual, Britain registers the lowest level of support (36 per cent), but what is most striking is the historically low levels of support for the EU in France (49 per cent) and Germany (43 per cent). Indeed, the percentage of Europeans who believe they benefit personally from the EU has declined in virtually every member country in recent years.

## NOW SWALLOW ENLARGEMENT

The disconnect between the Euro visionaries and 370 million citizens across 15 member states appears especially acute over the issue of EU enlargement. By the time all the leaders meet in Copenhagen in December, negotiations on EU entry are supposed to have been concluded with 10 countries - mostly former communist states in central and eastern Europe - paving the way for full membership by 2004.

But apart from issuing pronouncements that the process is "inevitable", European leaders have done a lousy job of explaining how your average Italian, Swede or Brit stands to benefit from EU enlargement. Not surprisingly, the key question concerns who pays the bill.

An EU of 25 countries will have almost 30 per cent more people, but only 5 per cent more GDP. The biggest headache surrounds the extension of subsidies under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), given that about 80 per cent of the EU budget goes on farm subsidies and aid to poor regions. The EU Commission is proposing that farmers in the east should receive only 25 per cent of what current EU member farmers get, rising to 100 per cent over 10 years.

In a country like Poland, with millions of poor farmers, this is seen as unfair. A radical Eurosceptic party has won political support there by tapping this discontent. Meanwhile, countries such as Germany that fund the CAP fear a new wave of snoghts in the CAP trough, making reform of European farm policy harder in the long run.

It may well be that differences will be smoothed over by officials to ensure smiles all round at Copenhagen in December. Still, thoughtful European politicians worry about the inherent tensions in the drive towards EU enlargement.

To take one example, Lousewies Van der Laan, a Dutch liberal member of the European parliament, reckons that 80 per cent of her countrymen are poorly informed about enlargement. "The romance is gone," she recently told American journalist Joe Klein. "The bride [the east] is beginning to realize that the groom (the EU) isn't as rich as he said he was. And the groom is beginning to think that the bride isn't quite so pretty."

## THE IRISH QUESTION

Meanwhile, what could yet throw a spanner in the enlargement works is that messiest of democratic processes, a referendum. In October, Irish voters get a second chance to vote on the Nice Treaty, a complicated series of measures designed to alter EU decision-making to take account of EU enlargement.

In June last year, the Irish delivered a rude shock by voting down the Nice Treaty. A rag-tag coalition of nationalists, socialists and environmentalists scored a victory based around the simple slogan: "You will lose power, money and freedom". The fact that the Irish No-vote was based on a turnout of only 34 per cent of the electorate merely underlined the distance most voters feel between themselves and Europe's institutions.

It so happens that Ireland is the only member state that requires a referendum to ratify EU treaties. Many commentators believe that if it were put to the vote elsewhere in Europe the result would be the same. The London *Financial Times* (itself a firm supporter of EU enlargement) says of the Nice Treaty: "No ordinary voter can be expected to understand it, let alone be enthusiastic about it." Far from making the EU more transparent, the treaty makes decision-making even more complex and opaque.

The reaction by some European leaders to the Irish rejection of Nice last year seemed only to confirm the image of an arrogant political class accustomed to issuing grand directives and expecting voters to give the "correct" responses. French President Jacques Chirac, after meeting German Chancellor Gerhard Schroder, declared their "confidence in the ability of the Union to surmount this obstacle". EU President Romano Prodi caused a stir on a visit to Ireland when he suggested blithely that "legally, ratification of the Nice Treaty is not necessary for enlargement".

It was left to Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern to make the obvious point. The referendum result, he noted, demonstrated "graphically ... what I believe all of us already know: there is, unfortunately, a widespread sense of disconnection between the institutions of the EU and its citizens". In the run-up to the second referendum in October, Ahern is seeking to assure Irish voters that such shibboleths as Irish neutrality will not be compromised by the treaty. Whether his countrymen behave in a way approved of by Chirac, Schroder, and Prodi is another matter.

## ONCE MORE FROM THE TOP: THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

Whatever happens in October, Euro enthusiasts are not about to let a bit of popular discontent derail their push towards their cherished "ever closer union". And plenty of thought is being given to how the EU structure can be further reformed. Since March this year, a Constitutional Convention has been underway with over 100 delegates drawn from European governments and parliaments, as well as trade unions, youth groups and other community organisations. Presided over by the 76 year-old former French president, Valery Giscard d'Estaing, the convention aims to develop a new constitutional treaty by 2003 that lays out once and for all the EU's purpose and principles.

Styled as a European equivalent of the 1787 Philadelphia convention that produced the American constitution, the Founding Fathers, Mothers and Youth Groups of modern Europe are mulling over who exactly should wield power in an enlarged EU. At least until now, the dominant ideas all fit neatly into the elite-centred system that has characterised the EU's development over the last 50 years.

Debating is focusing on two different models for the EU's future. One pushed by the EU Commission argues for shifting more and more power to guess who? ... the EU Commission. An arch-federalist proposal unveiled recently by President Prodi would extend the role of (unelected) commissioners to setting a single European foreign policy and assuming a bigger role on taxing and spending matters.

By contrast, a coalition of states has formed around an alternative proposal that would shift power from the Commission to the Council of Ministers, the body that brings together ministers of national governments across Europe. Britain and Spain are especially keen on the idea that the council would elect a president (one with an uncanny resemblance to Tony Blair) who would become the public face of the EU on the world stage, sidelining the Commission and Mr Prodi.

With all this jockeying over where the EU buck should stop, spare a thought for the average Spaniard, German, Hungarian or Czech who is supposed to be the ultimate beneficiary of all this high-minded activity.

## IT'S DEMOCRACY STUPID

All this begs the question: exactly why is the EU's democratic legitimacy so fragile? Perhaps the most persuasive answer has come from an American academic, Larry Siedentop. His book *Democracy in*

*Europe* (Allen Lane/The Penguin Press, 2000), is an insightful (and cleverly packaged) mirror of Alexis de Tocqueville's 1830s treatise, *Democracy in America*. Siedentop's thesis is that Europe's democratic deficit basically reflects the historical pattern whereby accelerated steps towards economic integration were undertaken without any real debate about fundamental issues of democratic process.

Europe, he argues, is going through a delayed crisis resulting from German reunification and the determination of the French political class to preserve its *de facto* domination of the EU. Hence, the drive by former Brussels supremo and French socialist Jacques Delors towards economic integration was all about binding the enlarged Germany into a closer union with centralised decision-making. As such, the Maastricht Treaty (1992) for a single market and the Amsterdam Treaty (1997) for a single currency greatly advanced economic union, but left questions about controlling public power, ensuring accountability and political participation on the sidelines.

Siedentop maintains that the same political culture that characterises the French bureaucratic state is at the core of European integration. This culture fosters a view of law and public policy as the domain of "experts", while citizens are "expected to be submissive and passive, mere spectators of the political process". He claims that this may work for a time, but "by neglecting the active dimension of citizenship" such political cultures simply "store up trouble for the future".

It may be that the future is in sight. On the other hand, Eurosceptics have been predicting for some time that the whole European integration enterprise would end in tears. And they have been wrong. It is hard not to be impressed by the sheer scale and audacity of those who seek a United States of Europe. The Europeans really have fashioned something remarkable out of centuries of state rivalry and war.

Even so, it is only right that fundamental issues of democratic legitimacy and accountability are muscling their way onto the European stage. It is becoming increasingly impossible for Europe's Big Thinkers to ignore the little people.

*John Kunkel is a former adviser to Trade Ministers Tim Fischer and Mark Vaile. His PhD thesis on "US market access policies towards Japan" will be published shortly by Routledge.*



# WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO PUBLIC DEBATE?

Senator Amanda Vanstone, Minister for Family & Community Services, has something to say. Public discourse is at an all time low. Hear what she has to say at The Sydney Institute - and make your own contribution to the public discourse.

**TOPIC:** *The Public Death of Public Discourse*

**TIME:** 5.30 for 6.00 pm

**DATE:** Tuesday 3 September 2002

**VENUE:** Clayton Utz Seminar Room, Level 25, 1 O'Connell Street, Sydney

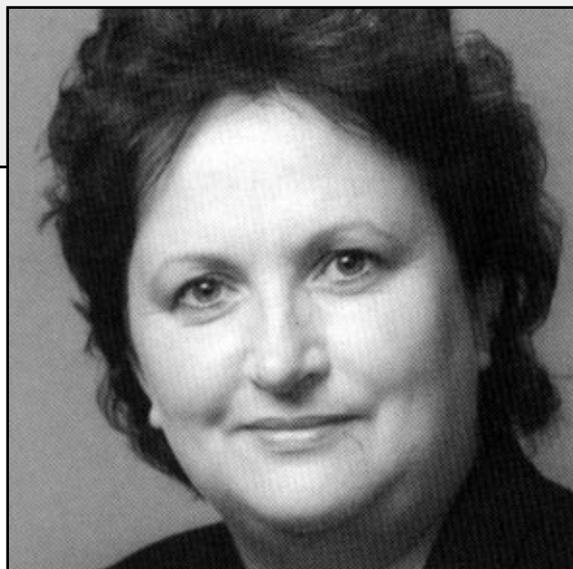
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# THE POLITICS OF ECONOMIC REFORM

Ian Henderson

If John Howard is to be taken at his word, further economic reform aimed at raising national productivity is a must. But in future, the government's reform efforts are almost certain to be accompanied by programs that will cushion the blow on those who would lose out from change.

There is no great secret about the politics of economic reform: For the most part, the losers from reform – indeed, the losers from virtually any economic and social change – are relatively easily identified, while the winners are often much harder to identify. The former characteristic makes it relatively simple for the losers, the potential losers and those who fear they will be losers to be mobilised to oppose the change in question. The latter characteristic – the difficulty in identifying the winners – makes it hard for governments and others in the business of promoting change to identify potential supporters and to must public enthusiasm for what they want to do.

As a result, it often seems to well-meaning politicians and econocrats that they are faced with an impossible task: to win the hearts and minds of those who, for one reason or another, prefer the status quo, and who can much more easily organise campaigns of opposition to change, drawing on the real or imagined costs likely to be imposed on the losers.

Public resistance to change in retail banking provides one example of this truth; the fight by dairy farmers in NSW and Queensland against reform in that industry is another; the campaigns waged by some business people and most unions against lower protection in the car-making and textile, clothing and footwear sectors are a third.

Just how valuable those particular changes have been, or are likely to be, in leading to higher economic efficiency is a moot point. But, research conducted by economists at the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Productivity Commission and the Reserve Bank of Australia suggests that a decade or so of pro-efficiency reform in a range of markets had resulted in higher productivity and thereby had helped raise national living standards.

Even so, economic policy-makers, believing the reform task is never completed, are not satisfied and are convinced that further liberalisation of the labour market and further pro-competition measures in product markets are needed, even if only to underwrite further gains in national and per capita incomes.

What economic policy-makers or advisers want is one thing. But if the Prime Minister is to be taken as his word, further reform is a must also from the politicians' perspective.

Howard has made it clear he wants the central bank to restrain any impulses that would put even a moderate brake on national economic growth, to see just how long the economy can expand at four per cent a year without reviving the bogey of rising inflation.

Regardless of what the bank thinks – or what Treasury thinks for that matter – the Prime Minister and his private advisers believe that, after a decade or more of reform, the economy can safely expand by four per cent a year without giving rise to fears of an unacceptable outbreak of price pressures.

What's more, Howard wants the RBA to test that speed limit because the government is keen to generate enough jobs to drive the unemployment rate down from its roughly 6.5 per cent figure at present to below 5 per cent. Just how willing the RBA is to comply with that aim is yet to be seen, although RBA Governor Ian Macfarlane is on the public record as willing to allow GDP to grow faster than the usually accepted upper limit of 3.5-3.75 per cent, provided inflation remains in check.

Howard's message will not have been lost on the RBA; nor will the RBA be reluctant to pass on, discreetly, its own return message to the Prime Minister: that getting trend growth up to 4 per cent without that giving rise to at least the unacceptable threat of inflation outstripping the bank's 2-3 per cent comfort zone (on average over the course of the business cycle) will require a fresh commitment to economic reform by the Howard Government.

Translated – and Howard is capable of doing the translation – the central bank's message will be that, in the absence of further economic reform, interest rates will be higher than would otherwise be the case, as the bank would be forced to contain growth in order to contain inflationary pressures.

How will Howard respond to that situation?

He is particularly proud of having been associated with a period of low interest rates; he is also intellectually disposed to support the arguments for economic reform. But he will be well aware of the

potential for reform to take its political toll on a government. There is a live and lively debate about the reasons why One Nation managed to garner almost one million votes at the 1998 federal election, but it is difficult to believe that phenomenon owed nothing to the widespread discontent in both regional Australia and the urban working class with economic and social change at the end of the 1990s.

Had voters deserted Howard last November – as they were threatening to do in the early months of 2001 – in the numbers that backed the One Nation movement candidates three years earlier, he would no longer be Prime Minister.

What Howard and his senior ministers learned – or re-learned – during 2001 was the simple truth of sound microeconomic policy - that the losers from change must be cushioned from its adverse effects if that change is to be justified. The government sought to do that on tax reform, with what it claimed was a generous compensation package for those hardest hit by the switch from the wholesale sales tax to the GST.

But it is a lesson that politicians should not have to re-learn every time they decide to go for change. Because the government had sought to cut corners in mid-2000 with its tax reform measures related to petrol prices, it was later forced to undertake drastic and fiscally costly action – to abandon in early 2001 future fuel excise indexation increases – just to still the public's complaints.

Further, economists should be constantly reminding their political masters that ensuring there are no underserving losers from enforced change is not only good politics, it is also sound economics.

If reform measures are worth the pain - that is, if they are pro-efficiency and thereby lead to net increases in national income – there will be enough gains to allow the losers to be compensated without the winners from change being disadvantaged.

Economists who have watched governments struggle to win public support for reform – like those in the senior ranks of the Treasury Department, all of whom have first hand experience of the Hawke and Keating governments in action – are also bound to believe that it is good policy to ensure there are no undeserving losers from reform. Because, the alternative is almost certainly public opposition to reform, with the likely loss of its promised benefits.

The only other serious policy-related matter that policy-makers and politicians must decide is whether or not to directly link the assistance provided to those in fear of losing from reform measures.

Economists might continue to argue that it's better to target such assistance to those people who need it regardless of the causes of their need. Straightened circumstances sometimes arise from government decisions, sometimes from private sector decisions, sometimes from elsewhere (like overseas economic conditions) but the problem that policy must address is the circumstances, not their cause. But politicians might be better advised to ignore that advice, if they are to win public support for further economic reform.

Reform will get harder, not easier. That point is made openly by the Productivity Commission in the documents it issued prior to the start of its latest inquiry into the post-2005 arrangements for the auto industry – the Commission points out that moving from 5 per cent tariff protection to zero would entail high adjustment costs but deliver relatively small gains for the economy.

That is not necessarily an argument against taking that step, but it is an argument for being relatively generous to those workers who would face income losses if that particular reform were implemented.

The cost of failing to be generous to those hardest hit by economic reform could easily be decreased public tolerance of reform – and government reluctance to pursue that path any further.

The result of any such reluctance is predictable; either the pace of economic growth and employment growth will inevitably begin to slow, as the gains from past reforms begin to fade; or the RBA will be unable to continue with its current low interest rate policy, as rapid growth kicks off inflationary pressures and the central bank feels compelled to quell those rising pressures.

Either of those scenarios would diminish Howard's political and economic legacy and reputation.

*This article draws on a paper presented by the author to the conference "Towards Opportunity and Prosperity", held in Melbourne on April 4-5, 2002, and jointly sponsored by the Melbourne Institute and The Australian. The author was then political correspondent for The Australian; he is now economics correspondent for the ABC.*



# WARNINGS ON THE WEB OF HATE

Georgina Gold

The advent of the internet, and the technological explosion that ensued, brought about new forms of communication and interconnectivity.

Information is now readily accessible and instant communication across borders and hemispheres is a given. We now have access to multiple news services, academic doctrines, virtual worlds, real time visual conversations through webcam and millions of recipes for grandma's homemade chocolate mud cake.

We also have detailed explanations on how to make a molotov cocktail, how to hack into government sites, the most effective methods for a successful suicide bombing and how to divert your electricity bill to your neighbour's house.

The common internet user does not generally access this type of information. Online shopping and pornographic sites predominantly remain the most accessed sites on the net. However, the occasional disgruntled teenager might venture into such a site for curiosity purposes.

What is more alarming than this type of website that feeds on paranoia and fear, is the increasing presence of established terrorist groups on the World Wide Web. Groups such as Hizbollah, Hamas, the Internet Black Tigers (an electronic branch of the Tamil Tigers), Al Qaeda, and Far Right Neo-Nazi and fascistic White Supremacist groups.

These groups are not only utilising the connectivity of the internet to release their messages to the world, but also to raise funds for their causes and to spread hidden messages to their colleagues.

The attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on 11 September threw the Western world into a frenzy - a frenzy of fear and reprisal. All known tactics to hunt down Osama Bin Laden and his terrorist networks were implemented - from ground attacks to airborne bombings. There was, however, another less tactile approach that might have been effective in hunting down Bin Laden - except Al Qaeda was a step ahead.

Bin Laden and other members of the Al Qaeda network had used a variety of both high and low tech communication to ensure that all facets of the terrorist network maintained communications.

Bin Laden was known to use a portable satellite phone in remote places and his supporters have been known to utilise email. Through the use of electronic communication, the network has been able to spread throughout the Middle East, Africa, Malaysia, the Philippines, Ecuador, Bosnia, Britain, Canada and the United States.

During the year preceding the 11 September attacks, the National Security Agency (NSA) had lost all track of Bin Laden. It is suspected that he abandoned all forms of electronic communication so as to elude his trackers. Evidently it worked. However, many of his supporters successfully utilised sophisticated encryption software to communicate with other operatives through "hidden" messages.

Encryption is the conversion of data into a scrambled message with must be decrypted or unlocked by a "key".

Similar techniques have been used for centuries to hide messages so that information does not end up in enemy hands. Enigma was an electro-mechanical device used by the Germans throughout World War II. It was an encoding device thought to be unbreakable until it was cracked by the Poles and subsequently the British. As early as 170 BCE, a system using a number of torches placed in various positions to represent letters of the alphabet was described by the historian, Polybius.

The technologically savvy Al Qaeda operatives, however, have taken encryption one step further.

Steganography, or digital watermarking, is the embedding of messages within an ordinary message. In this way, maps, directions, blueprints or photographs can be watermarked within webpages, photographs, chat rooms and emails which can only be "seen" by particular programs.

Steganography has also been used for centuries to avert enemy intervention - more commonly in the form of invisible inks such as lemon juice or urine which become visible once applied to heat.

Communicating between operatives is not the only way that groups such as Al Qaeda are utilising the technologies made possible by the internet. What is perhaps more alarming are the methods in which terrorist groups use the net to propagandise their ideologies.

In an article entitled "Blacklisted Groups Visible on the Web" (*Wired*, 19 Oct 2001) it was reported that the website of Hizbollah (Party of God) included video clips of the group's attacks on Israeli targets, political declarations and photos of bombing victims. These photos have subsequently been taken down.

The Lebanese guerilla group, Hamas, publish through the Palestine Information Centre a list of Hamas members who have "matyred" themselves in the ongoing suicide bomb campaign against Israel. The Islamic Resistance Support Association, a Palestinian group, has pictured highlights of militant Muslims who have died "in the course of performing (their) Islamic sacred duty".

The apocalyptic Japanese group, Aleph, whose cult members were responsible for the 1995 gassings in the Tokyo subway that killed 12 people and injured up to 6000, is less ostentatious on the web than some of its counterparts. To access the main site, a password is requested which is changed bi-weekly to avoid hacking by unwanted members.

Fascistic and neo-Nazi websites are prolific throughout the web world. The Aryan Nation links to other white supremacist sites add up to over 200. These sites include *Better than Auschwitz*, *Skin Nation Forces*, *White Alliance* and *The Fagbashers of America*.

The Anti-Defamation League in the United States has conducted extensive research into the ramifications of widespread publication of materials such as seen on White Supremacist, racist and anti-government sites. The League, which incidentally is cited on a number of White Supremacist sites as being a conspiratorial Jewish organisation, highlights the immediate and potentially devastating danger of these sites.

Not only is information available on why particular groups should be targeted, but also there is information about exactly who to target. Hit lists with personal details including social security numbers and photographic identification are accessible from some sites. Government officials, doctors that allegedly conduct abortions, law enforcement officials and judges are listed alongside bloodied graphics.

Since the events of 11 September, Australia has entered into a national debate on terrorism. The elements that constitute a free society are arguably at risk if severe crackdowns on the freedoms that are so highly valued in Australian society are repressed. Responses, verging on hysterical, were dominant post 11 September.

# AUSTRALIA'S MOST DECORATED - FORGOTTEN

Joice Loch was an extraordinary Australia. She had the inspired courage that saved hundreds of Jews and Poles in World War II, the compassion that made her a self-trained doctor to tens of thousands of refugees, the incredible grit that took her close to death in many wars. She was born on a Queensland sugar plantation only to emerge from years of unpaid drudgery years later in Victoria by writing a children's book. By the time she died in 1982, she had written ten books and saved thousands of lives. At her funeral, the Greek Orthodox Bishop of Oxford named her "one of the most significant women of the twentieth century".

**SPEAKER:** SUSANNA DE VRIES (Author, *Blue Ribbons Bitter Bread* [Hale & Iremonger 2001])

**TOPIC:** *Heroine in the Shadows - The Search for Australia's Most Decorated Woman*

**DATE:** Tuesday 13 August 2002

**TIME:** 5.30 for 6.00 pm

**VENUE:** 41 Phillip Street, Sydney  
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The counter terrorism package, which sought to fully equip Australia's defence forces to deal with potential terrorist attacks, included amendments to the Security Legislation Amendment (Terrorism) Bill 2002, Criminal Code Amendment (Suppression of Terrorist Bombings) Bill 2002, Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism Bill 2002, Border Security Legislation Amendment Bill 2002 and the Telecommunications Interception Legislation Amendment Bill 2002.

Amendments to the various bills have been varied and have included a redefining of terrorism and a broadening of the definition of a terrorist organisation to include those both directly and indirectly involved with planning and engaging in terrorist activities.

With the government attempting to rush through ill-conceived anti-terrorism legislation, opponents were fiercely critical. A slow down ensued and a reconsideration of the intricacies of the various counter-terrorism bills enabled a more detailed debate.

Fears still exist regarding the broad definition of terrorism given by the government in that benign or highly politically active groups might be caught within its realms.

What marks a freedom fighter from a terrorist is ideological difference and community support. However, supporters of the government's anti-terrorism legislation maintain that tightened security is essential to further bolster Australia's defences.

New technologies are continually surpassing efforts to control and understand them. Government proposals, such as gaining access to SMS, voicemail and emails from service providers without a warrant were stymied by both Labor and Democrat opposition. There was even opposition to such measures from within Coalition ranks.

Australia is not the only country battling with the balance between democratic freedoms and desiring protection from terrorist actions.

In recent months, many countries have grappled with the fundamental concepts of what defines terrorism, what constitutes a terrorist and how far should a country protect itself. Furthermore, states are taking action to discuss the highly intricate topic of terrorism-related internet activities.

At a recent convention on Cybercrime that included the Council of Europe, European Union, G8 and the United Nations, a second drafting of the Protocol to the Convention on Cybercriminality was to include

terrorist messages and their decoding. Hans Christian Krüger, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, noted that cybercrime and cyberterrorism represent a serious challenge to society as a whole and the Convention provided the first co-ordinated and international response to this challenge.

The aims of the treaty include clarifying common definitions of certain criminal offences relating to the use of the new technologies, defining methods for criminal investigations and prosecution and determining methods for international communication.

Furthermore, the treaty facilitates the examination of criminality in cyberspace through intercepting communications and preserving data.

Support for the treaty has been substantial with 26 Council of Europe member states and the four non-member states signing the treaty at the Hungarian Parliament in Budapest. With many countries supporting interceptive methods for controlling electronic communications, the civil libertarian argument in Australia might lose its persuasive power.

The fine balance between security and freedom of communication is critical to the debate about telecommunications security.

Debates concerning freedom of communication will continue as global political movements tend more to the extreme. The fundamentals of democracy will be challenged as personal and communicatory freedoms come to loggerheads with national security.

It must be recognised, however, that these freedoms have limitations, including the limitations of defamation, libel, verbal assault, abuse and criminal intent.

Terrorist and racist sites break these ethical mores through the propagation of information with malintent. Hate sites and terrorist organisations merely provide the weak-minded with palatable theories and simple explanations.

*Georgina Gold is a freelance journalist whose interests include the politics of technology*



# AGING AUSTRALIA - DON'T RUSH TO RETIREMENT

Anne Henderson

Recently my twenty (almost 30) something children looked at me blankly when I mentioned actress Diana Rigg. "Who's she?" came their collective response. It seems even the sixties icon of *The Avengers*, Diana Rigg as Mrs Emma Peel, can reach her use by date. So it must be time, at long last, for aging baby boomers to move over while another generation takes centre stage.

But, from Prime Minister John Howard down, Australia's older citizens have every reason not to rush retirement. The number of Australians aged over 85 has grown by a third in the past five years. And, as the older Australians face a downscaling of their incomes and decreasing numbers of younger taxpayers have to pick up the tab, the problem is how to cope with the burden of dependency. Working longer is one way of paying for a longer life and enjoying it.

The boomer cohort, that attention grabbing bunch of gogetters, is fading into middle and old age. But not without a struggle that's causing new concerns. Treasurer Peter Costello's 2002-03 *Intergenerational Report*, released with the Budget, echoes the 1994 EPAC report, *Australia's Aging Society*, in measuring the cost to the taxpayer of our aging society.

**"...the number of people in the eligible age range for the Age Pension will double by 2041-42."**

With life expectancy up and fertility down, by 2042 around 24.5 per cent of Australia's population is expected to be over 65. Alongside this, after 2007-8, labour participation rates for people over 15 will start to decline. This unhappy mix is already pressuring governments to prioritise and prune spending programs as the numbers of dependent grow and the pool of wage earning taxpayers shrinks.

# MIXED MARRIAGES

Through interviews with more than a 100 mixed race couples, June Duncan Owen has written an amazing portrait of Australia's interracial harmony. Her own interracial marriage, between a caucasian Australian and a Malaysian of Sinhalese and Indian parents forms the foundation of her study. Tolerance and intolerance - how have Australians coped with inter racial couples?

**SPEAKER: JUNE DUNCAN OWEN (Author, *Mixed Matches: Inter-racial Marriage in Australia* [UNSW Press, 2002])**

**TOPIC: *Mixed Matches: Inter-racial Marriage in Australia***

**DATE: Tuesday 27 August 2002**

**TIME: 5.30 for 6.00 pm**

**VENUE: 41 Phillip Street, Sydney  
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Yet the story is not all bad – albeit offering some transitional pain. An older Australia doesn't have to be a poorer one if we can make the adjustments needed - both psychologically and financially.

Women increasingly entering the workforce with superannuation, people staying longer in the workplace, larger immigration numbers – all these can help with the costs of an aging population. Even so, health costs will soar as the number of workers relative to non-workers declines.

The 2001 census has revealed that the number of people in their 20s living in Australia has dropped by 104,000 since 1996. The birth rate also plunged in 2001 with the lowest number of births recorded in Australia in 14 years. For the first time in our history, the rise in dependency ratios is coming from the aging end.

Where once Australia's high dependency ratios were explained by large numbers of young, now it's an over population of elderly. And the cost to the public purse of dependent elderly is far greater than dependent young. Especially when the bulk of retirement incomes is publicly funded.

The 2002 federal Budget's *Intergenerational Report* predicts that the number of people in the eligible age range for the Age Pension will double by 2041-42. And while the proportion of those receiving a full Age Pension will decline, those receiving a part Age Pension (as larger numbers retire on superannuation benefits) will increase significantly.

Added to this, of course, is the increased cost of health services that will be required. For while much of the government's projected cost increases in health have been put down to the growing cost of new health care technology, increasing use of services and strong consumer demand and expectations, the aging of the population will further increase the burden on health funding.

Government spending on aged care as a proportion of GDP is projected to more than double, rising from 7 per cent of GDP in 2001-02 to almost 1.8 per cent in 2041-42.

It's time, then, to review attitudes surrounding the older generations. For, unlike the enforced dependency of the very young, as life expectancy increases older citizens can, and indeed will have to, find ways to be more self sufficient and less dependent.

While budgetary constraints force continued pruning by governments and a scaling back of public

benefits, increasing numbers of over 65s will want to go on working, in many cases will need to go on working.

Life on the Age Pension, or pension top up to modest superannuation entitlements, is unlikely to satisfy the average baby boomer for long - conditioned as he or she has been through decades of progress to regular and costly leisure pursuits, travel and homes equipped with technological aids from cars to computers.

Even well prepared retirees, with superannuation entitlements, can expect to live on no more than half of their income just prior to retirement. Those reliant on the Age Pension can expect almost 78 per cent of their pre-retirement income, but this amounts to some 54 per cent less than for the non Age Pension or better off retirees.

Recent figures from the Bureau of Statistics show older workers are already noticing they need to earn while they can. More are hanging on to their jobs or looking for work at much older ages.

Just over half of all women aged between 55 and 59 were in the workforce between 2001-02 – a generation before it was half that number. Twenty-three per cent of women aged between 60 and 64 are still in the workforce compared to 11 per cent two decades ago.

Meanwhile, the same figures show that participation rates among male workers aged 60 to 64 is at a seven year high and activity rates among workers aged over 65 are the second highest on record.

### **“...in the next two decades Australia will see the biggest transfer of wealth in its history.”**

And as Allen Consulting Group Co-Chairman Dr Vince Fitzgerald pointed out in *The Age* (17 May 2002), some of the answer to who should pay for the increased costs to government of an aging society might lie partly with reversing “the trend to early (often involuntary) retirement that we have seen over the past few decades”.

Fitzgerald advocates that government policies counter negative myths about older workers and promote their engagement in work. For while the *Intergenerational Report* is pessimistic about the extent to which older citizens can retain jobs, Fitzgerald is optimistic, saying “younger workers will be increasingly scarce”. Older workers, presumably, will be required and in many cases more than ready to make up the difference.

It is estimated that, without a rapid increase in immigration numbers, such will be the shortage of workers after decades of oversupply, Australia can expect to see a workers' market, with older workers suddenly becoming greatly attractive to employers.

Governments grappling with how to manage an aging population will no doubt see this as a plus - cutting costs to government as well as improving incomes for older generations. This would delay many Age Pension payments, and also add to superannuation contributions.

With life expectancy up and mortality rates down, however, retirees and older workers not only face a longer life after 65 (commonly seen as the retirement age) but a healthier one. The picture of retirement as being an end to paid work followed by a decade of physical decline, confinement to an old age home and then death is largely a myth and increasingly so.

Such is the longevity of a majority of olds, we now speak of two stages after 65 - the old and the older elderly. As well, most health costs associated with an aging population are for infirm elderly and come with hospitalisation, usually only needed in the two years prior to death. For the rest, aging is a slowing down but by no means incapacity.

Most over 60s can expect fruitful and active later years. A time, in fact, when older people contribute both financially and in kind, to the wider community. Australia is by no means top heavy with old folk of scant means. In fact, as the EPAC report *Australia's Aging Society* pointed out in 1994, older Australians have accumulated significant wealth which will be passed on to their children in inheritances.

In 1990 more than \$140 billion was owned by Australians aged over 65. In the 1990s, the asset holdings of the retired, including those aged between 55 and 65, amounted to over \$200 billion.

Regardless of what will be needed to support this group till death, in the next two decades Australia will see the biggest transfer of wealth in its history. Moreover, figures show that older people are twice as likely to give money to their families than receive it.

It is true that the baby boomer generation of working women means they will be less able to provide their traditional full-time carer role for elderly parents or relatives. However, the availability of better communications and cars means a lot of care can be provided, and is already provided, from a distance.

Older parents will continue to support working daughters and sons with children, as childminders, and they will continue to assist in financial, emotional and other practical emergencies. As older Australians live longer and fitter lives, this will be increasingly so.

In the community at large, older citizens are the backbone of volunteer and community services. This will continue to happen. Community projects in many cases could not continue without older volunteers, but likewise older people gain vitality and contact through the contribution they make.

One such program is Melbourne's Foster Grandparent Scheme, where volunteers over age 50 are matched with disabled children. Volunteers commit to at least two hours per week and activities are wide ranging from joining in outings with the child's family to assisting with the child's therapy.

Measured this way, older citizens can and do put back in ways not so easily measured as the tax take or the cost of pensions. Evaluations of the "costs" of an aging population should try to take this into account.

And while economists and treasurers will warn of blowouts in costs from unchecked dependency in oldies, the numerically strong older generation is already winning concessions from government.

In 2001, John Howard gave generous handouts to self-funded retirees so that now a retired couple on \$52,800 effectively pays no tax. Even Simon Crean has promised to lower the contributions tax on superannuation.

As with the equally costly health insurance cover, governments recognise that, in time, encouraging self sufficiency in retirement might be the greatest saving of all.

And if it's good enough for the Prime Minister to work while he can, why not the over 60s in the electorate at large?

*Anne Henderson is Deputy Director of The Sydney Institute*



# BOOK REVIEWS

John McConnell

## DEMONS AND DEMOCRATS: 1950S LABOR AT THE CROSSROADS

By Gavan Duffy

Freedom Publishing Company Pty Ltd, pb 2002, rrp \$27.95

ISBN 0 957 868 227

Gavan Duffy's *Demons and Democrats* provides a clear account of the major split that occurred within the Australian Labor Party a half-century ago.

The author examines the establishment of the Movement (the Catholic Social Studies Movement, later to become the National Civic Council), ALP Industrial Groups, events leading to the split and its aftermath.

The Industrial Groups were formed expressly to fight communist penetration of the trade unions. Any group holding a position of power in trade unions affiliated to the Labor Party automatically gained influence within the ALP.

Communist successes in the union movement therefore translated into a corresponding capacity to influence the Labor Party, Australia's alternative government.

Similarly, Industrial Grouper success in removing communists and pro-communists from positions of union leadership meant a consequent growth of potential influence within the ALP. It so happened that industrial grouper activists were largely but not exclusively, Catholic. In an Australia with a strong undercurrent of sectarianism, the stage was set for an explosive development.

Enter Dr Evatt. He accuses a Catholic group based in Victoria operating under the direction of B.A. Santamaria of trying to subvert the ALP. The ALP split follows.

Gavan Duffy discusses issues relevant to the split and its aftermath including Dr Evatt's personal instability, Rupert Lockwood's perjured evidence before the Petrov Royal Commission, the formation of the Democratic Labor Party, the tactic of the united front and the role of unity tickets.

It was never the intention of the Movement, argues Duffy, to seek control of the ALP. Such a strategy, he suggests, would have been impracticable. And the Federal Conference of the ALP should have resolved the issues brought to the fore by Dr. Evatt's extraordinary attack.

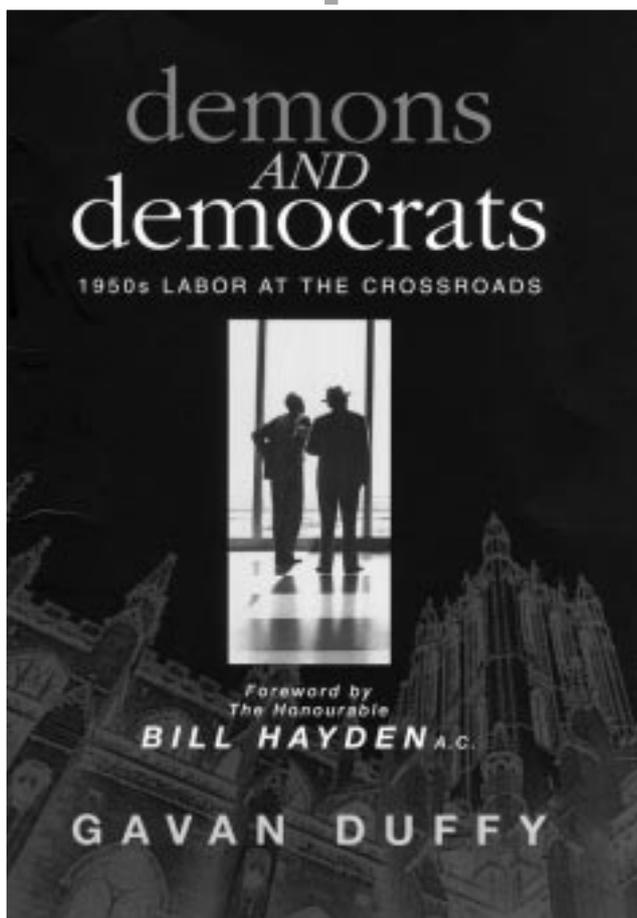
However, a special Federal Executive meeting was used instead. This was highly irregular as Clyde Cameron subsequently admitted. Cameron – an architect of the plan to defeat “the groupers” – argued that when it comes to the crunch, technicalities don't count.

The appendix to *Demons and Democrats* contains Clyde Cameron's vale to Bob Santamaria following the latter's death in 1998. There, Cameron speaks of “lasting respect from friend and foe” for Bob Santamaria and that “when a full history of Australian politics over the past 50 years is put to paper, his rating will head the list.”

The ALP expelled the Industrial Groups. The Democratic Labor Party came into existence. DLP

preferences were used to deny office to the Labor Party pending a purge of the extreme left and a return to traditional Labor values.

This so-called road-block policy ensured that the ALP, both federally and in some states, was confined to the opposition benches for a very long period of time.



Gavan Duffy recounts these events carefully and reasonably. The information he assembles is based mainly on published material and a small number of interviews rather than on more extensive interviewing and access to various archives. He refers to unsuccessful attempts to bridge the gap between the ALP and the DLP. Duffy raises the possibility of three such meetings but acknowledges Gerard Henderson's belief that the 1956 talks never occurred.

*Demons and Democrats* contains a very interesting foreword. There, Bill Hayden observes that his comments resonate with the benefit of hindsight. A lot of the ALP faithful at the time of the Split, he says, swallowed the party line on Dr. Evatt.

The official version portrayed Dr. Evatt "as a defender of free expression, a slayer of intolerant Catholic sectarianism and a demolisher of secret and sinister Catholic conspiracies to seize control of the Labor Party." It all looks so fanciful now, says Hayden. Indeed, "unconvincingly grotesque" in its more extreme manifestations, he adds.

Dr. Evatt's serious psychiatric disorder contributed to his erratic judgment and, at times, scarcely rational behaviour. Bill Hayden concludes that Bob Santamaria was "more correct in his description of Communist intentions towards this country's political and social system than his critics were prepared to allow."

Had the Industrial Groups survived, Gavan Duffy argues, the ALP would never have entertained the policies of deregulation, privatisation and globalism that were implemented during the Hawke and Keating years. In the concluding chapters of *Demons and Democrats*, he summarises the present priorities of the National Civic Council and associated organisations.

## STASILAND

By Anna Funder

The Text Publishing Company, pb 2002,

rrp \$27.50

ISBN 1 876485 90 6

*Stasiland* is the story of a number of individuals who lived mainly on the eastern side of the Berlin Wall. It is therefore the story of the former Communist state of East Germany and its relationship with its citizens.

Anna Funder, an Australian writing her first book, reveals the nature of East German society during decades of intensive State surveillance of its citizens.

Her book contains moving accounts of the restrictions and sufferings ordinary people underwent. It reveals how lives were shaped by the Berlin Wall (built in 1961, demolished in 1989). The Berlin Wall, Funder notes, "obeys all the logic of locking up free people to keep them safe from criminals".

Central to the tale is the Stasi – the former East German Ministry for State Security.

The Stasi amounted to an internal army that enabled the Communist Party to remain in control. Its reach is hard to imagine.

Stalin's Soviet Union relied on one KGB agent per 5830 people. Hitler's Third Reich had one Gestapo agent per 2000 citizens. But there was one Stasi

officer or informant for every 63 people in East Germany.

The ratio is even lower if part-time informers are included. The Stasi files, kept on their countrymen and women, would reach some 180 kilometres into the distance if laid out upright and end-to-end.

We meet various individuals in *Stasiland*, some who were victims, some who were oppressors working for the Stasi, but not necessarily under their real names.

There is Miriam Weber who was imprisoned at sixteen years of age. Her crime? Supporting a group of protestors with a banner reading "Consultation,



not water cannon!" And then, when the authorities track her down for such subversive action, attempting to escape over the Wall into West Berlin.

Following her release from prison, Miriam Weber marries. Later, her husband is imprisoned under suspicion of planning to flee the GDR. He dies in prison in mysterious circumstances. Miriam Weber is still trying to find out how he died and what happened to his body.

We meet also Julia Behrend, in trouble with the authorities over her Italian boyfriend.

There is Frau Paul, her husband and son living out a story of painful separation, amidst great suffering and courage. Their story involves the separation of parents and son during the early years of the boy's life. Frau Paul refuses to betray a friend. For this, she pays a very high price. Access to her very sick son in a West Berlin hospital is denied for years.

We also meet a number of former Stasi officers and gain insights into their lives and attitudes. *Stasiland*, Funder writes, was "a place where what was said was not real, and what was real was not allowed, where people disappeared behind doors and were never heard from again, or were smuggled into other realms."

Anna Funder constructs the story of *Stasiland* carefully and skilfully. She is curious and observant. Her pen presents vivid images of personalities and places. She builds a story that reveals the suffering and the depressing nature of a regime that suffocated citizens with a devastating level of surveillance.

Imagine a society governed by mistrust. Where everyone suspects everyone else. Where fiction is fact – "such as the idea that human nature is a work-in-progress which can be improved upon, and that Communism is the way to do it."

The author blends the ingredients together neatly, although there are moments when the progress seems a little slow.

The prose is impressive. And Anna Funder shares her responses with the reader as the story unfolds. Along the way, there is the demolition of the Berlin Wall, the dissolution of the Communist state, the shredding of files and how a small number of people are undertaking the painstaking task of attempting to piece the shreds that remain back together again.

East Germany has gone but, as Funder observes, its remains are still at the site. The Berlin Wall has gone too but its significance hangs on. To many former Stasi officers, it is a symbol of a time to which they wish to return. To many of the victims, such a thought remains a terrifying possibility.

*Stasiland* introduces readers to a number of human beings trapped in time and place seeking meaning and in some instances what is very basic information about their own lives.

Some wish for a return to the order and control that was theirs when most individuals could be subjected

to persecution and torture on mere rumour and suspicion.

Others continue to deal daily with painful memories. Justice is on standby.

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**THIS WAR NEVER ENDS: THE PAIN OF SEPARATION AND RETURN**

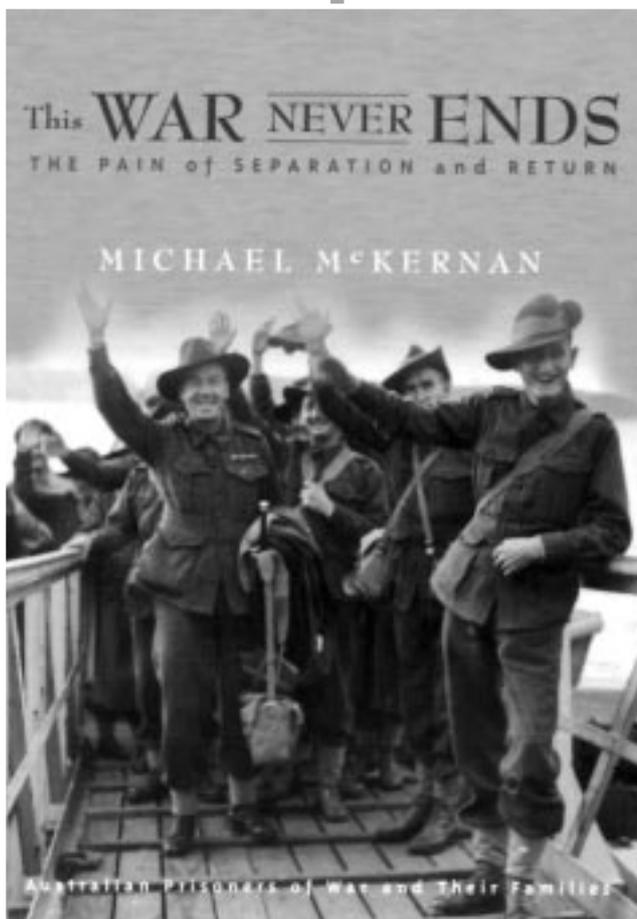
**By Michael McKernan  
University of Queensland Press,  
pb 2001, rrp \$35  
ISBN 0 7022 3274 2**

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Michael McKernan gives a challenging and unusual perspective on war. The focus is not on battles. Rather it is on Australian prisoners of war returning home from Japanese captivity following the end of the World War II.

Any soldier returning from war is likely to encounter difficulties in resuming relationships and fitting back into civilian life.

For the former prisoners of the Japanese, the magnitude of the adjustment becomes apparent from the research that McKernan has under-taken. The



prisoners had experienced suffering and degradation on such a scale that they found it difficult to speak about their feelings to their loved ones.

They had seen mates die. They had lived under appalling conditions. They had endured brutality. They had been forced to assist the Japanese war effort. Many of these men had returned to Australia harbouring the suspicion that they had let Australia down. Meanwhile, there were government ministers who were not keen for the general public to find out how badly the prisoners had been treated.

There were military officials who understood the problems. However, there was a desire to avoid any special consideration for the returning prisoners in case this might undermine the resolve of Australian soldiers in future conflicts.

Through access to letters and government documents, Michael McKernan has woven a number of insights together in what is a very sad aspect of the Australian story. The book brings into sharp focus how personal connections – families, friends, neighbours, workmates – were disrupted by the years in Japanese captivity.

In this age of e-mail and SMS messages, it is difficult to imagine the total silence that descended on the overwhelming number of Australian prisoners of war. Over a 15 months period, communications from 22,000 Australian prisoners in Japanese captivity totalled around 500 letters and cards. Many families did not know whether their loved ones had survived and if they were in captivity.

Prisoners were treated brutally. More often than not, they were denied access to mail and food parcels. Conditions were shocking. One in three Australian prisoners of the Japanese were to die in captivity. The Japanese felt contempt towards anyone who surrendered.

There are many sad stories indeed within the pages of *This War Never Ends*. Michael McKernan writes that the cruellest aspect of liberation occurred when the surviving prisoners were freed. A general fear among the former prisoners, he reports, was that other Australians and particularly family members might see them in their wretched and wasted states.

Ambiguity was present. They were happy to be going home but their happiness was mixed with apprehension and impatience. Family members had suffered grievously during the war years, not knowing what had happened.

Many family members had imagined all sorts of things that might have happened. Now, they were

grateful for their return. They could sense that the former prisoners had undergone brutal treatment and savage deprivations.

However, they were often unsure how best to respond. The prisoners found it difficult to speak about what had happened to them. They were also unnerved by the expectations of families of mates who did not survive for information on just what had happened. A generation of Australians that found discussing very personal issues difficult clung to the hope that time would heal the wounds.

As Michael McKernan notes, there was a gulf that could not be bridged. Here were war victims – both the former prisoners and their families – who were unable to communicate properly with each other. Neither was well prepared for the homecoming. Many family members were particularly distressed by the sense of rejection that they encountered.

*This War Never Ends* presents a powerful perspective on an aspect of World War II that has received minimal attention to date. Denial of reality is at the core of Michael McKernan's analysis.

Returning prisoners underplayed their wounds and amputations and said little about their illnesses. Family members cooperated in the silence in the hope that normality would return eventually. The situation was far from normal. Psychological damage was not addressed.

However, Michael McKernan stresses that his book is about suffering and trauma, not blame.

Understandably, McKernan believes that the story of those Australians who suffered in Japanese prison camps may well become one of the defining stories of the nation.

*John McConnell is the author of several senior textbooks*



# REVIEW OF THE REVIEWERS

Stephen Machett

For three hundred years, polemicists used the pamphlet to sway public opinion - which must be small comfort to commentators whose recent passionate punditry was largely ignored, certainly by the quality media.

This may be because most interested Australians have ready access to robust political debate in the daily print and electronic media and increasingly on the www. People no longer need to turn to long essays or books for interpretations of the issues of the hour.

Or it might be because much of this opinionated moralising just did not engage the mass of Australians who have ample access to information and prefer to think things through for themselves.

Many of these pamphlets are the work of academic critics and it shows in their less than elegant prose and pedantic tone. Even Robert Manne, whose long experience as a Fairfax columnist should have saved him from such error, wrote at times like a benign lecturer trying to explain things to particularly dim students.

But whatever the reason there was not much interest in this batch of reforming texts, Donald Horne, (*Looking for Leadership: Australia in the Howard Years*, (Melbourne, Viking, 2001), Helen Irving (ed) *Unity and Diversity: A National Conversation*, (Sydney, ABC 2001), Mungo MacCallum, "Girt By Sea: Australia, the Refugees and the Politics of Fear", *Quarterly Essay* (Melbourne, 2002), Robert Manne,

*The Barren Years: John Howard and Australian Political Culture* (Melbourne, Text 2001), Andrew Markus, *Race: John Howard and the Remaking of Australia* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 2001), Glen Patmore (ed) *The Big Makeover: A New Australian Constitution*, (Sydney, Pluto Press 2001), Guy Rundle, "The Opportunist: John Howard and the Triumph of Reaction" *Quarterly Essay* (Melbourne, 2001), Don Watson, "Rabbit Syndrome: Australia and America", *Quarterly Essay* (Melbourne, 2001).

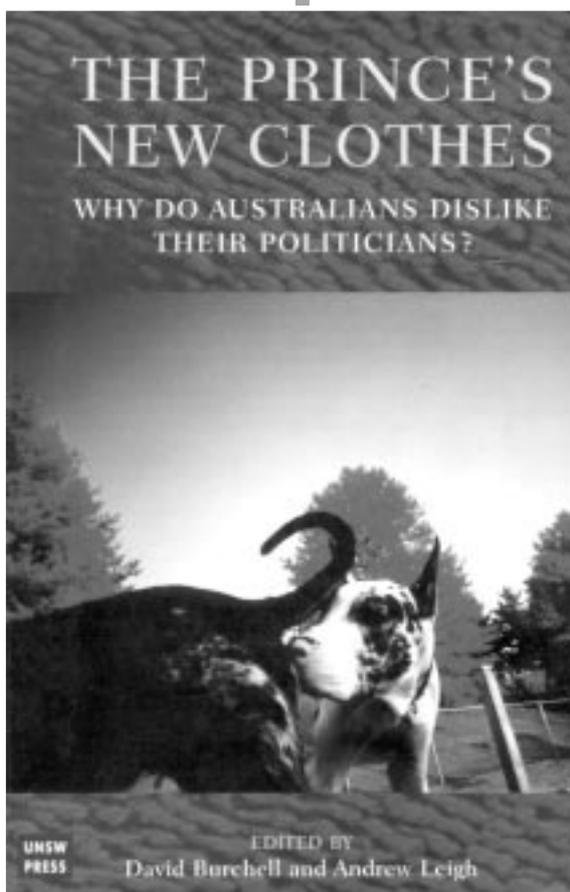
Not every academic effort in this crop was dull and dogmatic. David Burchell and Andrew Leigh (eds), *The Prince's New Clothes: Why Do Australians Dislike Their Politicians?* (Sydney, UNSW Press, 2002) produced a collection of essays that demonstrated how scholarship can make a greater contribution to public debate than mere complaint. Helen Irving's elegant essay on constitutional reform (in *Unity and Diversity*) similarly sneered at no one while making a

carefully argued case for change. But on the whole the writers, Rundle, MacCallum and Watson, rather than the academics, made the most engaging cases.

They certainly were not as dull. Most of these books and essays are tedious reading, many the work of people who appear convinced of their own moral rectitude, leaders of what Robert Manne, in a revealing definition of self-regard, called 'the moral middle class', (*Barren Years*, 189). It was a throwaway reference by Manne but it neatly defines a class of academic commentators who purport to represent all that is good and true. Whoever said only the impotent are pure in politics could have been thinking about this lot.

The Moral Middle Class is the self-appointed keeper of the national conscience. Its

members are contemptuous of politics and its practitioners are deeply suspicious of ordinary Australians' capacity to make reasoned judgements. Thus Manne argued in 1998 that the chasm between the "economic or cultural elites" and ordinary people, based on their different world views as much as their material wealth, is the real divide in Australian politics.



The cultural elite read the quality press and watch and listen to the ABC while “ordinary people” consume commercial television, talk-back radio and popular magazines. The cultural elites are sensitive to “questions of Aboriginal injustice”, support Asian migration and multiculturalism, which is the exact reverse of what the masses think. (*Barren Years*, 15-16)

In an attack on Labor’s position on refugees, Anne Summers established the same sort of claim to moral superiority for what she called, “the Whitlamite generation”:

**Those thousands of middle-class, educated people who flocked to the party because of Gough Whitlam (and) have supported the ALP for more than 30 years. (Sydney Morning Herald, 28 January, 2002)**

There are no prizes for guessing who Manne and Summers line up with in this division of the Australian people into right thinkers and dullards. For Manne, the nation that is informed by right thinkers is governed best. Thus he yearned for the Federation debates when proper thinking people led the debate:

**Without an earnest, active citizenry of the educated middle-class, willing to agitate and educate, there might have been no federation. This active citizenry embodied an optimism about politics and a belief in the power of reason that it is almost impossible for an age as cynical as ours to understand. (Barren Years, 142)**

Donald Horne made the same general point and argued that the nation needed the wisdom of its intellectual elite:

**... the bold and guileful enemies of things as they stand, who have their own ideas of how things should be run. Instead of indulging in claptrap about academics guzzling their caffe lattes as they idle their time away, we should recognise that if the people who run things, and their critics, rust up Australia rusts up. We should ensure that our education systems make it possible for those who make it into this group to excel. (Looking for Leadership, 94)**

The Moral Middle Class is so convinced of its worldview it will brook no disagreement. You are with ‘em or agin ‘em. They assert their superiority on Four Articles of Faith which are scattered throughout these pamphlets and are familiar to any one who listens to Radio National or reads the letters pages of the broadsheets.

The First Article holds that structural economic reform is immoral and exclusively designed to make people work too hard. It uses the term “economic rationalist” as a collective description covering everybody from corporate cowboys through to the Productivity Commission and holds that a nation’s economy and its capacity to provide for its citizens’ needs can be distinguished.

The Second is that the practice of politics is in a state of moral collapse. The Australian people are bereft of hope and yearn for moral leaders who will make everything like it was in the 1970s (but with better coffee and less sexism). All politicians, perhaps excepting the Greens and Democrats, are morally corrupt and utterly disinterested in the aspirations and attitudes of the voters. Of course, Pauline Hanson and her followers qualify for the Moral Middle Class on economics and alienation but are heretical on the Third Article of Faith.

This focuses on race and refugees and is the cause of some doctrinal dispute. One argument holds that many of the Australian people are irredeemably racist, demonstrated by their support for the Howard Government’s mandatory detention policy for refugees and the refusal of the Commonwealth to apologise to Indigenous Australians. For commentators who claim to speak for the people on Articles One and Two this is a problem. If the Australian people are so sensible as to support the Moral Middle Class position on the first two, how can they be so wrong on the Third?

The more common position is that the Australian people are not racist at all – just misled by villainous politicians. Why the voters are on to the ALP and Coalition on Articles One and Two but not on Article Three is a problem – but it’s an easier question to deal with than accepting that all the voters who are not members of the Moral Middle Class want to reinstate the White Australia Policy.

It is the Fourth which pulls this anthology of grievance together – that all the transgressions against the First Three Articles of Faith are the diabolic work of Prime Minister Howard who has bent the nation to his evil will.

These are all among the issues of the hour and it is a demonstration of the rude good health of Australian public life that they are so vigorously debated in the media and that so many voices beyond the academy speak out. The dilemma over race and migration, in particular, rightly excites passionate debate.

But the problem is that to qualify for the Moral Middle Class you have to be sound on all Four Articles of Faith. There is little solace in any of these polemics for independent thinkers who rigorously

support continuing de-regulation of the Australian economy but loathe the government's treatment of refugees.

The irony is that for all the posturing as thinkers championing justice and progress much of this writing is indistinguishable from the orthodoxy of public opinion. This is certainly the case in the way some of these pamphlets argue the First Article of Faith, that Australia was a better country before the Hawke-Keating government embraced the economic whore of Babylon, in the guise of restructuring the economy.

It is of course absolute nonsense; the black shade of Hansonism has happily passed but the memory lingers on and there is no longer a constituency in either major party for continuing economic reform.

But, despite all the evidence to the contrary, many of these essayists bang on about the evil effects of the market. And they lament the lost glories of a supposedly egalitarian Australia of the 1950s and 1960s now lost. Of course they ignore that while it was an era when the gap between rich and poor might have been less pronounced it was also a time when the complacency of government and people made the transition to an internationally competitive economy much harder than it should have been.

And in common with their unreconstructed faith in the capacity of people like them to know best what is good for the populace, they practise that furtive slight of hand so loved by social engineers and talk of "equality" when they mean outcomes rather than equality of opportunity.

There is little in any of these pamphlets on the necessity of economic-growth generating reform, particularly in the public sector, to create the wealth that will increase the quality of life for all Australians. Rather there is criticism of "economic rationalism" – a generalised term of abuse for all those folk-devils who do not accept that Australia's last right-thinking Treasurer was Jim Cairns.

Perhaps this is just force of habit. Perhaps it is because the Moral Middle Class has never taken economics all that seriously and has not grasped that the old traditions of state intervention and business rent-seeking never went away.

Most likely it is because the dogmatists for the Moral Middle Class are uncomfortable that the message of Articles One and Two appeals to so many people who voted for Pauline Hanson and who certainly do not embrace Article Three.

Even Mungo MacCallum, who has seen a good deal more of practical politics than the mass of academic essayists and whose piece on the evolution of the Howard Government's internment policy is elegantly structured and beautifully written, can't resist sneering at people who don't measure up to his moral standards. Thus he dismisses the "aspirational voters", (the sort of people who deserted Labor in the seat of Lindsay in 1996 and never returned) as mean-minded, selfish of spirit and utterly conformist in their xenophobia (*Girt By Sea*, 40-41).

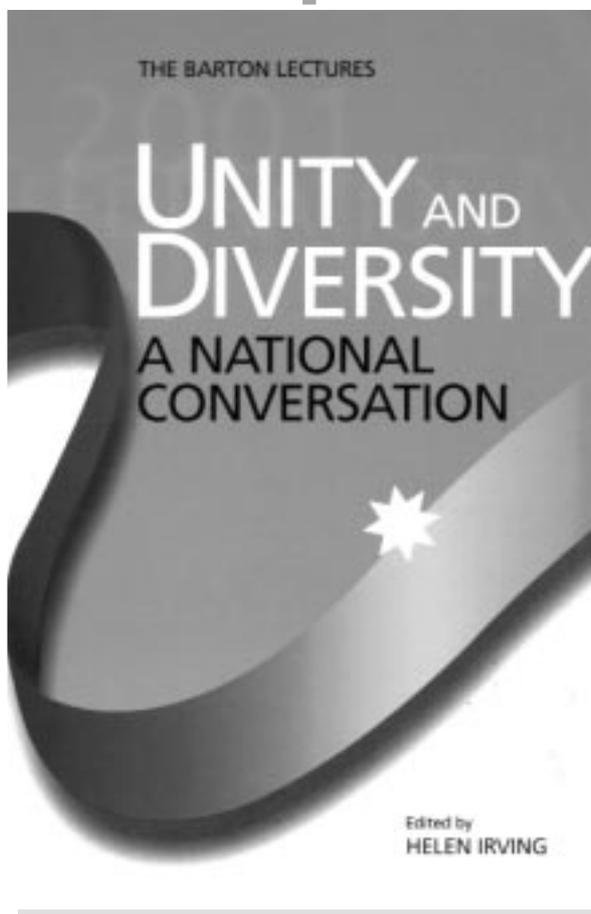
He is not alone. Many of these authors clearly think that right-thinking people, people like them, have such a monopoly on moral courage and wisdom that anybody who does not subscribe to all of the Four Articles of Faith is either racist, mean-spirited or, worse still, a friend to John Howard.

For some of these writers, what it seems to come down to is irritation that they are not leading the national debate. For which sad state

they blame everybody from the Government and Opposition, for not doing what they are told, through to the electorate for not listening to what their betters are telling them.

Which may be because what the electorate hears from the middle class moralists, if they listen at all, has less to do with the realities of Australian politics and more with a fanciful memory of the polemicists' youth.

Thus Belinda Probert set out the First Article of Faith. She argued that economic reform is in the interests of the rich and that a regulated economy



protected the working class through measures such as regulated home loans. Evidently she was not paying attention when they were twice what the market now sets them at and rationed by the banks to suit their oligopolistic interests. (*Unity and Diversity*, 29)

Elaine Thompson, also argued that all this emphasis on economic reform had twisted the best nature of the Australian people who were interested in more than money - "they also fight for ideas such as freedom and the right to produce poetry" (*Unity and Diversity*, 71). The connection between building a job-generating globally competitive economy and writing verse is evidently so obvious to right thinking people that Thompson felt no need to explain further.

There was more of the same yearning for a golden age of full employment and government regulation from Robert Manne in *The Barren Years* which cheerfully ignored the problems piled up by a generation of politicians from Menzies to Whitlam (76). Don Watson saw de-regulation of the economy and labour markets as inevitable but lamented that it took Australia further down the American road, presumably because learning from world's the richest democracy, a nation with an immigration policy of extraordinary liberality, is a bad thing. (*Rabbit Syndrome*, 40)

Similarly Guy Rundle, the brightest hope for those on the left who yearn for articulate thinkers to replace the ageing moralists, argued that both major political parties are united in their willingness to subject Australia to the wickedness of globalisation and de-regulation (*The Opportunist*, 33-35). His point is not all that different from the Hansonites who wailed at the loss of the old certainties:

**The freedom to be a self-defining person also involves the stress of having to define oneself and to make one's way in an increasingly atomised world. This ambivalence is keenly felt, yet neither mainstream political party has had the wit**

**to highlight it as the deep structure of a host of disparate social problems - from the gradual evaporation of traditional work and the work cultures that supported it to the multitudinous social and psychological dilemmas of those who may be more fortunate in material terms. (*The Opportunist*, 51-52)**

That both political parties are complicit in this betrayal of the Australian people to the nostrums of market-economics is the basis of the Second Article of Faith espoused by the Moral Middle Class - the alienation from politics of ordinary Australians.

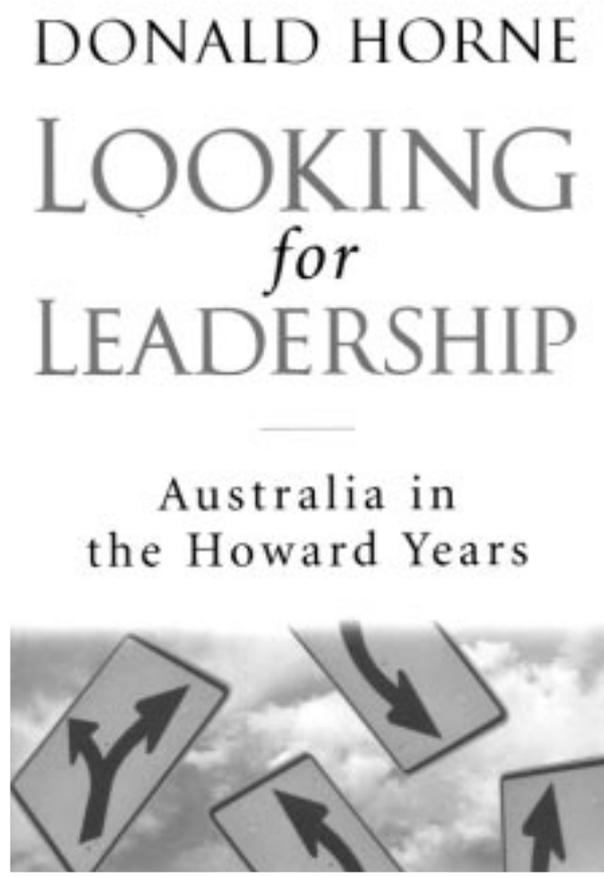
Donald Horne suggested that Paul Keating failed to sell his vision for Australia (*Looking for Leadership*, 10-11) and that Hansonism was, in part, the consequence of, "politicians not having the heart or brains to speak honestly to citizens".(37)

Robert Manne offered a more vigorous recitation of the "all politicians are bastards", (except presumably the ones who are subscribing members of the Moral Middle Class), Second Article of Faith when he suggested that the real political divide in Australia was between the market focused "elites" and "ordinary people" who believe in "broad-ranging intervention and protection" by the state. (*Barren Years*, 15)

Sarah Joseph was equally convinced that ordinary people are properly suspicious of the political class:

**It is beyond doubt that the standard of political debate at all levels in this country needs raising. The electorate is cynical and politicians as a class are uniformly tarred with the brush of untrustworthiness. (*The Big Makeover*, 57)**

There is certainly little faith that the major political parties reflect the views of right-thinking people. Thus David Tucker and Sally Young argue for universal funding of election campaigns, "so that every candidate is heard". (*The Big Makeover*, 61)



Of course, none of this is necessarily true, as Murray Goot demonstrated in an essay that forensically sliced and diced the rhetoric of an alienated electorate. Certainly Goot accepted that there is a great deal of cynicism about politics but used masses of opinion poll data over decades to suggest that voters still think elections matter, still distinguish between political parties and are possibly more interested in politics than was the case in the early Cold War years or at the election of the Whitlam Government. (*The Emperor's New Clothes*, 15, 43).

In any case, cynicism about politics does not mean the system is in a state of moral collapse. As David Burchell argued, the most vocal cynics are simply not happy that their agenda is not in vogue. (*The Emperors New Clothes*, 62-64)

**A good deal of disillusionment with government nowadays is often based on assumptions which were the staple of the social democracy of one or two generations ago. (*The Emperors New Clothes*, 65)**

But as the Moral Middle Class represents all that is good and true in public life it should be obvious that they speak for all right thinking Australians.

And even some wrong thinking ones. Most of these polemicists skirted around the problem of the Hansonites by arguing that they are less bad than misguided and misinformed. Thus Donald Horne damned John Howard for politicising race and multiculturalism, "setting people off arguing about things they wouldn't otherwise have been arguing about". (*Looking for Leadership*, 6)

That people who are sound on Articles One and Two of the Moral Middle Class faith can be so wrong on the Third Article that deplores government policy on refugees and race is the great doctrinal dilemma for Manne, Horne and their fellow-travellers.

Some writers claimed that many Australians were and are just plain bad on matters of race. Thus, Lydia Miller asked the obvious question that if Federation was achieved in a decade why is there no agreement

on reconciliation between indigenous and other Australians after a century? (*Unity and Diversity* 152-153)

Andrew Markus went a way down the racism road in a long discussion of the behaviour of the political Right, including John Howard, from the 1980s in creating race as a divisive issue in national politics. Just in case any of his readers missed how evil these people were, Markus explained that while they pushed a race-based Australian nationalism they also

plotted to impose "economic rationalism" and "globalism". According to Markus, Hansonism did not create as much as tapped into this existing racism. (*Race*, x, 217)

And this racism is out there in the community, not just confined to sinister people who will do anything to improve labour productivity, Thus Markus attacked Howard for being governed by "the prejudices and sensitivities in the community":

**The embracing of these perspectives involved a willful blindness to other truths: a blindness to the plight of refugees who sought shelter in Australia; to families denied the opportunity for reunion; to the risk to democracy posed by the willingness to**

**allocate preferences and consider alliances with extremist forces and to the tragedies which marked the lives of Aboriginal people of past and present generations". (*Race*, 103-104)**

Markus did not debate or discuss; he denounced for over 200 pages. And at the heart of his book is the conundrum that faces the Moral Middle Class; what is to be done in a democracy when the electorate rejects the Articles of Faith, particularly that which calls for a more generous migration policy and redress of the wrongs done to Indigenous Australians.

His book concludes with the rhetorical question of what would have happened if Pauline Hanson had stayed in the House after the 1998 election, if One

# RACE



John Howard and the remaking of Australia



Andrew Markus

Nation had won more Senate seats and become a force in national politics and if a global economic downturn created mass unemployment. The implication he thought was clear - race would have become an ever larger issue in Australian politics. (*Race*, 225)

Of course it did not happen. The Australian electorate ultimately rejected the madness of Hansonism but Markus appears to have little faith in a mass electorate and just because it did not happen, does not mean that it cannot.

It's a problem best solved by denying that a government has a mandate when the electorate makes the wrong decision on any of the Articles of Faith. Donald Horne trotted out all the standard arguments why governments do not have mandates for particular policies, the people who voted for them may not support or understand all a government's policies. Elections can be won with less than a majority of the popular vote (*Looking for Leadership*, 81-83). It is all true enough and rebuts the lazy argument that election results end the right to dissent.

As abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison put in 1831, "I am in earnest; I will not equivocate; I will not excuse; I will not retreat a single inch - and I will be heard." But the second half of this quote is less often used, "The apathy of the people is enough to make every statue leap from its pedestal, and to hasten the resurrection of the dead."

Moral Middle Class theoreticians are similarly driven by the confident belief that they know better than the mass of apathetic voters. Thus Manne criticised Paul Sheehan for publishing *Among the Barbarians* not just for its poverty of argument but because it encouraged "Old Australians" in their prejudice (*Barren Years* 31-32). Or as Mungo MacCallum attacked Howard for making race a core issue in last year's election:

**... if people hear their leaders, both cultural and political, telling them that they are expected to be racially intolerant, they may well be encouraged to become so. (*Girt By Sea*, 64)**

The Moral Middle Class position on race and migration makes a great deal more sense than the Articles of Faith that hold that economic reform is bad and that Australian politics is in a state of moral collapse. But it accepts that ordinary people are ill-informed and gullible.

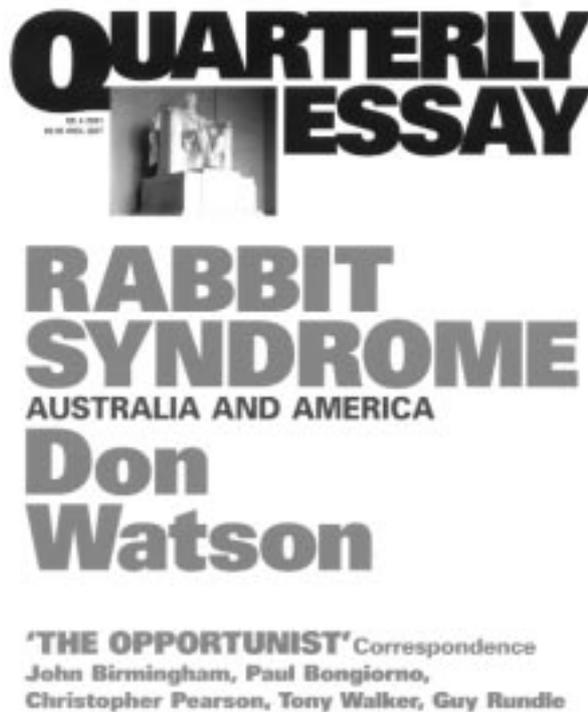
Which is the basis for the Fourth Article of Faith - that the Prime Minister has gulled the voters with cynical and racist rhetoric. The possibility that he has a considered, morally based opinion on a whole range of issues ranging from Reconciliation and the Stolen Generation through to the most appropriate mix of migrants is not considered likely. The debate is over whether he is a racist or just a political opportunist.

Donald Horne uncharacteristically announced that he did not know the answer but still managed to suggest that the Prime Minister plays the race card when it suits (*Looking for Leadership*, 109, 97). Robert Manne was less sure that Howard expressed his own prejudices rather than appealed to those of his constituents when he succumbed to the temptation, "to deal mean-spiritedly with refugees". (*Barren Years*, 81)

Guy Rundle did not bother with the question in an attack on the Prime Minister that was none the less brutal for the wit and elegance of the prose. John Howard was "virtually at one with the emotional priorities of One Nation" but what was worse was his willingness to do whatever it took to win elections. (*The Opportunist*, 55).

**What the Tampa crisis and its aftermath revealed was what many had suspected about John Howard - that ultimately he was an opportunist like Richard Nixon, that he would seize any chance he had to hang on to power. (*The Opportunist*, 58)**

Nor did Andrew Markus think that the reason why Howard would support a free market in goods while rejecting a free market for migration mattered. What was important was, "the end product of his actions, the maximisation of the potential for racial politics". (*Race*, 221)



It is a view shared by Mungo MacCallum :

**In the end it probably does not matter very much whether Howard himself is a racist or not. What is important is that he has given a free rein to racism in Australia. (*Girt By Sea*, 65).**

The passion of these pamphlets was in inverse proportion to the media's interest in them. This may be because most of them are badly written and contrive to make the major political issues of the hour just plain tedious. Or perhaps it is because some of these authors denounce rather than discuss and write only for their colleagues in the Moral Middle Class.

Whatever the reason, if public opinion does come to reject government policy on race and migration, it will have had little to do with the arguments of most of these writers.

At press time some of them had attracted absolutely no attention in the main media. The only mention of Irving's anthology was by Ross Fitzgerald, who dismissed most of its essays as making, "few helpful contributions for our future as a civil and civilised world". (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 March 2002)

Don Watson generated a minor silly-season debate on the main theme of his essay, the way the old Australian identity based on the ideals of mateship and the fair go is being overwhelmed by values we are taking on from the United States. It was picked up by Moral Middle Class catechists like Suzy Freeman-Greene with a vengeance. She used Watson's erudite and ironic essay as a tub on which to thump out her opinions:

**I'm not looking to this government to forge any kind of national identity that I can relate to, I still want a republic and a new flag. I'm not anyone's "mate". I want to live in a pluralistic society that embraces difference, not one that demonises refugees. (*Age*, 12 January 2002)**

Christopher Pearson was florid in his criticism and described *Rabbit Syndrome* as "couched in terms of masochism and collective self-disgust". (*Age* 14 January 2002) And, as ever, Tony Abbott went looking for a fight in an attack which was simplistic and self righteous and described Watson's, "deep unhappiness with his own country ... he just can't tolerate a country that will re-elect John Howard". (*Quarterly Essay*, 5, 2002)

There are just as many peddlers of simplistic verities on complex political and moral issues in the government's camp as there are in the Moral Middle Class.

Greg Sheridan, one of the commentators who confuse the moralists by being absolutely orthodox on Article Three and heretical on Article One, described Watson's essay as "entertaining, if paradoxically elegiac". Sheridan then proceeded to demonstrate that ideological consistency often denies reality by explaining that just as the United States has embraced the villainy of globalism it also runs a migration policy of the greatest liberality. (*Australian*, 27 December, 2001)

Donald Horne excited less enthusiasm with *Looking for Leadership*. Jefferson Penberthy (*Bulletin*, 29 August, 2001) did not review it as much as sympathetically summarise Horne's views on most issues, particularly the failure of John Howard and Labor under Kim Beazley to provide proper leadership for the masses. In a case of very strange bed fellows Paul Sheehan conducted a similarly friendly interview with Horne. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 September 2001)

Gerard Henderson (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 September 2001) was polite and argued that as a leader in the national policy debate for close to 40 years Horne deserved to be taken seriously. But Henderson still found much to disagree with, particularly Horne's argument that Australia has generally lacked political leadership which connected with ordinary people:

**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. ... 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 options). Along with followers ready to follow, albeit grudgingly.**

Stephen Matchett, developed a similar argument (*Australian*, 15 September 2001) and suggested that while Horne made a sensible case against those who sought to play the race card his thesis that the political class had failed Australia was not sustainable.

**... when practical politics diverges from the course Horne has set it is not because issues are complex and people divided, it is all due to a failure of leadership. ... Of course, one politician with very big ideas simply expressed hopes to do well in the imminent election. But Pauline Hanson's are not the sort of politics likely to appeal to Horne.**

Neither did the review. In a letter to the *Australian* (22 September 2001) Horne attacked Matchett's "mindless wisdom" and stated that the review attributed opinions to Horne's book that were not in it. Matchett replied (*Australian*, 3 October 2001) that while Horne may not have liked the review's interpretations it was based on "a close and careful reading of the book".

Giles Auty, (*Australian Financial Review*, 4 September 2001) was far harsher and considered Horne's book little more than a partisan attack on John Howard:

**The complexion Horne regularly puts on Howard's comments does not even begin to make sense unless it is understood to proceed from a view that the Prime Minister, who has been elected twice now by the Australian people, cannot conceivably do anything right. The reason he cannot do so, of course, is that he belongs to the "wrong" political party.**

It was a profound misreading of the book's criticism of both major political parties for not meeting Horne's standards. But while he missed the bipartisan tone, Auty was very conscious that Horne had to scrape for reasons why so many people did not think the way they should:

**By contrast, it has to be presumed that Horne, his colleagues, buddies and admirers know that everything is right and good for Australia if only the rest of us could be forced to listen.**

Horne was not having any of this either and accused Auty of producing a "non-review of my book ... written on automatic pilot" before reiterating just some of the many important points that Auty missed. (*Australian Financial Review*, 6 September 2001)

It was all part of the cut and thrust of public debate and at least extended, however marginally, discussion of the Second Article of Faith.

The most engaging argument was catalysed by Rundle's essay, but even it was ignored in the quality print media, the *Australian*, *Age*, *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Australian Financial Review* the biggest providers of public policy debate for a large and literate audience.

What discussion there was, came in the following issue of *Quarterly Essay* (4, 2001).

Paul Bongiorno supported Rundle's criticisms of Howard but argued that calling a practising politician of adamant self-belief an "opportunist" was hardly going to wound. But Bongiorno went beyond mere denunciation to suggest that Howard's opportunism

was born of a belief that he was protecting, "a world order which is True and Good or at least closer to what is True and Good than any alternatives". (67-68)

John Birmingham made the same point:

**Rundle errs in perceiving Howard as our own Richard Nixon, a man distanced as a politician from his own beliefs and morality. The key to Howard is not his cynicism but his sincerity. .... When he talks about the principle of controlling the nation's borders it is not just political expediency. He believes in what he is doing even as he consciously and happily reaps the electoral benefit. In this he is a sincere and utter bastard. (64-65)**

Christopher Pearson's response to Rundle was a primarily partisan defence of the government's mandatory detention policy and was the thinner for it. But he made one telling point that demonstrates why so many Australians have not sworn to all four Articles of Middle Class Moralism:

**What Rundle fails to consider is the question of whether Australia has discernible national interests, which override humanitarian concerns regarding an (in all probability) otherwise blameless majority of this boatload (the Tampa) of illegal immigrants. ... It seems to me that the Left want to avoid a prudential debate on the merits of particular cases and the evidence of real and present danger to the State in favour of one founded on moral absolutes, couched in humanitarian Newspeak but largely unexamined. (Quarterly Essay, 4, pp 74-75)**

But it was John Birmingham who summed up the horror for the ideologues of the Moral Middle Class as they struggle to explain why Howard, their blackest enemy on the Four Articles of Faith, has prospered:

**... it may well be that he is not the demon of modern political mythology. His genius, as David Marr wrote, might simply lie in seeing us not as we should like to be, but exactly as we are.**

The Moral Middle Class should be grateful for writers like Rundle, Birmingham, and Watson who are clearer communicators than their colleagues in the academy. Because if Birmingham is right, establishment of the Four Articles of Faith as Australia's civil religion is going to take a long fight.



# INDUSTRY IN A GLOBAL WORLD

**IAN  
MACFARLANE**

*Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources*

TO ADDRESS  
**THE SYDNEY INSTITUTE**

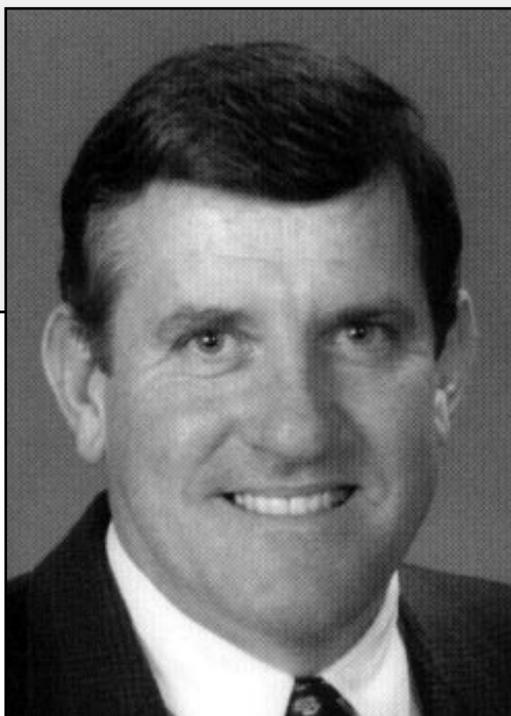
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## WHEN REFUGEES BECOME “ILLEGALS”

*Australia's treatment of refugees or illegal immigrants (depending on what side of the debate you are on) is the sort of complex moral issue the columnists love. Stephen Matchett waded through the rhetoric.*

How government and people should respond to boat people seeking haven in Australia is the sort of issue that makes people angry. It's a refreshing change after last year's fake moral crisis over tax reform and it demonstrates the core truth of politics in a pluralist democracy – policy decisions are always hard – there are always credible alternatives and always winners and losers.

But this didn't occur to the government's media supporters whose broad position was heavy on emotion and light on analysis.

In essence their position is that most of the people who have turned up on the north west coast are not refugees but illegal migrants. They include people who are variously cruel to their children and might be a threat to national security. Their supporters are un-Australian whiners who, comfortable in their wealthy suburbs, will never have any contact with the thugs intent on bullying their way ashore.

This collection of mean spirited generalisations was most vigorously advanced by the usual collection of generalisers.

Piers Akerman in particular ran hard. In the aftermath of 11 September, his position was that stopping illegal immigration, "reduced the travel opportunities of would-be terrorists and other criminals". (*Daily Telegraph*, 25 September, 2001) By February, he was arguing that detainees and their supporters in the community were trying to bully ordinary Australians into accepting the unacceptable:

**When it comes to having colourful migrant populations perform quaint traditional dances in their native costumes, your average Australian is happy to be singing and clapping along with the best of them. But not if they want to break the law. ... The wider public is aware that activist**

**detainees with their lip-sewing stunts and their media supporters are going well beyond what is acceptable to the broader community. (Daily Telegraph, 5 February, 14 February, 2002)**

It became even more foolish when Akerman attacked Norway, home to the *Tampa*, with allegations of anti-semitism and anti-Muslim practices. (*Sunday Telegraph*, 16 June 2002):

**There is also something far, far nastier in the nation that gave the world the word "Quisling" ... Is it not strange that the *Tampa*, which to some symbolised hope and asylum, sails under the flag of a nation which fails to support the only democracy in the Middle West and isn't particularly friendly to Muslim refugees either?**

It might have amused Akerman but it did not take the debate any further.

In contrast, Andrew Bolt strayed remarkably close to compassion when he agreed that Australia had a duty to assist genuine refugees – it's just that so many people claimed to be refugees - under false pretences:

**... not all asylum seekers tell the truth (and) it is not heartless to thoroughly check their claims. If we don't, phony refugees will swarm in and take the places of people who really are in danger. (Herald Sun, 6 May 2002)**

But what really excited supporters of mandatory detention was the chance it gave them to defend the honour of the Australian people. Thus Miranda Devine:

**People keep saying John Howard won the election by bringing out the racist demon lurking in Australia's heart. But in a nation of immigrants that makes no sense. Australia is one of the few great melting pots of the world, a successful experiment in mass immigration which has given us what farmers sometimes call "hybrid vigour". How can such a nation be racist. (Sydney Morning Herald, 22 November 2001)**

And of course support for the refugees came from the rich, who have neither interest nor understanding of the way most of us live now. Michael Duffy explained:

**The wealthy critics treat the views of other citizens with contempt, yet this contempt is based on a deep ignorance of the**

**concerns underlying those views. Perhaps this is understandable: wealthy people are insulated against many things that others feel more intensely. (The contempt being shown by the wealthy critics for ordinary people's concerns about queue-jumping typifies this: the rich do not wait in queues.) (Daily Telegraph, 17 November 2001)**

Thankfully, ordinary people still get to call the shots through the ballot, as Janet Albrechtsen gleefully reminded us:

**After the election, only one question was on the Left's lips: How could the electorate get it so wrong. ... If you manage to earn the disdain of the Left, you must be doing something right, even if all you've really done is remind the smug establishment who's really in charge. (Australian, 1 May 2002)**

The opponents of mandatory detention gave as good as they got, but some of them at least tried to keep the debate focused on the immediate issue of mandatory detention.

Neville J Roach argued that the problem was not going to go away and set out a range of measures to improve the condition of asylum seekers and take the political heat out of the issue. It was a sound and well thought out piece – if only Roach had not made a case for Michael Duffy's argument:

**Is queue-jumping such a grave moral issue? After all, many Australians jump queues routinely, be it to get into universities or hospitals and that doesn't bother us. (Bulletin, 6 February 2002)**

After much hand-ringing over the months about the moral corruption of the government and its supporters, Robert Manne also proposed an end to the stand-off in a piece in which he graciously set out terms which he assured both the Government and critics would end the crisis:

**If the Left is willing to concede that the government strategy has achieved its objectives and the Right is willing to concede the depth of suffering which its deterrent strategy has caused, then a politically feasible exit strategy from the tragedy can be readily found. (Sydney Morning Herald, 10 June 2002)**

But some critics of government policy were content to denounce the electorate for not behaving as it should. Hilary McPhee yearned for the righteousness of the 1960s and was horrified by the apathy of these sad times –

**... the population, or the majority that matters, is affluent and self-absorbed. The rest, who don't count, are heard from less and less.'**

Whether "the rest" are poor or those who maintain their sixties' rage (unlikely to be the same group) was not clear (*Age*, 3 May 2002).

Phillip Adams, with his usual horror of purple prose, denounced the mandatory detention facilities:

**Woomera is a place where protests are met with brutality. Where people are being driven insane. It's a place of helplessness, of hopelessness. So if it's not a concentration camp what the hell is it? An international disgrace, certainly an outrage that cannot be tolerated in a democratic nation." (Australian, 16 April 2002)**

But tolerate it is exactly what the electorate is doing, which mightily upset Adams who argued that too many people willingly accepted government lies that refugees were queue jumpers and could include stowaway terrorists:

**I love Australia but I don't like it. It was bad enough that our government lied to us. It was even worse that we lied to each other. Australians welcomed the lies because they allowed them to slam the door in people's faces – and to treat those who weren't drowned at sea as criminals. Most of all, the lies allowed us to justify our wilful ignorance of the truth. The result was as shameful a time in the nation's history as any of us can remember. (Australian, 23 February 2002)**

Adams may not have noticed, but some unlikely people weren't as complacent as he thought.

Michael Duffy may well still be on what he believes is the side of the workers but the unfolding coverage of the "children overboard" issue rendered him less inclined to believe the "gang of liars" that is the Howard Government:

**At some level, this government is guilty of lying to the Australian people in the most disgraceful manner. ... This shocking episode is of even more concern to the government's friends than its enemies. ... Howard's supporters must now ask themselves whether this government can ever be believed again." (Daily Telegraph, 16 February, 2002)**

It's an interesting thing about politics; people change their positions in response to information and debate. A point made by Shaun Carney who argued that just because the "children overboard" scandal does not register on the electoral radar now doesn't mean the voters cannot change their minds:

**... it would seem to be beyond question that a solid majority, perhaps even an overwhelming majority, of voters support the government's border protection stance. But it does not automatically follow that the public's indifference is all-embracing and that none of it will ever matter. (Age, 6 April 2002)**

It was a salutary point that should encourage the government's opponents on mandatory detention to remember the First Law of Opinion Change - when you cannot bear to repeat your argument the voters are just beginning to hear.

Nothing is forever in politics and the voters, or at least enough of them to make a difference, have a habit of thinking things through and changing their mind.

As Carney suggested, just ask Jeff Kennett.



# GERARD HENDERSON'S **MEDIA WATCH**

## DEBTOR ELLIS - ALSO RANN

And so it was done that Guy Rundle would have great copy for his *Your Dreaming* gig starring Max Gilles. In one of the scenes, actor Max Gilles depicts writer/director/debtor Bob Ellis lecturing-at-large concerning how he advised various Labor luminaries, from John Curtin on, about how they could best advance the ALP cause. To overcome the structural difficulty of just how your man Prophet Bob (born 1942) looked Saint John (died 1945) in the eye, script-writer Guy Rundle developed the scenario which the advice was proffered by the use of a stool. It was (yet another) case of Bob Ellis stepping-up to advise (yet another) Labor leader.

In any event, the satire has had no obvious effect on Bob Ellis. On his own account, in the lead-up to the February 2002 South Australian election, he "spent a month in Adelaide helping Mike Rann struggle towards electoral office...". As it turned out, the election outcome in South Australia was very close. Mike Rann was able to form a Labor government after gaining support from Independents. Meanwhile, the rumour from Adelaide is that Bob Ellis will have some involvement with the Rann government. It is uncertain whether or not this will extend to speech writing. But the signs are ominous.

In one of his first exposures as premier, Mike Rann spoke to the "My Media" segment of *The Australian's* "Media" supplement (25 April 2002). Lo and behold your man Ellis got three references. According to Premier Rann, he reads *HQ* magazine but only "for Bob Ellis's column". And what about films? Well, alas, there is no Ellis recent release. But Premier Rann is into videos and he has recently watched (or re-watched) *The Nostradamus Kid*. You know - the 1993 film on the young Bob, scripted by the old Bob with a walk-on appearance by YOU KNOW WHO. As to books, well, Mr Rann is reading (yes, you've guessed it) "parts of Bob Ellis's manuscript for *Goodbye Babylon*, to be published later this year - his best work yet". You betcha.

So, what has Mike Rann been reading in *HQ's* "Bob Ellis The Sound & The Fury" column this calendar year? Let's head to the archives.

- **December/January 2001-2002.** B.E. regrets the terrorist "attack on the Pentagon - hereinafter known as the Quadrangle - when a worthier target, John Howard, was half a mile away". It's a joke, perhaps. He prophecises that the "biggest economy in the world" has been "brought undone by a couple

of big explosions in a couple of tall buildings". And he depicts Messrs Bush, Blair and Howard as "men with virility problems who feel, with good cause, they don't deserve the power they have and need a nightly blood bath to quiet their troubled breast before they sleep with thumbs in their mounts uneasily". Well he should know. Believe it or not, on 5 May 1999 Ellis actually read a statement on ABC Radio 702 in Sydney concerning a (then unresolved) paternity matter. The high-profile writer/director/debtor told ABC listeners that he had recently experienced "a not unprecedented bout of impotence on my part". [That's enough, Editor]

- **February 2002.** B.E. asks whether he has been "ethnically cleansed". Good question. According to the Thinker Ellis: "We have redefined ourselves so often we do not know any more, or do not know precisely, in the dread Californian phrase 'where we are coming from'". Really. Or going to. Presumably. B.E. describes divorce as an "ethnic cleansing". But not before querying:

**...why so many graduate women stay single, disdaining marriage with tradesmen who bellow abuse at the footy and prefer the wit of Paul Hogan, good men who would have loved them and looked after them, as their railway-working fathers looked after their waitress mothers, before class feeling clicked in, and the ethnic whitewash of academe put them off the lower orders and sterilised their futures.**

Interesting point, to be sure. However, even an Ellis fan of the status of Premier Rann, could have picked the inconsistency. Pre "ethnically cleansed" women of the waitress kind married railway workers. But post "ethnically cleansed" graduate women disdain "marriage with tradesmen". In other words, female waitresses used to marry railway workers but female graduates will not marry tradesmen. So, what's the point? You ask the Prophet. Or Mike Rann.

- **March 2002.** This time the Prophet Ellis targets "men who won't let their women have babies". They are involved, the reader is told, in a "shallow and shameful and selfish" act:

**It's not how the game should be played. It's not how the game can be played. It's like turning a healthy woman into a Bride of Christ: it's a form of consensual slavery and it isn't fair. It's a form of sex slavery.**

According to the Prophet Ellis, a consequence of “men who won’t let their women have babies” scenario leads to a relationship which “stales and frays...in adulteries, drugs, bridge nights or the kind of rigid, baseless bickering that drives you apart”. [But see June 2002 - below]

- **April 2002.** B.E. refers to the Liberal Party’s “mendacious culture and criminal tendency”:

**This [sic] why I thought it worthwhile to give up a month of my life to help Mike Rann win – as he narrowly did - the pivotal poll of our time. The poll that would show which way our nation was going - towards multicultural civility or greedy, racist, privatising, devil-take-the-hindmost jackal cruelty. The poll that would begin, perhaps, the final avalanche to sweep the Howard-Reith-Ruddock Liberal Party out of history and into the deep dishonoured oblivion it now deserves.**

So there you have it. The 2002 South Australian State election - “the pivotal poll of our time”.

- **May 2002.** This time B.E. reflects on Paul Keating - a man, like most other Labor leaders (past or present), he has advised. Allegedly. He reflects that this “man of charm and brilliance” could have “changed the face of Australia to the sort of dynamic, socialist enterprise [Ben] Chifley had in mind. However, “instead of building socialism he smashed it”. This “wrought evil”. What a waste. Instead he could have constructed the Ellis Utopia - Ellisgrad - which, according to the Prophet, would entail “building a city on the Gulf of Carpentaria [and] another on the Ord”. Let’s build - “let’s do really big things with this country”.
- **June 2002.** The Prophet Ellis, “old now”, reflects on days of old. Like:

**In the ’70s we had the concept of sexual friends: people you dropped in on from time to time, in other towns, in other countries, whose welcome included a shared bed, and sex that was almost incidental, because the conversation was more important, the catching up, the comparing of memories, the new interests, the old common friends. And this was, in a famous phrase of the day, a kind of loving.**

Now, alas, “there’s less fun in loving, less drifting about, less chance of the eccentric fuck...”. Is Premier Rann still reading on? In any event, according to B.E., the decline and fall of the “stray eccentric fuck” is all due to a variety of causes. Namely (i) AIDS, (ii) the gender wars, (iii) money (“bits on the side cannot be easily afforded” and (iv) French letters (“they were why our parents hated each other”). [Let’s move forward - Editor].

Hang on a minute. How can the Prophet Ellis relate his June 2002 pining for a “kind of loving” adultery (1970s style) with his March 2002 complaint that the refusal of men to father children results in adulteries (circa 2002)? How indeed? Yet, all this is what the mild-mannered Mike Rann is recommending as a must-read to the electors of South Australia. Stay tuned.

**Postscript:** Bob Ellis (writer/director/debtor) has still yet to pay his \$500 wager debt which was due on 10 November 2001 - *The Sydney Institute Quarterly* Issue 16 refers. We’ll keep you posted - but, at the moment, it seems that only a miracle will see the debt paid.

## PAUL SHEEHAN’S RECOVERY - WHOLLY WATER

Meanwhile, while on the issue of miracles, consider the case of *Sydney Morning Herald* columnist and author of *Among the Barbarians* Paul Sheehan. On 6 April 2002 (the first Saturday after April Fool’s Day), *Good Weekend* carried a cover story entitled “Miracle Water?”. Readers were told that Paul Sheehan would answer THE QUESTION OF OUR TIME. Namely: “Can something as simple as this mineral-rich water really combat arthritis, fatigue and osteoporosis - and help you live longer?” Turn to Page 18 - and the answer is a BIG YES.

Paul Sheehan told readers that he had been struck down with a constellation of incurable auto-immune diseases. Over a three year period he had some 52 sessions with various doctors and therapists and 54 sessions with an acupuncturist - he still has the 1591 needles to prove it (how about that?). And then he began to drink “the magic water” which has been developed by Dr Russell Beckett - whom Sheehan described as an intense biochemical pathologist and who has queried what he (Beckett) terms the inevitability of “degenerative diseases and death”. Wow. Once it was said that “From dust thou art; to dust thou shalt return”. Or something like that. But now, with the assistance of Paul Sheehan’s favourite Holy Water, eternal life may just be possible - on this earth.

Anyrate, according to Sheehan, The Magic Water has worked on sheep. And a dog named Toby (who no longer endures arthritis but, alas, suffers from post-stroke brain damage). And for a cat called Tabby (who, alas, is dead - but at a more advanced age than many expected). So if The Magic Water worked for Toby and for Tabby - why not for your man Sheehan?

And why not for Sydney based *Good Weekend* readers? Despite Paul Sheehan’s acknowledgement that “Beckett has not published his findings in peer review scholarly journals” and that his own (apparent) recovery may have been due to the “placebo effect”, many a *Good Weekend* reader turned up at the Berts Soft Drinks depot at Taren Point in southern Sydney. So much so that some 60,000 cases of The Magic Water were sold in a week - at \$30 a case of two dozen

(600 ml.) bottles. Dennis Shelley, the co-owner of Berts Soft Drinks, told the *Sydney Morning Herald* (9 April 2002) that what he termed 600 crippled people had turned up at his factory door following the *Good Weekend* story.

Here's waiting for the next Paul Sheehan *Good Weekend* article. Maybe on how the lifestyles of Dog Toby and Cat Tabby have been further reinvigorated following their cures from galloping dementia. Due to swallowing copies of *Good Weekend* - pulped of course - with every canine/feline meal.

## LEST WE REMEMBER - AN UPDATE

Paul Sheehan did not let on whether The Magic Water could inhibit the onset of memory loss - along with other manifestations of the ageing process. Right now there are some players in the public debate who have a vested interest in forgetting - and, consequently, have little need of Sheehan endorsed Holy Water.

### • Douglas Kirsner

Douglas Kirsner, for example. The Senior Lecturer in Philosophy and Psychoanalytic Studies at Deakin University makes an appearance in *Blaming Ourselves: September 11 and the Agony of the Left* (Duffy & Snellgrove, 2002) which is edited by Gregory Melleuish and Imre Salusinszky. As the editors state in their introduction, the intention of the essays published in *Blaming Ourselves* is "to provide a permanent memorial to the intemperance of the intellectual left" in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks against the United States on 11 September 2001. The editors believe that some of the rhetoric used by Osama bin Laden clearly derives "from the same European anti-capitalist sources - Fanon, Sorrel, Satre, and others - that had nourished the New Left in the 1970s". Quite so.

Now turn to pages 61-72 which contains Douglas Kirsner's essay "Our Plague". It depicts 11 September as "an attack on our fundamental values, our sense of the right to survive and live in a normal way". Right on. A biographical note in *Blaming Ourselves* describes Douglas Kirsner as "a prominent student activist during the Vietnam era". In his essay Kirsner writes that "whatever resonances the present anti-war movement may appear to have with the protest movement against the Vietnam War there is in my view no similarity between these wars". He goes on to claim that he remains "as convinced by the compelling intellectual reasons for having opposed the Vietnam War as I am by the need to support this one".

Phew - just as well. And so on. For history records that the young Douglas Kirsner did not oppose the Vietnam War. Not really. Rather he barracked for one side in the conflict - the Viet Cong, or National Liberation Front (NLF) - which was supported by, and under the control of, the communist North Vietnam regime.

On 27 July 1967 Andrew Clark reported in *The Age* that Doug Kirsner (who was president of the Melbourne University Labour Club at the time) had said that his club supported the NLF "because we feel it is the organisation in Vietnam which is trying to give the people the same rights as we enjoy in this country". Really - a Joe Stalin/Ho Chi Minh equals Robert Menzies argument, to be sure.

On the same day, *The Age* also reported that a motion moved at a Melbourne University Labour Club meeting by Kirsner - calling for "the sending of unspecified financial aid to the National Liberation Fund" - had been defeated by 30 votes to 11. The meeting then passed a watered-down motion calling for medical non-military aid to be forwarded to the NLF.

On 15 August 1967 Doug Kirsner upped the farce a notch or two when he headed out to a training session at the Essendon Football Club to confront Aussie Rules centre-half-back Lindsay McGie, a national serviceman who had just returned from a tour-of-duty in South Vietnam. *The Age* of 16 August 1967 carries a photograph of a muscular McGie arguing with a bespectacled Kirsner.

Young Doug tried to convince the Bomber defender that it was a good move to support the communist NFL. McGie was none too impressed - he told the Viet Cong barracker from Melbourne University: "You kids ought to know something about it before you meddle in Vietnam". Following that, the Kirsner led delegation was abused by Essendon supporters watching the training sessions. Such comments as "Get out of here" and "Scabs" rent the evening (Essendon) air. It was reported that Doug Kirsner withdrew in some haste - wondering aloud how he was going to get the "few hundred dollars" collected to the NLF (who were engaging the Australian Defence Force on the ground in Vietnam).

Needless to say, Douglas Kirsner does not refer to his time as a Viet Cong barracker in his *Blaming Ourselves* essay. Pity when you think about it. For, by extending the time-frame somewhat, he could have used the opportunity to blame himself for once supporting communist aggressors in Vietnam. Alas.

### • Imre Salusinszky

And then there is the case of *Blaming Ourselves* co-editor Imre Salusinszky. From June to September 2001, he was given a gig (along with journalist Tim Blair) as host of a Friday evening program on ABC Radio National. You've heard about the old leftist motto: "Give peace a chance". Well the idea of the Salusinszky-Blair program was to give a so-called "right-wing Phillip Adams" a chance on the ABC. The program, *The Continuing Crisis*, was no worse than much - and better than some - of what passes for a comment on Radio National. In any event, the Salusinszky/Blair gig was soon terminated (the full story is told by Salusinszky in the July-August 2002 issue of *Quadrant* magazine).

So it cannot be said whether or not Imre S. would have succeeded as a “right wing Phillip Adams”. But we do know that Mr Salusinszky was once, along with Phillip Adams himself, a financial member of the “Kerr’s A Bastard” Club. Remember Sir John Kerr? The Governor-General who dismissed Gough Whitlam’s Labor government in November 1975, no less.

Well, once upon a time, Imre Salusinszky wrote to *The Age* (14 June 1976) defending himself against the *Age* editorial which claimed that he and others who had demonstrated against Sir John were “young hoodlums”. Wrote Young Imre:

**Now, there was some damage done to Sir John’s Rolls-Royce. Though I did not do it, I do not dissociate myself from that, either. I do not feel overwhelming remorse at seeing some dents in a luxury Rolls-Royce containing the man who destroyed what history, despite the harpings of your newspaper, will see as the best Government in this nation’s history. I do not think that Sir John should be riding around in that Rolls-Royce. After what he did last November, I don’t think there should be any Governor-General riding around in a Rolls-Royce. In the light of this, I don’t regard it as absolutely tragic that the car was dented.**

And so on - until Imre Salusinszky’s (somewhat pompous) designation of himself as “National Affairs Correspondent, *Farrago* newspaper, Melbourne University” Whereupon well known anti communist academic Frank Knopfmacher wrote to *The Age* (18 June 1976) in a somewhat light-hearted view:

**May I say that Mr Salusinszky’s belief that the Whitlam Government was the best in Australia’s history is shared by many people and organisations (e.g. the Iraqi and Soviet Governments and the PLO, and certainly Mr Whitlam himself though apparently not by the Chinese Government) and it is, therefore, by no means eccentrically unique.**

What a metamorphosis. From a leftist Whitlamite, to a right-wing Phillip Adams, in a mere quarter of a century. It’s the kind of transformation which could have been discussed, say, on a program like *The Continuing Crisis*.

• **Piers Akerman**

So could *Daily Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph* columnist Piers Akerman’s recent pilgrimage to the Dardanelles and all that. It was quite an experience.

- **21 April.** From Gallipoli, Piers A. records that “this Anzac week, Australians and New Zealanders will ponder...the themes of mateship, national identity, sacrifice and honour.” According to the *Telegraph’s* reporter, “these themes aren’t dead; they are still as relevant as they were in 1915”. Moreover:

**At Quinn’s Post, Ground Zero, or in Afghanistan today, that spirit of contribution, of sacrifice, continues as it did in the two World Wars, Korea and Vietnam.**

- **23 April.** More of the same as Piers A. praises the “generosity of spirit on the part of our old [Turkish] foes...” to visiting Australians and New Zealanders.

- **25 April.** From Anzac Cove, the *Telegraph* columnist declares that “this is where the concept of Australian was born”.

- **28 April.** Piers A. reflects on his great-uncle (“a source of humility and pride”) who served on Gallipoli, was incapacitated and died shortly after his return to Australia.

Followers of Piers Akerman were wondering whether he would use the occasion of his pilgrimage to the Dardanelles to atone for the fact that, when a leftist, he joined with members of the Communist Party, and serial fellow-travellers, to label members of the Australian Defence Force serving in Vietnam as “mercenaries”. The occasion was a pompous message to (then) Prime Minister William McMahon sponsored by the leftist Association for International Cooperation and Disarmament and published in *The Review* on 27 November 1971. But, alas, on this matter there has only been silence. Today Piers A. evokes the “spirit of sacrifice” of those who served in Vietnam. But he refuses to apologise for once having described Diggers in Vietnam as “mercenaries” of the United States. Shame.

**GREAT U TURNS OF OUR TIME (continued)**

• **Miranda Devine on *Big Brother* – circa 2002**

**People are starting to think that shows such as *Sex and the City* and *Big Brother* are planted by the Vatican as a canny reverse psychology ploy. The characters are so truly, irredeemably awful that they give a bad name to loveless sex, casual profanity, smut and greed. They are opposite role models, as in what they are is exactly what you don’t want to be. Fred Nile couldn’t have done better. *Big Brother* has barely begun but already butt close-ups figure prominently...**

- *Sun Herald*, 28 April 2002

• **Divine Miranda on *Big Brother* – Circa 2001**

**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... 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.**

- *Sun-Herald*, 19 July 2001

So, there you have it. Or not. *Big Brother* is all about "loveless sex, casual profanity, smut and greed" - 2002 version. But *Big Brother* is really "a sweetly innocuous show about platonic love and friendship" - 2001 version. Same program, same critic but different assessments.

## HOUSE-HISTORIAN'S BREAK AND ENTER

Miranda Devine is not the only Sydney based journalist having a problem with history. Enter Andrew Clark, the *Australian Financial Review's* historian-in-residence.

- **1 March 2002.** Andrew Clark reflects on a newspaper headline that "Peter Hollingworth's tragedy began long ago". In fact, Clark declared, the Governor-General's "problems go back about 500 years". Since "it was in 1536 that Henry VIII ordered the dissolution of the monasteries, and cut the English church's ties with Rome so that it became the Church of England". Well - that makes it clear, then. By the way, Peter Hollingworth was born in 1935 - which suggests that any problems the Governor-General may have, they began just on four centuries post Henry VIII. To all, except Andrew Clark. Of course.

- **23 March.** Andrew Clark writes an article for the *Australian Financial Review* entitled: "Untold Power: Howard's hidden agenda". This agenda, the reader was informed, was set "in 1995 after Howard regained the Liberal Party leadership". According to Clark, the Liberal Party leader "held meetings with close associates in the party, business and various institutes" devoted to the cause of "returning Australia to a nation unsullied by Labor's years". The (alleged) task was to trash the reputation of, and then remove, "targeted people in the public service, academia, ABC and the High Court". According to Clark, "a list" was drawn up by "participants at these secret meetings".

Interesting (conspiracy) theory. It's just that Andrew Clark provided no evidence whatsoever that any such "meetings" were actually held or any such "list" drawn up. Nor did he demonstrate precisely how a Federal government could target academics when they are not Federal public servants and, consequently, not subject to dismissal by a Federal government.

- **21 May.** Andrew Clark writes an obituary for the *Australian Financial Review* on the death of John Gorton. Clark describes the former Liberal Party

prime minister as a "wartime fighter pilot hero". It is true that John Gorton served honourably in the RAAF during the Pacific War. And it is true that he was involved in three crashes while in the RAAF. However, not one was due to enemy fire. As Ian Hancock pointed out in his (authorised) biography *John Gorton: He Did It His Way* (Hodder, 2002), Gorton himself scoffed at the suggestion that he was a "war hero". According to Hancock, it is "certainly questionable whether the label can be applied to someone whose three confirmed 'kills' consisted of aircraft which were either destroyed or temporarily disabled when he was their pilot". In other words, John Gorton presided over the destruction of more RAAF fighters than your average squadron of Japanese Zeros. The former prime minister saw the amusing side of this - that's why he never supported the view that he was a "wartime fighter pilot hero". Alas, no one told Andrew Clark - apparently.

## STONE THE FACTS

While on the topic of assessments consider the case of occasional columnist John Stone. The former Treasury Secretary, and one-time National Party senator, recently complained (*The Adelaide Review*, March 2002) that the "media's treatment" of Peter Hollingworth was but "a means of attacking John Howard and, thereby, bringing into question both the 'legitimacy' of last year's Federal election result and his own 'legitimacy' as the Liberal Party leader". In other words, critics of the man whom John Howard appointed governor-general are also critics of John Howard himself. Just like, er:

- **Paul Sheehan** who declared that John Howard's "experiment" with the appointment of Peter Hollingworth as Governor-General "has failed". Sheehan predicted that it "cannot be long before he takes the only honourable course and resigns". (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 February 2002).

- **Christopher Pearson** who declared, at the height of the controversy, that he was "among the few commentators to criticise the appointment of Archbishop Peter Hollingworth last April as Governor-General". He added that "it is cold comfort to be proven right in the prediction that he was unsuited to the demanding role of head of state and that he should withdraw gracefully into retirement". The Governor-General, thundered Pearson, "has no choice but to resign". (*The Age*, 25 February 2002).

- **Piers Akerman** who wrote that he had made his "view clear" about the G-G. Namely that Peter Hollingworth "is a goose and should go". (*Daily Telegraph*, 19 March 2002).

Paul Sheehan, Christopher Pearson and Piers Akerman are among the principal barrackers in the media for the Howard government. Yet, according to John Stone, journalists have used Peter Hollingworth "as a means of attacking John Howard". Interesting theory. Pity about the facts.

## ALAN JONES - AND TOOTH FAIRIES

Another media barracker for the Howard government is Sydney based radio talk-back presenter Alan Jones. These days Alan Jones is depicted as a confidant of the Prime Minister. In view of the Jones view of economics, it can only be assumed that the Prime Minister takes no regard of Jonesism on matters fiscal and monetary.

Let's go to the audio tape. This is Alan Jones - addressing the issue that the Reserve Bank of Australia might increase interest rates - on Sydney Radio 2GB on Tuesday 4 June at 5.50 am:

**Well, today the Reserve Bank board will decide to take money out of your pocket... and put it into the back-pocket of the banks. That's what it means. Small business battling with the GST, the economy doing well. So we'll take the money out of the small business till and we'll put it into the back-pocket of the banks. That's what increased interest rates mean. You tell me now much sense that makes.**

So there you have it. Alan Jones really believes that when the Reserve Bank increases interest rates it "takes money" from small business and passes it over to the commercial banks. Some conspiracy, this. It seems that Mr Jones is totally ignorant of the fact that commercial banks themselves actually borrow money and, as such, are also affected by interest rate movements.

In spite of his blissful ignorance on economics, Alan Jones is still listened to on economic matters. Most recently by Mark Westfield on the ABC TV 7.30 Report (11 July 2002). Westfield interviewed Jones about whether or not Macquarie Bank paid too much for its purchase of Sydney Airport. Jones told the 7.30 Report that the purchase could not be funded out of growth and that to suggest that this is the case is like "asking people to believe there are tooth fairies at the bottom of the garden". Well Alan Jones should know quite a bit about such fairies - since they appear to be the source for his belief that interest rate increases are a means by which the Reserve Bank takes money from men and women on Struggle Street and hands it over to the commercial banks.

## IT'S "REALLY TRUTHFUL BOOK REVIEWS" TIME AGAIN

Still, economic ignorance never harmed the career of the late Paul Lyneham (1945-2000). For a reminder, you need look no further than *Paul Lyneham: A Memoir* (ABC Books, 2002) which is edited by Dorothy Horsfield - Lyneham's widow.

The book takes four parts. There is the "Young Lyneham" section by Paul Lyneham himself. This consists of an uncompleted and unpublished (thank

God) autobiography which he commenced in 1991, worked on for a month or so and then dropped. Then there is Dorothy Horsfield's "A Last Love Letter" - a fine piece of writing about the Lyneham/Horsfield relationship even though, at times, there appear to be gaps in the narrative. A task for Laurie Oakes, perhaps. There follow various tributes to Lyneham by friends and associates alike - including John Howard, Kim Beazley and Tim Fischer. Finally the tome publishes some of Lyneham's speeches (usually of the after-dinner genre) on politics and economics and all that.

Little wonder that P.L. junked his memoir. He seemed quite unaware about whether he was writing on his life and times - or that of the politicians whose political lives and times he reported. Usually with a contemptuous air. For example, the second page of the Lyneham autobiography moves from an account of school days in the 1950s in Melbourne to the aside: "One reason we didn't realise how philistine we were was that we'd never even heard of Paul Keating". Funny, eh? There follows a reference to such ALP heavies as "Laurie, Leo, Richo and young Bobby Carr". All this in what is supposed to be a chapter on the author's school days. And then there are the jokes. Yes, the jokes. For example, Liberal Party politician Peter Reith is referred to as "the only man I know who could seriously entertain the idea of entering the Bathurst 500 - without a car". Have you stopped laughing yet?

And so it goes on. And on. Alternating between the boys-own life of the Young Lyneham in suburban Melbourne and, subsequently, Canberra and put-downs of those involved in Australian national politics. What is evident in all this is Lyneham's cruel contempt for most people he came to be involved with. There is Beryl, the co-proprietor of Mal's Modern Dance Studio, with her "luxuriant moustache and Chad Morgan teeth". And there is a snobbish account of an apparent working class wedding reception where the guests eat "cold tinned meat, garnished with pineapple rings and salad", the bride is pregnant, the bridesmaids are "big, solid women" and the groom's hair is in need of a "grease and oil change". And the bride's father demanded to sing. You've guessed it: "He was to music as bomber command over Dresden was to town planning."

Dorothy Horsfield obviously loved her husband. She recounts with feeling the occasion when, for reasons which seem understated, she requested that Paul leave the marital home. Soon after he developed lung cancer. Dorothy wanted to believe that Paul's illness had not resulted from the stress caused by the estrangement. But Paul was not prepared to make such a concession. Unintentionally perhaps, her small story tells us much about the real Paul Lyneham:

**Almost every day I ask myself whether all the turmoil foreshadowed what came next; whether the stress and unhappiness of that time, what he described as “the loneliest time in his life”, eventually made him ill. Paul believed it did. He said more than once that he wanted to wish away those years when “my life seemed to unravel”. If he was right I can hardly bear it. I don’t know. Though he’d given it up, he had been a heavy smoker for a long time; there was the family history of lung disease; and he had always been a wild man, a larrakin, the last bloke to leave if there was good time to be had.**

It was Paul Lyneham at his most self-centred. Given the opportunity to say that his illness was unrelated to the marital estrangement, he said that the stress involved made him ill. In other words, it was someone else’s fault.

Following his death, friends and acquaintances stepped up to praise Paul Lyneham. John Howard described him as “one of the journalistic greats” who was “witty and fair”. The (then) Opposition leader Kim Beazley conceded that Lyneham “could be cruel” and that he was “incredibly hard on me and my class” but added that “he wanted better from us”. And the National Party’s Tim Fischer spoke well of him. Needless to say, the feelings were not reciprocated during Lyneham’s lifetime.

Turn to the “Speechmaking” section of *Paul Lyneham: A Memoir*. John Howard is depicted looking like a “total goose”, Kim Beazley as resembling “two tons of spuds in a one-ton bag” while, elsewhere, Tim Fischer’s slight speech impediment is mocked: “I’m wif you John, frew fick and fin”. Such soft put-downs were all one way. Those who knew Paul Lyneham understood that it was never, but never, proper to laugh at him. Rather the way to get on with Paul Lyneham was to laugh with him when he was laughing at others.

*Paul Lyneham: A Memoir* bears testimony to the fact that Lyneham was woefully ignorant about economics - note, for example, his comments on gold (pages 209-215) and industry protection (passim). But he liked to mock the (alleged) economic ignorance of others.

What did Paul Lyneham say about Treasurer Peter Costello? - “He does to gold what bomber command over Dresden did to town planning”. That joke, again. And what about Federal Treasury? - “Whatever Treasury says, the opposite is usually true”. And so on. There are also jokes about “our New Zealand cousins” having “such an intimate relationship with their sheep”. Oh, dear. And about the (alleged) intelligence of Tasmanians. Wow. Paul Lyneham was known to search the Internet for jokes to re-tell at after-dinner speeches. So it is not surprising to see

some old chestnuts repeated in *Paul Lyneham: A Memoir*. For example, how many times have you heard this joke - in its various manifestations:

**...who could doubt the wisdom of the tale of international academics asked to write a book about elephants? The English version was titled *The Elephants and Empire: A Thousand Years of Glory*; the French was *Les Elephants: Les Implications Sensuelles et Existentielles*; the German was *Achtung! The Training and Discipline of Elephants*. The American version came out in two editions. On the east coast it was titled *Raising Elephants for Fun and Profit* and on the west coast *The Joy of Elephants*. As for the Australian edition, the title was *Elephants - Federal or State Responsibility?***

A good joke - up to, perhaps, the tenth telling. And have you heard the one about the late National Party figure Russ Hinze (who was amply proportioned) and the late Harold Holt (who drowned while prime minister)?

**What did they find when they did the autopsy on Russ Hinze? Harold Holt.**

Please stop slapping your sides.

It is customary - if unnecessary - in our society to speak well of the dead. It is in this context, presumably, that John Howard praised Paul Lyneham’s “duo with the late Andrew Olle on ABC Radio 702 in Sydney” in the early 1990s during the breakfast program. This, the Prime Minister declared, “was a masterpiece of entertainment and analysis”. Andrew Olle asked the questions. And Paul Lyneham provided the analysis. Good radio. Except that Lyneham produced all his “analysis” from the morning’s newspapers - without acknowledgement. It was only towards the end of the gig that Lyneham got around to (briefly) acknowledging the sources of his fount of (morning) wisdom - following complaints from journalists who resented having their work magpied each morning.

Members of the Canberra Parliamentary Press Gallery were none too happy at the time. But now all is forgiven - if not forgotten. The Gallery now presides over an annual Paul Lyneham Award of Excellence in Press Gallery Journalism - which is jointly funded by Channel 9 (Lyneham’s last employer) and the Australian Industry Group (for whom Lyneham did freelance work).

Which suggests that a bit of cruelty here, some recycled jokes there and economic ignorance all around can go a long way. Why, even, *Paul Lyneham: A Memoir* has sold well.

