

## FORTHCOMING FUNCTIONS AT THE SYDNEY INSTITUTE

**SPEAKER** **MARA MOUSTAFINE** (Author, *Secrets and Spies: The Harbin Files* [Random House, 2002])  
**TOPIC** *Joe Stalin: And My Family*  
**DATE** Tuesday 12 November 2002 **TIME:** 5.30 for 6.00 pm  
**VENUE** 41 Phillip Street, Sydney **LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**

**SPEAKER** **THE HON. MARK VAILE MP** (Minister for Trade)  
**TOPIC** *Trade – Multilateral and Bilateral*  
**DATE** Monday 18 November 2002 **TIME:** 5.30 for 6.00 pm  
**VENUE** Clayton Utz Seminar Room, Level 25, 1 O'Connell Street, Sydney

**SPEAKER** **DR DOUGLAS GREENBERG** (President and CEO of Steven Spielberg's Shoah Visual History Foundation)  
**TOPIC** *Henry's Harmonica – Memory and History in a Genocidal World*  
**DATE** Tuesday 19 November 2002 **TIME:** 5.30 for 6.00 pm  
**VENUE** AGSM, Level 6, 1 O'Connell Street, Sydney **LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**

**SPEAKERS** **TESS LIVINGSTONE** (Opinion Page Editor, *The Courier Mail* & Author *George Pell* [Duffy & Snellgrove, 2002]) and **STEPHEN CRITTENDEN** (Presenter, ABC Radio National's *Religion Report*)  
**TOPIC** *George Pell – Catholic Prelate & Public Figure: Two Views*  
**DATE** Tuesday 26 November 2002 **TIME:** 5.30 for 6.00 pm  
**VENUE** 41 Phillip Street, Sydney **LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**

**SPEAKER** **GRAEME MURPHY AM** (Artistic Director, Sydney Dance Company)  
**TOPIC** *to be advised*  
**DATE** Tuesday 3 December 2002 **TIME:** 5.30 for 6.00 pm  
**VENUE** to be advised

**SPEAKER** **RICHARD BUTLER AM** (Author & Commentator; former Australian Ambassador to the UN and executive chairman UN Special Commission on Iraqi Disarmament – 1977-99)  
**TOPIC** *to be advised*  
**DATE** Tuesday 28 January 2003 **TIME:** 5.30 for 6.00 pm  
**VENUE** Clayton Utz Seminar Room, Level 35, 1 O'Connell Street, Sydney

**SPEAKER** **DR JULIA BAIRD** (Columnist & Opinion Page Editor *The Sydney Morning Herald*)  
**TOPIC** *Women MPs and The Print Media – The Australian Experience*  
**DATE** Tuesday 4 February 2003 **TIME:** 5.30 for 6.00 pm  
**VENUE** 41 Phillip Street, Sydney **LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**

THE

# Sydney Institute

QUARTERLY

*ISSUES 18  
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**IAN HENDERSON**  
queries Labor's reform  
process

Writers, ghosts and  
lies with **ESTELLE  
NOONAN**

**GERARD HENDERSON**  
on the left's dilemmas  
over terrorism

**JOHN KUNKEL** on why  
Britain's Conservatives  
can't win

Why Australia has  
returned to high  
immigration intakes -  
**ANNE HENDERSON**

**STEPHEN MATCHETT**  
on Don Watson and  
political biography

**MEDIA WATCH** tackles  
Dennis Shanahan,  
Anne Manne,  
Richard Neville and  
Germaine Greer

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*with Gerard Henderson's*

## **MEDIA WATCH**

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# AN AFFAIR TO FORGET

In July Laurie Oakes made a pre-emptive strike against Cheryl Kernot on the eve of the publication of her book *Speaking for Myself* (HarperCollins, 2002). Writing in *The Bulletin*, he declared that this was not "an honest book". Later that day (3 July), Oakes defended his comments during an interview with Helen Dalley on Channel 9's *A Current Affair* program. By then Oakes had confirmed that the alleged dishonesty turned on the fact that Cheryl Kernot had not revealed a four year affair with (then) Labor Senate leader Gareth Evans. According to Oakes, Ms Kernot's "behaviour", resulting from "this steamy affair" caused "lapses of judgment" following her decision to quit the Democrats and join the Labor Party. This assertion was not supported by evidence.

So, what has Mr Oakes said about the publication of Paul Strangio's *Keeper of the Faith: A Biography of Jim Cairns* (MUP, 2002)? So far, nothing much. The book was released in May. It mentions the relationship which developed between Jim Cairns in 1974 (when, at age 60, he was treasurer in the Whitlam Labor government) and Junie Morosi (who, at age 41 was appointed as Cairns's private secretary). The author acknowledges that "Cairns was distracted by the emotional and intellectual upheaval created by Morosi's entry into his life". Moreover, it is evident from the text that he has read *Straight Left* (Random House, 1994) - the memoirs of Cairns's one-time colleague Tom Uren. In a section of the book which Paul Strangio did not quote, Tom Uren wrote: "Initially Jim and Junie had nowhere to be together, so during the early months of their relationship I let them use my flat in Canberra. Later they made other arrangements, but still used my flat on occasions. I will always remember the incense that Junie used: the smell would permeate the flat and it used to drive me up the wall, as my sinuses are very sensitive".

Paul Strangio's book attracted only modest attention. Until Jim Cairns appeared with his biographer in an hour long interview on the ABC Radio program *Sunday Nights with John Cleary* on 15 September. An examination of the text of the conversation reveals that it was Dr Cairns himself who introduced the issue of his affair with Ms Morosi. Initially the interviewer missed the prompt. So Jim Cairns became more explicit, stating: "I don't think the ordinary person thought I was wrong or a fool in going to bed with Junie Morosi; they thought it was a pretty good thing". It was only then that the specific issue was raised. Question: "Did you go to bed with Junie Morosi?" Answer: "Yes". Of itself, this was not an earth shattering revelation. After all, affairs are quite common at Parliament House Canberra - as they are at Westminster and on Capitol Hill. What distinguished this case from, say, the Kernot-Evans affair turned on the fact that - without question - Jim Cairns was markedly affected by his relationship with Junie Morosi. He has said so himself. And this has been attested to by many of his colleagues at the time - including Tom Uren and Gough Whitlam. Moreover both Dr Cairns and Ms Morosi had consistently denied that such an affair ever took place. Even to the extent of launching defamation writs to win monetary damages and/or silence critics.

There are some lessons to be learnt from the saga about both the biographer and his subject. Paul Strangio has claimed (*The Australian*, 19 September) that the admission: "adds little to the public record" since the affair had been previously revealed by Tom Uren. But Strangio did not discuss why he neglected to cite this specific source in his biography. As Richard Ackland has written (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 September), on 18 October 1982 Cairns was questioned in the Supreme Court of New South Wales during his action for defamation. Asked whether he had ever had an adulterous relationship, he replied: "No, never". In short, he lied under oath.

Jim Cairns was once the intellectual guru of the Australian left. Yet, as Paul Ormonde pointed out in *A Foolish Passionate Man* (Penguin, 1981), Jim Cairns' "deepest flaw" turned on "his ability to blot from memory incidents which did not fit the image of a man who was always honest, non-violent and decent". A diminished guru, to be sure.

# WRONG WAY, GO BACK

Ian Henderson

When the ALP's national executive asked Bob Hawke and Neville Wran - barely six weeks after Labor's latest federal election defeat - to advise on how the party could lift its performance, surely the executive could have hardly expected what Hawke and Wran actually delivered. Because, what Labor's most successful federal leader and its most successful New South Wales state leader handed over after an intense eight months' effort was either a solution to a problem that does not exist, or a failure to deal with a genuine and serious problem.

And, because the rules changes agreed at the ALP's October 2002 special national conference by and large follow the path trodden by Hawke and Wran, it's hard to see how they will do much to help the party's current leader, Simon Crean, in his efforts to modernise the party - not to mention win the next federal election.

At least part of the blame for the flawed report must be sheeted home to Crean himself. There's little, if any, doubt that Crean's intentions in launching the "modernisation" agenda were sound. But the trouble from the outset was that Crean allowed himself to become focused in public on a single issue: whether or not the proportion of trade union representatives at ALP conferences should be 60 per cent (as it is now in some states) or 50 per cent (as it is in others).

If that were indeed the content of Crean's "modernisation" agenda - and he offered little else that was concrete - it falls far short of the "modernisation" agenda that Gough Whitlam launched around 35 years ago, as part of his platform for the prime ministership.

At the public release of the Hawke-Wran report in August, Crean fended off questions about the power of the unions in the party, now and post-reform, by saying what he wanted was to give ownership of the party back to the rank and file - to make the party more inclusive - to remove much of the power currently exercised by factions, and to hand it back to party members.

It's difficult to quarrel with that sort of aim, although Hawke himself, despite arguing for that change,

freely admitted that during the period of his government, the factions had performed a valuable function.

But think for just a moment about Crean's contention that the most important reform recommended by Hawke and Wran is that aimed at cracking down on branch stacking, a practice that, it's almost universally agreed, shows factions operating at their worst.

If the problem to which Hawke and Wran were asked to turn their minds was, however it's framed, Labor's three federal defeats in a row, how did combating branch stacking become the party's number one priority? Indeed, if that's how Crean saw the aim of modernisation, why did he ever get bogged down in a debate on whether or not to slightly modify the mix of representatives at some party conferences?

**"[If]...Labor's electoral successes under Prime Ministers Hawke and Keating 'masked longer-term problems' for the party, then the Hawke-Wran report falls well short of even addressing the problem."**

If the existence and influence of factions or the practice of branch stacking or even the union majority at some state conferences had played a role in any of Labor's defeats by John Howard's Coalition, it would come as a surprise to the party's pollsters, its strategists and its supporters. For, Hawke and later Paul Keating led Labor to federal wins whilst those same conditions applied. And, of course, half a dozen state Labor premiers and two Labor chief ministers now hold office, seemingly despite those conditions.

And, indeed, Hawke and Wran themselves say that Howard's use of the Tampa incident plus the events in the United States of 11 September 2001, were the reason for Labor's second defeat under Kim Beazley's leadership. Neither those events, nor Beazley's handling of Labor's responses to them, owes anything to the problems associated with the party's factions or its links with the trade union movement.

That's not to say the anti-social behaviour of the factions has not deteriorated since Keating's 1993 victory; nor is it to say that the recommendations of Hawke-Wran, to do something about branch stacking, are unjustified.

But it is to say that, to the extent that the ALP becomes fixated with those matters as the problems

with which it must deal in order to win under Crean, it's simply barking up the wrong tree. In that sense, Hawke-Wran and all that follows from it are a solution to a problem that does not exist. To put it succinctly, if winning the next federal election is the party's chief aim at present - a legitimate aim by any measure - factions, branch stacking and the number of unionists at party conferences are not a problem worth spending vast amounts of time on solving.

On the other hand, if the problem is bigger than these, Hawke-Wran's solution is a fizzer.

If it's the case, for example, that - as *The Economist* put it - Labor's electoral successes under Prime Ministers Hawke and Keating "masked longer-term problems" for the party, then the Hawke-Wran report falls well short of even addressing the problem.

It's instructive to compare that report with another nominally co-authored by Hawke: the 1979 report of the ALP's national committee of inquiry.

Almost a quarter of a century ago, that committee - established at the instigation of then-leader Bill Hayden after two crushing federal defeats in a row under his predecessor, and led in fact by Labor Senator John Button - produced a set of detailed discussion papers, before making its recommendations to the national executive.

**"...while Hawke-Wran could lead to a tidying up of some of the party's unsavoury practices... Labor will have to wait for another electoral disaster at least if it wants to fully reform its internal activities as part of its search for more votes."**

Some of those recommendations were put into effect, one way or another; some are now out of date for other reasons (for example, the party's financial position is much healthier now than it was then, on account of the introduction of public funding during the Hawke government's time in office). But two stand out, even now: That the party should revitalise its relationship with the union movement; and that the party's national conference should be overhauled from top to bottom.

The first was put into effect with the negotiation of the ALP-ACTU Accord - in early 1983 and with its later re-negotiations. But, Hawke-Wran and Crean stress that, while an Accord is off the agenda, the relationship once again needs a re-think.

The second was rejected in the form advanced: a five component national conference, including one delegate elected directly by and from each federal electorate (124 at that time) and a matching number of delegates elected directly by and from unions affiliated with the party in more than one state. Hawke-Wran dipped a toe into that water, but found its temperature too hot to bear.

Crean generously described the Hawke-Wran report as a blueprint for reform of the party, especially with giving branch members greater say and with restating the party's relations with the unions in mind. But he was too generous to the point of inaccuracy. Hawke-Wran, and its followers, find it much easier to hedge that plan with conditions that virtually render it meaningless.

In other words, if the party's problem is its small membership and their obviously weak role in policy-making at present - in Crean-speak, its exclusiveness - then Hawke-Wran fails to deliver a solution.

It's not that a genuine blueprint is unimaginable. It was outlined in some detail in 1979. Nor it is hard to think of ways to push that sort of reform further - for example, by mandating the direct election by union members of their representatives to party forums, or by offering party supporters who are not party members a share of the party's decision-making action. Perhaps not policy-making, but certainly candidate selection, for example.

But it's hard not to conclude that, while Hawke-Wran could lead to a tidying up of some of the party's unsavoury practices, for the time being at minimum, Labor will have to wait for another electoral disaster at least if it wants to fully reform its internal activities as part of its search for more votes.

Meanwhile, the party awaits the results of the policy review still being undertaken by Crean's deputy Jenny Macklin - surely more important to those who think the most pressing problem for the ALP (as for any party in Opposition) is how to attract enough votes to win the next federal election.

*Ian Henderson is Economics correspondent, ABC Radio current affairs*





# ARE BRITAIN'S TORIES TERMINAL?

**John Kunkel**

**R**eggie Maudling, an eminently forgettable Chancellor of the Exchequer from the days of Harold Macmillan, once described Britain as "a Conservative country that sometimes votes Labour". Until Tony Blair came along, that seemed like a pretty good rule of thumb.

For a long time, Britain's Tories could boast to be the world's most successful political party. They enjoyed virtually uninterrupted power in Britain between 1874 and 1905. And in 80 years after the First World War, the Conservatives ruled for all but 17.

These days, however, the idea of the Tories as Britain's natural party of government has the smell of conventional wisdom well past its use-by date. Polls suggest that voter support remains stuck around 30 per cent – where it has been for most of the time since New Labour swept to power in May 1997. A second election wipeout last June saw the Conservative Party win fewer votes than Michael Foot's Labour Party in 1983, even with two million more voters on the electoral rolls. Remarkably, it was reduced to third place in London behind Labour and the Liberal Democrats.

More than a year on, things do not look much brighter. Party leader Iain Duncan Smith struggles to lay a glove on Tony Blair. Whether whispering in George W. Bush's ear or setting new targets for fourth grade reading standards, Mr Blair continues to look like a Prime Minister in command.

Not helped by a reputation for blandness, Mr Duncan Smith has also had his share of bad luck. His attempts to revive Tory fortunes at the annual party conference in October were swamped by former Thatcher Government Minister Edwina Currie's revelations about her affair with John Major before he became Prime Minister – her "big man in blue underpants".

MODERATES – 0, TRADITIONALISTS – 0

Mr Duncan Smith faces the difficult task of fashioning a kinder, gentler Conservative Party while not antagonising his Thatcherite support base. But the Tory leader – like his predecessor William Hague

## GEORGE PELL

### Prelate and Public Figure

Former Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne and now Catholic Archbishop of Sydney, the Rev George Pell has proved a controversial man. He has his followers and detractors, but all would agree that in his stand on issues of faith and morals, George Pell is consistent and no one would doubt his sincerity. Hear two very different views of Australia's most controversial Archbishop since Daniel Mannix - at The Sydney Institute.

**SPEAKERS:** TESS LIVINGSTONE (Opinion Page Editor, *The Courier Mail* & Author, *George Pell* [Duffy & Snellgrove, 2002]) & STEPHEN CRITTENDEN (Presenter, ABC Radio National's *Religion Report*)

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- seems unable to end the civil war between Tory moderates and traditionalists that has gone on since Margaret Thatcher was shunted out of office by her colleagues in 1990.

The moderates want to reach out to parts of British society which, they argue, the party has either failed to cultivate or needlessly alienated in the past - blacks, Asians, gays etc. They tend to be less gung-ho on things like tax cuts and more pro European. Meanwhile, the traditionalists say that the party's not for turning; that it should not become a touchy-feely clone of Labour on social issues. They also stick to a Thatcherite standard of smaller government and Euroscepticism.

A recent publication by the Centre for Policy Studies - the intellectual cradle for Thatcherism created by her former mentor Sir Keith Joseph - touched off a new round of Tory infighting. The pamphlet attacked what it termed the party's "Vichy response to Blairism", describing it as "consumed by self-doubt to the point of apologising for its existence". The current leadership was portrayed as "paralysed - trapped between the fear that Tony Blair has colonised its ideological heartland and the fear that Conservative principles are inherently unpopular".

Smelling blood, former party Chairman and über-traditionalist Norman Tebbit came out all guns blazing. He fulminated that Mr Duncan Smith should stop trying to be "liked by tiny minority groups who will never vote for him". Moderates took to the airwaves and op-ed pages to protest vigorously. Lord Fowler, another former party Chairman, tried to hose things down by suggesting politely that the Conservatives were "not actually going to win many elections if we kind of, for example, exclude women's interests and all that". Quite.

In the unlikely event that the average British voter tuned in, she would have ended up none the wiser.

## IN THE GROOVE WITH NEW LABOUR

Of course, the Tory troubles have not been helped by a government that has presided over a strong economy and projected a general air of competence - a far cry from the days when Labour government policy-making meant having the trade union bosses over for beer and sandwiches at Downing Street.

The Blair Government has embedded much of the Thatcher legacy, not least the once-controversial labour market reforms curbing union power. Gone is the "British disease". On unemployment, inflation, growth and public sector debt, Britain is currently the star performer of the major industrialised countries.

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, continues to churn out measures designed to make Britain both

fairer and more competitive. Having won a reputation for economic competence, he has now opened the spending coqs in areas like health and education. The July budget boosted public spending with an extra 90 billion pounds (A\$250 billion) by 2005 - the biggest sustained rise in 30 years.

Interestingly, Tony Blair has junked the Third Way waffle that characterised his first term in office. With the handy work of the Downing Street spin machine, the dominant policy rhetoric has been transformed into more nuts-and-bolts terminology emphasising "delivery" and "performance targets".

There's no doubting the political skills of the Blairites. Polls show that the prime minister has stayed more popular for longer than any previous incumbent. But whether, as some argue, Blair has permanently altered Britain's political landscape, à la Mrs Thatcher, is still debatable. And some of the gloss that surrounded New Labour's "cool Britannia" phase is wearing off.

## BUT NOT UNTOUCHABLE

For a start, the British public is tired of politicians overselling their policies, especially as the seedier side of Labour's spin machine has come to light over time. A series of scandals that began on 11 September 2001 with an email from a government media adviser suggesting it might be "a good day to bury bad news" culminated in May with the scalp of former Transport Secretary Stephen Byers.

There's also a danger that the problems Britons see in the National Health Service and in education will still be there in three years time, even after buckets of money have been thrown at them. Public sector unions have already staked claims for generous pay settlements and come out against reforms promoting private sector competition. The young, urban middle-class voters that Labour has won over in droves could yet be spooked by tax hikes needed to pay for ambitious spending plans.

More immediately, war in Iraq threatens to destabilise what has been a remarkably quiescent Labour Party over the last five years. Tony Blair just managed to avoid an open revolt on the issue at Labour's October party conference. And concerns about British participation in any American-led attack are not confined to the Labour Party. Eminent historian Sir Michael Howard thinks that Britain's support for an American-led attack "would divide the nation as profoundly as did the disastrous Suez adventure in 1956".

Then there is the question of what Britain does about the euro. It's no secret that Tony Blair wants his country to join in this parliament (by mid-2006). His

government has set June 2003 as the deadline for deciding whether five economic tests set by Gordon Brown have been met. But all the polls show that the euro-enthusiasts still have some persuading to do, with a solid majority of Britons opposed to ditching the pound.

Finally, some of the hallmarks of Blairism – the command-and-control style, government by Downing Street Policy Unit, the emphasis on spin – may yet provoke a backlash. One of those less than impressed with the Blair approach is journalist-turned-academic Peter Hennessy. His excellent book, *The Prime Minister: The office and its holders since 1945* (Penguin Books, 2000), points to some of the perils of “excessive prime ministerialism” in the British system of government given its lack of formal checks and balances.

Hennessy claims that one of the truly revolutionary aspects of the Blair years has been “the demise of anything approaching a genuine system of Cabinet government”. For example, it is a rare cabinet meeting that goes for a full hour. The amount of paperwork in cabinet has also declined markedly. The Blair style, Hennessy suggests, “cuts against the collective grain, which runs that way for a purpose – as just about the only barrier against undesirable accumulation of power which can all too easily accrue around a single figure under Britain’s constitutional arrangements”.

Tony Blair should not forget that one of the main reasons most Britons were happy to see Margaret Thatcher go was that they just got tired of the bossiness. And despite Labour’s thumping election victory last year, there was no shortage of cynicism with voter turnout at its lowest level since 1918.

## WANTED: A HEALTHY LUST FOR POWER

But are the Tories electable? For all their woes, the Conservatives are not without talent in Westminster. Mr Duncan Smith does seem like a genuinely thoughtful politician with some pointed criticisms of Labour’s obsessive centralism and attachment to bureaucratic targets. Shadow Home Office secretary Oliver Letwin has carved out a reputation as an intellectual force to be reckoned with on issues such as crime and asylum seekers, as has David Willetts in the area of work and pensions.

Indeed, there is a school that says the Tories run the risk of being too cerebral as they contemplate how to overturn Blairism. Even *The Economist* – not known for its low-brow view of politics – has suggested that one of the things ailing the Conservatives is that “they have come to take ideas too seriously for their own good”. What is required, the argument runs, is more killer instinct and less intellectualising.

There is certainly no shortage of raw, pragmatic politics in the Tory tradition – from Benjamin Disraeli to Mrs Thatcher’s hatchet man Willie Whitelaw. It’s not for nothing that John Ramsden’s penetrating history of the Conservative Party is entitled *An Appetite for Power* (Trafalgar Square, 1999).

Well-developed ideas will be essential if the Tories are to make the long march back from the political wilderness. But so will the ruthlessness that comes from an intense desire to govern.

*John Kunkel is the author of the forthcoming America’s Trade Policy towards Japan: Demanding Results [Routledge 2002]*



# “9/11”, BALI AND THE LEFT

**Gerard Henderson**

Phillip Knightley, the Australian born journalist who lives in Britain, is a perceptive commentator. Yet, at times, he looks at a wood and sees only trees. Or at international security but observes only oil - and oil politics.

On Wednesday 9 October 2002, Phillip Knightley was interviewed by Vivian Schenker on the ABC Radio National Breakfast program. Asked about George W. Bush’s aims concerning Iraq, he replied: “This is about oil; it’s always been about oil”. In other words, President Bush is driven by the need for oil rather than the war against terror. But is he?

It is well known that George W. Bush’s administration is similar to that headed by his father, George Bush Snr. Not only does the team consist primarily of conservative Republicans (in the United States sense of the term). There are common personnel. Including Dick Cheney, Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice. If the US’s attitude towards Iraq is all about oil - and has always been about oil - then why did the US not invade Iraq during the Gulf War a decade ago? Following the collapse of Iraq’s army, it could have done so with relative ease. Had it done so, Saddam Hussein would have been driven from office and regime change implemented. Then the US would have controlled all of Iraq’s vast oil assets. The US’s



decision not to invade Iraq in the early 1990s demonstrates that American conservative Republicans are not primarily concerned with oil. This is all the more so following the events of what the Americans call "9/11".

When George W. Bush came to office in January 2001, Iraq was not a high priority. All this changed on 11 September of that year following the al Qaeda murderous attacks on the US. President Bush's determination to rid Iraq of its Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) may, or may not, be well thought through. It's too early to say. However, there should be little doubt about the Bush administration's motivations.

George W. Bush does not want to be president of the USA when Americans are victims of a WMD attack initiated by Iraq or by a group such as al Qaeda which obtains WMD supplies from Saddam. It is true that the Islamists who control al Qaeda have no attachment to the essentially secular rulers of Iraq. It's just that the axiom "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" extends across political and religious boundaries. In other words, the US's current obsession with Iraq is driven by security and not by oil prices. In any event, there is no current - or predicted - oil shortage. There is, however, a glut of terrorism.

The tragic events in Bali on 12 October 2002 demonstrate the problem. Today terrorists, with relatively cheaply acquired weapons, can kill tens of thousands of non-combatants. The likes of Phillip Knightley can look at senior politicians and theorise about their motives. But such leaders as George Bush, Tony Blair and John Howard have a responsibility to protect the citizens who elect them to high office.

Among sections of the Australian left there was a tendency to not fully appreciate the impact of 9/11 terrorist murders on the American psyche. In his book *The New Rulers of the World* (Verso, 2002), John Pilger refers to "the terrorists of Osama bin Laden and George W. Bush". The implication is clear. Both men are terrorists - the elected leader of a democracy and the unelected ruler of a terrorist movement. It's an example of worst-case moral equivalence.

Writing in the wake of 9/11, leftist author Bob Ellis maintained that bin Laden was "almost certainly not" involved in the attacks on the US (*Canberra Times*, 25 September, 2001). He has remained silent following the admission of Ramzi Binalshibh, during an interview with the Arab language Al-Jazeera TV network, that he was the co-ordinator of the 9/11 attacks on the US. A Yemeni by nationality, Binalshibh joined al-Qaeda in 1996 and was a one-time flatmate of Mohammad Atta (who flew the first plane into the World Trade Center). In his *Canberra*

*Times* article, Ellis went on to describe George Washington and Nelson Mandela as "terrorists". Just like al Qaeda, apparently. Yet more moral equivalence.

In his book *Amerika Psycho* (Ocean Press, 2002), Richard Neville effectively looks through terrorism to see the US and its allies as the greatest threat to civilisation. He alleges that President "Bush's 'new kind' of war in the name of freedom is actually an old kind of imperial excursion to extend America's grip on the wealth of the world". In other words, oil is but part of wealth. Neville also maintains that "far from fighting a war to 'save civilisation', Australia and the United States are in retreat from civilisation". It's as simple - and simplistic - as that.

In the *Melbourne Age* (23 September, 2002) Kenneth Davidson has written that the "real issue" in the current Middle East tension turns on "who controls Iraqi oil". Meanwhile, *Arena* editor Guy Rundle has argued that: "By the rules of war it is Iraq that has a legitimate reason to attack US military targets, as the latter has so clearly and repeatedly threatened invasion" (*Australian*, 9 October 2002). This overlooks the point that the US has threatened invasion only because Iraq has consistently violated the surrender terms which it reached at the end of the Gulf War.

To Melbourne based academic Scott Burchill, the consequences of 9/11 and the 12 October terrorist attacks are, somehow or other, the West's fault. He has claimed that "no new strategic doctrines and no amount of technological fetishism will insulate the West from the unintended consequences of its actions around the world" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 October 2002).

**"...the Greens' leader's comments were particularly insensitive in view of the fact that they were made when many Australians were dead, dying or seriously injured in Bali at the very time when he chose to make a political point about Iraq."**

Some 20 Australians died in the 9/11 murders. It was a national tragedy. Yet, in terms of the dead and injured, significantly less traumatic than the toll from the Bali murders. It seems likely that the Australian psyche will have changed forever following the events of 12 October. When Australia's political leaders (Coalition or Labor) now talk about the threat of terrorism, they will be believed by most. And it is likely that Australians will be more inclined to take President Bush seriously when he warns of the threat posed by Saddam's WMD. Rather than to

dismiss his concerns as being motivated by oil politics or an agenda to dominate the world. The early indications are that even Bob Brown and the Greens have seen the need to reassess their attitude to security following the Bali murders which occurred late in the evening of 12 October 2002.

Early on Saturday 12 October, following the warning by Federal Attorney General Daryl Williams' that power installations in Australia could be subject to a terrorist attack, Senator Brown spoke to the media. The following extract is taken from the AAP report:

**Hobart, October 12, AAP - The Federal government should not have warned of a possible terrorist attack unless there was a specific threat against Australia, Australian Greens Senator Bob Brown said today.**

**Senator Brown said the government should have remained silent on the United States' warning of a threat to power stations and electrical transmission lines until it had explicit facts. "I think the government had a responsibility to insist the US authorities give them some specific information. They're just becoming a mouthpiece for the White House, both as we head for war with Iraq and by promoting this apparent terrorist threat."**

The context of Senator Brown's remarks makes it manifestly clear that, on 12 October, he downplayed the possibility of a terrorist threat to Australia /Australians. Moreover, he asserted that - in issuing terrorist warnings - the Howard government was "becoming a mouthpiece for the White House".

Then on Sunday 13 October, following the news of the Bali murders, Bob Brown issued a statement whereby - intentionally or otherwise - he linked the Bali bombings with Iraq. The statement was as follows:

**With the rest of Australia our hearts go out to all those who are suffering this outrage, here and in Indonesia. This event underscores the need for Australia to have a policy of regional defence and engagement rather than global stratagems at the behest of Washington. Australia should not join the invasion of Iraq. We should concentrate our resources in the neighbourhood.**

Then, on Monday 14 October, Bob Brown released a media statement which stated, inter alia:

**As the Iraq invasion becomes inevitable, this terror talk has a clear political advantage for the White House, but it does no good for Australia.**

The context of Senator Brown's remarks makes it clear that, in his view, "terror talk has a clear political advantage for the White House". In fact it is far from clear that the Bali terrorist murders would increase support in Australia for any US led military intervention against Saddam Hussein. In any event, the Greens' leader's comments were particularly insensitive in view of the fact that they were made when many Australians were dead, dying or seriously injured in Bali at the very time when he chose to make a political point about Iraq.

Then, on Thursday 17 October, Bob Brown appeared on the ABC Radio National Breakfast program with a warning to Australians that "we must prepare ourselves" against terrorist attack. This is the very same Greens' leader who, four days earlier, said that the Howard government should have remained silent on the apparent threat to power stations in Australia.

Bob Brown, like many other fellow leftists, misread the terrorist menace to Western civilisation. The threat is immediate. And much, much more serious than the future price of oil.



## WHO WRITES FOR WHOM?

**Estelle Noonan**

*I*n the second week of October 2002 President George W. Bush delivered a keynote speech outlining America's motives for war with Iraq, in which he referred to "terror cells", and "outlaw regimes building weapons of mass destruction", as differing faces of the "same evil". In the same week a Nobel prize-winning author was accused of having had ghostwriters in his employ throughout much of his career. On the surface, these two events seem only distantly related, if at all. And yet, for this author, they have stirred a recognition that these are interesting times in which to consider the question of where words come from, and how they come about.

From the man who brought us such notable catch-phrases as "axis of evil" and "the war on terror", has recently emerged yet more rhetoric to add to the ever-widening litany of euphemism for military force,

including the phrases “regime change”, “pre-emption” and “securing peace”, to name but a few.

But, of course – the man who coined the phrase is not the man who spun it. This article seeks to reflect, a little, on public perceptions of those who fabricate such rhetoric, using preliminary discussion of the phenomenon of speechwriting as a platform into broader discussion of the ethical and ideological status of the novelistic ghostwriter.

So what, exactly, is a ghostwriter? The answer to this question has been aptly put by a former *New York Times* staff member, Michiko Kakutani (as quoted by Eugene Garfield in *Current Comments*), who describes a ghostwriter as a “kind of courtier, a gifted scribe whose job it is to make his employer look his best – or at least honest and believable – without seeming to do so.” These writers include those who routinely execute works for celebrities, politicians and media personalities alike, as well as, further along the continuum, various forms of editing and “acknowledged pieces” written in collaboration with professionals who might otherwise serve as ghostwriters. The practice is not particularly new. In fact, ghostwriting dates back to antiquity in that it can be directly connected to the origins of rhetoric and the practice of logography and/or “wordsmithing”.

Interestingly, little empirical study appears to have been carried out on the intersection of ethics and public perception within the realm of political or novelistic ghostwriting. As to why this is, certainly, one explanation may be that ghostwriting is already viewed by most members of the public as a necessary element for crafting an effective public image.

Other explanations go so far as to locate the lack of study in this area as serving the interests of those elites: bureaucrats, politicians, and others, who benefit from a system of institutionalised plagiarism. In the case of novelistic ghostwriting and publishing houses, one might suggest that these “vested interest” arguments hold some weight.

With regard to the political realm, however, one needn't look to the small amount of empirical data on the subject to observe that for the general public, the fact of multiple authorship in this field simply does not constitute a problem. Indeed, though many speechwriters are expected to adopt a certain, discreet anonymity whilst in office, many have risen to positions of high-visibility following the cessation of employment, most notably Peggy Noonan in the post-Reagan/Bush era, and perhaps, to a lesser extent, Don Watson - to name a local example.

Those ethicists who defend political ghostwriting see no dilemma in the practice both because the public

deliverer of the message is still, ultimately, responsible for its content, and because the audience knows the “speechgiver” is not necessarily the “speechwriter”.

Indeed, with regard to the later point, the nature of this working relationship is often made all too explicit by Michael Gerson, George Bush's current speechwriter, who has, at times, been accused of writing a little too well for a thinker and orator of the President's calibre. In a field where capturing the client's personality, prose style and flair is a hallmark of good ghostwriting, we can look with some mirth on the complexities of the challenge that confronts the Gerson team.

This, after all, is the man who, last July, when asked by reporters whilst strolling near the White House pool what Independence Day meant to him said “I can't tell you what it's like to be in Europe, for example, to be talking about the greatness of America.”

Current arguments in opposition to the ghostwriting of speeches name an audience and media-driven “cult of leadership” as a motive for the continued employment of speechwriters, charged with maintaining a myth of omnipotence with respect to our current political leaders. These thinkers claim that if the public were simply more reconciled to a political leader who could exist as a mere mortal, the need for speechwriters would decrease.

Not surprisingly in the post-Clinton era, these arguments appear a little outdated. One persuasive point made on the subject, however, is that made by Carol Gelderman in her seminal work, *All The President's Words* (1997). In this text she names the presidential relegation of speechwriting to wordsmiths (as opposed to policy-makers), coupled with a reliance on polls, as having effected a “disconnection between words and action”, culminating in an overall diminishing of the integrity of the word.

In the case of Michael Gerson, the self-described “passionate conservative” who acts as presidential advisor, as well as Chief Speechwriter to Bush, one may note that the fulfilment of Gelderman's ideal formula may, indeed, have narrowed the gap between word and action. For action, it would seem, is coming fast - yet the integrity of motive that inspires the word is highly debatable.

Then again, integrity, also, is a dubious concept these days. In particular, evolutions in the construction of authorship, prompted by market-place forces and, to a lesser extent, propped up by postmodernist values, appear to have compromised the integrity of that all-important “name of the author”.

What I am referring to is what academia calls invisible ghostwriting. That is, those cases in literature where the person who claims to be the sole and exclusive author of a work has paid another to write something, and then publicly purveyed it as his or her own.

Like political speechwriting, the practice of literary ghostwriting is certainly nothing new - hidden, or partly hidden collaborations lie behind many putatively single-authored texts. Most notably, it includes a wealth of now-discovered female literary partnerships, not to mention those literary "assistantes" who produced the ideas and first drafts that culminated in Alexandre Dumas' canonical works, *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *The Three Musketeers*. Similarly, one need only reflect on the role of the literary "father of editing", Maxwell Perkins, in transforming Thomas Wolfe's chaotic manuscript of *Look Homeward, Angel* into the structure of episodic short stories that it later became, to observe that the limitations of authorship, for the most part, has always been a rather nebulous area.

In more recent times, the practice of employing ghostwriters posthumously has given new meaning to the concept of literary immortality. Virginia Cleo Andrews, author of one of the most popular gothic-horror series ever written, commencing with *Flowers in the Attic*, died in 1986. Since this time, a number of works have continued to emerge under the slightly altered title "V.C. Andrews" - an author who is, in fact, none other than the gothic horror novelist and former highschool teacher, Andrew Niederman.

Many argue that this kind of variation on ghostwriting, wherein a popular series is continued by other authors who write under their own, or a slightly different name, lends itself to stories which centre around a fictional character of mythic proportions - a character so distinctive that reader loyalty is to the character rather than to the original author. And certainly, if we look to the comic medium, for example, one can perceive the workability, and indeed, the desirability of this formula.

Yet, what of those contemporary novelists who are hiring others to assist in churning out formulaic novels, including Tom Clancy, Robert Ludlum, Clive Cussler, Dale Brown, and Laurence Sanders? In Tom Clancy's case, it would appear that he is hiring others to write, in their entirety, works for which he can only be named as "creator". It is in these cases, then, that perceptions may take a different turn.

Where comic story-line creators receive full front-cover acknowledgment, those who write for novelists such as Clancy receive a lesser form of credit, ranging from a small byline on the bottom of a cover,

to an inside-cover mention. Justifications of this phenomenon within economic terms explain how, within profit-seeking ventures of this kind, the author's name becomes that of fabricator, operating not so much as guarantor of authorship, but as logo within a complex system of branding.

This, indeed, is the intersection of modern artistic and capitalist values at its best; a subtly ironic system, loosely based on market/enlightenment notions of property, ownership and commodification, which define - what in its own rhetoric could easily be termed as fraud - as, well, nothing at all.

Convincing? Perhaps. Yet where notions of elitism permeate this formula, things begin to come undone. In October 2002, a literary scandal of the largest proportions arose from allegations made in a new book by investigative journalist, Tomas Garcia Yebra, about the Spanish literary giant, and Nobel prize-winning author, Camilo Jose Cela. The work, entitled *Desmontando Cela* ("Dismantling Cela") accuses the writer of relying on a veritable army of ghostwriters, secretaries and collaborators, hired as early as the 1950s.

The accusations, based on thorough consultation of archives, manuscripts, family, friends, and enemies, are tight, and further undermine a reputation already tarnished by an unsuccessful plagiarism lawsuit. At the core of the accusations, is the allegation that two ghostwriters were used to help produce *The Cross of Saint Andrew* and *Mazurka for Two Dead Men*, which won him, respectively, Spain's 250,000 pound Planeta Prize and Spain's National Literary Prize. According to Yebra, two ghostwriters, Marcial Suarez and Mariano Tudela, created the plots and characters that Cela later molded into his own prose style. Naturally, the Spanish literary establishment is a little flustered - this is a writer whom the Nobel committee once compared to Cervantes.

But hell, what does it matter? Can we not pass off these sorts of occurrences as an aspect of the systematic misrepresentation that features in most information disseminated by mass-media institutions? Perhaps not. I, for one, am not immune to this kind of thing - are you? What are the implications of literary ghostwriting in these allegedly post (post?) modern times?

Reconfigurations of authorship in postmodern discourse have helped emphasise the ambiguity of accrediting any text, concepts, or words to an individual, by locating the writer's activity only in intertextuality, where reconstruction and reorientation of borrowed material are predominant. By such thinking, the romantic notion of a "pure", unified, or single authorship has been rendered impossible.

On a slightly more pragmatic level, we should note the means by which the literary chain of print-production, composed of editors, critics, marketers, wholesalers and retailers, has inhibited any direct relationship between creator and receiver of literary works since, well, the invention of the printing press.

To this extent, modern notions of authorship have evolved to incorporate somewhat composite identities. And yet this is not simply a question of collaborative artistic endeavour.

There is a difference between minding collaboration, and feeling deceived by a deliberate implication that a certain work is not only a solo-effort, but an author's original intellectual property. If not fraud, this can at least be classified as deception.

When confronting another with the knowledge that a certain, favoured author did not in fact manufacture the work to which his or her name is attributed, one need only witness the narrowing of the eyes, the exclamations of "I've been duped!", and the look of disappointment that follows, to observe that, for many, the author is about as dead as the literary cult of personality that allegedly died with him. By the same token, the apprehended presence of human creativity and personality appears to remain the most important aspect on which any nominal authorship is based. Case in point: nobody is satisfied with anonymous authorship.

All of this begs an important question - if invisible ghostwriting is such an acceptable form of common practice, and if, indeed, "we all know" when this phenomenon is taking place, why the big secret? Copyright lawyer Gregory Baruch, writing for *The Ottawa Citizen*, makes an interesting observation when he notes that certain celebrity biographies, which would once have been advertised as "by (celebrity) as told to (ghostwriter)", and later as "by (celebrity) with (ghostwriter)" are now frequently sold as "by (celebrity)".

In effect, it would seem that publishers have chosen to have their cake and eat it too, by persisting in utilising the name of the author as cultural capital in the marketplace, whilst lifting production to levels that are rarely attained in the artistic realm.

Why? Well, ghostwriting is big business. A culture built on voyeurism, and reader appetites for certain varieties of best-selling fiction, respectively, have culminated in the glut of celebrity autobiography, and fictional works being marketed by publishers who are scrambling to sate our desires for certain works - wherever, of course, they can be of service.

In the world of business management a vast amount of books are produced by ghostwriters to whom only

tributes are paid on the inside front cover where they are listed as a "consultant editor". Many of the ghostwriters working within the business realm obtain significant financial reward, and are happy to approach their works as part of a much wider process of publishing as "multimedia presentation", wherein the book itself functions as a component of much wider product-packaging that follows a certain line of thought.

To some, it is merely a question of providing a service. To others, the practice is negative not for its ethical implications, but for its service limitations.

For example - Tom Brown, in an article penned by Stuart Cramer of *Management Today*, names the problem with business ghostwriting as being one where the enhancement or ideas put forward by ghostwriters may often inhibit the ability of a named author to speak adequately for his or her work on the promotional circuit.

As to whether this practice is the decent thing, well, where does one draw the line in matters of creative ownership? To many, authorship is a question of ownership of ideas, not prose style, of originator, as opposed to "medium" (though where would this leave Cela?) To others, it is a question of authorial attribution and giving credit where credit is due.

One thing appears clear - the traditional divide between the public and the private realm remains, to the extent that people are willing to accept acts of collaboration in a social context where writing fulfils a specifically political, public role. Yet romantic vision is supposed to be private.

Over the past century, the possibility that any text is a public object has been widely accepted, however, the means of production of that work continues to be viewed as a private act.

Within literature, the privileged status of individualised production is sustained by a number of dominant mythologies surrounding the nature of personality, originality, and - who could forget - "genius". As to whether this is bad thing - perhaps we shouldn't leave that one to relativism, but it is a matter of perspective.<sup>1</sup>

1. See Mendelson, Edward, *qtd. in Leonard, James S. & Warton, Christine E., Authority and Textuality, 1994.*

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# MIGRANTS AND MATRIARCHS

**Anne Henderson**

**I**t hasn't triggered much notice. Perhaps because the war on terror and associated discussion has taken over the headlines. But the Australian Prime Minister, John Howard, who once linked unemployment with high immigration intakes, is now presiding over some of the highest immigration levels in Australia's history - with relatively low unemployment levels.

And why is this so? Well John Howard has changed his view it seems. The Prime Minister now accepts

that Australia needs immigrants to continue growing. At some point in the last two years, John Howard became aware of the problems headed our way with the ageing nature of Australia's population. And he made a 180 degree turn on immigration. He has also come to realise it's no longer an either/or situation.

In the next four decades, it will be not be sufficient to argue for any one solution for future prosperity; to argue simply that immigration levels be raised to make up for a declining birth rate; or for community and government to proactively encourage fertility levels; or advocate and assist greater participation levels of older folk in the work force. No one solution will do. We are going to need all three and more besides to maintain the standard of living we expect.

Retirement for William Shakespeare was a time of oblivion - "Sans eyes, sans teeth, sans everything". No longer. Retirement and its consequences is now a major focus of governments in affluent, developed economies - whether it's Canada or Australia, Italy or Germany, Japan or Spain. The ageing nature of Australia's demographic makeup has become a major focus of the Howard Government's third term. In fact, ageing societies across the globe now have more than a few governments focussed. In Canada, the over 65s will amount to 23 per cent of the population by 2041 and in Australia some 24 per cent.

The figures tell the problem. Life expectancy up; fertility down. For three decades Australian births have not been happening fast enough to replace existing numbers of Australians. The rate needed of 2.1 is now down to 1.7 and expected to be 1.6 by 2042.

Governments are now being asked, even by commentators as prominent as *The Australian's* Paul Kelly, to act quickly to put in place policies that will encourage fertility. Kelly wrote recently that while he had no problem with the Howard Government's emphasis on encouraging older workers to work longer, it is fertility which is the key to an effective population policy. "Fertility is the pile driver of population outcomes," Kelly wrote.

But it's a lot to assume that government policy of itself will make much difference in such a complicated social area as having babies. If only it were so easy.

**"...it will be older Australians who will increasingly decentralize Australia's coastal areas in the next four decades - as they try to manage on substantially reduced incomes."**

Whatever governments can do to ameliorate our population difficulties, three decades of diminishing



fertility isn't going to be turned around in a hurry – and not by a sudden switch to a few family friendly measures - a baby bonus here, tax concessions there or even, in time, government paid maternity leave. Indeed, now that most women are so well educated, empowered by earning their own incomes and allowed most of the freedoms and status once only the prerogative of men, it's quite likely that many women are going to continue to give motherhood a miss - indefinitely.

Canberra, a well endowed, family friendly city, with an 80 per cent plus workforce participation, above average numbers of jobs in the public sector and a highly educated workforce, also has a 1.65 fertility rate, well below the national average.

Our ageing society is going to be with us for quite some time, with much discussion of how to best deal with its effects on our economy, and the generous government services Australians have come to expect. Many ageing baby boomers (the oldest of whom turn 60 in 2006) are about to find their retirement incomes won't allow them to continue living at the levels they've come to enjoy since the 1950s, while younger generations will soon resent the increased taxation burden falling on them as the tax base shrinks.

But there will be other, more subtle, changes. Most retirees, in the next two decades, will have minimal superannuation savings, or none at all. They will soon find a government pension offering just 25 per cent of male average total weekly earnings (\$10,000 a year in today's money) inadequate. With their only investment a paid off family home, cheaper living may well have to be found beyond the major capital cities. As a result, we are going to see an even greater blossoming of coastal centres in Australia. Tasmania and South Australia may even repopulate significantly.

NSW Premier Bob Carr shouldn't worry too much about newly arrived immigrants entering Sydney's sprawl. Retiring, long term residents will soon be leaving in increasing numbers. For, as they retire, many ordinary Sydneysiders will be only too happy to sell up to incoming migrants – if the price is right. Rather than migrants settling away from heavily populated capital cities (Bob Carr's preferred option) it will be older Australians who will increasingly decentralize Australia's coastal areas in the next four decades - as they try to manage on substantially reduced incomes.

For today's ageing folk are also expected to live a lot longer. So retirement incomes will have to last a lot longer.

In all of this, governments and policy planners will have to trip the light fantastic as they steer us

through the next four decades, and especially governments as they decide how best to portion out the precious tax take in a way that promotes not only economic growth, but also security and a healthy and creative community mix.

## IMMIGRATION

For two decades now it has been the rallying cry of the anti immigration lobby that immigrants take the jobs of locals, and that immigration is bad for us. Side by side with this has been the environmentalist objection that larger population numbers will be an excessive drain on our fragile ecosystem in this dry, arid land.

In spite of this, our immigration intake has returned to high numbers in the last two years – over 100,000 permanent settlers annually, as well as 200,000 short-stay business visitors, 100,000 students and 60,000 working holiday makers. Australia is now taking in more permanent settlers per head of population than the USA to where 1,064,318 migrated legally in 2001.

As well, unemployment levels in Australia remain stable at around 6.5 per cent. There is no evidence the immigration intake has adversely affected employment. And, with an increasingly ageing population, as local work force participation levels out or drops with natural attrition, new arrivals looking for work will merely replace retirees.

The connection between immigration and unemployment is no given. It is constantly challenged by the figures. Much of the evidence demonstrates that immigration, in fact, boosts employment for local citizens even if temporarily leaving the immigrant searching for work.

As to the fragile nature of the Australian ecosystem, there is no doubt that Australians will always have to live with an enlightened consciousness about their special ecology. But we can also learn much from highly populated desert societies like Israel. Australia, settled by those from temperate Europe, has still much to learn about water conservation, salinity and land conservation.

**“...In fact for some time, the bar for entry to Australia as an immigrant has been set so high that the average immigrant entering Australia has long been far better educated than the average Australian. Pauline Hanson would not have made it had she applied.”**

Rather than blaming population numbers, if Australia is to maintain its advantages as a high tech, industrialised and growing community, its citizens will need to find ways to both protect *and* develop their landmass. The investment needed from government and industry into ways we can do this will require a society that is both economically and demographically vibrant. And with declining fertility levels, we are going to need large intakes of permanent settlers to do it.

Immigration remains an area of great controversy at a time when people movement around the world is, if not unprecedented, then seen as close to the unprecedented levels of the late nineteenth century. Australia has been caught up in a bitter debate over illegal immigration and detention of asylum seekers on and beyond the Australian mainland over the last year. Compared with Europe or the US, however, our problem in terms of numbers is nothing. Which is why we can afford to detain those who arrive illegally. Britain gets some 70,000 illegal immigrants and asylum seekers every year – to detain them would be impossible.

But, putting aside the debate over illegal immigration, it is a time when many skilled people from poorer or overpopulated countries are seeking a place to settle. They are ours for the taking. If we want them. Ironically, the Australian government, having obsessively pursued a few hundred illegals, at great cost, has at the same time quietly upped the legal immigration intake without so much as a squeak from the anti-immigration lobby. Clever politics perhaps.

James Jupp, in his just released *From White Australia to Woomera* (Cambridge Uni Press), suggests that Australia is possibly about to enter a new phase in its immigration history. As an ageing community, there is no doubt anymore that we need to take in high numbers of immigrants. One phase has just ended - through the 1990s – where unskilled and family reunion priority intakes of immigrants collided with the downsizing of traditional factory style manufacturing industries and labour intensive rural industries. As a result it was easy for unemployed immigrants to become the anti immigration lobby's target.

Our new phase gives overwhelming preference to skilled immigrants – an extra 12,000 places in the skilled category announced in May this year. In fact for some time, the bar for entry to Australia as an immigrant has been set so high that the average immigrant entering Australia has long been far better educated than the average Australian. Pauline Hanson would not have made it had she applied.

However, adjustments will need to be made. The image of the immigrant as poor battler who needed a generation to establish his/her family, working

unskilled, manual jobs, will fade. Highly skilled immigrants will work in white collar industries and their kids will climb the education ladder rapidly. Meanwhile, more and more educated young Australians are leaving for careers abroad – 40,000 a year at the last count. And all this will be happening as more and more home grown citizens are ageing, downsizing and adjusting to modest incomes (even poverty). Unless the benefits of immigration are understood, One Nation will make a comeback.

## WORK AS INVESTMENT

Both Prime Minister John Howard and Treasurer Peter Costello are talking up the idea of older workers being retained in the labour market beyond normal retirement age. The Prime Minister told a Brisbane audience on 4 August 2002, "Instead of going from sort of six days a week to zap overnight, you ought to go from six down to five, to four and so forth through your sixties."

Likewise, in a speech three days later to the *Australian Financial Review* Leaders' luncheon, Treasurer Peter Costello gave the economic justification for older workers staying on in employment for as long as they can. Governments, in the Treasurer's view, can do little to reverse the fertility trend – declining now for three decades. It's a social reality not a funding one. So, along with a boosted immigration program, the Treasurer's answer to an ageing population is to have workers participate longer.

Australian males aged 60-65 have a 47 per cent workforce participation. The Treasurer wants to change that. Peter Costello argues that a higher workforce participation for the over 55s will have, in the short term, greater economic benefits than a rising fertility rate.

This is certainly true from a Treasury perspective. The young cost governments while they are nurtured and educated towards working age. A trained older worker, in a job, can only benefit the Treasury's coffers – and the national accounts. It may be a short term solution – but it's the Treasurer's preferred option as he juggles the many calls on the national Budget.

The Treasurer's aim is increased productivity. "A larger population will produce a larger GDP," he stated bluntly to his *AFR* Leaders' audience. But only, of course, if a large proportion of that population is of working age – and working. A longer working, older population would be a boon for the Treasury - older dependents cost the public purse far more than dependent young, especially when the bulk of retirement incomes (pensions) is publicly funded.

For the Treasurer, it's all a case of trying to offset the reversal of 40 years of productivity that will come

with a dependent ageing society. Peter Costello explains that over the last 40 years Australia's GDP growth of 3.75 per cent was gained from 2 percentage points - population factors and 2 percentage points - productivity factors. A dependent ageing population will subtract from that per capita GDP growth. If workers stay at work longer, that reversal can be somewhat mitigated.

**“...From any point of view, an increasingly ageing and matriarchal society will be one where larger numbers of citizens are cash flow poorer. A large percentage of single older women constitute some of the poorest citizens in our community.”**

For the older worker also, the Treasurer's argument is reasonable, if it's possible. Retirement incomes for the about-to-retire baby boomers will come as a shock. The world those baby boomers were born into has changed dramatically. For many, the decades of change have not impacted sufficiently on their images of retirement. To be born in the late 1940s to early 1960s was to be nurtured in a society where life expectancy was shorter, marriages more enduring, mortgage repayments minimal and early disposed of, and options for leisure remarkably simple by today's standards. Retiring pensioners then managed in simpler ways. Mum and Dad as Nan and Pa faded into the background as the older folk of a close knit tribe.

But what empowered, individualistic baby boomer expects to retire as his or her grandparents did? Whether in 2003 or 2030. The simple life is all very well - until you have to live it. Who's going to pay for the travel we have become accustomed to - both within Australia and abroad? The computer technology - ever changing and never cheap? The dining out? Those activities you've been putting off till retirement - from boating to sky diving? There's only so much gardening and knitting a baby boomer can take!

Retirement for many has been imagined as a long holiday - fine if you can manage it all on around \$10,000 a year - what the government pension pays in today's money.

Okay, you say - there's super. Well yes - for some. But for even the best prepared this will amount to just half pre-retirement income. Most will not be so well prepared. Those reliant on the Age Pension can expect some 78 per cent of pre-retirement income but this amounts to some 54 per cent less than what non-Age Pension retirees will be living on. Most baby

boomers will retire on the Age Pension or a part pension.

## A MATRIARCHAL SOCIETY

An ageing Australia will be an increasingly matriarchal one. For that reason alone, there will be many more citizens living close to poverty or certainly in limited financial circumstances. Women, on average, outlive men by around six years. And for widows, the time they live husbandless is on average longer than this six years, since most women are younger than their husbands.

Austen, Jefferson and Preston, in *Women and Australia's Retirement Income System* (Curtin 2002), demonstrate that the way our superannuation schemes work discriminate against women. Such schemes connect the level of individuals' retirement incomes both directly and indirectly with their labour force participation. This has detrimental consequences for women both from their broken work records because of child bearing and rearing and because of their lower earnings generally compared with males.

Ross Clare in "Women and Superannuation" (ASFA 2001) argues that partly because of the rapid rise of earnings in male dominated industries through the 1990s, women's average earnings have been falling relative to those of males. Says Clare, "This is not helpful in reducing relative imbalance in regard to superannuation entitlements."

Looking forward two, then five, decades from now, the figures present a dramatic change in the Australian population profile. Blocked up the spine in a hierarchy from 0-90 in five year groups, the shape of that bar graph alters from a "Christmas tree" shape in 1991 to a rectangular shape by 2051. By 2021, that rectangle is already obvious. By 2051, females in the 85-90 category will outnumber any male or female group from age 0-50.

From any point of view, an increasingly ageing and matriarchal society will be one where larger numbers of citizens are cash flow poorer. A large percentage of single older women constitute some of the poorest citizens in our community. NATSEM's paper "Women and Superannuation in the 21st Century" notes the concern already that a significant proportion of female retirees this century will receive Age Pensions and possess little or no private assets or income.

Of course, superannuation schemes are catching younger workers earlier. Older baby boomers had little chance to be part of the Superannuation Guarantee Charge. As younger boomers retire, it is argued, super schemes will increasingly provide for them. Even so, this will take some few decades.

Women - on average earning less than men - will be disadvantaged by the connection of super with earnings over a working life. Moreover, marriage is rapidly on the decline (2001 recorded the lowest number of marriages since 1941 - wartime) and divorce is common. Increasingly, women are single by choice or circumstance.

Superannuation coverage for Australian workers is growing - 86.7 per cent of workers are now covered by superannuation contributions. This figure, however, hides the fact that the level of coverage is still quite inadequate for a majority to provide for their retirement. Austen, Jefferson and Preston's study calculates this inadequacy from recent ABS figures.

They argue that median funds in superannuation accounts are low - equal to \$13,000 for males and \$6,400 for females - and that 44 per cent of women with super have less than \$5000 in their account. Others with less than \$5000 in a super account include 53.2 per cent of part-time workers, 65.6 per cent of casuals, 56.2 per cent of the unemployed and 56.2 per cent of those not in the workforce. Fifty per cent of women who have retired or will retire in the next 10 years have less than \$20,000 in super and 20 per cent of these have less than \$5000.

**“...paid maternity leave would probably have little effect on our declining fertility rate.”**

It's not hard to see why the Treasurer is arguing for older workers to stay longer in the workforce. For older citizens, there is good reason too. Additional working years contribute extra to those modest super savings - something younger women now factor in as they avoid breaks in their careers to have children. Moreover, for the fit and active older worker, a job is also a means to healthy feelings of usefulness.

Work has for too long been viewed by many social commentators as a negative. A leftover from the days when the working class was lumped with mostly menial and repetitive occupations. With long hours and poor pay.

Today, while the working wage is still a basic income, hours of work have lessened. Average hours worked for average earnings have fallen from 39 hours per week in the 1960s to around 34.5 hours today. Peter Costello tells us these shorter hours have taken from productivity. On the other hand, working conditions have improved as a result. In fact, work now offers investment in a more comfortable, secure and vibrant life. Retirees find a few days at work worth a lot more than just the welcome extra money they provide.

## WORKING WOMEN - THE KEY

Australia's Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner Pru Goward is presently leading the campaign for paid maternity leave. We are told it's one way to improve Australia's fertility rate by supporting working mothers and working families. A majority of women are now in full or part-time work and will be for most of their lives. This inevitably affects decisions younger women make about combining parenting and work. There is, however, no guarantee that paid maternity leave will impact on fertility rates.

There are many reasons younger women are choosing not to have children. A few months at home with a baby on full or part-time pay would undoubtedly ease much of the initial financial and caring burdens of having a child. However, as most women can discover long before having a child themselves, there are many more months than this in the life of a child. Juggling work and family with youngsters gets more complicated as babies grow towards school age.

Moreover, increasing numbers of career women are delaying having children so as to establish their foothold in professions. For many, there is never an easy time in that career path to have children. Younger women watch colleagues take out time to have babies with the expectation they will return to careers just as they left them, only to see those colleagues eventually sacrifice their career paths in order to more easily manage with children. They miss out on the promotions. And so on and so forth. This is hardly encouragement for the generation of young women following on.

Women who wait to have children are also discovering they can wait too long and when they try to conceive cannot. And it's not always easy to manage all factors in the equation at once - time out from the workforce, the right partner and the right age the body can conceive. For all these reasons, paid maternity leave would probably have little effect on our declining fertility rate. That's why we need high levels of young adult, immigrant families if we are to maintain healthy numbers of younger citizens.

But while maternity leave and other support for working mothers may not increase fertility levels, it is a step forward in the cause of improving older women's financial circumstances. The longer women stay in the workforce and the fewer the breaks in their working lives, the better will be their superannuation contributions and their chances to earn at levels closer to that of their male colleagues.

Moreover, with an ageing population, in many areas there will soon be a workers' market. With the diminishing number of younger workers generally,

# RE-ENGAGE

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To conclude the 2002 Re-engage series, Graeme Murphy will address The Sydney Institute. Choreographer Murphy was appointed Artistic Director to Sydney Dance Company in 1976. He has since created a remarkable repertoire, including 30 full evening productions and a diverse range of short works. In 1984, he began directing for Opera Australia with Brian Howard's *Metamorphosis*, subsequently directing an acclaimed production of Giacomo Puccini's *Turandot*, followed by Richard Strauss' *Salome* and Hector Berlioz' *The Trojans*, the latter bringing Opera Australia together with Sydney Dance Company in a lavish spectacle. In 2001, he was presented with the Helpmann Award for Best Choreography for *Body of Work, Gala Performance*.

**SPEAKER: Graeme Murphy AM (Artistic Director, Sydney Dance Company)**

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women and older workers who stay in the workforce will be in demand.

Australia's ageing population will bring much change and adjustment in the next four decades. Already we speak of older citizens and the older aged. With improved medication, health aids and diet, longevity will mean a healthy person of fifty will increasingly be seen as relatively young. Certainly fit enough to work at least another decade and more. Women are now educated and capable of independence, both as singles or partnered. They are also going to dominate as a growing percentage of the population among older generations.

Increasingly, women will need to save more for their retirement from an early age. This will require either a dramatic overhaul of the rules surrounding superannuation contributions to make them less reliant on paid work history (highly unlikely in the short term) or many more working years for both younger and older women.

In spite of all the talk about encouraging more women to be mothers, and even to take time out from the workforce to rear children, because of the way our retirement savings system is arranged even governments will want women to work longer over their lifetimes to help pay for the costs of their retirement incomes.

So, in the next few decades, expect to hear a lot more on the subject of migrants and matriarchs.

*Anne Henderson is editor of The Sydney Papers*



# NOTE

## The Sydney Institute

has a new web address:  
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# BOOK REVIEWS

**John McConnell**

## **FROM WHITE AUSTRALIA TO WOOMERA: THE STORY OF AUSTRALIAN IMMIGRATION**

By James Jupp

Cambridge University Press, pb 2002

rrp \$29.95

ISBN 0 521 53140 3

From one perspective, the story of Australia is that of successive waves of immigrants. By and large, these successive waves amount to a successful story. Along the way, the Australian people abandoned the White Australia Policy and accepted multicultural Australia. Since World War II, the Australian nation has extended the welcome mat to some six million migrants from increasingly diverse backgrounds.

Recently, however, some new names have become part of the immigration agenda. One is the name of a Norwegian container ship – the Tampa. Add detention centres such as Woomera, Curtin, Port Headland, Nauru and Manus Island. Mix in terms such as refugees, asylum seekers and queue jumpers and you encounter the contemporary flavour of the story.

It is contested terrain. Consensus and bipartisanship have been displaced in this changing agenda. James Jupp makes sense of this changing story in his latest book *From White Australia to Woomera*.

“Australian immigration policy over the past 150 years,” Dr Jupp observes, “has rested on three pillars; the maintenance of British hegemony and

‘white’ domination; the strengthening of Australia economically and militarily by selective mass migration; and the state control of these processes.”

“The first,” he adds, “has become less important in recent years but still exercises some minds; the second has been challenged by those who believe the population is large enough already; but the third remains, even while governments move away from the concept of a planned and engineered society towards notions of free markets and personal initiative. Immigration remains one of the few policy areas where to be an ‘economic rationalist’ means to be a planner and organiser.”

James Jupp’s story of Australian immigration is confined to just over 200 pages. He blends themes and details skilfully as he discusses assimilation, multiculturalism, the impact of the One Nation party, economic rationalism, sustainability and population policy, refugees and asylum seekers, as well as current policy assumptions and implications in the midst of globalising influences.

His special contribution is in providing context to readers for each facet of the discussion. Comments on Thomas Malthus or traditional preoccupations in Australian foreign policy enlighten his story.

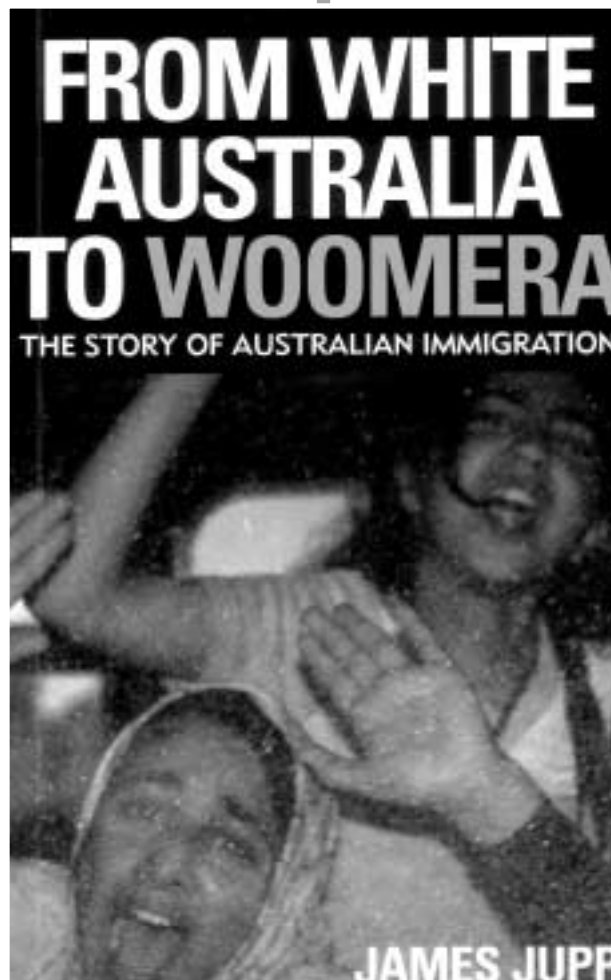
James Jupp is Director of the Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies at the Australian National University. He is the author of many publications on immigration and general editor of *The Australian People: An Encyclopedia of the Nation, its People and their Origins*.

*From White Australia to Woomera* contains a number of interesting observations. These include:

- a presumed link between the one million voters attracted to One Nation in 1998 and the Howard Government’s punitive

detention of asylum seekers in the 2001 election year;

- the social engineering aspect of Australian immigration policy;





- selective discrimination among potential candidates using differing criteria at different periods of time;
- an Immigration Department in which there is little evidence of racism but in which there is a culture of control; this implies a culture of suspicion;
- the confusion that exists in Pauline Hanson's thinking when she talks about equality;
- the practical consequences flowing from declining national birth rates;
- how arrivals from disturbed situations tend to exhibit unusually high unemployment rates;
- how New Zealand – now Australia's largest source of migrants – will have a population that is only 50 per cent European by 2050;
- the need to recognise that migrants are more than factors of production so as to restore humanitarian considerations to the equation;
- why it is important to return to consensus and bipartisanship;
- the necessity for government leadership to retain the multicultural emphasis and to inform and educate citizens rather than simply mirroring opinion polls.

As in most societies, there are attitudes in Australia that may be sourced to xenophobia, assimilationism and just plain lack of tolerance. James Jupp points out that these do not need to be dominant to inhibit policy. He writes clearly about the economics of immigration including human capital theory. However, there is insufficient emphasis, he argues, to the contribution that migrants make to demand for goods and services – and hence to employment opportunities, in addition to adding to the supply of potential labour.

Finally, James Jupp notes that there is a sensible compromise available between Paul Keating's "Australia is part of Asia" and John Howard's greater affinity with the English speaking world. This

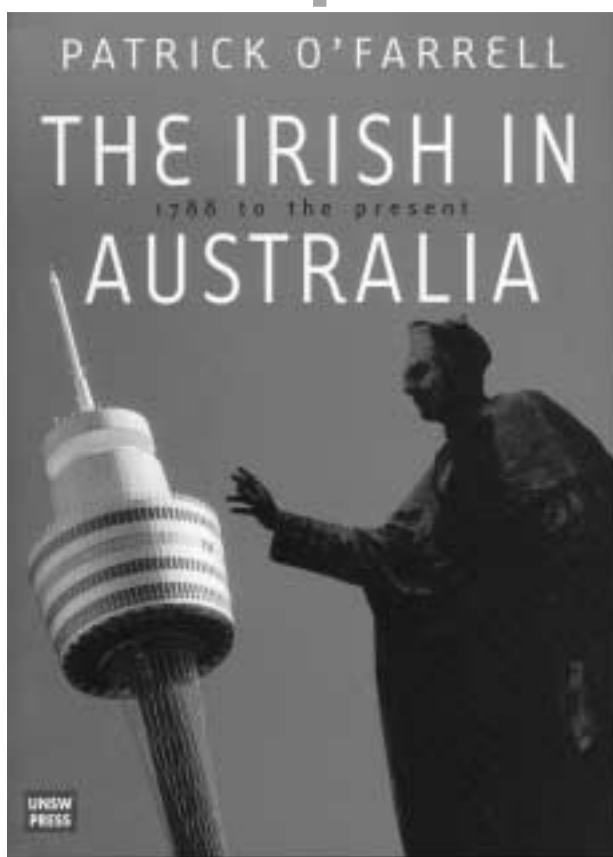
involves accepting that Australia is a part of both, he says. And it is the responsibility of government, Jupp concludes, to explain these realities to its citizens. Amen to that.

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**THE IRISH IN AUSTRALIA:  
1788 to the present**  
By Patrick O'Farrell  
University of New South Wales Press  
Ltd., pb 2000  
rrp \$35  
ISBN 0 86840 635 X

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This is the third edition of Patrick O'Farrell's well-known book *The Irish in Australia*. A revised final chapter examines being Irish in today's multicultural Australia.



It used to be a social liability to be Irish in Australia, notes Patrick O'Farrell. Being Irish was identified with undesirable traits such as drunkenness and disorderly behaviour. Now, he says, it is respectable, even an asset, to be Irish. It now conveys attributes such as charm, sociability, fun and entertainment as well as values that are ingrained in Australians' self-image.

This transition, the author argues, is an unintended side effect of multicultural Australia. Patrick O'Farrell considers the procession of Irish migrant generations to Australia and concludes that there is a contrast between the new and old Irish.

The old Irish wanted to be part of Australia. But the new Irish, he says, are different. They are inclined to see Australia as very conservative, lacking in dynamism, yet to sort out its identity. Modern technology facilitates their maintaining links with Ireland. They view Australia as a short-term destination. They operate on the premise that Australia should emulate modern Ireland. Essentially, they remain Irish.

There exists a failure to move mind and heart away from modern Ireland, its developing prosperity and European orientation. According to Patrick O'Farrell, even those migrants who departed Ireland just prior

to the 1980s do not understand the younger newcomers. They even hold different images of Ireland.

Patrick O'Farrell sees particular irony in affluent Irish joyfully discovering Australia while Australians of Irish descent flock back to Ireland "to inspect and wonder at the melancholy wastelands and ruins from whence their ancestors had sadly departed."

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**THE FEDERATION MIRROR: Queensland 1901 – 2001**  
By Ross Fitzgerald with the assistance of Keith Moore  
University of Queensland Press, pb 2002  
rrp \$35  
ISBN 0 7022 3328 5

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Professor Fitzgerald has written 26 books including those on the history of Queensland, the life of E. G. Theodore ("Red Ted") and Labor in Queensland. Ross Fitzgerald is an historian, novelist, broadcaster and political commentator. He has written on sport and edited books such as *The Eleven Deadly Sins* and *The Eleven Saving Virtues*. His diverse interests include questioning what is distinctive in Queensland culture and character and how that state may have changed since federation a century ago.

Hence, this latest book *The Federation Mirror: Queensland 1901 – 2001* written with the assistance of Keith Moore. The book divides into two parts: the first section focuses on Queensland in 1901; the latter section looks carefully at the Queensland version of Australia's 2001 centenary of nationhood.

To celebrate the centenary, Queensland was divided into twelve regions. Each region enjoyed a month of celebrations and events, ranging from the Gold Coast in January to the Sunshine Coast in December.

Part two provides an account of the 2001 centenary celebrations throughout Queensland. The book contains a number of photographs including a very

interesting set of contrasting archival and contemporary photographs.

Professor Fitzgerald was Chair of the Centenary of Federation in Queensland. *The Federation Mirror* is a story of the Australian federation with particular reference to the one-fifth of Australia's population living in a diverse and decentralised state.

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**A WITNESS TO HISTORY: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ROBERT BROINOWSKI**  
By Richard Broinowski  
Melbourne University Press, hb 2001  
rrp \$44.95  
ISBN 0 522 84942 3

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*A Witness to History* is the biography of Robert Broinowski. Born in Australia of Polish descent in 1877, he was press secretary to three Defence Ministers, Clerk of the Senate, Usher of the Black Rod, and editor of two poetry magazines.

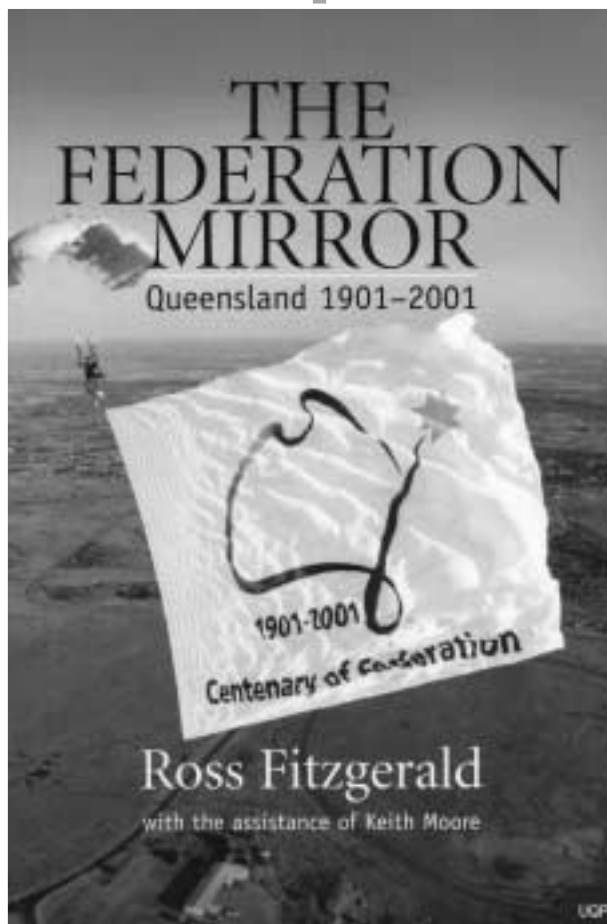
Richard Broinowski, Robert's grandson, has written *A Witness to History*. Richard Broinowski is an Honorary Professor in the Department of Communication and Education at the University of Canberra and former Australian Ambassador to Vietnam, Mexico and the Republic of Korea.

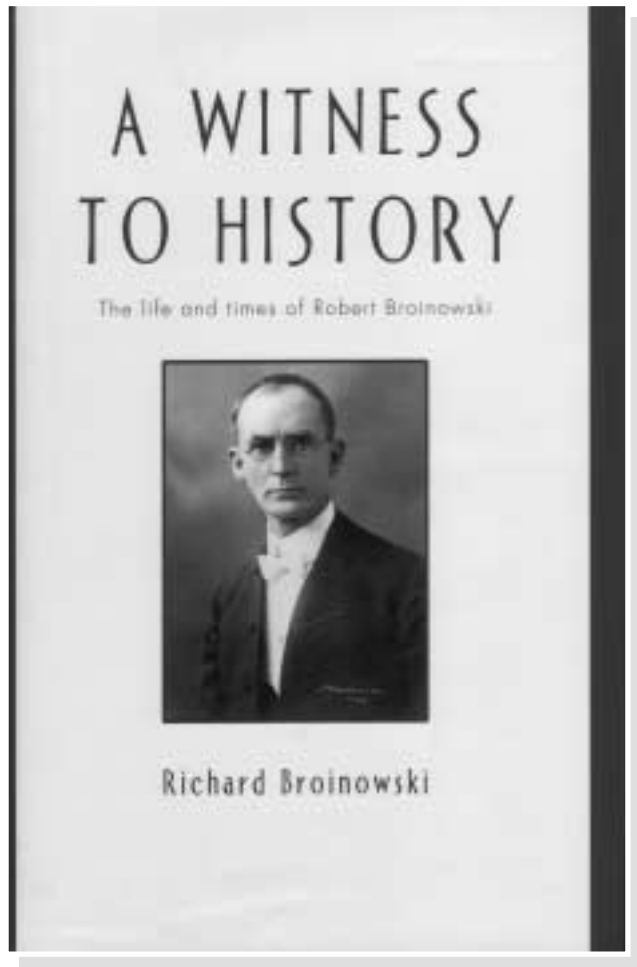
It is an interesting book from two perspectives. One is that Richard Broinowski examines issues relevant to the young Commonwealth of Australia such as defence and the shift of the Commonwealth parliament to Canberra as he reconstructs the life of his grandfather.

The other is that the book amounts to a personal journey of discovery for

Richard; he gains understanding of his grandfather, great grandfather and father – and inevitably of himself – as he researches the available material and conducts interviews.

Reflecting on both family and historical contexts, Richard Broinowski imagines at one stage that his grandfather gains a temporary leave pass to the present. He endeavours to work out his grandfather's





answers to a series of questions. He even wonders why Robert Broinowski – with his drive and personality – was content to take a back seat to politicians.

Richard Broinowski decides that his grandfather enjoyed more freedom and occasionally influence as a public servant than he would have gained as a frustrated parliamentary back-bencher.

*A Witness to History* is delightful reading. The book contains a particularly interesting introduction as well as a number of plates that complement the text.

*John McConnell is the author of several senior textbooks.*



# REVIEW OF THE REVIEWERS

**Stephen Matchett**

Evidently there is nothing that students of Australian politics will not do. Thousands of them are so desperate for the detail of John Grey Gorton's career as Minister for the Navy and to learn how Jim Cairns ever won pre-selection that they willingly pay money for new biographies of these definitive yesterday's men. On Jim Cairns - Paul Strangio, *Keeper of the Faith: A Biography of Jim Cairns* (Melbourne University Press); on John Gorton - Ian Hancock, *John Gorton: He Did It His Way*, (Hodder).

Which makes it less surprising that tens of thousands of Australians bought Don Watson's extraordinary memoir of the Keating Government, *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart: A Portrait of Paul Keating PM* (Knopf), a book in which Paul Keating appears nearly as often as the author. Of course Watson's sales are probably helped by this being possibly the best portrait of Australian political life ever written.

Strangio and Hancock have made a valuable contribution to the record of Australian political history. The problem is, as with so many biographies of Australian politicians, their texts are hard going. The greatest occupational mistake of the modern biographer is to believe that the times maketh the man and that dull people who left no enduring mark and lived lives of no remarkable character are somehow rendered fascinating simply because they briefly occupied powerful positions.

Fascinating Cairns and Gorton were not. On the evidence of their biographies they were extraordinarily self-indulgent men. Gorton was fond of women and drink and confused what he considered his bluff Australian commonsense for policy. He was not a bad bloke as blokes go, but a good nature and personal honesty do not a prime minister make. Cairns, even in Strangio's sympathetic eyes, appears a monster of intellectual egotism whose grasp of political reality was fragile even compared to other members of the Whitlam Government.

Watson's book is very different. It is neither a biography of Paul Keating nor a history of his government. Rather, it is a brilliant portrait of life in a political office and a unique insight into how we are

governed. There is a sense of the drama of the daily political round and Watson communicates the colour of characters motivated by the usuals of public life - avarice, fear and madness - which are missing in Hancock and Strangio.

Reading Hancock on John Gorton provides no sense of the social change of the late 1960s and the way Australia began to transform from a provincial collection of petty states loosely governed by a timorous federal government to a globalising nation. Reading Strangio on Cairns does not convey the daily drama of the Whitlam Government as it sacrificed Labor's first chance in a generation to the self-indulgence of some of its ministers, Cairns notable among them.

That the authors failed to capture the context as well as the character of their subjects is not surprising. The challenge in writing the definitive biography of a contemporary public figure is enormous. On the one hand the author must be across the sources and that means acres of personal and public papers, mountains of newsprint and kilometres of taped interviews. On the other the author must have a journalist's capacity to tell a story and a novelist's ability to capture character and describe experiences as they were lived.

To do all three takes a rare talent - a writer with the skills and curiosity of a journalist, a novelist's capacity to capture character and an historian's training in constructing the record of a life and era from divers, verifiable sources. Strangio and Hancock both have the historian's skills in spades. Watson has the talent to do it all.

While very different in quality and purpose, the three books do demonstrate the extraordinary changes in the practice of Australian politics over 30 years.

With his solitary nature and commitment to principle over practice in politics, Jim Cairns would struggle to win an ALP municipal pre-selection now. Laurie Oakes' suggestion that the Gorton style would appeal to voters sick of spin (*Bulletin*, 28 May 2002) in these sadly cynical times is unlikely. If there was ever a case for a strong office stacked with policy thinkers

and minders dedicated to keeping the Boss out of strife it is Gorton's time as prime minister.

The pace of politics 30 years ago was much gentler, and neither Gorton nor Cairns would have likely stood the workload and scrutiny endured by Keating's office.

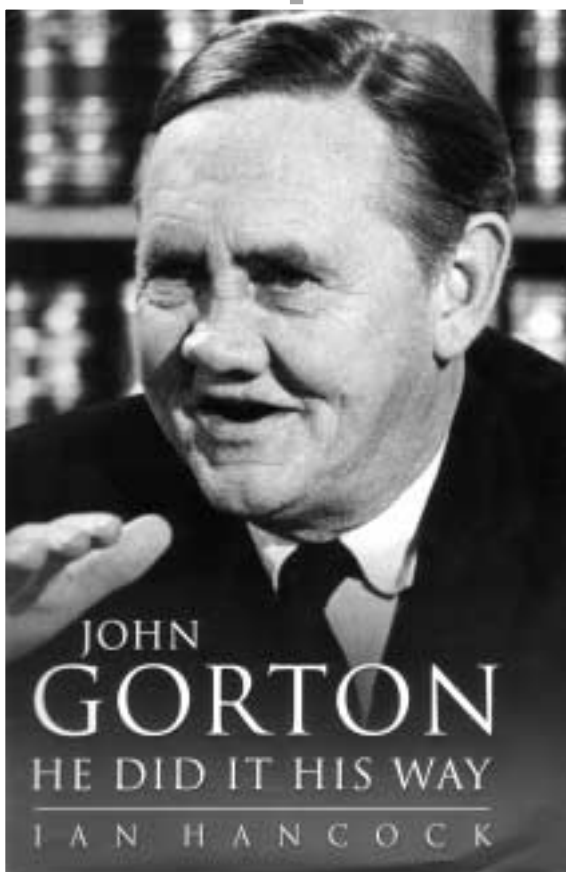
But what has not changed is the sheer impossibility of implementing wholesale change in a federated system. The unifying theme of all these books is that Australian politics will break the careers and hearts of visionaries intent on sweeping reform. The reactionaries in his own parliamentary party, and the states righters, defeated Gorton's modest ad-hoc ideas for strengthening the role and responsibilities of the Commonwealth. Watson portrays Keating as let down by the cumbersome bureaucracy, the

vicious media and ultimately an electorate blind to the benefits of further reform. Even in Strangio's generous gaze Cairns was never up to the grinding struggle of government and preferred to offer blueprints for political transformation that were as sweeping as they were impractical.

All three books demonstrate the impossibility of reforming institutions in the face of politicians and public servants who think they, rather than the electorate are the proper clients of government. In the case of Cairns' ideas for a centrally planned economy this was no bad thing. But at the other extreme, Gorton and Keating's more modest reforms were often impeded by states righters and the inertia of the public service.

The overall lesson of these books is that people who do not understand that incremental gains are the best reformers can achieve should take up a fulfilling hobby. If they don't, politics is always going to be a mugs game. But it is a lesson readers have to find for themselves in Gorton's biography.

If Hancock's task was to provide a chronicle of Gorton's life which duly recorded the external events of his life and work, he succeeded admirably. There is a creaking chronology of events and the incessant sniping and petty plotting against Gorton is recorded in great detail. Hancock is exhaustive rather than



merely comprehensive and provides more detail than all but the most devoted students of the Liberal Party could ever need. And, inevitable in an authorised life, there is the sound of scores being settled in ancient battles long forgotten by all but the participants.

However, if Hancock hoped to produce a broader work that placed his man in the context of the times and to create a sense of the drama of politics, particularly while Gorton was prime minister, he did not succeed. Nowhere in the conventions of academic writing is there a stricture that scholarly biographies must be entertaining, replete with gripping descriptions of key events and gossipy detail about private lives. Yet the very purpose of biography is to capture a life and that inevitably requires a description of the times. Sadly, there is very little of this in Hancock.

Certainly he presents the once famous matters of Gorton's working relationship with Ainsley Gotto and his late night visit to the American Ambassador in the company of a young journalist in a workmanlike manner. But Hancock is an historian without the skills of the journalist. He ignores the detail of Gorton's sometime complex personal relationships. There is little colour in his descriptions of the venomous plots that brought Gorton down. He provides ample detail on the gradually escalating skirmishes within the party with little sense of the drama of the gradual destruction of a prime minister.

Hancock does not appear to have pulled all his punches because this is an authorised biography. He accepts that Gorton's failure as Prime Minister was, in part, of his own making. He describes in full Gorton's brash manners, his remarkable lack of guile and his refusal to change his way of life in office. But he does allow his subject some latitude. Describing the life of a young man in the Depression who attended Geelong Grammar and Oxford as being tough is a bit rich and Hancock admitted that he did not include everything Gorton told him in the book, (*Canberra Times*, 21 May 2002).

There is certainly no doubt whose side Hancock is on when it comes to the way Gorton lost office. Hancock

portrays him as a good man brought down by his variously mean minded and traitorous courtiers who used his enthusiasm for reform against him. The constant theme of the chapters on Gorton's term as Prime Minister are a Greek tragedy of minor errors and unjust slights which combined and compounded to destroy his leadership. Gorton's enemies - William McMahon, Malcolm Fraser and a host of lesser plotters in the parliamentary party and in the state machines and journalist Alan Reid - are variously presented as banal, short sighted and vindictive, generally all three

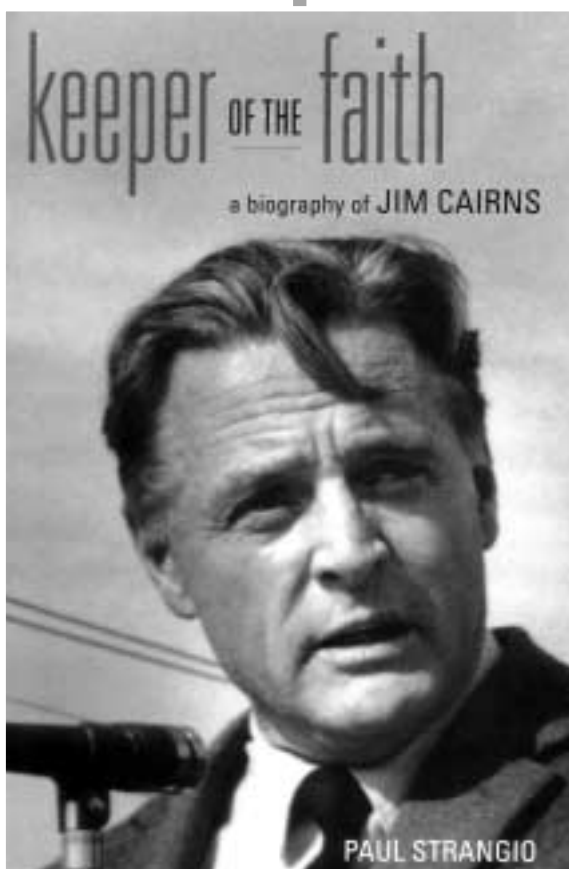
For Hancock, Gorton was not an incoherent political bumbler incapable of managing his parliamentary party. Rather than a man out of his intellectual depth and lacking in personal judgement and self-discipline, he was a good bloke, honest, hard working, with a great love of and vision for his country, but no wowser, fond of a drink and a good time and with the discernment to understand that women are better company than men.

Hancock's most generous measure of his man is the portrayal of Gorton as, if not a policy thinker then an ideas-man. A Whitlam writ small, Gorton recognised the need to enhance the economic sovereignty of the national government and to foster Australian culture.

And while it may not have been his intention, Hancock also demonstrates how primitive was Australian policy thinking a generation past. The role of government was

to appease rent-seekers with public funds and Gorton governed in the fools-paradise of a regulated, inefficient economy that continued to grow almost in spite of itself. Within five years of the end of Gorton's prime ministership the old Australian economy began to unravel. As portrayed by Hancock, it seems that Gorton would have been even less prepared for the economic crises of the middle 1970s than was the Whitlam Government.

One of the most valuable aspects of Hancock's study is the way it demonstrates the consensus that shaped Australian politics in the 1960s and 1970s. Even in terms of foreign policy the difference in Cairns' and Gorton's commitment to the US alliance was merely a



matter of degree and they both recognised the failure of Liberal policy in Vietnam. For all his rhetoric Cairns was still drawn to the power and freedom of US society, just as Gorton was.

Stripped of the rhetoric, there was little to distinguish Cairns from Gorton on economic policy. For both, the Australian economy was a magic pudding, the only argument was who would have first place in the queue to cut and come again.

Similar subjects resulted in similar books. Both Strangio and Hancock mastered massive sources, although in Strangio's case the achievement is diminished by the decade taken for research and writing. Like Hancock, Strangio is sympathetic to his subject but happy to criticise his personal behaviour and political judgement. Both are the work of scholars who properly place the highest value on their sources and who strive to provide a fair and balanced record of their subject's lives.

But also like Hancock, Strangio's is a story that does not inspire, both because of the elemental eccentricity of his subject and the author's style. Strangio reports some of the most colourful years in Australian politics in a plodding narrative of beige prose. Like Hancock, he has written a definitive political biography that is not the most engaging reading.

Strangio is most interested in recording the ideological environment of the late 1960s and 1970s as set out in Cairn's remarkably woolly writing on economics, foreign policy and the need for more niceness in life. As portrayed by Strangio, Cairns was a founding father of most of the orthodox hatred of market-based economics and contempt for the aspirations of ordinary Australians which is prevalent in left of centre political rhetoric today.

But even in Strangio's sympathetic portrait, Cairns' idealism demonstrates that he was utterly unable to accept that the world of practical politics was no place for an ideologue who dreamed of legislating to make humanity good. His leadership of the popular protests against the Vietnam War was born of his horror at the position of the parliamentary ALP in trying to defuse the issue lest it hurt Whitlam at the ballot box. As late as 1972, he was still arguing that the working class would abandon materialism if properly led. From the middle 1970s, Cairns abandoned politics for an exploration of the loopier realms of self-development.

Overall Strangio portrays Cairns as a good man who, convinced of his rectitude, would always fight for his beliefs. Which is another way of saying that he betrayed his responsibilities to his party and the community he supposedly served as a minister in the Whitlam Government.

Cairns was utterly incapable of subordinating his ideas to the exigencies of government and had the

intellectual's taste for inaction disguised as consultation. He believed that unemployment was too high a price to pay for containing inflation. He shaped the expansionary 1974 budget but left Frank Crean to deliver it and was never happy when Whitlam made him Treasurer. As the old Australian economy began to collapse Cairns continued to believe in centralised industry planning and tariff protection. And when he supported the Whitlam Government's celebrated 25 per cent cut in tariffs it had less to do with thought through policy than a hope for a quick hit to reduce inflation by flooding the market with cheap consumer imports.

And then there was what may have been personal weakness or rank opportunism, possibly a combination of both. Cairns liked the idea of power but recoiled from fighting for it, as demonstrated by his less than robust challenge for the parliamentary leadership in 1968. When confronted with his signature on a letter that breached government policy during the disastrous loans affair he simply said that he did not remember signing it. And until September 2002 he never admitted, on the record, to sleeping with Labor staffer, Junie Morosi.

All of which renders Strangio's conclusion, that Cairns was staunch in his ideals and impervious to the harshest criticism, extraordinarily generous. As Strangio's evidence repeatedly shows, Cairns simply lacked the political nous, strength of character and self-discipline to be a cabinet minister.

The differences between these two biographies and Don Watson's book are pronounced. Like Strangio and Hancock, Watson is an academically trained historian but he is also a professional writer used to communicating with audiences who are not always patient with the conventions and qualifications of academic prose. The fact that he got away with publishing such an enormous book demonstrates what an engaging writer he is. But Watson has one advantage over Strangio and Hancock. As his is not a biography, he does not have to bother with all the impedimenta a formal "life" requires.

Don Watson is far too modest in the title of his book. It is not just a portrait of Paul Keating as recollected by a "bleeding heart"; it is also a portrait of Don Watson – and as such it is written for the record – to set out Watson's own achievements as much as Keating's. It is probably the first book on Australian politics that any member of the American political caste could relate to and it is far better written than the two notable staff memoirs of the Clinton presidency, by George Stephanopolous and Dick Morris.

This is not the definitive study of Keating's prime ministership, rather it is a combat memoir by a participant that captures how the author felt, what he feared and how he played the political game in the



Prime Minister's office. When historians do come to write the history of the Keating Government they will turn to Watson as a primary source.

But while the historians will not mistake it for the definitive record many readers, seduced by the quality of the writing, will. Which is a problem. Like Peter Carey's novelisation of Ned Kelly, Watson on Keating will become the history of the last Labor Government of the twentieth century which people remember rather than a memoir by a participant.

In effect, Watson has seized control of the memory of the Keating Government which will come to be viewed through an ideological prism and one so old fashioned that it would likely appeal to John Gorton and Jim Cairns.

Watson is typical of his generation of Australian left-wing intellectuals – who mistake emotion for policy. Throughout the book he is the voice of compassionate commonsense fighting the econocrat John Edwards and Treasury and (until they chummed up) senior adviser, Don Russell.

And while Watson is a fine writer he is not above allocating blame. Where the econocrats were enthralled by ideology, Don knew that policy got in the way of looking after ordinary Australians. Watson seems the sort of bloke who takes refuge in appeals to the decency without ever accepting that policy is always hard, that government is about rationing resources that are never adequate to the tasks before them. Watson looks like he would have been an easy mark for all sorts of special pleading.

In many ways, Watson's book sets out the post Keating bi-partisan orthodoxy – more state intervention with government doing what the private sector will not. At times he understands the core truth of the Keating years that without continuing micro-economic reform the nation would stagnate at best - that without a dominant private sector Australia would never generate the wealth to provide the health, education and social services the electorate expects. But for most of the book he complains about hardhearted econocrats ignorant of the needs of ordinary people.

It does the book no service that issues such as these were subsumed by gossip about whether Watson betrayed Keating in writing it.

Certainly Keating would have had every right to be annoyed by Watson's description of his behaviour and analysis of his character. The Keating that Watson portrays is eccentric, ambivalent about the job he fought for decades to win and perplexed and nervous about his inability to make things, including his marriage, run as they should.

There is enough in this book to make Keating look eccentric at best and an aspirant autocrat utterly

disconnected with the electorate at worst. But it's hardly fair to criticise Watson for this. Once he decided to write the book he had to present it as he saw it. But it appears as if Watson was also careful not to present himself as the book's hero.

He reports making mistakes, misreading character and over-stepping his authority. Unless of course he is even cleverer than he looks and his motive is to demonstrate that he is not only brilliant but also a modest, decent sort of Australian bloke.

But regardless of how pleased he was with himself during his years as one of the Prime Minister's most senior advisers, clever he most certainly is. It's hardly Watson's fault that people will take this for a history of the Keating Government when it is no such thing – but there will not be many other memoirs by staffers to provide an alternative record for historians, Watson's book is too long and well written to be challenged.

The greatest challenge for biographers of contemporary public figures is that their work is considered in the context of readers' own memories and judgements. It was a fate that befell all three writers whose judgements had to compete with the reviewers' opinions.

It was particularly hard for Hancock. The generality of the reviewers judged the book a failure, not for any fault in its research or writing but because Hancock's case for Gorton's achievements and capacity as prime minister were not proved.

Some of the more prominent reviewers largely ignored Hancock's book, preferring to variously reminisce or pontificate on Gorton's career. Mungo MacCallum (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 March 2002) dismissed the book in passing at the end of a double page spread:

**Hancock dwells, in sometimes tiresome detail, on Gorton's very real achievements, to me he misses the essence of the man ... His insouciance, his unpredictability and above all his immense charm, fail to come through.**

Mike Steketee referred to Hancock's book in his lead but then proceeded to offer a potted history of Gorton's time as prime minister before returning to the biography in the last par with a polite judgement, unsupported by any discussion of the book:

**Hancock wrote it while employed on Gorton's staff and his sympathies are evident, while his criticisms tend to be muted. But he writes that this does not make it a hagiography and he is right.**

Gideon Haigh (*Bulletin*, 9 April 2002) produced one of the few comprehensive reviews which balanced a discussion of

Gorton's character and achievements with a judgement on the book which, "makes as sound and sympathetic a case for Gorton as could be made. It is thorough, readable and colourful". While Haigh suggested that Hancock was light on Gorton's private life, "he is often masterly in recapitulating Gorton's policy-making, and wholly compelling in describing the end of Gorton's reign".

And while he acknowledged Hancock's case for Gorton as a policy innovator, Haigh suggested that there were limits, "admiration can only be stretched so far. Gorton's vision was broad but diffuse, his nationalism often phasing into petulance".

Max Walsh in contrast dismissed Hancock's interpretation of Gorton, "as a fearless visionary cut down by pygmies" (*Bulletin*, 9 April 2002).

Christine Wallace (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 April 2002) matched Haigh's intelligent review in a piece which praised Hancock for setting out the lost tradition of liberalism in Australian conservative politics, which made the Gorton year's more than, "a whiff of Whitlamism before the main event". Wallace liked the book, she liked it a lot, particularly for the way it, "unleashes frissons of pleasure". The woman should get out more.

On the whole it was a well thought out piece that offered a considered judgement marred by a conclusion that was whimsical at best:

**... a good and profitable read with just one serious flaw: there is no picture of the magnificent Ainsley Gotto! This should be remedied in the paperback edition.**

The best of the reviews which tackled Hancock's interpretation of Gorton rather than discussed his foibles was by Peter Howson (*Adelaide Review*, April 2002). Howson was sacked by Gorton from the ministry but assured his readers that he "retains no bitterness". Which must reassure Hancock that the kicking he received was free of ulterior motives:

**Hancock, who obviously worked very closely with Gorton and his former private**

**secretary (Ainsley Gotto) while writing the book, provides a perspective that is, in my view, unbalanced and overly sympathetic. ... One is tempted to think that Hancock fell rather too much under the spell of Gorton.**

Howson's review detailed Gorton's practical and policy flaws and concluded that Hancock misread his subject:

**The issue is not, as Hancock suggests, whether Gorton was better than Holt or McMahon but whether he was a good leader for those who believe in small government and non-crisis management. He does not measure up on either count. Politicians and the electorate will stomach shooting from the hip for only a limited time, and, to give Gorton credit for being a "political adventurer" (as Hancock does), is a serious misjudgment.**

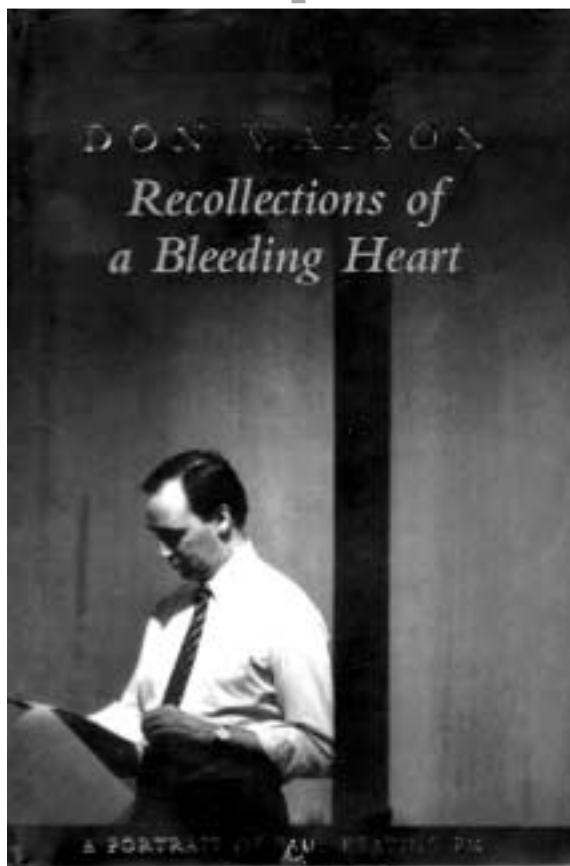
Or as Max Walsh put it: "Gorton was not without virtues. Within a narrow definition, he was a good bloke. But he was a lousy PM and the punters knew it." (*Bulletin*, 9 April 2002)

The judgements on Strangio's book were equally mixed with a common view being that he had not made his case for the importance of Cairns in Labor history. The only unequivocal praise came from Hall Greenland who liked both book and subject

"a fine and complex account of a fine and complex man" (*Bulletin*, 26 June 2002).

Shaun Carney was less impressed. He described the book as "thorough and solidly written" but suggested that Strangio's case for Cairns as a significant advocate of change in public life failed for want of evidence. (*Age*, 8 June 2002).

John Nethercote (*Canberra Times*, 8 June) also thought well of Strangio's craft, but less of his argument. Nethercote argued that Strangio did not make a convincing case for Cairns' as influential policy thinker and suggested that the author's preference for his subject over Whitlam simply did not stand up. But for a book with a flawed thesis Nethercote still found much to recommend:



**Strangio's talent for narrative makes this volume, notwithstanding its intellectual ambitions (and, more so, the intellectual vanities of its subject), very readable ... It is part of Strangio's skill that without undermining his own case he provides readers with sufficient information to allow them to make their own appraisals.**

It was a view shared by Evan Williams (*Australian*, 8 June 2002):

**This admiring biography does full justice to its subject. Or as some would say, more than justice: it makes an essentially dull, distant and notoriously difficult man seem more important than he was.**

Williams thought very well of the book, comparing it to "the best Australian political biography" But it was only a compliment of sorts because Strangio had written a very good book about a man of no enduring importance to the Labor Party or the Whitlam Government.

Which was an opinion shared only in part by Gideon Haigh, (*Australian Book Review*, June 2002). While Haigh considered Cairns' career "an heroic failure" he did not think all that much of the biography and called it "a lifeless and repetitive reading experience":

**The book conveys little sense of what Cairns is like to be with or to observe his personal tastes, of his opinions beyond politics, or even if he has any. The book scarcely contains any anecdotes, the stuff of life in biography. Instead there are endless slabs of quotes from press reports.**

There was a great deal more of the same as Haigh got stuck right in and damned the biography for being an edited version of Strangio's PhD dissertation when it should have been completely rewritten. That it would find an audience beyond the academy was due to the affection old lefties still felt for Cairns rather than for its qualities as "a quite satisfactory thesis".

It was a strangely tough judgement, not least because it came within weeks of Haigh letting off Hancock's biography of Gorton far more lightly. And it was tougher than it needed to make its point.

Strangio responded in kind, slamming Haigh (*Australian Book Review*, August 2002) for preferring style to substance, being incurious and "having no head for a serious, sustained and unashamedly political narrative". He pointed to his supporters in academe and the "mainstream media" before reporting that Cairns himself had written that the biography had helped him understand his work. Evidently nobody explained to Strangio that part of the process in presenting a book to the public is copping it sweet when people criticise.

Which was not a problem faced by Don Watson in a crop of reviews that were universally favourable at least when the reviewers could suppress the need to pontificate about the Keating Government.

Mike Steketee's long piece (*Australian*, 1 June) focused on Keating and the record of his government rather the book. But while his judgements were few they glowed. He wrote of Watson's "lovely loping language" and the "wit and remarkable candour" which placed the book, "streets ahead of most political biographies written, and sanitised by the subjects themselves".

Andrew Clark (*Australian Financial Review*, 11 May) also took an enormous amount of space to say very little about the book. Only at the end of his rambling feature did he offer a judgement calling the book, "a rich work – a revealing portrait of the complex man at the heart of the drama".

If that's all he had to say why did Clark bother to wade through Watson's 750 odd pages? Peter Lalor (*Daily Telegraph*, 18 May) made the point better in a quarter of the words:

**It is impossible to leave *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart* without more affection for a politician and man who fought his own bouts of apathy and had a crack at dragging Australia out of its crippling slumber. Whether or not you agreed with the economic modernisation, the Republic, changes to the flag, Mabo and reconciliation, you have to like him for having a go.**

John Button (*Age*, 8 June) admired the book, "studded with delightful cameo pieces ... a pleasure to read" but provided the perspective of another political professional to suggest that more went on in Parliament House than occurred in the Prime Minister's Office. Nor was the PMO always that effective - "It was more like a small and enthusiastic advertising agency with account executives and Watson as creative director. The product was sometimes difficult to market".

And then there was what sounded like an old opponent being dealt with. Thus Button on "the sharpest pointy head", Don Russell, "I recall him as a highly competent technocrat lacking in political nous."

Evan Williams (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 May 2002) went closer than most to discussing the book rather than its subject:

**Watson hasn't written a conventional biography or history of the Keating Government, still less a history of the times. But he has written a classic: an insider's account of the working of the political process, with its paranoia, its envies, its**

**fevered inconsequentiality, its joys, crammed with wisdom and a lovely detachment.**

It was a judgement shared by John Nethercote (*Canberra Times*, 25 May, 2002) in a review which focused on his close reading of the book rather than his opinions of Keating. It was an understated piece that Watson should prize for the well reasoned praise:

**Watson's book is always absorbing, usually illuminating, frequently disturbing, often stimulating, never uplifting. ... Every page is enlivened by Watson's erudition, invariably in evidence, rarely intrusive.**

It made a change from some of the more opinionated posturing, like the long digression on the history of speech making through the ages which stained Noel Turnbull's otherwise excellent review, (*Courier-Mail* 8 June 2002). Perhaps Turnbull gets little chance to demonstrate the breadth of his reading. He certainly seized the opportunity in his review of Watson to include references to Mussolini's foreign minister, the poet Keats, Martin Luther and Benjamin Disraeli, not to mention Edward Everett, who spoke before Abraham Lincoln at Gettysburg in November 1863, among numerous others of historical note. It was a marked contrast to Watson who wears his prodigious learning lightly.

It was something of a shame because when Turnbull focused on Watson he produced the most intelligent discussion of the book. At the heart of the review was the contention that that Watson had produced something far beyond a traditional political biography. It was he argued, four quite distinct and clever works in one, a polemic on economic rationalism, a study of Keating, a description of the rituals of life in Parliament House and a memoir "of an historian who is activist, participant and observer".

And Turnbull understood that the book was as much about Watson's work in the Prime Minister's Office as it was about the Prime Minister:

**... most of all, this book is one of the most insightful yet written about the process of writing speeches and the relationship between speechwriter and speech giver.**

It was a sprawling review that covered a great many issues and showed off more than a bit. But for all its faults it was a review that did the book the credit it deserved.

Hancock and Strangio can only regret that their own studies did not inspire similar discussions.

Stephen Matchett can be reached at [stephen4@hotmail.net.au](mailto:stephen4@hotmail.net.au)



## TO KISS AND WHEN TO TELL

*The Australian media is less interested in the details of politicians committing adultery than whether it is a matter for the record writes Stephen Matchett.*

The response to Laurie Oakes' story that Cheryl Kernot and Gareth Evans had conducted a personal relationship before she defected to Labor, which continued while she was on the party's frontbench, generated a passionate and considered debate. The commentators divided between those who believed that the public had a right to know and those who believed it was nobody else's business and that Oakes should have kept quiet.

Apart from the ones who preferred to sermonise. Like Joan Kirner who argued that Kernot was being picked on, (*Media Report*, Radio National, 4 July). It apparently did not occur to Kirner that while Oakes labelled Kernot an adulterer, Evans was shown to have lied to parliament. When a Liberal backbencher, Don Randall, implied that Evans was having an affair with Kernot back in 1998, the Prime Minister ordered him to apologise. There the matter would have stopped if Evans had not made an unnecessary response in the House denying the affair. If there was a bomb ticking in this whole sorry matter this was it.

But of course truth in parliament is nowhere as important as a sister with a grievance, at least for Rosemary Neil (*Australian*, 26 July). In a column very much like most of her columns, Neil thought the coverage of the affair diverted attention from the real story. That was how the treatment of Kernot was just another case of "Canberra's relentlessly combative, overtly masculine political culture ... destroying women in politics". Apparently Kernot "had every right to demand from the ALP the star treatment" and her "fatal mistake" was not demanding a safer seat than Dickson, which she barely won in 1998 and could not hold in 2000. That the judgement of the voters on their elected representative had any role in the process appeared to escape Rosemary Neil.

Angela Shanahan, (*Australian*, 9 July) who is generally not as one with Neil on the issues of the hour was certainly just as upset, but for rather different reasons.

# RICHARD BUTLER AND THE WAR ON TERROR

Richard Butler is the former chairman of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) set up to find and dismantle Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction at the end of the Gulf War. He has warned that Saddam Hussein is "addicted" to weapons of mass destruction and that biological weapons are his weapon of choice, but Butler argues that the US should go after Saddam only after UN Security Council approval.

**SPEAKER: RICHARD BUTLER AM (Author & Commentator; former Australian Ambassador to the UN and executive chairman UN Special Commission on Iraqi Disarmament - 1977-99)**

**DATE: Tuesday 28 January 2003**

**TIME: 5.30 for 6.00 pm**

**VENUE: Clayton Utz Seminar Room, Level 35, 1 O'Connell Street, Sydney**

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She began by suggesting that Cheryl Kernot had "execrable" taste in music and lived in a "fantasy world where the line between truth and falsehood were blurred". But the real victim of Shanahan's not inconsiderable ire was "the morally correct brigade":

**Every time one of their fellow travellers, particularly a woman, does something exceptionally stupid, bad or downright immoral, the watchdogs of victimhood are there to ensure the correct interpretation of events.**

And then there was Bob Ellis, (*Canberra Times*, 10 July) whose self-indulgent attack on Oakes appeared to be based on the idea that many people had done far worse things than Kernot which had not appeared in the press. It ended with Ellis promising not to try to wreck the careers of Oakes and the Prime Minister by writing "things" he knew. Which must have relieved Ellis' publishers.

But for unadulterated eccentricity it was hard to beat Paul Sheehan (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 July). His basic argument, that too often the press gallery shielded people it liked from proper scrutiny of their personal lives, was fair enough. But whether he needed to devote a third of his space to details of the weekly specials at a Sydney bondage parlour to illustrate his point is less apparent. What was the *Herald's* opinion editor thinking?

Among those less imaginative commentators who did not use the issue as an opportunity to editorialise about their favourite issues, or describe specialist personal services available to Sydneysiders, honours were about even among those who supported and opposed Oakes.

Glenn Milne, (*Australian*, 8 July) a man not above delving into politicians' private lives in pursuit of a story, gasped towards the high moral ground. He argued that there was no public interest because Kernot and Evans never served in government together and thus their affair had no impact on public policy. Which shows how relevant he considers shadow cabinet to the political process. And Evans' lie in the House was not even worthy of comment:

**It had nothing to do with politics. The man was cheating on his wife and couldn't bring himself to publicly admit it. Quelle horreur! Let it go Laurie ... The poor bastard was apparently in love.**

So that's all right then. Look forward to the love-struck defence when some wretched backbencher is accused of lying in the chamber about his travel allowance.

Errol Simper, writing in the media pages of the *Australian* (11 July) unsurprisingly thought the interesting issue was the debate over media ethics generated by Oakes' revelation. And as for the record, who cares:

**Was it one of those times when the truth simply wasn't worth the hurt and the damage? With Evans and Kernot now both out of politics was it one of those rare occasions when the truth had become all but irrelevant to anyone other than the main protagonists?**

Apart from historians for a start.

Gerard Henderson made the strongest case that, with no demonstrable causal connection between the Kernot-Evans affair and their political performance, Oakes had no good reason to make it public. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 July). He doubted Oakes' argument that because Kernot's recent memoirs had left out the affair the record needed correcting:

**If everyone is going to have their private life, or alleged private life, revealed because they have written what Laurie Oakes regards as a false history or a bad book, where will we stop? (*Lateline*, ABC TV, 3 July)**

But rightly or wrongly, sooner or later secrets end up being revealed, as Jim Cairns has demonstrated by finally admitting to the full nature of his relationship with Junie Morosi 30 years after the event.

Arguments that the Evans-Kernot affair had no political impact and were nobody else's business failed to convince journalists who believed that it must have had political implications and that in any case Kernot pushed her luck by leaving it out of her autobiography. It was certainly Oakes' defence:

**There is the question of whether Labor's leading lights would have vetoed the defection if they had known about the affair. ... There is the impact the gradual break-up had on Kernot's behaviour and therefore on Labor's election prospects. And there is the book, containing no mention of the relationship but promoted on the cover as "a woman dealing honestly with the slow unravelling of her political life". (*Bulletin*, 10 July)**

Piers Akerman agreed (*Sunday Telegraph*, 7 July):

**She blew the whistle on herself by promoting her book as a history of her four-year involvement with the Labor Party and omitting a critical element of interest to voters and her political colleagues alike.**

So did Brian Toohey. He argued that while Kernot was capable of deciding to rat on the Democrats herself – "Evans has boasted about the part he played in ensuring she was given a much-coveted shadow ministry". (*Australian Financial Review*, 6 July). As Matt Price put it, "By writing her book, Kernot climbed back into the ring and her luck ran out." (*Australian*, 6 July)

But not everybody focused on Kernot's sins of omission, with several senior commentators focusing on Evans' lie in the House of Representatives. As Toohey pointed out, the real question the public has a right have answered is what else Evans, a senior minister for a decade, lied about.

Mike Steketee (*Australian*, 6 July) had no doubt that Evans' behaviour mattered where the news that he had an affair with Kernot did not:

**It was this blatant lie that provided the only genuine justification for Laurie Oakes to break the story on the affair between Evans and Kernot. ... to argue that Evans's lie could be excused in the circumstances heads down a slippery slope and is not a great way to restore trust in public figures.**

Mike Secombe and Michael Millet (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 July) demonstrated that one of the great eternal truths applied to Evans and Kernot; if you dish it out you have to expect to cop it back.

They reminded their readers that Evans had got stuck into former Liberal MP Bob Woods for funding nights with a lady not his wife by claiming for travel allowance in Canberra when he was in Sydney. Evans, they said argued at the time that it was not the affair but the misuse of public funds and the conflict of interest that merited the public's attention. But when he presented that argument he was already two years into his own relationship with Kernot, who was still then the leader of another political party.

While there is no suggestion of financial impropriety in Evans' behaviour the suggestion of a conflict of interest is harder to dismiss.

Secombe and Millet also wondered why Evans was so aggressive in denying the Randall allegations after they were withdrawn and their author had apologised:

**Yet Evans found it necessary not only to lie to the Parliament but also to ring the wire service AAP and dictate a denial of infidelity. ... Why did he do that? The public record had been corrected; there was only a very small audience who needed the re-assurance of hearing Evans deny it himself. His wife, no doubt, and his suspicious colleagues.**

# WOMEN, POLITICS AND THE PRINT MEDIA

Julia Baird is a columnist and the Opinion Page Editor at *The Sydney Morning Herald*. She has just completed her PhD on Women MPs and the print media.

Do women MPs suffer more than their male counterparts from attacks on them in the print media? If so, is this because of poor audience appreciation, lack of skill in a new field or just plain bad journalism where lazy journalists kick down? Hear Julia Baird who has some of the answers.

**SPEAKER: DR JULIA BAIRD**

**TOPIC:** *Women MPs And The Print Media - The Australian Experience*

**DATE:** Tuesday 4 February 2003

**TIME:** 5.30 for 6.00 pm

**VENUE:** 41 Phillip Street, Sydney

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And whatever the ethics of Oakes, Secombe and Millet offered an undeniable conclusion. Evans and Kernot did not tell the truth, and Laurie Oakes did. But Secombe and Millet were wrong on one thing, that we were unlikely face the need for a similar debate.

They had forgotten Jim Cairns. When Cairns admitted on a ABC Radio broadcast that he had in fact slept with Junie Morosi 30 years ago there was some mild media interest. Which was enough to induce a state of moral outrage in Paul Strangio, (*Australian*, 19 September) who had either failed to discover or failed to report the affair in his very long biography of Cairns.

Strangio must have been reading Oakes' critics because he trotted out the same argument, that nobody had a right to know and that the media were just after cheap headlines:

**Back in 1974-75, the media, which by then had turned against the Whitlam Government, justified its fascination in the Cairns-Morosi relationship because, it was claimed, Cairns's position as a senior minister rendered it an issue of public interest ... mainstream views of Cairns tend to be frozen in the scandals of 1974-75, subsuming all his other activities and many fine achievements.**

Like denying in court that he had slept with Morosi.

Which was the point Richard Ackland made in a forensic demolition of Cairns' brazen hypocrisy, (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 September). Ackland reminded his readers that Cairns had mounted a defamation action against the defunct *National Times*, which had claimed he had slept with Junie Morosi:

**Cairns has laid bare his utter hypocrisy, not to say duplicity. Here is a man who said he'd been defamed and damaged by a newspaper article and 21 years later he admits, in effect, that what was published was true.**

It should have been enough to make Gareth Evans blush.

*stephen4@hotkey.net.au*





## GERARD HENDERSON'S

# MEDIA WATCH

### MEMORIES, MEMORIES...

This edition of "Media Watch" is devoted to memory and memories. Don't forget it.

### BOB ELLIS'S PROPOSED COUP

In the wake of the terrorist murders in Bali on 12 October 2002, Bob Ellis was one of the first to blame, yes - you've guessed it - John Howard. In a letter published in *The Age* on 15 October, Ellis Of Palm Beach pontificated that "we are paying in blood for John Howard's arse-licking, ignorance and xenophobic bigotry". Needless to say, he provided no evidence. The (Failed) Prophet then proffered a solution to Australia's current discontents:

**The Governor-General should sack him [John Howard] and ask a less tainted figure - Costello, Downer, Beazley, Rudd - to head a government of national emergency sworn in for, say, six months.**

How about that? What Ellis is recommending is that Peter Hollingworth, the Queen's representative in Australia, should dismiss the Prime Minister and form a "government of national emergency" to be headed by either a Coalition or Labor prime minister. There has been only one occasion when the Governor-General has removed a prime minister. Namely, the dismissal of November 1975 when John Kerr sacked Labor's Gough Whitlam and commissioned the Coalition's Malcolm Fraser to form a caretaker government - pending a double dissolution election which was to resolve the constitutional crisis.

But your man Ellis wants to out-Kerr Kerr. He wants a prime minister sacked - and for the Governor-General to choose a replacement for a term of at least six months. Moreover, Bob Ellis is untroubled by whether the Governor-General's choice reflects the wishes of the Australian electorate as demonstrated at the November 2001 Federal election. In November 2001, the electorate voted for the Coalition. But, according to the Ellis formula, it would be quite okay for the Governor-General to commission a Labor government.

Flashback. Remember Bob Ellis's *Goodbye Jerusalem: Night Thoughts of a Labor Outsider* (Vintage, 1997)? The tome contains a chapter entitled "Well May We Say" - where the author described the 1975 dismissal as signifying "the end of hope". He referred to the actions of the Governor-General in 1975 as amounting to a highjacking and quoted approvingly the claim that the events of 11 November 1975 in Canberra

were a bit like a coup-of-the-colonels in a tin-pot dictatorship.

Work that out, if you can. When the Governor-General, with constitutional cause, dismissed Gough Whitlam in 1975 it symbolised "the end of hope". But if, without constitutional cause, the Governor-General dismissed John Howard in 2002 it would be a "you-beaut" move. Confused? Well, join the club.

### DENNIS SHANAHAN FORGETS

While on the subject of former Labor leaders, consider the recall of *The Australian's* political editor Dennis Shanahan. In a puff-piece on Laurie Brereton, the New South Wales ALP right-wing factional heavy, Shanahan commented on how Brereton "goes for good policy", "takes no prisoners" and has a hard-headed "attitude towards leadership and the performance of leaders". Really. He then foreshadowed "a fearful symmetry" - whatever that might mean. In any event, Shanahan had in mind a time when Laurie Brereton might support Mark Latham replacing Simon Crean as Labor leader. Really. According to *The Australian's* political editor:

**Brereton will be kingmaker of the NSW Right in the parliamentary wing, he is capable of making hard decisions based on polling and performance, and he's backing someone seen as a potential Labor leader, albeit one in the Doc Evatt mode - Latham. Brereton is backing Crean to the hilt, even against his own NSW machine. But his opponents and his supporters concede there is a contingency plan - Latham.**

It seems that Dennis Shanahan forgot about the actual "mode" of Bert (call me "Doc") Evatt. Bert Evatt led the ALP to three Federal election defeats in a row - namely 1954, 1955 and 1958 - and was primarily responsible for the Labor Split in the mid 1950s. What's more, it is now widely acknowledged that he was mentally imbalanced from at least the early 1950s. Moreover, he came to the conviction that his various critics - both within and outside the ALP - were somehow united in a gigantic conspiracy against him. Some leadership "mode".

But this is not the only occasion of late where Dennis Shanahan's memory is not quite what it should be. On 11 September 2002 he contributed a reflection on the events in Washington DC of the previous year. It was published as a supplement to the *Australian* titled *9/11: September 11 Memorial Edition*. The

*Australian's* political editor recalled that he was in the Willard Hotel when the terrorist attack took place on the World Trade Center, getting ready for a news conference with Australian Prime Minister John Howard who was on an official visit to the United States. Recalled Shanahan:

**...as the television images of the planes striking the World Trade Centre towers shocked everyone into a sense of unreality, Howard's press conference went ahead haltingly and briefly. While Howard spoke, unbeknown to everyone at the press conference, a third plane crashed into the Pentagon.**

The evidence suggests that, contrary to Mr Shanahan's memory, the Prime Minister's media conference at the Willard Hotel in Washington on the morning of 11 September 2001 was neither halting nor brief. The media conference commenced at 9.20 am (Washington time). The first plane (American Airlines Flight 11), piloted by the terrorist hijacker Mohammad Atta, flew into the North Tower of the World Trade Center at 8.46 am. The second plane (United Airlines Flight 175) hit the South Tower at 9.02 am. Initially there was uncertainty about the reason why AA 11 had collided with the North Tower. But, when UA 175 hit the South Tower, it was evident that this was a co-ordinated terrorist attack. John Howard acknowledged this in *The Australian* on 11 September 2002. He commented that, having seen on television the second plane hit the second tower, he "knew that it was not an accident – but something much more horrific".

In other words, when the journalists assembled at the Willard Hotel at 9.20 am, it was known that the US was being subjected to a wide-scale terrorist attack. And those who had seen the television footage – including John Howard and Dennis Shanahan – must have been aware that tens of hundreds of individuals had died, or were dying, in New York City – not all that far to the north of Washington's Willard Hotel. It would have been reasonable to suppose that at least some of the victims of the World Trade Center attacks were Australian.

The Prime Minister's media conference opened at 9.20 am. John Howard said that he wanted to say a few words about the "most horrific, awful event" that was occurring in New York and acknowledged that it "will obviously entail a very big loss of life". He then indicated his intention to return to what he termed "domestic things". There followed four questions from Australian journalists about the terrorist attacks and the implications for US security.

Then it was on to "domestic things". With a vengeance. The transcript of the media conference reveals that members of the Parliamentary Press Gallery proceeded to ask – and the Prime Minister consented to answer – some 31 questions on the *Tampa*, asylum seekers, border protection, mandatory detention, the

"Pacific solution" for detaining unlawful entrants and more besides. One of John Howard's responses (on Nauru) went for 200 words while another (attacking Labor leader Kim Beazley) went for 300 words. No evidence here to support the Shanahan view that the PM's responses were in any sense halting or cut short. Then John Howard took four questions on the collapse of Ansett Airlines – one answer ran for 150 words.

At 9.30 am (while John Howard's media conference was still under way) President George W. Bush issued his first statement following the attacks – declaring that the US had experienced a "national tragedy" in "an apparent terrorist attack on our country".

At 9.40 am, just as John Howard's Willard Hotel media conference was concluding, American Airlines Flight 77 ploughed into the Pentagon. At 9.59 am the World Trade Center's South Tower collapsed – followed by the North Tower at 10.29 am.

The documentary evidence indicates that John Howard's media conference ran for a full 20 minutes – while the World Trade Center's twin towers were burning. Yet, according to Dennis Shanahan – who, presumably asked at least one of the 31 questions on asylum seekers – John "Howard's press conference went ahead haltingly and briefly". Which indicates that personal recall is not all that reliable.

It's all a matter of recall, you see. Dennis Shanahan's current form in this area is indicated by his recent comment on the leadership in the Liberal Party. On 25 October 2002, *The Australian's* political editor wrote that "John Howard has the potential to become the Liberals' version of Bob Hawke, a completely dominant prime minister who has the power to decide the manner and timing of his departure for better or worse." This, no doubt, would surprise Bob Hawke – who was dumped as Labor leader while the incumbent prime minister. And, also, Paul Keating who replaced Hawke after a bitter inter-party brawl. Presumably their memories are better than Dennis Shanahan's.

## LA MANNE'S BACK

Meanwhile there is good news to report. After an absence from the print media – which was neither halting nor brief – Anne Manne (who is invariably described as "a Melbourne writer") has resumed life as columnist. As some readers will remember, La Manne used to write a fortnightly column in *The Weekend Australian*. In March 1989, "Media Watch" was unkind enough to point out that there was a certain similarity about her columns – in that she continually bemoaned the plight of one income families as a manifestation of the decline and fall of the West – and, on occasions, pointed to the (alleged) deterioration of Western economies.

Ms Manne wrote her final column for *The Weekend Australian* on April Fool's Day 2000. It was on the need for paternal leave. In a postscript, Ms Manne declared:

"I am taking time off from column writing to finish a book, *Motherhood: Putting the Questions Differently*."

Nothing much happened for around two years. Then, suddenly, La Manne re-emerged in *The Age* – commencing what would now be a monthly column. Good news, indeed. So, how is it still going? And has she developed any fresh topics? And what ever happened to the promised gestation of that tome on motherhood? Let's see:

- **23 March 2002** La Manne kicks off with a certain reflection: "Last Melbourne Cup eve I had dinner with friends in the inner city. The impressive women present had, regarding motherhood, all returned early to well-paid high-status jobs. Work was central to their identity". But on Cup Day itself La Manne was doing "volunteer work at the local pony club on the rural fringe" where she lives. Here another group of "impressive" women either stay at home to look after young children – or work part time. In other words, the focus was on paternal leave. Sound familiar? And, ah yes, there was a criticism of the Liberal Party's (alleged) "economic rationalism".

- **20 April 2002.** This time Anne Manne tries this for a kick-off: "Jokes, Freud observed, bear a revealing relationship to our unconscious". Fancy that. There follows a treatise on how Australia "is presently lurching towards Americansing our economy, embracing... the new capitalism". Richard Sennett's "brilliant" book *The Corrosion of Character* is cited.

- **18 May 2002.** How's this for an opening sentence? viz: "Shit happens". Yes – you've guessed it. It's a column about the "growing inequality among women" between those in "well paid, professional jobs on the one hand and those in low-paid casual service jobs on the other". In case you're wondering – it's the latter lot who do the "shitwork". This month's reading is Barbara Ehrenreich's "important book" *Nickle and Dimed*.

- **15 June 2002** The cause is children and, paedophilia and – in particular – "the sea change in our attitude to the seriousness of the violation of children's rights". All is going well until "the Lewinsky affair" gets a mention – along with "the Kennedy brothers and Marilyn Monroe". These cases are cited to demonstrate the "sexual use of women by powerful men". No consideration is given to the fact that Lewinsky /Munroe types are/were powerful in their own right.

- **13 July 2002** It's back to parental leave. La Manne reckons that "a clever daughter is a wonderful means for concentrating the mind of a conservative male". To wit, John Howard and his "very able daughter Melanie". There follows much, much more about childcare and "poor quality McChildcare centres" are condemned. This month's guru is British sociologist Catherine Hakim, the author of *Work-Lifestyle Choices in the 21st Century*.

- **10 August 2002.** Another month; another guru. This time it is American feminist Arlie Hochschild who divides interpreters of the 1960s into (i) Sunshine

Modernists and (ii) Primordialists. The former barrack for the 1960s; the latter reject them. And what about Anne Manne? She regards both positions as "flawed". Fortunately, Ms Hochschild has come up with a third category – namely Critical Modernist. This fits La Manne just fine. Phew. For she believes that "the 60s brought both gains and losses". Profound, eh?

- **14 September 2002.** More about child care. This time the reader is informed that "most Australian parents wisely do not favour childcare for infants and toddlers". This month's guru is the Canadian J. Fraser Mustard, co-author of the *Canadian Early Years project*.

- **5 October 2002.** La Manne commences her (monthly) lesson with the story about how an (anonymous) young man apologised at his wedding for getting married. Really. It seems that he felt that this indicated "dorkish" behaviour on his part. Yes, indeed. But there was no need for such an apologia. For the latest research reveals that marriage is good for you – and me. So much so that "married men and women are the least likely of any group to suffer mental health problems". Moreover, being single is the strongest risk factor for mental health problems for both sexes". All this suggests that "the glories of the Sex and the City single lifestyle may have been somewhat oversold".

"Media Watch" just cannot wait for (the long-awaited) publication of *Motherhood: Putting Questions Differently*. The burning question is this: Given that La Manne's questions about motherhood will be put differently, can the answers still be the same? Precedence suggests that the answer is, alas, in the affirmative. We'll keep you posted.

## LE NEVILLE'S FRONT

While on the issue of love and marriage – and mental health – consider the recollections of fashionable leftist (and one-time self-confessed acid researcher) Richard Neville. In his most recent tome *Amerika Psycho* (Ocean Press, 2002), Le Neville sounds a bit like La Manne. She's against McChildcare; he opposes McEntertainment. And so on – in Richard Neville's own words:

**As a fledging social commentator, I once railed against the horrors of marriage and the bleak suffocation of family life. In a stagnant and strait-jacketed 1950s Australia, I saw the sexual revolution as a stupendous liberation. And it was. Thirty years down the track, the speed and scope of change is dizzying... In such a world, the long-term partnership is a radical act... Sooner or later, just about every relationship reaches a moment of truth, when a partner turns out to be not quite the person imagined. This can hit hard. Tears, rage, separation. Do you really need to clear the slate and start all over again? Pain and fury can serve as a**

pathway to a new level of involvement. As a friend remarked: "I feel sorry for people who don't experience the exhilaration of fixing up a crappy marriage."

And so it goes on. And on. Le Neville offers the following gems:

- "No matter how hot the sex on the first date, sooner or later couples reach a state when sleep is a preferable option" (Mr Neville was born on 15 December 1941).
- "Love flickers and flares and needs, for its full flowering, to be nurtured over a long duration." (Mr Neville was editor of the libertine Oz Magazine from 1963-1972).
- The "Future Zone" should enter "the bedroom, into the longer term relationship and move it beyond the point of panic, disappointment, retreat and abandonment". (Mr Neville now presents himself in *Who's Who in Australia* as a "futurist" – but there is no listing of any one specific event which he has ever predicted – in or outside the Future Zone).
- "Coupledom doesn't really take-off until after the point is passed where a partner is merely a projected fantasy of what you think you deserve, or what you think you want." (In his most recent book, Mr Neville describes a phenomenon experienced by the "gnarled hippie" – namely the "spontaneous acid flashback". Can this affect writing style?)

And so on. As indicated, these days Richard Neville describes himself as a "futurist" – whatever this might mean. It seems that Richard Neville had no anticipation of his future role as a social commentator proclaiming the benefits of monogamy and bed-without-sex when he boasted in *Playpower* (1970) about the joy of sex with a cherubic school girl. Let's go to the text:

**I meet a moderately attractive, intelligent, cherubic fourteen-year-old girl from a nearby London comprehensive school. I ask her home, she rolls a joint and we begin to watch the mid-week TV movie... Comes the Heinz Souperday commercial, a hurricane fuck, another joint. No feigned love or hollow promises...A farewell kiss, and the girl rushes off to finish her homework.**

Not much full flowering or nurturing on this occasion. Now, just three decades after Richard Neville's boasted about "hurricane" goings-and-comings with a 14 year old schoolgirl, Le Neville is advising readers of *Amerika Psycho* that "social relationships are the key to the future, the bedrock on which to build a psychological bridge to the 22nd Century". But what kind of social relationships? Only three years ago, Le Neville declared that "bisexuality is the best invention since the wheel" (*Canberra Times*, 30 November, 1999).

His argument, then, was that bisexuality made possible double dipping in the dating pool. But that particular piece of Le Neville wisdom was delivered in the 20th Century.

## PIERS FORGETS (HIS OWN) IRISH ABUSE

While discussing inventions, consider some of *Daily Telegraph* columnist Piers Akerman's recent inconsistencies.

On 25 September 2002, *Daily Telegraph* columnist Michael Duffy tried his hand at irony. After the revelation that a group of students from the Catholic Waverly College had run rampant through the streets of Bondi following a late night end-of-year boozier, Michael Duffy went into full ironic mode. He picked up the criticisms which had been made of Muslim Lebanese gangs in Sydney and ran a similar line about what he termed "Irish Catholics". The conclusion was that "it is time that Australia seriously re-evaluated its immigration policies regarding Irish Catholics". On Radio 2UE, Mike Carlton had a similar line in humour.

Enter Piers Akerman. Writing in the *Daily Telegraph* on 1 October 2002, he dismissed the Duffy comments as a "small wry, ironic piece" but bagged the Carlton line. According to your man Piers, Carlton had attempted "to revive old enmities held against the wider Australian Irish Catholic community". It seems that one man's irony is another's anti Irish Catholic sectarianism. To Piers Akerman, at least.

Flashback. It seems that PA's concern for the sensitivities of Australia's Irish Catholic community is a recent development. Only a few years have passed since Mr Akerman HIMSELF was using the word "Irish" as a term of abuse. For memory's sake, let's go to the archives of the *Daily Telegraph*:

• **14 January 1999.** PA criticises the forthcoming visit to Australia of Gerry Adams. Fair enough. But PA uses his opposition to the Sinn Fein leader to mock the Irish. Declares PA: "No doubt many of the usual Irish-Australian faces who find their way into the faux Irish saloon each St Patrick's Day will be pressed into service to celebrate Adams' visit next month". PA predicts that "most of those who pay to hear this creature will throw back a few jars and sing a few verses of *Danny Boy* or *Kevin Barry*". The former is a well known Irish song; the latter was a young Irish nationalist who was executed by the British during the Irish War of Independence.

• **23 February 1999.** PA maintains that "residual patriotism" can be "invoked" among the Irish "by a few choruses of *Kevin Barry* and a good wack of the Jamesons". In other words, the Irish are all boozers. The Australian born author Tom Keneally is equated with an "Irish Leprechaun".

• **19 October 1999.** Yet another PA reference to the "faux Irish".

• **11 December 2001.** PA refers to a “bog-Irish victim culture” – the familiar put-down for (allegedly) ignorant and unsophisticated Irish.

So how to explain the fact that the very same Piers Akerman - who now condemns those who (allegedly) attempted to “revive old enmities” held against the “Australian Irish Catholic community” - only a few years ago used the phrase “bog Irish” as a term of abuse? Put it down to double standards and a flawed memory.

The evidence indicates that PA’s lack of a sense of recall extends beyond himself to history. During an appearance on the ABC TV *Insiders* program on Sunday 18 August 2002, Piers Akerman declared that the position taken by those who are reluctant to support a pre-emptive strike against Saddam Hussein’s Iraq is “so similar to the response to the Weimar Republic in the thirties”. Meaning appeasement and all that.

This comment suggests that Piers Akerman is woefully ignorant of 20th Century European history. The Weimar Republic is the term used to describe the government of Germany from 1919 until 1933 – when the Nazis came to power. As Alan Bullock pointed out in *Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives* (HarperCollins, 1991), Adolf Hitler had an enduring “hostility” to the democratic Weimar Republic”. In short, Nazism was appeased in the 1930s – not democratic Weimar Germany. If Piers Akerman had any accurate memory of his school-days history, he would know this.

Come to think of it, PA even has trouble remembering the details of contemporary history. On Sunday 3 August 2002 he spoke about asylum seekers in Britain to the *Insiders* program viz – in somewhat incoherent form viz:

**The reality, though, is that when that [sic] they’ve found – here and overseas – that if you have a family and, er, it’s out there making its appeals it’s more likely to get lost and disappear into the society. And this is what’s occurred in Britain at the rate of 100,000 a month or whatever. I mean, it’s totally over the odds.**

No one on the *Insiders* panel disputed Piers Akerman’s comment. It passed with (apparent) agreement – as to its factual content, at least. But the claim is manifestly false. According to available Home Office statistics, around 85,000 asylum seekers are entering Britain each year. Mr Akerman apparently calculated his figure for asylum seekers – who “disappear into the society” after failing to obtain refugee status – by the following process. He took the annual asylum seeker figures, added a bit for rounding reasons, and then multiplied by a factor of twelve. How about that?

On the available evidence, the number of rejected asylum seekers who “disappear” into British society annually could be no more than 40,000. Absolute tops. Yet according to Piers Akerman on *Insiders*,

over a million asylum seekers are illegally entering British society each year.

## DR GREER’S TRUE COLOURS

Remember when Germaine Greer declared, just over two years ago, that she never returned to Australia without doing “a deal” with the “traditional owners of the land”. Greer was reported in *The Australian* (3 July 2000) as declaring that she “won’t leave” the airport “until they allow me in”. She continued: “One would be enough, but I get 9, 12 or 15”.

In late August Germaine Greer returned to Australia to address the Melbourne Writers’ Festival. There was not an Aborigine in sight when the England based sage touched down in Australia. She managed to leave Melbourne Airport without the sanction of the traditional owners. And so it came to pass that Dr Greer came to give the keynote address to a capacity audience of luvvies at the Melbourne Town Hall on 1 September 2002.

What a night it was. One of the world’s high profile feminists urged Australian women to wear – wait for it – a black burkha. Why? Well it would provide a means of making a visible statement against any Australian involvement in a war in Iraq. Spoke Greer:

**We have to make our opposition to the war perfectly plain. If we all veil ourselves, they could see, on the streets, the opposition to the war. If we veiled ourselves, it would be very disturbing. Imagine if Melbourne – if Australia – became a sea of black veils. It would be a protest that would be undeniable. (*The Age*, 2 September 2002)**

Germaine Greer went on to tell her audience that she has not “worn colours since the first war in the Gulf”. Remember that. The Gulf War was a military action, endorsed by the United Nations, by which Iraq’s invasion force was driven out of Kuwait. It can only be assumed that the “I-don’t-wear-colours” Dr Greer would have been content if Saddam’s conquering forces had remained in occupation of Kuwait. Anyrate, the luvvies at the Melbourne Town Hall really loved it. Even so, don’t put your money on burkha futures. Opposition to a pre-emptive strike against Iraq might have become a fashion statement Down Under – but not, it seems, the burkha bit. By the way, the feminist Greer, did not propose that any men got decked out in the no-seeing, no-hearing burkha – or even its male equivalent.

## GREAT U-TURNS OF OUR TIME – THE JOHN HOWARD EDITION

While on the subject of history, it’s time - yet again – for great u-turns of our time.

• Andrew Bolt on why John Howard should stay on as prime minister beyond his 64th birthday in July 2003.

I don't think he's [John Howard] closed any options off, really. He's closed no options off. He's still looking good and it remains to be seen whether, em, er, Peter Costello really has the support or the courage even to make a tilt...Why would you as a backbencher, a Liberal backbencher – as, say, sitting on a backbench margin of one per cent think “No, I think I'd rather go for Peter Costello”?

- Andrew Bolt, ABC TV *Insiders*, 29 July 2002.

- Flashback – Andrew Bolt on why John Howard should step down as prime minister before his 62th birthday:

We'd just finished the main course when I told John Howard he should quit. I didn't mean quit eating. No, the food he'd put on for us at the city club was terrific. I meant he should quit politics if he wanted to give his Liberals a chance of winning the next election.

Of course, he didn't take my advice – what fool would? And six months on he's still Prime Minister. Last week we saw the result – proof Howard is now grief to his friends and God's gift to his foes. It's a disaster!

- Andrew Bolt, *Herald Sun*, 17 May 2001.

- Paul Kelly on John Howard – Great Prime Minister

John Howard is in the zone. It's his 63rd birthday, his 28th year in parliament and his sixth year as prime minister. Howard sits on his office lounge, chirpy, cautious and confident. Nothing seems to have changed as he delivers lines I can recite with my eyes closed. Yet Howard is different.

It has taken him three elections but Howard has entered the winner's zone. Finally. He knows it, and feels it. “Yes, each term is different,” Howard tells me, contrasting his third term with his first and second. “I think this term, there is a sense in which you've seen off some challenges and critics.” It's an understatement because the transformation in Howard's standing is obvious.

- Paul Kelly, *The Weekend Australian*, 27-28 July, 2002

- Flashback - Paul Kelly on John Howard – Flawed Prime Minister

The Australian people are the victims of a conspiracy – a betrayal by the political class against the best interests of the nation. It has been a long time since federal politics saw the combination of such a

flawed prime minister as John Howard and such a weak Opposition leader as Kim Beazley. This is the most obvious feature of our politics...The truth is that Howard is the most knee-jerk, poll reactive, populist prime minister in the past 50 years. He has turned the leadership virtue of listening to community reaction into a desperate over-reaction to transitory opinion inflamed by tabloid headlines and talkback jocks

- Paul Kelly, *The Weekend Australian*, 19-20 February 2000.

## JOHN CARROLL'S TOSH

Unlike Messers Bolt, Kelly and the like, Dr John Carroll (the Melbourne based author and occasional columnist) is a consistent type. His approach to political analysis has a familiar ring. Take a traumatic incident, embellish it with lotsa theory and hyperbole – but not too many facts (names, places, that sort of thing). In short, come up with the GRAND VISION – of the “we-are-all-doomed” kind.

There is much of this in John Carroll's latest book *Terror : A Meditation on the Meaning of September 11* (Scribe, 2002) which was launched on 10 September by Phillip Adams. The inaugural chapter contains references to “Apollo the sun god”, the “Delphic god”, the Loan Ranger, novelist John Ford, Liberty Valance, Martin Luther and so on. It's much the same with the final chapter. Jesus gets a mention. Along with Martha and Mary (of biblical fame) Conrad, Rodin, Raymond Chandler, Homer and so on. All these references sure help to build up the pages a 100 page book (or booklet) on 9/11 – without having to do a great deal of research on revolutionary movements, terrorism and so on.

If all of this were confined to the realms of academe, this would not matter much. It's just that - every now and then – John Carroll gets a run in the press or on the electronic media. Then it can become quite confusing. As Stephen Crittenden found (or did he?) when he interviewed John Carroll for ABC Radio National's *The Religion Report* (11 September 2002). In a lengthy conversation, your man Carroll:

- Declared that the United States is “completely spooked” by Osama bin Laden (he prefers the spelling “Usama”) who is a “Satanic figure”.

- Compared bin Laden with the “lone man on horseback, iconography straight out of the American Western”. “You know, Shane, the Lone Ranger – that sort of thing – who is “going to destroy the frontier town”.

- Linked “the Twin Towers” with “the two injunctions carved in the doorway at the Delphic Oracle, Apollo's temple, in Delphi: the injunctions “Know Thyself” and “Nothing Too Much”.



- Found a “message” in the fact that two Rodin sculptures (which were held in the WTC office of Cantor Fitzgerald) escaped the carnage – even though situated on the 105th floor.
- Expressed a “fear ... that America, and with it the West, is going to be paralysed, that everything is going to stall...”
- Described as “mad” the decision to sift the WTC debris and DNA test what was found. According to Dr John, this procedure (which was designed to locate all remains of the deceased) suggests “a terrible symptom of a complete misunderstanding of the level at which this crisis in our culture is functioning”. He simply ignored the fact that some 20,000 body parts were located at the WTC site.
- Alleged that “the cultural corpus of the West is now in that [WTC] hole and queried: “what in the hell do we do?”.

Well, why not start by easing off on the hyperbole somewhat. Writing in the *Australian Financial Review* (18 October 2002) after the Bali murders John Carroll implied that Australia’s problems were somehow or other the fault of Paul Keating. Declared Dr John:

The historian Samuel Huntington, in his seminal book *The Clash of Civilisations*, ridiculed Paul Keating’s foreign policy initiative to turn Australia into an Asian nation. Australia is an outpost of Western culture. As a result its security depends on strong ties to the West, which means primarily the United States. This does not preclude good relations with our Asian neighbours, but reminds us of the underlying reality. October 12 has also confirmed that Huntington argument.

Ordinary Australians, who received a tragic wake-up call this week, never bought the Keating line. It was at odds with their visceral sense of things. They might be interested in Huntington’s final judgement, that in 100 years historians may look back at the Keating policy as “a major marker in the decline of the West”.

It is true that, in *The Clash of Civilisations*, Samuel P Huntington alleged that, during the Keating Labor government, Australia had abandoned the West and embraced Asia. But this was a ridiculous – and undocumented – assertion. First, Prime Minister Paul Keating went out of his way to state emphatically that Australia was not an Asian nation. Second, any decision by Australia to junk the West would have resulted in the abandonment of the Australia-US alliance. In fact, Australia-US ties were a core part of Australian foreign policy during Paul Keating’s prime ministership.

Come to think of it, there is a remarkable co-incidence in the thought process of the leftist Bob Ellis and the

conservative John Carroll. According to Ellis, John Howard was mostly to blame for the Bali catastrophe. According to Carroll, Paul Keating bears some responsibility for the decline of the West – of which Bali was a manifestation. The Ellis love affair with hyperbole is an established fact. The Carroll tendency to overstatement is not so well known.

So, in a final flashback, consider how John Carroll assessed the death (by drowning) of Australian prime minister Harold Holt in December 1967. In his essay “National Identity” in the edited collection *Intruders in the Bush* (OUP, 1982) Carroll examined the death of the mediocre Harold Holt and found – yes – a national myth:

There is one event in our history fit to become a national myth. It complements the naïve scepticism as a signpost of identity. Its truth is about our relationship to our continent. I speak of the death of Harold Holt in Cheviot Bay, Portsea, on 17 December 1967. There is a unique, an awesome and humbling truth, but one of which we might be proud, about having had a prime minister walk into the surf, swim strongly between the rocks towards a deep rock pool which he always enjoyed, find himself in a vicious undertow, swim confidently with it, and be ripped out to sea never to be seen again... we can presume that he felt a need for the cleansing power of the surf, for being alone in the vast cavern of the ocean deep, at the mercy of, in harmony with, the eternal swell of nature...

There was a certain celebration in this act, the greatest of all tributes: the last sight of him was of his silver hair in the broken water as he appeared to be swimming strongly with the current. His death portends far more than Voss’s analogous end. In the martyrology of our country – and martyrs are always the leading heroes – Harold Holt has a far more important place than the squalid, unoriginal, and irrelevant Ned Kelly, and not the less for his having been, as Prime Minister, an amiable and undistinguished figure.

What absolute tosh. In the same essay, John Carroll (falsely) predicted “that the Bicentennial in 1988 will be a complete flop”, described Patrick White as the writer from which “Australia has most to learn about itself” and opined that if the cartoonist Michael Leunig “reminds one of anyone, it is Kafka”.

Remember.

