

FORTHCOMING FUNCTIONS AT THE SYDNEY INSTITUTE

SPEAKER : JANET WEST (Writer & Author of *Daughters of Freedom* [Albatross, 1997])
TOPIC : *Women, History and The Church*
DATE : Wednesday 11 March 1998 **TIME** : 5.30 for 6.00pm
VENUE : 41 Phillip St, Sydney **LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**

SPEAKER : THE HON TIM FISCHER MP (Deputy Prime Minister & Minister for Trade)
TOPIC : *Native Title*
DATE : Thursday 19 March 1998 **TIME** : 5.30 for 6.00pm
VENUE : The Chifley Conference Room (Rm 102), Level 1, 2 Chifley Square, Sydney

SPEAKER : DAVID SALTER (Former Executive Producer, ABC's *Media Watch*)
TOPIC : *Inside Media Watch*
DATE : Tuesday 24 March 1998 **TIME** : 5.00 for 6.00pm
VENUE : The Chifley Conference Room (Rm 102), Level 1, 2 Chifley Square, Sydney

SPEAKER : PRU GOWARD (Head, Office Status of Women)
TOPIC : *Free Feminism - The Modernisation of the Case for Women*
DATE : Wednesday 15 April 1998 **TIME** : 5.30 for 6.00pm
VENUE : Museum of Sydney Theatre, cnr Bridge & Phillip Sts, Sydney **LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**

SPEAKER : CHERYL KERNOT (Labor Candidate for Dickson)
TOPIC : To be advised
DATE : Wednesday 22 April 1998 **TIME** : 5.30 for 6.00pm
VENUE : Mallesons' Conference Room, Level 60 Gov Phillip Tower, 1 Farrer Place, Sydney

SPEAKER : LAURENS BRINKHORST (Member/ European Parliament - Liberal Democrat Group)
TOPIC : *European Monetary Union - An Update*
DATE : Wednesday 6 May 1998 **TIME** : 5.30 for 6.00pm
VENUE : 41 Phillip St, Sydney **LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**

SPEAKER : DALE SPENDER AM (Well known journalist & Author)
TOPIC : *To be advised*
DATE : Monday 11 May 1998 **TIME** : 5.30 for 6.00pm
VENUE : The Chifley Conference Room (Rm 102), Level 1, 2 Chifley Square, Sydney

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QUARTERLY

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FEBRUARY 1998



THE MEDIA SAY
SORRY

CHRISTINE
WALLACE
on Germaine
Greer

THE LUNAR
RIGHT GOES
NEW AGE

WESTMINSTER
WOMEN

MORE
MORAL
RIGHTS

STEPHEN
MATCHETT
tackles
Mark Davis

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with Gerard Henderson's

MEDIA WATCH

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THE MEDIA CORRECTING ERRORS

So Stuart Littlemore QC has stepped down as the presenter of ABC TV's *Media Watch* program. This means that we will never know whether Littlemore QC would have used *Media Watch* to correct his claim (delivered during his *Lateline* on 11 November 1997) that he was not paid by the ABC. Pity, really.

Meanwhile, brand new *Media Watch* presenter Richard Ackland has declared that, unlike his predecessor, he will correct errors. According to Ackland: "If a mistake is made and it's demonstrably inaccurate, then, the program should address that fact, not pretend that it never makes mistakes. That's an absurdity."

Point taken. The essential problem with *Media Watch* when Stuart Littlemore was presenter turned on its unwillingness to acknowledge errors. Under Richard Ackland this will change. Or so we are promised.

The issue of media corrections is in the news right now due primarily to *Private Eye's* send-up of *The Guardian*. In 1997 *The Guardian* announced that, henceforth, it would correct all errors. In its 6 February 1998 issue, *Private Eye* commented that *The Guardian's* corrections "are far, far more interesting than the original articles". In other words, Sir Normal Fowler appears more interesting than Sir Norman Fowler.

The problem with *The Guardian's* current policy is that it corrects all errors, however trivial. In this sense, *Private Eye* picked on a soft target. What is required is an acceptance by the media (print and electronic) that it will correct serious mistakes that affect individuals and organisations. *The Guardian* is on the right track, despite the unintended behaviour of its daily "corrections and clarifications" column.

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On 24 March 1998, David Slater, former Executive Producer of Stuart Littlemore's ABC *Media Watch* will address The Sydney Institute on the topic: "Inside *Media Watch*". For details, see page 31 of this issue.

GERMAINE GREER VERSUS CHRISTINE WALLACE

Writing about Germaine Greer is a risky business. Or so her inaugural biographer discovered. Christine Wallace, who has produced the first biography of Germaine Greer in *Greer, Untamed Shrew* (Macmillan 1997), spoke for The Sydney Institute after the launch of her book. What follows is an edited transcript of the discussion at the end of that address.

Q: Is it better to leave your biographical subject to die before publishing or is it more important to be able to get access to your subject?

CW: I think the latter. Definitely. This is something I argued strongly with Germaine Greer, in correspondence. It's too late when she's dead. You can't exhume her and ask her whether some of the racier stories one heard about her were true or false.

Different sorts of biographies are written with live subjects than with dead ones. With someone like Germaine Greer, whose popular influence has been so great, there's a very strong case for publishing now as well as later. There will be half a dozen biographies written about Germaine in the next 20 or 30 years. It would be too late in her case to wait till she's dead.

There's an interesting twist to that though. That is the author who dies before he or she can be sued for defamation. Australia's own Peter Blazey died just before his memoir was published. His book *Screw Loose* is a fantastic read, a wild read. He was pretty wise in shuffling off this mortal world (before his book was published).

Q: If you're careful not to defame doesn't that mean you have to leave out some facts you were afraid of?

CW: Generally I only publish things I'm completely certain of. In the case of Germaine Greer, most of the wilder stories involved sex. And there is so much sex in her life which she's already written copiously of herself, that it wasn't a great cost to put some of those stories aside. Blazey in fact published one that I dared not. Generally caution, prudence and taste should prevail but not at the expense of truth.

Q: How do you rate Germaine Greer's Melbourne Writers Week speech given in Melbourne last week?

CW: It was classic Germaine. And beautifully written. Some of it was completely crazy and some of it was really important, interesting and worth working over. Her ideas on penetration and culture were first canvassed by feminists 20 years ago. There's been an enormous amount of debate surrounding that in the feminist movement. Her general point is that culture is highly sexualised in a way that doesn't necessarily encourage women to be in control. It's a fair point.

But when Germaine strays off into the nether regions of the pill, and suggests that there's a dark conspiracy against the health of women, I really start despairing. The fact is that when you do any sort of cost benefit analysis, modern reproductive technologies are overwhelmingly beneficial to women. So again, this is one of the reasons why you've got to look at someone like Germaine and carefully analyse her work.

That is one of the reasons for the book. You need to be able to separate out the dross and have some sort of compass to where the value lies. Doing it all on our own each time individually is just too hard and, in fact, we can't do it without sharing information with others. That is very much the spirit in which the book is written.

Q: How did you overcome the problem of not having direct access to the source?

CW: One very interesting but particularly difficult biography I read while I was writing my book was Carolyn Heilbrun's biography of Gloria Steinem. Now she had a real problem because Gloria Steinem is pretty saint-like as a human being and reading this book you're thinking, for God's sake where's the light and shade, she can't be that perfect. Well, Gloria broadly is, but it makes for really hard reading. That's an example of a non-authorised biography, which is, in effect, hagiography.

So I felt, let a hundred flowers bloom. I tried to say to Germaine, through the book: Look you're in a unique position, your experience of life, having done what you've done, been through what you've been through, you're in a fantastic position now to write a book reflecting on whether what you thought 30 years ago was right, whether it worked or whether it turned out to be misguided. And I gather she's working on a reprise to *The Female Eunuch* now. If that's correct, that's fantastic. But generally speaking I think the problem of balance, accuracy and so on is solved by a proliferation of biographies.

If you've got enough to read, enough to guide your perspectives, somehow you can get at the core of it.

Q: With some of Germaine Greer's more outrageous thoughts, do you see her as really believing in her writing, since she changes her identity quite frequently, or do you feel it's more attention grabbing for the media?

CW: I think she's thoroughly authentic in each moment. Many people I spoke with - in particular those who had acted with Germaine - said, she just missed her calling. She would have been an incredible actress of world renown. That great thespian quality shines through every time you see her. There is truth in each moment, in each utterance. If she were to tell us it was raining in one sentence and then that it were not raining in the next, despite what was happening out there, she would completely believe what she had just said. And again that's very important to know about her. It makes reading her a lot different.

“Germaine Greer has said that she has read the book. She passed the comment that it's probably better to have an unauthorised biography.”

Q: One person who died before anyone could interview her for an autobiography was Sylvia Plath. Many biographies have been written about her. Sylvia Plath became interesting because all the people that knew her talked. To what extent did you get to the people who know Germaine? Could you tell us a bit about who talked? Who didn't talk? And who you would have liked to have talked to?

CW: Actually, Germaine wrote in the *Guardian* that anyone who spoke to me she would not speak to again. And as I went along, I found that cooperation with me related directly to distance from Germaine. Cambridge was the hardest. I'd ring people up and they'd say: "Look we have to live with her. It's just over that cornfield." And you can entirely understand their reluctance. The bravest people were Australians. Everybody spoke in Australia and basically in America too. And that actually had a lot to do with our national character as well as the distance. Australians largely couldn't see the problem. They are for free speech. And Germaine has always been for free speech. What is there to hide anyway? And basically you can't intimidate Australians. It might work in Cambridge, but it doesn't work in Woolloomooloo. After Germaine dies biographies of her will be much stronger on the English section of her life.

Fortunately my particular interests were much more her intellectual roots, what her formative life experiences and intellectual experiences were, and what came to together to make *The Female Eunuch* such a unique and totally different feminist book in that early second wave period. So it didn't worry me too much if I couldn't get everyone to talk. I think the English version will probably be better when she's dead. Not that I want her to die. I'd like her to hang around a lot longer.

Q: I was at the Germaine Greer lecture when she lambasted you for attempting to write her biography. She gave a very boring speech and then someone provoked her and she just went wild. Do you think she was trying to stop the book? Or do you think she was trying to stop people from reading the book?

CW: I think both. She tried to bully me out of writing it. And when that failed she made a faint attempt to bully people into not reading the book. But fortunately she's come here. I don't know whether she's read the book or not but I think enough people have told her it's alright, you can relax. And she's calmed down. That was very interesting, that speech. For those who don't know, she threatened me about speaking to her mother. She didn't know, at that stage, that her mother had been the first person I had interviewed two years earlier.

But as I recall it, Germaine Greer got a standing ovation at the end of that speech. There was triumphant applause and she got a magnificent response. Again, it's the great thespian quality of Germaine. She's fabulous at it. One of the things I was grappling with in the book is her characteristic, throughout her adult life, of basically beating up on people. She's known for the cutting line, the quick attack, the devastating language. Yet she was so loved. And even very close friends will say that Germaine herself says she's a monster. And they described her and their friendships with her, with tremendously long terrific happy periods and suddenly there will be this lashing out. They'd just be expected to forget that, move on and enjoy the next nice period.

It was the same experience for me watching Jana Wendt interview Germaine on *60 Minutes* when the "fuck me shoes incident" occurred in the *Guardian* with Suzanne Moore. I heard the most extraordinary attack coming from Germaine's mouth. The most unfair, unreasonable, outrageous attack on Julie Burchill and Suzanne Moore. But at the same time, emotionally, you're responding in a completely supportive way even while you know she's being wrong and unfair. You're thinking "Go Germaine, good on you." It's the style of the woman. Even as

she's being outrageous, ridiculous, crazy, unfair. She really does have the most incredible and wonderful chutzpah I've ever witnessed. And when she dies I think we will be the lesser for it.

Q: (Sasha Soldatow) Germaine Greer has said that she has read the book. She passed the comment that it's probably better to have an unauthorised biography.

CW: That's interesting. Whew.

Q: Recently the *Sydney Morning Herald* carried a comment which Germaine Greer had made in Britain saying that her mother was suffering from Alziemer's disease. Was that another beat-up?

CW: Germaine's whole life has been spent undermining her mother's credibility. Suggesting that she's lost her marbles. When I spoke to Mrs Greer in 1994 she seemed to have all her marbles to me. And in fact she's very like Germaine. That very idiosyncratic, living your own life, bugger the consequences thing. She's intelligent, well read, so I don't know what Germaine means. When I spoke to her she was fully in control of her senses.

Q: I just wondered whether you had any sense at all of what you'd done when you realised how much opposition Germaine Greer would make to the book?

CW: I had second thoughts approximately three times a day for the entire writing of the book. It wasn't a euphoric experience. She very effectively created a feeling of siege in me. And I wish that hadn't happened. However, I knew in my heart that the project was entirely honourable. On principle I couldn't allow anyone to bully me out of an honourable and well intentioned course of action. So this book was going to get written. Germaine's approach couldn't have been better calculated to make me go ahead. At the same time I'm glad it's over. I feel fairly happy that it's a good book that people enjoy reading and get a lot of intellectual value from.

Q: Other than the public bullying, what was the nature your early initial correspondence with her?

CW: Well, initially, I sent her a letter from Canberra. Hi, Dr Greer. I introduced myself. I was then

working for the *Financial Review* in the Canberra Press Gallery. I explained what I wanted to do and why. I hoped we could talk. I would come to wherever she was at a time of her convenience if that was possible. And got back this absolutely vitriolic letter. The words were practically self-igniting on the paper, it was so hot. I was just stunned.

Germaine Greer argued that all biography was parasitic, which is a familiar argument to anyone who has read about biography. I should wait till she was dead. She would not sue on her own behalf but she would sue on behalf of anyone who "had the misfortune to be associated with her, whose privacy was invaded" and so on. I wrote back and tried to engage her on the substance of the argument.

I said: Look, you yourself have written about living people in your own work for 30 years. Is that inconsistent? Can't you see the value of doing it while you are alive? You get your facts right. And in any case, why do you assume that this is going to be a hatchet job? That couldn't be further from my intention. And back came another letter in which she

said: You're already wasting too much of my time - what I'm trying to tell you is publish and be damned. So that's what I decided to do. Now I never gave up hope that I could change her mind and when I hit the road shortly afterwards for America and Britain, I sent her a few faxes saying I'm in England how about it? And on to Cambridge. "I'm here, hi".

I made one last ditch effort and sent a fax. I think I was about five kilometres from her at this point. I said, can we at least get together for a cup of coffee so you can tell me why you object so profoundly to the biography of living people? And there was a complete silence. So I wandered down to London. And suddenly this *Guardian* column appears which is, again, red hot. And it was very much a low point for me researching the book.

It's a fascinating thing about Germaine, she has a very acute perception of the value of things. And one of the things she did with these letters was to dictate them to her assistant who then signed them "PP". She then pointed out that she had the copyright to



the letters. So not only could I not use them, I couldn't quote from the letters for copyright reasons but also the letters themselves had no physical value because they didn't have her signature. Now that attention to detail I've got to admire.

Q: Do you like her? Secondly, how do you feel about her today as opposed to when you started writing the book?

CW: I really like and admire the likeable and admirable parts of Germaine. And I really dislike the bullying, blustering Germaine. The big difference in my feelings about Germaine at the beginning of the book and at the end is that I feel I understand now why the unpleasant side of her exists. In the beginning it's a mystery. But knowing what's happened in her life I can now see that she was a very, very intelligent, sensitive, highly strung child. She was the ham in the sandwich of an unhappy marriage. And never having had that feeling of being loved by a parent I think is possibly the biggest liability you can carry through life. It's easy for us who've been loved to love, to have easy relationships, to have easy friendships.

But someone who has never felt loved, in a family environment, everything that follows is just so much more difficult. So it's a sort of oddly religious feeling I feel. I've forgiven Germaine. I know she wouldn't want my forgiveness. In a sense it means nothing. But having been beaten up, I now feel I know why I've been beaten up and it's alright. But on a more secular level, I think it's just ridiculous. She should just sit down and have a bottle of red and get on with life.

Q: Can you think of a male equivalent of Germaine to write about?

CW: Norman Mailer was her mirror opposite, the big, macho, literary brawling bull of New York writing. At a particular time they came together and were titanically potent. It really was a match made in heaven. I think he's the only one with a comparable ego and a talent, in completely different ways. I can't stand all the macho but I think he's the only one on her sort of scale.

Q: Will you write another biography?

CW: No. I told my publisher they should take my hands and nail them to the desk should I ever propose another biography.

Q: With all these politicians to write about, why Germaine?

CW: Germaine is a politician. Feminism is one of the great political movements of the 20th Century. We don't think of it like that because we are still in the century. We are still too close to it. Germaine is

nothing if not a politician. She may be one without a parliament but her whole public presence is about influencing people's lives. She is one of the supreme polemicists of our time.

Today's feminists may think her wacky at times, but she was the feminist who actually broke through and influenced people and really changed women's way of existing. For that reason she is one of the more important politicians of the post-war period. We talk in too orthodox a manner about politics. You don't need a parliament to be a politician. Cheryl Kernot is going to be a politician without a parliament for the next twelve months. Others tend to see Germaine as a writer. I see her as a politician, as a polemicist first and that's very much the way I've approached her in the book.

Q: You make the point that very few serious studies of feminism actually quote or use *The Female Eunuch*. So to what extent was Greer an important feminist at all? And did her mother have any comments when she read the book?

CW: I haven't spoken to her mother since early 1994. I did feel that I should not subject her mother to any more pressure than that already brought about by the book. I'm being very careful and tender about that. So I don't know if she's read the book or not, but if she did I don't think she'd be unhappy.

As to whether Germaine may be feminist or not, that's one of the key conundrums I was trying to resolve. If you talk to baby boomer women in the English speaking world, who read the book at that period, they all regard Greer as the feminist. When you talk to women's movement activists from the same period, they don't consider her a feminist at all. I had to try and reconcile that. What I did was to position her in the maverick tradition of feminism. The one offs going their own way. Often at odds with other women activists in that period. She's undoubtedly feminist. She's undoubtedly a key feminist of our period. It's important to know that her feminism was rooted in things apart from the women activists at the time.

Germaine's feminism is rooted in the counter-culture, in Push libertarianism, in many of the things that the women's activists earlier on the second wave were reacting against. So if the book does anything, I hope it illuminates just why we see her in such a confusing manner.

The women's movement has a few things to learn from Germaine too. The importance of communicating. Communicating with power. Getting the message through. It's all very well to be pure and living up in the mountains but there's a lot of women out there who need to hear the message too.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN OUR BACKYARD?

ASIA'S MELTDOWN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Alison Tarditi

“Asia” comprises a diverse set of countries, spanning the spectrum of economic development. But it is a lack of transparency, both in regard to economic and financial system statistics and in the nature of political business practices, which characterises the indeterminate nature and extent of what is, essentially, a broad financial system crisis in this region. The failure of Western credit agencies to recognise the potential for systemic crisis in Asia underlies this point. Currently in the grip of collapsing domestic asset markets, widespread bank failures, corporate bankruptcies and severe real economic downturn, Asia's deleveraging is likely to dominate the overall region's performance for a number of years to come.

The consequences are likely to be slower world growth than might otherwise have been the case, reduced pricing power and hence poorer corporate earnings in 1998/99. But, with a more medium-term outlook, the current situation also presents an opportunity for the region to embrace reforms which strong growth have made easy to shirk. Broad-based deregulation of its trade and financial sectors will provide a sound foundation for the eventual re-emergence of solid “quality” growth in the region.

How does the crisis evolve? It is generally true that, over the last decade, low production costs (particularly with regard to a disciplined and economical labour force) and fixed exchange rates across a number of Asian countries attracted a continuous and considerable flow of foreign capital into the region. A combination of inadequate financial system regulation and government-directed or “connected” lending, saw a significant proportion of this capital deployed with little regard for the commercial criteria of project viability and return. One exception here is probably Korea, whose vulnerability stemmed from the fact that its highly leveraged conglomerates (chaebols) lacked

effective market discipline. Protected from the rigours of international competition, the chaebols operated on the Japanese rather than the US business model. Asian corporates borrowed heavily to fund investments in unprofitable or non-productive areas, establishing pockets of excessive industrial capacity (sharp price falls in electronics in Korea) and real estate price bubbles (Thailand and Hong Kong).

Pegged exchange rate regimes gave financial institutions the confidence to take on excessive risk when extending these loans. Borrowing from abroad, in US dollars, left them exposed to the risk of default by corporates and property developers unable to repay dollar-denominated loans in the event of currency depreciation. Also, not without its parallel in Australia in the 1980s, collateral was often used as the main consideration in loan-evaluation. Generally, but not universally, this encouraged asset price inflation which in turn masked the condition of intermediaries' balance sheets. Financial institutions across the region were left highly exposed to the risk of asset price falls which render their security both illiquid and insufficient.

So the vulnerability of financial sectors to contagion and systemic crisis was endemic to countries across Asia, despite the fact that their macroeconomic credentials were far from homogeneous. It was the floating of the Thai baht in early July 1997 which triggered turbulence across the region. Thailand had been one of the fastest growing economies of the Asia Pacific, indeed of the world, over the past decade. Between 1988 and 1995, growth averaged more than 8 per cent per year. But a confluence of factors came together in mid-1997, the full ramifications of which we have yet to see.

“A prevailing risk for the region is that, with only tepid domestic demand, China may require currency devaluation.”

Unlike a number of its neighbours, Thailand was experiencing traditional excess demand pressures leading to macroeconomic imbalance. This was manifest in a persistent and widening current account deficit (which peaked at 8 per cent of GDP in 1996) and an associated high external debt burden (50 per cent of GDP), around half of which was short-term. At the same time, Japan, a regional superpower, was facing its sixth year of stagnant economic performance in the wake of asset price deflation and an unwillingness to address instability in an over-leveraged financial system. The yen was depreciating vis-à-vis the dollar, resulting in a loss of

A TALK BY THE MINISTER FOR TRADE & DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

The Hon Tim Fischer, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, began his parliamentary service in 1971 as a member of the NSW Legislative Assembly. In 1984 he was elected to the House of Representatives as the member for Farrer. In 1990 he became leader of the Federal Parliamentary National Party.

Tim Fischer has made a distinct mark as Australia's Trade Minister, embracing global markets with a passion and working tirelessly for optimum outcomes for Australian exporters. As Australia contemplates the shake up in Asian markets, hear Tim Fischer at The Sydney Institute.

SPEAKER : THE HON TIM FISCHER MP (Deputy Prime Minister & Minister for Trade)

TOPIC : *Native Title*

DATE : Thursday 19 March 1998

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competitiveness for Thailand, because the Thai baht was pegged to the US dollar.

Akin to most of its Asian neighbours, Thailand was also labouring under the weight of an overleveraged corporate sector. The prospect of an issue of new banking licences saw Thailand's finance companies engaging in risky, fine-margin lending - largely for property - in an effort to secure market share. This fuelled asset price inflation, which artificially bloated unhealthy balance sheets. With the collapse of the Bangkok Bank of Commerce in mid-1996 the Bank of Thailand intervened to defend the exchange rate. The consequent rise in interest rates, exposing an ailing property market, produced an increasing number of nonperforming loans. The Bank of Thailand was forced to float the currency in 1997. The result was a hefty devaluation of the baht.

International investors began to reevaluate their perceptions of risk in the entire Asian region. A loss of investor confidence saw the contagion spread quickly. Sound economic fundamentals (strong growth, lowest inflation in a decade, rising foreign exchange reserves) provided no immunity for countries like Indonesia.

Today, with hyperinflation (inflation above 60 per cent), massive debt defaults seeming to require some form of moratorium, and corporate restructuring eliminating jobs, lack of political leadership and serious social tension threaten civil unrest in Indonesia. And so the problem snowballs. Along with the ASEAN-4, Hong Kong faces asset price deflation. Even the world's seventh largest economy - China - is exposed to the problems characterising the region. Despite the immunity from financial markets offered by the non-convertibility of China's currency, Asian devaluations to date have placed pressure on the competitiveness of the export sector. A prevailing risk for the region is that, with only tepid domestic demand, China may require currency devaluation to maintain export strength and sustain growth.

Official statistics imply that China has the largest proportion of non-performing loans (30 per cent of the total outstanding) in the region. But China also has healthy reserves, the potential to ease monetary and fiscal policy further and - as the second largest economy in the region, after Japan - an obligation to play a constructive role in stabilising and containing the region's crisis. How these forces play out depends, at least in part, on the political environment in Japan. If Japan fails to deliver a substantive fiscal stimulus (in the order of Y10trn) to revitalise an economy in the throes of recession and to stabilise the Yen, issues of competitiveness could well see

China devalue its currency before the end of 1998. This would trigger another round of competitive devaluations in the region, destabilising financial markets further and deepening the real economy consequences of this crisis.

The potential for this Asian contagion to spread to other emerging markets in Eastern Europe and Latin America would reemerge. For example, with a significant proportion of its foreign debt short-term, and unresolved issues of taxation reform contributing to its government budget deficit, Russia's currency may be vulnerable to short-term speculative attack. Even without the added instability of Renminbi devaluation or contagion to other emerging markets, the current crisis is not only likely to be extremely costly for the region - with a number of countries experiencing recession - but also prolonged. In a recent paper for the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas (August 1997), Professor Morris Goldstein of the Institute for International Economics, noted that, historically, crises which are principally financial in origin (as in Asia) frequently endure for 4-5 years, unlike currency crises (which typically last for less than a year).

Compounding this is the failure of a number of Asian leaders to acknowledge and react, in a timely way, to the problems manifest in their economies. There is clearly a need for co-ordinated international support to maintain the process of financial intermediation in the region. For example, in a number of countries where real economy effects are merely *symptomatic* of ailing financial systems, *lower* rather than higher interest rates recommended by IMF are required to provide liquidity to financial sectors. Nevertheless, the main responsibility for stabilisation lies with the Asian countries themselves. The rapid identification of non-performing loans and instigation of programs for the use of public funds to take them off financial balance sheets will be critical to restoring economic growth in the region.

What are the immediate consequences of this crisis? The consequences of this crisis are far-reaching. In the near-term, Asia probably permits a relatively more accommodative global monetary policy and extends the low inflation global growth cycle at a relatively more moderate pace. This occurs because the unwinding of Asia's excess capacity will deliver both a negative demand shock to global growth and a supply shock which is likely to suppress any acceleration in global inflation. In the face of a great deal of uncertainty about the final impact of such shocks on Western economies, there is little doubt that the Asian crisis has arrested the lever of tighter

THE STATUS OF WOMEN

The office of the Status of Women (OSW) is the principal policy advising body to the Prime Minister on issues affecting Women in Australia. Pru Goward is the First Assistant Secretary of the OSW.

Australians know Pru Goward well as a journalist for ABC radio and television over 19 years. Pru Goward has also been a lecturer in journalism at the University of Canberra. Appointed to the OSW in 1996, Pru Goward has certainly raised the position's profile. Hear Pru Goward give an update on measures being undertaken to improve the status of women.

SPEAKER : PRU GOWARD (Head, Office Status of Women)
TOPIC : *Free Feminism - The Modernisation of the Case for Women*

DATE : Wednesday 15 April 1998

TIME : 5.30 for 6.00pm

VENUE : Museum of Sydney Theatre, cnr Bridge & Phillip Streets, Sydney

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monetary policy in the United States and perhaps even here in Australia, at least for the moment. And, in Europe, economic union is likely to proceed at a lower level of interest rate convergence.

Given the collapse of domestic demand and exchange rates in the region to date, the net export performance of the Asian countries is likely to improve dramatically. Slowing import growth and accelerating export growth (*critically* dependent on the continued availability of trade credit) will result in current account surpluses and provide some stimulus to growth across the region. The reciprocal of this will be burgeoning current account deficits, and some drag on growth, for Western trading partners, including Australia. Our own estimates suggest that this impact on the current accounts of Western economies (and Japan) is likely to be in the order of US\$78 billion. Australia's current account deficit is likely to widen to around 5.5 per cent of GDP in 1998/99.

“The Asian crisis has effectively delivered the opportunity to compress and accelerate the longer term goals of APEC.”

Although difficult to quantify with any sort of conviction, this is likely to depress OECD economic growth by around .5 to .75 of a percentage point in 1998. For Australia, where two-thirds of our exports are directed to East Asia (including Japan), the impact may be higher, at around 1 per cent. But this detraction is impacting at a stage in our domestic cycle when real wage and employment growth is underpinning strong consumption expenditure, further boosted, at least to some extent, by the wealth effects of successful privatisations, such as the Telstra float, and perhaps more importantly, the AMP demutualisation. Wealth effects have been identified as significant contributors to consumption growth in the US (as a result of general equity market strength) and in the UK, following the windfall gains arising from building society demutualisations over 1997.

Our domestic economic fundamentals are presently in good shape; we enjoy low inflation; a government budget surplus; and a healthy financial system; supported by world-class standards of prudential supervision. Growth in the order of 3.5 per cent in 1998/99 in Australia, Asia notwithstanding, is likely to be amongst the fastest recorded amongst OECD countries.

Financial linkages will also play some role in transmitting the Asian impact. Excluding Japan,

European financial institutions have the greatest (direct) Western exposure to the region. According to the Bank for International Settlements, German banks had \$42 billion worth of loans to countries in the Asian region at the end of 1996. This compares to \$35 billion for US banks and \$119 billion for Japanese banks.

Asia extends (and amplifies) the disinflationary environment nurtured by central bank commitment to price stability across the OECD in recent years. This works through a number of channels. Weaker global growth depresses commodity prices; relative price shifts occur as excess capacity delivers price falls (deflation) in certain sectors (this is already occurring in technology-related electronics and automobile industries); and import competition, through the availability of cheaper Asian goods, suppresses pricing power in a number of industries. In the US, for example, the strength of the dollar has delivered falls in import prices and contributed significantly to the country's excellent inflation performance in the face of prolonged above-trend growth.

What are the longer-run consequences of this crisis? The process of debt-deflation in Asia will be worked through. Eventually the region will re-emerge, healthier and better positioned within the global economy. The Asian crisis has effectively delivered the opportunity to compress and accelerate the longer term goals of APEC, namely financial and trade liberalisation within the region. Under the Bogor (Indonesia, 1994) schedule, APEC aimed for the removal of tariff barriers for developing countries by 2020 and for industrialised economies by 2010. Such liberalisation delivers efficiency of resource allocation, improves the returns on investments, bolsters productive capacity and promotes “quality” growth.

In a recently published paper on this topic (Stoeckel, McKibbin et al., 1997), the Centre for International Economics estimates that the original APEC reforms had the potential to deliver real consumption gains in the order of 1.4 per cent for participating economies. For the ASEAN countries, this potential comprised economic growth around 3 per cent higher in 2020 than it might otherwise have been, exports over 10 per cent higher, and consumption expenditure over 6 per cent higher in the same period. Acknowledging the benefits to the Asian economies themselves, Australia, along with other Western countries, now has the opportunity to encourage expedience with respect to these reforms.

(Alison Tarditi is a Vice President, Bankers Trust Australia)

NEW AGE MEETS THE LUNAR RIGHT

David Greason & Michael Kapel

Our local lunar right is numerically tiny, yet it manages to support an improbably wide range of newspapers, magazines and newsletters. Few if any of these would ever be seen by the average Australian. It is unlikely, for example, that magazines published by Australia's premier anti-Semitic outfit, the League of Rights, would ever be found on newsagents' shelves, largely because they are so unambiguously racist and anti-democratic.

Yet walk into virtually any capital city newsagency, and it is likely that you will find *Nexus* magazine, *New Dawn* or *Exposure*. All peddle the well-worn myths and fears of the lunar right; some of them propagate openly racist theories, yet all manage to avoid the lunar-right tag, largely thanks to their other contents, which range from UFO exposés to alternative health practices, often mixed in with a healthy dose of what appears to be New Age mysticism.

The bi-monthly *Nexus* is the eldest of the three. Its publisher, Duncan Roads, has told of how some years ago he took over a dying New Age magazine, junked the New Age contents, replaced them with conspiracy theories (Roads prefers to call them "suppressed information"), and has never looked back. How much the New Age content has been junked is a matter of opinion; the magazine's contents and edgy anti-establishment tone guarantee *Nexus*' standing in New Age circles, whatever Roads' strategy.

Roads has any number of lessons to teach publishers who want to increase circulation by finding new markets. Each subsequent issue appeals to a new segment of the disaffected. One issue will expose UFO cover-ups, then move on to suppressed cancer cures, then reveal how the power companies have been blackening the name of Free Energy scientist Nikola Tesla.

Most of this material is neither right nor left in and of itself. As far back as the 1950s, the League of Rights was promoting "alternative" medicine, although, as with its political musings, it had an unerring ability to latch on to known crank therapies, such as the Hoxsey cancer treatment. This was meant to be a

practical manifestation of the League's contempt for centralised sources of power; in this case the medical establishment and the major drug companies.

Nor was this solely an Australian trait. America's John Birch Society was that country's prime publicist for dubious cancer treatments; one society leader, G. Edward Griffin, wrote two best selling books, one attacking the supposed communist control of the United Nations, the other extolling the cancer-fighting qualities of laetrile.

The medical articles in *Nexus* are of the same genre as the above mentioned works, and as many paragraphs are devoted to detailing the conspiracies against these unorthodox theories as there are explaining how they are meant to work. But this is only one side of *Nexus* magazine. Besides the "how-to" articles on growing your own teeth, and the interviews with extra-terrestrials is a hard core of articles promoting far-right conspiracy theories and racist doctrines.

Three years ago, Roads found himself the centre of controversy when it was revealed that *Nexus* had been the major Australian mouthpiece for the US militia movement. Contributors to *Nexus* included Bo Gritz, a former Green Beret who described the Oklahoma bombing as "a Rembrandt - a masterpiece of science and art put together", Linda Thompson, who was arrested in 1994 on her way to blockade the White House with the help of an assault rifle and 285 rounds of ammunition, and Mark Koernke, also known as "the Grand Guru of Hate".

"When Bob Hawke ordered the closure of the Libyan People's Bureau, the Libyan Government arranged for Pash to take over the Melbourne-based Libyan-Arab Cultural Centre"

Besides being a mouthpiece for the militias, *Nexus* gave substantial publicity to US anti-Semite and white supremacist Richard Kelly Hoskins. *Nexus* serialised Hoskins' *War Cycles*, *Peace Cycles*, which argued that it was justifiable to murder "inter-racial" couples. Roads also reprinted the writings of jailed US fraudster and extremist Lyndon LaRouche.

Roads' relationship with the LaRouche movement is problematic. In a 1995 interview with *Australia/Israel Review*'s Michael Kapel, he described LaRouche as "a few sandwiches short of a picnic", and his Australian supporters as anti-Semites who

“incite ... anger, hate and bad emotions”. Yet he was also quite happy to sell, until recently, LaRouche’s preposterous expose of international drug trafficking, Dope Inc., which lays the blame for this scourge directly at the door at the British Royal Family.

Whereas lunar-right publications tend to draw political lessons from their “revelations”, *Nexus* is content to simply air the various theories and let readers make their own minds up. “*Nexus* seeks to provide ‘hard to get’ information so as to assist people ... *Nexus* is not linked to any religious, philosophical or political ideology or organisation,” says the magazine’s statement of purpose. This distancing stance serves a number of purposes. When interviewed on Melbourne’s 3RRR radio, in 1995, Roads even admitted to having “an open mind” on whether the Holocaust occurred.

To add some flavor, Roads regularly editorialises about the mysterious threats he and his fellow journalists receive. He has repeatedly boasted that “the international intelligence community” supposedly warned him off publishing his revelations on international drug trafficking, although the warnings appear to have had little or no effect. Other, more pleasant callers, fill Roads in on the latest operations of the conspiracy. “I have repeatedly been getting calls from people saying that 1998 is the year,” he editorialised in *Nexus*’ February-March 1998 edition. “Whether they mean earthquakes, Big Brother takeovers, stock-market crashes, alien visitations, or all of the above, I guess we’ll find out later.”

Roads’ introduction to LaRouche’s peculiar theories may very well have come through an old comrade of his, Robert Pash, the founder/publisher of *Nexus*’ shelf-mate, the bi-monthly *New Dawn*. In a 1997 interview, Pash admitted to *The Sydney Morning Herald*’s Richard Guillatt, that he had had a “youthful flirtation” with the far-right.

In fact, Pash had a substantial involvement - including at a leadership level - with lunar right groups throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, as was once revealed in a parliamentary speech by Victorian Labor MHR Clyde Holding. Pash was the Queensland organiser of the white supremacist Aryan Nations movement, and a member of National Alliance, a predecessor of National Action. In the early 1980s, he established his own group, National Vanguard, which combined white Australian ultra-nationalism with pro-Libyan propaganda.

Robert Pash was by no means the only extremist seeking to promote Colonel Gaddafi’s interests in Australia. He faced some tough competition from the Trotskyist Socialist Labour League, whose British

comrades in the Workers’ Revolutionary Party were so politically and morally bankrupt that they were happy to take Libyan and Iraqi money in exchange for spying on British Jews. But Pash won the Libyan franchise, and when Bob Hawke ordered the closure of the Libyan People’s Bureau, the Libyan Government arranged for Pash to take over the Melbourne-based Libyan-Arab Cultural Centre. In this position, Pash helped to co-ordinate Libyan Government funded visits to Tripoli; most recipients were from the political left, but Pash’s National Vanguard comrades were not forgotten.

This writer (David Greason) managed to wangle a first class ticket to Tripoli in 1989, as *The Age* correspondent covering a delegation of left-wing MPs who unsuccessfully sought to explore an alleged Libyan chemical weapons plant faced with US bombing. It was on this visit that I first met Duncan Roads, who claimed to be representing the Australian Democrats. He spent much of his time on the trip either attempting to convince the Victorian shellback lefties, George Crawford and Joan Coxsedg, of the presence of UFOs or singing the praises of the far-right Bo Gritz, who - unsurprisingly - the Victorians had never heard of. Fellow Victorian ALP Socialist Left luminary Jean McLean aptly dubbed Roads “Astro Boy”.

For his part, Pash has for some years claimed that he had renounced his former far-right beliefs and was now a committed opponent of all forms of racism and colonial oppression (including, unsurprisingly, Zionism). Yet even until the present day, he has shown a repeated propensity to assist the interests of far-right groupings, from the British National Front, whose 1987 leadership trip to Libya Pash helped to facilitate, to the LaRouche movement, whose early 1990s push into Australia was actively assisted by Pash.

The knowledge of Pash’s background to a large extent limited his work with many leftist groups (although this did not stop the purist Spartacist League, which loudly boasts of its total opposition to fascists and former fascists, liaising with Pash in the late 80s). He did, however create a beachhead through the South Movement, a Third Worldist outfit headed by two former Melbourne Maoists whose slide towards conspiracism was no doubt accelerated by their Pash-induced flirtation with LaRouchism.

In the early 1990s, *New Dawn* regularly reprinted material from the LaRouchites, and Pash was favorably quoted in US LaRouche publications, despite LaRouche’s earlier claims that Colonel Gaddafi had once attempted to assassinate his wife, Helga Zepp-LaRouche. For reasons best known to

himself, Pash phased out *New Dawn's* pro-LaRouche commentary and began to favor obscurantist articles lauding gnosticism (a definite LaRouche no-no) and articles sourced from the controversial Church of Scientology, which also takes out expensive color advertisements in the magazine. Also phased out were the articles lauding Arab dictatorships, although *New Dawn's* editor, David Jones, has maintained that link through his leadership of the Hands off Iraq Committee, under whose auspices he recently had a letter published in the *The Australian*.

New Dawn avoids much of the heavily footnoted pseudo-scientific content of *Nexus*, concentrating instead on lengthy metaphysical articles. These are interspersed with more populist-minded pieces on the X-Files, conspiracy theories and left-sounding attacks on the police state (encouraged no doubt by Pash's recently revealed presence in the files of the Victorian Special Branch).

With the departure of the LaRouchites from the pages of *New Dawn*, other lunar-right luminaries came to the fore, including US white supremacist lawyer Kirk Lyons, who specialises in representing far-right activists, and William Grimstad, the former editor of the US Nazi Party's newspaper, *White Power*. A favorable reference to Grimstad appears in the January-February 1998 issue of *New Dawn*; he is described as identifying "the diabolical dangers inherent in the supremely anti-spiritual ethos dominating our age".

Like Roads, Pash is dismissive of the "New Age", while filling his magazine with advertisements from that quarter. "The so called 'New Age' movement - quite obviously - refuses to face the reality that powerful, malevolent forces control the world, and are holding the Earth and its inhabitants back from the goal of transformation". This claim appears in a *New Dawn* (Jan-Feb 1998) article signed by the Life Science Fellowship, Pash's own quasi-religious body that offers *New Dawn* readers "introductory literature on the Gnostic Tradition".

One piece of literature from the Fellowship is "The Divine Conception and the Crisis of the Modern World". This document is available on the internet, and it is perhaps telling that many of the sites pointing to it are lunar-right or ultra-conservative.

The document is not signed, although much of its content is eerily reminiscent of material produced by Robert Pash since his Aryan Nations days. Its core trumpets the well-worn (and Pash-favored) British Israelite myth that subtly disenfranchises Jewish people by claiming that the Israelites of the Bible are now to be found among the "aryan" peoples of Europe.

Throughout the document are references and footnotes that in their totality would really only make sense to a lunar rightist steeped in mysticism. On the one side, Italian fascist theorist Julius Evola, apartheid apologist Douglas Reed, and unrepentant Hitlerite Savitri Devi; on the other mystical writer Manly Hall and Rosicrucian Spencer Lewis. But even these few references serve to point out that the line between the far-right and unorthodox spirituality is not clear-cut. Evola's religious writings are far better known than his fascism, while Savitri Devi, a Greek Hitlerite who lived in India, had a number of her books published by the Rosicrucians.

What sometimes makes lunar right theories attractive to people is a faulty comprehension of the significance of those ideas. Readers of Rex Gilroy's *Mysterious Australia* (published by *Nexus*), which argues that Australian pre-history has European origins, might be less inclined towards these views were they to consider that such theories might serve to undermine Aboriginal legitimacy. They might be even less inclined again were they to know of Mr Gilroy's long-time association with Australian far-right activists from his 1970s association with individuals in Australia's tiny national action movement, such as Jim Saleam, through to his writings in the 1990s published in the anti-Semitic and racist *Bunyip Bulletin*.

"Its December-January 1997-98 issue boasted an exclusive interview with Pauline Hanson, insisting that the Member for Oxley was not a racist."

The third news-stand magazine is *Exposure*, which is very much a recent arrival. In format, *Exposure* is almost identical to *Nexus*, although the content appears to more reflect the personal interests of its publisher, former Jehovah's Witness, David M. Summers. All three magazines emblazon their interests across the top of their cover pages. *Nexus'* are "Conspiracies - Behind the News - Health - UFOs - Future Science"; *New Dawn's* are "Real-Life X-Files - Cover-ups - Alternative Health Supplement"; *Exposure's* are "Conspiracy - UFOs - New World Order - Religion - Ancient Mysteries - Secret Societies - Suppressed Technology and more..."

As with *Nexus* and *New Dawn*, each issue of *Exposure* offers a wide range of material to appeal to paranoid and edgy readers. *Exposure* also has a strong side business in the lucrative area of videos. The February-March 1998 issue features videos on UFOs and crop circles alongside US Militia-made documentaries on the Waco siege, anti-Masonic and

anti-Jehovah's Witness exposés and two popular videos from Jeremy Lee, veteran Australian rural lunar-right activist who for years was Eric Butler's lieutenant in the League of Rights.

Besides publicising familiar lunar-right standbys, such as features on the notorious Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion, *Exposure* has been more willing to engage in partisan more political controversy than the other two magazines. Its December-January 1997-98 issue boasted an exclusive interview with Pauline Hanson, insisting that the Member for Oxley was not a racist. As is often the case when conspiratorial ideologues meet their less informed hero figures, the interview at times had unconsciously comic touches. The interviewers, Summers and his partner Kelly Cahill, strained to dominate the interview with their own theories, most of which appeared to pass over Pauline's head.

***Exposure:* We print a lot of stuff that they don't want you to know about. They ... the governments, the establishment. Let's be realistic, it is coming to the stage, in my opinion, where it is getting to be the public versus them. They are playing chess with the masses and we are the pawns. When you see what is happening in the Middle East, it's horrific. I don't know if you have been over there?**

Hanson: I haven't been to Asia since 1980.

Other unorthodox spiritual groups have also attempted to climb aboard to the One Nation bandwagon. Enquirers to a pro-Hanson advertisement run in a Northern Territory newspaper last year were also sent copies of "An Eye for an Eye", a newsletter mixing UFO material with white supremacy and anti-Semitism. Its website hosts a mind-bending range of articles, from "Project Apocalypse Now - Australia's Premier Paranormal and Parapsychology web site (which) gives you the cutting edge insight into the real world of Magic and the Occult" to the home page of the pro-Nazi Australian Revolutionary Movement, a breakaway group from the violent Perth-based Australian Nationalist Movement. Whether the publishers of "An Eye For An Eye" are primarily lunar-right or occultist is probably irrelevant; there is a sufficient confluence of interest.

New Age and occultist circles are not necessarily of the left, even though alternative lifestyles and anti-establishment sentiment is often assumed to have a leftist shade. To a certain extent, the rise of irrationalist ideologies as propagated by *Nexus*, *New Dawn* and *Exposure* may be filling a vacuum created

by the recent collapse of the radical left. Australia has not yet seen the rise of leftist groups that mirror these views (with the exception of the tiny quasi-Maoist South Movement), although even left groups acknowledge that this is increasingly likely to happen. Magazines like *Nexus*, *New Dawn* (and to a lesser extent *Exposure*), which introduce to a wide audience lunar-right theories cloaked in a counter-culture garb, may very well play a significant role in accelerating this process.

(David Greason & Michael Kapel are Contributing Editor and Editor respectively of Australia/Israel Review)

LEARNING FROM BLAIR'S BABES

Anne Henderson

The chaps have stolen the limelight again, this time at the Constitutional Convention. While a third of the delegates were women, and some very well known public figures among them, media reports gave a different impression, especially newspaper reports.

The blokes got the opening speeches - Chair pair Ian Sinclair and Barry Jones, parliamentary leaders John Howard and Kim Beazley, ARM leader Malcolm Turnbull and Constitutional Monarchist Lloyd Waddy who knocked off spokeswoman Kerry Jones. Daily reports were heavily concentrated on the blokes - with the exception of a few women such as Pat O'Shane or Janet Holmes á Court

In the 1890s, there were no women at the conventions that gave birth to the Australian Federation. Only in South Australia were some women able to vote at the first federal election. But being there and having a vote is not enough. Women also need some star roles. Newspaper archives are filling up with all-male pictures of the birth of the Australian Republic.

It's a lesson British Labour Party women may have learnt some time ago. In the Blair Government women are a quarter of the parliamentary party. Five women hold Cabinet positions and 18 are in the Ministry. Mo Mowlan is Secretary for Northern Ireland and Margaret Beckett is President of the Board of Trade. The Commons is now splashed with female colour. 101 Labour, 13 Conservatives and 6 other women MPs.

They've been called Blair's Babes by the media, been derided in the worst of British upper class schoolboy traditions across the floor of the Commons, had lewd gestures flung at them as they speak, but they are changing things at Westminster. "Attitudes of MPs I thought would never shift, have shifted," says Mo Mowlan.

Linda McDougall's *Westminster Women* (Viking 1998) is the story of how women, mostly Labour, won a critical mass of seats in the British parliament in 1997. The book became a television series immediately and was screened in Britain in January.

It was coming for two decades. And it was a struggle where women won their seats and preselections with dogged determination, by using every stratagem the men had taught them. Betty Boothroyd, Speaker of the House, stood for 17 years in unwinnable seats before she was selected for the winnable seat of West Bromwich. Conservative Ann Widdecombe took three general elections, or a decade and a half, to win Maidstone and The Weald.

Almost half of Labour's 64 new women MPs gained political experience through their involvement in local politics. And half of these admitted to having actively looked for a seat. Many also found a background in union organisations gave them valuable skills and experience when entering parliamentary politics.

Yet while many of the 92 women MPs interviewed for *Westminster Women* showed they had been ambitious, confident and healthily tactical in their moves to become MPs, McDougall also found a familiar ambivalence in them. One in five of them had to be encouraged or helped by others to put themselves forward for preselection.

Even with younger MPs, there was a feeling it was not good politics for women to be accused of self-promotion, especially in the Labour Party. Hazel Blears, MP for Salford, won her seat after three attempts in 1997. "The Labour Party ... is a party where you gradually take steps and you become more skilled." But for the first time in Britain, the 1997 election saw a full cross section of British women taking their seats in the Commons. Nurses,

carers, kindergarten teachers, trade union officials and small businesswomen. And with it a somewhat new approach to private lives.

Angela Eagle, MP for Wallasey, has spoken publicly about her longtime relationship with a woman. Some are open about living with men they are not married to and helping to bring up children who could be "hers, his or theirs". For the first time ever, British MPs seem to be able to live unconventional lives and still win votes.

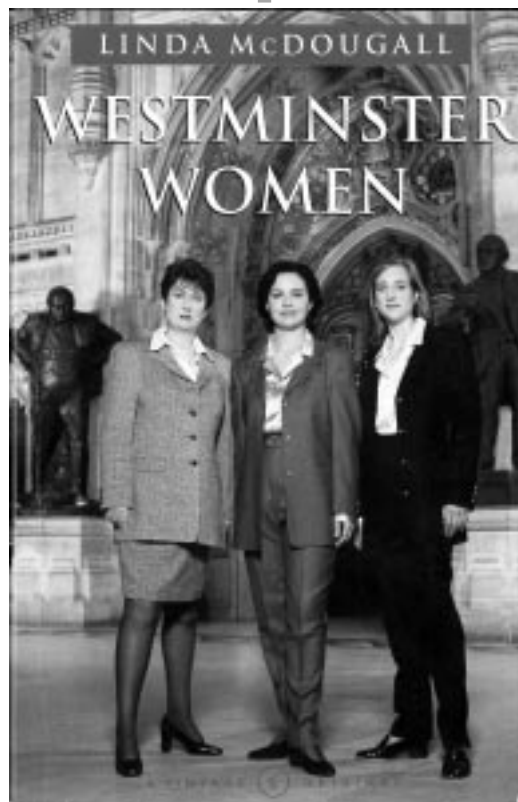
The battle to get significant numbers of women into parliament in Britain has been concerted and tough minded. Its longterm success and impact will be measured by the fact that of the 66 seats Labour did not expect to win at the 1997 election, only 11 are held by women.

A swing in the Conservatives' favour at the next election, four years away, will not see many women lose their seats and would in fact increase the proportion of women in the Commons on the Labour side.

Should the Conservatives opt for more women candidates, this should only increase female participation at Westminster. British women seeking a parliamentary career in the next few years are advised to try the Conservatives. That's where the seats will be.

There is no doubt the increase in women MPs in Britain owes a lot to Labour's pro-active policies to engineer women into winnable seats. When party polling showed that Labour had lost the 1992 election largely because it failed to win enough women's votes, it adopted regional targets. Half the safe seats and half the winnable seats in every region would be committed to all-women short lists. This policy was eventually overturned by an industrial tribunal in 1995, but by then 38 women had been preselected under the new rules, bringing the number of women candidates, sitting and new, to 132. The battle to secure a significant number of seats for women was won.

Many stories went into the years of pushing for more female candidates in the British Labour Party. Funds raised by Emily's List assisted women with CVs, transport, home help, whatever as they prepared for preselection. The April 1994 newsletter *Emily's News*



announced the “first eleven” recipients of Emily’s List money. The hope then was to score a tally of 50 new Labour women in parliament at the 1997 election. 1997 outdid all expectations.

Humble beginnings permeate the stories. Six women union organisers who had met every six weeks in a piano bar in the 1980s, plotted the strategy to put women into positions of power in the male dominated unions.

A few years later, one of them, Anne Gibson of the Manufacturing, Science and Finance Union, convinced her union to abstain from a crucial vote which saved the all-women short list policy from defeat at the 1993 Party Conference. Labour women were not just learning how to win preselection, but also how to play party politics like the men.

There is no doubt that female representation in parliamentary forums will be a natural progression of the change that has taken place in the broader community. At the 1996 Australian Federal election, a surprising number of women won seats for the Liberal Party. All female Liberal MPs have held their preselections, but as many of them are in marginal electorate, should the tide turn Labor’s way at the next election, many will lose their seats.

And the Australian Labor Party is yet to demonstrate it can match British Labour with its targets and quotas. Preselections in Victoria and South Australia have been good for women. In New South Wales a number of women have won safe seat preselections. There will be five women in safe NSW seats for Labor after the next federal election. Joan Kirner is hoping that with an expected swing to Labor at the next federal election, 25 per cent of Labor federal members will be women. The ALP target is to have women running in 35 per cent of winnable seats by 2002. Emily’s List money, at present around \$170,000, will help some ALP women, but only when they are preselected.

But if women are to take their place among the real leaders, they will also need to be given senior jobs in Cabinet and the Ministry. Along with portfolios that go beyond areas of social policy or education. Likewise in opposition. Only then will our newspaper archives record that women did take part, and were leaders too.

(Anne Henderson is Deputy Director of The Sydney Institute)

MORAL RIGHTS CONTINUED...

Ian David

Editor, Therese Catanzariti’s piece on Moral Rights in the November issue cannot be safely ignored although it deserves to be.

In the second paragraph of her article (“Moral Rights - Wish the Producer Luck if the Writer doesn’t Waive it Goodbye” *SIQ* November 1997) she says the Australian Writers Guild maintains that the writer is the maker of the film. What bunk. The Australian Writers Guild (AWG) has always maintained that film making is a collaborative endeavour. The writer doesn’t make the film any more or less than the director, cinematographer or actor. The writer, as an author, is a major creative contributor.

In the third paragraph, Therese Catanzariti gets a little hysterical, suggesting moral rights could be given to everyone working on the film like lunch-break lollies. In fact, moral rights is more serious than that. They are rights that set out to protect the reputation of creative artists. They aren’t thrown around with gay abandon. Writers, like directors, maintain that as authors they should have some protection for their reputation and that means defending their work once it has been finished and has their name on it.

In the sixth paragraph, Therese Catanzariti shows her gross ignorance about the proposed moral rights legislation. She presents a scenario where various film artists argue over the making of a film, ostensibly exercising their moral rights. Only one problem. You can’t exercise your moral rights to defend your reputation until your name’s on the work and that doesn’t happen until the final credits go on. The argument Therese Catanzariti puts forward simply shows once again her ideas about movies must come from watching them, not making them. In short, her points are ignorant and silly.

It gets sillier in her next paragraph. Therese Catanzariti talks about trust. She says if you don’t trust the producer then find another one. If only life were that simple. But if trust is what it’s about then surely it would work the other way. Why don’t producers trust writers and directors enough to uphold their moral rights instead of moving to have them waived?

In the ninth paragraph, Therese Catanzariti cuts to the chase when she asks “what about after the film is made?” This is where moral rights kick in, so this is at least a relevant question. The scenario she presents is a simple one. A producer is required to cut two minutes from a film to make a sale in Germany. It’s pretty straight forward, but Therese Catanzariti makes it all quite juvenile, “the set designer is thrilled”, “investor is over the moon”. But the best is saved for the last. In a breathtaking piece of objectivity, she claims “the producer looks at the new cut, balances all interests”, but the writer “goes ballistic” and there’s a court case. A couple of things need correcting. First, in the proposed legislation, set designers and costume designers do not get moral rights, so why does Therese Catanzariti keep mentioning them? Second, the writer, as a moral rights holder, would expect to be consulted on any major changes to the finished work, but why couldn’t he or she be interested as the producer is making a sale and earning a living? Third, the writer could only take action if he or she felt their reputation had been impugned or damaged in some way. Just cutting the film isn’t enough, Ms Catanzariti.

In order to call herself a “film and television lawyer” Therese Catanzariti needs to do more than just represent film distributors on tax matters. She needs to do some homework. In Europe, moral rights have been around for a long time. For writers and directors they mean self-esteem, self-respect and integrity in their work. Therese Catanzariti might spend a little time with a dictionary to find out what all that means.

In her final remarks, Therese Catanzariti repeatedly uses the word “scared” in reference to distributors and producers. If Therese Catanzariti was representing me, I’d be scared too. She doesn’t know what she is talking about.

(Ian David is President of the Australian Writers Guild Authorship Collecting Society)

Therese Catanzariti Replies

Ian David assumes that I am wrong in suggesting that moral rights could be granted to other creative contributors involved in the film. He assumes that only directors and producers are granted moral rights, and says that set designers and costume designers will not be granted moral rights. This is false. The Copyright Amendment Bill grants moral rights to all authors of literary, dramatic, musical and artistic works, and the maker of a film, as producer and director. This means that composers will be granted moral rights in their film score (“musical

work”), set designers in their set designs (“artistic work” is defined to include “drawings” and “models of buildings”), costume designers in their screenplay (“literary work”).

Ian David argues that this will not give creative contributors the ability to influence the content of the film. It is true that these authors only have rights in their particular creations. However, as I explained in my article, it is very difficult to cut a film scene, without incidentally cutting the script, the set and/or the music which were part of the scene that was cut.

Ian David assumes that the Bill provides that moral rights only arise when the author is named, and authors are not entitled to moral rights if they are not named by the author. This is false. The right not to have the work subjected to derogatory treatment is a separate and distinct right from the right to be named as the author of the work. It is not dependent on being named as the author of the work.

Ian David assumes I do not support moral rights for authors. This is false. I support moral rights for authors, just as I support copyright for all authors. However, I believe that the copyright laws should allow commercial deals which properly reflect the commercial and creative reality. The moral rights regime should allow waiver, just as the copyright regime allows an author to either retain copyright or assign it to someone else.

The writers of *Shine* or *The Piano*, who developed and nurtured a project over a number of years, passed up million dollar deals from Hollywood studios to protect their creative vision, and go cap in hand to distributors and investors, are not the same as a writer of an episode of *Neighbours* who is given the characters, the series storylines, and a summary of an episode’s plot, or a writer of a screenplay who sells a project for a large upfront fee. The Bill should allow waivers to reflect different commercial and creative positions.

Ian David assumes that an author can only take action if his/her reputation has been damaged. This is false. The author will only succeed in court if his/her reputation has been damaged. But any author can file a statement of claim. And once the statement of claim has been filed, damage to the project has already been done. Investors and distributors will wait for the court to make its decision.

Ian David assumes you can win an argument and by calling your opponent stupid. Personal attacks are not an argument.

(Therese Catanzariti is a film and television lawyer at Mallesons)

BOOK REVIEWS

John McConnell

KEEPING THE BASTARDS HONEST: THE AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS' FIRST TWENTY YEARS

Edited by John Warhurst
Allen & Unwin, pb 1997, rrp \$29.95
ISBN 1 86448 420 9

In January 1997, the Australian Democrats celebrated their twentieth anniversary with a national conference in Canberra. They might not be an alternative government, Cheryl Kernot told the conference, but they were an alternative opposition. Well, well. Who would have thought that just one year later, Cheryl Kernot would be attending not a conference of Democrats, but an Australian Labor Party conference. Life is sure full of surprises.

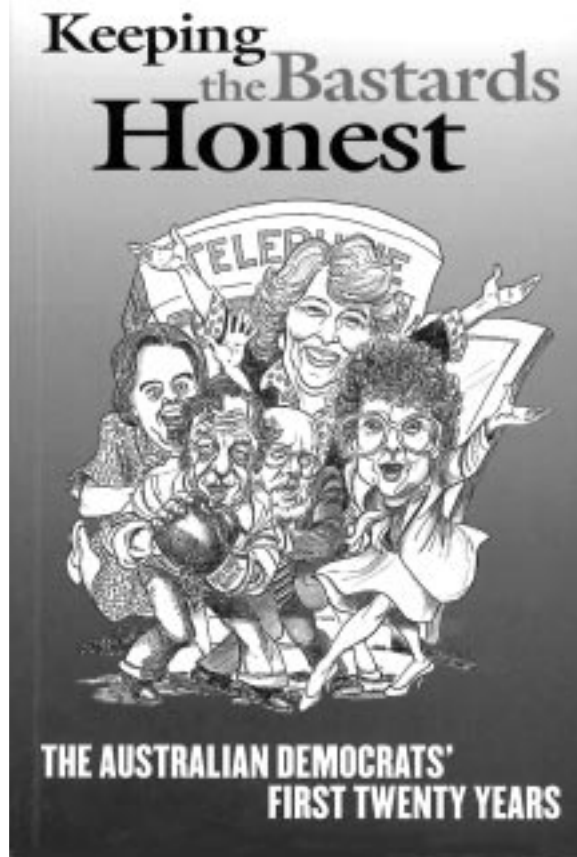
Keeping the Bastards Honest contains a collection of academic assessments of what the book's back cover blurb calls a "minor" party with a major impact". Professor John Warhurst of the Australian National University has edited the collection, as well as penning three chapters. Professor Warhurst, it seems, proposed the idea for a book and conference to the party. The party welcomed the proposal, and the conference was duly held. But without Don Chipp. The political figure identified most clearly in the mind of the public with the formation of the Australian Democrats did not attend.

Twenty years earlier, an optimistic Don Chipp had proclaimed a politics constructed on "three simple virtues": honesty, tolerance and compassion. As John Warhurst points out, the early vision guiding the Democrats' torchbearers included participatory

democracy, a desire to develop an ideology different from that of the major political parties, and an intention to act as a third political force articulating middle-of-the-road policies. The Democrats' distinctive proclamation - the commitment to internal democratic participation - has proved to be very difficult to put into practice.

Meanwhile, there has been a perceived shift by the party to the left. And now, Cheryl Kernot's defection to the official opposition. Professor Warhurst is not as critical as some about the Democrats falling short of their direct democracy ideal. However, he does note that the party has not avoided factionalism any more than the major parties. Human nature has a way of blocking the path to ideals. John Warhurst nominates the absence of ideological and organisational tightness as an issue of continuing concern for the Democrats.

The major issue in the longer term, he argues, is that which divided Cheryl Kernot and Don Chipp. Is it sufficient for the party to concentrate on "keeping the bastards honest"? Or should the party seek to find a lower house base? Unlike Don Chipp, Cheryl Kernot wished to combine a policy maker/policy leader role with that of Senate watchdog.



Cheryl Kernot may be in for some interesting times ahead. Her adopted Labor path to power may place her in conflict with previous perspectives and positions. There may be some fascinating observations on work-place relations and parliamentary tactics just over the horizon. Clive Bean concludes that the Democrats appear to be safe in the foreseeable future. But he does stress just how important leadership is to a party without a distinctive social base. "In practice," writes Ian Ward, "politics within the organisation are often played out much as they are in the major parties and the Democrats have not been immune to factions (or tendencies) or to personal

rivalries." Ian Ward refers to anecdotal evidence suggestive of a high membership turnover, and of the Democrats' reluctance to remove a veil from this aspect of party life.

Hiroya Sugita, a Special Adviser on Australian Politics at the Japanese Embassy in Canberra, has contributed two chapters to the book. He sees the Democrats' ideological character based on social liberalism and postmaterialism. Two tendencies coexist within the party, he writes, one green, the other pragmatic. The working of Australian politics, Hiroya Sugita suggests, means that this is an "age of conflicting mandates". Nicholas Economou highlights the mixed nature of the relationship with environmental interest groups. While allies to a certain extent, the context is a competitive one at times. Assessments of state branches are provided by Jenny Tilby Stock (South Australia), and Rodney Smith (New South Wales). Dean Jaensch discusses the Liberal Movement in South Australia.

Liz Young applies three criteria (capacity to obtain parliamentary representation, to achieve policy goals, and to enhance the review function of the upper house) to the parliamentary performance of the Democrats. Marian Sawyer examines the party's role from a feminist viewpoint and from the view of their contribution to social liberal values; the party, she believes, reflects the modern trend to cater for difference.

R. K. Carty, a University of British Columbia political scientist presents the Australian Democrats in comparative perspective, reflecting on the roles of new parties in Denmark, the Netherlands, Ireland, and Britain. Tim Battin urges the Democrats to confront what he regards as "the extremism of the middle ground". In addition to 17 pages of references, the book includes three appendices: a listing of all Democrat Senators, the party's national officeholders, and state parliamentarians since 1977.

PAULINE HANSON: ONE NATION AND AUSTRALIAN POLITICS
Edited by Bligh Grant
University of New England Press, pb
1997, rrp \$19.95
ISBN 11 875821 38 4

Is there something that I have missed about fish and chip shops? Could it be that they turn one's thoughts to politics? Pauline Hanson made the transition from

"fish and chips" to parliament. Now we have a book - *Pauline Hanson: One Nation and Australian Politics* edited by Bligh Grant - and you guessed it, Bligh Grant has worked in a fish and chip shop too.

I decided to investigate this matter. I spent some time in the local fish and chip shop while my order was being prepared, but alas gained not one political insight. Other, that is, than identifying in some strange way with the small goldfish that was darting around inside a murky fishbowl on the shop's counter. Bligh Grant, most probably, will never discuss the best way to chop squid tubes into calamari rings with Pauline Hanson. But he does believe that any political discussion of Pauline Hanson involves a conversation embracing the Coalition government and the prime ministership of John Howard. Bligh Grant graduated from the University of New England in 1994, and is now undertaking a PhD examining international governance.

Most of the book's ten chapters have been written by University of New England academics. Grant Bligh speaks of "an emotivist style of politics" that is the Hanson phenomenon, one that brings with it an associated danger of violence. He regrets John Howard's "lack of moral imagination".

The book's first chapter provides an excellent opening to the subsequent contributions. Written by David Wells, a senior lecturer in political science at the University of New England, it reviews the nature of populism and associated tendencies. This "gut feeling" politics invariably exhibits "positive hostility" David Wells observes, "to intellectual, reflective and reasoned approaches to the political world".

Populism may begin, he argues, with an apparently democratic claim. But it subverts democratic values by interpreting criticism as repression. Have you heard Pauline Hanson insisting repeatedly that she will not be silenced? Populism elevates opinion above debate. Indeed, it genuflects before certain opinions as "the Truth", while concluding that the presence of



other opinions amount to evidence of a conspiracy.

Wells correctly sees populism as the politics of resentment. It is the politics of generalised anger. Usually, the generalised anger is directed at a scapegoat, a minority that is different in some respect. Social psychology provides the avenue to an understanding of the politics of perceived relative deprivation.

Digby Hughes discusses why the Hanson phenomenon may be limited to one parliamentary term. Many variables will come together to determine the outcome in this regard. Anne Ellison with Iva Deutchman - both of whom are connected with the University of Melbourne - regard Hanson's leadership as being precarious. Pauline Hanson, they argue, is a woman with a masculinist agenda in a male playing field, the only female leader in a far right movement full of potential rivals. Ruth Bohill, an Associate Lecturer in Law at the University of New England, focuses on Pauline Hanson's seeming attachment to the flawed logic of formal equality, that is, that everyone should be treated the same, no matter the differences that exist.

Tony Lynch and Ronnie Reavell discuss the politics of political correctness, while Tod Moore targets economic correctness (economic rationalism) in a chapter entitled "Economic Rationalism and Economic Nationalism"; One Nation, he believes, will win votes by substituting economic nationalism for economic rationalism. John Atchison reviews the nature, as distinct from the content, of the Australian immigration debate.

Karin von Strokirch and Mary Low-O'Sullivan attempt to assess the impact of the Hanson phenomenon on Australia's standing in the Asian region; the tendency for the Howard government to dwell on the economic implications flowing from Pauline Hanson's statements, they argue, "has lent a hollow ring to its fervent declarations that racism is morally reprehensible". Anthony Phillips portrays the Hanson issue as part of a wider identity crisis for Australia.

Last of all, Jeff Archer, Head of the Department of Political Science at the University of New England, discusses the importance of symbolic politics, and laments that there has been insufficient realisation of the significance of symbolism within the Howard government.

(John McConnell is the co-author of several senior economics text books)

REVIEW OF THE REVIEWERS

Stephen Matchett

The more irrelevant the ideology the stronger the theoretical debate among its adherents. Which is probably why the last ten years were a golden age for the rag bag of cultural theorising and academic esoterica which has replaced the various failed faiths of Marxism.

But despite the furious attempts of the cultural studies academics, the dominance of theorising in the universities has had no impact on the public policy popular culture debate which rolls on outside their charmed scholarly circle. It is a desperate attempt to explain this irrelevance which is at the heart of Mark Davis' *Gangland* (Allen & Unwin 1997).

Superficially *Gangland* has all the breadth of intellectual vision of a column by Hugh Mackay. Be it a mass murder or a fall in TAFE enrolment rates Mackay's explanation is that the uncertainties of life are having a terrible impact on the long suffering middle classes. Davis has a similarly universal explanation for all problems which afflict the young. A clique of ancient media middlebrows controls cultural debate in the Australian media to ensure that only their views get a hearing and that only they and their mates get all the good jobs.

Davis is far too clever to run this line in isolation. He argues that there is a conspiracy of the established intellectual order of media greying beards, in their 40s and 50s, to exclude young intellectual visionaries. What is more the conspiracy to exclude even applies to young people not as deeply read in Derrida, Lacan et al as they should be. But the real purpose of the book is less a plea for putatively dispossessed youth than a desperate attempt to explain why both the chattering classes and the wider community completely ignore the party line run by Davis' academic sect.

It is not far into the book before Davis lets it slip that being young is not enough for a place in his book of martyrs. The forces of righteousness who

evinced the proper political views and the correct interpretations of culture are rendered young by their beliefs. People, chronologically younger than Davis, who have not embraced the correct line on "new forms of knowledge", are by dint of their black hearted beliefs ipso facto, old. But the claim that there is a conspiracy to suppress it is so unsubstantiated that Davis has trouble in maintaining the fiction.

Davis' men and women in their 40s and (oh that such wickedness should be) their 50s, dominate the media, by which he means the Arts and Op Ed pages Davis does not mention business, sports, IT, food or fashion. Prominent villains are Michael Gawenda, P P McGuinness, Gerard Henderson, Robert Manne, Beatrice Faust, Helen Garner, Bettina Arndt, everybody who has fronted a current affairs program on television, and the shock jocks of populist radio talk-back. Claiming that this group is in any way a coherent elite is simply nonsense. Their only unifying characteristic is in being bipeds.

Of course the greyness of the baddies' beards is relative. Luke Slattery and Rosemary Neil, very much in Davis's own age group, are lumpen greying beards because they run lines of which he does not approve. And forms of success Davis finds distasteful are also a damnation, regardless of age. For example, he dismisses Poppy King as a media token young person because she has made her own money.

But far worse than their age is the rank apostasy of the old elite. Radical in their youth, they now refuse to pass the torch to the new generation. The result is that younger writers, journalists and commentators suffer from "an enforced adolescence" (p27). Misguided readers may consider this is another way of saying they are learning their crafts.

The tragedy for Davis is that he genuinely thinks that his indeterminate groups of journalists and commentators on books and culture have any power at all. There are financial journalists half the ages of Davis' disparate collection of baddies who exercise vastly more influence in shaping the economy than a bunch of book reviewers ever will. Davis ignores the

real public policy debate, possibly because it is a bit hard to apply the rubrics of Derrida, Lacan et al to the problems of the long term unemployed and funding an equitable social security system. But in ignoring the industries the vast majority of young people work in (his examples always come from film, theatre, journalism and publishing) Davis demonstrates the irrelevance of his pompous polemic.

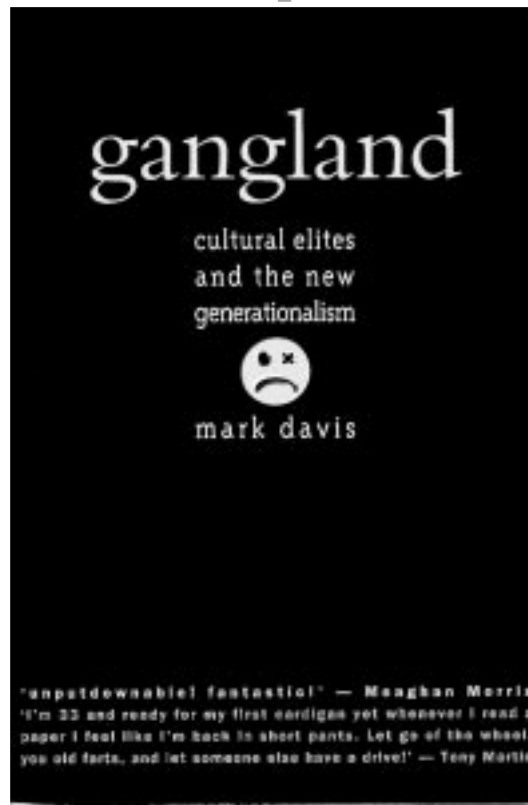
What drives Davis is that his mates are not getting the run they want in the media. In a world where new class warrior scholars such as Catherine Lumby and McKenzie Wark have regular columns in the broadsheet press this is an unlikely claim.

But Davis must avoid the unpalatable reality, that his tractarian sect has no ability to communicate its arguments to a non academic audience. According to Davis, the established order is denying the validity of entirely new ways of interpreting society, which (to establish some claim to consistency) the "young" propose.

According to Davis, not only does the conspiracy of old farts deny the young a voice, the greying beards have created the straw person of political correctness to exclude the ferals. For evidence he uses long discussions of the treatment of Helen Garner's controversy of the Ormond College sexual harassment controversy, *The First Stone* and the outcry over Helen Darville's *The Hand that Signed the Paper*.

He is particularly virulent in his treatment of Garner. Although he cloaks his discussion of her book in his two ostensible themes, the attacks on youth and the intellectual sterility of the cultural elite, he writes as if he has personal scores to settle. In particular he is angry that Helen Garner is critically well regarded and often gets a good press:

This sort of shepherding of literary reputations isn't an easy business. It requires constant husbandry, tending the flock, rounding up stragglers, cutting out the ring-ins, making sure everything is in tip-top condition. (p.126).



Davis' approach to the Darville affair is much the same. While explicitly rejecting the apparent antisemitism of her book, he focuses on the attack on Darville by the supposed media elite:

The Holocaust, in this case, figures as the ultimate version of the real. But is it possible to defend alternative ways of thinking about the Holocaust without being anti-Semitic? Contrary to the textual fundamentalism put about by some of the critics, it is. In fact, asking such questions has a bearing on the controversy, and on the role often played by members of cultural elites. (p.227)

Most of the book is like that. In *Gangland* Davis has produced a book of such intellectual irrelevance that without his generational conflict metaphor it would have gone unremarked outside the ancient warring camps of the literati. Unsurprisingly the reviewers divided into two obvious groups, the conservatives and liberals who disputed Davis censorious ideology and the leftists who celebrated it.

One of *Gangland's* lesser targets, P P McGuinness, produced an essay which supported the generational conflict thesis, without mentioning Davis' book; a line familiar to McGuinness' legion of readers, (*Sydney Morning Herald* 25 September 1997). For years McGuinness has banged on about how the baby boomers, who having won the best jobs have no intention of letting them go and intend to work on long into old age, thus holding the young to demographic ransom.

This is something which should cheer McGuinness up because in most of his Malthusian exercises in gloom he argued that the baby boomers' extravagant demands for luxurious retirement will reduce their tax paying children to penury. But in this case McGuinness argued that by not retiring, the baby boomers will exclude the following generation from the good jobs (or in Davis' terms the right to produce convoluted chats on French theory for Radio National).

Ken Gelder (*Sunday Age* 14 September 1997) is a similarly paid up believer. According to Gelder, middle aged writers and commentators hate academics, particularly young ones, developing new theories of culture and claiming to speak for the left while expressing the values of the right.

Gelder's review is a grovelling gloss on *Gangland's* core argument: "The powerful seem able only to represent themselves as embattled, which is shown through the fact that they often relate hysterically to the changing boundaries of the new world." But he

does not draw his examples from the realm of the "powerful". He merely repeats Davis' savage attacks on Helen Garner for *The First Stone* and Robert Manne and others for their denunciation of Helen Darville:

Davis...shows how moral outrage was orchestrated through the publication of three books on Darville by three ageing men with "strong media connections". These men - along with their colleagues - responded pathologically to Darville's novel, blowing it up so that it finally came to represent the end of civilisation as we know it. Manne's use of the Holocaust to serve his own interests is scathingly treated by Davis.

Gelder's praise for Davis appears to indicate a desperate need to hold the ideological line. Commentators who attacked Darville for falsifying the record of history cannot go unchallenged.

It got worse in McKenzie Wark's exercise in self justification (*Australian*, 3 September 1997). Wark set out Davis' core argument, that the greying beards are not letting the theoreticians run the nation's intellectual life: "He sees generational rhetoric as one of the ways the cultural elite legitimises itself at someone else's expense. ...In book after book we get endless repetitions of cheesy humanism." In a remarkably balanced argument he also suggested that state sanctioned harassment of the young was due to their exclusion from control of the means of cultural production:

The denial of a space in so-called high culture and literary life for young people contributes to a repressive climate for the young, in which towns and states increasingly deny basic rights to youth with special policing powers, sentencing laws and curfews.

There was more of the same. For a critic of what he calls "cheesy humanism" it is hardly surprising that Wark will not tolerate opposing views. When it comes to the culture wars Wark takes the expression literally:

Davis doesn't like the word "postmodern" because he thinks it implies that there is nothing left to say. On the contrary, I think the beauty of it is to swing the axe with joy and start again, making culture afresh... Davis does a fine job with that axe.

A case of post modern tongue firmly in a post structuralist cheek?

Catherine Lumby (*Sydney Morning Herald* 12 September 1997) frothed less but still confused her own scholarly interests with the universal concerns of youth: "...It's time to realise that post modernism, queer theory and cyberspace are serious cultural propositions, not trends."

For Lumby, the "young" as a class seems to have the idealised characteristics of a cultural studies student at a fringe metropolitan middle class university. She gave the game away with her lead which described an apocryphal fictional conversation among young people in a pub, "a novelist in his mid 30s" and "an ashen-faced academic in her early 30s". The sad reality is that most young people do not live the privileged, albeit impecunious, lives of academics and novelists. Lumby's review said it all; the theories Davis and his chums espouse are not selling with the masses and they are desperate for an explanation, or better still an excuse.

Virginia Trioli, (*The Age*, 13 September 1997), mentioned favourably in *Gangland*, produced a balanced, sympathetic review which still demonstrated the book's grievous failings. While she enjoyed the terrifically entertaining attack on old fartdom in Australian media and letters, Trioli dismissed the generational conspiracy argument:

Davis' error is in attempting to cast all whom he charges with monopoly...as belonging to one generational basket and sometimes even to uncomfortably close philosophical baskets. This is, in many of his examples simply nonsense.

Trioli sympathised with Davis' "real book", the defence of academic cultural theorising and associated left wing rat baggery, but her conclusion did it more damage than most of the outright hostile reviews: "Those with the highest profiles at the moment are not members of Davis' gang and that's fair enough but it does mean that his alternative is every bit as clubby as the ones he means to criticise."

The estimable Helen Elliott, who has made the books pages of the *Herald Sun* such a success, praised *Gangland* from a neutral stance in the culture wars but pointed out that the generational exclusion argument was nonsense (October 1 1997). She accepted Davis' general case but made the quite reasonable point that in genuine mass market popular culture the grey beards do not rule:

It's amazing that in your search for the essence of popular culture, popular opinion and young opinion you never once mentioned this paper - the largest mass-circulation paper in Australia. And, incidentally, the one paper where most of the reviewers are under 30.

Anne Coombs (*Australian Review of Books*, February 1998) aspired to a magisterial stance but basically argued that the times, they are changing:

What this country is witnessing now is not just one age cohort replacing another but something far more complex; a shifting balance of power that is happening on several planes at once. In the academy, postmodernism is throwing over the traps of traditional scholarship, in the media a younger generation is pawing at the gates, demanding admittance and in the political arena a new-old social agenda is abroad.

And surprise, surprise, *Gangland* charts the struggle between the enemies of promise and those right thinking scholars who offer us new ways of understanding the world. To her credit Coombs recognised that *Gangland* is less about a generational split than the struggle between the true believers and everybody else. Alarming, she implied that this is probably a good thing:

There is a sea change going on. Not only is a new generation of people ready to take over the wheel, but there is a new (or not so new) generation of ideas sweeping the academy and public intellectual life.

With Davis, Coombs believed that it really matters who is making the tractarian running in the cultural studies squabbles: "Literature has been a primary influence in establishing the national ethos. Writers are bestowed with some extra element of intellectual and cultural authority, so that they have often been seen as speaking on behalf of the nation." Which makes Coombs' criticism of Davis for generalising a little thin. In a post modern world, where all voices and interpretations of what they say are of equal value, it is dangerous to argue that the authorial voice has any integrity. Anne Coombs should watch out lest Davis proscribe her as an enemy of the factional line.

If many of Davis' supporters ran thin intellectually self serving arguments so did many of his critics. Frank Devine's review (*The Australian* 18 September 1997) was so orotund, pompous and patronising that perhaps it was written as some form of self parody. It certainly makes Davis' case far better than any of the arguments in *Gangland*. It was Devine at his worst, declining to discuss the book, giving the tired old war horse of his prejudices a wheezy gallop and dropping the names of his famous chums, in this case Giles Auty and Peter Coleman. For Devine, the likes of Davis believe in the "sacred women's" business at Hindmarsh Island, view the Prime Minister as a clown, think Helen Darville was victimised, all of which Devine "extrapolated" from *Gangland*. But

among all the bile and prejudice Devine did identify the fatal flaw in Davis' argument, pointing out that his line is not so different from that of the grey beard left.

Christopher Pearson (*Financial Review*, 9 September 1997) produced a less splenetic version of the same argument. Pearson is not old enough to be an old fogey, but he is working on it. Most of Pearson's review was mere sneering. Davis' book is largely "recycled thesis", and is: "clearly designed to infuriate the gang and win him a niche as king of the kids. If this is youthful iconoclasm, cultural gatekeepers have nothing to fear." Pearson's salient point was that Davis had not even noticed the greying beards' real betrayal of the young:

The profoundest grievance of the intelligent young is that they have been disadvantaged by third-rate public education. Baby-boomer teachers, who had the benefits of a rigorous, liberal education, were among the worst offenders...It was an inter-generational betrayal and it's increasingly true of tertiary education, though Davis fails to see it.

Ramona Koval (*Australian* 27 September 1997) belongs to the Devine school of reviewing. Her copy was replete with a feeble attempt at a joke uncharitably ascribed to her father, rambling discussions about people whose work she approves and why at age 43 she has decided that: "it came to me in a flash that the Treasurer of this country was three years younger than me. The thought of Peter Costello as a pimply first-former, telling the sophisticated fourth formers how to spend their tuckshop money, was too much for me to bear." Whatever that may mean.

What is more, the longer the people live, "the more likely it is that they may have learned something of value. Older people are not just good at looking back and giving tips on how to grow old gracefully. There are extremely radical thinkers two generations older than Generation X." Perhaps it was self parody intended to demonstrate the truth of Davis' argument.

Luke Slattery, a lesser victim of Davis' ire, (*Australian* 11 October 1997), produced an exercise in outrage which swung from minor point scoring, (there are lots of young journalists, the editor of *The Australian* is Davis' age) to petty abuse calling parts of *Gangland* "stretches of inane yammering". Slattery attacked Davis for presenting his case by assertion rather than argument before proceeding to do exactly the same thing. Where Davis argued that young people are not inclined to racist stereotyping, Slattery countered:

Venture into any school; attend any suburban soccer match: you'll soon see

this as wishful rhetoric ... undergraduates crave a more direct, less theoretically encumbered approach to literary texts.

No sweeping generaliser Slattery. For all the point scoring Slattery's review did manage to identify the fatal flaw at the heart of *Gangland*:

A Derrida scholar, Davis must realise that the critical mode to which he is wedded is itself a child of the 1960s, if not earlier... Davis might think that critical theory is a youthful patois; in fact it is the idiom of the academic establishment.

Robert Manne, one of *Gangland*'s primary targets, provided the most substantial of the critical reviews (*Sydney Morning Herald* 22 September 1997), in tone and manner far more closely argued than the book it discussed, but just as opinionated. Manne agreed that the greying beards do dominate cultural discussion. He accepted Davis' case that the right denounces "political correctness" as a trick to suppress debate. However, Manne belled the post modern cat by pointing out that the left, as represented by *Gangland* do exactly the same thing:

Just as the Right now deploys the idea of political correctness as a way of avoiding the need for serious discussion of questions concerning race or female emancipation or the environment, so does the Left use the idea of moral panic as a means of avoiding discussion of sexual barbarism or family or neighbourhood breakdown or drug abuse or youth suicide.

This argument is not entirely fair to Davis. Whatever Manne means by "sexual barbarism", a good deal of *Gangland* is taken up with generalisations about the social dispossession of youth. Manne was on more solid ground with his treatment of the moral ambiguity in Davis' claim that Helen Darville's critics were too aggressive: "I am not sure what kind of response he thinks appropriate to the honouring of an anti-Semitic novel about the murder of five or six million Jews." Rather than dismissing Davis's ragbag of theories, deconstructionism, post modernism and etc, Manne accepted their intellectual density and status as the heirs of European philosophers from Hegel to Heidegger. The problem, Manne argued, is that the contagion of theory has escaped from the philosophers and had become the new academic orthodoxy across the liberal arts.

Davis cannot be surprised with the response to his book. It was exactly the sort of faction fight which academics mistake for the work of the public intellectual.

GERARD HENDERSON'S

MEDIA WATCH

It was one of the most poignant moments on Australian television. For a year, at least. Or thereabouts.

CHRISTOPHER PEARSON MORALIST

On Monday 15 December 1997 Christopher Pearson appeared on ABC TV's *7.30Report*. This followed publication of his weekly column in the *Australian Financial Review*. Readers of the *AFR* will understand that your man Pearson has a somewhat limited range of topics. Which probably explains why he seems to spend around a quarter of his available space (or is it a third?) on matters indigenous - in spite of the fact that Aborigines number less than two per cent of the Australian population.

It just happened that on Monday 15 December 1997 Christopher Pearson had (yet another) chance to sound off against two familiar topics - this time, feminists and the Labor Party. The previous Saturday in the *Sydney Morning Herald* Paul McGeough had broken the story that in the late 1970s Cheryl Kernot (the ALP's star recruit) had had an affair with a former student. According to McGeough, Kernot had formed a friendship with a Year 12 student while teaching at St Leo's College in Sydney (then a Catholic regional school, the equivalent of a government high school). The *SMH* suggested that Kernot left St Leo's at the end of 1975 and commenced a relationship in 1976 with her former student. The affair lasted for some five years. Kernot was 27 in early 1976, the young man was ten years younger.

Christopher Pearson leapt into action in his *AFR* column on 15 December 1997. Describing Cheryl Kernot as "the most sanctimonious woman on Capital Hill", Pearson thundered that "the whole story will come out":

We need to know when it started. How old was the boy at the crucial moment? Was it a victimless entanglement, a breach of trust or a criminal matter? Is it right to assume it was an isolated incident?

Even if the answers to those questions are

relatively reassuring, I doubt that middle Australian parents will take an especially mellow view. However broad-minded in theory, many of them understand how destabilising and potentially disastrous for adolescent boys and their families such affairs with manipulative older women can be. This case is worse than John Hewson's abandonment of his wife and children on Christmas Eve and just as much a matter of legitimate public interest.

Kernot may still have a political future - preferably in local government or the community welfare lobby. Although it has just pre-selected her, Labor will already be feeling decidedly queasy about running her as the candidate for Dickson. Her putative Liberal rival, the sitting member, will be able to claim that at least he had the decency to resort to the paid services of an adult sex worker.

There was (much) more of this. Then (at last) Pearson concluded with a comment on Cheryl Kernot's "confected righteous indignation" and her (alleged) "simpering or wistful head-on-one-side girlishness". Misogamy seems to be a common trait among some of the *AFR*'s columnists. But it's difficult to imagine David Barnett or John Stone going to such length to score a point about a woman.

PEARSON SHOCKED VOTER

That evening Christopher Pearson was invited by Barrie Cassidy to re-state the view expressed in his *AFR* column on the *7.30 Report*. He did so - with a vengeance. In a moving moment Pearson declared that he decided that he could not vote for the Coalition in the March 1993 Federal election after learning that (then) Liberal leader John Hewson had left his wife on Christmas Eve. How touching.

7.30 Report viewers could well have formed the view that here was a Liberal voter who in 1993 could not support a party whose leader had left his wife. On Christmas Eve, no less. Or that here was a swinging voter who, on this occasion, could not vote Liberal on

CHERYL KERNOT

AT THE SYDNEY INSTITUTE

CHERYL KERNOT WAS ELECTED TO FEDERAL PARLIAMENT AS A SENATOR FOR QUEENSLAND IN 1990. SHE BECAME LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS IN APRIL 1994. AS PARTY LEADER SHE GAVE THE AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS A FRESH STYLE AND ESTABLISHED HERSELF AS ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S MOST RECOGNISED POLITICIANS. IN 1997, CHERYL KERNOT RESIGNED FROM THE SENATE AND JOINED THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF KIM BEAZLEY. THIS CONTROVERSIAL MOVE CHANGED THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE. THIS WILL BE CHERYL KERNOT'S FIRST MAJOR ADDRESS FOLLOWING THE ALP NATIONAL CONFERENCE.

DATE : Wednesday 22 April 1998
TIME : 5.30 for 6.00pm
VENUE : Mallesons' Conference Rm, Lvl 60,
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account of the fact that John Hewson was living apart from his wife and children. And that they had experienced a black Christmas.

The *7.30 Report* did not make clear that Christopher Pearson was a former long time ALP supporter. In other words, his voting pattern in March 1993 followed his long-established preferred pattern - he voted Labor (as usual). It was only in March 1996 that Pearson voted Liberal for the first time at the Federal level. In between the two elections, Pearson had worked on John Howard's staff as a speech writer.

THE EDUCATION OF YOUNG CHRISTOPHER

Christopher Pearson's very own apologia is contained in the chapter "The Ambiguous Business of Coming Out" which he wrote for Peter Coleman's collection *Double Take: Six Incorrect Essays* (Mandarin, 1996). There it was revealed that:

- Christopher Pearson's earliest political activities had involved "voting for the ALP at State elections, marching at the moratoriums against the war in Vietnam, and deciding to register as a conscientious objector". A regular Don Dunstan - voting-street-marching-conscientious-objector-leftie, no less.
- Dr John Bray, the Chief Justice of South Australia, "became a neighbour, friend and lover in 1973". At the time Bray was 61 and Pearson aged 22. According to Pearson it's "potentially disastrous" for an adolescent boy aged 17 to have an affair with a "manipulative older woman" aged 27 but quite alright for a 22 year old young man to be having it off with an older man about three times his age. Perhaps it is. But why is one such relationship perfectly proper and the other potentially disastrous?
- According to Pearson, "at its best Gay Lib was capable of marvellously playful, self-mocking agitprop, cartoons, tableaux and street theatre far more effective than anything comparable produced by the women's movement because they were good-natured rather than self-pitying or morally earnest". In short: Gay Lib. - good; Female Lib. - bad. "The most memorable moment" during Pearson's Contemporary Social Theory course at Flinders University in Adelaide occurred in April 1975 when the class "learned at a tutorial that the Khmer Rouge had taken Phnom Penh". As

Pearson recalls it: “We adjourned to the staff club and toasted them [i.e. Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge] in Great Western Champagne”. What (leftist) fun.

- While conceding that his youthful support for the Khmer Rouge “was an occasion of continuing shame”, Pearson maintained that “the story of the Khmer Rouge’s Year Zero and the ramifications of its absolutism took a long time to filter through”. This is manifestly not so. There was ample evidence in 1975 from reporters Francois Ponchaud, John Barron and refugees alike, that the communist totalitarians in Cambodia circa 1975 were behaving like, well, communist totalitarians. It’s just that, circa 1975, Pearson and his leftist mates did not really want to know.
- In the late 1970s Pearson was travelling in a bus which collided with a truck. He was hospitalised in Melbourne for two years. After leaving hospital he “supplemented sickness benefits and later the dole, with arts journalism, work on various independent South Australian magazines and editing *Labor Forum*, a policy journal” *Labor Forum* was a pro ALP journal. When it criticised the policies of Bob Hawke and Paul Keating, it invariably did so from the left.

Writer Peter Goldsworthy told Jane Cadzow (who wrote about Christopher Pearson for *Good Weekend* magazine in March 1996) that Pearson tends to go against whoever is in power. The facts, however, indicate otherwise. At Flinders University in the 1970s the prevailing fashions were on, and of, the left. Those who wanted to get on were well advised to adopt a leftist stance. Youngish Christopher took all the “correct” lines, ideologically speaking. He voted ALP, marched against the Allied commitment in Vietnam and publicly rejoiced when Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge came to power. A fashionable leftist, to be sure.

Christopher Pearson got out of hospital in 1978. By mid to late 1978 it was evident that Malcolm Fraser’s political honeymoon was over. Liberal Party support began to decline from the time that John Howard (in his capacity as treasurer) junked the personal income tax cuts which had been promised by Messers Fraser and Howard during the December 1977 Federal election campaign. The Coalition was not defeated until 1983 but it was in decline from 1978.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s Christopher Pearson barracked for the ALP in his capacity as

editor of *Labor Forum*. There was no noticeable break with his political affiliations when, in 1984, he founded, and became editor of, the *Adelaide Review*. Pearson remained a Labor supporter throughout Bob Hawke’s time as prime minister. Moreover he voted for Paul Keating in March 1993. In South Australia he supported Labor Premier Don Dunstan and, later, John Bannon.

By the time of the August 1993 Federal budget (when Paul Keating and his treasurer John Dawkins effectively junked the tax reductions promised in the March 1993 election campaign) it was evident that Labor’s time in office was limited. John Howard resumed the Liberal leadership in January 1995. Soon after Christopher Pearson accepted a consultancy in his office as speech writer.

Since April 1997 Christopher Pearson has had a weekly column in the *Australian Financial Review*. Before that he wrote regularly for *The Australian*. He also writes intermittently for the *Courier Mail* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* and for the *Adelaide Review*.

THE (VARIED) THOUGHT OF CHRISTOPHER PEARSON

Highlights of Pearson-the-columnist include:

- A call for “an end to the Australia Council” (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 September 1995). Pearson did qualify this somewhat by stating: “I am not certain that we could dispense with it immediately and altogether; perhaps there are some small elements of arts patronage best dealt with by direct grant”. But he made it clear that most, if not all, of the Australia Council should go.

That was in September 1995 when Paul Keating was prime minister. In March 1997 (when John Howard was prime minister) Pearson accepted a position on, er, the Australia Council board. In recent times he has not been heard to re-state his call for an end to the Australia Council. Nor has he publicly withdrawn his claim that a shrunken Australia Council should handle “small elements of arts patronage”. How time flies.

- Opposition to “soft totalitarianism” (*The Australian*, 22 August 1995). According to this view, some regimes exhibit hard totalitarianism. For example, Nazi Germany, Josef Stalin’s Soviet Union, Mao Zedong’s China and Castro’s Cuba. And some governments practise

“soft totalitarianism”. For example, the Keating Labor government, especially vis à vis arts policy. The very idea that Nazi and communist regimes can be compared with democratic societies is an insult to the victims (dead and living) of totalitarian gulags. Except to your man Pearson.

- Christopher Pearson was a school boy republican who became a mature age monarchist. Until he got to the Constitutional Convention where he wobbled somewhat and came out in support of Richard McGarvie’s model for a head of state determined by a body of elders (mainly chaps, aged between 65 and 79). You know retired senior judges (like Richard McGarvie), retired State governors (like Richard McGarvie). And so on. Writing on the Constitutional Convention for the *Australian Financial Review* (4 February 1998), Pearson commented: “The greatest strength of this [McGarvie] proposal is that it is monarchical in conception but that the monarch has been replaced by a regency council”.

Fancy that. Christopher Pearson has travelled a long way in just two decades. From a supporter of the Khmer Rouge to an advocate of the view that, under a republic, Australian democracy can only be saved by the establishment of a “regency council”, dominated by decorated and superannuated chaps.

And what about the Liberal Party? Well, there are signs that Christopher Pearson’s political attachments may be about to change. Once again. Writing in the *Australian Financial Review* on 14 July 1997, Pearson gave his assessment of John Howard’s Coalition government:

Government brings with it different priorities. Impressive ministerial performances are what count and they have been few and far between. Take out Costello, Reith and Alston and the rest of Howard’s Liberal frontbenchers look like a bunch of colourless accountants and generate

about as much enthusiasm. Comparisons with the early Hawke Cabinets are inescapable and chastening.

That was Christopher Pearson in July 1997. Just five months earlier Pearson assessed the performance of the Howard Government after its first year in government (*Sun Herald*, 23 February 1997). While conceding that it was a “bit early” to be marking cards on the Howard Government’s performance, Pearson concluded that “demonising Howard is going to be an uphill battle for his opponents”. In the middle of the article, he wrote of John Howard’s “remarkable” performances in the opinion polls.

That was February 1997. By mid year the Coalition’s performance in the polls had declined. By July 1997 Christopher Pearson was making unfavourable comparisons between the performance of Bob Hawke’s early ministry compared with that of John Howard.

DANCING (ALONE) ON TENNYSON BEACH



But for a Christopher Pearson highlight, consider his *AFR* article of 6 October 1997 which carried the heading “MacKillop’s ‘Philistine Triumph’ Challenged: Christopher Pearson on Adelaide’s feral nuns”. It’s not at all clear what the essential business readership of the *AFR* was to make of Pearson’s ramblings about nunnery matters in South Australia. But there you have it.

Pearson commenced and ended with a reference to Mary MacKillop (1842-1909):

Protracted power struggles between male hierarchies and nuns, with the sisters winning in the end, are nothing new in South Australia. Blessed Mary MacKillop, the co-founder of the Brown Josephite order, was even briefly excommunicated by Bishop Shiel [sic] for her defiance. But the current cheer squad claiming her victory as one of their own

ought to think again. As the late Professor Austin Gough remarked, feminists should recognise that Shiel [sic] was in the right and MacKillop quite misguided.

Shiel [sic], a scholarly man of rather advanced views, was a great believer in education, including musical education, and thought that Catholic girls deserved the best. MacKillop was more interested in providing the rudiments - in keeping with their station in life - to girls destined to be domestic servants or the wives of poor farmers.

This proposition was asserted, rather than argued. The only evidence to support Pearson's put down of MacKillop was an unsourced reference to the late Austin Gough. Gough was born a Catholic but became a convinced atheist. Even so his family and friends felt the need to farewell him in the chapel of his alma mater Xavier College (which is run by the Jesuits in Kew, Melbourne) amongst the images of God and saints which Gough rejected so firmly in his life. Which suggests that the Austin Gough fan club was interested in style. Particularly of the exit variety.

Not so Mary MacKillop. She saw it as her duty to educate the poorest of the poor - mainly Catholic but including some non-Catholics. At this time MacKillop came into dispute with Bishop Sheil circa 1871, the poor simply could not afford a musical education. Later on MacKillop's Josephites included music in their curriculum. By then, however, living standards in the Australian colonies had improved somewhat.

Bishop Sheil was a bully, of the clerical kind. Eventually MacKillop prevailed in South Australia, against his wishes. In the process she enjoyed the support of some Jews, influential Protestants, and the Jesuit order and, eventually the Pope in Rome. The Jesuits were dedicated to delivering the highest possible standard of education. They supported MacKillop in her dispute with Sheil, because they believed in the rightness of her cause.

In his final paragraph Pearson summoned MacKillop as an authority for the proposition that she would have been appalled by Adelaide's contemporary feral nuns. According to Pearson, they had danced "naked under the light of the moon at mid-summer solstice on the shores of Tennyson Beach". To "the consternation of fisherman". Golly.

Can your man Pearson have a hang-up on women?

One moment he is concerned about young male adolescents being seduced by older women. On another occasion he worries publicly about the (alleged) dancing habits of Adelaide's naked feral nuns, which seems to have come from Pearson's reading of Margaret Mills' *Woman, Why Are You Weeping?* But there are no nuns dancing naked on Tennyson Beach or any other beach in Mills' book. Well, it beats reading about tax reform and the current account deficit. Greg Hywood, the *AFR's* publisher, could be on to something here.

DR SPRINGBORG ON BOB, GEORGE, MARGARET AND SADDAM

At the time of writing, tensions in the Gulf have scaled down somewhat. It appears that the most recent Gulf crisis will be much less intense than seven years ago - both abroad and at home. Remember Robert Springborg? During the 1991 Gulf War he got a guernsey as ABC TV's in-house expert on matters Iraq. Invariably the only view sought by the ABC was that of Dr Springborg - despite the fact that he was on record as a vocal opponent of the allied Gulf commitment. There was never any objection to the ABC interviewing Springborg on Iraq, Kuwait and the Gulf. The problem turned on the fact that the ABC did not see the need to balance Springborg's opposition to United Nations policy in response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait with the views of a supporter of the Allied commitment.

The ABC of old was happy to use Springborg as its only voice on Iraq - despite the fact he had stated his attitude on Australia's Gulf commitment as early as August 1990. Writing in the *Melbourne Herald* on 13 August 1990, Springborg declared:

[Bob] Hawke has actually committed Australian ships to a United States-led armada. He did so following one short telephone conversation with George Bush and brief discussion with four or five members of Cabinet. What amounts to a declaration of war on Iraq - paradoxically one of our best trading partners - was made precipitously and with little consultation, suggesting that we are every bit as much a one-man show as is the country we may be fighting. Their man, however, is at least clearly his own.

In other words, Springborg was claiming that democratic Australia under the leadership of elected prime minister Bob Hawke was "every bit as much as

a one-man show” as totalitarian Iraq under the leadership of the unelected dictator Saddam Hussein. Springborg went on to assert that Bob Hawke’s “language of moral absolutism sounds to Arabs like the all-too-familiar strains of racism”. This overlooked two central points. In 1990, when Springborg wrote his hyperbole, the majority of Arab nations supported the United Nations, demand that Iraq withdraw from Kuwait. Moreover, neither Bob Hawke nor (then) opposition leader John Hewson, could fairly be accused of engaging in “strains of racism” - in relation to Iraq or anywhere else.

This time round, there has been relative calm on the Springborg front. Dr Springborg is no longer the ABC’s sole authority on the Gulf. And when he appears on ABC television and radio, his on-air views are usually balanced by either a supporter of allied policy in the Gulf or by an opponent of the current Iraqi leadership. However, just prior to the outbreak of the present (Gulf) crisis, Robert Springborg gave listeners to ABC Radio in Sydney a glimpse of his thoughts on Saddam Hussein, George Bush, Margaret Thatcher and Bob Hawke. Interviewed by Richard Glover, on 3 November 1997, Springborg was asked to give an assessment of Saddam’s game plan. He replied as follows:

Saddam seems from our perspective to miscalculate time and time again. And yet he’s outlasted Margaret Thatcher, and George Bush, and Bob Hawke and all the rest of them. So he gets something right.

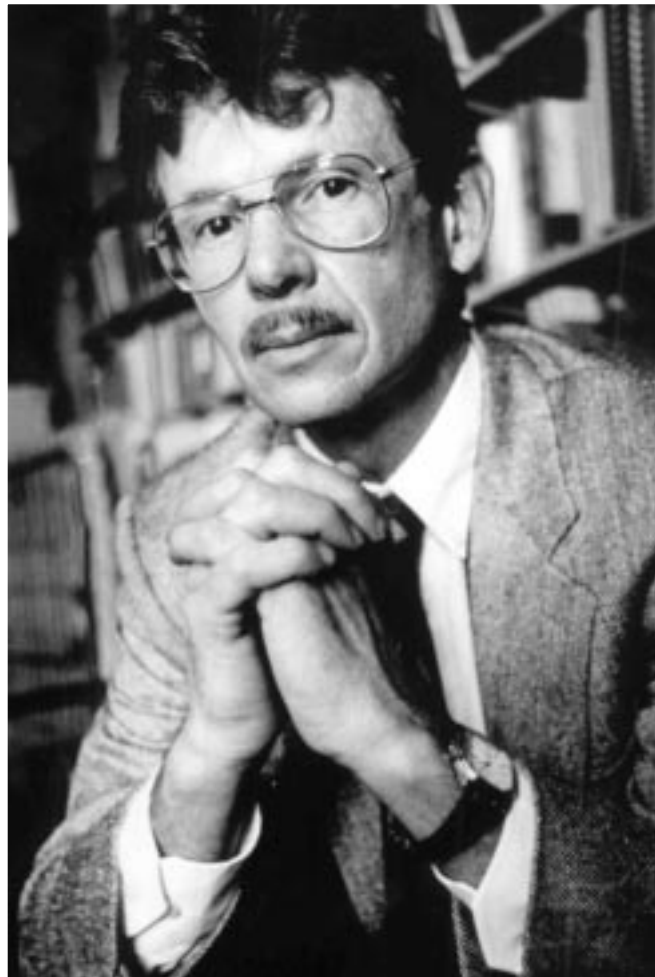
In this old-style leftist commentary, Robert Springborg simply overlooked the difference between democracies and dictatorships. George Bush was defeated by Bill Clinton in a free election Margaret Thatcher and Bob Hawke stepped down from leadership positions because they lost majority support within their respective political parties.

Saddam Hussein kills or imprisons his political opponents and refuses to face free elections.

In August 1990, Springborg opined that Australia was every bit as much authoritarian as Iraq and that Saddam Hussein was more independent than Bob Hawke. By November 1997 he was of the view that Saddam gets “something right” due to the fact that he has outlasted George Bush, Bob Hawke and Margaret Thatcher. Professor Springborg’s politics classes at Macquarie University must be really something.

JOHN HOWARD AND THE MEDIA’S SILLY SEASON

In 1997/98 the Australian media seems to have escaped the worst excesses of the silly season. There were, however, a few exceptions.



• On Wednesday 7 January 1998, the *Newcastle Herald* ran a “Dear John” article on its front page. The sub-heading gave the newspaper’s message: “Six months after the PM gave Newcastle steelworkers two days of his time, he’s spending nine days in Hawks Nest”. There was a map of Hawks Nest (where John Howard and his family holiday every year) along with a photo of its Lodge motel (in which the Howard family resides). *The Newcastle Herald* even advised the readers of what they might say to the Prime Minister about his (alleged) treatment of the Newcastle region.

According to reports, no one took the *Newcastle Herald’s* advice and the Prime Minister enjoyed a comfortable and relaxed holiday. Which suggests that some readers have more sense than some editors.

• On the following day (Thursday 9 January 1998)

the *Melbourne Herald-Sun* led its front page with a "Howard Snub" story. Journalist Nui Te Koha reported that 'Prime Minister John Howard has snubbed repeated requests to meet global pop sensations the Spice Girls'. And image maker Max Markson was quoted as reflecting that the "smartest thing" John Howard could have done would have been to invite the Spice Girls to Hawks Nest. This suggests that Max Markson has not spent much time at Hawks Nest.

In the *Herald-Sun* Terry Brown commented that John Howard needed a Spice Girls encounter to boost his conservative, sombre image. Karen Phillips ran a similar line in the *Adelaide Advertiser*. She fanged the Prime Minister for his failure to meet with Ginger et al and claimed he could have taken an RAAF jet "zipped in [and] been kissed all over". Ms Phillips claimed that John Howard's failure to meet the Spice Girls left him open to being labelled "the most boring man in the world". The implication was that one tangle in Sydney with the Spice Girls would have resolved all John Howard's presentation problems. Oh, well, it was the silly season.



ABC's MEDIA WATCH WITH DAVID SALTER

David Salter was Stuart Littlemore's producer at the ABC's *Media Watch*. When David wanted out, Stuart refused to work with his replacement - any replacement. And then Stuart Littlemore left too. Now Littlemore critic Richard Ackland is in the chair. The sparks continue.

Hear David Salter at The Sydney Institute assess all this, the program and much more.

SPEAKER: **DAVID SALTER** (Former Executive Producer, ABC's *Media Watch*)

TOPIC : *Inside Media Watch*

DATE : Tuesday 24 March 1998

TIME : 5.30 for 6.00pm

VENUE : The Chifley Conference Room (Rm 102), Level 1, 2 Chifley Square, Sydney

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