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with Gerard Henderson's

MEDIA WATCH

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VALE HENDO

Ian Henderson (15 March 1949-16 August 2003) had a tragically short, but most eventful, life. He was – variously – a political operator, a Labor ministerial staffer, an ALP office holder and a journalist. Yet perhaps the most significant message he left behind occurred in his final years when Ian worked as the economic correspondent for ABC Radio.

Ian Henderson came to the ALP via the nuclear disarmament movement. In 1978, he joined the staff of Bill Hayden who was then Opposition leader. When Labor came to government in 1983, Ian worked for Finance Minister Peter Walsh – one of the leading economic reformers in Bob Hawke's government. He subsequently became assistant national secretary of the ALP. In 1994, as editor of the *Canberra Times*, Michelle Grattan enticed Ian away from Labor politics and into journalism. He soon moved to *The Australian* - writing initially on economics and, later, politics. In 2002 he took what was to be his last position as economic correspondent for ABC Radio. This was a politically sensitive post since it involved filing reports for such influential programs as *AM* and *PM* on the key commercial issues of the day.

During his stints at the *Canberra Times* and *The Australian*, Ian Henderson's reportage and commentary was marked by absolute professionalism. As ALP frontbencher Bob McMullan commented in his obituary in *The Australian* (20 August 2003), Ian "made no apology for writing, at times, stories that were damaging for the Labor Party". McMullan explained this by referring to Ian Henderson's higher goal – namely "to contribute to the democratic debate and make Australia a better, fairer place".

Ian Henderson's high professionalism was also evident during his stint at ABC Radio. This had an impact on the politicians who knew him. On 3 March 2003, when Ian was considered near death, Prime Minister John Howard and Opposition leader Simon Crean reported on his condition to the House of Representatives and extended their best wishes to Ian and his family. Against the odds, Ian made a surprising – and courageous – recovery. When he died in August, there was further comment in Parliament. Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson, Simon Crean, Treasurer Peter Costello and Bob McMullan all spoke in what was, in effect, a condolence motion. In a fine speech, Peter Costello commented that he had been sceptical about whether Ian could make the transition from politics to journalism but conceded that he had been wrong, adding that "when we [i.e. the Howard government] complained about economic coverage, I would always point out that the fairest person in the [Press] Gallery was the former assistant secretary of the ALP...You could count on him to give you a whack if you had done something wrong, but he would report favourably if something good had been done".

Ian Henderson had an extraordinary work rate. He asked to publish some of his work in *The Sydney Institute Quarterly* and the offer was gratefully accepted. Ian's comment for his magazine was of a high standard – his arguments were considered and always supported by evidence. What was possibly Ian Henderson's last article appeared in the July 2003 of *The Sydney Institute Quarterly*. It was an extremely well written piece that was both balanced and supported by evidence. If all ABC journalists and presenters performed with Ian Henderson's evident professionalism, then the national broadcaster would be held in greater regard than it is right now. The reactions to Ian's death – from both sides of politics – explains why.

BRING'EM ON: WHY WE NEED AN ECONOMIC HISTORY WAR

John Kunkel

History Wars rock. Anything that gets people talking about (and hopefully reading) Australian history has to be a good thing. The accompanying spectacle of name-calling and academic bitchiness is surely a bonus.

One piece of historical turf crying out for revisionism is the popularised version of Australia's postwar economic history. It's curious, for example, that almost nothing on economics finds its way into *The History Wars* (Melbourne University Press, 2003) by Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark. As S.J. Butlin noted at the start of his classic book *Foundations of the Australian Monetary System* (Melbourne University Press, 1953): "Australian economic history is the major part of all Australian history; from the beginning economic factors have dominated development in a way that would gladden the heart of any Marxist."

Not only that, but much of the writing on Australian economic history has a decidedly leftist slant – from the Old Left of Brian Fitzpatrick, to the New Left of Humphrey McQueen, to the Left-Right-Left of Robert Manne. A common theme, for example, has been post-1788 Australia's "exploitation" by nasty foreigners – the British (up to World War II), the Americans (after the war), the Japanese (in the 1970s and 1980s), and the Americans again (under contemporary globalisation).

Our "progressive" history mongers also have a well-worn narrative on Australian postwar economic policy. They usually start by gushing over wartime economic planners and their schemes for the postwar extension of sweeping government controls. A sneer is directed at Robert Menzies and others who opposed the planners. The economic failures of the Whitlam government are largely ignored or downplayed. And the historically-correct club trashes the market-oriented economic reforms of Labor and Coalition governments alike over the last two decades.

This is a shame and a sham. It's time for a new front in the History Wars.

THE BEN AND NUGGET SHOW

In the progressive pantheon, nothing can compare with the glory days of wartime planning and postwar reconstruction. Hence in *A Short History of Australia* (Heinemann, 1963) Manning Clark enthuses about "the age of the planner" when "high-minded, hard-working, and dedicated secular humanists and Fabians worked together for a common end".

The two secular saints of this epoch are former Labor Prime Minister and Treasurer Ben Chifley and economist H.C. "Nugget" Coombs. Chifley personified "the history and aspirations of radicalism in Australia" (Manning Clark), while Coombs was "emblematic of the enhanced role of the planner" (Stuart Macintyre). Infused with social conscience and vision, the Chifley-Coombs partnership is widely portrayed as the driving force of Australia's postwar economic progress. Their expansive view of the role of government in economic affairs generates considerable sympathy, as attested by recent biographies of Chifley (by David Day) and of Coombs (by Tim Rowse).

Chifley and Coombs first teamed up in Treasury in 1941, but the Ben and Nugget Show really got going the following year when Chifley was also appointed Minister for Post-war Reconstruction and Coombs became Director-General of the new department. For much of his tenure, Chifley was economically responsible. But his obsession about another Depression lurking over the horizon would cause him to seek unprecedented economic powers in peacetime. Coombs served as "Chifley's brain" when it came to implementation and the packaging of Labor's plans as part of a larger "Keynesian revolution".

The achievements during the war of John Curtin, Chifley, Coombs and other Australian patriots are obviously worthy of recognition. More problematic is the easy run historians give to what Geoffrey Bolton describes as Labor's "vision of a planned social democratic future". Key threads in this story involve the fate of referenda to expand Commonwealth powers, Chifley's nationalisation crusade against the banks, and Australia's quixotic bid to institutionalise binding employment obligations in postwar international economic organisations.

At worst, these campaigns are painted as glorious failures, brought down by a cast of small-minded capitalists. The miscellaneous bad guys from these episodes include the High Court, Robert Menzies, greedy banks, American "free trade imperialism" and – given their caution about constitutional change and their vote at the 1949 federal election – the Australian people.

In *A Concise History of Australia* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), Stuart Macintyre mourns the “innovative measures” blocked by the High Court. (What is especially innovative about banning commercial activity?) In *Chifley* (HarperCollins, 2001), David Day uses words like “populist” and “hysterical” to describe those who opposed Labor’s bid to widen Commonwealth powers. (What is populist about upholding constitutional limits on government?)

The air of hero-worship that has surrounded Coombs is further thickened by Tim Rowse’s *Nugget Coombs: A Reforming Life* (Cambridge University Press, 2002). Coombs is not easy to pigeon-hole, but it’s fair to say that for an economist he had very much a lawyer’s penchant for strict economic rules and enforcement mechanisms. His postwar attempt to enshrine international employment mandates – complete with sanctions for non-compliance – now seems high-handed and control-freaky. Indeed, the Rowse book illustrates that Nugget’s enthusiasm for his own planning capabilities seemed to get the better of him at times. In September 1948, for example, Coombs and his counterparts in Britain’s Atlee Government “began to envisage a multilateral trade and payments system for the world as a whole excluding the United States”. Sometimes, you can just have too much vision.

In the end, the postwar planners would be denied their more grandiose dreams. The former engine driver’s “light on the hill” morphed into the Menzies Express that rolled over the top of him in December 1949. A good man stuck in a time-warp of the mind, Chifley was reelected Labor leader in February 1950. He marked the occasion by reaffirming the old (blind) faith, telling his party that “where it is found an organisation or an industry should be socialised, the Labor Party should not hesitate to socialise that industry”.

Coombs fared better going on to serve as central bank governor from 1949 to 1968. But having spent his career as the consummate insider of Australian public life, he ended up an arch-critic of “the Establishment”. In his 1984 John Curtin Lecture, Coombs attacked the economic reforms of the Hawke Labor government, saying that it was alienating “the idealists, the intelligentsia and the radical reformers from whom the inspiration for change and progress comes”. He was, I guess, referring to himself.

THE UNDERAPPRECIATED INERTIA OF MENZIES

With the help of Paul Keating, the true-believer history of the Menzies years is of one long Anglophile snooze. Menzies is the arch “straitener” arraigned

against Manning Clark’s “enlargers” that are the (self-proclaimed) well-springs of progress.

The only problem is that this doesn’t stand up to historical scrutiny when it comes to Australia’s economic progress. In the first place, Menzies moved Australia out of Britain’s economic orbit much more deliberately than his Labor predecessors. David Lee outlines the steps in *Search for Security* (Allen & Unwin, 1995). The cessation of petrol rationing angered the Atlee Government as it put new pressure on the Sterling Area pool of US dollars. Menzies also provoked the ire of London by moving rapidly to secure large dollar loans for Australian development. And when severe balance of payments problems hit at the end of the Korean War wool boom, the imposition of non-discriminatory import restrictions hit British exports especially hard.

But the greatest achievement of Menzies was his studied inertia when it came to social democratic schemes for economic planning. The prime example was his opposition to the stampede of enlightened opinion in the early 1960s when indicative planning was all the rage in Britain, continental Europe, and among sections of this country’s intelligentsia. Those who jumped on the indicative planning bandwagon in Australia included respected economists like Sir John Crawford and Heinz Arndt.

This was not just some academic fetish. Consider the implications of then Labor Leader Arthur Calwell putting into practice his “five-year plan” ideas as set out in the 1963 tract, *Labor’s Role in Modern Society* (Lansdowne Press, 1963). Take it away Arthur:

Once the growth-targets were worked out in the basic sectors of the economy, similar targets would be set for particular sectors. The planning authority, whether a separate Commonwealth department or a branch of an existing department, would ensure that resources of men and materials were available to meet those targets and any inconsistencies and overlapping in plans of the various sectors would be eliminated. With the plan determined, the government, either directly or indirectly, would use all the powers at its disposal to see that the plan was carried out throughout the economy. Where the targets clearly could not be met by relying on private enterprise, the government would step in and help supply the need.

Simple as that. Commissar Calwell goes on to concede “technical difficulties in planning for a country starting almost from scratch”. But, readers are assured, “with time, we could master the detailed statistical and mathematical techniques”. Yeah, right.

If today this sounds faintly ridiculous, it bears a striking resemblance to exactly what the British Labour government of Harold Wilson attempted with its National Economic Plan between 1964 and 1970. Needless to say, the Plan failed to achieve the targets set.

The progressive Keatingites in our history faculties need to come clean. If they buy the line that Menzies put the country to sleep through a lack of economic reform, then they should concede that the likes of Doc Evatt, Arthur Calwell and Jim Cairns would have been worse. Much worse.

Sure, Menzies should have been stronger in resisting John McEwen's protectionism. But his major contribution to Australia's economic progress was in holding the sensible centre against fashionable Fabianism. The career of the late economist Heinz Arndt captures nicely a maturing appreciation through the 1950s and 1960s about what governments can and can't do. In *A Course Through Life* (National Centre for Development Studies, 1985), Arndt charts his intellectual journey from enthusiasm for bank nationalisation and planning to a deeper appreciation of economic liberalism.

AMATEUR HOUR WITH GOUGH

In general, the Whitlam government leads a charmed life in our modern history books. In *The Oxford History of Australia* (Oxford University Press, 1993, Vol. V), Geoffrey Bolton describes the Whitlam years as a "shining aberration" cast asunder by what progressive historians never tire of bemoaning as "essentially a conservative nation". In *The Penguin Bicentennial History of Australia* (Penguin Books, 1987), John Molony gushes over the "three, short years of Whitlam" when "a new hope and a new vision were given to Australia". Molony sniffs: "Those who felt that Australia had been changed for the worse could not spell it out in any detail except in generalities that were meaningless to the millions of Australians who benefited during his government and afterwards." So there.

Clearly, after 23 years in office, the Coalition government under William McMahon was tired and mediocre. A number of Gough Whitlam's reforms have rightly endured, though the extent to which they evolved from initiatives of earlier governments is often forgotten. And in areas like tariffs and rural policy, Whitlam was better than the political conservatives.

But Whitlam also headed the most economically irresponsible government in postwar Australian history and this should not be airbrushed out of the picture. The fiscal policy of the Whitlam Government was nothing short of a disaster. After rising almost 20

per cent in 1973-74, government spending soared by over 40 per cent in 1974-75 – a full 5 percentage points of GDP in one year. And with the public sector made the "pace-setter" for wages and conditions, the 1974 wages explosion saw average weekly earnings rise by 28 per cent while inflation jumped by 16 per cent.

The soft-left line is that this was simply a matter of bad luck – the result of the end of the long postwar boom and the first oil shock. But in his book *Confessions of a Failed Finance Minister* (Random House, 1995), former Labor Finance Minister Peter Walsh makes a convincing case that the Whitlam government's economic problems in 1974 and 1975 were "largely of its own making".

A junior member of Caucus at the time, Walsh estimates that "most of the 10 or 12 dominant Ministers" were "economic cranks" and that "most of the time Whitlam behaved as if the economy didn't matter". Dismissing public service advice, the Whitlam government "had little understanding of what had caused inflation and recession and therefore no idea of how to deal with them. They refused to accept *any* linkage between wage increases and either inflation or unemployment". Under the tutelage of economic nationalists like Lionel Murphy and Rex Connor, it was deemed all the fault of wicked multinationals.

To say that the Whitlam government confronted big global economic challenges is a cop out. It didn't *confront* them. It went on taxing and spending regardless. Treasurer Frank Crean later described the decision-making over the 1974 budget as the economic policy equivalent of a "lunatic asylum". His budget speech welcomed a recession in the private sector as an opportunity for more public spending. Soon after replacing Crean as Treasurer, Jim Cairns publicly supported printing money.

In this case, Paul Keating's history is dead right. It was, as the former Prime Minister has said, "amateur hour".

TRIUMPH OF THE GROWN UPS

For left-leaning historians, the past 20 years have seen one damn economic reform after another. First, the Hawke-Keating government deregulated financial markets and floated the dollar. Then Labor reduced the size of government, cut protection and started to privatise government enterprises. The Howard government has gone further on labour market deregulation, reduced public debt, continued privatisation and implemented tax reform.

The end result is that Australia now has one of the best performing economies in the OECD. Economic growth has averaged over 4 per cent per annum over

the past decade with low inflation. Productivity growth in the 1990s exceeded even the strong performance of the United States.

But this is not the world many Australian historians inhabit. The more prominent among them cling to a pale imitation of the late Manning Clark's world view when he fretted about us being "enslaved" by our "greed-and-titillation culture". A recent example comes from David Day in his essay in *The Hawke Government – A Critical Review* (Pluto Press, 2003). Day finds little to recommend the economic changes of the 1980s, claiming that Bob Hawke "sucked the spirit out of the labour movement" while "doing the bidding of business lobby groups and conservatives within the bureaucracy and universities".

And putting his seal of approval on this doom and gloom is the current big cheese of progressive historical thought, Stuart Macintyre. Towards the end of *A Concise History of Australia*, Macintyre laments how:

The greenfield site is now brown and fragile, a young country has become old and weary. In its arrangements, also, there are signs of premature senility. The capacity for political innovation is apparently spent. At the beginning of the century investigators came here to learn of the Australian achievement; now we take our lead from the nostrums of the New Right and our signals from the credit ratings agencies of New York. Australians are followers rather than leaders, and careless of their earlier achievements – for much is insignificant in the fading memory of a people who no longer learn from the past.

Nice prose, but completely wrong. Australians have learnt from the past. Most have learnt that Australia is a stronger country for being closely linked with the global economy. We have learnt that corporatist bodies like the Arbitration Commission do not deliver economic security, but serve only as incubators for low productivity and wages blow-outs. We have learnt that no group of visionary planners can chart Australia's destiny. We have learnt that there are limits to what government can do.

In short, we have grown up.

John Kunkel is the author of America's trade policy towards Japan: Demanding results (Routledge, 2003)



JOHN HOWARD AND THE JOE LYONS LEGACY

Anne Henderson

All signs point to Prime Minister John Howard facing another electoral triumph some time in 2004 – his fourth election win since 1996, making him Australia's most successful conservative prime minister since Robert Menzies. John Howard – the supposedly ordinary man, disdainful of "elites", yet leading a party of middle class elites.

Flexibility and fluidity are and have always been important components in electoral success in Australia – and in the ability of prime ministers to retain office. It is no coincidence that two of Australia's most successful Prime Ministers – Billy Hughes and Joe Lyons – were defectors from Labor at times when Labor was divided by ideological debate. Labor's most successful prime minister – Bob Hawke – was also in many ways a pragmatist. Like John Howard, Joe Lyons and Billy Hughes, Hawke could feel the average Australian voter's mindset, its changes and moods.

It's a message Simon Crean well recognised as he tried to pull his rebels in Caucus into line in readiness for the October 2003 visit of US President George W Bush. Parliamentary protest against President Bush might be all very well for Labor MPs who opposed the war in Iraq – but around 90 per cent of Australians, internal Labor polling showed, respect and support the Australian-US alliance.

John Howard's electoral appeal has confounded many who follow politics. Not that it should, if history is anything to go by. Prime ministers Joe Lyons and Billy Hughes were caricatured, like John Howard, as "small" or "plain" while managing to stay record years in office. And all three prime ministers owe their success to being able to project a stand for uncomplicated principles, dear to the average Australian, mixed with a fair degree of pragmatism. In many ways, pragmatism underlines success in Australian politics. The fact that Labor has not governed as often as non-Labor, in Australian history, merely reflects the more pragmatic nature of non-Labor.

So who are, or have been, the Australians voting non-Labor? Can they be classified by class? By some ongoing philosophical bent? By geography? Or are they simply a wave of “forgotten people”, as Judith Brett argues in her recently published *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class* (Cambridge 2003) – in more recent times, those voters who have responded to Howard’s ability, like Menzies, to adapt “the language and thinking carried in his party’s political traditions to the circumstances of his political present”.

Unlike the ALP, non-Labor groups took the first half of last century to hybridise into the long lasting, alternative major party they became, circa 1945, with Robert Menzies’ new look Liberal Party. Before then, the Nationalist Party and the United Australia Party, federally, captured the electoral appeal which would later be focused on the Menzies’ Liberal Party.

Consequently, in Australian political history, it is common to talk of a “non-Labor” entity in mainstream politics – as if the conservative side of politics was in search of an identity as a political grouping.

What jelled that grouping is still up for debate as the publication of Judith Brett’s *Australian Liberals* suggests. And while Brett gets some of the way to answering the question, her thesis has gaps which she does not address. For example, in examining how sectarianism shaped conservative parties in Australia, before the 1970s, Brett manages to ignore how the success of Catholic Prime Minister Joe Lyons, as conservative prime minister in the 1930s, does not support her thesis from the thirties on.

Peter Costello, Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party in Howard Governments since 1996, was Shadow Minister for Corporate Law Reform and Consumer Affairs when he addressed The Sydney Institute in October 1991. The Coalition was, at the time, in the wilderness of Opposition after the success of Hawke Labor governments since 1983. A political dilemma something akin to the dilemma which the Labor Opposition currently finds itself – and yet no commentator today would ever contemplate an end for Labor as a major political party. But in the early 1990s the demise of the Liberals’ electoral possibilities caused some commentators, such as Judith Brett, to question whether the Liberal Party would survive as a mainstream party. In a piece for *The Age* (17 July 1993) Brett wrote, “the Liberal Party in the 1990s seems doomed”.

Undaunted by his party’s temporary demise, Peter Costello spoke confidently of a future Coalition Government, and in terms which laid down comprehensive policy settings. These settings offered a philosophical compass in keeping with

historical connections – in particular with that of the non-Labor governments of Prime Ministers (Billy) Hughes, Joe Lyons and Robert Menzies.

“Political parties,” argued Costello, “are not, in my experience, primarily philosophic groups ... [yet] there are significant in-principle or philosophic differences between major Australian political parties, and those differences do influence the choice made by the electorate.”

Judith Brett would certainly agree with the proposition that there are philosophic differences between the major political parties. In *Australian Liberals*, she draws a picture of Australian conservatives or non-Labor groupings before the 1970s as overwhelmingly Protestant in character and membership, as opposed to the Labor Party with its more Catholic base. The Protestant nature of the non-Labor political groupings was reflected not only in the backgrounds of members but also at the top where most non-Labor prime ministers before 1972 were Masons.

“It was Lyons who conquered the Protestant-Catholic divide in conservative politics, not only at the party level but also at the ballot box.”

Conservative prime ministers who were Masons make a long list – Edmund Barton, George Reid, Joseph Cook, Stanley Melbourne Bruce, Earle Page, Robert Menzies, Arthur Fadden, John McEwen, John Gorton and William McMahon. Not surprisingly, Australian Catholics tended to feel more comfortable with Labor a lot of the time.

Much of this was a legacy of the sectarianism, as historian Michael Hogan has demonstrated, present in Australian society from colonial days, reaching peaks at times of political unease.

Cardinal Francis Moran was opposed in a sectarian campaign when he put his name forward for the 1897 Federal Convention. Catholics were labelled as traitors after Archbishop Daniel Mannix of Melbourne led anti-conscription rallies during the conscription plebiscites in World War I. This in spite of his counterpart in Sydney - Archbishop Michael Kelly - leading groups in support of conscription. Emerging from the war experience, the 1920s became a decade of bitter sectarianism against Catholics.

The sectarian bitterness of the 1917 Federal election campaign, directed against Labor which it targeted as “disloyal” and “Catholic”, set the tone for a decade and more. Brett writes of it as the campaign which “consolidated the pattern of Protestant and Catholic

AUSTRALIA'S \$10 BLUESTOCKING IN ARGENTINA AND PARAGUAY

Sydney-based writer Anne Whitehead's latest work is the story of the young Mary Gilmore – now immortalised on our \$10 notes. In *Bluestocking in Patagonia*, Whitehead interweaves her own travels with an account of how the pursuit of utopian ideals inspired Gilmore (then Cameron) and 500 other Australians to follow the socialist William Lane to distant South America.

In what now seems the pursuit of an impossible dream, Lane led an initial 200 "brave or foolhardy souls" to found the settlement of "Nueva Australia" in the year of 1893. At the age of 30, Mary left Sydney for Paraguay, farewelled by the writer Henry Lawson, who would become a lifelong friend.

She diarised en route, "I am tired of the gilded chaff of single life and my being craves for more substantial food of married life - even though it be rye bread." The "rye" was fellow utopian William Gilmore, a "quiet and diffident bushman", whose skills (mostly as a shearer) could not provide security to a wife and, soon enough, a young son.

The family moved later to Patagonia, in southern Argentina, where English and Welsh sheep farmers employed William on their land and Mary to educate their children. Author Whitehead visited this area and interviewed the landowners' successors.

In her spare time Mary wrote, discovering that she did it well.

Times were tough and the weather bleak. In 1902, with spirits broken, the Gilmores embarked on a ship for Australia, via London, where Mary visited Henry Lawson who was aware of her emerging reputation as a poet. Later the couple separated, although Mary corresponded with her husband for the next 34 years, during which time she became a well-known writer and a famous campaigner for social causes.

Dame (of the British Empire) Mary Gilmore died, aged 97, in 1962.

SPEAKER: ANNE WHITEHEAD (Author, *Blue Stocking in Patagonia* [Allen & Unwin])

TOPIC: *Mary Gilmore's Quest for Love and Utopia in South America*

DATE: Tuesday 2 December 2003

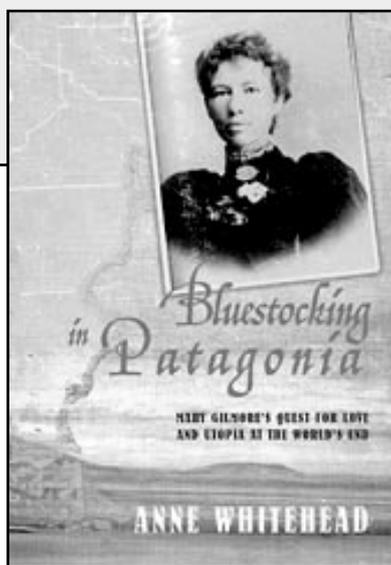
TIME: 5.30 for 6.00 pm

VENUE: 41 Phillip Street, Sydney

RSVP: (02) 9252 3366

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WEBSITE: www.thesydneyinstitute.com.au



political alignments which held till the Labor Party split again in the 1950s".

For Brett it is this Catholic-Protestant divide which shaped conservative politics until the 1970s. "This view," writes Brett, "draws on Protestantism's commitment to the morally independent individual and its hostility to Roman Catholicism, on the struggle of the middle class for political representation against an idle and unaccountable aristocracy, and on the economic experience of the small entrepreneur who depended on disciplined hard work to survive."

For non-Labor in the first half of the twentieth century according to Brett, Catholics were seen as disloyal and "Irish"; in the second half, Labor was portrayed as a party hostage to insidious outside groups such as communist infiltrated unions or pressure groups lobbying for rights or legislative change.

Those organising for non-Labor, or voting for it, were thus the electors who responded to this sort of political message. Catholics were excluded from conservative or non-Labor politics for decades, not because they were essentially working class as in many cases they were not, nor because they were natural Labor voters. They were largely frozen out by conservative or non-Labor parties for being seen as citizens with divided loyalties between God and King.

Much of this cannot be disputed. For all that, the Brett thesis fails to answer how it was that in 1931, after defecting from Labor, Catholic Joe Lyons became the conservative United Australia Party leader and subsequently Prime Minister – and was re-elected twice before dying in office in April 1939. How could this have happened if the Protestant/Catholic divide was as axiomatic as Brett would have it?

The Lyons episode is the antithesis of sectarianism. And it shows that while sectarianism had played out its dramas in the 1920s and before, in 1931 pragmatism was a far stronger force in non-Labor politics. The emergence of Joe Lyons (a Catholic of Irish descent and father of ten at the time) as leader of the conservative and newly formed United Australia Party was a wily and breathtaking development.

The plot to install Joe Lyons was the work of a handful of Protestant Melbourne businessmen and the then Member for Kooyong, a young Robert Menzies. They met in the heart of elitist Protestant Melbourne at the Savage Club. The initiator was Stanlforth Ricketson who had become a friend of Joe Lyons when Lyons was Premier of Tasmania.

As acting Labor Treasurer in the Scullin Government in 1930, Lyons had raised 28 million pounds for a loan conversion in a nation wide appeal – a conversion which was opposed in caucus by (Red) Ted Theodore who had been forced to stand aside as Treasurer while he was under investigation for a mines scandal.

The national campaign to raise the money for the conversion was so successful, Lyons impressed significant figures in the conservative opposition, such as Menzies, who saw him as a moderate and responsible element within Labor. After Lyons and a small group left the Labor benches in 1931, he attracted the attention of the group who would install him as UAP leader.

At no stage was Lyons' Catholic religion or Irish background a hurdle in his recruitment into the conservative side of politics. And across the nation, Joe Lyons and wife Enid quickly became popular figures, sponsored by the powerful Citizens Groups that had formed in the political vacuum created by the stock market collapse and rising unemployment.

"The nation state, the family and the individual are the three key social formations of Australian Liberalism," argues Brett. Indeed they are. And this was never so true as in the election of Joe Lyons. An important point which Brett misses in her book.

It was Lyons who conquered the Protestant-Catholic divide in conservative politics, not only at the party level but also at the ballot box. In December 1931, two Catholic leaders, Jim Scullin and Joe Lyons, contested an historic election battle. Catholics now could choose their preferred Catholic leader. The financial excesses of Labor, and in particular the Lang Labor group in New South Wales, worried not only Protestants but Catholics too. The nation was seen to be under threat, not from an invading army but from financial collapse. At the 1931 election, the ALP vote fell to 27 per cent from a 49 per cent first preference vote in 1929. It was a wipe out for Labor.

As Michael Hogan put it in *The Sectarian Strand*, "Middle class Catholic voters would return to support Labor in strength in the 1940s, but the safety net of Catholic middle class votes could no longer be relied on."

Through the 1930s, the image of Joe and Enid Lyons and their very large family in the Lodge was a unifying and comforting symbol for the many seeking security in these years. And that image was as much Catholic as Protestant.

In his 1991 Sydney Institute speech, Peter Costello remarked, "Some principles are held more dear than

others. Mostly they are applied in a flexible way. This is not a contemptible weakness. Political parties which are democratic must acknowledge and heed public opinion." So spoke the man who is now regarded as Prime Minister John Howard's successor.

Peter Costello also noted the relatively small number of times government has been won by oppositions in Australian history. And that, in most cases, such change came only when the party of government forfeited its claim to superior management of the economy and when the opposition could convince the electorate that it could do a better job and "articulate a coherent and attractive outline of the kind of society it wants". None of which suggests great philosophical difference of an ideological kind between Australia's mainstream political parties – at best it's a difference at the margins of management and preferment.

Sectarianism certainly left a trail in Australian politics over decades – and took many Catholics into the Labor Party. But whether such sectarianism had a great effect on voting habits much beyond the 1930s is debatable. In 1940, Protestant UAP leader Robert Menzies could not match the vote his predecessor Catholic Joe Lyons had won as conservative leader.

Moreover, Catholics by no means were a voting bloc. Even the 1950s Split in the Australian Labor Party did not see all Labor Catholics leave and go with the predominantly Catholic Democratic Labor Party which helped, by directing preferences to the Liberals, keep Menzies and his successors in office until 1972. In New South Wales most Labor Catholics stayed with the ALP. In Victoria, it was the reverse.

Any attempt to read the Australian electorate as one that can be divided by class, religion or ideology is a brave one. As John Howard recognises, and Joe Lyons, Billy Hughes, Bob Hawke and Robert Menzies knew before him, there is an essential pragmatism in the Australian voter that defies analysis.

And, like the Australian character, it's hard to define. Currently, though, it's the ordinary man in John Howard who has its measure - much to his advantage.

Anne Henderson is editor of The Sydney Papers and author of "Joseph Aloysius Lyons" in Michelle Grattan's Australian Prime Ministers (New Holland, 2000)



CORRESPONDENCE

DAVID FLINT & GERARD HENDERSON

On 22 July 2003 Gerard Henderson's weekly column (published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age* and *The West Australian*) contained a critique of David Flint's book *The Twilight of the Elites* (Freedom Publishing, 2003). Following the publication of the article, David Flint (who is chairman of the Australian Broadcasting Authority) wrote a letter-to-the-editor which was published in *The Age* (23 July 2003), *The West Australian* (24 July 2003) and *the Sydney Morning Herald* (30 July 2003). Published below is the correspondence – in its complete form – which took place between David Flint and Gerard Henderson following the publication of Gerard Henderson's critique of *The Twilight of the Elites*. It turned on the claim in the column that David Flint's book "contains some significant historical errors".

DF TO GH - 22 JULY 2003

My dear Gerard

I would be grateful if you would send me the list of significant historical errors.

Sincerely

David

GH TO DF - 22 JULY 2003

Dear David

Thanks for your note. Apologies for a post-lunch reply – I had scheduled meetings all morning which I could not interrupt.

I have had a number of requests to document my assertion in today's column that *The Twilight of the Elites* "contains some significant historical errors". I did not read the book in search of errors. But here is a list of what I have found – historical and otherwise.

_ On page 9 you wrote:

The overwhelming view in Australia is that only those who apply properly for refugee status, and are then approved, should be allowed to come to Australia. Obviously refugees fleeing directly from persecution are an exception. This included, for example, those who had come directly from Vietnam as the Communists occupied the whole country.

Response: The overwhelming majority of Vietnamese refugees who were generously accepted

in Australia in the late 1970s and early 1980s by Malcolm Fraser's government did not "come directly" to Australia from Vietnam. Nearly all travelled with people smugglers on small boats to Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Hong Kong etc and were subsequently settled in Australia.

_ On Page 22 you wrote:

They [Bob Hawke and Paul Keating] cleverly avoided a split by making the labour market sacrosanct, except for airline pilots.

Response: The Hawke government did make "the labour market sacrosanct, except for airline pilots". But this is not true of the Keating government. In the early 1990s Labor commenced the first freeing-up of industrial relations in Australia since the highly centralised system was introduced in the first decade after Federation. The Keating government introduced enterprise bargaining – a significant reform, especially for a Labor administration. The Howard government continued, and substantially improved upon, the Keating government's reforms of Australia's industrial relations system.

_ On page 154 you wrote:

Another part of the [elite] agenda – sometimes sold as a "big picture" item – was Paul Keating's plan for the integration of Australia into Asia, which according to US writer Samuel Huntington was to involve Australia's ultimate defection from the West.

The point is essentially repeated at Page 182.

Response: Paul Keating has no plan "for the integration of Australia into Asia". In fact, when prime minister, Mr Keating was proclaiming precisely the opposite. For example, in his Weary Dunlop Lecture – delivered on 8 December 1993 – Paul Keating said:

Soon after I took office as Prime Minister I made this point in my first major speech on Australia's foreign policy. I said – I think it bears repeating now – that we go to Asia "as we are". "Not with a ghost of empire before us. Not as a vicar of Europe or as a US deputy. But unambivalently. Sure of who we are and what we stand for. If we are to be taken seriously, believed, trusted, that is the only way to go."

Claims that the Government is attempting to turn Australia into an "Asian country" are based on a misunderstanding both of my own approach and the direction of government policy. This is something I

want to be understood very clearly because it is at the core of my view of Australia and of the Government's approach to relations with our neighbourhood. Put simply, Australia is not and can never be an "Asian nation" any more than we can – or want to be – European or North American or African.

Paul Keating returned to the subject at the Singapore Lecture on 17 January 1996 – his final speech on foreign policy as prime minister. He said then:

I have never believed that Australians should describe themselves as Asian or that Australia is or can become part of Asia. We are the only nation in the world to inhabit a continent of our own. I have said more than once before, we can't be Asian any more than we can be European or North American or African. We can only be Australian and can only relate to our neighbours as Australians. Our history, including the 40,000 year history of our indigenous people and the histories of the 150 different cultures from which Australia derives, make us unique in the world.

The Samuel P. Huntington comment (made in his 1996 book *The Clash of Civilizations*) was that "in the early 1990s...Australia's political leaders decided, in effect, that Australia should defect from the West, redefine itself as an Asian society, and cultivate close ties with its geographical neighbours". There followed a reference to Paul Keating. Professor Huntington did not support his assertion with any quotation from Paul Keating. An examination of the Samuel P. Huntington article in the Summer 1993 issue of *Foreign Affairs* (on which his 1996 book was based) indicates that Professor Huntington formed his view following a discussion with Owen Harries who was then based in Washington. No sources were cited in the *Foreign Affairs* article. In other words, the comment made about the Keating government in *The Clash of Civilizations* was hearsay upon hearsay. Reproduced in *The Twilight of the Elites* it is hearsay upon hearsay upon hearsay.

Moreover, in *The Clash of Civilizations*, Samuel P. Huntington made no attempt to explain how Australia, during the time of the Keating government, was able to "defect from the West" – while continuing to maintain the Australian-American Alliance. The fact is that, at no time during the period of the Hawke and Keating governments did Australia abandon ANZUS – unlike successive Labour and National governments in New Zealand.

In my view your (unsourced) comments on the Keating government constitute "significant historical errors". I have not criticised your generalised critique of the Keating government – only the factual errors made when stating your case.

There is one final matter which I would not classify as an error – strictly defined – but is misleading, nevertheless. On Page 7 you wrote:

His [John Howard's] leadership on East Timor was remarkable...The speed with which he obtained UN support, and actually had troops on the ground, is a record for such an operation. He thus removed, for one and all, that awful stain on the nation's honour which the four previous Prime Ministers had tolerated.

Certainly Mr Howard did extremely well in putting in place the diplomatic and military resources necessary to get INTERFET into East Timor. But it is misleading to maintain that Gough Whitlam, Malcolm Fraser, Bob Hawke and Paul Keating were the only prime ministers to tolerate Indonesia's position vis à vis East Timor prior to 1999. So did John Howard – before the Asian economic slowdown and the subsequent collapse of the Suharto regime. John Howard made his first visit to Indonesia in September 1996. At an official banquet given by President Suharto on 16 September 1996, Mr Howard said:

I also acknowledge the contribution made by our predecessors in government in Australia. The relationship with Indonesia enjoys bipartisan support from both sides of politics in Australia – and this has a long history. Indonesia had the support of Australia in its moves towards independence after the war under a Labor government. It was a Liberal/Country party government which welcomed the stability brought by the New Order government in the second half of the 1960s and in those early days helped in establishing the international financial arrangements to support Indonesia's development. In more recent years, the Fraser, Hawke and Keating governments all played their part in strengthening the relationship.

The stability and unity of Indonesia and its economic growth under the New Order – so much of which is due to your personal leadership, Mr President – have been a feature of our economic and strategic landscape for 30 years and of great benefit to Australia and the region.

EDITOR OF THE TIMES TO ADDRESS THE SYDNEY INSTITUTE

In February 2002, *The Times* (London) appointed its first non-British editor in 218 years. Australian Robert Thomson, formerly the managing editor of the US edition of the *Financial Times* (FT), now heads up one of the world's oldest and most distinguished daily newspapers. At the *Financial Times*, Thomson was credited with quadrupling sales in the US from 32,000 to 123,000. While sales haven't matched this in London with the *Times*, Thomson can boast a younger readership. Nearly a quarter of the *Times*' readers are under 34, compared with just 14 per cent of *Telegraph* readers.

Hear Robert Thomson at *The Sydney Institute*

SPEAKER: ROBERT THOMSON

(Editor, *The Times*, UK)

DATE: Thursday 18 December 2003

TIME: 5.30 for 6.00 pm

VENUE: 41 Phillip Street, Sydney

RSVP: (02) 9252 3366

OR mail@thesydneyinstitute.com.au

WEBSITE: www.thesydneyinstitute.com.au



In this speech, John Howard made no reference to East Timor. Subsequently, circumstances changed – and, as it turned out, the Howard government adapted well to the changed situation.

It is much the same with what you refer to as the “Keating-Suharto Treaty” (Pages 162 and 193). For the record, the proper title is the Australia-Indonesia Agreement on Maintaining Security. It is true that the Australian-Indonesia security agreement was an initiative of the Keating government. But it is also true that, before the Asian economic slowdown and the subsequent collapse of President Suharto’s New Order government in Indonesia, the agreement was welcomed by the Howard government. For example, in April 1996 Defence Minister Ian McLachlan declared: “There is nothing wrong with the [Australia-Indonesia] treaty. It’s a series of useful words and we’ll work with it in the future.” (*Australian Financial Review*, 22 April 1996).

The Prime Minister said much the same in his speech in Jakarta on 16 September 1996. He indicated that the Australia-Indonesia security agreement had his “government’s strong support”. John Howard continued:

It underlines that the security of each country is important to the other. It sends the message that at a time of strategic change Australia and Indonesia are committed to cooperating in order to promote regional stability.

You are entitled to criticise the Australia-Indonesia agreement. But it is misleading to imply that this agreement was not supported by the Howard government when it came to office in March 1996.

That’s all. Best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Gerard Henderson

PS : According to the publisher’s blurb, your book is being presented as controversial. Who knows, my column today may even assist sales. In case there is a reprint, you may wish to correct the spelling of Jonathan Shier’s name.

DF TO GH - 22 JULY 2003

My dear Gerard

Rather than late you were most commendably prompt. Thank you for that.

I would not call them significant historical errors – not the sort that Keith Windschuttle has found. I would call these different interpretations. I accept that Paul Keating did make those statements about the US alliance, but I think Huntington captured his

longer term thinking. As to the Keating-Suharto Treaty, isn't that more interesting – as with say Molotov-Von Ribbentrop, Sykes-Picot or Kellogg-Briand?

The correct names are as dreary as the names the CPSU (Bolsheviks) used to use, such as the President of the Presidium, or the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. I suppose it filled up their dreary news bulletins.

Gerard, could you send back your email with the attachment which has disappeared. Thanks.

Regards

David

GH TO DF – 22 JULY 2003

Dear David

As requested, I have re-forwarded the attachment.

Two small points.

- I am not sure how someone like Samuel P. Huntington who – as I understand it never met Paul Keating and never cited any of his speeches – can be quoted as an authority for a proposition which is manifestly false. The fact is that Australia did not defect from the West during the time of the Keating government. More importantly, Australia continued a vibrant Australia-United States alliance during the period.
- My point about what you term the “Keating-Suharto Treaty” did not turn on the abbreviation – but rather on the implication. You implied that John Howard did not support President Suharto when he succeeded Paul Keating. But he did – and Mr Howard's support included a public backing of the Australia-Indonesia agreement which had been negotiated by his predecessor.

Kind regards

Gerard Henderson

On 23 July 2003, *The Age* published the following letter from David Flint:

After a blistering critique of one or other of his former benefactors by Gerard Henderson, I have more than once heard the comment: “Dear Gerard always bites the hand that fed him!” I am therefore surprised by his series of attacks on me – on the ABC's *Insiders*, in his own journal and now in his review of my book, *The Twilight of the Elites* (Opinion, 22/7). The truth is, I have never helped him!

But what book was he reading? Nowhere in *The Twilight of the Elites* have I criticised “women, migrants and Aborigines”. Nor does the book contain a critique of the ABC. To the contrary. It would be difficult indeed to write on Australian cultural and social affairs without some reference to the considerable output of the national broadcaster.

What is indeed ironical is that I am accused of being repetitive. And by my dear colleague, Gerard, of all people.

David Flint, Bondi, NSW

GH TO DF – 24 JULY 2003

Dear David

I have just read your letter to *The Age* which was published on Wednesday 23 July 2003. I am not sure whether you forwarded a similar letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

I do not intend to continue the correspondence (enjoyable though it is) but I should make a few points.

In *The Twilight of the Elites* you condemn the use as a “weapon”, of “ridicule, branding and labelling”. Yet your book is based on a brand or label – i.e. “the Elites”. And your letter to *The Age* is replete with ridicule directed at me.

I am not aware that I have had any “former benefactors”. But, like most employed Australians, I have had former employers – for whom I worked with dedication and complete professionalism. I am not aware of any ethic which states that a person should never disagree with the views of a former employer – especially if it is the former employer, not the former employee, who has changed his/her position on one or more issues.

In case you are referring to the late B.A. Santamaria and/or John Howard, a clarification is appropriate.

I worked part-time for Mr Santamaria's National Civic Council in 1970-1971 and was associated with the NCC from 1965 until late 1974/early 1975 (when I was effectively expelled from the national council and national conference). My employment at the NCC was at a pittance. Over a decade, I more than paid my way – and undertook many tasks for which I neither sought, nor received, remuneration. As you may or may not know, B.A. Santamaria was not in a position at the time to be a “benefactor” to anyone.

I was employed on Mr Howard's staff in 1984, 1985 and 1986 – my salary was paid by the Commonwealth Public Service. I never sought, nor received, any preferment from John Howard when I worked in his office or subsequently. Consequently, in no sense was he a “benefactor” with respect to me.

It is true that, as a commentator, I have been critical of the Prime Minister on some issues. But it is also true that, on some occasions, I have been a strong supporter of the Prime Minister. Most recently concerning Mr Howard's decisions to commit the Australian forces to the war against terrorism in Afghanistan and in support of the Coalition of the Willing in Iraq.

I see my role as a public commentator – not as a public barracker. In my view there are too many (predictable) barrackers in the Australian public debate – leftists and conservatives alike. I do not intend to join them – irrespective of what ridicule is directed at me. The essential problem with *The Twilight of the Elites* is that it is a polemic, of the barracking genre.

As you will be aware, in my *Sydney Morning Herald/Age* column on 22 July 2003 I supported much of the criticism of the ABC in *The Twilight of the Elites*. You now maintain that your book does not contain a “critique of the ABC”. This is essentially a debating point.

On such an interpretation, I have not mounted a “critique of the ABC” either. However, like you on occasions, I have made criticisms of ABC programs and personalities. Because of this, I am happy to be identified as a critic of the ABC. But then, I am not chairman of the Australian Broadcasting Authority.

Apologies if I got this one wrong. But I interpreted the Page 202 reference to “women, migrants and Aborigines” (but not, for example, gays and Catholics) as a put down – in that you seemed to be pointing to some groups, but not others. However, since you believe that this is a misreading of your book, I will not repeat the particular criticism.

In conclusion – a point about the final paragraph of your *Age* letter. I frequently find the use of the word “dear” – and the reference to a person's first name (without reference to a surname) – as forms of ridicule.

Yours sincerely

Gerard Henderson

PS : For the record, I do not recall attacking you on *Insiders* or in *The Sydney Institute Quarterly*. But it is appropriate to query whether a senior public servant should also be a high profile public intellectual (re which see the foreword, to *The Twilight of the Elites*). Best wishes.

MORAG FRASER, PHILLIP ADAMS AND GERARD HENDERSON

In her Sunday Age column on 20 July 2003, titled “Strident anti-US luvvies were missing actually” (www.theage.com.au/articles/2003/07/19/1058545625787.html), Morag Fraser responded to Gerard Henderson's column of July 2003 which mentioned the 2003 Adelaide Festival of Ideas. This generated the following correspondence with Morag Fraser and Phillip Adams (both of whom are members of the Festival's advisory committee) which is reproduced below in its complete form.

GH TO MF - 6 AUGUST 2003

Dear Morag

I am a bit behind in my reading of late. Consequently, I only recently came across your *Sunday Age* column of 20 July 2003 titled “Strident anti-US luvvies were missing, actually”. This was a response to my *Sydney Morning Herald/Age* column of 15 July 2003 where I mentioned – inter alia – George Monbiot, the Adelaide Festival of Ideas and the ABC Radio National *Late Night Live* program (and its presenter Phillip Adams). It is my understanding that both you and Phillip Adams are members of the advisory committee of the Adelaide Festival of Ideas and that there is an on-going arrangement between the Festival and *LNL*.

George Monbiot

You take issue with the comment in my *SMH/Age* column that, at the time of writing, George Monbiot was “in Australia hawking his latest book”. But he was.

I have no problems with authors spruiking their own books – indeed, I regard this as a commendable act. Nor do I have any difficulty in identifying the writer/spruiker when I see one. When I debated Mr Monbiot on SBS TV *Insight* program (10 July 2003), he gave the impression that, while in Australia, he was hawking his most recent book *The Age of Consent*. A similar interpretation can be drawn from the various media profiles that accompanied Mr Monbiot's visit to Australia – see, for example, the profile in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5-6 July 2003. Late one night recently I heard him again talking about *The Age of Consent* on ABC Metropolitan Radio.

I do not challenge your statement that George Monbiot “came to Australia at the invitation – issued long ago – of the Adelaide Festival of Ideas”. However, there is no incompatibility between Mr Monbiot's decision to accept this invitation to come to Australia – and to promote his book while in Australia.

As to other issues, well, they are matters of opinion. In my view, Mr Monbiot presents himself as a “guru”, of utopian disposition. How else to depict his call, in his self-declared “manifesto” *The Age of Consent*, for the establishment of a world parliament? Moreover, George Monbiot’s comments on *Insight* were evidence enough that he is profoundly anti-American. On that program he went so far as to query whether the contemporary United States is, in fact, a democracy. Really.

Adelaide Festival of Ideas & ABC RN Late Night Live

The criticism in my *Sydney Morning Herald/Age* column was that the Adelaide Festival of Ideas now holds the place once occupied by the ABC – in that on such subjects as international affairs nearly everyone agrees with nearly everyone else and a fine self-righteous (ideological) time is had by all. In other words, a leftist luvvies wonderland. To clarify – here I am talking about the great international issues, following 9/11, Bali and the Second Gulf War.

What I had in mind was the evident lack of diversity in many of the sessions at the 2003 Adelaide Festival of Ideas dealing with foreign policy and related issues. Take, for example, the Session titled “Disquiet on the Western Front” which led-off discussion at the Festival on the evening of Thursday 10 July 2003 – following Lowitja O’Donoghue’s opening address. It featured Joanna Bourke, Richard Butler, Elisabeth Schussier Florenza, Tahmeena Faryal and Robert Manne – with Phillip Adams in the chair. Only a limited disagreement there, to be sure. Or the session “Fall from Grace: Truth in public life since the Olympics” which took place on Saturday 12 July 2003. It featured Margo Kingston, Humphrey McQueen, Robert Manne, David Marr, Moira Rayner and Irene Watson. Not much genuine debate there. I am advised that the leftist Robert Fisk was a late withdrawal from the Festival’s program. He would have added interest – but not diversity.

The first *LNL* coverage of the so-called debate at the 2003 Adelaide Festival of Ideas (which aired on 14 July 2003) reflected the lack of plurality in the Festival’s program. Following friendly introductions from Phillip Adams – Joanna Bourke agreed with Richard Butler who agreed with Robert Manne on the general issue of the Second Gulf War. It was as chummy as that. But where was the debate? It was not so much the Adelaide Festival of *Ideas* but, rather, the Adelaide Festival of *Idea* – in so far as international affairs was concerned.

As I understand it, the Adelaide Festival of Ideas is funded by taxpayers. I am advised that, for the 2003 function, the Festival received \$100,000 from the South Australian Government and \$50,000 from the Adelaide City Council. As such, the Festival should

be under an obligation to provide genuine ideological diversity in its program. As you will recall, the American commentator David Brooks wrote about the leftist predominance at the inaugural Festival in 1999 following his return to the US. He also referred to the mocking introduction which he received at one of his appearances.

It is simply not accurate to claim (as you did in your *Sunday Age* column) that I was “generously received” at the Adelaide Festival in 1999. Certainly the organisers were friendly and professional. But not the audiences - nor the various forum chairmen. Hanan Ashrawi spoke to me after the first evening session held at the Festival Hall Theatre – which was chaired by Phillip Adams. She said she admired my low-key response to the evident hostility directed at me by large sections of the audience. Phillip Adams did not try and prevent this – indeed he engaged in his own mocking directed at me. It was as unprofessional as that. Initially I had expressed reservations about participating in this session - since Phillip Adams was chairing it and it was being recorded both for ABC TV and *LNL*. I did not see the point in turning-up to be mocked by Phillip Adams on ABC Radio National and ABC TV. I was assured that, this time around, there would be no Adams-style mockery. There was, of course. Ever since, I have refused to appear on *LNL* when Phillip Adams is in the chair. As I have advised the *LNL* production team, I do not understand why Phillip Adams goes out of his way to mock some of his talent – most, if not all, who appear on his program at an inconvenient time for gratis.

You may recall that you chaired my talk to the 1999 Festival on the Saturday afternoon. You may also recall that, during a subsequent session the next day, Catharine Lumby expressed concern at the unprofessional and aggressive response to my address by sections of the audience present.

I appreciated the comments made by both Hanan Ashrawi and Catharine Lumby. However, I am well used to public criticism and regarded the audience reactions to my performances as both predictable and amusing. It’s just that it is inaccurate for you to claim that I was “generously received” and that I was “afforded exactly the kind of platform that George Monbiot enjoyed this year”. I wasn’t.

The essential problem in 1999 was that the Festival was attended, overwhelmingly, by ABC Radio National types. Many were in a mood for barracking – not reflection – at the sessions covering international relations and the left/conservative debates. And, as far as I am aware, none of the comperes of the sessions have attempted to change this particular culture. The fact is that many of those who do front-

up at the Adelaide Festival of Ideas are leftist luvvies. A friend who spoke at this year's Festival wrote to me in the following terms - following my (private) prediction that the Festival would be dominated by leftists:

You were right about the Adelaide Festival of Ideas: ripples, waves, tsunamis of applause washed over huge audiences at the mention of any anti-Howard or anti-American comment (they make no distinction).

You, Phillip Adams and other members of the Festival's advisory committee cannot determine the audience. But you do draw up the program. In my view, the overwhelming hegemony of leftists at certain of the Festival's sessions (i.e. those focusing on the foreign policy debate) encourages audiences of a leftist/luvvie barracking disposition. By the way, I don't know why you take exception to the word "luvvie". As I understand it, the term was popularised by *Private Eye* to describe contemporary middle class radicals - a group which can be found in abundance at, er, the Adelaide Festival of Ideas.

The Sydney Institute: A Comparison

In your *Sunday Age* column you wrote:

The festival has a policy of not inviting serving politicians, but if it were to, Peter Costello, who spoke last week at Henderson's Sydney Institute, would be as welcome a participant as any. And if his ideas about social capital then received further public exposure through rebroadcast on Adams' *Late Night Live* instead of, as they did, republication in the Fairfax press, then would we call that luvvie collectivism? I think not.

I don't see the point of this comment - if, indeed, there is one. Since the Festival has "a policy of not inviting serving politicians", why say that "Peter Costello, who spoke last week at Henderson's Sydney Institute, would be as welcome a participant as any"? I can only assume that you were telling your readers that Peter Costello, a leading conservative politician, had addressed The Sydney Institute in 2003. The implication was that The Sydney Institute invited political conservatives - and only political conservatives, since no others were mentioned - to speak at its functions. It is true that Peter Costello has spoken at the Institute this year - along with Alexander Downer, Nick Minchin and John Howard. It's just that The Sydney Institute's 2003 program also includes Julia Gillard, Jacinta Collins, Lindsay Tanner, John Faulkner and Bob Brown.

In other words, there *is* a real diversity of views at The Sydney Institute. And not only among politicians. Last Wednesday, Margaret Simons and Ron Brunton spoke. Last year's program included Tariq Ali and Boaz Ganor - along with John Ralston Saul and Patricia Hewitt. Speakers this year have included Alison Broinowski and Keith Windschuttle. What's more, whoever chairs the forums introduces all speakers in a professional way (without mocking) and ensures that they are heard with courtesy (without open jeering).

It may well be that you and I are coming at this issue from different positions. I genuinely believe in debate and discussion - and The Sydney Institute's program demonstrates this. You may profess such a goal - but the Adelaide Festival of Ideas's program does not, in fact, encompass genuine debate and discussion concerning issues in the foreign policy debate, at least.

All this may have something to do with funding. In my view it's all too easy for the board of the Adelaide Festival of Ideas. First, State and local government provides a bucket-load of taxpayers money to Festival organisers - who then proceed to invite their ideological soul-mates to Adelaide. I accept that a substantial section of the Festival's funding comes from the private sector. However, it is unlikely that much of this funding would be forthcoming if the Festival were not underwritten, in the first instance, by public monies.

Eureka Street - A Reflection

It may well be that our different stances on the Festival turn on different attitudes both to what constitutes genuine debate. It was much the same when you were editor of *Eureka Street*. I used to joke that, while I was a subscriber, I rarely read the magazine - lest I intrude on a family conversation. It was very much a case of (ideological) mates writing to - or about - (ideological) mates.

What's more, the money to *Eureka Street* was handed over in bucket-load form. I spoke to Bill Gurry (who, as you know, is chairman of Jesuit Publications) in Canberra in May. During our discussion, I put it to him that *Eureka Street* had lost around \$100,000 a year during your decade of editorship. In short, \$1 million all up. He did not refute the claim. I joked that that I could have done better than that. That, if he had given me \$2 million, I could have lost that in 10 years - in which case I would have been twice as successful as a *Eureka Street* editor. Just joking, of course. Bill was not amused. Alas.

However - assuming the above figures are accurate - there is reason to query whether the Australian

Jesuits were wise to lose around \$1 million on *Eureka Street* over a decade. Especially when the same in-house-family discussion could have been produced in a more economical style magazine at substantially less cost. If the Jesuits in Australia had money-to-burn – they could have sent more funds to, say, the Australian Jesuit Mission in India.

Conclusion

I invariably find the receipt of large handouts – whether from, say, a government or the Society of Jesus – introduces a sense of complacency, if not self-indulgence. Which perhaps explains why you truly believe that the Adelaide Festival of Ideas has a politically diverse range of speakers when even a cursory examination of the Festival's program demonstrates that this is not the case.

Best wishes – and congratulations on your position at La Trobe.

Yours sincerely

Gerard Henderson

Morag Fraser is currently adjunct Professor in the Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences at La Trobe University in Melbourne. There was no reply to Gerard Henderson's letter of 6 August 2003

LETTER FROM GERARD HENDERSON TO PHILLIP ADAMS – 20 AUGUST 2003

Dear Phillip

You may – or may not – have seen Morag Fraser's article in the *Sunday Age* (20 July 2003) in which she mentioned both you and me. You obtained a guernsey in view of your position as a member of the Adelaide Festival of Ideas' advisory committee and as presenter of *Late Night Live* (since it records and plays some of the Festival's speeches and forums).

I have attached – for the record – a copy of my response to Morag Fraser, dated 6 August 2003. I did not write to the *Sunday Age* because I believe that columnists should not carry out arguments on letters pages – which should, wherever possible, be reserved for readers.

As I have explained to Chris Bullock, the ironic reference to *LNL* in my *Sydney Morning Herald/Age* column (of 15 July 2003) was sparked by the *LNL* segment which featured Joanna Burke, Richard Butler and Robert Manne – where everyone agreed with everyone else. As you are aware, this came out of an Adelaide Festival of Ideas gig.

There is no need to respond to – or acknowledge – this.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely

Gerard Henderson

PA TO GH – 16 SEPTEMBER 2003

Dear Gerard

Sad but true. There's a wide range of human emotions that seem alien to you. Ingredients completely lacking in your psychological make-up. Principle among them is a sense of humour. I've observed this singular absence with fascination over the decades we've half-known each other. It manifests itself in many ways, including your inability to distinguish satire from serious comment. This was observable in your "Media Watch" observations on any number of occasions, when you reacted with characteristic primness to the utterances of others when, clearly, they were written or delivered with comic intent.

This means that much of your comment on our social, cultural and political life is delivered with the sternness of a headmaster. Gerard, if only you could switch, just occasionally, to vaudeville.

Were you possessed of a sherrick or scintilla of humour, you'd realise that "mocking" is often good natured, even warm hearted. It might be described more accurately – and equally anachronistically – as "joshing". This is certainly the case when I've introduced you – or spoken about you in the past. And I've talked about you a lot – usually favourably – pointing out that, on balance, you make a very useful contribution to public life. Even if it is characteristically bad tempered.

Which brings us to the Festival of Ideas and that "mocking introduction". I'm glad that Hanan spoke kindly to you. If nothing else, it's further evidence of her finely honed diplomatic skills. In truth, you didn't need me to send you up on that occasion. You made a complete fool of yourself in Adelaide. It was one of your silliest, worst judged performances – which is why the entire audience laughed at you. Not with you.

Thanks for informing me that you've black banned *Late Night Live*. Nobody told me. So be it. In return, I hereby black ban further appearances in your column. You mention me constantly, obsessively and inaccurately. You're the master of the "out of context" quote. So, in the future, my name will disappear from your diatribes. (Incidentally, this is a joke. One of these days I shall explain jokes to you.)

David Brooks? Remember that the Festival invited him – and that I invited him to stay on as a weekly contributor to *LNL* for some considerable time. In the most recent festival we invited a long list of Conservatives, including the neo-Con convert Christopher Hitchens. The reason he didn't make it

to Adelaide to boost Bush was, presumably, because he was so busy making a big quid on the lecture circuit in the US.

Let me commend a colloquial expression to you. "Lighten up". Gerard, it's not too late to abandon the monochromatic and embrace a radiant world where even political combatants can enjoy the hues of humour.

Cheers

Phillip Adams

GH TO PA - 2 OCTOBER 2003

Dear Phillip AO

I refer to your letter of 16 September 2003. And what a pleasure it was to receive my second letter from you – on "Phillip Adams AO" letterhead – in just three months.

As to humour, I invariably find it very much in the eye of the beholder. You maintain that I have no "sense of humour" but rather the "sternness of a headmaster" – and then proceed to lecture me, in headmasterly mode, about this.

No doubt you found your letter to me dated 26 June 2003 humorous – I regarded it as surprisingly juvenile. It's all a question of judgement. As for me, I find the use of the title "AO" on your letterhead amusing. I concede, however, that this is a matter of taste – since you seem to take your gongs very seriously indeed. I note that in your *Who's Who in Australia* entry you not only list your AO (1992) but also your AM of recent memory – along with an honorary doctorate, no less. Well done Dr Adams, AO, AM, et al.

It's much the same with the constant mocking of some (but not all) of your *Late Night Live* guests. You maintain that this is mere "joshing" – which is "often good natured, even warm hearted". Sometimes it is – and sometimes it is self-indulgent. My observation that you like "joshing" others – but do not take well to others "mocking" you. It's just that I see little point in giving up the best part of an evening, for a pro-bono performance on *LNL*, only to be joshed/mockered by you. I have communicated this to a number of your producers over a number of years. If they have not passed on my message – then this may say more about you than me. But, then again, it may not.

In your (most recent) epistle, you allege that in my *Sydney Morning Herald/Age* column I "mention" you "constantly, obsessively and inaccurately" and assert that I am "the master of the 'out of context' quote". In short, I engage in "diatribes" concerning you.

The fact is that you are rarely mentioned in my *SMH/Age* column – and when you have been named it has usually been in passing. In the last three years I have quoted you a total of three times. Two of the quotes were sourced (so they could be checked) and one was a statement which even you would not claim was out of context. In fact in 2001, 2002 and 2003 combined – I have only quoted a total of 18 words from your work. Just 18 words in almost three years.

If your allegation about me "inaccurately" quoting you "out of context" is serious – rather than just, er, joshing – this suggests that you are heavily into self-delusion. In this instance, I would suggest that you self-administer some of your own headmasterly advice and "lighten up". It helps to ward-off onset paranoia, you see.

As to the Adelaide Festival of Ideas, I accept that Christopher Hitchens was invited for the 2003 gig. But, then, so was Robert Fisk. The fact is that there was a manifest imbalance of opinion in the Festival's sessions on politics and foreign policy. I note that you have not defended the 2003 program.

Finally – yes, I remember David Brooks. I also remember that he wrote an article on the leftist domination at the 1999 Adelaide Festival of Ideas (*The Weekly Standard*, 9 August 1999). David Brooks objected – in a humorous manner, of course – about some mocking introductions he received during his sessions. You, no doubt, would prefer the term "joshing".

In particular, David Brooks referred to "well-meaning moderators" who introduced him in "unintentionally patronizing tones". He made a specific reference to a moderator who introduced him "as a conservative who actually has a sense of humour". Remember who he was? Phillip Adams AO, no less. David Brooks commented that "nobody who actually knows any conservatives would ever talk like this". Quite so.

It's much the same with your political judgments. You maintain that I "made a complete fool" of myself "in Adelaide" in 1999 and "that the entire audience laughed" at me. Sure sections of what was essentially an *LNL* audience objected at my comments – but, believe it or not, I also received some praise. As far as I am aware, "entire" audiences only laugh on cue in, say, North Korea.

Have lotsa fun – and keep that Phillip Adams AO letterhead coming.

Best wishes.

Gerard Henderson



BIAS IN THE ABC

By Geoffrey Luck

Is bias simply in the eye of the beholder – the viewer and the listener? The ABC believes it is. Can there be an objective system to determine whether a program was biased? The ABC believes there can – and says its complaints review procedures are not only just that, but also that they are the best in the world. Not everyone agrees, and recent events have put more pressure on both the credibility of its programs and the appropriateness and independence of its complaints handling structure.

Like any good bureaucracy, the ABC keeps detailed statistics of contacts by members of the public and publishes them quarterly on its website. At first glance, they give a most satisfactory and satisfying impression. Take for example the latest available report, for the April-June quarter 2003. Of 8330 public contacts “finalised” in this period, 63 per cent are presented as “Appreciation/Request/Suggestion” while only 35 per cent are classified as “Complaint”. Of this 35 per cent (2889 in number), only 363 were upheld either fully or partially. That represents a mere 12.5 per cent of all complaints, and only a miniscule 4.3 per cent of all contacts to the ABC. But it gets better. Of those 363 successful complaints, 309 related to the accidental broadcast of the wrong episode of “Monarch of the Glen”. A quick re-calculation shows that indeed only 55 individual complaints were upheld, a gratifyingly paltry 1.9 per cent of all complaints, and an insignificant 0.0066 per cent of all contacts. They are statistics which must give a warm glow of comfort to management and the board.

However, a closer look and a little more analysis reveals a rather more disturbing picture. In that same second quarter of 2003, 718 complaints, or 25 per cent of the total lodged, were listed under “Matters of fairness, accuracy and independence”. And of those, three-quarters (539) cited “Party political bias”, “Other bias”, “Lack of Balance”, News values/News content”, or “Unfair treatment”. The accompanying table shows that these concerns by the public have been running consistently at these levels for at least the last nine months. The outcome of the complaints handling process was again overwhelmingly favourable to the organisation. Of the 33 complaints which could be categorised as “fairness, accuracy or independence matters” that were either fully or

partially upheld, only 14 could be interpreted as involving bias, balance or unfair treatment. That is only 2.5 per cent of the complaints lodged in that category, and only 0.0048 per cent of all complaints.

ABC COMPLAINTS STATISTICS			
	Q4/2002	Q1/2003	Q2/2003
TOTAL COMPLAINTS	1363	1457	2889
<i>Fairness, accuracy, independence matters (total)</i>	423 (31%)	508 (35%)	718 (25%)
Bias, balance, news values or content, unfair treatment	282	383	539
- As proportion of total complaints	21%	26.3%	18.6%
- As proportion of Fairness, accuracy, independence complaints	67%	75.4%	75%
<i>Taste and standards matters (total)</i>	664 (49%)	781 (54%)	1529 (53%)
Scheduling, programme changes	339 (25%)	367 (25%)	1032 (36%)**
<i>Other (total)</i> (Technical, management, promotions, customer service)	276 (20%)	168 (11.5%)	642 (22%)

**Includes 309 identical complaints when wrong Monarch of the Glen episode broadcast

This system of aggregating complaints, and providing a summary analysis on the basis of overall percentages is misleading. It seems structured to satisfy the ABC itself, and superficially at least, serves it well in defending its programs, News and Current Affairs in particular, as completely honourable journalism under proper editorial control. This is the area of real contention in the argumentation about bias, so the data should be meaningfully dissected and reported, as above. To equate raw figures - the number of complaints of bias with those on program alterations - is like comparing the number of derailments to changes in the train timetable.

What then is the explanation for the large discrepancy between what hundreds of listeners and viewers perceive as bias or lack of balance, and the ABC’s opinion of its program? The large majority of complainants could of course be ideologues looking for toads under every stone. Liverish disposition could account for some. But is it just possible that some people who take the trouble to protest are actually fair-minded, concerned that the ABC’s reputation, its importance as an independent national

broadcaster, and its ability to withstand political pressures are all weakened by departures from the established codes, guidelines and editorial policies? Paranoid defensiveness in rejecting their complaints only heightens their concern.

An old journalistic adage comes to mind: "If you want to know the editorial policy, look at what's on the spike, not what goes in the paper." We don't know anything at all about the 506 complaints of bias or unfairness that were rejected, but we do know of the powerful defensive missiles in the armoury of Fortress ABC that may be deployed when critics approach its walls. These may be fired randomly, or in sequence, as deemed appropriate:

Flat rejection (denial)

"Balance can be achieved over time (not necessarily in the one program)"

"Reporters need to be questioning"

"The difference between News and Current Affairs is not understood"

"Both sides of politics complain when in power, so the ABC must be fair"

"Polls show most Australians believe the ABC is not biased"

"Most complaints are not sustained"

"Critics are part of an ABC-bashing (government) conspiracy"

There is a siege mentality. So it's worth examining the anatomy of one complaint to demonstrate the difficulties in challenging the ABC under existing procedures for bias, lack of balance and disregard of its Editorial Policies. In October 2002, the programme *Foreign Correspondent* included a 22-minute segment on Silvio Berlusconi. I had not long returned to Australia after living in Italy for ten years, and looked forward to a penetrating report by Michael Brissenden, well-known for his sound European reporting from Moscow and Brussels.

The report was timely, on the eve of the passage of the so-called "Cirami" Law, which permits an accused person to apply to Italy's highest appeal court to have a trial moved to another jurisdiction if it can be shown that the original magistrates are biased. It's not unlike our provision to have a jury trial moved if local feelings could prejudice a fair trial. The scene was set with footage of a colourful noisy protest demonstration in the piazza (which Italians do so well). But my concerns grew as the segment gave voice to a militant actress, the editor of *L'Unita* (the former communist newspaper), an English Marxist history professor and a former magistrate closely associated with Berlusconi's prosecutors. Together they mounted a sustained attack on Berlusconi, for his power, his monopolisation of the media, his alleged attack on democracy and the law, and his conflict of interest.

Taken as a whole, the program maintained that Berlusconi was ramming through the Cirami Law to save himself from prosecution, that he was attacking the independence of RAI, (the ABC's fellow national broadcaster), that he was reckless in his use of his newspapers, magazines, television stations and other commercial interests - as well as his position as Prime Minister - to attack the judiciary and subvert the democratic process.

The program did not explain that the Cirami Law was reinstating a provision of the Italian Criminal Code which had been accidentally deleted three years earlier. It clearly represented the law as a simply a corrupt device for Berlusconi to escape justice. It did not point out that the Milan prosecutors accusing Berlusconi were known in Italy as the "Red" magistrates for their position in the politicised judicial system. It did not clarify that, as was well known in Italy, Berlusconi alleged the magistrates were pursuing him for political reasons. It did not reveal that one of their number, Antonio di Pietro, had resigned from the magistracy in 1994 in a pre-arranged attempt to succeed Berlusconi as Prime Minister when he (leading his first coalition government) was to be brought down by the corruption charges his fellow magistrates were planning.

It did not explain that in Italian law, prosecutors could secure his conviction as personally criminally liable for any of the alleged or admitted instances of tax fraud, false accounting or bribery in any of his hundreds of companies without evidence of his involvement, his intent or even his knowledge. They have the useful catch-all "*non poteva non sapere*", that is he could not possibly not have known! The only rebuttal of the repeated denunciations by opponents came in the 15 seconds allowed a Berlusconi editor and supporter, out of focus and almost out of earshot claiming that the magistrates were out to supplant the government.

Most serious of all however, was the use of a videoclip of a prosecutor, the same di Pietro, saying, "When you walk in the street, do you ever see 250-million lire handed over for no apparent reason?" This was in close juxtaposition to footage of Berlusconi, with the clear implication that the charge applied to him. But it came from another court case altogether. Nobody in Australia was expected to recognise that the program had broken one of the cardinal rules of broadcast journalism, transgressed ABC editorial policies and breached the AJA Code of Ethics.

My first complaint to the ABC was rejected out of hand by Geoffrey Crawford, Director of Corporate Affairs. As was the second, although supported by a

file of background material which went further to define the program's lack of objectivity. In this approach, I commended the idea of a report on Berlusconi with all his faults as worthwhile, but pointed out that due to its lack of balance and distortions, *Foreign Correspondent* had missed the opportunity to present a much more interesting, if more complex picture of Italian politics.

By this time, the ABC had appointed a senior manager, Murray Green as Complaints Review Executive, but the issue was not referred to him. Dissatisfied that my points had been dismissed out of hand by management, I appealed to the Independent Complaints Review Tribunal. In my covering letter I made my reasons clear: "As a former journalist, I see no subject as 'off limits' to ABC reporters. But if the Corporation is to claim legitimacy for its right to look at controversial matters, it must not, and must not appear to be coming down on one side. This is especially important in foreign reporting, when Australian audiences will not be *au fait* with domestic situations such as the one under review."

The ICRP, appointed by the ABC but consisting of five outsiders, first had to consider whether my complaint was worthy of investigation, then extracted a Deed of Waiver releasing it and the ABC from any legal action in respect of the subject broadcast. No doubt a routine protection, but I thought it excessively protectionist in the circumstances.

Eleven weeks later, I received its report from the ABC's Managing Director, Russell Balding. In summary, the Panel concluded that "...while there is imbalance within the Berlusconi segment, such does not amount to **serious** bias." (My emphasis). In its Solomon-like judgement, the ICRP seemed to be able to distinguish between serious and normal bias. As to the issue of the bogus videoclip, it seemed to accept the ABC's defence that "...the particular videoclip was simply a general illustration not out of context in the segment viewed as a whole." The Panel was left merely "...to ponder whether Mr Luck might have a point."

It might be thought curious that the ICRP should deliver its report not to me, the complainant, but to the ABC. What made it offensive was that it took the Corporation nearly a month to pass it on. When challenged, Russell Balding pointed out that as the publisher of ICRP reports, the ABC was legally liable for their contents and must check them for defamation before release. Here was an Alice in Wonderland vortex of contradiction that left the real independence of the ICRP in some doubt.

The last chance for a complainant lies in an appeal to the Australian Broadcasting Authority. To my surprise, the ABA responded to my submission by stating that

it could not investigate complaints of breaches of the ABC's Charter of Editorial Practice because the Charter is not covered by either the *Broadcasting Services Act* 1992 or the ABC Code of Practice.

This was critical. The Charter is the key document guiding the conduct of ABC journalists. Under the heading "Accuracy, impartiality and objectivity", it requires "accurate and impartial gathering and presentation of news and information according to the recognised standards of objective journalism" and editorial staff "not to allow their professional judgement to be influenced by pressures from political, commercial or other sectional interests, or by their own personal views." Instead, the ABA pointed out it could examine the program on "objectivity" are not mentioned. And the Code contains those escape clauses mentioned above – not to be unquestioning, no requirement to give all sides of an issue the same amount of time, balance not always needing to be reached within a single program.

In its comprehensive 13-page report, the ABA had to conclude that the balancing elements which I had listed were absent from the program. But not surprisingly given its terms of reference, it concluded: "The ABA accepts that critical perspectives predominated, but notes that the Code does not oblige a program to give all sides of an issue the same amount of time. The ABA accepts, as well, that critical perspectives were favoured in the segment, but does not consider that they were favoured unduly, which the ABA interprets to mean a favouring without foundation in fact."

The difficulties revealed by this sequence of events (which lasted ten months) were almost immediately replicated when Senator Richard Alston presented the ABC with his 68 complaints about the *AM* radio program's treatment of the Iraq war. But the additional ingredients of politics and media interest introduced significant new dimensions. It's understandable that the normal inclination of fellow journalists is to rally around beleaguered colleagues in a show of solidarity. But the Alston-*AM* case became interesting for the reluctance of the media to apply the same rigour in its observation and comment as it would in other issues of public interest.

When malfeasance is suspected in public office, the press is quick to demand open enquiry and condemn internal investigation. Yet the laborious Green Report, produced internally by the ABC as its response after nearly two months, was almost universally hailed by journalists as a finding. Any suspicion of bias was a delusion. "A bit of misplaced sarcasm, but ABC 'bias' largely in Alston's mind," headlined Errol Simper's conclusions in *The Australian*. Of course the 130-page Green document was no "finding" - merely the ABC

The jury was not still out, it had yet to be empanelled. What distinguished this response from others, including mine, was the use of an in-house lawyer, using forensic and courtroom techniques in an attempt to bring down the eight pillars of bias that were the substance of the Alston complaints. The extent to which Green went was indicative of how seriously the ABC regarded the Alston dossier.

Unsurprisingly, Senator Alston was dissatisfied with the ABC's attempt at self-acquittal. But in considering an appeal to the ABA (which was publicly canvassed at the time), he immediately found himself up against the same limitation I had encountered. The ABA could not investigate alleged breaches of the ABC's Charter of Editorial Practice, the grounds for his complaints. It could only adjudicate on the basis of the much more vague S.4 of the Code of Practice. As soon as Senator Alston floated the idea of a new complaints appeal body which would have side-stepped this limitation, the media came down on him like a ton of bricks. The ABC took the initiative by referring his 68 hot potato items to the ICRP.

The outcome of the Alston complaints may well prove to be pivotal in the long and contentious history of bias complaints against the ABC. For the first time the Corporation was faced with a comprehensive body of evidence of attitude in the coverage of a running story of national importance. Transcripts of Linda Mottram's link pieces (which she wrote herself) revealed not the ABC's right to be questioning and sceptical or to pursue issues, as Green's report claimed, but day after day, an editorialising and personal commentary. The ICRP's report, upholding 17 of the complaints and deeming 12 of them serious, should have been a shattering blow to the ABC, and to public confidence in its journalistic output – but most of the newspaper reports played it down.

For Senator Alston, 17 strikes out of 65 (3 complaints were withdrawn) represented a batting average of 26 per cent. Put most accurately, a little more than a *quarter* of the *AM* program items complained of were held to be in breach of the Corporation's own guidelines in its Charter of Editorial practice. Compare this with the mere 2.5 per cent of complaints in the ABC's own category of "Fairness, accuracy or independence matters" upheld in the April-June quarter 2003. (As in the analysis above). The wonder here was that with such a high percentage of complaints upheld, the ICRP could not find a pattern, and dismissed any idea of "overall biased and anti-coalition coverage... nor tendentious commentary by program presenters."

Some media commentators have maintained that "a sensible demarcation" between news and programs of analysis and interpretation excuses biased

comment by a program presenter. This is an oft-heard plaint by ABC management. The ICRP betrayed its independence by taking this same easy way out. While recognising that the presenter has the opportunity to set the tone for the ensuing content, it reached the surprising conclusion that in 11 instances complained of "the ensuing content sufficiently dispelled any insinuation arising from what she (Linda Mottram) said as presenter." The implication was that the presenter could say anything she liked as long as the reporter stuck to the facts. The Panel seemed to have overlooked the fact that both reporters and program anchors are bound by the same editorial practice rules.

The final twist in the *AM* saga came in the unprecedented situation of the ABC allowing Mottram to broadcast a defiant statement in the 7pm television news bulletin, proclaiming her innocence and criticising the ABC's own "independent" complaints tribunal! It was as if little Alice just stepped through the looking glass again. All of which emphasises just how essential it is for a statutory body completely independent of, and outside both the ABC and the ABA to deal with editorial complaints. Ultimately it will be in the best interests of the Corporation, as well as of the public

How then did the ABC reach this state of affairs – a sad decline from the position of national trust in and respect for its news-type programs? The answer lies in an unfortunate conjunction of events going back more than 30 years. Firstly, the moribund management of the News Division (then led by a former Queensland mounted policeman with no journalistic training) had failed to perceive that around the world, reporting had gone "live", with voice reports on radio and "stand-up" pieces to camera on television. So its journalists received no training in broadcasting techniques, continuing to write copy for bulletins read by an announcer. This was reinforced by management dogma, still living in a past that separated news from spoken word programs. As late as 1970 when, as London Editor, I was pushing more and more national radio news stories from our team to Australia as voice reports, I was chided by the General Manager that "...there is too much talking in the bulletins!"

Into the void left by the News Division's incompetence stepped dynamic program makers who transformed the creaking Talks Department into "Public Affairs." Bob Raymond and Michael Charlton had already shown the way of the future in television with *Four Corners* in 1961, which began not as today's single-topic program, but as a miscellany of stories, as many as eight in 45 minutes. The initiative was immediately seen as a threat – and bitterly opposed – by the News Division. (After Michael "nicked" some

of the overseas film clips in the News editing suite for his program, we were ordered to deny *Four Corners* any assistance.) But it wasn't until 1967 that the launch of *This Day Tonight* on television, and *AM*, which followed it on radio five months later, sowed the seeds for the ABC's current problems.

During the 1970s friction between News and Public Affairs developed into acrimony, and finally internecine warfare. News journalists were not allowed to share voice circuits booked by Public Affairs. For example, the nightly circuit from London to Sydney was off-limits to my reporters – until I persuaded the BBC to shift the time at which it relayed *World Roundup* to Sydney, making it impossible for Current Affairs to deny News an extension of time. The day of Gough Whitlam's dismissal, Public Affairs Radio not only seized the only voice circuit from Canberra, blocking any use by News reporters, but also persuaded senior executives to give them total control of the network. As a result, only brief summary news bulletins were injected into programs that afternoon. On that most dramatic news day, bemused listeners were often left for up to three-quarters of an hour at a time wondering what had happened while academics prattled about consequences. Interpretation and comment displaced fact.

In 1975 conflict came to a head when News journalists staged their first stop work action in history in protest against Public Affairs Radio's attempts to monopolise direct broadcasts of news events. I was the News Division's negotiator in the dispute; the rather clumsy resolution provided for joint participation in events such as the then quarterly basic wage decisions, and state and federal elections – but it was a beginning. The stupidity was in management. In overseas offices, News and Public Affairs people co-operated well at a personal level. On their return home, they were appalled and frustrated by the refusal of the organisation to tackle the integration of the two areas.

In 1976, I organised a seminar of journalists to consider the future of News as a means of opening up the issue. Conducted (free) by a leading behavioural scientist, Professor John Hunt, it came up with the unanimous recommendation that News and Public Affairs should be merged (much to the chagrin of the Controller of News). A key concern within this proposal was that Public Affairs programs should be subject to the same editorial strictures and control as in the News Division.

Five years later, with the situation still unresolved, the Dix Report into the ABC put its finger on one of the reasons for the friction, and the drift to separate editorial standards:

....Current Affairs tended to recruit directly from the universities and from other non-

journalistic professions, people whom they trained in the use of broadcasting techniques.

In the News Division, reporters underwent a four-year on-the-job cadetship, similar to that of newspaper journalists. Venerable crusty sub-editors with decades of experience scrutinised their copy, teaching them by rejection and re-writing to adhere to style, to avoid defamation, to conform to the AJA Code of Ethics, to report objectively, and especially to excise any personal views or opinions from their stories. During the Vietnam War, chiefs-of-staff in the national radio newsroom forbade reporters to go out with anti-war badges on their lapels. Not to suppress their personal beliefs, but because flaunting them in public would impugn the reporter's objectivity.

No such curbs were applied to Public Affairs radio and television reporters. Ken Inglis' history, *This is the ABC*, records Gerald Stone, one of the first *TDT* reporters, admitting that the program "...tends to dwell on what's wrong with us, rather than what's right with us". Kit Denton, father of Andrew, and an acclaimed broadcaster himself, praised *TDT* for having the courage to assume "an editorial point of view". Allan Martin, one of its first producers, was quoted by Inglis: "A public affairs producer needs a bit of crusading spirit. It is not his job to start a revolution, but he must have a sense of justice, of what is wrong, and **what needs changing.**"

TDT, *AM* and to a lesser extent *PM* were more interested in impact than impartiality. It is not an exaggeration to say that these programs escaped from strict editorial control at that time. The Commission, management and program makers were embroiled in a constant ferment of complaint and criticism – not all of it due merely to the novelty of what they were doing. The programs were children of the 1960s revolution and the "new" journalism which denied objectivity and validated the personal viewpoint in reporting. Alex Dix in his 1981 Review saw the danger:

...the organisation is likely to attract people into its service who have a highly developed interest in social and political issues. It is here that the ABC has a duty as a professional broadcasting organisation to guide and channel that concern and to ensure that it is not allowed to override the need for adherence to the principles of "due impartiality".

In a very real sense the ABC has not yet succeeded in bringing Current Affairs programs under this control. The problem was aggravated by changes to journalism cadetships, requiring only one year on-the-job training for graduates. If they came from the new schools of journalism with that "highly developed interest in social and political issues", it

was inevitable that their convictions would take to the air. This could occur in the design of programs, the selection of topics, the choice of interview subjects, and the line of questioning. This explains why it is impossible not to recognise a “culture” of the ABC with strong strands of belief that its role is to be at the forefront of societal and political change. This is true whether the subject is aboriginal reconciliation, a republic, homosexuality, multiculturalism, mandatory detention of illegal immigrants, family law, UN conventions, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Kyoto Protocol or the Iraq War.

So what is to be done? We do need an independent national broadcaster to bring us dispassionate examination of all these topics in its news and current affairs programs. But we also need a higher level of editorial discipline than we now observe, to ensure balance and forbid the intrusion of personal opinion. There must be no “nudge, nudge, wink, wink” to the listener or viewer, else the ABC will find itself talking only to like-minded people, not serving all Australia. The ABC must insist to its reporters, and clarify for its audience, that “commentary” “opinion” and “interpretation” in current affairs programs mean commentary, opinion and interpretation by the interviewee, not the interviewer. It must cease to use claims of political interference as a knee-jerk defence against complaints of bias - a lesson that also needs to be learned by the so-called “Friends of the ABC”. Above all, it needs an Editor-in-Chief, a senior, older, wiser more experienced practitioner, unafraid to exercise a stern discipline internally. He will recognise that only thus can the Corporation defend its integrity and its right to tackle the tough issues.

In the meantime, the ABC Board and management might commit to heart the *mea culpa* of the *New York Times* after its recent embarrassment:

Journalism is an imperfect business, and like all human enterprises journalism is not perfectible. But it should always be heading in that direction.

Geoffrey Luck was an ABC journalist from 1950-1976

References

ⁱ K.S. Inglis, *This is the ABC: The Australian Broadcasting Commission 1932-1983* (M.U.P.) p.216

ⁱⁱ *The ABC in Review – National Broadcasting in the 1980s - Report by the Committee of Review of the ABC*, (May, 1981) S.10.117

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid

^{iv} *This is the ABC* p 274

^v *The ABC in Review* S. 10.25



(YET MORE) CORRESPONDENCE

TOM UREN & GERARD HENDERSON

On 21 October 2003, Tom Uren sent the following letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* for publication on the *Letters Page*.

Dear Editor

I am appalled at the snide viciousness of Gerard Henderson’s claim against Jim Cairns in the *Herald* (21/10/03). When he said “Cairns was not anti-war in the strict sense of the term. Rather he wanted one side, namely the communist North Vietnamese army and its puppet Vietcong force in South Vietnam to defeat the South Vietnamese Army and its US-led allies” (meaning also the defeat of our Australian soldiers).

Jim Cairns when addressing the Melbourne Moratorium in May 1970 said:

When you leave here today, realise a sacred trust. You have the trust to stand for peace and for the qualities of the human spirit to which we must dedicate ourselves... Our spirit is the spirit of peace and understanding. Our spirit is opposed to violence, opposed to hate, opposed to every motive that has produced this terrible war. And in developing our spirit, we will change the spirit of other people. We can overcome...and I have never seen a more convincing sight than I see here now to give me confidence that we shall overcome.

Yours

Tom Uren

The Letters Editor forwarded a copy of Tom Uren’s correspondence to Gerard Henderson for any comment he might wish to make. He responded by forwarding a note which he had sent to Tom Uren direct:

Dear Tom

The *Sydney Morning Herald* has forwarded to me a copy of your letter-to-the-editor which was faxed today. You write that you are appalled at my reference to the late Dr Jim Cairns in my *Sydney Morning Herald* column of 21 October where I wrote:

The Labor Left’s opposition to the Australian-US alliance is ideological. It was perhaps best exemplified by the attitude of Cairns during the ‘60s. Following his death

last week, several commentators referred to his anti-war stance during the Vietnam conflict.

In fact, Cairns was not anti-war in the strict sense of the term. Rather he wanted one side, namely the communist North Vietnamese Army and its puppet Vietcong force in South Vietnam, to defeat the South Vietnamese Army and its US-led allies.

Due to space considerations I had to cut my column in today's *Herald* to 900 words. A longer version appeared in the *West Australian* - which included the following additional sentences:

This became clear when, as deputy prime minister in April 1973, Cairns presided at a visit to Australia of a North Vietnamese delegation. He was photographed posing in front of a North Vietnamese flag which was draped over a photograph of the Vietnamese communist dictator Ho Chi Minh. He was no pacifist. Nor was Cairns anti-war, but he was hostile to the US.

By the way, the photograph of Jim Cairns in front of the Ho Chi Minh portrait and the flags of communist North Vietnam and the communist National Liberation Front/Viet Cong was published in *The Age* on 27 April 1973. The reference to Jim Cairns as deputy prime minister in April 1973 was incorrect - he attained this position in 1974. But in 1973 Cairns was a senior Cabinet minister.

I followed Jim Cairns's career with interest - attending some of his talks in Melbourne in the late 1960s and early 1970s and reading much, if not all, of his books, pamphlets, articles etc. Dr Cairns never made any secret of the fact that he wanted Ho Chi Minh's forces to win in Vietnam. A few examples illustrate the point:

- In early April 1975, Cairns confidently predicted that the fall of the anti-communist Lon Nol government in Cambodia to the communist Khmer Rouge forces would lead to a "more stable situation" in Cambodia (*Four Corners*, 5 April 1975).
- Around the same time, Cairns declared that military victories for the communist forces in Cambodia and Vietnam were "the only way to stop the carnage, the bloodshed and the suffering" (*The Australian*, 9 April 1975).
- On May Day 1975, Cairns greeted the fall of Saigon, and the consequent end of the Vietnam War, "with relief as though a load has been lifted". (*The Age*, 2 May 1975).

The fact is that Jim Cairns's support for the military victories of the communist forces in Cambodia and Vietnam in April 1975 is not consistent with him being accurately described as holding an "anti-war" position. Rather, Cairns supported one side - the communist side - in the Indo China conflicts.

It is true that Jim Cairns urged those who attended the May 1970 Moratorium in Melbourne to "stand for peace". In fact, this comment was directed at ensuring that the demonstrators behaved peacefully during and after the Moratorium. There was some concern at the time that the Moratorium protest could turn violent.

Jim Cairns never disguised his support for Ho Chi Minh, North Vietnam and the communist National Liberation Front/Viet Cong. It is neither "snide" nor "vicious" to point this out. Just truthful.

Yours sincerely

Gerard Henderson

Tom Uren's letter was published in the *SMH* on 24 October 2003. Soon after Gerard Henderson sent the following note to Tom Uren:

Dear Tom

Following our phone conversation of last Wednesday, I note that your letter re the late Jim Cairns was printed in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on Friday 24 October 2003. You mentioned that you had asked the Letters Editor to withdraw your reference to my "snide viciousness". This was appreciated, but unnecessary - I am well used to criticism of the hyperbolic genre.

During our discussion you indicated that you were annoyed at my column of 21 October 2003 primarily on account of the fact that I would not have written what I wrote about Dr Cairns if he was still alive. Not so. For example, in my review of Paul Ormonde's biography of Jim Cairns titled *A Foolish Passionate Man*, I wrote:

Ormonde spends little time evaluating Cairns's position on Vietnam. His attitude is a simple one - Cairns was right on Vietnam. This is still the fashionable view. What should be remembered about Cairns's role in the Vietnam debate is that he was a supporter of the Viet Cong and Hanoi. He was no pacifist - rather he supported the war aims of one of the combatants. (See Gerard Henderson, "The Greening of Saint James", *Quadrant*, December 1982, pp 40-42).

As you will note, this is precisely the same point as I made in my column on 21 October 2003. I was never worried about making this critique during Cairns' lifetime – because my claim was true. Jim Cairns never denied supporting Ho Chi Minh's forces in Vietnam – i.e. the Hanoi government in the north and the Viet Cong/National Liberation Front in the south.

Thanks for forwarding a copy of your *A Tribute to Jim Cairns* which you read at his funeral service in Melbourne. It was a well written speech of suitable length for such an occasion. You said something of significance without trying to say too much. Well done.

I read with interest your reference to the Junie Morosi affair and your claim that “the media and conservative politicians used Cairns' personal life to bring him down”. For the record, my criticism of Jim Cairns never turned on his personal life. Rather, I was always concerned about Cairns' acceptance of – and, on occasions, support for – totalitarian communist regimes and the communist functionaries who presided over them. Some examples illustrate the point.

- In *The Age* on 13 October 2003, Bernie Taft wrote that he “first met” Jim Cairns when he (Taft) “helped in his campaign in the seat of Yarra in the Federal election of 1955”. In the mid 1950s, Bernie Taft was a Communist Party apparatchik and a supporter of Joseph Stalin's brutal communist totalitarian regime in the Soviet Union.
- In the Spring 1964 issue of *Dissent* magazine, Jim Cairns wrote:

We [Labor] are situated in the political spectrum next to the communists and they will stand for many things for which we also stand. We cannot therefore oppose those things. Because of our position in the political spectrum we will find ourselves in the same places as communists on some occasions, doing the same things for the same ends.

In the mid 1960s, the Communist Party in Australia was split – between those who supported Stalin's heirs in the Soviet Union and those who backed Mao Zedong's communist regime in Beijing. Circa 1964, the so-called Great Leap Forward was coming to an end in China. Mao's forced famine, which was part of the Great Leap Forward, led to the deaths of some 30 million Chinese.

- In late 1965 Jim Cairns wrote: “Communism has, so far, shown no evidence that it is a military expedition. It can be met only by basic political and economic progress” (*The Melbourne Partisan*, October-November 1965, pp 7-10). This overlooked the fact that the Red Army had suppressed most of Eastern

Europe in the mid to late 1940s and established communist regimes at the point of a gun.

- In December 1970, following a visit to the Soviet Union, Cairns reported that he had found no more suppression in the Soviet Union than in many aspects of Australian life. He added: “Democracy is a matter of degree and there's not much of it in Australia”. (*The Age*, 5 December 1970). He was subsequently reported as saying: “The Russian policeman, in his baggy uniform, is a slightly comical figure. He is often found lounging against a wall dragging on a cigarette. He doesn't seem to have much to do.” (*Melbourne Observer*, 7 November 1971).

Following Jim Cairns December 1970 comment, Dr T.H. Rigby wrote to *The Age* (10 December 1970) in the following terms:

As a Labor-voting socialist and fellow-opponent of our involvement in Vietnam, I have no political motive to discredit Dr Jim Cairns, but it would be a betrayal of responsibility as one of Australia's few professional students of Soviet politics to pass over unchallenged his reported statement that he had found no more suppression in Russia than in many aspects of Australian life. (*The Age*, 5/12). Russia has some strong points but political freedom is not one of them. In view of the vast and incontrovertible evidence of political repression of an order that makes the limits on freedom in countries like Australia look almost inconsequential, the mind boggles at the audacity of a politician who tells us we should reject this evidence because he saw no repression during his one and a half day visit. Apparently Dr Cairns did not manage to fit in a visit to Alexander Solzhenitsyn or Academician Sakharov, inspect any camps for political prisoners or run into any Volga Tartars arrested for attempting to return to their homeland from which they were expelled by Stalin, or any Independent Baptists imprisoned for objecting to religious persecution.

If there was really little difference in the level of political repression between Australia and Russia, then (just to take one issue) Dr Cairns, along with thousands of other Australians (me included), who had publicly opposed the Government over Vietnam, would now be in camps, prison or “special” psychiatric hospitals, all processions and meetings to protest

against our involvement would be prohibited and forcibly suppressed if attempted, thousands of university students expelled and restricted to laboring jobs for their involvement in protests and hundreds of scholars and intellectuals signing petitions and appeals against this repression would have been demoted, posted to the backblocks or prevented from obtaining work at all...

The fact is that Jim Cairns proffered more criticism of democratic political systems (including Australia) than he ever did of communist totalitarian systems (including the Soviet Union).

- In 1972 Jim Cairns called for the immediate recognition of the communist regime in East Germany along with its admission to the United Nations (Melbourne *Herald*, 10 February 1972). He was in East Berlin at the time as a guest of the state sponsored East German Peace Council. East Germany was the most repressive of all communist satellite regimes set up in Eastern Europe by the Soviet Union.

- In 1973, following an official visit to China, Cairns wrote that “the human experience of a quarter of mankind challenges us all to question our own assumptions about life and society”. (See his introduction to *China Through Australian Eyes*, New Democratic Publications, 1973). This comment was made towards the end of the Cultural Revolution in which tens of millions of Chinese were purged and some millions died. Yet Cairns maintained Australians needed to challenge their assumptions about life and society to follow the plans mapped out by the communist dictators in Beijing.

- And then there was Jim Cairns’ attitude to the communist dictator Ho Chi Minh. I know that you, like the late Dr Cairns, are a member of the Ho Fan Club. But the fact is that Ho Chi Minh was a typical communist totalitarian ruler – he purged political opponents, oversaw widescale executions, persecuted all groups independent of the party, instituted land collectivisation programs (which caused tens of thousands of deaths) and so on. This is well documented in a number of works by Vietnamese authors. Including, most recently, Bui Tin *Following Ho Chi Minh: Memoirs of a North Vietnamese Colonel* (C. Hurst, 1995).

The fact is that Jim Cairns never publicly objected to the suppression of human rights under communist regimes in Eastern Europe or Asia. Which brings me back to the past. Jim Cairns *did* want Ho Chi Minh’s forces to win the Vietnam War.

By the way, I documented the left’s support for Ho in Vietnam – and Pol Pot in Cambodia – in my article “In Hanoi’s Fields”, *Quadrant*, May 1985, pp 53-58. Needless to say, you got a guernsey. The reference is to the telegram which you co-signed on 26 January 1978 in which you depicted yourself as an Australian “...who supported the national liberation struggles of both Vietnam and Kampuchea...”. That is, the “struggle” of Ho Chi Minh and his successors in Vietnam – and the “struggle” of Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge in Cambodia/Kampuchea. You may remember that the telegram was addressed to Phan Van Dong in Hanoi and, yes, Pol Pot in Cambodia.

I accept your sincerity. It’s just that you – and Jim Cairns – were sincerely wrong about the nature of communist societies. This was demonstrated by the fact that in January 1978 – when considerable evidence was available about what later became known as the Cambodian killing fields – you were still willing to state your support for the Khmer Rouge revolutionaries.

You may remember that your telegram of 26 January 1978 was actually addressed to “Prime Minister Pol Pot of Kampuchea (Cambodia)” and “Prime Minister Phan Van Dong of Vietnam”. One of your co-signatories was Jim Cairns.

Memories, Memories.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely

Gerard Henderson

Following his receipt of the fax, Tom Uren phoned Gerard Henderson. He said that the only point in the fax which he “accepted” was GH’s claim that he had criticised Jim Cairns during his lifetime. TU said he regarded much of GH’s other comments as “bullshit”. TU mentioned that he was not aware of everything that Dr Cairns had said. But he described him as an “anti-communist” because he opposed “authoritarianism”.

TU depicted himself as “non-communist” and said that he had raised concerns about human rights in communist countries. TU maintained that the January 1978 petition adopted a conciliatory position because the signatories were attempting to get the governments of Vietnam and Cambodia to make concessions in order to end the conflict between the two nations.



THE WISE MAN IN EXILE

By John Kunkel

Think “foreign policy establishment” in Australia and you immediately think Dick Woolcott – the smooth-as-silk former secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (1988-92) with a career that included heavy-weight ambassadorial assignments to the United Nations in New York (1982-88) and to Indonesia (1975-78).

His recent memoir, *The Hot Seat: Reflections on Diplomacy from Stalin's Death to the Bali Bombings* (HarperCollins, 2003), sees Dick working rooms, gripping elbows and whispering advice across decades and continents. It evokes images of high-powered people managing complex issues – “you should see this cable Prime Minister”, “I hope you can live with this text Ali”, “nice shot Andrew”, that sort of thing.

The *Hot Seat* is the work of a man pretty pleased with himself. And fair enough, as Woolcott has given years of service to his country. But it also sketches a picture of someone whose world has changed in ways that he finds disorienting and disturbing. In short, John Howard and 11 September have upturned the world of Australia's old foreign policy pros – the Wise Men (traditionally they've been men) who saw their role as trusted advisers to governments of different political persuasions with diplomacy largely cordoned off from domestic politics.

Woolcott's estrangement is emblematic of how many former bureaucrats and academics have become increasingly despondent with Australia's foreign policy, especially with John Howard's strong support for George W. Bush. It's a story of how “hot seats” of years past have come to be replaced by the bracing chill of exile.

THE BREACH

Dick Woolcott is something of an *éminence grise* in Wise Men ranks. Over a decade after his retirement, *The Australian's* Paul Kelly is still describing him as “Australia's pre-eminent diplomat” (*The Australian*, 10 May 2003).

Woolcott had wanted to play a role as an external source of foreign policy advice following the Howard government's election in 1996. He scored a couple of early assignments as a special envoy and he was appointed to the advisory panel on the government's 1997 White Paper, *In the National Interest*.

But by the time of the 2001 election, Woolcott was openly advocating a vote for Kim Beazley. It was, he wrote in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (6 November 2001), “painful to encounter the extent to which Howard is widely seen in our region as a narrowly focused domestic politician, uninterested in, and uncomfortable with Australia's Asian and Pacific neighbours”. No more envoy gigs for Dick.

His critique of John Howard's foreign policy went up a notch earlier this year in the run-up to the Iraq war. Woolcott blasted the Howard government's support for the American-led campaign against Saddam Hussein in a series of media appearances coinciding with the launch of his book. “Howard has done considerable damage to Australia,” he told *The Bulletin's* Maxine McKew. Australia had become “uncritically pro-American” at a time when Washington was pursuing “an almost messianic evangelical approach to foreign policy”.

A DASH OF KISSINGER

Woolcott's world-view is basically an amalgam of the main schools of international relations thinking – a sort of diplomatic cocktail mixing power-based “realism” with more idealistic “liberal internationalism”.

The Kissingerian realism is embodied in the quote (from Daniel Varè's *The Handbook of the Perfect Diplomat*) that he uses to introduce his chapter in *The Hot Seat* on East Timor – viz. “... official diplomacy must carry on in the world as it is and not in the world as it should be”. It highlights the enduring constraints of national power and state sovereignty. And it comports with gearing Australia's capabilities and competences to our backyard of Asia and the Pacific. As a rule, Wise Men do not support far-off campaigns in places like Afghanistan or Iraq.

Woolcott's realist sensibilities are especially offended when politicians like John Howard talk about the need for our foreign policy to reflect Australian values. To Perfect Diplomats, this can easily spill over into insensitivity, jingoism and “megaphone diplomacy”.

Prior to the Iraq war, it was the Howard Government's approach towards Indonesia that particularly got up Woolcott's nose. His book places the responsibility for the troubles in the relationship squarely on Australia, citing it as an example of “how years of patient diplomacy can be undone by a heady mix of hasty action, insensitivity, domestic political opportunism and a failure to anticipate outcomes”.

As he has done previously, Woolcott makes a convincing case in *The Hot Seat* that there was little Australia could have done to stop the takeover of East Timor by Indonesia in 1975. He provides a well-reasoned argument of why successive Australian governments have sought to maintain good relations with Indonesia “for geostrategic, political, economic and social reasons”.

It all makes sense, up to a point. But Indonesia also encapsulates a problem Wise Men can face when their Kissingerian realism blurs into an unsustainable bias towards the status quo. The view that the people of East Timor would eventually accept their fate as part of Indonesia proved to be, shall we say, unrealistic. So did the notion that economic growth would continue to underpin President Suharto's domestic legitimacy and that things like corruption surrounding his family didn't matter much. Keeping on the right side of an authoritarian ruling elite may well be prudent. But it can also be an excuse not to update one's Rolodex.

A SPLASH OF ASIA (AND LESS AMERICA)

It would be wrong to imply, however, that Woolcott simply views the world in terms of power. Far from it. The truly binding thread of the Wise Man world-view centres on "engagement with Asia". It is at this altar where realist strategy is married to liberal ideals.

This is about much more than Australian foreign policy. Fundamentally, it is about Australian identity and a quest to shrug off what is seen as our baggage of Anglo-American centrism, protectionism, racism and fear of the unknown.

Not surprisingly then, Woolcott sets high standards on Asian engagement. And despite repeated statements – like that in the 2003 White Paper, *Advancing the National Interest*, that engagement with Asia is an "abiding priority" of Australian foreign policy – the Howard government continues to be found wanting. In his book, Woolcott bemoans the revival under the Howard government of "the image of Australia as an Anglo-American outpost, a regional misfit, uncomfortable with its location in its own neighbourhood".

Your view about where we stand in Asia today largely comes down to how much you want to generalise – whether "Asian engagement" can be thought of usefully by lumping together diverse relationships and events.

It's hard to argue that the Prime Minister covered himself in glory in some cases – the ambiguity over Hansonism and the so-called "deputy sheriff" episode in September 1999 come to mind. The rough patches in relations with Indonesia are no secret and Malaysia's Dr Mahathir has continued to reserve the right to poke us in the eye at will. Equally, there's been plenty of effort put into maintaining close ties in Asia across the Howard ministry and relations with big players like China and Japan seem in pretty good shape.

And if there's no getting away from the detail, nor is the cause of Asian engagement helped by statements

implying that it's a one-way street where Australia has to do all the running. Australia's regional neighbours, we are told by Woolcott, "tend to be watchful of our attitudes and policies. We are on a sort of a good behaviour bond and they still ask themselves whether we seriously want to engage with them."

But who *they* are makes a difference, especially if they have their own agendas. A good example was the effort in 1999-2000 to move towards free trade negotiations between the ten ASEAN countries, Australia and New Zealand. This was the brainchild of trade ministers from Singapore and Thailand at a meeting in October 1999. Australia's Trade Minister Mark Vaile responded enthusiastically and appointed his predecessor Tim Fischer to the non-government taskforce charged with drawing up a plan. Malaysia unceremoniously slammed the door on the proposal on the eve of a ministerial meeting in October 2000. Fine, but the shortfall on engagement did not come from Australia.

The debate over Asian engagement is bound up with the substance and style of Australia's relations with the United States. And the Howard government's up-front support for the Bush Administration after 11 September has only deepened the fault-line between it and a large cast of foreign policy Wise Men including Woolcott, Stuart Harris, Ross Garnaut, Paul Barrett and Paul Dibb.

Australia's participation in the Iraq war sharpened the distaste of the old foreign policy establishment for Howard's stewardship of foreign policy. One aspect that proved especially unsettling was the increase in domestic partisanship as tribal politics disrupt the stable, predictable environment in which Wise Men can exert influence.

THE EXAGGERATED VIRTUES OF BIPARTISANSHIP

Woolcott argues at length in his book that feisty domestic politics only complicate a good foreign policy. He bemoans how he "found it a recurring problem that the pursuit of a sound foreign policy was often circumvented and inhibited by domestic political considerations". He goes on to suggest that:

One of the main problems of Australian politics has been the apparent need of incoming federal governments to differentiate their policies from those of the previous government of a different political persuasion. This is natural in respect of domestic policies such as taxation, health and education. In foreign, trade, and defence policies it is, however, clearly preferable that they should be bipartisan.

WOOLCOTT ON UNCLE JOE'S ACHIEVEMENTS

Wise Men pride themselves on their cool professionalism; their dispassionate and disinterested analysis of issues and interests. In at least one area, however, Woolcott's reflections appear overly warped by enthusiasms of youth.

We hear about his "first love" posting to the Soviet Union in 1952 after studying Russian at Melbourne University and following a schoolboy brush with Marxism at Melbourne Grammar at the feet of teachers such as Manning Clark. Woolcott set out for Moscow "fascinated at the prospect of investigating for myself this attempt to build a socialist society supposedly based not on individual acquisitiveness but on the common good". Readers are assured that: "It did not take me long to discover the great gap between aspirations and actual achievements, between government claims and reality." Indeed, it shouldn't have by 1952.

Still, there's a strong element of on-the-one-hand this, on-the-other-hand that when it comes to Stalinism. Woolcott writes that while Stalin "has been demonised in the West and denounced in Russia itself because of the purges in the 1930s and his cruelty, his achievements are remarkable despite the human cost". These achievements are cited as "ensuring the revolution succeeded", "driving the Soviet Union out of its backwardness" and "organising the heroic defence of the country against Nazi Germany".

Hmmm. Or you could say that Stalin was a psychopathic dictator who crushed political and economic freedom and destroyed the lives of millions. Not as even-handed, but perhaps more accurate. In *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Empire* (HarperCollins, 1998), the Russian historian Dmitri Vologonov describes Stalin as having "brought the country to real backwardness" as the Soviet people "submitted to enormous deprivation, endured unprecedented suffering and accepted monstrous sacrifices in the name of a nebulous future". On this reading, any "achievements" were largely in spite of the forced collectivisation of agriculture, the gutting of the Red Army leadership, the Nazi-Soviet Pact, and the mass murder of the Gulag.

But is it "clearly preferable"? In a democracy, there will inevitably be different views about how to advance the nation's security and prosperity. Both major parties are essentially pragmatic and neither aspires to ideological foreign policy doctrines. Within sensible limits, there is plenty of scope for legitimate disagreement about such things as the use of American power, the likely implications of the rise of China, the capabilities of the United Nations and different strategies for promoting trade liberalisation.

The argument that foreign and defence policy should necessarily be bipartisan is a recipe for bureaucratic inertia and intellectual smugness, no less than it is in economic policy, health policy or education policy. At some level, it is also illiberal as there are "sound" democratic reasons why we do not have government by Philosopher Kings, experts or Wise Men. Then there is simple fallibility, which can seem particularly acute in the realm of international politics. Surely one of the lessons of the Iraq war was the capacity for foreign policy and defence experts to get things wrong. Sometimes, badly wrong. (Incidentally, some of Woolcott's historical assessments in *The Hot Seat* also recommend a healthy scepticism about leaving it all to the experts – see box.)

It's hard to escape the conclusion that Woolcott doesn't really trust the democratic process when it comes to foreign policy. At the very least, he finds it difficult to hide his disdain for those politicians – like Paul Hasluck and John Howard – who have failed to fully appreciate his diplomatic wisdom.

Woolcott likes to draw a contrast between the statements of politicians and his own contributions to public debate which he credits with being completely objective and impartial. "I don't want to sound pompous," he told interviewers on the *Sunday Sunrise* program earlier this year, "but I would regard myself ... as a better, if you like, analyser or bellwether of the Australian national interest than our politicians are, because I'm not serving any political interest."

For all his muscular Australian republicanism, Woolcott embodies a very "old Europe" view of how foreign policy should work. Mere politicians are seen as lacking the subtlety and sophistication required to deliver a culturally-sensitive message, to balance this or that competing interest, or to read the machinations of some fascinatingly complex authoritarian regime.

He may be right sometimes. But keeping foreign policy as the preserve of a few Wise Men doesn't seem right either. In any case, those days appear well and truly over.



BOOK REVIEWS

John McConnell

THE HISTORY WARS

By Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark
Melbourne University Press, pb 2003,
Rrp \$29.95
ISBN 0 522 85091 X

Who said Australian history was dull? Consider the competing and sometimes controversial historical interpretations entering the public domain during recent years.

Historians arguing with historians over “frontier wars”, the bicentenary, National Museum exhibitions and the “black armband” versus the “three cheers” viewpoints. Then, there is the “big picture” that Paul Keating advocates, while Don Watson on the sidelines assists with the script. And what Professor Stuart Macintyre refers to as Prime Minister John Howard’s “attempts to rewrite Australian history in the service of a partisan political cause”.

It is all very interesting. So you would think that historians would be delighted by what is happening. Not necessarily. Definitely not, in the case of Professor Macintyre.

Professor Macintyre is a very influential historian in Australia. He is the Ernest Scott Professor of History, Dean of Arts and Professor Laureate at the University of Melbourne.

Stuart Macintyre enjoys a professional reach throughout Australia that extends all the way from primary education through to university studies. With co-author Anna Clark, he has written about the

historical controversies that have been gaining quite a share of media space in recent times.

Ironically, Professor Macintyre borrows the title – *The History Wars* - from the United States - to be precise, a 1994 conflict involving Newt Gringrich and the Smithsonian Museum.

Professor Macintyre’s book, *The History Wars* contains its fair share of military metaphors. There are “insurgents”, “pre-emptive strikes”, “repeated assaults”, “warriors”, “crusaders”, even “weapons of mass destruction” and “collateral damage”. Talk about pushing the metaphorical boundaries.

In early chapters, Stuart Macintyre addresses “History under fire”, “What do historians do?” and “What do they say?”

Anna Clark contributes a chapter which surveys what is happening in Australia’s schools with the teaching of Australian history.

Then there are Professor Macintyre’s chapters dealing with the issues that constitute “the history wars”. He writes sympathetically about Manning Clark and critically on Geoffrey Blainey.

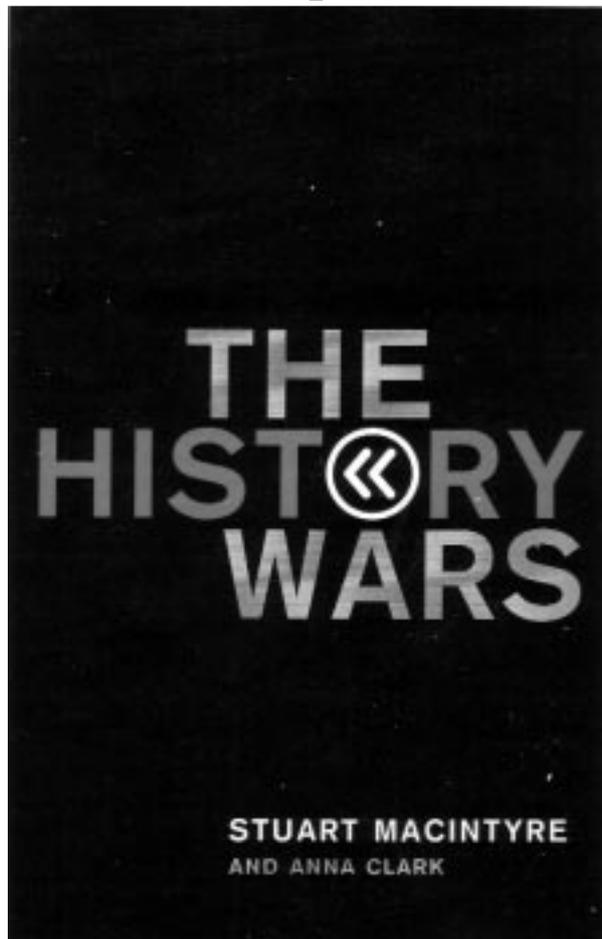
Professor Macintyre operates in a context that he constructs around two camps. On the one hand, there are historians following the procedures of historical scholarship. They consider the issues and weigh arguments.

This is history as an academic discipline. Academic colleagues in this camp are likely to find Stuart Macintyre’s sketch indeed admirable.

However, there is a dark side to the debate. There is a second group who appear to be devoid of such

admirable characteristics. These “history warriors” deal in unilateral assertions, impugn motives and level personal aspersions.

And they know how to produce good copy for the media. Consequently, “the prejudices of the columnists and commentators who dominate the national media pass largely unchallenged”.



When Gerard Henderson writes that our historians should junk guilt and alienation and adds “Down with the falsification of Australian history”, Professor Macintyre observes that it has “the ring of a Stalinist ideologue calling down the wrath of the people on dissident intellectuals”. Really.

Stuart Macintyre argues that the history wars are unfair to academic historians (in the camp which bears his stamp of approval). Their natural habitat, he says, is the seminar, the conference and the academic journal. There, the rules of debate are understood and observed. The training of historians, he argues, makes them ill-equipped to engage in public hostilities.

Rather than engage in conversations about history, the history warriors, he says, caricature their opponents, act as bullies and impose an intimidating public surveillance on his colleagues. Keith Windschuttle’s *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History* is a “shocking book”. It is an exercise in incomprehension.

Professor Macintyre states that “freedom of judgment and expression is ...a hallmark of the academic vocation”. But the history warriors appear to be testing his patience.

He is offended, he says, on behalf of historians. He regrets the official patronage dispensed on the “insurgents” since 1996. They now have access to governing bodies and public agencies such as the ABC and the National Museum.

Recently, on ABC television (*Lateline*, 3 September 2003), Professor Macintyre said that he resisted the proposition that the “history wars” might be confined to two camps.

But, after reading *The History Wars*, it is difficult to see how Professor Macintyre’s claim on *Lateline* might be reconciled with the account he provides in his book. Stand by. Australia’s history wars are far from over.

ABOUT FACE: ASIAN ACCOUNTS OF AUSTRALIA

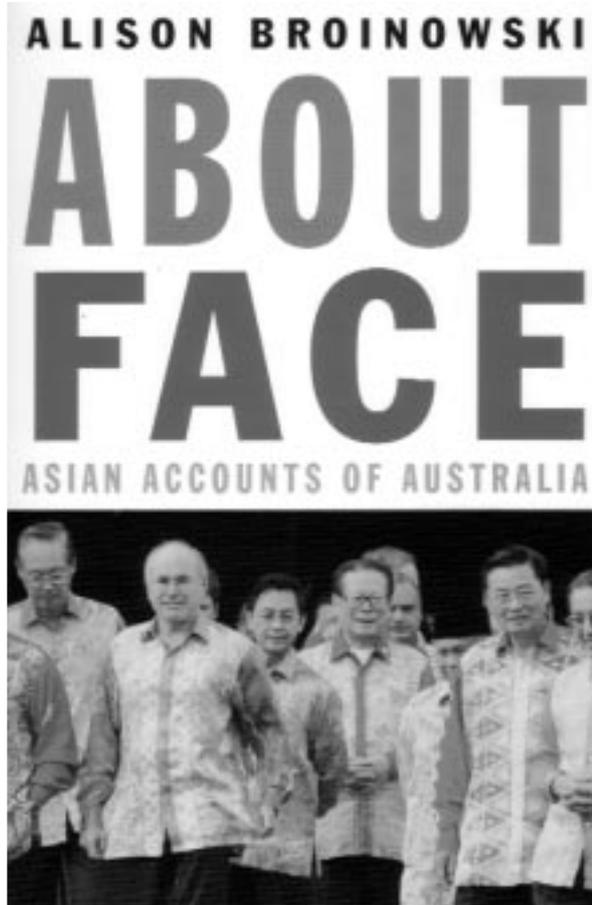
By Alison Broinowski

Scribe Publications Pty. Ltd. pb 2003

rrp \$30

ISBN 0 908011 96 2

Australia, Alison Broinowski believes, has an image problem. Influential people in Asia, she argues, see Australians as different. They believe we identify with the West. That we possess Western priorities. Moreover, we reinforce their perceptions. We refer to ourselves as Western.



There is official insistence that the US alliance is indispensable in Australia. Accordingly, Asian Australian relationships boil down to difference. “Difference,” Alison Broinowski states, “is the obvious, overriding perception to emerge from all the studies, and it is mutual.”

About Face: Asian Accounts of Australia is Dr Broinowski’s sixth book. *About Face* presents images of Australia held by opinion leaders in ten Asian countries. Viewpoints expressed belong to twentieth century voices, allowing for some spillover at either end of the time frame.

Alison Broinowski is a former Australian diplomat and the author of *The Yellow Lady: Australian Impressions of Asia*. Currently, she is a visiting fellow in the faculty of Asian Studies at the Australian National University.

About Face, presents stereotypes held among opinion leaders in Asian countries about Australia. Despite the diversity of Asian societies, opinion leaders in Asia apparently entertain limited and repetitious stereotypes of Australia and Australians.

It seems to be case of damned if you do and damned if you don’t. Become involved in the affairs of our East Asian neighbours and we risk being accused of interfering and impertinence. Do nothing and we are likely to encounter allegations that we are ignorant and indifferent.

We are a ready-made target, Dr Broinowski believes, for post-colonial elites in search of a scapegoat.

Whether we are included or not in regional groupings depends on what suits leaders in Asia at any one point in time. Projection and inversion contribute to the stereotyping process of Australia and Australians.

Moreover, denying Australia access to the East Asian club causes images of past colonial and imperial racism to rebound on to Australia.

Alison Broinowski examines three crises in *About Face* – Pauline Hanson and One Nation, East Timor and the Bali tragedy. In each case, she argues, the outcome was to scapegoat and marginalise Australia. Blame occidentalism – our identification with Western values and priorities.

Occidentalism occurs both in Asia and within Australia. According to Dr. Broinowski, four recurrent themes that are not necessarily all accurate effectively marginalise Australia in the minds of Asia's opinion leaders. We talk rather than act. The Australian economy is an economic failure. We do not qualify for Asian membership. We are not the intellectual equals of Asians.

Dr. Broinowski makes some harsh judgements of both Asians and Australians. Asian opinion leaders, she argues, share a tendency to place blame on others. While we invite the region's contempt by the way we promote ourselves. We play "the Asia game" ineptly.

What should we do?

Alison Broinowski recommends that we should do what we can to cease being an outsider in Asia. Have our own head of state. Develop independent foreign and defence policies.

That is, deal with our image problem and behave as an equal, and hope that our performance convinces key leaders in Asia that we deserve access to regional organisations.

So long as they do not take offence at the images portrayed in *About Face*, of course.

A SPECIES IN DENIAL

By Jeremy Griffith

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ISBN 1 74129 000 7

Like to improve your understanding of the human condition? Ever wondered about our contradictory capacity for good and evil? Jeremy Griffith, an Australian biologist, believes he has the answer to the riddle of humanity. To why humanity's progress is stalled in a state of unknowing. To how human intellect and instinct produce psychological conflict.

A Species in Denial, with a foreword by Charles Birch, traverses wide ground indeed. From deciphering Plato's cave allegory, to human denial, to bringing peace to the war between the sexes, to the denial-free history of the human race and the demystification of religion.

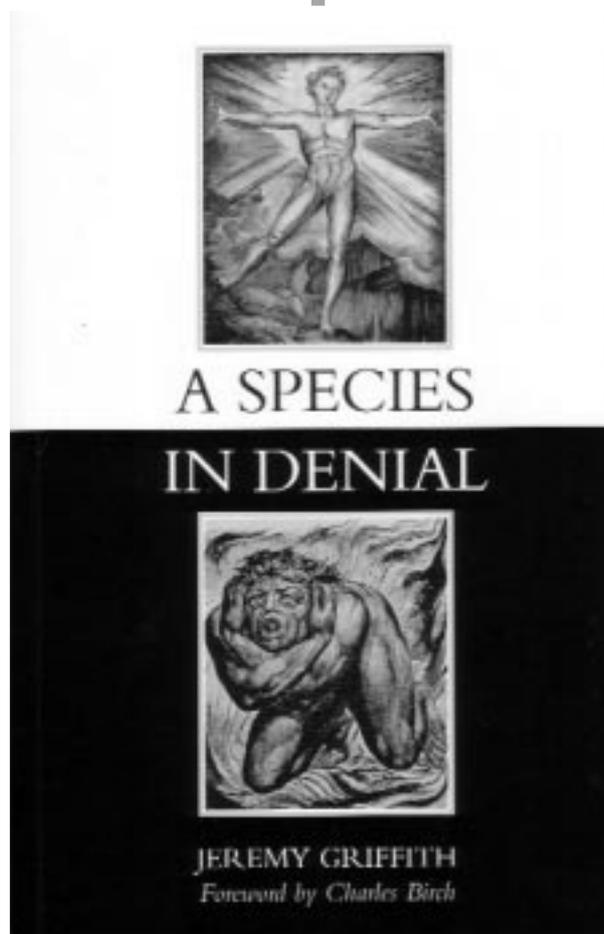
Jeremy Griffith believes that the human race, allowing for a limited number of exceptions, suffers from an immense psychosis. This has its origins in humanity living in a state of deep denial. It is a denial to which most of us are oblivious. Hence *A Species in Denial* which offers the path, the author believes, to freedom.

Strip away the layers of denial and resulting

psychosis, Jeremy Griffith believes, and we will mature to a state of psychological freedom. *A Species in Denial* consists of around 500 pages, with many quotations that are identified in bold print. You'll get your money's worth there.

Jeremy Griffith was raised on a sheep station in central west NSW. He was educated at Tudor House School in NSW, Geelong Grammar in Victoria and the University of New England and Sydney University. His book is dedicated to the Members of the Foundation for Humanity's Adulthood.

John McConnell is the author of several senior textbooks



REVIEW OF THE REVIEWERS

Stephen Matchett

Politicians will tell you they are red-hot for policies – they think of little else – because they know policy is what Australian voters are looking for. And their opponents have lots of policies as well, all of them wickedly designed to serve special interests at the expense of ordinary electors.

To listen to politicians in campaign mode – and isn't that all the time? – politics is all about policy. And while this may sound unlikely to devotees of the parliamentary broadcasting service, they are right – we are living in a golden age of policy debate. The self appointed social commentators who have built media profiles on complaining about the intellectual poverty of public life may find this difficult to accept, but the last 20 years has demonstrated that Australians are remarkably receptive to new ideas. While suspicious of self-interested urgers selling special-interest schemes, the community pays attention to proposals for political change.

POLICY DEBATE CIRCA 2003

Much of the interest in policy debate is generated outside the public service. The universities are major contributors. The proliferation of specialist research units and the democratisation of publishing through the web which means that all disciplines and every political persuasion can offer their wares in the cyber-bazaar. There is so much discussion going on that Swinburne University now publishes a weekly on-line gazette announcing new e-publications from eighty-odd subscribing organisations. In addition, the e-zines and on-line newsletters from all sorts of lobbies are proliferation just as fast. The think tanks and industry and labour organisations all run their lines on-line. Where once Australian readers relied on a handful of magazines and the pontifications of self-promoting experts to mediate the raw academic writing into useable ideas now they can find out for themselves direct from the source.

The winners from this explosion on writing and thinking on policy are the handful of public intellectuals whose idea of fun are endless discussions on superannuation reform and workplace change – and the Australian people. The losers are the public

service mandarins who have always held policy discussions, but generally quietly and among themselves, and the self appointed deep thinkers used to generalising without letting too much data get in the way. There is no longer any excuse for making policy based on ideology. Where once policy thinkers had to rely on ideas and anecdote – because large slabs of comprehensive data were simply not common beyond annual ABS and Treasury print publications - now it is available on-line as soon as the stats and position papers are compiled.

However, the old mindset of pamphleteering continues and commentators still like to present their cases on the basis of grand sweeping ideas. And demonstrating how people can easily ignore social transformations that are changing their lives, polemicists are still using books – an old fashioned and expensive medium which reaches an audience far more slowly than a web presence.

Two books demonstrate the case. For partisan pamphleteering of the polemical kind it is hard to go past Clive Hamilton *Growth Fetish* (Allen and Unwin, 2003) and Michael Pusey *The Experience of Middle Australia: The Dark Side of Economic Reform* (Cambridge University Press, 2003). Though kitted out in the style of scholarship, these are passionate arguments written in defence of a lost age where academics and public servants knew what was best for us and government ran the nearest thing to a command economy that independent-spirited Australians would allow. Pusey and Hamilton have produced pamphlets, less concerned with the practicalities of politics than setting out how things ought to be.

They contrast poorly with Fred Argy's *Where to Here From Here? Australian Egalitarianism Under Threat*, (Allen and Unwin, 2003) which presents evidence, lots of it, for his argument that Australia needs to help those who have fallen behind. And they are dwarfed by Peter Dawkins and Paul Kelly, *Hard heads, soft hearts: A New Reform Agenda for Australia* (Allen and Unwin, 2003). The core of this collection of policy suggestions is the editors' argument that Australia should maintain the pace of reform – but focus on bringing the losers along. What distinguishes their book from Argy is the extraordinary mass of practical ideas in the conference papers that are the raw materials Dawkins and Kelly use for their argument.

MICHAEL PUSEY'S COMPLAINERS

Pusey's book is a polemic in the form of conventional social science research, tricked out with surveys and interview-based tables and formula to extrapolate the national mood from the opinions of small numbers of people. Not that there is anything remarkable about this. Pollsters accurately predict election results

across the nation by asking the smallest numbers of people whom they will vote for and why. However, there is a world of difference between this sort of research and the open-ended focus groups that marketers use to hear people think aloud and work out what messages they will be receptive to.

Pusey does both; he asks small groups questions and explores their attitudes in open-ended conversations. However, asking people what is not perfect in their lives is guaranteed to deliver a deluge of misery as they focus on their fears – everything from mortgages to mortality. Given this approach, the book unsurprisingly presents a mass of anecdotal evidence that supports Pusey's case. As a scholar of the highest standards, Pusey must have been delighted that objective research supported his own judgements – for a man so apparently convinced that micro-economic reform has brought great harm to ordinary Australians it would have been unfortunate if he had found his interview subjects thought otherwise. Happily, they did not and Pusey's research provided him with the evidence to make his case that things are pretty crook.

Pusey takes a stance from the start – that nobody, at least not the “academic audiences” of social scientists and economists he values – believes that economic reform has benefited ordinary Australians. With a premise like that it is hardly surprising that he discovered anything in the transformation of the Australian economy to admire. What upsets him most is that economic change has taken power away from the state and its servants. Thus, Pusey reports his sample group of public sector middle managers is upset that their skills are not valued (64). For believers, including Pusey, in the right of the moral middle class to lead society, the decline in authority of the people with jobs in public policy, teaching and social work is a shock. Pusey is writing in a parallel universe where the Whitlam Government never lost office and the state could provide everything for everybody.

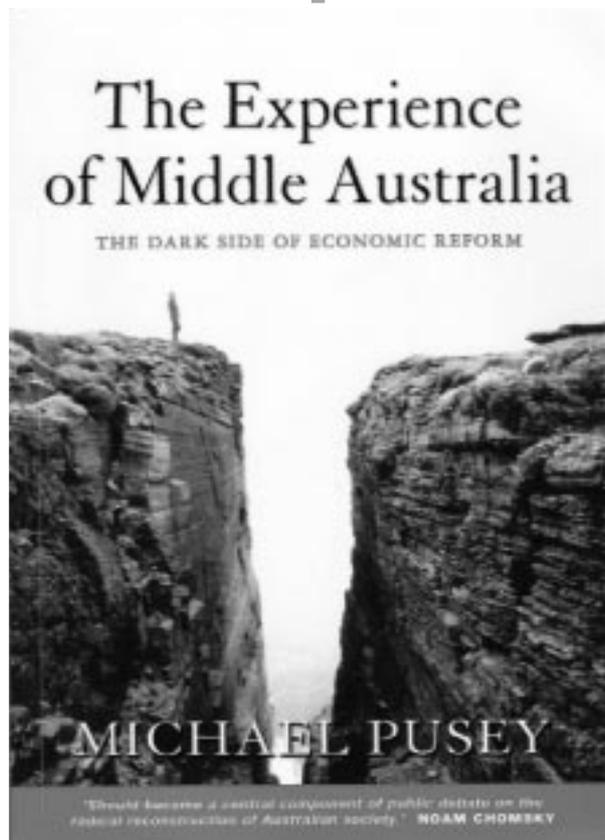
Pusey is also resolute in demonstrating that most people are made miserable by social change. The foundation belief in the book is that things were better before the restructuring of the 1980s began – when wages were linked to the idea of a “fair go”. For Pusey, society has been colonised by an evil entity called the market that has imposed alien values on powerless people. Thus, he writes of “the morally debilitating impact of the market” (94). The problem with this transformation of productivity improvements

into a *bete noir* destroying society is that it ignores the twin realities of Australian public life since the election of the Hawke-Keating government in 1983.

Firstly, the old economic model had failed – and provided no means for Australia to prosper in the emerging global economy. As Paul Keating warned through the 1980s, Australia either reformed or set out down the Argentine Road. More important, as Dawkins and Kelly, and their contributors demonstrate, reform has been overwhelmingly positive for Australians. However, Pusey's research samples do not seem to be able to imagine what would have happened to their lives if

Australia had not embraced reform 20 years ago. All they can see is that things are not as nice as they would like them to be.

Nor does Pusey have an answer to how things can be set right beyond old fashioned complaints about big – generally international – business and the supine refusal of the Labor Party to stand up for the workers. He does not actually denounce the money-power of old but he comes close. And by the end of the book his own voice is shrilly asserting that the objective of the “New Right political class” is “the political disempowerment of the broad middle class”. (167) His is a classic statement of the moral middle class belief that there is something intrinsically wrong about an economy which generates more jobs and higher incomes but where the old mandarin class of academics and public servants is not in control.



CLIVE HAMILTON AND EUDEMONISM (SIC)

In contrast Clive Hamilton offers the old elite a way to reassert its traditionally claimed right to tell the rest of us what to do. Hamilton's solution is his very own political ideology, "eudemonism", which he has generously dreamt up so we can all be happy as we live lives in the way he thinks we should. The problem, according to Hamilton, is that there is far too much economic growth – and growth is very, very bad. Not only does growth harm the environment it means that people pursue wealth and possessions and this makes them unhappy – or it would if they listened to Hamilton who spends most of the book explaining why people should be miserable. Perhaps Clive sat in on Pusey's focus groups.

Sadly there is little detail on eudemonism in the book and what is included is less a coherent statement of political philosophy than a collection of generalisations bemoaning the way most Australians prefer to live. Like Pusey, Hamilton's basic political philosophy is based in his anger at the loss of status of the old Whitlamite elite. He seems to hate the idea that ordinary people might have ideas of their own. He argues that the claim of the capitalist elite that consumers have a choice to live their lives as they wish is wrong and that ordinary citizens, presumably lacking Hamilton's enlightenment, really do not know what will make them happy in life:

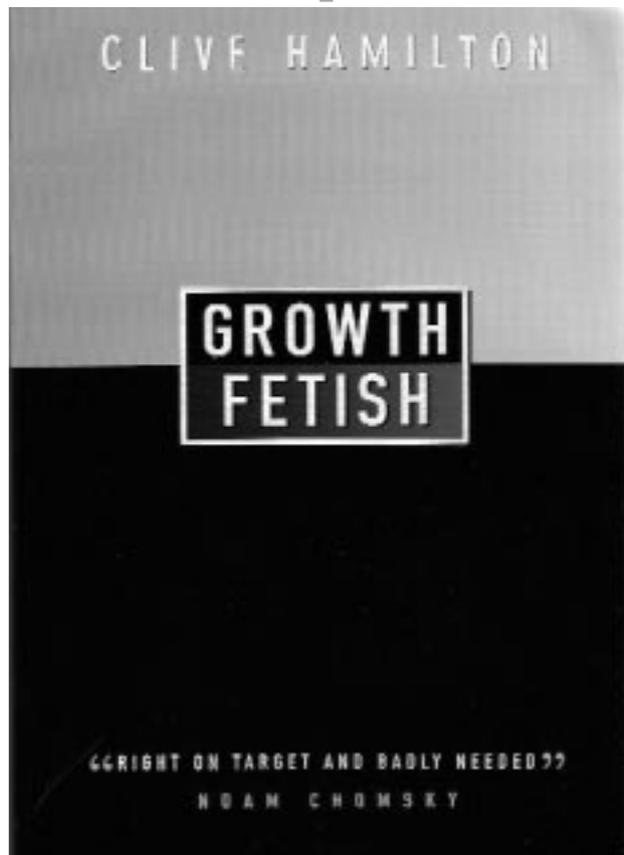
...neo-liberalism is based on the very strong assumption that people's preferences – preferences that determine what they consume and how much they strive to be rich – are simply a given and not the subject of social control or manipulation by others. If this assumption does not hold, then the behaviour of consumers reflects not their own preferences but the preferences of the organisations and institutions that influence them. (64)

And there are times when Hamilton sounds like any of the millenarian thugs who bedevilled the twentieth century with plans to frog march humanity to paradise. Thus he suggests that abolishing growth as the primary goal of national economic planning would reduce the power of the wealthy by depriving them of the status that accompanies the successful in a growing economy. Stalin had much the same idea when he collectivised agriculture to reduce the power of the terrible kulaks whose grain fed Russia.

Like Pusey, Hamilton is at home among Robert Manne's "moral middle-class" the self-appointed arbiters of what ordinary people want, or at least will want – when they listen to their moral superiors. But for all his desperate desire to demonstrate his learning, there is little that is new in Hamilton's argument. His basic idea, that people are unhappy and want to change their lives, which are dominated by the pursuit of wealth is recycled rhetoric from the 1960s. Because the 1960s did not subvert capitalism, Hamilton has to offer a convoluted explanation why the marketers who shape desire so easily returned the flower-power generation to obedience. But his message is not much different from the nonsense peddled by the forgotten gurus of 40 years ago. While he does not actually suggest that we should all take-up the consciousness expanding

chemicals that made the counter-culture so incoherent and self-indulgent and 'turn on' he certainly wants us to "tune in and drop out".

People who read a lot of sociology probably find it hard to grasp that ordinary Australians love the idea of building big houses in the suburbs, filling them full of whiz-bang gadgetry and going to Asia on holiday. But manifestly they do – this is tough enough for Clive's philosophy. But the killer is that his basic premise, that somehow we can abandon economic growth, is plain wrong. Hamilton thinks that growth and consumer spending are as one and that if people stop buying wide screen TVs – presumably they can read faux scholarly tomes instead – GDP will stop growing, global warming will



abate and people will live spiritually enriched lives. What he fails to explain is how the medical technology that can keep extending life expectancies will be paid for. Or where the revenue will come from without economic growth to pay for the sorts of things Hamilton is likely to approve of – bicycle paths, academic salaries and the like.

Hamilton argues that Labor's political failure is due to its focus on the relative losers in society – claiming that the problem of absolute poverty is largely solved. He is largely right, only people suffering multiple disadvantages are homeless and hungry in Australia. But he makes the point not to rebut the claims of misery Michael Pusey revels in but as a basis for his own elitist alternative – that people should stop pursuing a higher standard of living and, “adopt a politics that points out that the door is open – not just for the rich but for ordinary people too – a politics that allows people to achieve liberation, to find authenticity and to value community and relationships”, whatever all that may mean.

And when Hamilton finally stoops to facts to buttress his sweeping rhetoric he does not pick strong ones. He points to the success of the French compulsory 35-hour week as the sort of positive step that a civilised society not obsessed with growth adopts. The problem is that the French have rejected the scheme that reduced working class incomes by forbidding overtime and played hell with productivity – never France's strong suit in the first place.

Hamilton explains at length the failures of the old left and why the Third Way represents nothing more than the evils of consumer capitalism tricked out in the rhetoric of compassion. But his generalisations that somehow the world would be a better place if people did not strive to improve their lives by their own measures, are a sermon for simplicity, quite distinct from governments' problems in funding public services and the challenges every citizen faces to create the life that suits them within their means.

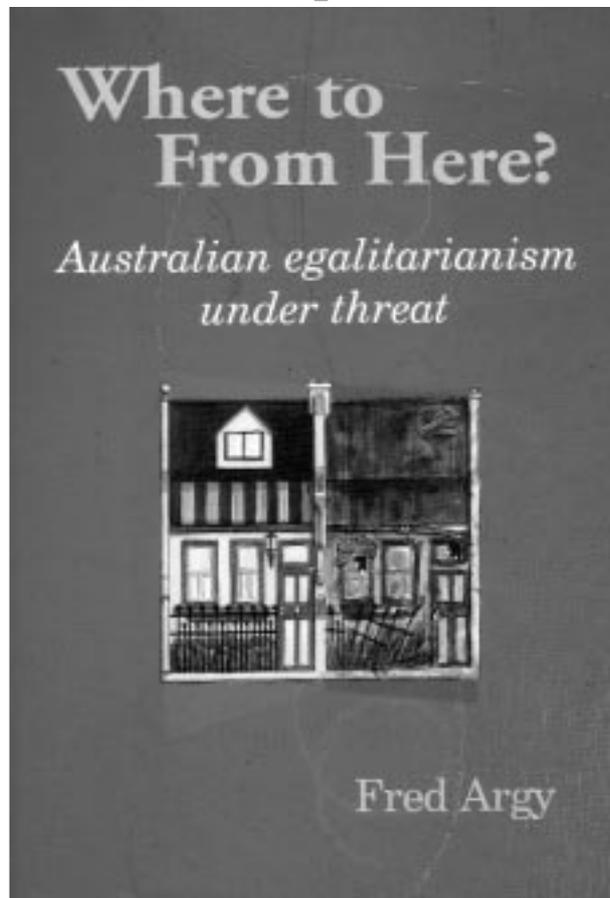
FRED ARGY – AN EMPIRICAL APPROACH

Fred Argy seems to have some ideological sympathy with Pusey and Hamilton. But a general commitment to policies designed to protect Australians who have not adjusted well to the globalising economy is about as far as it goes. Argy may wish things were other than they are and builds a fighting case on how the state can improve life for poor Australians, but he never strays from hard data in making his case. This makes for a book that merits more serious consideration than the two ideologically focused reformers. But in his determination to make his case credible Argy buries his argument in a mass of detail – which makes it a book most useful as a source but it is a struggle to read.

Argy piles the facts on hard and high, and although he occasionally relies on newspaper reports rather than scholarly studies to make a point this is obviously the work of an economic thinker with a comprehensive grasp of social policy. But for all his magisterial command of the sources, Argy's arguments are not especially sophisticated. For example, he suggests a key component of social capital under threat is, “the workplace, where a long tradition of mateship, unity, trust, loyalty to and from employers and the collective exercise of power have provided the key elements of social capital” (39). Anybody who remembers the dictatorial authority exercised by the big unions, especially in the

public sector service sector, may not be as nostalgic for a time when workers' solidarity was a cloak of privilege for unionised workers. And for all his mastery of the evidence there are times when his proposals verge on the vague, such as one suggestion on how to move back towards full employment:

While it would be a retrograde step to go back to the old paternalist policies on tariff protection and financial regulation, some rethink at the edges of industry policy would seem desirable. (150)



Others are politically impossible, such as funding social reform through death duties, an entirely sensible idea, but ask any politician what ordinary Australians think of it.

Argy does not believe Australia was ever an especially egalitarian society. He accepts that the golden age of the 1950s and 1960s never glowed all that bright and he is certainly no friend to protectionism. But the book is devoted to explaining the case for increased government spending to make Australia a more equal society. Certainly Argy has ample evidence to make his case. From the flight of the rich away from government schools to the absence of training programs that guarantee work to the low skilled, the book sets out the decline in the relative prosperity of poor Australians. In particular he argues Australia can spend more money on social programs to improve the circumstances and opportunities of the poor without jeopardising the benefits of 20 years of economic reforms.

This may be as feasible, as he claims, but simply demonstrating how reform can be accomplished is not enough. Argy ducks the fundamental question whether more equal outcomes for all Australians is as important as focusing on equality of opportunity and accepting that relative poverty is inevitable in societies which do not level down through confiscatory tax rates. From the tenor of the book it seems Argy thinks the case for the state to protect the poor through active economic intervention is very strong. Argy assumes activist public spending can make a meaningful difference to people's lives and that it should. The problem is that his vision of a Whitlamite style program relies on the support of the mug taxpayers who have to fund it and they are not always amenable. The government has only to run a modest surplus for the demands for tax cuts to begin. But no matter, Argy thinks people can be bent to the cause of righteousness:

Public opinion is showing no decisive trend and can be swayed either way. ... Political leadership will be crucial in deciding the future of egalitarianism in Australia. (140)

Of course this is not an argument for social engineering.

A socially progressive government (small "I" liberal or social democratic) would need to actively cultivate a more propitious climate for its policies. This does not mean "opinion management" of the dishonest or misleading kind. There are enough honest facts and arguments that political leaders can use to influence people's opinions. Truth is the best propaganda in the long term. (159)

Argy may know a great deal about economics and social policy but if he thinks that honourable politicians can successfully rely on the truth to make their case he knows remarkably little about politics.

The greatest weakness of the book is that Argy fails to make an overwhelming case for his basic premise that Australia should work to being a more equal society. A society that values and rewards the wealth creators may have an unequal distribution of incomes but still be rich enough to improve both the circumstances and equality of opportunity for the disadvantaged and even people of average income. Argy may find this reprehensible but his book is based on a no more sophisticated premise – that the greater the equality in the way all Australians live the better. Granted, Argy makes it plain from the start that even with his self-confessed egalitarian bias he is exploring issues rather than an arguing an explicit case:

Where I evaluate and prescribe, it is in the main to demonstrate how egalitarian values can (sic) be given a higher policy weighting – if that is the way mainstream opinion wants to go.

This makes the book a public sector policy paper – setting out how a particular philosophy could be implemented and the benefits (and in much less detail) the costs. Compared to Pusey and Hamilton, Argy has made a comprehensive case that social reform is needed and set out a vision of how to do it – the book's limitation is that he does not argue in detail why his way is the best.

HARD HEADS - HARD FACTS

The contrast between Pusey and Hamilton and Peter Dawkins and Paul Kelly's collection *Hard heads, soft hearts* (Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 2003) is stark. Dawkins and Kelly have collected a mass of proposals discussed at a Melbourne conference last year that address specific problems and present politically saleable – at a pinch – solutions. Where Pusey complains and Hamilton pontificates, this collection provides masses of policy proposals designed for the real world of practical politics.

Like Argy, Dawkins and Kelly set out detailed data for change, based on a general assumption that continuing structural change across the Australian economy and improved delivery of social welfare, health and education are quite compatible. Their core thesis is that economic reform must continue but the new need is to use market forces to help ordinary Australians. The book provides proposals across 13 policy areas, including education and labour market reform, health and family policies and

growth in a globalising economy. There is an extraordinary amount of information and ideas in the book with dozens of contributions from the policy elite in business, government and the universities.

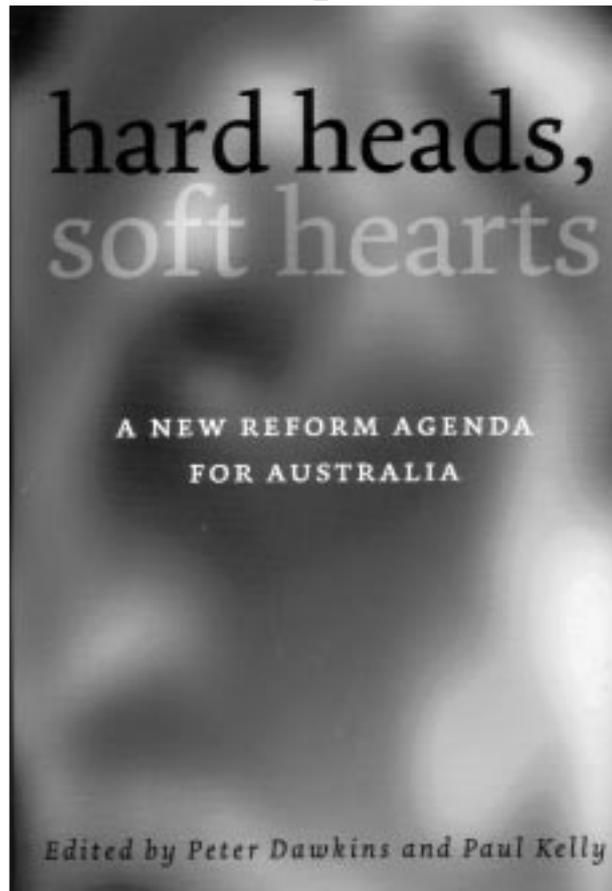
As with Argy, the book provides less of an integrated argument than a mass of information. But unlike Argy it is presented in easily digestible bites – the sheer volume of material would make it hard to process but for the commentaries on each chapter by Dawkins and Kelly. Their consistent conclusion is that change must continue across the board if Australia is to pay for the mass of health, education and social welfare it needs. In particular they endorse Argy's broad thesis that "growth promoting policies that violate community perceptions of distributional equity are not possible in Australia, at least in the long run". (36)

What is especially optimistic about the collection is the assumption that Australia's social and economic problems can be addressed within the existing political and economic framework. But this is not always well founded. Contributors to the book advocated tax credits integrated with revamped welfare payments and when they wrote Kelly and Dawkins hoped the idea would be addressed in the then long awaited government policy paper. Many months later we are still waiting and Canberra appears to have consigned the "work and welfare" balance to the too-hard basket. They similarly assumed the university system is capable of the cultural transformation needed to take more responsibility for its own financial management. The hostility of most university leaders to the proposal to de-regulate domestic undergraduate fees demonstrates that, to date, Kelly and Dawkins's hope is misplaced. They similarly assumed the vested interests in the health system will focus on the national good in moving to managed competition to contain costs. As health hots up as a key issue in the next election the State premiers are unlikely to place policy above the opportunity to blame the Commonwealth.

The book's most important message is the need to continue with micro-economic reform, including the full privatisation of Telstra and de-regulation of the labour market. The editors argue that the first 20 odd years of reform have set up the Australian economy for strong, low inflationary growth and that what is now needed is more change to generate more jobs. They accept this will be hard, because the losers in an era of change are far louder than the winners, but suggest further labour market deregulation will deliver growth. But the book is silent on how this message can be sold when the Puseys of the world are making the running on how bad things are.

For all the detailed proposals in the book, Dawkins and Kelly make the most useful contribution with their conclusion that Australia has been having the wrong debate on reform. "Too much of our national debate reflects a rear-vision culture," they write. "It is still a battle between economic reformers and sentimentalist traditionalists imprisoned by nostalgia for the old Australia and its egalitarian edifices. This is not the debate that Australia needs now and it has become a means of avoiding the real issues." (199)

The core policy challenge is to create a more equal Australia not by re-distributing wealth as much as creating more jobs. Kelly and Dawkins accept the political reality that without improved circumstances for Australians who have not prospered there is little political hope for continuing with reform. But the success of reform to institutions and work practices to date is not questioned. The philosophy at the base of the collection, that second wave reform must push the losers towards prosperity, makes some of Pusey's case – but does not accept that it has all been in vain. The collection has little in common with Hamilton's argument that a simpler life will make Australians happier. Dawkins and Kelly provide a superior version of Argy with an anthology that identifies the areas that Australia must address to build a richer society that makes better provision for all its citizens.



WHAT THE REVIEWERS THOUGHT

The reviewers were split between those who welcomed Pusey's argument and those who suggested his evidence did not stand up. Craig McGregor (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 May 2003) called his book, "a bold and formidable achievement". McGregor did not question the methodology or query any of the findings and concluded:

This is an important book and research document. What it does, above all, is chart how the Australian middle class and its values have been corroded by free-market ideology with social results that confront us daily: division, wedge politics, a dominant conservative ethos and even the acceptance of war.

Less of a book review, more of a personal endorsement.

There was more of the same from Alex Millmow (*The Canberra Times*, 2 May 2003) who simply paraphrased Pusey's arguments before concluding that because reform began with the Hawke-Keating government Labor is still properly being punished in the polls:

...this book represents an entrée into how many of its constituency feel disenfranchised by the very policies the ALP unleashed on its own people. There is still much humble pie to be consumed in Caucus.

In contrast, John Warhurst (*The Canberra Times*, 11 April 2003) was careful to neither condemn nor endorse Pusey's argument, but made the point that it appears a tract for the times, tapping into the public mood: "Perhaps middle-class anger, after smouldering for many years, is now only ready to create a bonfire".

But the critics disputed far more than Pusey's conclusions, they argued his evidence was not sound. Tony Harris (*Australian Financial Review*, 15 April 2003) argued that, for all the grumbles Pusey recorded, he missed mentioning the evidence in his own book that showed middle Australians did not think they were doing too badly. Harris added his own examples – real wages 25 per cent up since the reforms started in the middle 1980s and the way the economy has weathered both the Asian economic crisis and an American recession. He concluded that Pusey saw only "the downside of economic reform". John Murphy (*Australian Book Review*, May 2003) was similarly sceptical. In a long and careful review Murphy made a strong case that Pusey's own evidence did not support his conclusions:

I am not convinced the job is made simpler by Pusey's beatification of the middle

class as the representative of all that is opposed to "economic rationalism". In effect he makes a middle-class moral economy the metaphor for a world we have lost, now trammelled by economic reform. This is heart-warming to hear, but it is worth remembering that the middle class's commitment to equity has been matched by its commitment to self-reliance, and its public-spiritedness by its introversion.

Peter Ruehl made a similar point, much more succinctly: "Pusey came up with his point and then shopped it around to the limited group of suckers he was looking for." (*Australian Financial Review*, 10 May 2003). Andrew Norton (*The Australian*, 12 May 2003) was far less polite, slamming Pusey's argument in detail. While he did not say Pusey was un-Australian, he suggested the book was not in the national interest:

Pusey's book and its media coverage are regrettable, because they help create the problems they claim to be diagnosing. Is it any wonder that people are cynical about their political leaders when they are told that politicians are not doing their best in the face of difficult choices but are instead trying to enhance corporate profits? Is it so surprising that some people are "angry" when they are led to believe jobs are less secure than they are, or that their wages are being held down to benefit the rich? Rather than correcting the misperceptions his survey highlights, Pusey reinforces them. Pusey's book and the attention it has received obscure Australia's many achievements since economic reform began.

Hamilton also appealed to the middle class moralists who appear to think they know what is best for people. Like Anne Manne (*The Age*, 12 April 2003) who began her positive review by sneering at people whose homes and cars were not to her taste and who explained that ordinary people often do not know what is good for them.

Tim Flannery (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 April 2003) agreed that we should all consume less – both for our own and the environment's good. Even Ross Gittins (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 June 2003) fell for the argument that we are all working to buy stuff we don't want or need, "because we are hooked on the false promise of materialism". Gittins took Hamilton's book very seriously, devoting three columns to it. His key point was that Hamilton's thesis was important because it challenged the key assumptions of conventional economics – that growth is what

economies should do and that all consumers are rational actors. But Gittins could not avoid making the conventional charge that advertising gulls people into buying things they neither want nor need (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 June 2003):

We know advertisers sell the sizzle, not the steak. Some of the most creative minds in the country sell stuff by playing on our emotions. They associate the most prosaic products with a life of love, glamour, success and happiness. We know these unspoken promises are absurd but we're all influenced by them because they pervade our lives.

All well and good, but who gets to decide what constitutes double plus good self-denial in Hamilton's non-consuming paradise?

Dennis Altman (*The Age*, 12 April 2003) was not seduced by the proposal for monastic happiness and focused on the core problem with Hamilton, and Pusey's, argument. If everybody is so miserable why do they not vote the government out, or at least pay some attention to the Labor Party? It was left to Fred Argy to put Hamilton's book politely but firmly in its place (*The Drawing Board* @ www.econ.usyd.edu.au/drawingboard).

Argy suggested that Hamilton was missing the point. The problem was not marker-oriented politics but the refusal of politicians to raise the taxes and to borrow the money necessary "to reorder social priorities". Argy's review repeated one of the broad themes of his book, that there is nothing wrong with market based reforms – when they are utilised by a social welfare focused government.

Argy's own book was unreservedly admired by the reviewers. Geoffrey Barker (*Australian Financial Review*, 7 April 2003) summarised the argument as a "call to a moral responsibility that should not excessively confront reasonable people on either side of politics". Barker suggested that it should especially appeal to conservatives who do not wish to see "an angry, alienated underclass". Ross Gittins liked the book so much he produced two different columns in its praise. On 12 April (*The Age*) he said Argy "has a deep understanding of the subject matter and makes his case with care and honesty". By the following Monday (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 April) he was boosting Argy's ideas as making the next phase of reforms possible:

The reformers have realised belatedly that the only way they stand the remotest chance of persuading governments to press on with reform is paying a lot more attention to the fate of potential losers.

Michael Costello (*The Australian*, 9 May 2003) also saw Argy as proposing the way forward for economic

reformers and social improvers both: "His central point is that you can have economic efficiency through liberal market economics and pursue egalitarianism at the same time."

But the reviewers appeared to completely ignore Dawkins and Kelly's collection. Granted it was not an easy book to review – too much dense detail. Which demonstrates the point that Pusey and Hamilton did not confront – sweeping rhetorical calls for change are a great deal easier than working out the practicalities to make it happen.

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A NEW GALLIPOLI? – REPORTING ANNIVERSARY ONE OF THE BALI BOMBING

The stories are all now told, the wreaths laid, the commemorations held – Stephen Matchett takes a look at how the Australian print media handled the first anniversary of the Bali bombing

The print media's commemoration of the Bali bombing said a great deal more about the nature of Australian life than just about the way people dealt with the horror of the attack.

A year on there was no sabre rattling and no assertions of embattled Australian triumphalism. Rather than nationalism, there was a focus on the achievements of ordinary Australians who helped the victims.

For the spokespeople of the moral middle class who have never forgiven the Australian people for electing the Howard Government after the children overboard affair in 1998, the stories of ordinary Australians behaving honourably and the almost complete absence of a racist backlash after the attack must have been puzzling. For the Australian people, at least as far as the commentators were concerned, responded to Bali with calm and commonsense.

Certainly, the press appeared to have a sense that this was not the time for flag waving and name-

calling. Most of the coverage focused on the victims and those who worked to help them.

Few commentators erred on the side of fine-writing, at least not as baldly as the (Brisbane) *Sunday Mail's* leader-writer (12 October) who assured us that all Australians hoped the tears shed at the commemoration service "will wash away at least some of the pain but make brighter the memory of those so cruelly stolen from us".

Most played it straight, on the one hand trying to grapple with the political meaning of the attacks, on the other seeking to capture the essence of the human tragedy while avoiding the lachrymose.

Notably the *Courier Mail* (11 October) tried to put the bombing in a personal and political context, without overdoing the courage of the human spirit or the need for vigilance against terror.

The Australian Financial Review (10 October) also focused on the way the attack changed Australia, making the telling point that while Australians will make jokes out of almost anything there were none about Bali.

Paul Kelly (*The Australian* 8 October) looked for a bigger picture but concluded that it would be years before we would understand the significance of Bali for Australia – yet this did not stop him having a go at explaining what it might be.

Kelly argued Australians now understand that engaging with the wider world, especially Asia was a risky business and that some of our neighbours wish us harm: "Australians now know that south-east Asia was penetrated a decade ago by al-Qa'ida, that our immediate region is a pivotal battleground for the civil war within Islam and Australians will be drawn inexorably into the struggle."

Kelly's colleague, Greg Sheridan (*The Australian*, 16 October) knew exactly what Bali represented. He placed it directly in a line of iconic Australian battles – although how the fate of civilians cruelly murdered in a war they did not know they were fighting is comparable to troops on active service is not entirely clear.

But for Sheridan the message of Bali is that Australia is at war: "... there is no choice about participation in the war on terror. Make no mistake: just being Australians makes us targets."

Most agreed and none of the writers doubted who the enemy was or thought that we should turn away from the region in response to the attack.

The Advertiser (13 October) warned Australia should work on its relations with Indonesia and not rely

exclusively on the United States: "... a confident country is capable of more than one course in foreign affairs".

The *AFR* (10 October) focused on the region, warning of instability and an ambivalent Indonesia. And the paper added that the way Australia had responded, by closely cooperating with the Indonesian authorities rather than threatening pre-emptive strikes, gives the lie to the Asian critics of Australia's attitude to the region.

The *Sunday Telegraph* (12 October) in Sydney focused on the "lesson of Bali" and warned that Australia is in the firing line of the war against Islamic fundamentalism before rebuking those who say the fight is not ours: "Pulling up the drawbridge is not an option".

The Australian (11 October) went further in asserting the need to make Indonesia our friend, suggesting that we have no monopoly on sorrow. Its Bali memorial leader pointed to the death in anniversary week of 50 Indonesia schoolgirls in a bus crash:

For the families involved, this is as devastating and worthy of our sympathy as the suffering endured by those who lost people they loved in Bali. While the bombers place no value on individual lives, ordinary Australians and Indonesians do – and this weekend we should remember our pain is not unique.

But the inevitable focus was on the Australian experience and there was universal agreement that Australia was bloodied but not swayed by the attack. As *The Australian* (11 October) put it - "We must continue to demonstrate to the terrorists who still wish us harm that we will stand with the Indonesian people against them. They need to know their evil deeds failed in Bali. Despite the horrors they inflicted Australia was not cowed – nor will it be."

The (Adelaide) *Sunday Mail* (12 October) made the same point:

The Australian spirit showed both in the simple humanity of people helping each other and in the tungsten-tough determination not to let terror win.

Greg Sheridan (*Australian*, 16 October) went further, celebrating the response to the attack as defining the national character:

To watch the Bali memorials and commemorations in this past week was to be struck by their quintessentially Australian quality. There was no great poetry but there was great sentiment. The

substance was real and true; the form was ordinary. Australians don't dress up the big things – our politics, our national grief. Instead, we dress up sport because that is great fun. A people's vernacular governs Australian public life and it reflects the Australian mind, which has an ordinary granite hardness about it, which is something close to wisdom.

Tony Stephens (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 October) made a similar point, albeit more modestly:

Much of Australia's distress over Bali has been discharged in appropriately human ways. It has not been allowed to turn toxic. ... Australians were bruised but the nation kept its cool and is restoring its self-faith. Jingoism was never allowed to take hold. Sprigs of wattle are as likely to be seen at anniversary services as are flags. ... Australians have dealt with the disaster in often distinctive and generally levelheaded ways.

Inevitably, there were critics, notably Andrew Burrell (*AFR*, 15 October) whose comment piece revealed a great deal more about his views than it did about the impact of the attack. Burrell produced an exercise in sneering distaste for young tourists who drink too much and play up in cheap bars.

Of course he offered the requisite, if patronising admission that the people drinking in the Sari Club and Paddy's Bar did not deserve to be blown up: "...the ignorance and cultural sensitivities of a few do not mean they deserved their dreadful fate". But his description of Australians in Bali had a ring of contempt:

A year after the bombings, young Australians on holiday still walk the streets of Kuta semi-naked. Some vomit and urinate in the town's narrow laneways after marathon drinking sessions. ... most do not touch the local food ... few bother to learn one word of Indonesia, nor do they show even a cursory interest in Balinese culture or history.

And he quoted at length from a Malaysian writer's description of the Sari Club, "... to that rickety firetrap would lurch the last of the night's purblind drunken foreigners".

It may well all be true. Some of the people who died may have behaved like this but Burrell's take is massively at odds with the descriptions of the victims and the survivors who bailed in to help them on the night that appeared in the three comprehensive, commemorative supplements (*The Age*, 4 October,

Australian, 11 October and *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 October).

The supplements described ordinary Australians having their own version of a good time. And while they may not have been as sophisticated as Burrell thinks Australian tourists should be, the supplements told life stories that all Australians understand. The victims of Bali were ordinary people who had every right to live their lives as they chose – whatever cultural critics think.

As *The Herald Sun* (13 October) put it, the victims of Bali were not saints, 'they were not engaged in any pursuit more noble than a few drinks and a few laughs' – but failed to explain why this disqualified them for sanctity.

Piers Akerman (*Daily Telegraph* 14 October) produced a superior version of the same theme. Like Burrell, he did not seem to think much of some of the sorts of Australians that Bali attracts:

The reality is that not a lot of those who are attracted to the seedy clubs and bars of Kuta listen to the ABC's Radio National or watch SBS – these tourists are not so much seeking an exotic foreign experience as they are foraging for extensions to the most down –market, cheap and tasteless of Australian resorts.

Or maybe they are taking the only international holiday they can afford, however it offends Akerman's standards.

What both Akerman and Burrell seem to miss is that people they do not like the look of can still behave heroically. The thing about courage and compassion is that it does not directly depend on money or sophistication. And people who do not have a clue about other cultures can recognise and respond to human suffering when they see it.

Like Burrell, Akerman was also quick to make the point that the people who were killed in the bombings did not deserve to die. But nor were they heirs of the First AIF and Akerman rejected the digger-comparisons:

But this is not a new Gallipoli. The dead were not fighting to prevent their nation falling to foreign power, they were simply enjoying themselves on holiday.

Nor Akerman added – without explaining – could the Bali victims be compared to the young Australians who died in the Swiss canyoning disaster perhaps fit people on a sporting trip are in some way more admirable than Australians having a beer in a bar.

WOMEN AND EQUALITY – TWO VIEWS

When Prime Minister John Howard named Peter Hollingworth as governor-general in mid-2001, leaking to the media that he would have liked a woman in the post, Anne Summers, author of the feminist classic *Damned Whores and God's Police*, got angry. The clear implication was that Howard had been unable to find a woman good enough. Summers sat down with a copy of *Who's Who* and quickly came up with the names of 45 eminent Australian women.

Women might make up 50 per cent of the population. They might vote and pay tax. But what Summers saw was women being pushed off the political agenda, increasingly barred from positions of power while issues key to many – including childcare and domestic violence – were being marginalised, even ignored. This led her to write *The End of Equality* (Random House 2003)

Dominique Hogan-Doran, a child at the time Anne Summers published *Damned Whores and God's Police*, is one woman making strides in a profession largely dominated by men – the Bar. She holds the degrees of Bachelor of Economics and Bachelor of Laws with First Class Honours from the University of Sydney. She went to Oxford to read for the Degree of Bachelor of Civil Law and currently is President of Australian Women Lawyers.

Hear Anne Summers and Dominique-Hogan Doran on whether women deserve better.

**SPEAKER: DR. ANNE SUMMERS AO &
DOMINIQUE HOGAN-DORAN**

**TOPIC: *The End of Equality?: Women in
Contemporary Australia***

DATE: Thursday 11 December 2003

TIME: 5.30 for 6.00 pm

**VENUE: Metcalfe Auditorium, State Library of
NSW, Macquarie St, Sydney**

RSVP: (02) 9252 3366

OR mail@thesydneyinstitute.com.au

WEBSITE: www.thesydneyinstitute.com.au



But Akerman was merely setting up the rhetorical contrast to make his point – one of the most important of all the commentaries – that whatever anybody thinks about the holiday styles of the people who died – they had every right to do what they liked:

Liberal democracies offer openness and liberty to their citizens. We might not like everything that is being done in the bars and clubs of Kuta but it's surely better than the mindless repressive religious fundamentalism represented by the terrorist's creed.

It was a point that needed to be made – and one that goes to the heart of the bomber's inability to understand the West – that people who do not like the behaviour of others have no automatic right to impose their will over behaviour which offends them. It was an excellent antidote to some of the pontificating.

By the end of the Bali memorial week there was a sense that about enough had been written and broadcast. *The Australian* (15 October) suggested it was time for the country to leave the people who Bali hurt to get on with their grieving and forgetting in private.

And while Ackerman's point, that while the victims were not the heirs of ANZAC this does not make the bombings any less awful, was well made, on the whole the coverage of Bali was neither maudlin or jingoistic.

There was a lot of coverage but most of it was understated and focused on personal loss rather than political symbols and patriotic posturing. In that sense at least, it was an Australian memorial. And the information on the victims, heroes and just plain survivors did not make them look like the rude, crude drunks Burrell and Akerman wrote about.

They were just ordinary Australians – good, bad and indifferent – and none of them were doing any harm to their murderers.

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GERARD HENDERSON'S MEDIA WATCH

History is all the rage right now. So much so that what has been termed “the history wars” are being fought not only between historians but also between politicians and commentators – among others. What’s more, the battle rages over both traditional and contemporary history. So it’s time to make some academic judgments, mark some papers and so on.

ROBERT MANNE’S 3 OUT OF 10

In his weekly newspaper column on 9 September 2003, Gerard Henderson commented on Andrew Wilkie – the former Office of National Assessments officer who resigned in protest at the Howard government’s support for the Coalition of the Willing (United States, Britain, Australia and Poland). Henderson was particularly critical of Wilkie’s appearance before the Parliamentary Joint Committee Inquiry Into Iraq WMD Intelligence, commenting that:

In a confused and confusing performance, Wilkie continually accused the Prime Minister and his senior ministers of lying about Iraq’s WMD. In his opening statement to the committee, Wilkie claimed, variously, that the Howard government had “deliberately skewed the truth”, “mis-represented the truth”, gone “so far as to fabricate the truth” and “lied”. This followed his claim that, pre-war, the Howard government maintained Iraq possessed a “massive” and “mammoth” WMD arsenal (emphasis added)

When asked by Labor Senator Robert Ray what was the source for the claim that the Howard government had used the words “massive” and “mammoth” with respect to Iraq’s WMD, Wilkie replied: “Off the top of my head, I cannot recall.” Ray subsequently demonstrated that Wilkie’s (alleged) quotes had been taken out of context. The former ONA officer did not seem to understand the seriousness of the charge.

On 12 September 2003 *The Age* published a letter – signed (somewhat pretentiously) Professor Robert Manne, La Trobe University – which the Professor declared:

In his attack on Andrew Wilkie (Opinion, 9/9), Gerard Henderson leads your readers to believe that Wilkie made a serious mistake in his claim to a parliamentary committee that the Howard Government “had used the words ‘massive’ and ‘mammoth’ with respect to Iraq’s WMD”.

In her book *Howard’s War*, Alison Broinowski quotes John Howard as telling ABC TV on March 17, 2003, that “Australia was going to help the United States disarm Iraq of what he claimed to know were its chemical and biological weapons capable of ‘mammoth’ destruction”. On February 4, 2003, Howard told Parliament: “In 1995 the international community was confronted by Iraq’s massive program for developing offensive biological weapons...”.

Henderson wondered whether Wilkie understood the “seriousness” of his “charge”. The question is more appropriately asked of Henderson. Will he apologise.

For someone who likes to flash his academic title of Professor (of Politics, no less), Robert Manne’s scholarship was abysmally low.

Take the (alleged) John Howard comment of March 2003, for starters. The Professor did not bother to check the original source for what John Howard had actually said – despite the fact that all his speeches /interviews are on the Prime Minister’s website. Rather the Professor went to a secondary source - i.e. Alison Broinowski’s *Howard’s War* (Scribe 2003). Then he got the date wrong.

In fact, Broinowski did *not* refer to any statement made by the Prime Minister on 17 March 2003. But she did refer to a statement on 12 March 2003. This, in fact, was an error – as Dr Broinowski acknowledges. The reference should have been to 20 March 2003. In other words, the Professor added his own error to an original error. He also misquoted the Broinowski quote – she actually referred to “...weapons capable of ‘mammoth’ mass destruction”. Manne omitted the word “mass”.

This is what John Howard actually said in his Address to the Nation on 20 March 2003:

The Government has decided to commit Australian forces to action to disarm Iraq because we believe it is right, it is lawful and it's in Australia's national interest. We are determined to join other countries to deprive Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction, its chemical and biological weapons, which even in minute quantities are capable of causing death and destruction on a mammoth scale (emphasis added).

In other words, the Prime Minister did not say (as Mr Wilkie and Professor Manne alleged) that Iraq had massive or mammoth supplies of WMD. But, rather, that its WMD were capable of having a "mammoth" effect – even if used in "minute quantities".

So here we have the situation where a Professor of Politics used a secondary source in favour of a primary source document – and who seemed unaware that John Howard had formally addressed the Australian nation on 20 March 2003.

Examiner's Assessment – 1 out of 5. The Professor obtains 1 because he at least knew that the topic was Iraq.

Now consider Robert Manne's assessment of John Howard's statement of 4 February 2003. This is what the Prime Minister actually said during a speech to the House of Representatives:

In 1995, the international community was confronted by Iraq's massive program for developing biological weapons – one of the largest and most advanced in the world. Despite four years of intensive inquiries and searches, the weapons inspectors did not even know of its existence until Saddam Hussein's son-in-law, Hussein Kamal, defected. Faced with its duplicity Iraq finally admitted to producing aflatoxin, which causes cancers, the paralysing poison botulinum and anthrax bacteria...(emphasis added).

In other words, the Prime Minister did not say (as Mr Wilkie and Professor Manne alleged) that Iraq had massive or mammoth supplies of WMD. But, rather, that in 1995 evidence was produced with respect to Iraq's massive *program* for developing WMD.

Examiner's Assessment – 2 out of 5. One for getting the date correct this time round. And another for getting the subject right. But the Professor's inability to understand the meaning of the word "program" in this context ensures that his second attempt must also fail.

There was no excuse for such slovenly research. Robert Manne should have been aware of Andrew Wilkie's false claims about John Howard – because they were personally drawn to Mr Wilkie's attention by Labor Senator Robert Ray during the Parliamentary Joint Committee inquiry. The fact is that Andrew Wilkie alleged that the Howard government had claimed that Iraq had a "massive" and "mammoth" arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. And the fact is that neither the Prime Minister nor any of his ministers made any such claim. Moreover Mr Wilkie was not able to document his allegation – acknowledging, instead, to Senator Ray that he had no evidence and was talking on an "off the top of my head" basis.

Apparently this was good enough for the Professor from La Trobe. By the way, Robert Manne is yet to apologise for either of his howlers. It seems that he requires of others what he is not prepared to do himself. Fancy that.

LATELINE'S HISTORY CHALLENGED

On 1 September 2003 ABC TV *Lateline* presenter Tony Jones announced the launch of *Lateline's* "History Challenge". First up, Margot O'Neill introduced Bob Carr (New South Wales Labor premier) and Michael Cathcart (who was presented as a "broadcaster and historian"). This set the theme for the challenge – whereby viewers would be invited to submit their own stories on aspects of Australian history and those judged the best would be presented on *Lateline*.

The series commenced on 2 September 2003. Bob Carr spoke about the scene in Sydney Harbour in 1945 when the first plane load of Australians who had been made prisoners-of-war by the Japanese returned home. Then it was over to Michael Cathcart who currently has a gig on ABC Radio National as presenter of the *Big Ideas* program. He is a former academic and is the author of *Defending the National Tuckshop: Australia's Secret Army Intrigue of 1931* (Penguin, 1988) and edited the abridged edition of *Manning Clark's History of Australia* (MUP, 1993).

Cathcart chose as his topic the (alleged) rise of fascism in Australia circa 1930 and the (almost) civil war which (nearly) occurred Down Under at the same time. Or something like that. His presentation was introduced by Margot O'Neill who declared:

As a young historian, Michael Cathcart found untold stories of secret right-wing armies ready to overthrow democracy in the 1930s. It was a time when the sectarian divide in this country was wide and deep,

a time when some Australians considered shooting other Australians. Tonight, Michael Cathcart tells us a little-known story of a day in March 1931 in rural Victoria. It was a day when a rumour spread.

You bet. Still spreading, in fact. This was the cue for Cathcart to declare that, in 1931, rumour “spread through the Western Districts [of Victoria], through the Mallee and the Wimmera that the Communists and the Catholics are on the move”. This in spite of the fact that Communists and Catholics tended to be on opposite sides of the political debate at the time. Anyrate, the threat by the surprising unity ticket of Communists and Catholics provoked a response by – you’ve guessed it – a group described by Cathcart as “THEY”. Over to MC:

THEY became convinced in March 1931 that there was going to be a revolution, and the reason for that was that there was a big unemployment demonstration scheduled for that day and THEY were sure that the Catholics were going to mass at the convents, the unemployed were going to mass at the unemployed camps, the communists were going to arrive, mobilise the whole thing and there was going to be a revolutionary overthrow of the civil order. So old soldiers and well-to-do young men who’d missed out on the First World War dug trenches in Ouyen, for example, guarded the banks in towns through central Victoria – THEY went on patrol one night in 1931.

Enter Margot O’Neill. She identified the “THEY” as members of what she termed “The White Guard”. According to M O’N, Federal intelligence agencies estimated that the White Guard had 30,000 members in Victoria alone and that they “had ready access to the armories of the Army Reserve”.

Enter MC. He adds that in the early 1930s Federal intelligence agencies believed that “THEY had the capacity and the will and the weapons to overthrow the elected government of the day and to install a military junta because THEY were so alarmed at the way in which politics under Jim Scullin federally – and Jack Lang in New South Wales – were going”. According to MC, “what THEY shared was a belief that democracy was an experiment that had failed”.

Re-enter Margot O’Neill. She labels the “THEY” – who have only otherwise been identified as members of a White Guard – as “fascist groups” intent on “civil war”.

Re-enter Michael Cathcart advising that it all worked out okay (phew):

Of course nothing happened – there was no uprising, there wasn’t any revolution, the nuns did not hand out 303s to the rebels outside. And this misfire triggered the attention of members of the police force and members of the military who were not sympathetic to what was going on.

And the key figure who was not sympathetic to what was going on was General John Monash because Monash knew the price of fascism because Monash was a Jew. And Monash saw what was happening and he’s part of a group within the military that starts to mobilise to hose this kind of activity down. But it was very serious.

Re-enter Margot O’Neill: “As it turned out, Jack Lang was sacked by New South Wales Governor and the Scullin government was voted out in Canberra. The threat of civil war was averted.”

Re-re-enter Michael Cathcart:

Those members of the secret army really only wanted one account of Australia – their account of Australia, which was male, conservative, Protestant, British. THEY were frightened of Irish Catholics. THEY were frightened by Italians. THEY were frightened by the unemployed. THEY believed that their version of what is right, what is moral, what is true, what is British, what is Australian is total and they will not allow any other version to be heard. Now history rescues us from that kind of arrogance. History is one of the places where we ventilate democracy.

Or myths – as the case may be.

- Margot O’Neill, in her *Lateline* presentation, referred to a “White Guard”. In his book *Defending the National Tuckshop*, Michael Cathcart made reference to “the White Army”. In fact, there is no conclusive evidence that such an entity as the “White Guard” or White Army ever existed. Certainly there was a public organisation known as the New Guard. This was particularly active in New South Wales and comprised some ex-military types. But it was in no sense a secret army and some of its leaders were well known political activists – namely Eric Campbell and Francis De Groot.

But what about the secretive organisation which went under the name “White Guard” or “White Army?” In his book *The Secret Army and the Premier: Conservative Paramilitary Organisations in New South Wales (1930-32)* (NSW University Press, 1989), Andrew Moore referred to “a mysterious and secretive organisation variously known as ‘The

Movement', the 'Gillespie-Goldfinch Organisation', the 'Defence Association' or the 'Defence Organisation', the 'Citizens Reserve Corps', the 'Home Defence League', 'X Force', the 'White Guard' or the 'White Army' and perhaps most satisfactorily the 'Old Guard'".

So there you have it. Perhaps. Or perhaps not. As Andrew Moore (who is very much into the secret army thesis) demonstrates, there is no agreement that any such entity as the "White Guard" or the "White Army" ever existed. So what was *Lateline* doing presenting Michael Cathcart's account about an organisation which may never have existed as the lead-in to its "History Challenge". Who knows?

- Margot O'Neill referred to the (so-called) White Guard/White Army as "fascist groups" due, apparently, to their attempts to overthrow the elected governments in Canberra and Sydney circa 1931. However, there is no evidence that the (alleged) members of these (alleged) groups considered themselves as "fascist".

In fact, little was known about fascism in Australia in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Benito Mussolini had formed a fascist movement in Italy in 1919 which came to power in 1922. But Mussolini had a low profile in Australia in the 1920s and early 1930s. *Lateline's* description of the (alleged) White Guard/White Army is reading history backwards.

In any event, according to Cathcart's own account, the (alleged) White Guard/White Army was made up of "male, conservative, Protestant, British types" who were "frightened" by "Irish Catholics" and "Italians". So what would have been the attraction of the Italian Mussolini who had been both a Catholic and a socialist?

- Michael Cathcart's declaration that John Monash did not sympathise with the White Guard/White Army because, "as a Jew", he "knew the price of fascism" is another case of reading history backwards. Cathcart was specifically referring to the period before the Federal election of December 1931 (in which the Scullin Labor government was defeated) and the dismissal of the Lang Labor government in New South Wales in May 1932.

Adolf Hitler's Nazi movement did not come to power in Germany until 1933 – little was known about Nazism (a variety of fascism) in Australia before that date. John Monash (an engineer by profession who headed the Australian Imperial Force during the latter stages of the First World War) was a sensible, pragmatic Australian who was opposed to extremist ideologies. But he was not – and never claimed to be – a prophet. In other words, John Monash had no idea circa 1930/31 about the fate which Jews would suffer around a decade later in Germany and

elsewhere – under a Nazi/fascist regime which was not in power in 1930/31.

- Then there is the issue of civil war. Margot O'Neill asserted that Australia was on the eve of civil war in 1932. Michael Cathcart made a similar claim in *Defending the National Tuckshop*. A like assertion has been made by Andrew Moore and by Phillip Knightley in his *Australia: A Biography of a Nation* (Jonathan Cape, 2000). Neither O'Neill nor Cathcart nor Moore nor Knightley have ever produced unequivocal evidence to support so serious an allegation. For example, who would have led the civil war?

When Michael Cathcart was challenged to support his thesis advanced on *Lateline*, he responded as follows on the "History Challenge" website (www.abc.net.au/history)

All history is to some extent a matter of reading backwards. We approach the past in the full heat of our own humanity, as we understand it now, but also with a deep humility to listen to the past and understand its realities. I do not claim that the White Army were Nazis, but they were Fascist in their outlook and they were linked with an admiration of Mussolini. I agree...that there is a sort of innocence to their ideology: they did not have the benefit of our hindsight. But what hindsight shows us is that fascism was a serious threat to democracy. We know - as they did not - how fascism turned out.

Geoff Serle's biography of John Monash deals with Monash's rejection of the White Army and his refusal to lead it. I am in Italy at the moment and so am unable to check the reference exactly. But my recollection is that there is a footnote in which Serle reveals a jotting by Monash. Monash implies that his own Judaism was playing on his mind when he rejected advances by White Army supporters. Monash was a remarkable and well-informed man. It is not improbable that he appreciated the anti-semitic dimension of European fascism as early as 1931. I think my reading is sustained by the balance of probabilities. (In any case, it certainly isn't a headstrong "exaggeration".)

My core point about the White Army is that they had the means (the men and weapons ... and the ideology) to legitimate a military coup. My take home message about the secret armies is that they were a moment when Australia was offered the fascist

option - and ultimately rejected it. The election of 1931 ... which brought Joe Lyons to power ... put an end to the secret armies. But my core point about history is this. I'm delighted if anyone wants to contest my reading, I'm delighted to engage in debate. As I say, historical understanding is all about conversation.... all about the recognition that there is always another way of saying it...

Michael Cathcart's response, postmarked Italy, was replete with references to "humanity", "humility", the "balance of probabilities" and so on. But remarkably short on evidence. There was no evidence to support MC's assertion that the so-called White Army in Australia, circa 1930-1931, was "fascist" – or that its members "were linked with an admiration of Mussolini". Certainly there was an anti-democratic ethos among supporters of anti-communist paramilitary organisations at the time. But this did not make their members "fascist". Nor did it entail that they had more than a fleeting knowledge about the fascist regime which Benito Mussolini had set up in Italy in 1922. In any event, there was another anti-democratic force in Australia at the time which was certainly not fascist. The Communist Party, no less. In other words, there was no causal connection between opposition to democracy and fascism.

As to the assertion that John Monash prophesied the implications of Nazi anti-Semitism, the footnote to which Cathcart refers is at Page 514 of Geoffrey Serle *John Monash: A Biography* (MUP, 2002 edition). It is dated 12 January 1931 and reads as follows: "Record warning. 1. A rash policy. 2. War Record. 3. Jew". That's all.

The Monash diary entry is not evidence for anything – and, in any event, does not support MC's claim on *Lateline* that "Monash knew the price of fascism because Monash was a Jew". Dr Serle himself described Monash's diary note as mysterious. He linked it to actions taken in January 1931 by certain prominent Australian businessmen to get Joseph Lyons to defect from the Labor Party and join the political conservatives. In other words, the diary note appears to bear no relationship whatsoever to John Monash's attitude to fascism – in Australia or Europe - or to any such entity as a "White Army". It is a gross exaggeration for Michael Cathcart to claim otherwise.

It was never a good idea for *Lateline* to engage an historian – of the Manning Clark school – for its "History Challenge". The problem with Michael Cathcart is that he is into history as hyperbole. Witness his assertion in *Defending the National Tuckshop* that "it appears that during the final year of the Whitlam

[Labor] government, conservatism again mobilized secret armies". As usual, Michael Cathcart's historical hyperbole is not supported by evidence. It seems that Cathcart rationalises his inability to document his assertions about "secret armies" because, well, they were secret.

Michael Cathcart deserves a pass – primarily on account of the fact that it is impossible to disprove his claims about secret entities. Clever, eh?

WHAT THE BUTLER REALLY SAID - OR NOT

While on the issue of historical secrets, what will history say about the stance taken by Richard Butler AM – formerly Executive Chairman of the United Nations Special Commission on Iraqi Disarmament and New Governor of Tasmania. You be the judge.

- **28 January 2003.** Richard Butler addresses The Sydney Institute. In anticipating a United States led attack on Iraq, without the sanction of the United Nations Security Council, Butler comments: "It's not often that we see an event of this kind of approach – the sole superpower putting together a massive force to do something that is expressly forbidden in international law...to seek to change the government of another country."

- **Sunday 16 February 2003.** RB attends a rally against any military action by the Coalition of the Willing in Sydney's Hyde Park. Subsequently the *Sydney Morning Herald* (19 February 2003) publishes a color photograph of Richard Butler at the Hyde Park rally – wearing a purple ribbon for peace.

- **16 February 2003.** RB commences a column in the *Sydney Telegraph*. He states that "it's beyond doubt that Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction" and has "oppressed and terrorised the Iraqi people". But RB regards any "unilateral action" by the US as "the worst possible situation". He praises the French position rejecting "the central American proposition that military force was needed to disarm Iraq".

- **23 February 2003.** RB reflects that "notwithstanding the rhetoric about military action being a last resort, it's fairly ludicrous to conclude that the US is not set on that path".

- **2 March 2003.** RB opines that "we now know the truth". Namely that "the highly conservative Bush administration, and the September 11 attacks on the American homeland have produced an America determined to organise the world in ways that will suit its image".

- **9 March 2003.** RB comments that US policy on Iraq “will answer a question that has hung in the air since the end of the Cold War 11 years ago: what will a world with one superpower – the US – look like, and how will that superpower use its power?”
- **16 March 2003.** From Flagstaff, Arizona RB reflects that “it seems clear that the US Government, in spite of extraordinary efforts – including some questionable propaganda – has been unsuccessful in making a case for military action against Iraq.
- **23 March 2003.** Filing from San Diego, RB restates his conviction that “what America – and by extension Australia – has embarked on is a violation of international law”. He refers to the “plain fact that for any state to attack another without the blessing of the UN Security Council violates international law”.
- **30 March 2003.** RB turns military expert – and predicts that the military campaign is “going to be much harder than expected...”.
- **6 April 2003.** RB reports that, during a recent visit to China, he mused that “we [Australians] sold ourself to US interests rather than attended out of our own, especially in our neighbourhood”.
- **13 April 2003.** RB rejoices in the fall of Saddam Hussein’s regime but warns that “the US decision to attack and invade Iraq without the agreement of the Security Council is contrary to international law”.
- **20 April 2003.** In his final *Sunday Telegraph* column, RB complains that “John Howard seems to show not a flicker of recognition of how nationalist and self-centred the present US Government is”.
- **13 June 2003.** *The Sunday Age* gives front page coverage to a report of Richard Butler’s speech in the Adelaide Festival of Ideas (where else?). There RB had declared that “Australian democracy” was in “crisis” and called on Prime Minister John Howard, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer and Defence Minister Robert Hill to resign. His reason? Well, claimed RB, all three made misleading statements about Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction.
- **15 July 2003.** RB is interviewed by Tony Jones on the ABC TV *Lateline* program. He asserts: “Everyone knows there were unaccounted for weapons in Iraq. They weren’t very significant in quantity.”

Flashback to RB inaugural *Sunday Telegraph* column on 16 February 2003 where he wrote that “it is beyond doubt that Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction”. And flashback to his column of 13 April 2003 where he wrote:

When Saddam ejected me and the UNSCOM inspectors from Iraq in 1998, I gave the Security Council a list of Iraq’s unaccounted weapons. No action was taken, mainly because of Russian and French insistence, but also because of the US was preoccupied with President Clinton’s impeachment. Four years later, my successor, Hans Blix, gave the Security Council his list of outstanding weapons of mass destruction – virtually identical to my 1998 list. Again, the Security Council could not agree to act.

On neither occasion did RB claim that these WMD “weren’t very significant in quantity”.

- **20 September 2003.** *The Press* in Atlantic City reports a speech delivered the previous day by Richard Butler to the Annual Convention of the Utility and Transportation Contractors Association at the Tropicana Casino and Resort. Let’s take up staff writer Madelaine Vitale’s report of what the man she referred to as Ambassador Butler had to say:

Butler said the obvious and most defining events of the 21st Century thus far are 9/11 and the invasion of Iraq. He said the United States and its allies had no choice but to invade Iraq and overthrow Saddam Hussein’s government. Butler likened Saddam to Adolf Hitler and said the evil dictator used the weapons on live people. “I want to be plain about this”, Butler’s voice heightened. “The overthrow of Saddam Hussein was justified whether or not there was reluctance to authorize it... No one could say it was wrong to overthrow a homicidal maniac. The Security Council sat on its hands for 10 years.”

As for not finding these weapons allegedly in Iraq, Butler said he is sure Saddam had them. He said Saddam was addicted to the deadly weapons, and whether they are still in Iraq but hidden, moved or destroyed, they did exist. “Don’t believe those who say they aren’t there just because we haven’t found them. Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction,” Butler told the crowd. “Iraq certainly did have weapons of mass destruction. Trust me. I held some in my own hands.”

So there you have it. Or not. According to RB Iraq did/did not have significant weapons of mass destruction. And the Coalition of the Willing was/was not justified in invading Iraq. Governor Butler of Tasmania is a one-time diplomat.

AN AFFAIR TO FORGET – ON AUSTRALIAN SOAP

Then there is the history that is best forgotten. Take, for example, the case of Mary Moody – the former presenter of ABC TV's *Gardening Australia* program. Ms Moody has just written a memoir entitled *Last Tango in Toulouse*. In which she reveals – shock /horror – that she had an affair. In France. At 50 plus. With “The Man From Toulouse”. The Moody tome has just been released. However, it received buckets of (free) publicity when the Moody story became the subject of ABC TV's *Australian Story* on 7 July 2003.

Believe it or not, Mary Moody spoke at length about the affair to *Australian Story*. Followed by her husband, film-producer David Hanny. Followed by their daughter Miriam Hanny. Followed by her publisher Tom Gilliat. Highlights of this episode of “Australian Soap” included:

- MM's true confession: “Part of the whole thing that I've been going through is a desire to actually revisit my youth. I mean, I want to dance on tabletops and, you know, have fun.” Oh yes – the Man From Toulouse is “very different from David in appearance – in the style of person that he is”.
- DH's true confession: “I'm a melancholic depressive and I'm compulsive obsessive”. Oh yes – and lately DH has “become sexually withdrawn”.
- MH's true confession: “I hate [The Man From Toulouse] because he knew she was married and he knew that she had a really important family life and he didn't care.” Oh yes – MH overlooked the fact that The Man From Toulouse had a wife and family as well. But did MM care? Who knows? Who cares?

TG's true confession: “She was perfectly happy...to write...in some detail about what it's like to get undressed in front of another man after 30 years of monogamy... This was, if you like, ‘Big Brother’ for the over 50s”. Or “Big Sister” perhaps. Oh yes, TG praises DH for not opposing the publication of MM's book even though he knows that “Mary's unfaithfulness [and] his being cuckolded, is going to be read around the country”. But, ah yes, anticipated sales are high.

Can you believe it? This soap actually made it to *Australian Story*. The program was introduced by a serious looking Caroline Jones who commented: “At issue [is] the truth – how much should be revealed and how much held back”. The answer is – all of the latter. Sure history matters. It's just that self-indulgence is just self-indulgence.

MADDOCTOR'S HISTORICAL BUMP-UP

The Quarterly Essay (Black Inc) makes quite a splash every three months or so. Each essay includes an introduction by Peter Craven – the magazine's editor – and contains a lively correspondence section. The most recent issue, Number 11, saw Germaine Greer on the topic *Whitefella Jump Up: The Shortest Way to Nationhood*. It contained a fair measure of the alienation which afflicts many an Australian expat. The London based Dr Greer described Australia as a “crazily devastated” (p.2) nation where suburbia is an “endless nightmare” (p.2) and “most...hate the land” (p.11). In this country, a “ratbag culture of self-improvement” prevails (p.12) – following the inheritance of “our ignorant, deluded, desperate forefathers” (p.14). And so on.

But the biggest surprise of all occurs at Page 75 where the Learned Doctor wrote:

The feeling that Australia should not get involved was still strong when the war drums began beating again in the 1930s. Australians who believed that if they fought alongside the British in Europe and Africa, Britain would defend Australia, were eventually proved wrong when Singapore was allowed to fall virtually undefended. The Commonwealth Training Scheme in which all available pilot recruits were trained for the European conflict went ahead, leaving Australia with no air defences. When the Japanese invaded the Northern Territory, Australia had no comeback.

Now this is a scoop. A real SCOOP. According to GG, Japan “invaded the Northern Territory” during the Pacific War. Yet, for six decades, Australians had believed that no Japanese invasion of Australian soil took place – and that Japanese hostilities on Australian land were limited to bombing from the air and shelling from the sea. But now GG has revealed otherwise – and her views have the apparent editorial endorsement of Peter Craven himself. Stand by for a new *Quarterly Essay* – perhaps entitled *Japfella Punch Up: The (Previously) Untold Story of the Japanese Invasion of Australia*. With an introduction by Peter Craven, of course.

DAVID FLINT!!!

Finally a (contemporary) history text. How many exclamation marks are there in David Flint's *Twilight of the Elites*? Go to it!!!!!! Results will be announced!! in the next!! Edition of Gerard(!) Henderson's(!) Media!! Watch!!

