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SPEAKER:	SENATOR THE HON. HELEN COONAN (Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts) NB. CHANGE of DATE	
DATE:	Tuesday 23 August 2005 **Bookings from 9 August only**	TIME: 5.30 for 6 pm
VENUE:	BT Training Room (Room 401), Level 4, Chifley Tower, 2 Chifley Square, Sydney	
SPEAKER:	BARONESS SUSAN GREENFIELD CBE (Professor of Pharmacology at Oxford University; Director of the Royal Institution of Great Britain, Synaptica Ltd, BrainBoost Ltd & Neurodianostics Ltd)	
TOPIC:	<i>The Future of the Brain</i>	
DATE:	Wednesday 24 August 2005 **Bookings from 10 August only**	TIME: 5.30 for 6 pm
VENUE:	Clayton Utz Seminar Room (Level 30), 1 O'Connell Street, Sydney	
SPEAKER:	DR. PETER DOHERTY AC (Nobel Laureate – Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine, 1996; Australian of the Year 1997; Laureate Professor at the University of Melbourne and a Burnet Fellow of NHMRC)	
TOPIC:	<i>A Beginner's Guide to Winning the Nobel Prize</i>	
DATE:	Wednesday 31 August 2005 **Bookings from 17 August only**	TIME: 5.30 for 6 pm
VENUE:	BT Training Room (Room 401), Level 4, Chifley Tower, 2 Chifley Square, Sydney	
SPEAKER:	MICHAEL SHERRADEN (Founder & Director, Center for Social Development, Washington University; Author, <i>Assets and the Poor: A New American Welfare Policy</i>)	
DATE:	Thursday 1 September 2005 **Bookings from 18 August only**	TIME: 5.30 for 6 pm
VENUE:	Clayton Utz Seminar Room (Level 30), 1 O'Connell Street, Sydney	
SPEAKER:	DR TOM FRAME (Anglican Bishop to the Australian Defence Force; Author <i>The Life & Death of Harold Holt</i> [Allen & Unwin, 2005])	
TOPIC:	<i>Harold Holt: Why He Mattered</i>	
DATE:	Monday 5 September 2005 **Bookings from 22 August only**	TIME: 5.30 for 6 pm
VENUE:	The Sydney Institute, 41 Phillip Street, Sydney	
SPEAKER:	THE HON. TONY ABBOTT MP (Leader of the House, Minister for Health & Ageing) LAUNCH OF THE BIOGRAPHY OF JOYCE HARMER (Former Court Chaplain, Downing Centre, who counselled and supported accused child-killer Kathleen Folbigg during her trial)	
DATE:	Friday 9 September 2005 **Bookings from 26 August only**	TIME: 12 pm for 12.30 pm
VENUE:	BT Training Room (Room 401), Level 4, Chifley Tower, 2 Chifley Square, Sydney	
SPEAKER:	DAVID CORLETT (Author, <i>Following Them Home: The Fate of The Returned Asylum Seekers</i> [Black In Agenda, 2005])	
TOPIC:	<i>The Fate of Australia's Returned Asylum Seekers</i>	
DATE:	Tuesday 13 September 2005 **Bookings from 30 August only**	TIME: 5.30 for 6 pm
VENUE:	Museum of Sydney Theatre, Corner of Bridge & Phillip Streets, Sydney	
SPEAKER:	DR HARLAN ULLMAN (Author; National Security Consultant; Senior Adviser, Centre for Strategic & International Studies)	
TOPIC:	<i>China: Friend or Foe?</i>	
DATE:	Thursday 15 September 2005 *Bookings from 1 September only*	TIME: 5.30 for 6 pm
VENUE:	to be advised	
SPEAKER:	BILL SHORTEN (National Secretary, Australian Worker's Union) NB. CHANGE of DATE	
DATE:	Tuesday 20 September 2005 *Bookings from 6 September only*	TIME: 5.30 for 6 pm
VENUE:	Clayton Utz Seminar Room (Level 30), 1 O'Connell Street, Sydney	
SPEAKER:	DR ELSINA WAINWRIGHT (Strategy and International Program Director, Australian Strategic Policy Institute)	
TOPIC:	<i>Australia's Solomon Island Commitment: How is it Faring?</i>	
DATE:	Tuesday 11 October 2005 *Bookings from 27 September only*	TIME: 5.30 for 6 pm
VENUE:	to be advised	
SPEAKER:	THE RT. HON. LORD PATTEN OF BARNES (Chancellor of Oxford and Newcastle Universities; Until 2004, Chris Patten was the Commissioner for External Relations in the European Commission)	
TOPIC:	<i>Britain, Europe and America: After the Cold War</i>	
DATE:	Wednesday 9 November 2005 *Bookings from 26 October only*	TIME: 5.30 for 6 pm
VENUE:	BT Training Room (Room 401), Level 4, Chifley Tower, 2 Chifley Square, Sydney	

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THE

Sydney Institute

QUARTERLY



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Boyer Lectures - How
alienated can an Aussie
expat get?

ANNE HENDERSON
on mandatory
detention, the Palmer
Report and some case
studies

TED RULE assesses
Jiang Jingtou and
Chiang Kai-Shek's
Legacy

STEPHEN MATCHETT
takes it up to Howard
Haters

Curtin's Gift - reviewed
by **STEPHEN MILLS**

JOHN MCCONNELL
looks at the Labor Split
and the Howard years

GEOFFREY LUCK
The ABC and PNG

MEDIA WATCH
takes on Carmel
Travers, Matt Price,
Malcolm Farr, Laura
Tingle, Andrew Jaspan
and Robert Manne
(not again?)

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with Gerard Henderson's

MEDIA WATCH

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MR BALDING'S SPAM

The July 2005 issue of the ABC's house journal *Inside the ABC* contains a lead story "National Broadcaster Speaks Out". The reference is to an address by ABC Managing Director Russell Balding on 16 June 2005. Mr Balding's complaint is that, since triennial funding was established in 1988, the ABC's appeal for extra money "has been repeatedly knocked back; five times in a row". From this, the ABC managing director concludes that "appeals by the ABC - no matter how realistic or convincing, no matter how strong the evidence - seem to have acquired the status of spam at government level". Russell Balding added that "this is true of governments of both major parties". He reported that, when treasurer in Bob Hawke's Labor government, Paul Keating had told (then) ABC managing director Geoffrey Whitehead: "They won't get an extra zack out of us. It's the most self-indulgent and self-interested outfit in the country." Needless to say, Mr Balding simply dismissed the former prime minister's critique of the public broadcaster.

In his speech Russell Balding demonstrated a grievously deficient understanding of the essential critique of the public broadcaster. He said that, following the criticism of the ABC Radio Program *AM's* coverage of the Second Gulf War by the Coalition Communications' Minister Richard Alston, Andrew Denton had sent a note him "a note suggesting that we should go on the front foot and mobilise our heavy artillery, so to speak, and do a television promo listing all the complaints the ABC has received from Australian prime ministers - past and present - Menzies, Whitlam, Fraser, Keating, Hawke, Howard". The line was that, if "they're not complaining we're not doing our job". Mr Balding took up the Denton theme with enthusiasm and raised the question: "How could we possibly be politically biased when we have managed to offend every prime minister since 1932?"

How naïve can the ABC managing director get? What Russell Balding cannot understand is that the ABC has offended Liberal and Labor governments alike - but always from the left. In other words, the ABC has attacked the Howard Government from the left - just as it once attacked the Hawke/Keating Government from the left. This is not an example of political balance but, rather, the opposite. Proving, once again, that while Mr Balding may be a fine accountant he is totally out of his depth in his capacity as ABC's editor-in-chief. He simply does not understand the cultural debate.

The ABC managing director would be well advised to purchase a copy of the forthcoming book *Taking Sides*, which is written by former long-term BBC correspondent Robin Aitken. According to previews in the British press, Mr Aitken has lifted the lid on the British public broadcaster's "institutionalised leftism" and "prevailing centre-left culture". As the author of *Taking Sides* put it: "In a way, it doesn't bother me that BBC journalists do hold political views. The scandal is that left-wing voices are not balanced by right-wing voices." (*The Daily Telegraph*, 14 May 2005). Quite so. It's much the same Down Under where a leftist culture still pervades the ABC and where ABC management has consistently refused to establish an adequate complaints procedure, despite the requests of the former Labor and current Coalition governments. Russell Balding is in denial about why successive requests for additional funding - for an essentially unreformed public broadcaster - meet with such little success and, as he himself now concedes, are regarded as mere spam.

AUSTRALIA'S ONSHORE PROTECTION - FOR WHOM AND AT WHAT COST?

Anne Henderson

*I*t's finally happened. After years of controversy. And it took a bunch of concerned Coalition MPs, Judi Moylan, Petro Georgiou, Bruce Baird and Russell Broadbent, to shift the hardened attitude of government senior ranks and begin reform of the management of Australia's mandatory detention policy. They were helped in their moves by leaks that indicated the Palmer Report into the wrongful detention of Cornelia Rau would find serious cultural and procedural problems with the Immigration Department in the compliance and detention areas.

After legislation which passed through both houses of parliament in June 2005, Australia's policy of mandatory detention will be managed in a more humane way. Families with children will no longer be held in detention, decisions on cases will be quickened and streamlined and, most importantly, overseen by the Prime Minister's Department. Long term detainees will be released on "removal pending" visas, but retain their rights. Review of cases will be made fairer and kept in check by the presence of an ombudsman, a position enshrined in legislation. The Coalition MPs will also meet regularly with Dr Peter Shergold, Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, to oversee that the reforms are working.

Designed and developed by the Keating Labor Government, Australia's policy of mandatory detention of unlawful immigrants, including asylum seekers who have fled persecution, has been in place for well over a decade. Most protests against the policy have largely fallen on deaf ears. In fact, often such protests have been counterproductive in their overly aggressive, even violent, outbursts. At times, detainees have been the unintended victims of

demonstrations. As well, exaggerations and stridency have more often than not simply turned off voters and encouraged the government to dig in its heels and maintain the status quo.

So it was not until early in 2005 when stories emerged of how Cornelia Rau, a deeply disturbed Australian resident of German origin, had been incarcerated and abused for months in Baxter Detention Centre that most Australians began to register what mandatory detention actually involves. Ordinary Australians, who had no interest in what might be happening to non Australians taken into detention centres, suddenly were caught by what could happen to an Australian in detention - that ordinary people could be taken into custody simply on the grounds of being "unlawful" and, while in such custody, be subjected to physical and mental abuse at the whim of their custodians, with no means or avenues of redress. The Cornelia Rau case made many Australians listen to what refugee advocates had been saying for years. Now they could empathise. Cornelia was one of them.

ONSHORE PROTECTION - THE CULTURE

The legacy of Australia's era of mandatory detention will take years to understand and will not be fully appreciated till the historical record is more fully written. But, as with the years of detention of Aliens during Australia's two World Wars, when recorded it will not be a story to make Australians proud.

With the findings of the investigation into the Cornelia Rau case, known as the Palmer Report, not surprisingly the Department of Immigration is already undergoing massive administrative reforms. The Minister for Immigration and Multiculturalism and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA), Senator Amanda Vanstone, had admitted to a "culture" within the department in need of fundamental change even before the Palmer findings; in addition, the then Secretary of the DIMIA, Bill Farmer, had admitted this culture problem often led officers of the department to make serious mistakes in assessing cases of asylum seekers. It has seen many genuine asylum seekers languish for years in detention, while those on Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) and Bridging visas have suffered unimaginable anguish as they seek a renewal of their protection visas, often while unable to work and dependant on the charity of generous Australians, and most cut off from families they are not permitted to bring to Australia.

With the Palmer Report now out, Prime Minister John Howard and Minister Amanda Vanstone have announced that its findings will be taken seriously

and acted on. And while the “culture” problem in the DIMIA has not been defined by the minister, Chapter 7 of the Palmer Report certainly does so. In the words of the Report:

Within the DIMIA immigration detention function there is clear evidence of an “assumption culture” – sometimes bordering on denial – that generally allows matters to go unquestioned when, on any examination, a number of the assumptions are flawed. For example ... [there is] no requirement to review the validity of the exercise of “reasonable suspicion” where it is formed or the basis on which the detention is made. ... Rigid, narrow thinking stymies initiative and limits the ability to deal successfully with new and complex situations. A wider, questioning and enabling culture is required.

The Report goes on to note that administering officers showed a “considerable evidence of deafness to the concerns voiced repeatedly” and operated with a “culture that ignores criticism and is unduly defensive, process motivated and unwilling to question itself ... Energies seemed to be channelled more into justifying and protecting the status quo”. The Report also describes officers of middling rank in operational positions with too much power to administer detention – even administering the policy outside the terms and definitions of the Migration Act:

In particular there seemed to be a general lack of understanding on the part of officers of their legislative responsibilities under the Act. ... [and] a belief that the emphasis was on detaining people and that the follow-up investigation of a person’s lawful situation was a matter of process, with no limitation on time and no need to execute the process as a matter of urgency.

The report describes the attitude as one where the fact that a person’s liberty had been taken “seemed to be accepted as a ‘matter of fact’ and as a result of the person’s own doing brought about by their actions”.

MANDATORY DETENTION

Any investigation into the files of asylum seekers and detainees illustrates DIMIA’s culture in regard to mandatory detention. It is a problem that begins with a mindset which many DIMIA officers have adopted and allowed to govern their far too wide sweeping powers over defenceless people. That mindset is twofold.

Firstly it chooses to believe that most people who come to Australia unlawfully are not honest and cannot be believed; secondly it accepts that the DIMIA’s job is to establish that unlawfully are not genuine refugees and to see that they comply with the law which states that they should leave Australia. In the worst cases, quite harsh and questionable methods are used to deport those unwilling to comply.

The policy of mandatory detention evolved out of a particular political climate. In the years of the early 1990s, with recession and economic reforms that saw many traditional jobs disappear, immigrants came to be seen as taking employment from hard working Australians. Unlawful immigrants became a special target. Compassion burnout was widespread. In response, the idea of detaining unlawfully caught on with policy makers. It was a neat departmental answer to the problem of getting people to “comply” – the DIMIA code word for deportation. After all, those awaiting deportation, visa overstayers and the like, had for many years been detained before being sent home. Mandatory detention of all unlawfully became policy.

The 1990s saw vastly increased numbers of desperate people from oppressive situations arrive unlawfully at the borders of Western nations. Under the world’s humanitarian conventions, there is nothing illegal about people fleeing oppression and claiming asylum at another country’s borders. Most obtain their passages with the help of people smugglers who are prepared to grow rich on the desperation of a fraction of the world’s persecuted and oppressed millions.

In the years 2000 and 2001, the numbers of unauthorised people arriving by boat on Australian shores peaked at 8312. At the same time, Britain was receiving around 70,000 unlawful arrivals each year and the Australian figures were small by comparison. However, the increase in numbers Down Under raised xenophobic feelings in many Australians. As the emotion of the debate in the media increased, it was reported that Immigration officials and even the Minister at the time, Philip Ruddock, believed that “whole villages” in the Middle East were planning to migrate to Australia unlawfully.

After the suicide attacks by fundamentalist Islamic terrorists on New York and Washington DC in September 2001, the vastly increased number of unauthorised arrivals in Australia, mostly from the Middle East through Indonesia, were seen as potential security threats. In no time, ministers of the government were implying that refugees in leaky boats were a direct threat to national security. It wasn’t much of a jump from that to thinking they

were potential terrorists. And this in spite of the fact that, after ASIO checks following the 2001 election, the head of ASIO, Dennis Richardson, went on record stating that no unlawful arriving in Australia had ever been found to be a threat to national security.

The DIMIA has long seen itself as a front line in the task of keeping Australia “safe”. The name of the section within the DIMIA that handles management of unlawfully arriving and their applications for visas is known as Onshore Protection. In recent years the DIMIA has taken on the role of a major player in national security, approaching the assessment of unlawfully arriving and asylum seekers as if cracking down on international crime, the attitudes of its officers often laced with suspicion and prejudice, as well as displaying an increasing confidence that they can act with impunity against unlawfully arriving. Coupled with this has been ongoing departmental inefficiencies and poor work practices of not especially well educated time serving bureaucrats given extraordinary powers to decide life and death issues for unfortunate people. These weaknesses of process have often extended to members of the Refugee Review Tribunal. Such is the problematic DIMIA culture which Immigration Minister Amanda Vanstone has admitted to.

ONSHORE PROTECTION – THE PLAYERS

Individuals who come unlawfully to Australia, are invariably frightened and traumatised both by the lives they have left behind and by the disorientation they experience in coming to such a foreign place. Many do not speak English and many translators are not able to convey exactly what individuals mean. Dialects can vary widely and cultural gaps abound. Mistakes of translation go down on a file as fact and are not easy to correct.

A Sudanese man was assumed to have told a Refugee Review Tribunal member, through an interpreter, that his torturers had pulled off his toe. The RRT member challenged this as nonsense but refused to take a look at the man’s foot. Later when the man was told what had happened, he became upset. He had said to the translator that his “toenail” had been torn off, not his toe. The translator had it wrong. He showed his foot as evidence. By then it was too late. The RRT member had refused him a visa on the grounds that he was not credible.

On arrival in Australia, in a state of fear and disorientation, suffering cultural shock and even limited language communication, unlawfully arriving are subjected to interviews to gauge their credibility. With the culture of the DIMIA as it is, these

interviews more often than not are designed to trick and confuse the interviewee since it is believed by the DIMIA that most people who are unlawful are not truthful. Not surprisingly, many are refused.

The next step is to appeal before the Refugee Review Tribunal where the grilling continues. On one occasion, an RRT member assessing the credibility of a man who had converted to Protestantism from Islam, and who spoke only through a Hindi translator, asked him to explain the meaning of “transubstantiation”. This in spite of the man not even being a Christian in the Catholic church. There was no word in Hindi for “transubstantiation”. Moreover, one might well ask if any average, twenty-first century Australian Christian, of any denomination, could explain the meaning of transubstantiation? Hardly.

At the RRT, around 90 per cent of unlawfully arriving are refused. The failed decisions make sad reading. Again and again, serious evidence is presented only for RRT members to rationalise why such evidence should be discounted. Ignorant interpretations of country practice are common. One RRT member was so notorious for her low “set-aside” rate (allowing a visa) that she was eventually removed. She managed only six “set-asides” out of 562 that came before her in five years. Her particular harshness was evident in cases of the Burmese men who came before her – all with political backgrounds in Burma. Burma isn’t all that bad would be the member’s rationalisation for rejecting their claims.

After losing with the RRT, the unsuccessful applicant can appeal in the courts where a finding of an error of law is possible but unlikely. New evidence cannot be introduced at this point. To have any chance of new evidence being considered, an applicant must withdraw from all court action and make an application direct to the minister for ministerial intervention – this can happen under sections 48B or 417 of the Migration Act.

These applications do not actually go to the minister herself but are handed back to the DIMIA by ministerial staff where the original case officers are asked to evaluate the new evidence. For most applicants, these DIMIA officers are reluctant to overturn their own negative decisions. Routinely, they advise the minister accordingly, in abbreviated dot points. In this way, large files of important and painstakingly accrued evidence are left not read as closely as they deserve. Not surprisingly, most of the attempts to gain ministerial intervention will result in the minister accepting the departmental advice and deciding not to intervene.

The ignorance is not on any one side; in spite of the many resources of the DIMIA it is not unusual to

discover in case files that country research is lacking and that case officers making assessments often impose their Western (even suburban Australian) values on interpretations made of behaviour in vastly different cultural settings. Some RRT members even rely on material to be found in *Lonely Planet* tourist guide books when trying to assess conditions for locals in remote villages and towns in Africa and the like, the impressions of middle class Western tourists apparently sufficient to reliably inform the Tribunal of complex local ethnic and cultural divides. On such imperfect research hang the lives of many seeking protection visas.

And yet, the statistics show that after years of struggle most genuine asylum seekers do succeed in gaining some kind of protection visas. Even most on Temporary Protection Visas eventually make it. Figures indicate that while a large majority of TPVs do not succeed with their DIMIA interviews, more than 90 per cent have been given visas in the past year after appeals to the RRT. But at what price for both for the taxpayer and the asylum seeker?

For the asylum seeker, it most often involves years of struggle with stubborn bureaucrats who at times behave like mindless zealots in their resistance to the facts of a person's identity. Many refugees have faced years in detention at a cost to the detainee of \$127 per day (plus GST) – the bills are sent on release, sometimes for tens of thousands of dollars. People being allowed eventually to stay in Australia thus start their lives with the added disadvantage of not only having to begin again from nothing but to do this with a massive debt to pay off before they even start to save for life's essentials.

Over nearly a decade, the Australian taxpayer has kept the policy of mandatory detention in place at a cost (conservative estimate) of some \$700 per day per detainee. Meanwhile, detention has caused serious mental illness for so many detainees. As immigration barrister Claire O'Connor has said, detention is toxic; it makes people sick. Being successful only after years of distress means that the true cost of the policy is still being reckoned. Medical clinics and hospitals putting together broken individuals released into the community on protection visas will be left to estimate the final cost.

The case studies of those who have come through the DIMIA system and mandatory detention are piling up in archives. Begin sifting through just a handful and it's not hard to realise why the Coalition MPs had a strong case for reform of the "culture" in the DIMIA. Try the following.

CASE A - VICTOR

Victor*, a Nigerian, arrived in Australia on a two week visa and was stopped by immigration officials at Sydney airport. Under questioning, he revealed that he was in fear of his life and could not return to Nigeria. From the time he was detected as an unlawful, Victor's story remained consistent. He had been a security officer for the Adoration Ministry in Enugu State, an interdenominational group run by a Catholic priest believed to be a healer who could work miracles. The priest was also a stern critic of the Muslim state governor. Victor had witnessed an incident at a vigil prayer meeting in 2002, widely reported and embarrassing to the government. The Catholic Church maintained that vigilantes sent by the governor had caused a stampede leading to the deaths of fourteen people. As a witness to the incident, and having had his ID badge, complete with home address, taken by the vigilantes, Victor was eventually threatened by men seeking to kill him. He fled Nigeria, his people smuggler determining that he would come to Australia.

After two years in detention in Sydney, having lost his case both with the DIMIA and at the RRT and having failed to have his appeal to the Federal Court overturn the RRT decision because new evidence could not be introduced, Victor was granted what is known as a 48B, by ministerial intervention. This allowed him a fresh interview with the DIMIA and a chance to prove his genuine need for protection owing to the fact that new evidence had been presented to support his story. In fact, Victor had produced substantial and significant new evidence eighteen months earlier in an application for ministerial intervention but, as is common with the DIMIA, this evidence had been sent back to Victor's original case officer who refused to properly consider it as this would mean overturning her original and erroneous decision.

At his fresh interview, after two years in detention, it might have been expected that the new case officer would be seeking to hear the true story of Victor's need for protection. This did not happen. The interviewer avoided any serious discussion of the facts of Victor's case and instead conducted a short lesson in Western Catholic theology.

Victor was asked to describe the Adoration Movement. He said it was interdenominational and that, besides Catholics, there were also Anglicans and Pentecostals who attended. In the official documents provided by Victor's lawyer, the Movement was also described as interdenominational. The interviewer did not appear to have read these documents and asked Victor, who is Anglican, if he

knew what the doctrine of Perpetual Adoration is in the Catholic Church. Victor was not sure. The DIMIA interviewer was clearly trying to trick Victor and demonstrate he was not truthful. This after documentary evidence, available to the interviewer, had demonstrated all that Victor had been telling the DIMIA over two years was indeed truthful.

Victor said that the adoration of the sacrament was done aside from the main vigil gathering. The interviewer ignored this answer and began explaining the Catholic doctrine of the adoration of the blessed sacrament. Protestants, such as Lutherans, would not be at such a ceremony, said the interviewer who seemed indifferent to the fact that Victor had never mentioned Lutherans, only Anglicans and Pentecostals. And so the interview continued, in similar fashion, with the officer picking over minor details and ignoring the full story.

In making his assessment of Victor's need for protection from this interview, the DIMIA case officer demonstrated not only ignorance of the situation Victor was seeking protection from, but also an inability to examine impartial documents before him. This case officer, not surprisingly, has a record of rejecting almost all applicants he interviews.

CASE B - ABDUL

As the numbers of unfortunals arriving in Australia from Afghanistan increased, the DIMIA began to suspect that among them were many who were in fact Pakistani. Years of war and oppression in Afghanistan had made it common for Afghans who lived within reach of the border to spend time in Pakistan until it was safe to return home. Others, like the Afghani Hazaras faced persecution at all times. Establishing if an unfortun who came to Australia from Pakistan and claimed to be Afghani was in fact a citizen of Pakistan has been an obsession with DIMIA case officers over the past decade.

Some of the saddest cases to be found in Baxter Detention Centre, in 2005, were men who had been in detention many years because the DIMIA would not accept that they were Afghani and who the DIMIA had asserted, again and again, were in fact Pakistanis. Tragically, in the past year, the DIMIA has begun to accept that these applicants are in fact Afghans, but now has asked them to return to Afghanistan under an agreement struck with the new Afghan government.

Abdul is one of these men. In mid 2005, Abdul had spent four and a half years in detention, having arrived in Australia on New Year's Day 2001. He had been detained at Port Hedland and Woomera before being moved to Baxter. In spite of having come from

an Hazara region of Afghanistan and from an area adjoining one still today suffering from Taliban insurgency, Abdul could not convince the DIMIA of his true background over four years.

In that time, Abdul's file had accumulated many documents. He had been assessed by psychologists and had made contact with refugee activist groups owing to his eventual ability to read and write fluent English. He was noted to be an amicable person, easy to engage and easy to get along with. But, by 2005, Abdul was showing acute signs of the distress that comes with long term detention. An advocate went through his file to establish what had happened to leave Abdul so long in detention. What she found was disturbing. His file was full of departmental errors, documents relating to other detainees had become part of his file, some describing behaviour Abdul could never be accused of, others just plainly in the wrong place.

The advocate also discovered, that Abdul's documents were littered with what she described as "an enormous amount of evidence relating to the projection of 'supposed Pakistani nationality' onto this applicant from the time of his arrival in 2001 right through to his (so-called) re-examination in 2004". In other words, the persistent perception on the part of DIMIA case officers that Abdul was in fact Pakistani had coloured all investigations into his identity from day one. At various times in the documents, DIMIA officers had also wrongly written his supposed identity as "Pakghani" or "Paskistani" not encouraging confidence in the expertise of the people passing judgement on Abdul's case. Having made this judgement, Abdul had never had his claims against Afghanistan heard. In four years, his need for protection was never properly assessed.

Very early in Abdul's case, he became the victim of anonymous "dob-ins". It is a practice, at the DIMIA, to allow information against an applicant (asylum seeker) to become evidence even without any record as to who might have given the information. In some cases DIMIA has no idea of the informant. It could simply be a mobile phone message with a note taken by the person who answered the call. It's as unreliable as that. Misinformation, malicious untruths, mischief making and petty allegations, anecdotal misunderstandings and hearsay, all this can become part of the "facts" which the DIMIA case officers will use to "prove" an asylum seeker is not telling the truth. There is no way for the applicant to know who has given the information, or if they are credible or not. The so-called information can also be withheld from the applicants and their lawyers or advocates. Many languish in detention for years

trying to disprove secret allegations, in other words to disprove the unknown.

As Abdul's file shows, an unknown source contacted DIMIA in January 2001 to assert he was in fact a Pakistani. In 2003, an email from a DIMIA officer suggested he was not Afghani based on the evidence of one Afghan detainee who claimed ten of the men at Port Hedland detention centre who said they were Afghans were in fact Pakistani. None of this was evidence of a genuine kind but it was used in Abdul's file to regard Abdul as not genuine.

Following the fixed view that Abdul was a Pakistani, over three years his file filled up with emails from DIMIA officers exchanging ideas on what strategies they might use to put pressure on Abdul to make him "comply" at the same time as arguing that he had not produced any "new evidence" to convince them he was not Pakistani. By January 2003, an officer was emailing a colleague that it might be time to confront people like Abdul with the "adverse information we hold on them [dob-ins]" and that it might be time to "be a little more aggressive in doing this". The tone of the email is a "them and us" one and leaves no doubt officers regard detainees like Abdul as frauds deserving punishment. But, through the years as Abdul languished in detention, DIMIA could not find any conclusive evidence that Abdul, and others like him, were really Pakistani. They could not even get Pakistan to arrange travel documents so Abdul would have to "comply".

Then, finally, in 2005 what should have been done four years before was done. Delegations from Pakistan and Afghanistan arrived in Australia to assess all detainees who claimed to be Afghans. Abdul was found by the Pakistani delegation not to be from Pakistan; he was found by the Afghan delegation to be Hazara and indeed from Afghanistan. In June 2005, Kabul began processing Abdul's documentation. By then, however, Abdul had been told he should return to Afghanistan under a new agreement with the Australian government.

CASE C – ETHNIC ALBANIANS BUT SERB CITIZENS

A husband and wife, Serbian citizens and ethnic Albanians, arrived in Australia in late 2000. They had escaped from Serbia at the height of armed conflict in 1999 and found refuge in a UNHCR refugee camp in Albania. When their lives were threatened in Albania, they assumed false Albanian names and passports, for which they gave ID photos and fingerprints, and fled to Australia. Once in Australia they assumed their true names and identities and were given protection visas.

After three years the husband and wife were happily settled in Australia, the wife a much loved stage artist and the husband employed as a stone mason. However, at this point officers of the state branch of the DIMIA where the couple lived reminded them of their precarious status in Australia. Acting with the authority invested in DIMIA's state office functionaries, the operational bureaucrats overseeing the case changed the couple's status to visas that did not permit them to work. Such a practice is routine and many TPVs have suffered in this way. The wife continued to appear on stage for no payment only to be told by local officers of the DIMIA that she must not work in any way, even as a volunteer, as this might mean she was taking payment in kind. This is common in such cases. Thus, the woman lost her chance not only to please her many fans, but also to continue in her much loved profession. And the local opera company lost a talented artist.

The couple were now forced to rely for their existence on the charity of Australian taxpayers who continued to support them. Two years passed. In 2004, the DIMIA began to pressure the couple to make arrangements to leave Australia, to return to Serbia. To speed up their removal, the local DIMIA issued them with identity documents under their Serbian names. However, return to Serbia proved impossible. Under the new regime, ethnic Albanians are not allowed to go back to Serbia. The couple were stateless.

But, at this point, the local DIMIA moved ground. Realising the couple could not return to Serbia, the DIMIA pronounced that the couple were not Serbian at all. The DIMIA now began to claim that they were the identities they had assumed on the false Albanian passports they had used to enter Australia. The DIMIA added that there were fingerprints and photos to "prove" this. [Yes, but only because the couple had provided fingerprints and photos to gain their false passports – so this proved nothing] Meanwhile the many documents on the couple's files proving they were from Serbia (birth certificates with photos, driver's licences, tertiary enrolment) as well as documents from their time in a refugee camp in Albania as refugee Serbs were ignored by the local DIMIA. After this, the couple lived on weekly protection visas which meant they had to fill out the same papers every Friday at the DIMIA in order to remain lawful.

One Friday, in October 2004, as the couple presented to sign their bridging visa papers at the DIMIA, the usual officer was not at the desk to take their forms. They were advised to return on Monday morning. Unknown to them, the fact that they had reported for their visas to the DIMIA was not entered on the

computer as it should have been to ensure their continued “lawful” status. The next morning they were surprised by a police raid on their house. They were told they were “unlawful” as they had not renewed their weekly visas the day before. Within hours, the couple was taken to Baxter Detention Centre.

Seven months later they were still in detention, in spite of a Migration Review Tribunal decision in November 2004 which ordered their release. The DIMIA had simply appealed that decision which meant the couple must remain in detention pending the outcome of the appeal. And they did. By mid 2005, the wife was five months pregnant and both were on medication for severe depression. Friends visiting Baxter could not believe the mental and physical deterioration in the couple while they struggled to get the truth of their case properly investigated, not knowing how long they would be detained or if, suddenly, they might be deported to Albania on false documents. In July 2005, the wife was diagnosed with severe mental illness and transferred to an Adelaide psychiatric hospital.

CASE D - THE SADDEST LEGACY, KAMIL

Since mandatory detention was introduced in Australia, many asylum seekers have been deported, returning to miserable lives at best, persecution, even death. David Corlett's *Following Them Home – The Fate of the Returned Asylum Seekers* (Black Inc Agenda, 2005) provides an excellent and tragically engaging tracking of various people who have been removed from Australia after failing to convince the DIMIA of their credibility.

One deported Australian detainee, however, remains unrecorded in any published volume. His case is a particularly tragic one and illustrates much that remains of the harshness and denial of Australia's onshore protection industry.

Kamil spent more than seven years in Australia's mandatory detention centres. Even longer than Peter Quasim. His case should have been a clear cut one of protection as he had fled the Sudan in 1997, in danger of his life, after criticising the newly imposed Sharia law there and refusing to take part in the massacres of people in the south of Sudan. His uncle, who had successfully claimed asylum after trying to organise a coup in Sudan opposing Sharia law, had settled permanently in Australia. Kamil expected the DIMIA would see his case in the same light. It didn't. A botched first attempt to deport him left scars on his leg. An injection to subdue him had been deflected, piercing the seat, and then, contaminated, reinjected causing infection.

By 2005, all attempts to get consideration for Kamil had fallen on deaf ears at the DIMIA and with the minister. Some of the advocacy had been quite significant. Kamil had by now been in detention well over seven years, his case lost in the DIMIA files, more or less labelled not willing to co-operate. Moreover, he had for some time gone in and out of serious depression. After a strict observance of Ramadan, in 2004, he proclaimed he was strong and ready for anything, but many said Kamil had simply “lost it”. Detention had destroyed a healthy and handsome young man.

At 11.30pm, 11 January 2005, Kamil was surrounded by five guards wearing full riot gear at the Villawood detention centre. They took him to his room where they remained with him for an hour. When they all emerged, Kamil was taken to a holding room. Inmates who witnessed the guards moving Kamil claimed he appeared to be drugged. From Villawood, Kamil was taken to an Arab Emirates flight, some nine people party to his custody on board as the flight made its way to Dubai. Kamil's mouth was taped and his hands and feet were bound. At Dubai, he was sedated again and transported by a local airline, accompanied by five guards, to Khartoum.

Here Kamil was handed over to Interpol by the Australian guards from the DIMIA and subsequently to the Interior Ministry of Sudan. His family, still reasonably well off by Sudan standards, managed to persuade authorities to keep him under house arrest instead of putting him in prison where he might well have died. In the following weeks, he was taken away frequently and subjected to intense interrogation. Just as he was due to appear before a military tribunal and charged with desertion, a charge for which he would serve 20 years in prison, Kamil managed to escape Sudan with family help for a second time. He is now on the run internationally, still in need of protection and seriously affected mentally by his years of incarceration.

In Australia there are many who grieve the loss of Kamil. In so many ways, his story is an epitaph to condemn the management of Australia's mandatory detention policy over more than a decade.

ENDNOTE

* Names of the individuals in these case studies are fictitious. The case studies, however, are factual.

Anne Henderson is editor of The Sydney Papers



JOHN CURTIN - ANOTHER VIEW

Stephen Mills

***Curtin's Gift - Reinterpreting Australia's
Greatest Prime Minister***
John Edwards, (Allen & Unwin, 2005)

John Edwards has subtitled his compact, compelling, story of John Curtin: "Reinterpreting Australia's Greatest Prime Minister". It's a neat way of reasserting the iconic status of his subject, while also suggesting that the legend needs reappraisal. But does it? Does John Curtin need reinterpretation?

It is not as if Curtin's story has been overlooked. Only six years ago Curtin was the subject of a full-length biography by David Day (*Curtin, A life*); two years ago the same author subjected Curtin's war time decision making to exhaustive scrutiny (*The Politics of War*). Curtin's speeches and writings (*Friendship is a Sheltering Tree: John Curtin's letters 1907 to 1945*, Black, 1995) and transcripts of his wartime press briefings (*Backroom Briefings: John Curtin's War*, Lloyd & Hall, 1997) have been unearthed and published. Lloyd Ross wrote a pioneering eyewitness biography, and Sydney James Butlin and Carl Boris Schedvin covered the war economy. And then there are the official war histories and the numerous Canberra memoirs.

This does not count the contributions by the politicians themselves, especially on the Labor side. As John Faulkner said of the Labor Party while launching Bernard Lagan's biography of Mark Latham, "Our history is our weapon of choice in battles against foes without and within the Party."

Curtin has always been, and remains, a particularly sharp sword. Bob Hawke as Prime Minister in the 1980s claimed him as his own; Paul Keating as challenger tried to wrest him away; Mark Latham cited Curtin parallels to urge the troops home from Iraq before Christmas 2004. More recently, and more surprisingly, the sword has been gripped by the coalition, with Alexander Downer painting Curtin and Labor, then and since, as a collection of weak-kneed isolationists.

Not bad for less than four years in office. Certainly a more intense and complex focus than Robert Menzies has received. The story seems complete:

the fervent anti-conscriptionist, the socialist union man, the morose drunk, the marginal backbencher who went on to national leadership at the time of unprecedented military danger for Australia, who brought the diggers home and who, with victory in sight, died with his boots on.

Yet Edwards insists that we have not had enough about the Curtin Prime Ministership. More precisely, that we have had too much on Curtin's military story - in particular, his forthright but risky insistence, against the advice of both Winston Churchill and F. D. Roosevelt, on the recall of the 7th division from North Africa to the Pacific theatre - and not nearly enough on what Curtin did at home. In Edwards' mind, Curtin's real claim to greatness as prime minister more truly lies on his management of economic rather than military affairs. Edwards summarises his case for a reinterpretation clearly:

My argument is that the key to understanding Curtin and his place in Australian history is that he was a politician gifted with insight into the significance of events, that he came to power just as Australia's structure and its relationship with the rest of the world were ready to change, and that he grasped the authority to move the country in the direction he wanted to go. He understood that the circumstances of war offered him a chance to change the way Australia worked. Though remembered now for bringing the troops home, his primary intellectual interest was economic policy rather than defence policy and the biggest influence on his thinking was not Australia's experience of war against Japan in the 1940s but its experience of the Great Depression in the 1930s. His enduring achievement was not saving Australia from Japan but in creating modern, post-war Australia. (pp11-12)

This reinterpretation is no mere rebalancing act. Edwards insists that that we have overlooked the greater significance of Curtin's peacetime achievement, and he elevates Curtin's creation of a "modern post-war Australia" - the "gift" of the title - to a high plane of significance, offering this comparison with Paul Kelly's thesis on Australian political history:

If there was, as Paul Kelly argues, an Australian Settlement at Federation that included tariff protection, White Australia and wage arbitration, there was a quite new construction introduced 40 years later by the Curtin government. It was based on Commonwealth control over monetary

policy, Commonwealth control over fiscal policy and Australian engagement in a rules-based system of global trade and finance - all in pursuit of a goal of full employment. (p158)

Edwards' subtitle explicitly limits his reinterpretation to the period Curtin spent as Prime Minister. But to substantiate his claim to the greatness of prime minister Curtin, Edwards traces Curtin's career from the period of the previous Labor Government, headed by the hapless Jim Scullin, whose election victory in 1929 coincided with the onset of the Depression. With an economy going backwards, tax revenues falling, and interest repayments on foreign debt soaring, Scullin was desperate for credit. Standing in his path was Sir Robert Gibson, chairman of the Commonwealth Bank. It makes for astonishing reading today, in our era of all-powerful prime ministers, to read of the meeting at which Gibson told the newly-elected Scullin and his ministers "the Bank was entirely independent" and would accept neither advice nor requests from them:

He (Gibson) would give Scullin and (Treasurer) Theodore another five weeks to show how spending would be cut to reduce the growing government deficit. Unless he was satisfied, the bank would not finance the Commonwealth beyond the end of November.

The harsh prescriptions of the Premiers Plan followed – spending cuts, balanced budgets and bond repayments - fuelling further deflation, further unemployment and declining tax revenues. Between the insurgency of Jack Lang and the defection of Joe Lyons, the Labor Party shattered and the Scullin Government was thrown out in 1931.

Through this time Curtin, passed over for a ministry, was a disillusioned, heavy-drinking backbencher from a marginal seat (he was to lose Fremantle in the 1931 rout); David Day quotes an observer who described Curtin as "morose and lonely". An unlikely recipe for a visionary, but it is in these gloomy circumstances that Edwards locates the spark of Curtin's future leadership. In a number of articles and speeches, Curtin distanced himself from both the conservatives and his own colleagues by outlining an effective and farsighted response to the Depression crisis. Built around government deficit budgeting, it was proto-Keynesian at a time when John Maynard Keynes himself was still a work in progress. (Keynes' *General Theory* was not published until 1936.) Further, Curtin supplemented this prescription with a floating exchange rate and expansion of the money supply.

The missing, essential ingredient from Curtin's recipe was control over the levers of monetary and

fiscal policy – the very tools which Gibson denied the Scullin Government. The height of the irony, as Curtin the frustrated reformer perceived it, was that in the event of a war, bankers would immediately extend credit to finance the necessary government spending. This they had done immediately upon the outbreak of the First World War, but this they refused in the midst of the Depression. "Twelve years later," Edwards observes, "Curtin would connect the two points by using wartime powers to transform Australia's economic framework – especially in respect of banking."

Ten days after being sworn in as PM, Curtin and Treasurer Ben Chifley met with Sir Claude Reading – successor to Gibson – and on this occasion, it was clear the power relationship had changed. "The Government intends control of the banking system," Reading reported to his colleagues; he had not succeeded in having the government's policy "changed in any major respect". Commonwealth control of income tax, adoption of full employment and active participation in the creation of the post-war global financial architecture all followed – all this while a war was being fought and won.

Edwards, whose day job is chief economist of a major trading bank, has the skills to bring the economic debate of 75 years ago to vivid life and contemporary relevance. Other economists who have ventured into this territory – H C Coombs and Butlin and Schedvin – make for dry reading to say the least.

One of the best things about Edwards' book is, as he modestly puts it, that he can translate Curtin's economic argument into contemporary terminology. This is very important. Today we are deluged by data and commentary about every aspect of the national and global economy. In the 1930s there simply was not the range of authoritative statistics or the agreed vocabulary to interpret them. Moreover, what passed for economic debate in the Labor Party was a confused clash of Marxists, Fabians, gold standard purists, "funny money" credit theorists and others who by today's standards would be written off as crackpots. (One of Curtin's closest friends and a life-long mentor was Frank Anstey, whose obsession with banks and the so-called "money power" led him to write the anti-Semitic tract *The Kingdom of Shylock*; Curtin as editor of the *Westralian Worker* serialised it.)

Curtin himself was widely-read but entirely self-taught, and his economic vocabulary could be obscure by today's standards. Though he was regarded by the Press Gallery as a compelling speaker, one suspects the journalists were more attracted to the rhetoric than to the economic analysis. Maybe the historians too. At any rate, it is surely significant that the speech that Edwards has

resurrected as Curtin's "most penetrating" and far sighted economic analysis – his parliamentary speech of November 1930 – has been largely overlooked by previous writers. On this score, if no other, the reinterpretation is necessary, and brings with it fresh and important insights into Curtin's prime ministership.

But try as he might, Edwards still just can't get us to shift our national focus from the military Curtin.

This became apparent as recently as May this year, with Alexander Downer delivering a speech in honour of Sir Earle Page that was essentially devoted to attacking Curtin's policy of "resolute appeasement and isolation" as Opposition Leader in the late 1930s. Downer's real agenda, obviously and understandably, is to shore up support for the government's current policy in Iraq. I have no problem with that, or with trying to draw on historical argument to prove a point today. But it seems an odd way to go about it.

Page, of course, was the Country Party's long-term leader who served as deputy in the Bruce Nationalist government and the Lyons UAP government. When Lyons died, Page served for 20 days as caretaker prime minister – but when Menzies was selected as the new UAP leader Page delivered one of the all-time great serves, denouncing Menzies as a coward who had failed to enlist in WW1 and of hastening Lyons' death through disloyalty. Needless to add, Menzies refused to have Page in his Cabinet and the Country Party no longer wanted him as leader, so Page started WW2 on the backbench.

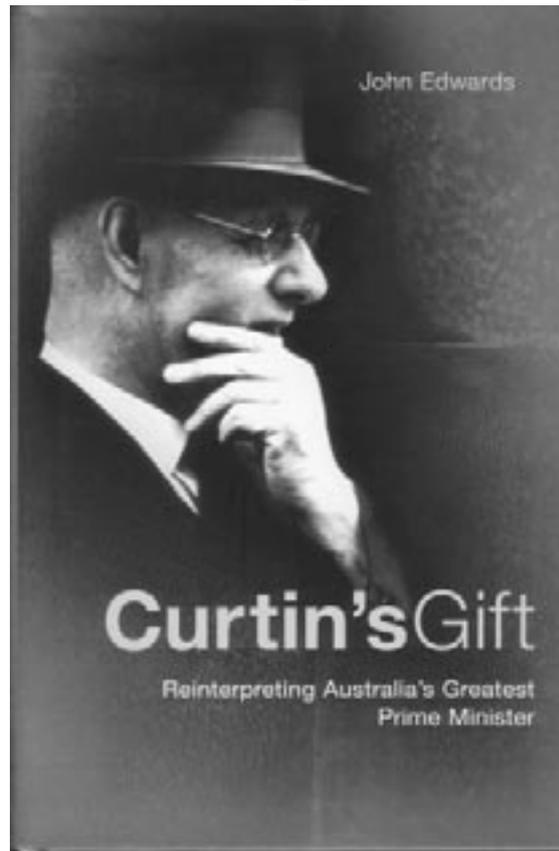
With that kind of colour and movement among the conservatives, it is perhaps not surprising that Downer would seek to draw attention to Labor of the same era. To be sure, there were anti-conscriptionists, isolationists, pacifists and socialists in the Labor Party of the 1930s not to mention the occasional appeaser; Labor did oppose the dispatch of the Second AIF (as Paul Kelly pointed out in the *Weekend Australian*, 18-19 June).

Curtin had to work hard to hold it all together so as to position Labor to take power. He did this successfully on both counts. But it does not follow, as Downer argues, that whatever positions Curtin had to adopt as Opposition Leader, to balance those competing forces within Labor, were more genuinely "characteristic" of Labor's approach to international politics than what he did as prime minister. Governments need to govern, and can be judged accordingly. It is surely an odd way to celebrate a conservative government, which was itself divided and dilatory both in its leadership and strategic response, by blaming Labor for refusing to enter a government of national unity.

The humiliating failure of the Scullin Government – it can scarcely be said to have governed at all – stayed like a brand on Curtin. As Opposition Leader it became his priority to re-unite the party, and as prime minister he was determined to ensure his government was not stymied and routed as Scullin's had been. Edwards has done well to revive this Curtin. Fifty years later, when Prime Minister Hawke became Australia's second longest serving PM, he told his staff he had been "haunted" by the lost

opportunity of the Whitlam Government and determined to ensure that necessary policy reform did not automatically compromise electoral success and political continuity. Of all the many parallels between these two great Labor reform Prime Ministers – sandgropers who moved east, unionists who were economically literate, boozers who went on the wagon, reformers supported by strong treasurers who succeeded them in the Lodge and went on to suffer hard and enduring electoral defeat – this is in my view the most telling. Impressively – but given the character and achievement of the man, not surprisingly – the reinterpretation of Curtin continues into the twenty-first century.

Stephen Mills is the author of The Hawke Years (Viking 1993)



AN “A” FOR ALIENATION

PETER CONRAD’S BOYER LECTURES

According to ABC Radio National’s website, The Boyer Lectures involve “great minds examining issues and values”. The annual series, which began in 1959, is the only occasion on which the ABC chairman and the ABC Board make a decision about programming. Each year the ABC Board chooses an Australian to give six lectures on major social, scientific or cultural issues. Recent lecturers include Peter Conrad (2004), Owen Harries (2003), Geoffrey Blainey (2001), Murray Gleeson (2000) and Inga Clendinnen (1999). There was no Boyer Lecture in 2002 due to the illness of the proposed lecturer. The Boyer Lectures are subsequently published in book form. Peter Conrad is the first non-resident Australian to give the Boyer Lectures since Shirley Hazzard in 1984.

In December 2004 ABC Books published Peter Conrad’s 2004 Boyer Lectures under the title *Tales of Two Hemispheres*. The author was born in Hobart in February 1948 and educated at the University of Tasmania. In 1968 he went to Oxford on a Rhodes Scholarship and in 1970 was made a Fellow of All Souls College. Since 1973 Conrad has taught English literature at Christ Church, Oxford. He has written widely on such areas as literature, arts, music, media, history and film and has published a novel. Conrad first wrote about Australia in his autobiographical *Down Under: Revisiting Tasmania* (1988) which coincided with Australia’s bicentenary. In 2003 his book *At Home in Australia* was published – the author’s words accompanied some 200 photos from the National Gallery of Australia’s collection.

AN UNHAPPY CHILDHOOD

Peter Conrad is highly articulate and immensely well read. Since moving from Australia to Britain, he has established himself as an influential and productive critic on both sides of the Atlantic (he has homes in London, Lisbon and New York). The problem is that,

like quite a few Australians who headed for Britain in the decades after the Second World War, Conrad has bad memories of Australia – which have affected how he views the nation. Writing in *Granta* (Number 70) in 2000, he revealed an unhappy youth as the only child of a non-intellectual father and mother. This, in time, led to a “ruthless withdrawal of affection from my parents, and from the country to which they...had relegated me”. During what Conrad describes as his “colonial childhood”, he became “alienated...from Australia”. You can say that again.

Peter Conrad’s alienated childhood is also mentioned in his autobiographical *Down Home: Revisiting Tasmania* and *At Home in Australia*. He grew up in Glenorchy, then an essentially working class suburb of Hobart. The Conrads were diligent parents – he worked a trade as a painter to provide for the family, she (a former nurse) was dutiful in maintaining the family home; together they improved their house and built a garden of which they were immensely proud. But young Peter resented, and was embarrassed, by his mother and father. In *Down Home* Conrad described Hobart residents as “victims of a twofold alienation” – in that they were both Australians and Tasmanians. This is a classic case of projection – Peter Conrad suffered from alienation but this was not true of the overwhelming majority of Tasmanians and other Australians. In any event, in view of Mr and Mrs Conrad’s modest means, it is difficult to see how they could have brought up their only child in any other place.

What was Peter Conrad’s problem? According to his *Granta* essay, Australia in the 1950s and 1960s was “vacant, vacuous” and “boringly British” and Australians lived “an unsynchronised, woefully belated life”. So much so that the young only child felt “isolated, needy and inadequate”. He now concedes that perhaps his “own estrangement was a symptom of a more general, abiding sense of displacement” and asks the rhetorical question: “How could we not have grown up with a low opinion of ourselves?”

But was Hobart really so bad when Conrad attended the University of Tasmania in the mid 1960s? After all, the academic staff in the English Department (where Conrad studied) included James McAuley and Gwen Harwood – both of whom produced a fine body of criticism and poetry in the same society as Conrad found so alienating – and neither of whom regarded themselves as British. Clearly, Conrad projected what he describes as the “low opinion” he had of himself on to his family, Tasmania and Australia at large.

The evidence from Peter Conrad’s work suggests that he had an unfortunate childhood. Of scholarly interests, he avoided sport at school – and took

himself on long walks from Glenorchy to the Hobart CBD and back. Conrad has written about his father's health – he suffered from “gout, sciatica and indigestion” – and his mother's apparent neurosis. Yet there is no analyses of his own personal psychology and no discussion of his teenage and young-adult sexuality. Clearly Conrad found himself isolated within Tasmanian society – but it is not clear why. Certainly, he was not a retiring type. For example, at age 13 he played a role in the children's film *They Found a Cave*. There are not many shy teenagers who manage to land a part in a movie. So the evidence suggests that Conrad as a youth was much as he is now – confident and self-opinionated. So why was he so miserable and isolated in Tasmania?

LEAVING HOME – FOR SOME REASON OR OTHER

It is not precisely clear why Peter Conrad was so desperately keen to leave Hobart – as he puts it “without sorrow or regret”, having “impolitely slammed the door” as he departed. In his *Granta* essay he presented himself as a personally miserable youth, determined to leave his roots as soon as possible to take up an “entitlement to a place in an imaginary England” where he “had actually been living” ever since he “learned to read”. However, Conrad's earlier account of his leaving of Tasmania – as reported by Robert Dessaix in the edited collection *Speaking Their Minds* (ABC Books, 1998) – was significantly different:

When I left in 1968, I had a very good reason for going: I got a Rhodes Scholarship to go to Oxford and in the same year I got my call-up papers to go to Vietnam. Given the choice between Oxford and Vietnam, I went to Oxford, having been generously granted a two-year deferral from my military service. In fact, it was about eleven or twelve years before I came back...

So there you are. Or there you are. Did Conrad find his Rhodes Scholarship so appealing because it enabled him to escape the dark night of the Tasmanian soul? Or because it meant he could avoid conscription and possible military service in Vietnam? It depends on which Conrad you believe.

CONRAD'S ALIENATED FORM

When ABC chairman Donald McDonald and the ABC Board chose Peter Conrad to deliver the 2004 Boyer Lectures it was widely known that he was an alienated, leftist expatriate with a tendency to lecture-at-large to Australians. Or, rather, this should have been evident to anyone who had actually read his published work – as the following examples from

Peter Conrad's *Granta* essay titled “New New World” testify.

According to Peter Conrad, as told to *Granta* readers in 2000:

- **Conradism:** “Australia began as an imperial amenity, a tip for Britain's human refuse, and it remained a place of last resort, literally a terminus. During the 1950s, the country still officially classified its interior as a nullity, good for nothing except for rehearsing apocalypse.”

- **Fact.** Certainly the British established a penal settlement in the colony of New South Wales in 1788. Yet, from the early days of European settlement, a free society grew alongside the prison. Within a few years after 1788, Australia was much more than a prison. It is mere hyperbole to suggest that the country remained a “terminus” for many decades. Also, it is a gross exaggeration to claim that in the 1950s Australia “officially classified” its interior as “good for nothing”. Where is the (official) evidence to support such an assertion?

- **Conradism:** “Australian troops were always available to die in Britain's wars. At Gallipoli, they were used by imperial generals as cannon fodder, and lined up to be massacred. In the 1960s, still cheerfully belligerent, Australia volunteered to join a newer empire, and its army followed the Americans into Vietnam.”

- **Fact:** Successive Australian governments, conservative and social democrat alike, have regarded it as in the Australian national interest to support Australia's traditional allies – initially Britain and then the United States - at times of conflict. The understanding was that such support would ensure that Britain and the US would continue to assist Australian security by helping to secure sea-lanes and, later, air-lanes and would increase the likelihood that such traditional allies would assist Australia if the nation was threatened.

Also, it is pure mythology to maintain that members of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) were used by British generals as “cannon fodder” at Gallipoli. The most commonly cited example of the AIF-as-cannon-fodder thesis turns on the charge at The Nek on 7 August 1915. The fact is that it was Australian military commanders, Colonel John Antill (born in Picton in 1866) and General F.G. Hughes (born in Melbourne in 1857), who ordered this offensive – not British officers. This was made clear decades ago by C.E.W. Bean in the second volume of the *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918* titled *The Story of Anzac* which was first published in 1924.

- **Conradism:** “Anglo-Australia has always lived in fear of Asian immigration: hence the happy collusion with the Americans in Vietnam.”

- **Fact:** The White Australia Policy existed until 1966, when it was effectively dismantled by Harold Holt's Coalition Government. But it is pure mythology to link Australia's military support for the US in Vietnam (which commenced in the mid 1960s) with the White Australia Policy (which was junked in the mid 1960s). Moreover, it is not true to assert that Anglo-Australia has "always lived in fear of Asian immigration". In fact, Australia was the most generous recipient (on a per capita basis) of Indochinese refugees in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

- **Conradism:** In the middle of his *Granta* essay, Peter Conrad quoted from what he termed the "choral anthem" which ran during the credit titles at the end of the 1966 film *They're a Weird Mob* – which was produced and directed by the British film-maker Michael Powell (1905-1990) and based on John O'Grady's novel of the same name. O'Grady's book, written under the nom-de-plume Nino Culotta, was a send-up of contemporary Australia by an ironic Australian. The film was a put-down of Australia by a Brit. Yet Conrad saw fit to quote at length the film's theme song from, which he maintains, accurately depicted Australia's "rugged national creed" at the time:

**There are many manly things that must be done,
A man's gotta prove he's a man
Wear your shorts, bare your chest, get a tan, build a barbecue,
It's a man's country, sweetheart,
From the chain marks on its ankles right up to its short back and sides.**

Peter Conrad commented:

The Hitler Youth might have marched to such a tune. But, though it hurts me to admit it, this brutish manifesto does sum up the country's values in those cruder and more innocent days.

- **Fact:** This statement shows considerable evidence of alienation. It is gross hyperbole to compare Australia with Nazi Germany – in any decade.

CONRAD'S (CONFUSED) THESIS

The thesis of Conrad's *Granta* essay is that, some time after he moved to Britain, "Australia decolonised itself" and that "Australia has come to be envied by a world which once ignored its existence". Yet such a thesis was not evident in his 1988 book *Down Home*. Or in his contribution to the 1998 collection *Speaking Their Minds* – where he referred to the "the abiding insularity of Australia". Or in his 2003 publication *At Home In Australia*. Reviewing the last work in *The Age* (29 November 2003), Peter Craven wrote:

In *At Home in Australia*, the result is a curate's egg. The images are fine. There's Dupain's image of the sunbather, or the blokes in the baths and a girl with a bathing cap. There's Gregory Peck, photographed by the great Athol Shmith, looking even more like the paternal soul of America at a difficult time than he usually did. Here's Sydney stretched like a map or a fish in the silver of the surrounding ocean. All of that provides a rich portrait of an Australia largely remembered as a thing of the past, a family embarrassment dripping with fragile beauties, but then there is the commentary, which is half camp and half donnishly superior. It's a remarkable performance, if only we knew what ballet was being danced.

BACK HOME - TO LECTURE ABOUT KYLIE'S BOTTOM ETCETERA

Peter Conrad returned to Australia to engage in a round of publicity for the Boyer Lectures – which commenced on Sunday 14 November 2004. There were the familiar electronic media interviews and newspaper profiles.

First up, Conrad was interviewed by Kerry O'Brien on the ABC TV *7.30 Report* on 18 October 2004. O'Brien commenced with a soft question – namely why had Conrad titled one of his Boyer Lectures "Austerica". Here followed a spiel which indicated that Conrad was as alienated as ever. Let's go to the video-tape:

Kerry O'Brien: *Peter Conrad, you've titled one of your lectures, "Austerica". Why?*

Peter Conrad: *A nice, ugly word for a very ugly idea. I think this compound of Australia and America was something that worries me very much – that we spent such a lot of time unplugging ourselves from the nipple of the great mother, Britain, and we now seem likely to vanish up the bum of big brother. It's – all the way throughout history, we've had politicians telling us that we should ape the American model and go for the sort of economic development they had in the United States at the end of the 19th Century. And it conceals the real differences between the two countries and the need for Australia to be an independent country, to be its own sort of place, its own peculiar place. It's not at all like the United States, I don't think.*

So there you have it. The 2004 Boyer Lecturer maintains that Australia moved from being on "the nipple of the great mother" (Britain) to vanishing "up the bum of big brother" (the United States). When interviewed by Geraldine Doogue for the ABC *Sunday Profile* program (14 November 2004), Conrad

junked his bad language in favour of scrambled expression when discussing the US – as the transcript demonstrates.

Peter Conrad: *I love lots of individual Americans but kind of hate - hate?*

Geraldine Doogue: *You said it.*

Peter Conrad: *[I] dislike the idea of the United States spiritually and ideologically, because – I think, you know, I mean – a country which is so hepped up with this conviction of its own God-given priority. You know, everyone is told from the moment they become conscious that you've got to set your goals, go for your dreams, pursue happiness at 100 miles an hour across the landscape.*

In this instance Peter Conrad's expression (you know, I mean) was as jumbled as his thesis was hyperbolic.

Then it was on to the print media profiles. Here's how Peter Fray led his story in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* on 13 November 2004.

The academic Peter Conrad has been spying on his native land several times a week for years. He watches *Neighbours* on the BBC. "It tells you an enormous amount about the country", he says. "It's one of my most reliable sources of information about Australia." And not everything in Ramsay Street – or Australia – is to his liking. At the risk of sounding like a snob, he says: "Apart from the doctor, everyone in that street is in the working class and happy about being the working class. All the kids, they are working behind the counter in a coffee shop. It kind of depresses me that those people are not going to uni to do premed or to law school. Ambition is thought to be a bit uncool."

How about that? The 2004 Boyer Lecturer relied on the soapy *Neighbours* as one of his "most reliable sources of information" for his message to Australians about Australia.

Peter Conrad told Jennifer Byrne that he is a bit thin-skinned (*The Bulletin*, 9 November 2004). Clearly, he prefers criticising to being criticised. He sure has criticised Australian born stars Nicole Kidman and Kylie Minogue. As Conrad told Christopher Lawrence (*Limelight*, November 2004):

Kylie or [Nicole] Kidman are our post-national characters, because they have this mutant identity – a composite identity. What is Nicole Kidman? Sometimes she's a Russian mail-order bride, sometimes

she's a Stepford robot, a Bloomsbury novelist, a girl from the north-shore of Sydney – the last if she's being herself. But she's not *allowed* to be herself that much. She exists and is paid for being other people. And what is Kylie? She's just a bottom [emphasis in original].

Nicole Kidman is one of the most talented actors Australia has produced. Kylie Minogue is a hugely successful entertainer. Yet to Conrad, neither deserves to be taken seriously. And this from a commentator who admits to being thin-skinned to the criticisms of others. An unpleasant double standard, to be sure.

Interviewed by Matthew Westwood (*The Australian*, 12 November 2004), Conrad declared: "Australians seem determined to pick fights with expatriates. I'm not going to let anyone pick fights with me." It's just that Conrad himself enjoys picking fights with such female expatriates as Kidman and Minogue. He told Westwood that, like "all decent, sensible people" he would have voted for John Kerry in the 2004 presidential election campaign – implying that the tens of millions of Americans who voted for George W. Bush were neither decent or sensible. This says more about Conrad than it does about President Bush.

Oh, yes. Gerard Henderson also criticised the 2004 Boyer Lectures in his syndicated column on 16 November 2004. But more of that later.

PC'S TALES OF TWO HEMISPHERES

Then it was on to the real thing. The 2004 Boyer Lectures commenced on ABC Radio National on Sunday 14 November 2004 and concluded on Sunday 12 December 2004. Here are some highlights.

Lecture One: Antipodes

Re-reading Nevil Shute's novel *On the Beach*, PC discovers "the plaintive implication that no-one in Australia had ever been more than half alive". Really. Also, PC reflects:

It's good that Australia is no longer cast as the northern hemisphere's notion of hell. Still, we need to be wary about what kind of heaven we flatter ourselves that we live in. The figures Max Dupain photographed had exemplary classical physiques, like his "Sunbaker", but despite the homage to Greece, they also disturbingly resembled the eugenic statuary of Germany during the Third Reich. Do we inhabit a paradise of brainless, soulless, sun-tanned flesh?

Good question, eh?

PC refers to the fact that, in the 19th Century, some Brits “saw Australia as a sphincter”. Fancy that. PC adds: “Even if we weren’t treated as an unsightly anus, we were still referred to the globe’s hind quarters.” So, now you know.

Lecture Two: Austrailure

PC commences with what he calls an “almost unspeakable” joke. But he speaks it, nevertheless. It goes like this. Australia rhymes with failure. Get it? Well here is PC’s joke, in full:

Puns don’t work on the radio: you need to see the way a word is spelled in order to recognise that it’s being put to a dualistic use. But the pun I have in mind is inescapable, because it sums up the legacy of self-disbelief Australia had to cast off. It’s a joke, though it is also shocking, almost unspeakable. Ours is a country whose name can be rhymed with failure.

PC throws in another comparison between the Australia of a century ago and, wait for it, Nazi Germany. He also claims that, in years gone by Australians “were taught to despise our own landscape” and “there was no question of Australians being permitted to create art of their own”. PC’s evidence for these hyperbolic assertions? Answer – zero. Absolutely zip. Not even *Neighbours* is cited as a source of insight in this instance.

Lecture Three: Down Under

PC heads off with (yet) another generalisation – viz: “The Australia I grew up in during the 1950s was as white as starch, and about as stiff; everyone adhered to Anglo-Saxondom, even if their lineage was doubtful.” This overlooks the fact that in the 1950s and 1960s Australia was quite a diverse nation. Apart from the British – many Irish, Germans, Italians, Greeks, East Europeans, Maronite Lebanese and Turks had settled in Australia. “Everyone” (in PC’s term) was neither as “white as starch” nor Anglo-Saxon.

Lecture Four: Up Over

Yet another lecture: yet more generalisations. PC declares that: “At Ypres, as at Gallipoli, the Australian recruits were reduced to troglodytes, subterranean

gnomes; even in peacetime, England sentenced young Aussie travellers to the same fate by stowing them in cellars”. Both assertions are false – but does anyone care? Probably not. PC concludes that times have changed and that “by blowing their noses or by breaking wind, Australians can shake the foundations of those fabled northern cities”. Fancy that.

Lecture Five: Austerica

PC imagines himself in “the imaginary land of Austerica, which is an ugly word for a muddled idea: a conflation of Australia and America”. For an alienated leftist like PC, this – no doubt – is about as ugly as you can get. PC (i) refers to his “one-time subjection to a mythical, imperious America”, (ii) claims that “having failed to equal the United States, we begged to be allowed to join it”, and refers to “our obsequious reliability as client state” of the US. PC opines that “to conquer the world, you don’t need to know anything about it”. A similar level of knowledge as is required to lecture about Australia in the Boyer Lectures, it seems. Just watch *Neighbours*, that should do.

PC alleges that, when Prince Charles visited Australia in December 1967 for Harold Holt’s memorial service, the following exchange took place with US President L.J. Johnson:

When Charles arrived, Johnson rose from his pew and fulsomely welcomed him to Australia. Charles – still a teenager but clearly itching for his inheritance – said, “Thank you Mr President, but since this is my country, let me welcome you”. I wish someone had got up and contradicted both of them by pointing out that the country belonged to itself, not the rival potentates who had dropped in for the day.

Okay. But what is the evidence for Conrad’s claims that L.B. Johnson ever welcomed Prince Charles to Australia and that Charles said that Australia was his country. No sources are cited in *Tales of Two Hemispheres*.

Lecture Six: Oz

There’s nothing new in Lecture Six. Except a claim that “the British with their callipygian tastes dote on



Kylie Minogue's bottom". Er, that's about it. What better highlight to end on? It seems that Conrad is obsessed with bottoms, bums and the like.

WHAT THE CRITICS SAID ABOUT THE (THIN-SKINNED) CRITIC

The publication of Peter Conrad's *Tales of Two Hemispheres* created little critical attention. Neither *The Australian* nor the *Sydney Morning Herald* reviewed the published version of Peter Conrad's 2004 Boyer Lectures. The few critics who reviewed the book were extremely critical.

In the *Canberra Times* (18 December 2004), Dr Tom Frame commented:

After listening to three of Peter Conrad's Boyer Lectures broadcast on ABC Radio National and reading the complete series in published form, my only response was: so what? In a book by someone who has been teaching undergraduates for more than three decades, I struggled to find an introduction, a main body and a conclusion. He never explained why I ought to listen or what I would gain from pondering his thoughts. The six lectures...meander without arriving at anything particularly profound. They appear to have been a vehicle for Conrad to declare his disdain for the Australia of his youth, to defend a residual claim to Australian nationality although he has lived abroad for 36 years, and to parade his facility with obscure phrases and arcane words.

Tom Frame commented that Conrad's "narrative is rambling", that "he relies far too heavily on impressions and stories to convey generalisations so general they are practically meaningless" and that his comments on "defence and diplomacy border on the banal" – involving "mere slogans without substance". Frame also wrote:

Given his [Conrad's] absentee status, it is perhaps surprising that he feels competent to lump all Australians together under the pronoun *we* and presumes to know how the entire population responded to particular events or ideas. As the television program *Neighbours* is one of Conrad's "most reliable sources of information about Australia", he can

hardly object when someone complains that his narrative tends towards the trivial.

Next up was Ian Brittain (the editor of *Meanjin*) who reviewed *Tales of Two Hemispheres* in *The Age* on 24-25 December, 2004. He commented:

Peter Conrad's latest book, which partly focuses on the relations of our own continent with America, is small and contains mainly platitudes. That's no reflection on Australia or Australians, though when allowances have been made for the constraints of the lecture-form, you might see these things as reflections of Conrad's underlying insouciance about the home and hemisphere he quit nearly 40 years ago.

Ian Brittain also made the point that Conrad's "verbal facility too often lapses into facile verbiage, unsupported as it is by anything but the most desultory assemblage of evidence from stray anecdotes or literary quotations and the thinnest strand of sustained argument". Brittain also drew attention to some contradictions in the *Tale of Two Hemispheres*:

There are some whopping self-contradictions, too. In one lecture he reports: "Australians are quiet and self-contained people, averse to making a noise in the world", while "Americans have a verbal confidence that they perhaps inherited from the sermonising fanatics who founded their country". Just a few pages later, in the succeeding lecture, he asks: "what are Australians appreciated for?", and readily supplies the answer: "...for their unsocialised larrikinism. Americans softer, more pampered, reluctant to be reckless and desperate to be liked...lack this antic danger."

Writing in the *Australian Financial Review* on 14 January 2005, Gerard Windsor joined the criticism. He argued that Conrad's "bagging of the antique historical personalities of Australia is done with such lack of historical sympathy as to be distasteful". Windsor maintained that "listeners and readers are entitled to something more adult than this cavalier slurring". Windsor also commented on Conrad's obsessive anti-Americanism. Remember, he actually told Geraldine Doogue of his "hate" for Americans. Windsor assessed the likely response of listeners to, and readers of, the 2004 Boyer Lectures.

“Hey hang on,” the listener/reader says. “These are the people you’ve chosen to live among, to whose art you’ve devoted books, yet you do nothing but denigrate them. What’s going on?” The conclusion is inescapable that the scarifying and the praising is highly selective. There is something opportunistic and grossly inauthentic about these lectures.

LEFTIST-LUVVIES IN CONVERSATION

In fact, the only reviewer to rave about Peter Conrad’s 2004 Boyer Lectures was Phillip Adams – ABC Radio National’s leading leftist-luvvie. On 18 November 2004, Adams devoted the entire 55 minutes of his *Late Night Live* program to a soft interview with Conrad. It commenced with a self-indulgent comment by the presenter. What’s new? Adams told his listeners that he (Adams) has always wanted to deliver the Boyer Lectures but, alas, has not been invited by Donald McDonald. Shucks. Adams went on to make the point that, now, this did not matter so much because Conrad and he are on the same intellectual wave-length. How about that?

Spoke Adams:

Let me tell you why I’m pleased about Conrad doing the Boyers. It makes it unnecessary for me to do them because he says almost everything that I’ve yearned to say. Damn it, he says it better. For example, when Gough [Whitlam] was trying to get a new national anthem up I was forced to point out to Australia that Australia rhymes with failure. Later [I] learnt it also rhymes with dahlia and regalia. But I could only think of failure and although this seems culturally appropriate it does mean you’re not going to get the *Marseillaise* out of it. Peter, in his Boyer Lectures, does a wonderful riff on Australia rhyming with failure.

I have for twenty years been pointing out that Australia looks like a great backside, a great bum squatting in the Pacific. Peter, in one of the Boyer Lectures, does a wonderful thing about Australia’s role in history as a sphincter. See, he’s just terrific; he’s just terrific. And we’ve got him, we’ve got him to have a chat. Peter I’m very pleased.

The reference is to Conrad’s depiction of Australia as a sphincter in Lecture One. In Lecture Four he also asserted “the planners of the penal colony treated Australia as a conveniently distant cloaca”. Sphincter, cloaca – such big words. Have Thesaurus, will Boyer. And so it came to pass that Phillip Adams commenced his discussion with Peter Conrad on the topic of bottoms, bums, sphincters and the like. What a great start.

It is not clear to what extent Adams had read the 2004 Boyer Lectures. For example, early in the interview Adams introduced the name Joseph Conrad and asked: “Incidentally, are you any relation?” If Adams had actually read the Boyer Lectures (then in manuscript form) he would have known that Peter Conrad’s father changed the family name from Konrad – “to eliminate a treasonous Teutonic K”, during the Second World War. See the second and third lines of Lecture 3.

Any rate, Conrad proceeded to tell *Late Night Live* listeners his life story – or some of it, at least. There were also some put-downs of critics and writers alike, who, apparently, he does not like. Let’s go to word association format.

- **Patrick White.** PC agrees with PA’s comment that “for most of his life” Patrick White was “his mother in drag”. PC comments “He was indeed, was he not?”

Somewhat homophobic, don’t you think?”

- **Mr and Mrs Conrad.** According to PC: “It’s horrible to grow up, eh, you know, thinking that, you know, you’re not really loved; it leaves you, you know, full of self-contempt, in fact, and full of anger and stuff, you know.” Yes, you know, we do know.

- **The Australian and United States elections.** According to PC: “I’m in despair about that. I mean, to have the Australian election turn out the way that it did, and then the American election turn out the way it did just a few short weeks later. I mean, that’s a real double whammy.” It seems that voters are not to be trusted.

- **Robert Mitchum.** According to PC, Robert Mitchum was “an actor of some accomplishment, if you can call what he did acting”. PC depicted Mitchum as someone who was “in and out of jail for experiments with reefer and so on; I mean, falling down drunk most of the time”. So there. PC then told the following tale (which also appears in 2004 Boyer

Lectures) about what Mitchum did when in Australia in the 1950s to film *The Sundowners*:

..the end of the year came. Um, Mitchum was going back to Hollywood for Christmas and in the airport in Sydney was apparently stopped by a little girl who asked him for his autograph. And he signed the autograph and it was much more than an autograph because what he wrote for her was this – and, you know, although my memory is not working all that well today...I can quote this, because its burned itself into my brain. I mean, the offensiveness of what Bob Mitchum wrote. What he wrote in the autograph book of this little girl in Sydney airport was this: “In a country which regards as normal the platypus and the emu, the being homo-sapiens is a disgusting oddity. Happy Christmas. Bob Mitchum.”

The (alleged) Mitchum quote may have “burned itself” into Conrad’s brain. Even so, the version in Lecture Two of the 2004 Boyer Lectures was somewhat different. There the quote from Mitchum read as follows: “In a country which regards with casual aplomb the anachronism of the kangaroo and the platypus, the being homo-sapiens is a disgusting oddity. Merry Christmas. Bob Mitchum.”

Did Robert Mitchum write this? Who was the girl with the autograph book? Where is the autograph book now? Even Adams suggested to Conrad that the story was an “urban myth”. “No, no”, replied Conrad. He proceeded to use this alleged put-down as yet another reason to bag Americans. Commented Conrad:

Where does he [Mitchum] get off writing that? I mean, this is an American who comes from a country where they have armadillos and skunks. And look carefully at what he’s saying. What he’s actually saying is that Australians do not belong to the race of homo-sapiens, that we belong to an inferior species.

Peter Conrad produced no evidence that Robert Mitchum had ever written what he claimed he had written. Or, if he had, he was being serious. If Conrad sees fit to dismiss such stars as Nicole Kidman and Kylie Minogue, why should he regard Mitchum so seriously?

- **Gerald [very sic] Henderson.** PC also took aim at Gerard Henderson (whom he referred to on three

occasions, without any correction from PA, as Gerald Henderson). What a wit. Phillip Adams raised the issue of Gerard Henderson’s critique of the 2004 Boyer Lectures, in his syndicated newspaper column, early in the interview. He commenced with a free-kick, of the media variety:

Phillip Adams: ...*Gerard Henderson, he disapproves of you almost as much as he disapproves of me.*

Peter Conrad: *Who is this?*

PA: *Gerard Henderson.*

PC: *I don’t know that name, this, this –*

PA: *[Laughter]*

PC: *No. you have –*

PA: *Is that right?*

PC: *No. No. Really. Who is this?*

PA: *He’s a very distinguished Australian intellectual.*

PC: *Oh, gosh.*

PA: *Now, before you suggest that that’s an oxy-moron...*

PC: *Yeah, no. I know there are many distinguished Australian intellectuals but he’s not one that’s ever swum into my ken, I have to tell you. Tell me about him.*

PA: *Yours is not the sort of ken he’d want to swim into.*

PC: *[Laughter]*

PA: *He swims in his own ken which is The Sydney Institute and he’s very critical of people of the left.*

PC: *You know, I have never even heard of The Sydney Institute. Is that a medical establishment or?*

PA: *Oh dear, I think we’d better terminate this conversation.*

PC: *Would [sic]The Sydney Institute. No, you have to tell me.*

PA: *Well, it’s a conservative sort of think tank in Sydney where many of the mighty of the right, of the conservative side of politics, orate on a regular basis.*

PC: *Oh really.*

PA: *And they publish the odd paper and –*

PC: *And he, whoever he is, thinks I’m a left-winger.*

PA: *Well, no, no, no. He thinks that you’re, well, he thinks you’re a bit radical. A bit radical. And he’s been slightly peeved –*

PC: *Gosh. That’s a compliment. I’ve not been called that for about thirty years, I’m getting to like the idea of him if he says these nice things about me.*

PA: [Laughter]

PC: *He's slightly peeved by what?*

PA: *Well, he was slightly peeved by the contents of your Boyer Lectures which we'll get around to in due course but before we rush to them, let's sort of dawdle a bit. In your problems with your parents – are they – does one extrapolate those problems, to create, or to understand your problems with Australia?*

Peter Conrad replied: "I don't know that I have any problems with Australia". In which case you really wonder what, for example, his *Granta* essay was all about.

And so the verbal love-in continued. Peter Conrad subsequently referred to "this Gerald, whatever his face was, I've forgotten his name already" and reflected "even if I knew who Gerald Henderson was, I've forgotten it". He returned to this particular obsession towards the end of the interview, when Adams raised the question of where Conrad might like to be buried:

Phillip Adams: *I read somewhere that you were thinking of being interred here or was that you being frivolous?*

Peter Conrad: *That was probably Gerald Henderson saying that I ought to be killed and brought home to be hung, drawn and quartered posthumously.*

So here we have the 2004 Boyer Lecturer who feels free to criticise anyone he likes but who regards any criticism of him as the modern day equivalent of a hanging, drawing and quartering. And here is ABC Radio National's Phillip Adams, who is prepared to deliberately mislead the 2004 Boyer Lecturer in order to provoke a response. Mr Adams used to be a paid up associate-member of The Sydney Institute – so he knows it is wilfully false to describe The Sydney Institute as an organisation "where many of the mighty of the right, of the conservative side of politics, orate on a regular basis". The fact is that the program of The Sydney Institute is genuinely pluralistic. Recent speakers include John Howard, Kim Beazley and Bob Brown; Shirley Hazzard and William Shawcross; Daniel Pipes and Tariq Ali. Adams actually paid for a ticket to the Institute's 1997 Annual Dinner at which Shirley Hazzard was the guest speaker. Ms Hazzard is certainly not a voice "of the right".

TELLING AUSTRALIANS TO "GROW UP"

The Phillip Adams/Peter Conrad interview was a self-indulgent exercise by two leftie-luvvies who are

good at dishing out – but not taking – criticism. In the middle of the conversation, Adams asked Conrad whether he felt "rejected or accepted" by resident Australians. Conrad responded:

I mostly feel accepted, eh, although maybe it's, it's my illusion. I mean, you know because one gets a lot – I mean, the "e" word [i.e. expatriate] is used quite a lot by mean-minded rancorous people...I don't know. I don't know. I mean, ah, I get the, I mean, it is still a bit of a problem isn't it? It's not a problem for me. Um. It's a problem for, I think, Australians who behave in this rather rancorous way. Not especially towards me but towards the likes of Greer, Hughes, Humphries and so on. Yeah, I mean, you just, you just want Australians to grow up a bit and accept that they're going to be some of their number who, for whatever reason, are, you know, living elsewhere and doing quite well – which doesn't mean that they don't feel any less fondly about the country or don't identify with it any less fiercely.

This is, yet another, gross exaggeration. Around one million Australians live overseas. They are not criticised for doing so. The reason the likes of Germaine Greer, Robert Hughes, Barry Humphries and John Pilger engender some criticism turns on the fact that they make hyperbolic and frequently ill-informed claims about Australia. Peter Conrad fits into this category. But not, for example, Clive James – who has never shown any signs of alienation and whose comments on Australia are invariably considered and well informed. James is rarely criticised in Australia – rather, his work is widely admired.

Contrary to Conrad's claim, it is not resident Australians who "need to grow up". Rather, non-resident Australians, like Conrad, need to perform at a high standard if they want to lecture other Australians about Australia. The 2004 Boyer Lectures were a dud. The author failed to provide a consistent thesis to convey a coherent message. Instead, Peter Conrad rambled through six lectures with much hyperbole but with little insight. The 2004 Boyer Lectures tell us much more about Peter Conrad's personal journey than they do about the nation of his birth.



TAIWAN AND JIANG JINGGUO'S LEGACY

Ted Rule

The Generalissimo's Son - Chiang Ching-kuo and the Revolutions in China and Taiwan

- Jay Taylor, Harvard University Press, US\$ 44.50

Love him or hate him, it has to be acknowledged that when Jiang Jingguo (Chiang Ching-kuo), the son of General Chiang Kai-shek, died in 1988, he left behind him at least one great achievement. He conceived and presided over the transition of Taiwan to democracy. As Taiwanese have been fond of pointing out for the past 20 years, he created the first and only true democracy in five thousand years of Chinese history.

Jiang Jingguo haters have had ample column space over the years. They point to his leading role, as head of the Taiwan Garrison Command, in the Guomindang's security apparatus and to the repressive authoritarian regime which ruled Taiwan for 40 years. They wrongly associate him with the 2.28 Massacre of between 18,000 and 28,000 Taiwanese by Guomindang troops in the period after riots on 28 February 1947 (he was not involved in the government of Taiwan at the time). Or they simply dismiss him as the corrupt brutal ineffectual son of Chiang Kai-shek, himself the failed leader of a failed regime.

There is relatively little written and available in English about Jiang Jingguo, Chiang Kai-shek and the Guomindang on Taiwan. Partly this is because of the academic establishment's fascination with Beijing and their dismissal of the Guomindang's many achievements both before and after the Communist victory in 1949.

Jay Taylor's book is a welcome attempt to correct this imbalance. Taylor is a former political counsellor at the US Embassy in Beijing and now a research associate at the Fairbank Centre for East Asian Research at Harvard. He brings a notable level of scholarship to the task and deals freely and comfortably with sources in English, Chinese (both Mainland and Taiwanese) and, most importantly,

Russian. The Russian element is particularly significant. Russia played a pivotal role in the twentieth century history of China and specifically of Jiang Jingguo.

Jiang Jingguo started his adult life in 1925 as a student at the "University of the Toilers of the East" in Moscow (in a typically chauvinistic Russian touch, he was known there as Nikolai Vladimirovich Elizarov). He studied under Karl Radek and Pavel Mif and in the company of Deng Xiaoping, Wang Ming (Mao's great rival) and Shao Zhikang, son of Chiang Kai-shek's Secretary Shao Lizi who was a secret Communist.

Jiang studied Bukharin. He toyed with Trotsky, and later repudiated him when it became clear that his Trotskyist leanings could affect his ability to enter a Soviet military academy. He denounced his father publicly in the pages of *Izvestia* after Chiang's purge of Communists in Shanghai in 1927. He worked for several years in a machinery complex in Sverdlovsk. He married a Russian, Faina Epacheva Vakhaleva, who became the mother of Chiang Kai-shek's grandchildren.

In 1936 Jiang Jingguo applied for full membership of the CPSU. He had many one-on-one meetings with Josef Stalin and when he returned to China in 1937 it was with Stalin's personal approval and possibly encouragement. Stalin put all of his weight behind the United Front and Jiang told his Russian friends that "... the Central Committee is sending me to China so that I may win my father over to our side".

On his trip home via Vladivostok, Jiang was accompanied by Kang Sheng, later Mao's security chief and the man personally responsible for possibly more violent deaths than any other man in history. On arrival in Vladivostok, he sent a telegram to Moscow saying, "Now the Party sends me to China. This is an important task ... Tell the Comintern Executive Committee that I will strictly follow Party discipline ... We send you our most warm Communist greetings from the shores of the Soviet Union".

Taylor takes some trouble to demonstrate that Jiang's relationship with the Soviet Union was not an aberration in China in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. This is not in keeping with the orthodoxy which grew out of the American leftist critique of the "loss of China". The orthodox view is that in the 1920s there was significant Russian involvement in the CCP and the Guomindang via the Comintern "advisor" Borodin, and the military "advisor" Blücher (who had originally been no less than the Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Siberian Army) who organised and disciplined the Guomindang Army.

But, according to this view, after the defeat during the Long March of Wang Ming's "Moscow faction", the CCP became a self-sufficient, indigenous party of nationalist agrarian reformers dedicated to guerilla warfare, and their ultimate victory owed more to the innate spirituality of the Communists than to any force of arms. In this analysis, the Guomindang troops, recognising the greater goodness of the Communists and the deep corruption of Chiang and his cronies, laid down their arms and joined the side of righteousness. Mao himself hated Stalin who had double-crossed him and the ultimate split was inevitable.

Of course this approach begs the question of why there was a Long March in the first place. The obvious reason is that the Communists were unable to supply their guerilla bases in Jiangxi because they were a long way from the Soviet Union. Yan'an, the objective of the Long March, was close to Outer Mongolia which had been a Soviet colony since 1921, and only a short flight from Xinjiang which came under Soviet control in 1934. The Long March was not a matter of pointless heroism, but a quest for Soviet guns and butter.

Equally, the victory of the Communists was not achieved by guerilla action but, as in Vietnam in 1975, by a series of set-piece battles like the Huaihai Battle of 1948. The role of the Soviet Union in this was critical. The Soviets entered the war only a week before its end and quickly disarmed the Japanese in Manchuria. They were followed closely by Lin Biao's Eighth Route Army which had not been particularly diligent in fighting the Japanese, but which now established itself in the Manchurian countryside with hundreds and thousands of modern Japanese weapons confiscated and handed over by the Soviets. Soviet authorities gave political assistance to the CCP in establishing "People's Governments" all over Manchuria and put whole divisions of well-equipped Manchukuo puppet troops under Lin's command.*

Other puppets played their part. Lin had three divisions of Korean troops, allegedly ethnic Koreans from Liaoning but most likely "volunteers" sent by Kim Il-sung. Importantly, the Soviets allowed the CCP to establish a munitions complex in Dalian and to draft thousands of recruits from the city and its suburbs. In December 1945, the Soviets agreed to delay their withdrawal for two months. It was widely speculated then and since that, because Chiang considered the delay to be to his advantage, this was part of Stalin's "betrayal" of the CCP. In fact, as Taylor points out, Russian documents which are now available make it clear that the delay was at Mao's request, presumably to allow Lin Biao more time to establish himself in the countryside.

Taylor makes good use of the availability of Russian documents to put to rest some hoary old stories of Sino-Soviet discord. Take Mao's first visit to Moscow in 1949-50. The orthodox view is that the trip was a disaster during which Stalin patronised Mao and the fundamental differences between the two sides deepened. Taylor reminds us of Mao's much quoted comment to Harrison Salisbury that during the visit he had "nothing to do but eat and shit". It is possibly unfortunate for the orthodox that the availability of Soviet records of their conversation now means that the old Sinologue's standby of making up details of such conversations is no longer as useful as it once was.

Records of their conversation clearly show that Stalin believed that his alliance with Mao was the key to his global strategy. Mao, for his part, said that China's goals required him to show his "allegiance to Stalin and his willingness to comply with Soviet demands". Stalin said that Mao's key task was "to promote revolutionary struggle in Vietnam and south-east Asia ... and to assist Kim Il-sung in his take over of South Korea ... causing the United States to split its forces and face combat on two global fronts".

Not a picture of a house divided. And not a picture which should cause us any surprise. After all, it was in Beijing, not Moscow that a 50 ft. high picture of Stalin stood in the city centre until the 1980s. In the end, the Sino-Soviet split came not because Mao hated Stalin but because Mao hated Khrushchev for hating Stalin.

The picture painted by these records is equally not one in which the guerrilla warfare so beloved of the orthodox has a role. From 1949, when Chen Yi's troops crossed the Yangtze, through Lin Biao and Peng Dehuai's "human wave" attacks in Korea, through Dien Bien Phu to the North Vietnamese Army's 1975 advance down the coastal plain to Saigon, the history of Asian Communist warfare has been one of mechanised set-piece battles.

Another old orthodox favourite which fails to stand up to Taylor's analysis is the idea that East Asian communists are nationalists first and communists second. On the contrary, the record speaks of Russian surrogates in the form of Koreans fighting with the "Chinese" communist forces in Manchuria. The role of Chinese troops and Russian pilots in Korea is well known. Less well documented is the role of Chinese forces against the French in Vietnam. For many years in casual conversations with knowledgeable Chinese officials, the author has noted the surprise and disdain with which they treat the idea that Vo Nguyen Giap was responsible for the victory at Dien Bien Phu. It seems that even a child knows that it was the Zhuang general, Wei Guoqing, who led the Chinese troops at Dien Bien Phu.

Taylor also highlights another little-known aspect of the Communist victory, Chiang Kai-shek's state of mind. Chiang was a complex character, probably bipolar and given to long periods of inaction and depression. In 1949, even though the Communists had made great progress in the north, most of the country was still in the hands of the Guomindang. Chinese history is full of instances of regimes split between north and south or east and west. If he were to make a stand Chiang had many options other than Taiwan, options which would have given him control over far greater territory and population, and supported his claim to be the legitimate government of China. One possibility was Sichuan, a vast area with rugged mountain defences where Chiang had established his capital during the war.

It appears, however, that as early as 1948 Chiang had given up hope. In January 1949, Jiang Jingguo was already transferring the Central Bank's treasury assets to Taiwan. Chiang then resigned as President of the Executive Yuan (he retained his post as Director-General of the Guomindang) and retired to his ancestral home of Xikou in Zhejiang Province (now a Mecca for Chiang admirers from all over China). There, according to staff members, he was "thinking". There is no evidence that he made any attempt to organise a defence. When Chen Yi's troops were assembled on the north bank of the Yangtze opposite Nanking, Jiang had already put paid to the Guomindang's hopes of winning by transferring the Navy and Air Force to Taiwan and many of the remaining Central Army troops to Shanghai.

When news of the Communist take-over of Nanking arrived, Chiang was watching a Beijing opera performance at Xikou. It is interesting to speculate what might have happened in 1949 if Chiang had been at the "up" end of his cycle.

Taylor makes much of Jiang Jingguo's role as an administrator including new material on his performance in the late 1930s and early 1940s as head of the Gannan Administrative Region in southern Jiangxi. Unlike his father, who was a thoroughly Chinese figure, Jiang Jingguo was a modernist, a progressive and an extremely successful administrator. His four-year rule brought unprecedented order and prosperity to the region.

Interestingly, in Gannan, Jiang set up the pilot for the "Land to the Tiller", a land reform which was later to be the cornerstone of the Guomindang's success in Taiwan. In Taiwan in 1949, two-thirds of farmers were tenants. The Guomindang issued government-guaranteed bonds to landlords in exchange for their land. They distributed this land, along with expropriated Japanese-owned land, to farmers. The proceeds of the bonds made the former landlord

class the backbone of Taiwan's industrialisation. The ending of crushing rents ensured that native Taiwanese remained firm supporters of the Guomindang until the 1990s.

Taylor errs heavily on Jiang's side on the question of his role in the suppression in Taiwan. Taiwan was never the free little democratic state beloved of the right. It was an authoritarian, repressive and occasionally brutal one-party state. Jiang Jingguo, as head of the Taiwan Garrison Command, was responsible for the machinery of this repression and his early points of reference were not Thomas Jefferson but Lenin, Stalin and the OGPU (a predecessor of the KGB).

Taylor allows Jiang to defend himself in his own words. In 1976, answering the Carter Administration's accusations of human rights abuses in Taiwan, Jiang claimed that there were only 254 people in jail charged with sedition and that only one had been executed. The charges by Taiwanese groups abroad that there were 8000 political prisoners were incorrect, he said, and a US Senate investigation basically agreed with him. The State Department's first Human Rights Report said that "the average Chinese (in Taiwan) goes about his business without anxiety over repressive governments".

Perhaps so. Concrete pillboxes with clear fields of fire were a prominent feature of the Taipei avenues well into the 1970s. But, as Taylor points out, the evidence comes out in favour of a generally lenient level of authoritarianism with a determination to avoid bloodshed in Taiwan at all costs. In 1980, when a military tribunal was planning to sentence to death the leader of riots in the southern city of Gaoxiong, Jiang sent word that as long as he was President "there would be no bloodshed on the island of Taiwan".

What says most for Jiang's fundamental achievements is that at the end of his career and his life, he not only led Taiwan to democracy but did so without social disorder or bloodshed. This speaks volumes for how well he and his colleagues administered Taiwan. Before the 1980s, Taiwan was not a democracy but it was well and fairly cleanly administered and most people felt that justice was done and that they could go about their daily business in peace. In the history of China over the past 200 years this was unique.

It is reasonably asked how it was that someone who had been so committed as a communist in the 1920s and 1930s could imperceptibly transmogrify over a period of 50 years into a true democrat. Taylor does not address this issue directly. Indeed he points out that as late as 1948 when Jiang was Supervisor of

Economic Control in Shanghai, one of his staff found him reading Lenin's collected works in Russian.

The answer to this conundrum is a complex one. It is often forgotten that right up until the 1980s the Guomindang was a Leninist party in structure and, to some extent, in doctrine. Additionally, even after the 1927 purge of communists, Stalin maintained an ambiguous relationship with China under KMT rule. In this way the transition from Moscow to Nanking was a relatively painless one, and, free from the restraints of Stalinism, Jiang could think leftist thoughts and put them into political practice while still being responsive to the day-to-day reality of places under his control such as Gannan and Shanghai.

Stalin's total repudiation of the KMT after the victory of the communists and the advent of the Cold War made a pro-communist position untenable. But Jiang's relationship with his father was also critical in his political development. As he repudiated the leftism of his early life, the older Chiang increasingly paid attention to Confucian virtues such as filial piety, the driving force in the relationship between father and son.

Taylor paints a deeply personal and attractive picture of Jiang. We learn about his first love, the daughter of Warlord Feng Yuxiang, the so-called Christian General who reputedly baptised his troops with a fire hose. We learn about his Russian wife's strongly Ningbo-accented Chinese and about his children and their predilection for wives who were Eurasian like themselves. We learn of his sometimes testy relationship with his step-brother Wego Chiang (Jiang Weiguo). Taylor does not resile from dealing with gossip that, like Wego, Jingguo was not Chiang's natural son.

There is not a lot of evidence that the Generalissimo was any great shakes in the sack. Soong Mei-ling, his widow, remained virgo intacta as far as Chiang was concerned: this decorous picture was somewhat sullied after a visit to China in 1942 by the wavy-haired 1940 Republican Presidential candidate Wendell Wilkie for whom Madame Chiang was reputed to have let down far too much of her hair. Jiang, whose mother was Mao Fumei, had diabetes which he passed to his children (they all died in middle age) but we do not see the disease in Chiang or his ancestors. The father and son could not have looked less alike: Chiang senior was tall, thin and ascetic, junior was short, fat and famously jolly.

Surprisingly Taylor does not examine in any detail the relationship between Jiang and Soong Mei-ling. Taipei gossip always had them at each other's throats but Taylor's picture is of a proper if not particularly affectionate relationship.

Taylor puts paid to suggestions of corruption on Jiang's part. He describes a man who ate and drank a bit too well for a diabetic, who loved the company of women but who never owned a house and who lived much of his life in a rented house in a modest middle-class area of Taipei. When, at the end of his life, he was asked if he wanted a big mausoleum, he said that he had never had a house of his own, why would he want a mausoleum. Taylor, however, brushes over the question of who inherited the estate of Chiang Kai-shek which was nothing if not ill-gotten.

When Chiang Kai-shek fled to Taiwan in 1949 it was a political and economic basket case. On the day Jiang Jingguo died in 1988, he left a peaceful, prosperous democratic country. Taiwan was the world's tenth largest exporter of manufactured goods. At US\$ 40 billion it had the world's largest foreign exchange reserves. The official unemployment rate was 2.5 per cent. Per capita GDP was at first world levels and wealth distribution was uniquely even without great extremes of wealth or poverty.

It is invidious to draw comparisons between Jiang Jingguo and the other great Chinese of the twentieth century, his Moscow classmate, Deng Xiaoping. Taiwan is only a small island, not a sub-continent with the world's greatest population, and Deng was responsible, despite seemingly unsurmountable difficulties, for raising the standard of living of more people than any other person in history. Clearly Deng fails Jiang's test of avoiding political bloodshed.

But it is possible to see parallels in massive economic development, social order, and the ability of ordinary people to go about their daily business without fear of political interference. There has even been some progress in China, sadly not enough, in introducing the rule of law and justice.

Whether Deng's successors will be able to emulate Jiang and take the final step towards political reform remains one of the key questions of the twenty-first century. Whether they, like Jiang, can do it peacefully is possibly more problematic.

ENDNOTE

*For further treatment of this question see: Wang Ming, *Predate'stvo Mao Tsee-duna*, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1975 and O. Borisov, *Sovetskiy Soyuz i Manchzhurskaya Revolytsionnaya Baza 1945-1949*. Progress Publishers, Moscow 1975

Ted Rule has lived for most of the past 35 years in Beijing, Taipei and Hong Kong where he was intimately involved in China's economic, financial and commercial life.



THE ABC LAUNCHES THE PNG HISTORY WARS

Geoffrey Luck

If you thought that the History Wars ended with Keith Windschuttle's demolition of the work of Henry Reynolds, Lyndall Ryan et al with his landmark book, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History*, think again. The post-modernist, left-wing academic historians have found a new target, Papua New Guinea. It fits perfectly.

Not as far in the mists of the past as the early settlers' brushes with Aborigines, Australia's administration of Papua and New Guinea is nevertheless sufficiently remote from the general Australian consciousness for a defamatory character assassination to pass without much scrutiny. Murder, exploitation, racism and abandonment will be the charges. Denigration and obliteration of the dedicated work of thousands of Australians over 80 years will be the objective.

The first broadsides have not yet been fired, but the forward scouts have already been sent out – the revisionist historians' loyal allies in the ABC. The national broadcaster's Social History and Features unit presents a weekly program, *Hindsight*. The unit boasts on its website that it is "the only program on Australian radio devoted exclusively to social history". "*Hindsight*," it says, "offers new perspectives on well-known aspects of the past – and brings to light those stories long-ignored on the public record." This sounds suspiciously like post-modernist double-speak for re-interpreting history. In late May 2005, *Hindsight* tackled Papua New Guinea as the second of a six-part series of programs entitled "Rear Vision," with the ambitious promise to "examine the history of Australia's relationship with our nearest neighbour" in 55 minutes.

Having served in PNG for seven years – initially in the late 1950s when the Territory was still sweeping away the rubble of war, and first contact was being made with previously unknown tribes, then again in the 1960s as development accelerated and the first national elections with universal franchise delivered an embryonic parliament, I was interested to see what insights would show up in the ABC's rear view mirror.

The program started innocently enough, with a focus on the billion-dollar Australian-PNG Enhanced Co-operation Program, which had only just run into

trouble, with the enforced withdrawal of the Australian police contingent. But then it moved smartly into academic spin.

The first charge – Australia's culpability in sowing confusion about the constitutional future of the territory it was administering. Professor Hank Nelson of the ANU raised the canard of what he termed Australia's ambiguity about the future by citing the American usage of "territory". There, he said, the word was applied to lands that became states and were subsequently absorbed into the United States. He argued that the word "territory" created uncertainty about the status and constitutional direction of PNG which continued right up till the 1960s.

This is plainly nonsense. Hubert Murray, the pre-war Governor of Papua, who dealt so humanely with the Papuan people (despite a huge lack of resources), never expressed an intention for Papua (a Crown colony) to be incorporated in the Commonwealth of Australia. While the ultimate status of the jointly-administered PNG had never been defined, and some expatriates called for a "seventh state," the repeated Australian ministerial view – as Ian Downs pointed out in his history of the Australian Trusteeship – was that "Australia would abide by the wishes of the people for self-government when Papua-New Guineans were ready." Some indigenous leaders like Sir John Guise had entertained hopes that Australia would incorporate PNG into Australia because of their fear of the young militant elites, but this self-delusion was extinguished in Canberra in 1966.

Professor Nelson next traversed the history of Australia's acquisition of German New Guinea as a League of Nations mandate, citing Billy Hughes' insistence on its importance for the defence of Australia. But then he came to an extraordinary conclusion – the ironic result was Australia's defence position had deteriorated. "We've now got all of east New Guinea," he said, "but just beyond the horizon, there are the Japanese, advanced all the way south of the Equator." Was he suggesting Hughes should have claimed all the German territories? Or just given up on New Guinea? It is doubtful if the Australians who fought along the Kokoda Track or died in the swamps of Gona and Buna would have agreed that Hughes blundered.

Next came the new historiography, with a frontal attack on the icon of Australia's administration of PNG – the patrol officer. "Something of a romantic figure in Australian mythology," sneered *Hindsight* presenter Annabelle Quinn. She introduced Allan Patience, Professor of Political Science at the University of Papua New Guinea, to deliver the *coup de grace* to the kiaps. Here's what he had to say in full:

I think it's a mythology that's only recently begun to be really challenged. Dr Chris Ballard at the ANU, for example, has begun looking at some of the really quite horrendous murdering that went on in

conjunction with some of the early opening up of the country by the various patrols...of Australians who made initial contacts with Papua New Guineans. [They] behaved appallingly. But this historiography is only just coming to light, in a not unsimilar way in which a few years ago, Henry Reynolds' history of Aborigines began to open up Australians' eyes to how they had really been treating Aborigines. Australians are awfully good at patting themselves on the back about colonising other people but in fact the reality is sometimes far worse than the myths that they like to accrete around them would lead us to believe.

Professor Patience is an Englishman with a Science Masters from London University and a B.A. from Monash.

Not surprisingly, this distortion brought a swift response from people who really knew Papua New Guinea. Harry West, former District Commissioner, Rabaul, now President of the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia had this response to the program and its allegation of "appalling behaviour and horrendous murdering" by patrol officers:

There were very few unfortunate incidents, mostly involving prospectors, not patrol officers, and in New Guinea, one German was hanged...The colonial administration, and particularly the kiaps, seem to have a lingering bad odour with a lot of the media and academics. No one seems to be prepared to take a "real world that we live in" look. It is easy, and perhaps convenient, to forget the situation as it was in 1945 after the disruption, devastation and destruction of the war and the ongoing shortages of human and material resources with only 30 years to independence – the hundreds of individual, isolated communities, with rigidly restricted loyalties, suspicious of their neighbours, sorcery rampant, plunged into little understood and bewildering nationhood amongst the world's nations. To the ordinary village people, the kiap brought alleviation from fear from neighbours, impartiality, stability and some certainty, and this was an essential basis to development.

Well, impartiality was certainly not to be seen in this program.

Anyone who has read one of the recent books on the 1942 Kokoda campaign will understand how indentured Papuan carriers were recruited to help supply the troops and evacuate the wounded. The carriers suffered along with the soldiers. Nelson believes they had every reason to be sullen and resentful, but concedes they appear to have

responded with a humanity and compassion "which is difficult to understand".

Damien Parer's and George Silk's images were real enough, but even allowing for the over-sentimentalisation of wartime, the Fuzzy-Wuzzy Angels did strike a chord in the hearts of Australians at home. Yet Hank Nelson could turn that into a racial taunt: "A Papuan man, a black man, is made a cover picture of the *Australian Women's Weekly*...images like that were unthinkable a few years before." He could have added that the *Weekly* also printed the poem, written by an Australian housewife, which coined the "Fuzzy Wuzzy" *nom de guerre*. It was cut out and pasted up in many a kitchen.

The program continued to parade sweeping generalisations, each more outrageous and preposterous than the last. So Helen Hughes, a Senior Fellow in the Centre for Independent Studies, could say: "Australia failed to provide primary education for Papua New Guinea or to establish a central Department of Education and make sure that Papua New Guineans could read and write and speak English. The village schools were largely left to the missionaries, the whole education system...we just failed Papua New Guinea on education before independence."

It is difficult to know where to start to rebut such ignorance. Let me just say from personal experience that in the late 1950s there were Papuans who had been educated to a level where they could be sent to the Suva Medical School and graduated as medical assistants (lik-lik doktas); by the time I left Port Moresby in 1966, I had trained five local journalists to Australian standards; the University of Papua New Guinea was founded in 1965, ten years before independence and began graduating students a few years later. Yet the program could repeat that there were only six Australian-trained graduates at independence, conveniently ignoring the local faculties.

Nowhere did this program acknowledge achievement. In its selection of contributors, its selective quotations and its eager pursuit of critical interpretations of every aspect of the Australian administration of Papua New Guinea, *Hindsight* set out to demean the work of thousands of Australians. Many of these people spent their lives to help lift Papuans and New Guineans to a stage in their history where they could choose and define their national future. In their attempt to re-write history, the ABC's ill-disciplined programmers have labelled not only the people who served in PNG, but also the entire Australian contribution to the country.

Geoffrey Luck was an ABC journalist from 1950 to 1976



DOCUMENTATION

TOM UREN, DENIAL AND POL POT

In his syndicated newspaper column published on 26 April 2005, Gerard Henderson wrote that in 1975 many leading Labor figures supported the communist victories in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. He specifically mentioned the former Labor MP Tom Uren. Mr Uren wrote to the *Sydney Morning Herald* denying that he had ever supported Pol Pot or the Khmer Rouge and challenging Gerard Henderson to produce any evidence to the contrary. Mr Henderson subsequently wrote to Mr Uren providing documentation in support of his original claim. The correspondence is set out below – along with a copy of the statement which Tom Uren released on 28 January 1978.

LETTER FROM TOM UREN TO THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD – 28 APRIL 2005

Gerard Henderson quoted a statement which I and others sent to Pol Pot and Phan Van Dong in January 1978 calling for conciliation between their two countries. That is on the record. I have challenged Gerard before to cite any statement where I had supported Pol Pot or the Khmer Rouge. Gerard is good at selective quotes.

From my book *Straight Left*: “I visited Vietnam in 1978 ... I went up to the Cambodian border to visit the camps of refugees who had escaped from the tyrannical Khmer Rouge regime. A lot of what was being said through the interpreter was Marxist jargon, especially from the men. But when the women were being interviewed I could really read the fear in their eyes ... In Parliament ... I was critical of the actions of the Khmer Rouge and Pol Pot.”

Tom Uren
Balmain

GERARD HENDERSON TO TOM UREN – 7 JULY 2005

Dear Tom

I was in the United States when the *Sydney Morning Herald* published your letter on 28 April 2005 – following my column on Vietnam which was published on 26 April 2005. Hence the delay in responding. The first paragraph of your letter read :

Gerard Henderson quoted a statement which I and others sent to Pol Pot and Phan Van Dong in January 1978 calling for conciliation between their two countries.

That is on the record. I have challenged Gerard before to cite any statement where I had supported Pol Pot or the Khmer Rouge. Gerard is good at selective quotes.

There was nothing “selective” about the quotes concerning you which appeared in my *Sydney Morning Herald* column of 26 April 2005 – where I wrote:

Once it was fashionable to support the communist victories in Indochina. This was the position of most leading ALP figures (Whitlam, Cairns, Tom Uren) and of the overwhelming majority of academics, journalists and other opinion leaders involved in the public debate on Australia’s Vietnam commitment.

On January 26, 1978, Uren and some fellow Labor comrades issued a statement addressed to Pol Pot in Cambodia (the nation’s name was changed to Kampuchea by the Khmer Rouge) and Phan Van Dong in Vietnam. The leftist signatories declared their support for the “national liberation struggles of both Vietnam and Kampuchea” and urged both leaders to resolve their “current border conflict”. No mention was made about the human rights violations then taking place in both countries.

Both the quotes in my *Sydney Morning Herald* column – which refer to you – were accurate and in context. As you will be aware, there is a background to all this. I originally quoted your statement of 26 January 1978 - which included the text of your telegram to Pol Pot and Phan Van Dong – some years ago. You wrote to me on 8 August 1991 saying that you “cannot recall” having forwarded a telegram to Pol Pot and Phan Van Dong in early 1978 which called for “the resumption of peaceful and comradely relations” between the two nations and declaring that you had no record of having issued such a statement. In my letter to you dated 9 October 1991, I forwarded a copy of the statement which you had issued on 28 January 1978 (on House of Representative letter head). This seems to have jogged your memory. You now maintain that your statement of 28 January 1978 is “on the record”. Well, it is now.

As you will remember, the inaugural paragraph of the 28 January 1978 statement – of which you were the lead signatory – read as follows:

Today a telegram was sent to Prime Minister Pol Pot of Kampuchea (Cambodia) and Prime Minister Phan Van Dong of Vietnam. It was signed by leading figures of the Australian anti-Vietnam War

movement, which supported the national liberation struggles of both countries (emphasis added).

The telegram also referred to your group as having “supported the national struggles of both Vietnam and Kampuchea”. In other words, in January 1978 you did not attempt to hide your support for the Khmer Rouge victory in Cambodia in 1975 and for Khmer Rouge rule in Cambodia from mid April 1975 – until at least late January 1978. In fact, you explicitly expressed the hope that the border conflict between Vietnam and Cambodia could be resolved so that the leaders of both nations could go on ruling their own countries without being involved in military engagements.

Your statement concluded as follows:

Tom Uren, the National Chairperson of the Australia-Vietnam Society, said that many Australians who had supported the national liberation struggles of Vietnam and Kampuchea were shocked by the news of the border conflict and sincerely hoped that the close fraternal ties which bound the two peoples and their leadership together during the war against the United States would once again be achieved (emphasis added).

Once again, the above comments make it unequivocally clear that you *did support* the “national liberation struggle” of the Khmer Rouge and that you explicitly told Pol Pot this. And (contrary to your comments in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 28 April 2005) there is evidence that, as late as January 1978, you *still supported* Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge. As you will be aware, by January 1978 Cambodia (Kampuchea) had become a massive killing field and Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge (the so-called “national liberation” movement of Kampuchea) had murdered millions of Cambodians. This was well known at the time to anyone who wanted to know – and had been documented (before January 1978) in the published work of Francois Ponchaud, John Swain, John Barrow and Anthony Paul as well as by the testimony of those refugees who had managed to flee Cambodia.

In your letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* you quoted from your book *Straight Left*, which was published in 1994, about your attitude to the Khmer Rouge regime when you visited refugee camps on the Vietnam-Cambodia border in 1978. I accept that you came out in opposition to Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge sometime in 1978. After all, by early 1978 the tensions between Cambodia and Vietnam – which led to the invasion of Cambodia by Vietnam in December 1978 – were evident. You were National Chairperson of the Australia-Vietnam Society at the time and, so, it came as no surprise that you supported Vietnam against Cambodia. My point is that you expressed no

opposition to Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge regime *before* the tensions between Vietnam and Cambodia resulted in border conflict.

You seem to be in a clear case of denial about your attitude to Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge three decades ago. Unlike you, I do not deny my positions at the time.

In 1975, I supported the non-communist regime in Cambodia, led by the non-communist General Lon Nol, and opposed the Khmer Rouge’s victory in April 1975. In 1975, I supported the Vietnamese anti-communist regimes headed by Nguyen Van Thieu, Tran Van Huong and General Duong Van Minh. You supported the communist Viet Cong and the communist North Vietnamese regime – which conquered Saigon, with the assistance of military aid provided by the communist rulers in the Soviet Union, in April 1975.

As you make clear in *Straight Left*, you continued to support the communist leaders in Vietnam – from the dictator Ho Chi Minh to his various successors. However, you now attempt to deny that you ever supported Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge. But you did. The truth is stated unequivocally in your statement issued on 28 January 1978. By the time you came to oppose the Khmer Rouge, the worst atrocities of Pol Pot’s killing fields had already occurred. Your letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* – in which you deny that you “ever supported Pol Pot or the Khmer Rouge” is simply that – i.e. denial.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Gerard Henderson

**Parliament of Australia
House of Representatives
STATEMENT BY TOM UREN, MP -
26 JANUARY 1978**

Today a telegram was sent to the Prime Minister Pol Pot of Kampuchea (Cambodia) and Prime Minister Phan Van Dong of Vietnam. It was signed by leading figures of the Australian anti-Vietnam War movement, which supported the national liberation struggles of both countries.

The list of the signatories which called for the immediate cessation of hostilities and a negotiated settlement is attached. The text of the telegram was as follows:

As Australians who supported the national liberation struggles of both Vietnam and Kampuchea, we are deeply distressed at the current border conflict between socialist, non-aligned neighbours and war-time allies. We appeal for the immediate cessation of

hostilities in order that a negotiated settlement respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of both countries can be achieved. We believe that the present conflict must be to the disadvantage of both countries and that common interests can only be served by the resumption of peaceful comradely relations.

Tom Uren, the National Chairperson of the Australia-Vietnam Society, said that many Australians who had supported the national liberation struggles of Vietnam and Kampuchea were shocked by the news of the border conflict and sincerely hoped that the close fraternal ties which bound the two peoples and their leadership together during the war against the United States would once again be achieved.

Canberra
26 January 1978

A list of signatories is attached:

TOM UREN, MP
SENATOR GEORGE GEORGES
SENATOR ARTHUR GIETZELT
SENATOR GORDON McINTOSH
JIM CAIRNS
KEN McLEOD, Secretary, Australia-Vietnam Society
JOHN LLOYD
JEAN McLEAN
DICK SCOTT, President, AMWSU
MERVE MALCOLM, State Secretary, AMWSU
JACK CAMBOURNE, Secretary, Federated Engine Drivers and Firemens' Association.
GEORGE CRAWFORD, Secretary, Plumbers Union
PAT CLANCY, Secretary, BWIU
STAN SHARKEY, State Secretary, BWIU
CATHY BLOC, NSW Teachers Federation
RON ARNOLD, President, Association International Co-operation and Disarmament
JIM ROULSTON, Congress of International Co-operation and Disarmament
MARGARET HOLMES, Womens International League for Peace and Freedom
EILEEN BARNARD-KETTLE, Convenor, Society of Friends
REV. GEORGE GARNSEY
PROFESSOR R. CONNELL
PROFESSOR E. WHEELWRIGHT
JO HARRIS, BWIU
W. LATTEER, President, West Australian Trades and Labor Council
R. REID, Acting Secretary, West Australian Trades and Labor Council



BOOK REVIEWS

John McConnell

THE GREAT LABOR SCHISM : A RETROSPECTIVE

Edited by Brian Costar, Peter Love and Paul Strangio

Scribe Publications pb 2005

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Fifty years ago, the Australian Labor Party suffered its third and most serious split. It was the mid 1950s and international Communism was on the rise. The Cold War – which was to dominate international relations for five decades – had been underway for almost ten years.

Within Australia, communist and pro-communist candidates had gained a significant share of positions in the trade union movement during the preceding decade. This union base provided the disciplined Communist Party with influence out of all proportion to its support among the broader community. Representation within the industrial wing of the labour movement provided the opportunity to determine many of the delegates to the crucial State Labor Conferences.

The ability to influence policy and preselection decisions in the nation's alternative government followed from there. Enter B. A. Santamaria, the Catholic Social Studies Movement – the Movement, and the ALP Industrial Groups. (The Movement later became the National Civic Council where I worked for three years in the early 1970s).

The ALP-endorsed Industrial Groups were formed expressly to fight communist penetration within the trade union movement. And they did so with considerable success. Replacing pro-Communist officials in trade union elections, however, implied a consequent ability to influence the Labor Party. The possibility existed that the Movement might adopt a wider agenda.

Enter Dr H V Evatt. Bert Evatt was federal leader of the Australian Labor Party and alternative Prime Minister from 1951-1960. Evatt had lost the May 1954 federal election. He was determined to hold on as federal leader but there were growing concerns about his erratic behaviour. On 5 October, 1954, he denounced the ALP's Victorian Executive.

Dr Evatt attacked the allegedly sinister and secret Movement, despite the fact that he had been communicating and cooperating with B.A.Santamaria for some time. It was a vicious attack on a section of the ALP's own voting base consisting mainly of Catholics. In a modern context, it raises the question as to how our contemporary multicultural society would react to such a personal attack as Evatt directed at the person and ethnic origins of B A Santamaria on top of vilifying a particular religious group.

As a result, severe divisions opened up within the Labor Party and the community. Many families and former friends became bitterly divided. The ALP expelled the Industrial Groupers.

The essential story of the Split was that the left expelled the right – particularly at the federal and Victorian levels, later to be joined by Queensland. The Groupers subsequently formed the Democratic Labor Party. DLP propaganda and preferences were then used to deny federal office to the ALP up to and including the 1969 federal election.

The effects of the Split – which provoked considerable bitterness and hostility, much of it along sectarian lines – were to be felt for decades. *The Great Labor Schism: A Retrospective* (Scribe Publications) re-examines the Split. The book's editors – associate Professor Brian Costar, Dr. Peter Love and Dr. Paul Strangio – note that the fundamental question (“why did the party blow apart?”) remains a puzzle.

What is remarkable is that the book that they have edited directs the blame to B A Santamaria, the Movement and the then Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, Dr Daniel Mannix while sidelining Bert Evatt.

No sustained critical examination of the role played by Dr Evatt is included in *The Great Labor Schism*. Peter Love does refer to Evatt's “erratic relations” and “tempestuous behaviour”. Paul Strangio and Brian Costar understand that a split Labor Party was

not in the interests of Santamaria. But the focus of blame in the book is directed at the Santamaria-led forces while Evatt's role is marginalised.

Apparently the contributors to *The Great Labor Schism* share a consensus that the Split was neither inevitable nor unavoidable. Paul Strangio, however, describes the Movement in Victoria as “a counter-revolution in search of a counter-revolution”, referring to Frank McManus and Stan Keon as “Labor Splitters”. A counter-revolution in search of a counter-revolution is hardly compatible with the view that the Split was neither inevitable nor unavoidable.

There are other matters too – in addition to the book's failure to adequately address the role of Bert Evatt – that are given less emphasis than they deserve. Except for Brian Costar's analysis of the Split in Queensland, there is little information about the role played by the Australian Workers' Union. And there are minimal references only to the actions of a number of key left-wing ALP members such as Joe Chamberlain and Eddie Ward.

But it is the underplaying of Bert Evatt's role that is truly astonishing, given all of the circumstances surrounding his role in damaging his own party and destroying its electoral prospects for a generation. For the consequences of the Split were indeed profound. Bitter divisions, often along

sectarian lines, persisted for decades.

The editors of *The Great Labor Schism* cast an eye to the legacies of the Split, including the inflaming of sectarian bigotry, the fragmenting of the Catholic vote, the stigmatising and marginalisation of Catholic social thought in the ALP, as well as the electoral consequences suffered by the ALP.

Federally, the Labor Party was barred from power for almost two decades. Twenty-seven years were to pass before Labor returned to the government benches in Victoria. Part one of *The Great Labor Schism* comprises four chapters focusing on the Split at state level. Prelude and protagonists constitute the theme for part two.



Jenny Hocking writes about how Power Without Glory contributed to the exposure of the “subversive forces” within the ALP. Anthony Cappello argues that a number of Labor identities who opposed Bob Santamaria’s promotion of Italian immigration in conjunction with decentralised land settlement were to play an anti-Movement role in the Split.

Stephen Holt recalls how Professor L F Crisp in the Canberra branch almost brought about a decision that Bert Evatt’s ALP membership had expired and that he was therefore no longer a party member. Cathy Brigden covers the Melbourne Trades Hall while Greg Gardiner studies newspaper coverage of Dr. Evatt and the Split. Part three on “Religiosity and the Split” includes three chapters – by Peter Haeusler, Paul Strangio and Brian Costar, as well as by Bruce Duncan (author of *Crusades or Conspiracy? Catholics and the Anti-Communist Struggle* - reviewed in the July 2001 issue of *The Sydney Institute Quarterly*).

The remaining section of the book contains eight chapters under the theme “aftermath”. John Roskam’s research confirms that the Liberal Party at the time of the Split had not been favourably disposed towards Catholics. Party documents recognised that there was a need to overcome “intolerance” and “marked antipathy to Roman Catholics”. John Roskam also explores the impact that the Split exercised on the Liberal Party during the decade following Menzies’ retirement.

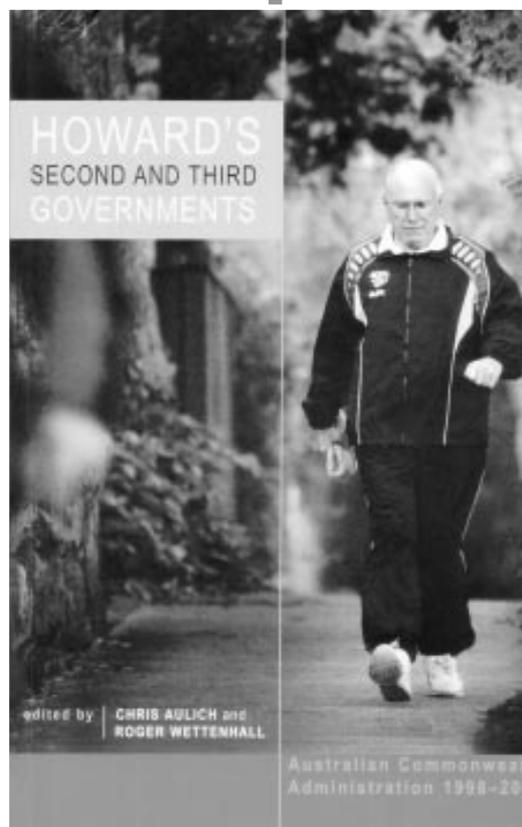
Tim Hayes writes from a family perspective. His grandfather, Tom Hayes, was for many years a Labor member of the Victorian parliament. His father, Kevin Hayes, gained Labor preselection for the State seat of Coburg three times between 1950 and 1954. Both were expelled from the Labor Party in 1955. Yet neither Tom Hayes nor Kevin Hayes agreed with the Movement’s involvement in the Labor Party. Tim Hayes calculates that only half of the 25 Victorian parliamentarians expelled in 1955 were Movement members or sympathisers.

Few Catholics survived the expulsion stage in Victoria. Brian Costar’s chapter on the Split in Queensland provides interesting information on an alliance between left-wing union officials and the right-wing Australian Workers’ Union resulting in the

destruction of the state Labor Government led by Vince Gair. Costar argues that power plays and personalities dominated in Queensland. Nevertheless, it is “puzzling”, he concludes, that the Split ever occurred in that state.

Rodney Cavalier provides useful insights into New South Wales, with particular reference to the Hunters Hill branch. The hatred and contempt between the competing groups in New South Wales, he believes was as deep as in the other states – despite the different outcome there.

As is to be expected, the chapters in the book are of an uneven quality. More significantly, *The Great Labor Schism* amounts to an incomplete examination of an important albeit regrettable event in Australia’s political history.



HOWARD’S SECOND AND THIRD GOVERNMENTS
 Edited by Chris Aulich and Roger Wettenhall
 UNSW press pb 2005
 rrp \$39.95
 ISBN 0 86840 783 6

Howard’s Second and Third Governments is the eighth book in the Australian Commonwealth Administration Series. The series began with the Hawke Government in 1983. The seventh volume covered the first Howard Government (1996–1998). The latest volume covers the six-year period from November 1998 until late 2004.

The dominance of John Howard over the government during this period is reflected in the comments made throughout this publication. The editors – Chris Aulich and Roger Wettenhall – observe that John Howard is said to practise “wedge politics”. The likely consequence, they add, is “the alienation of large numbers of Australian social scientists, the people likely to be contributing to books such as this”. Yes, they do say “alienation”.

If many of our social scientists are alienated, one would hope that the reason well and truly justifies it. So it is interesting that Gwynneth Singleton, an Adjunct Associate Professor in Politics at the University of Canberra, notes that “wedge politics” may not be new. Rather, it may just be the same old wine in a different bottle.

Singleton remarks that the term wedge politics “may have entered the lexicon of the popular press and attracted academic comment, but there is much to be said for [Gerard] Henderson’s view that attempting to exploit the weaknesses of the Opposition is just ‘clever’, ‘mainstream, routine politics’ and that is something at which Howard and his government have excelled”.

John Halligan, Harry Evans, Chris Aulich and Roger Wettenhall each examine the institutions of governance in part two. Seven contributors write on key public policy issues in part three – Mary Walsh (The Republic), Marie Brennan (education), Philip Mendes (welfare reform), Will Sanders (Indigenous affairs and reconciliation), James Jupp (immigration and multiculturalism), Daniel Baldino (foreign policy) and Anne Daly (taxation reform). David Adams considers the legacy and style of John Howard in the final section.

Chris Aulich provides a useful discussion on the various meanings that may be applied to privatisation. Outsourcing, he believes, amounts generally to the most common and yet the most complex form of privatization. Roger Wettenhall provides a valuable discussion of non-department public bodies. This is a complex and changing area about which information is not easy to obtain.

Roger Wettenhall examines in turn, statutory bodies, public sector companies and executive agencies. Anne Daly, Associate Professor in Economics at the University of Canberra covers microeconomic reform. As such, she addresses the role of incentives and competition in influencing economic behaviour under Howard rather than administrative dictate.

Philip Mendes, Senior Lecturer in Social Policy and Community Development at Monash University, applies “neo-liberal” and “social conservative” labels to the Howard Governments. The former involves policies valuing individualism and small government. The latter involves reinforcing “traditional institutions such as the family.”

Will Sanders believes that differing views about the concepts of equality, practicality and history led to poor relations between the Howard Governments and Indigenous people. David Adams, Senior Lecturer in Political Science at the Australian National University sees John Howard in enigmatic terms. He provides an interesting sketch of how others have perceived the Prime Minister adding John Howard’s own words at times to add to the picture. Adams concludes that the period under review were truly the Howard years.

John McConnell is the author of several senior textbooks

REVIEW OF THE REVIEWERS

Stephen Matchett

For the Howard haters and Bush and Blair bashers this is an awful age. First, John Howard was re-elected in Australia, with an increased majority. Then President Bush was returned, with a thumping increase in his popular vote. Most recently, Prime Minister Blair was re-elected, but with a much-reduced majority, which almost all the media immediately announced was the people’s judgement on his lies about Iraq. Except that the Tories, who also supported the war picked up seats, more seats than the peace party, the Liberal Democrats.

Clearly, the times are out of joint. And there are ample explanations of just how bad things are in these four catalogues of despair, Peter Browne and Julian Thomas (eds) *A Win and a Prayer: Scenes from the 2004 Australian Election* (Sydney, University of New South Wales Press), Marion Maddox, *God under Howard: The Rise of the Religious Right in Australian Politics* (Allen and Unwin), Sally Young, *The Persuaders: Inside the Hidden Machine of Political Advertising* (North Melbourne, Pluto Press) and Marian Sawyer and Barry Hinds (eds) *Us and Them: Anti-Elitism in Australia* (Perth, API Network).

Typical of political commentary from within the academy, these books are far fuller of complaints, than they are of suggestions on how to set things right. As such, they demonstrate the way academics have disengaged from the practice of politics.

Not policy, politics. When it comes to policy, this is a golden age of academic engagement. The revolution in computing power over the last 20 years means organisations like the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM) are able to analyse all aspects of economic, tax and welfare policy and produce data that shapes debate. But specialists in trade and tax, childcare and conservation, education and the environment do not run party campaigns or set strategies.

Academic enemies of the Howard Government, are happier whingeing on the sidelines than working out why the conservatives have now won four elections on the trot, and how to stop them winning a fifth.



These books set out the standard left diagnoses for its affliction with political irrelevance. The less sinister is that John Howard is an evil genius who uses tax cuts and welfare benefits to trick people into voting for him. This assumes the old left argument, that the workers are good hearted but lack learning and need guidance from their betters, generally inhabitants of academic tearrooms.

But as evil geniuses go, the Prime Minister is a bit unlikely and there is ample media coverage of the government's misdeeds, which the voters ignore. This leads to the second explanation, that the voters know exactly what they are doing and are as awful as the government. For people who cannot understand why the electorate did not punish the government for the invasion of Iraq, the continuing ill treatment of aspiring extra-legal immigrants, the low level of university funding or the government's refusal to sign the Kyoto Agreement, to name but a few, this is an obvious argument.

But a very dangerous one. Because by dismissing everybody who voted for the prime minister as gullible and greedy, reactionary and racist, the left intelligentsia is abandoning the arena of practical politics. And when criticism of the established order consists of name-calling and moralising the debate democracy requires is reduced.

The distinction between the issues that excite these authors and ordinary electors is less a gap than a chasm. For some academic ideologues tax cuts diminish the amount of money the public should provide them to get on with their important work.

Yet, instead of arguing the economics, oppositional academic culture has conceded defeat and turned away from the main game, how Australia can best

construct a richer country where every individual has a right to prosper. Instead, the left is almost exclusively focused on moral issues, the rights of refugees, the evils of free trade, discrimination against sexual minorities and so on.

This agenda may be morally important, but it does not interest the electors. The argument, both here and in the United States, that the polity is deeply divided, is specious. One side has simply stopped speaking the language of practical politics. And, for as long as the left intelligentsia stays out of the arena, the chance of change they yearn for is reduced.

The Marian Sawyer and Barry Hinds' anthology, *Us and Them: Anti-Elitism in Australia* demonstrates how far the academic left has run from reality. It is a committed collection of essays by academics and commentators who know they are the right, and will brook no dispute.

Some are informative, such as Tim Dymond's piece on the origins of the idea of the new class in Australian popular debate. Others make little effort to disguise their loyalties. Like Marian Sawyer, who runs an overt argument for a privileged public sector, tricked out as a case for fair play. Thus, she defends single mothers, ethnic minorities, "sexual lifestyle minorities"

(the quote is hers) and women in general, as victims. And she accuses public choice theorists of transforming decent people into opportunists, wanting special treatment from the state:

Public choice repositioned equality-seeking as the rent-seeking of special interests, rather than an authentic public value. ... The idea of shared schooling and universal services as a basis for common citizenship was, moreover, discounted as a mask for the vested interests of public-sector unions and their members.(39)



Note the code, “equality-seeking” and the attempt to dismiss the idea that unions ever act in anything other than the public interest.

Sawyer’s is a superior exercise in sophistry, presenting a public sector committed to equity, which only the mean-minded would resist.

Damien Cahill is even more old-fashioned, invoking Gramsci to explain how the real elite has gulled people with conservative social rhetoric into tolerating unpopular economic policies (90). Presumably, the unpopular policies he means are the bipartisan commitment to economic reform that has transformed Australia over the last two decades. Cahill also argues that rather than left wing intellectuals, the real “elite” are big business and its running dogs in the Murdoch press.

He has a point. It is a bit rich for commentators with access to audiences numbered in the hundreds of thousands to rant against academic journals, and the ratings wasteland that is Radio National. And while academic activists and their pals in the public sector are privileged in their insulation from the rigours of private sector employment, they are manifestly not electorally influential.

But they are still an elite, albeit a self-appointed one, in the way they assume their own policy views, however divorced from questions of economic growth and national security, should properly be privileged. And they still think their arguments are morally superior. As Cahill demonstrates.

By reducing concerns for social justice to ideological fashion or to the self-interest of new-class elites, the right is able to tarnish such concerns and render them ineffectual. Because it demonises the left and social justice claims, new class discourse allows the right to criticise the left without engaging seriously with left-wing arguments. (83)

And then there is Michael Pusey. Professor Pusey has been telling us how aggrieved Australians are for fifteen years. The essence of his argument, that ordinary Australians want to see more spending on schools and hospitals, is a transparent demand for a protected public sector:

Middle Australians do not subscribe to the ideological libertarian idea that public sector professionals – such as teachers, social workers, nurses, clerical and professional officers in our public services, and the like – comprise some “new class” of featherbedded parasites

pushing their own agendas and living off other peoples’ taxes. (198)

Evidently, this is all so obvious that Professor Pusey sees no need to explain where public service pay comes from. This anthology of anger is based in the distress that the old fashioned left feels over the way the debate has moved on. And rather than analyse how it happened, these authors would rather rage against the people they think have robbed them of their right to set the agenda.

Which for Steve Mickler, means talkback radio hosts who peddle conservative politics serving the interests of the global business elite. What this sort of argument ignores is that the shock jocks often indulge in Hansonite huffing against economic reform. And the truth is that micro-economic reform has occurred in spite of the social conservatives who see nothing wrong with government spending, as long as it props up people they approve of, in agriculture and protected small business, newsagents, pharmacists and the like.

Not according to James Walter, who argues “market populism” presents “advocates of social and economic equity” as “elites ... while recasting the discourse of reform in terms that favour commerce and have seen a widening gap between rich and poor” (220). There is no supporting information for this suggestion, unsurprising given all the evidence that government transfer payments have improved the circumstance of low-income families in the last decade.

The style of this statement reflects the overall tone of the collection. Most of these authors know that the old ideology of a dominant public sector is politically out of favour. But they struggle to understand why. Some think the populace has been gulled, some that the reactionary plebs have bought a line that does not serve their interests. It does not seem to occur to many of these authors that the debate has moved on and left the academics yearning for times past when they set the agenda are gone for good and that the wickedness of the Howard Government is a symptom of the way the world has changed, not a cause of the malady.

Marion Maddox understands reform advocates have to get back into the policy fight, particularly people whose religious beliefs translate into political ideas she approves of. And she spends most of *God Under Howard* detailing what they are, telling us exactly what she thinks about everything from Iraq to the way the social security system discriminated against her.

And if you are not with her, it seems Maddox thinks you are against her. From the start, she makes plain

that she dislikes almost everything the Prime Minister stands for. At times, it seems she is equally unhappy with the misguided wretches who vote for him:

“Voters accepted lies as political lingua franca and even when not deceived voted an increasingly notorious liar back and back.” (5) But the voters are less wicked than gullible, victims of the machiavellian cunning of a master politician who presents a reasonable face to con the community.

This book denounces the Prime Minister across the whole spectrum of Moral Middle Class issues. From refugees to Aborigines, from Iraq to economics, Howard is always up to no-good, manipulating the interests of the innocent and dispossessed to hang on to political power. His chosen tactic is to use conservative Christians in parliament to do his bidding, always staying in the shadows when there is mud to be slung but making sure it hits targets of his choosing.

In Maddox’s presentation, Howard is a master-politician of a deep duplicity. But it is never entirely clear if she thinks his motivation is to stay in power or to reshape Australia in his own reactionary image.

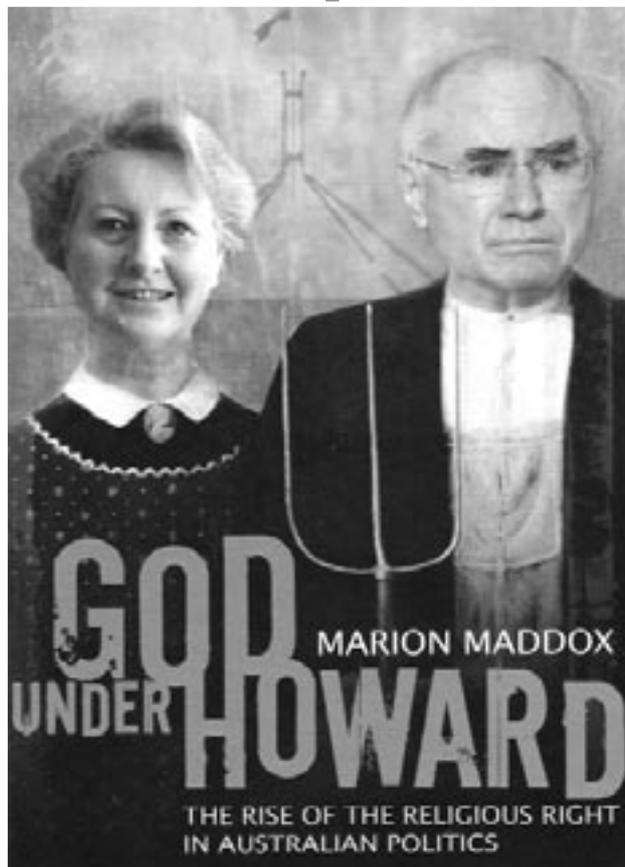
While Maddox does not seem to see it, these are not necessarily the same thing and the dichotomy is at the heart of this deeply flawed book. Whether Howard’s conservative religious values are genuine, or mere political opportunism, matters not a jot unless they enjoy electoral support. And if they do not then Howard’s supporters on the hard religious right will not back them for long. Religious zealots who pick political fights they cannot win do not stay long in politics.

And people with a grasp of political reality know it, especially John Howard. The way the Prime Minister firmly took abortion off the agenda, despite conservative demands for a debate on the subject, when it was plain that the electorate was happy with the status quo, demonstrates that however deep Howard’s conservatism he is most interested in hanging onto power. This inevitably means he will not

push the electorate further than it will permit itself to be pushed, which creates a problem for left-wing commentators who reluctantly recognise Howard is in touch with, even reflects, community opinion.

But not Maddox. She ends her book with a catalogue of the government’s failings that deny it legitimacy, whatever the voters think:

Australia’s democratic, egalitarian soul has sustained serious assaults from a government which encouraged our worst and endured “small target” silence from an opposition that refused to bring out our best. ... Howard might keep winning elections but, in between, he has not entirely had his way with Australia’s soul. (319).



As evidence we are not all as mean spirited as the Prime Minister, and the people who vote for him, Maddox points to supporters of refugees and reconciliation, opponents of the war in Iraq and the “Australians”, as if they are a majority, who prefer social security spending to tax cuts.

The problem is that Maddox is ill informed on key aspects of her own argument. Her assumption that the government grinds the poor, “maximum freedom for money and minimum freedom for

people” is not supported by the record. Under the Howard Government, the poorest Australians have not become poorer. Nor does she appear willing to accept the government has won four terms because enough voters think it is most likely to keep Australia secure and prosperous.

These fundamental foundations of Howard’s electoral success are simply unpalatable to his Moral Middle Class critics, which is why they retreat into secondary issues and focus on the government’s undoubted moral failings.

There is very little on John Howard’s religious beliefs in this book. In the keystone chapter, called “God Under Howard”, he does not appear for the first 30 pages. Maddox sticks to the MMM party line and

demonstrates that Howard's politics are as much a product of his innate conservatism as his religious faith, which leads him to adopt positions she disapproves of. And these include all sorts of issues that simply do not matter very much to anybody not directly involved.

Thus she criticises Howard for signing a petition against broadcasting the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras on prime time television saying that this was a blow against minority rights with more at stake than "the right of men to be seen on television in flamboyant frocks or dykes to flaunt their bikes in prime time". (45)

Whatever Maddox might think, compared to the real abuse suffered by generations of homosexual Australians in the past, this is not a first order problem. Nor, does electoral disinterest in it mean that either government or people are in some overwhelming way morally corrupt. At the heart of this book is a great outrage that John Howard's Christianity is of a conservative kind and as such hostile to all the fashionable causes of complaint adopted by the ideologues of the religious establishment.

What Maddox appears to want is more overt religion in public life, preferably of a politicised kind that focuses on the right sort of issues. She certainly does not like the idea of social and economic conservatives making the religious running in politics. Thus, she warns "the unusual prominence" (33) of religion in the 2004 election campaign was the product of a decade of backroom lobbying by the religious right.

But this is a fear of Maddox's own making. Australia may not be a godless country, but religious observance is a minority pass-time and for all the commentary about the arrival of Family First, there is no overwhelming case that voters who let their faith shape their politics are any more a risk to sensible politics than Green zealots.

Everybody remotely interested in politics will have read and heard everything Maddox argues before.

And while her book uses the forms of scholarship, it is as much a polemic as a work of academic analysis. For example the mainstream magazine of politics and letters, the *Adelaide Review* is described as a "maverick" publication, (126), whatever that sneering aside is supposed to mean. Maddox also focuses on Howard as opposition leader attacking Carmen Lawrence, as if there was something odd about a politician calling a minister names (124). And she says that in 1996 Pauline Hanson was "Howard's candidate" when it is unlikely that he had ever heard of the onetime Liberal standard bearer in Oxley before she was disendorsed (128).

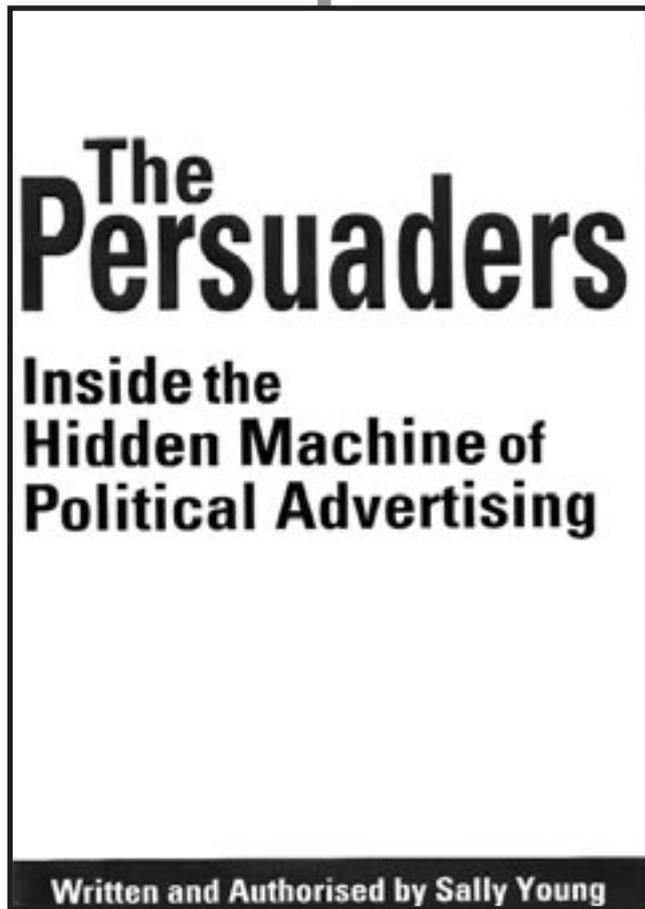
Perhaps Maddox's premise, that Howard uses religion as a driver for his conservative social agenda is correct, although her book does not make a convincing case. But life is short and this book is long, too long to make its thin argument and self-righteous tone worth enduring.

In contrast to Maddox's sermonising, the very title of Sally Young's book will encourage expectations among people who understand politics is about selling ideas in a crowded and competitive market to difficult and discerning customers.

Studies of the mechanics of electoral politics works

in the real world are few and far between. The best-known book on Australian political marketing, Stephen Mills, *New Machine Men* is now 20 years old. So, with the market much to herself, and all the work she has obviously done, Dr Young could have produced a book that explained political marketing in a way that would have been useful for communications practitioners, political operators and just plain interested readers.

Sadly, she is no Dick Morris. Instead of analysis on how political communications work she provides comprehensive information on public funding of political parties and a long denunciation of the culture it has created.



The title says it all. Maybe the allusion to Vance Packard's 1950s fear sheet on the dangers of so-called subliminal advertising is intended. But even if it is not, Young's message is much the same; we are all being manipulated. Young's thinking reflects the orthodoxy of people who cannot understand how so many people vote for parties, which are so bad. And by pitching their advertising to people who don't follow politics the major parties enthrone the judgement of the ignorant:

Veteran pollsters have suggested that it may be only ten per cent of the population who ever really follow the issues, read the broadsheet press or watch quality news and current affairs. In 2001, only thirty-one per cent of Australians said they took "a good deal of interest in the election campaign". (49)

One can only wonder what constitutes "quality" in Young's mind. Would Andrew Bolt's commentary in the tabloid *Herald Sun* fail the quality control test while Alan Ramsey in the broadsheet *Sydney Morning Herald* pass?

Dr Young also runs the loser's line that the parties advertise to the lowest common denominator.

With their high-priced political ads, Australian politicians meet their aim of communicating a simple message to swinging voters. Unfortunately, that message seems to be: "We think you are stupid and greedy".(230)

Yet the assumption that people in marginal seats decide elections, and that politicians, and policies are shaped by marketers to sell to them, no longer applies like it did before 2001. Since last October, the government now has few seats to lose on a very small swing. It will only lose office at the next election with a substantial vote against it right across the country.

And this means that all parties must pitch to people on the basis of their beliefs. For Labor to win next

time it will have to change a lot of voters' perceptions of what it stands for rather than repeat the previous disastrous strategy of assuring us Kim Beazley is a nicer bloke than John Howard. And the government will need to run harder on its enterprise culture argument next time. After the disgraceful giveaway at last year's election, and the Budget tax cuts, there cannot be many people left to bribe.

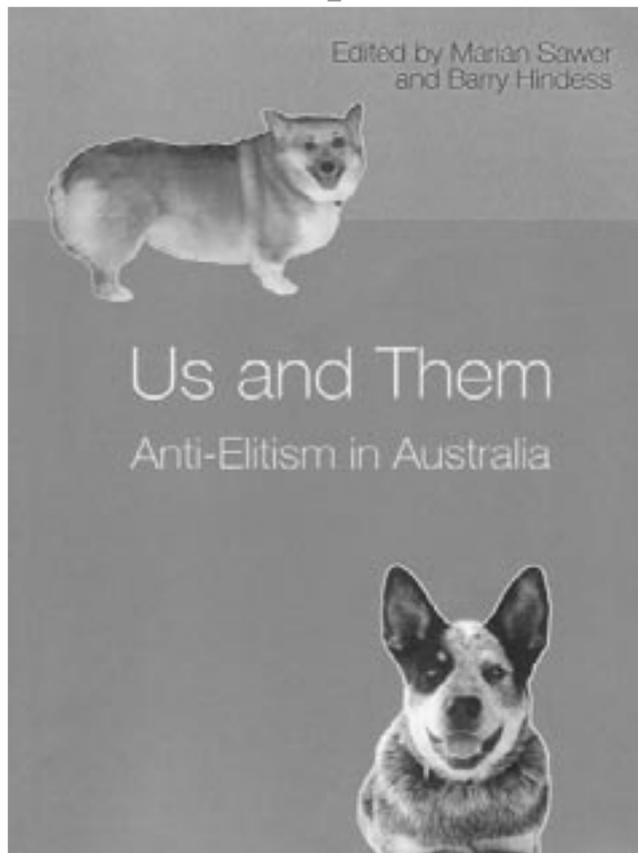
Dr Young seems convinced marketers can shape a political party like a consumer product, yet she assumes the critical awareness people use in assessing all sorts of other products disappears when it comes to politics. In a Radio National interview with Terry Lane (7 November 2004), Young said she would like to work on a campaign. It is a shame she hasn't had the chance, she might have learned how hard is the practical craft of changing people's minds. To adapt an old ad industry aphorism, "voters are not stupid, they are your spouse, parents or children".

What really bothers Dr Young is the way the professionals freeze out the peripheral players. Certainly, she builds a comprehensive, and compelling, case against the way Labor and the Liberals vote themselves big bundles of public

money to fund their election efforts. But on that basis, she makes her major pitch, that the minor players should get a bigger share of the cake. And she warns that we could find a future where rich individuals buy their way to political power if we were to become a republic with a directly elected president:

"Free speech" is already too expensive in Australia. ... Democracy requires more than just electing our head of state and representatives. It requires a fair and level playing field where newcomers and the less wealthy have a fighting chance. (136)

This may mean the one million people who voted One Nation, but more likely refers to the thinking minority's chosen parties, the Australian Greens and



Democrats. And it is here that Dr Young's argument becomes alarming. Because the evidence all indicates that, despite ample public airtime and Bob Brown's genius for self-promotion, the Greens will always remain an inner city fringe force. And as for The Democrats, despite their flash "lie detectors" branding strategy (remember the sight of the senators in black skivvies?) they failed dismally at the polls. In the free market of ideas all the advertising in the world cannot fill an intellectual vacuum.

But when Dr Young is not demanding public subsidies for political advertising be spread about more liberally she wants rigorous regulation of political messages. She regrets the High Court's decision to throw out 1991 legislation banning political advertising in an argument that Orwell's O'Brien would be proud of:

When a system is unbound by any rules (or by inadequate ones), this can actually be more stifling for democracy because it can mean less transparency, less accountability, less openness, and fewer people having a say or being involved in politics. In practice the laissez-faire free-for-all of Australian political advertising actually makes it less free for all and weakens democracy. (186)

At the heart of this book is the standard complaint of the Moral Middle Class, that minorities, women, migrants, etc are being excluded from a say in public life by the major parties. She is especially annoyed that ethnic minorities are not presented in political advertising, saying it is a ploy to attract swinging voters, (216) from the mythical mainstream (214), which she does not seem to realise may just include immigrants or second generation Australians (215).

But while Dr Young has a bob every way to prove how cynical the political advertising industry is, overall she is most annoyed that the right sorts of people are not running politics. Certainly, she demands the state give activists a privileged position that they cannot win in open electoral competition:

Some will argue that social movements or issue groups are the way of the future. This proposal would not exclude such new groups or movements but it would encourage them to formalise their role in the political system in order to be able to access benefits like free TV time (as per the Canadian system) – just as the Greens have emerged from the environmental movement. Theoretically it opens up more chances for these groups in a system, which at the moment, is highly two-party

centred and highly centred around money and financial resources. (305)

And for all her insights into political advertising, what Dr Young offers at the end is the old-fashioned left's argument that the voters are being tricked:

In Australia, it hasn't been the tyrant's jackboot that has endangered Australian (sic) democracy. Rather it's been the ad agent's storyboards, the corporate donor's chequebook, the staffer's database, and the media mogul's profits that mark a system operating for the benefit of an insider political caste. But now "it's time" to reclaim our democracy. (307)

But evidently not time to produce a scholarly analysis of how political advertising operates.

Dr Young clearly has the knowledge to produce a fascinating book. Her treatment of party fund raising is comprehensive. Her chapter on advertising strategies is fascinating. But she betrays herself with a populist, partisan romp in which she demonstrates that she seems to think only a conspiracy can account for the way the sort of populism she supports is marginalised by the voters. Anybody who wants to learn about the state of the art of political advertising in Australia will be better served by Sarah Miskin and Richard Grant's parliamentary library research brief (5, 2004-2005) *Political Advertising in Australia*.

If any more evidence is needed that much of the commentariat still has trouble coming to terms with changes in the way Australians decide how they vote, it is easily found in Peter Browne and Julian Thomas' collection of commentary on the 2004 election, *A Win and a Prayer*.

There is as a great deal of grievance about the failure of enough voters to recognise the cynicism and villainy of the Howard Government in this anthology. Geoffrey Barker is angry the election did not focus on foreign policy and Australia's long-term strategic circumstances. Fair enough, Barker is manifestly no friend to John Howard but his criticism that the government is not paying enough attention to defence and foreign policy is well made. However, Barker indulges in what looks like contempt for voters who do not value what he thinks they should.

For Australian voters – provincial, materialistic, obsessed with personal short-term utility rather than long-term national survival – the main issue was who was getting robbed and who was getting the spoils. The politicians and the media focused on who was getting the goods, and mostly excluded defence and security issues. (41)

DR PETER DOHERTY RETURNS TO THE SYDNEY INSTITUTE

Professor Peter Doherty AC was awarded the Nobel Prize for Physiology and Medicine with Swiss colleague, Rolf Zinkernagel, in 1996 for discovering "the nature of the cellular immune defense" and was also awarded the "Australian of the Year" in 1997. The Nobel discovery was made whilst performing as a Research Fellow at the John Curtin School of Medical Research (JCSMR). Although he commutes between SJCRH in Memphis, Tennessee and the Department of Microbiology and Immunology at the University of Melbourne, he spends most of his time in Australia as an advocate for promoting the cause of biomedical research and education. Dr Doherty has led substantial research in viral immunology at the Wistar Institute, Philadelphia, JCSMR and St Jude Children's Research Hospital (SJCRH) and is currently developing a new research program at the University of Melbourne.

SPEAKER: DR. PETER DOHERTY AC
(Nobel Laureate – Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine, 1996; Australian of the Year 1997; Laureate Professor at the University of Melbourne and a Burnet Fellow of NHMRC)

TOPIC: *A Beginner's Guide to Winning the Nobel Prize*

DATE: Wednesday 31 August 2005
****Bookings from 17 August only****

TIME: 5.30 for 6 pm

VENUE: BT Training Room (Room 401), Level 4, Chifley Tower, 2 Chifley Square, Sydney

RSVP: (02) 9252 3366 or email

**ENQUIRIES: PH: (02) 9252 3366
FAX: (02) 9252 3360**

**OR mail@thesydneyinstitute.com.au
WEBSITE: www.thesydneyinstitute.com.au**



And Morag Fraser makes it plain that, in the Adelaide electorate of Mayo, incumbent Alexander Downer was not the candidate who represented the issues that mattered:

Twenty-first-century Australian politicians in election mode like the known and the predictable. They look for simple dichotomies, rhyming slogans and messages that "cut through". Journalists and media proprietors collaborate, even as they protest. But up on the peak of Mount Lofty politics seem so tawdry, so approximate. Mayo is a slice of complex, troubled, comfortable, beautiful, teetering Australian town and country life. No election result will tell its full story, or do it justice. (100)

Of course, as an after-word admits, Downer's vote was effectively unchanged, which, on Fraser's own argument, would seem to make a case that the electors did not have much of an idea of the issues that matter.

It was left to the professionals to explain what happened to Labor, and what it meant for the party, without the hand wringing. Brian Costar and Peter Browne make it starkly apparent that electors in once marginal seats took a good look at what Labor and the Greens were offering and decided they were not buying. Novelist Shane Maloney and political philosopher David Burchell produce portraits of once heartland Labor seats in Sydney and Melbourne that the party can no longer take for granted.

In the process, they went to the heart of the left's problems in a way that the emotionally assured ideologues seem unwilling or unable to match. The old assumptions, that the poor and their intellectual leaders vote Labor and the ignorant and greedy vote for the Tories no longer apply. The challenge, which writers like Maddox and Sawyer and their peers, seem unable to accept, is to find ways to get rid of the Howard Government, rather than just complaining about it.

Which may be why the main media effectively ignored these books, as there is only so much complaining, without anybody offering answers, editors are willing to inflict on their readers.

The only substantive review of Browne and Thomas in the print press was in *The Age* (15 January) where Nick Economou was kind, finding something nice to say about most of the contributors. But there was a sting in the tail where he wrote that while the book would appeal to "a cosmopolitan readership ... who don't know whether to laugh or cry at the state of contemporary Australian politics" the people who re-elected John Howard will not even know it exists.

Sawyer and Hindes went unreviewed, apart from an astute piece by David Marr (*Journal of Australian Studies Review of Books*, December 2004 @www.apinetwork.com). When Marr was not sniping at News Limited he made an important point - that the left was wasting its time in trying to connect two different opponents, Hansonite populism and “anti-progressive” ideologues who mimic the populists: “The pursuit by many contributors to this collection of some organic connection between traditional populism and modern anti-elite rhetoric is essentially futile.”

But what Marr did not seem to understand is that the economic opinions of the so-called progressive left have more in common with the socialism of the Hansonites than with the real reformers.

Sally Young got more attention. There were the usual approving summaries masquerading as reviews. Wayne Crawford (*The Mercury*, 11 December 2004) thought her “extensive investigation” was “compelling”.

And other reviewers were happy to accept her claims. Like Peter Ellingsen who thought, “Young has done us a favour by documenting this unsavoury exercise, along with the history of Madison Avenue’s invasion of Australian elections”. (*The Age*, 19 March). And like Robert Crawford, who entirely bought her argument that advertising was eroding Australian democracy:

It is perhaps testament to the pervasiveness [persuasiveness?] of Young’s argument that my cynicism leads me to think that the erosion of democracy in Australia wrought by advertising will not be reversed. (*Journal of Australian Studies Review of Books*, 29, December 2004 @www.apinetwork.com)

It was left to Peter van Onselen to suggest Young was taking herself too seriously. Certainly, he admired her research and found her recommendations for reform, “reasonable in principle”. (*Policy*, Autumn, 2005 @ www.cis.org.au). However, he was not convinced:

I can see the lighter side of politicians and their advertising pitches, and fortunately I think voters still can as well. The dangers of political manipulation Young highlights are present, but perhaps they are yet to reach the alarming heights she suggests.

Maddox received the same sort of treatment. There were supportive summaries and anodyne approval, like Antony Loewenstein’s, who took a great many words to say nothing of substance (*Sun Herald*, 20 February).

Shaun Charles (*Courier Mail*, 19 February) was convinced it was:

... a fine achievement. Maddox displays considerable skill here and, given the subject matter, never allows her tone to drift towards the hysterical. Nonetheless, reading such a clear account of Australia’s shift towards ultra-conservatism sends a chill down your spine.

So was Andrew Hamilton – “she makes her points easily and persuasively” - in a long piece that used the book to launch his own argument on the issues Maddox raised. (*Eureka Street*, May 2005, @www.eurekastreet.com.au)

Muriel Porter provided a classic statement of Moral Middle Class outrage in her rave, in more senses than one, review. (*The Age*, 26 February)

God Under Howard is a troubling expose of the unheralded, unholy marriage between religious fundamentalism and political expediency that has taken place in Canberra, a marriage that has justified and accelerated increased government intrusion in the lives of individuals while accelerating the pace of economic deregulation.

But other reviewers looked at the book for evidence rather than moralising. According to John Carmody, “she seriously over-argues her case (at times to the point of being incendiary). She is especially hostile to John Howard ... but the book would have been better if she had disciplined that animus and tightened the text.” (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 March)

And Gerard Henderson was not having any of it. He argued that the debate over religion in politics was over-blown and that Maddox’s book was “a diatribe (yet another) directed at the Prime Minister who, apparently, has no redeeming features whatsoever”. (*The Age*, 8 February)

Neither was Emma-Kate Symons (*The Australian*, 29 January) who saw a need for a book of this sort, “her subject – the interaction of religion and politics in contemporary Australia – is a little understood yet powerful phenomenon”, but decided this wasn’t it:

God under Howard is a crusader’s document worthy of a Methodist-raised religious studies academic. And woe betide any who dare question its dogma.

A description that could equally apply to all these books. When it comes to passion Howard haters have it in spades. Perhaps it is compensation for the fact that nobody outside the Moral Middle Class is listening to their outraged, and often incoherent complaints.

Stephen Matchett can found at stephen4@hotmail.net.au

LONDON BOMBINGS – WHAT THE LEADERS SAID

The leader writers were all appalled, writes *Stephen Matchett*, and knew who to blame for the 6 July London bombing. But while they agreed that something must be done, they differed in exactly what - -

The terror attacks in London at the beginning of July generated similar responses among the leader writers, but there were degrees of difference.

The *Courier Mail* (9 July) captured the key point when it argued that the bombers' motivation was a hatred for British values rather the presence of its army in Iraq: "This attack was not because of where British soldiers are but what the British people represent – tolerance, individuality and democratic equality".

The *Australian* saw the July bombings as the work of nihilists: "These attacks are the work of misanthropes who have no faith in humanity, no hope for the future, outcasts who compensate for their own inadequacies by killing innocent individuals who have done them no harm." (9 July)

There was, the national daily went on to argue, no case for taking terrorist complaints seriously - "the Islamists' own statements of why they do what they do, and what they hope to achieve by it, are an impenetrable mish-mash." Nor any reason to treat them as anything other than an obdurate enemy beyond any appeal to reason. And any who would argue that the west had to acknowledge the cultural concerns that catalyse terror are appeasers:

Events since 9/11 have thrown out the same challenge to us that Nazism posed to our grandparents and great-grandparents. The question is: have we multiculturalised and relativised ourselves so successfully that we can no longer assert their values, or match their courage". (*The Australian*, 22 July)

The paper also argued that Australia's culture of tolerance had to cut both ways:

It is time for tough-minded tolerance. As a nation of immigrants Australians easily accept neighbours with different attitudes

to matters of morals and their own ways of worship. It is the Australian way to accommodate new cultures. It is the Australian way to take people for who they are, not what they wear, or where they come from. But it is also the Australian way to abhor those who demand to live their lives as they wish and to practise their religion as they choose, but reject the right of everybody else to do the same.

Some of the tabloids put the same point – in tougher terms. Like the *Herald Sun* (12 July), which wanted police and spooks to have all the powers they need to stop terrorists before they strike Australia: "Terrorists are choosing when and where to attack peaceful populations. Our intelligence and security services must be able to choose the time and place to investigate terror suspects. ... And while there may be arguments about the rights of individuals, intelligence and security services must have the means to investigate suspects."

Given that ASIO already has the power, subject to approval by a federal judge or magistrates to detain and question individuals suspected of knowing terrorist plans this is serious stuff. And those who do not like such surveillance, the paper said, should lump it or leave:

In the case of the Islam convert who complains that ASIO and the police are watching him, saying he expects to be visited within five minutes of a bomb going off in Melbourne, his remedy is as simple as his fundamentalist beliefs. He says he does not want to be part of Australia and that his sympathies lie with the people of Afghanistan. Let him leave the country. People will line the road to Melbourne airport to make sure he goes.

In contrast, the *Herald Sun's* Sydney stable-mate was more interested in the strength of Australian society as a defence against terror than immediate appeals for more police powers:

Britain is now prey to the vile perversion of the suicide bomb – the preferred terror tactic of Islamic fanatics. And we would be naïve if we were to think in this country that we are immune from such threats. If culturally diverse Britain has unknowingly harboured such enemies, it is probable that nests of violent extremists have infested our communities as well. Yet, ironically, our best defence is in that very sense of community itself. For the stronger we make our own social and cultural institutions, the less opportunity, the less space we provide for those who seek to tear them apart. (*Daily Telegraph* 14 July)

But while the *Tele* did not back away from this argument, it was talking much tougher at the beginning of the next week after it had reported anti-western propaganda for sale in Sydney Islamic bookshops:

Civil libertarians and anti-censorship purists will be relaxed with the *Daily Telegraph's* revelation that hate-filled terror manuals are readily available in Sydney's radical Islamic bookstores. Conversely, these pollyannas will be upset with the fact that ASIO has these stores under surveillance, arguing that such attention undermines basic freedoms in a diverse community.

The paper was having none of any free speech defence:

This is the battle that must be won, a battle not just about the terrorist methods but their views. Not just their barbaric acts but their barbaric ideas. Those ideas are on sale in Sydney today. Those who buy, sell and read this toxic propaganda are asking for the closest scrutiny. (18 July)

In Adelaide, *The Advertiser* was much more moderate. It began by warning any retaliation against ordinary Muslim communities, "who are the enemy of the fundamentalist" because encouraging anger and alienation among them would suit the terrorists' schemes: "Their aim is to destabilise, divide and conquer, to set Christian against Muslim. It is only when we retaliate in the same way that their extreme views and hatred gain any currency." (11 July)

Despite any apparent attacks in Australia, the paper again called for calm at the end of that week:

The cowardly fanatics who orchestrate these atrocities have no face, no identity. It is easy, even convenient to brand them as Muslim. Or to take out our frustrations against Muslims by abusing them in the street. These attacks are orchestrated by fanatics and extremists, not caring and concerned Muslims. Revenge has no role in this dreadful tragedy. (15 July)

Unless everybody else has missed sectarian violence in Adelaide, it is hard to see why the paper needed to twice warn against a danger that does not appear to exist in Australia.

The next week, the paper was warning against censorship of social critics as hypocritical and attacked any idea of Britain following the tough on terror path of Israel, or the British in Northern Ireland, "where the presence of armed British security forces has not stopped the bloody policies of religious separatists. Nor will the implementation of hard-edged, police-state, anti-terrorism guarantee peace and security in Britain or Australia". (*The Advertiser*, 19 July)

BARONESS GREENFIELD AND THE BRAIN

Baroness Susan Greenfield is not a fellow of the Royal Society. She has very little to say about that. On the other hand she is a force in British science, and she knows it. She is a professor of pharmacology at Oxford, which even in the bitchy world of British academics counts for something. She is also a baroness and a member of the House of Lords, one of the "people's peers" appointed by Tony Blair to put oomph into the upper chamber. She has launched three academic start-up companies, named Synaptica, BrainBoost and Neurodiagnostics, all of which are concerned with aspects of Alzheimer's disease. As well she is the author of "*Journey to the Centres of the Mind: Toward a Science of Consciousness*" (1995) W H Freeman & Co, and "*Private Life of the Brain*" (2000) Penguin. She has also written "*The Human Brain: A Guided Tour*" (1997) Orion-Phoenix Press, which ranked in the best seller list for hard and paperbacks. From 1996-1999, she held the Gresham Chair of Physic, and has received 18 honorary degrees.

HEAR BARONESS GREENFIELD AT THE SYDNEY INSTITUTE

SPEAKER: **BARONESS SUSAN GREENFIELD CBE**
(Professor of Pharmacology at Oxford University; Director of the Royal Institution of Great Britain, Synaptica Ltd, BrainBoost Ltd & Neurodiagnostics Ltd)

TOPIC: ***The Future of the Brain***

DATE: Wednesday 24 August 2005

****Bookings from 10 August only****

TIME: 5.30 for 6 pm

RSVP: (02) 9252 3366 or email

ENQUIRIES: PH: (02) 9252 3366

FAX: (02) 9252 3360

OR mail@thesydneyinstitute.com.au

WEBSITE: www.thesydneyinstitute.com.au



THE HON TONY ABBOTT MP with MAJOR JOYCE HARMER

Armed with an unshakable faith in humanity, Major Joyce Harmer has counselled some of society's least wanted: drug addicts, alcoholics and criminals including accused child killer Kathleen Folbigg and the victims of Sydney's notorious gang rape trials. The Hon Tony Abbott MP will launch Joyce Harmer's biography in September at The Sydney Institute.

SPEAKER: THE HON. TONY ABBOTT MP
(Leader of the House, Minister for Health & Ageing)

DATE: Friday 9 September 2005
****Bookings from 26 August only****

TIME: 12 pm for 12.30 pm

VENUE: BT Training Room (Room 401),
Level 4, Chifley Tower, 2 Chifley
Square, Sydney

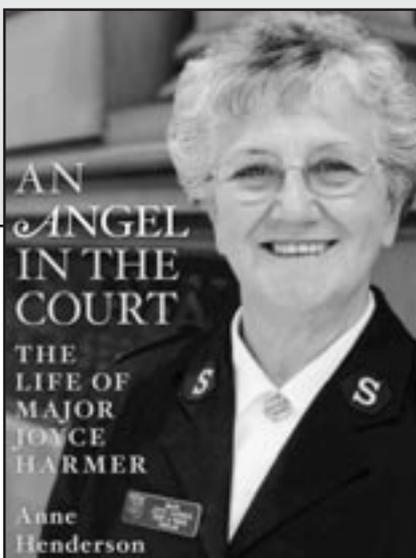
RSVP: (02) 9252 3366 or email

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FAX: (02) 9252 3360

OR mail@thesydneyinstitute.com.au

WEBSITE: www.thesydneyinstitute.com.au



The Sydney Morning Herald (9 July) shared The Tiser's concerns.

The SMH's editorial line in support of Australia's role in the war of terror is as clear as the reverse position expressed by some of its columnists. On 22 July, the paper argued Australia should stay the course in Iraq and that the decision to return troops to Afghanistan was necessary, and overdue.

But while the paper made sure no accusations of appeasement could be levelled calling the London attack "the cowardly bombing of London's peak-hour public transport" in its first substantive leader on the subject, it was anxious not to be seen to support any erosion of civil liberty:

The balance between public and protection and individual freedoms is tricky, and all the more difficult for emotions laid bare by the bombings. Perverse as it may seem, however, tolerance is two-edged. Protections of multicultural freedoms, for example, have facilitated the preaching of extremism. Protecting legal freedoms is fundamental, but so, too, is protection from what a global terrorism conference dubbed Europe's al-Qaeda-style threat "growing from within". Expect the bombings also to enhance the legitimacy in mainstream Europe for bigotry. Not only is it unjust to blame those whose only association with the terrorists is a shared religion or race, it is dangerously counter-productive. Further marginalisation of those whose isolation within society already fuels terrorist ire and recruitment will serve only the forces of evil.

The Australian was also alive to the danger to political and civil freedom. But it had a different take on the behaviour society had a right to expect from minority groups:

... it is hardly the height of Hansonism to expect all Australians to acknowledge allegiance to the country they call home and to accept the way to change aspects of society they do not like is through the ballot box. ... Australians all have a right to say and think what they like, within the law. But it is the intellectual equivalent of treason to exonerate, let alone celebrate, terrorist acts that kill Australians, and others.

What separates the two broadsheets might only be a matter of degrees, but there is still a deal of difference between them.

Stephen Matchett is a leader writer for The Australian



GERARD HENDERSON'S MEDIA WATCH

TAKE ONE - HELEN REDDY'S SIXTH SENSE

Today's lesson commences with a take from Helen Reddy's recently published epistle titled *The Woman I Am: A Memoir* (HarperCollins, 2005). The one-time singer, actor and television celebrity became famous with her song *I am Woman* which, as her publisher attests, "provided the feminist anthem of the 1970s". And now *The Woman I Am* is likely to provide the road-map for the 21st Century – as we all seek what Ms Reddy calls "soul growth" in this Vale of Tears in which we all reside.

For the most valuable insights in *The Woman I am*, turn to Chapter 30 titled "Family ties" and Chapter 31 titled, "Royalty and reincarnation". Ms Reddy outlines details about her "sixth sense" along with her "interest in hypnotic regression" and declares: "The keystone of reincarnation is karma, the metaphysical law of cause and effect, that states that every action has a reaction". Then there is "group karma" which "involves several people... reincarnating together to resolve unfinished business".

The author reveals that "the British royal family is a clear example of group karma, familial reincarnation and name replication". Her scoops include the claim that "Richard III, who died on a field of war", was "reborn" as Ms Wallis Simpson (nee Warfield). Get it? The much divorced Wallis married Edward VIII, but only after he was forced to abdicate as King of Britain. Edward VIII, formerly the Duke of Windsor, was also formerly "a personal servant to Richard III". So, in a (reincarnated) sense, he married up. And there's (much) more. The Queen Mother - as in Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon (1900-2002) – was formerly the "mother of Henry VIII", and Queen Elizabeth II was "formerly... Edward V" and her sister Princess Margaret was "formerly Prince Richard of York" who died in the Tower of London eons ago. And so on. Oh yes, and Elvis Presley was "formerly King Tutankhamen". In view of this, it seems likely that Mr Tutankhamen has also now left the building – so to speak.

In case you have ever wondered why famous people invariably reincarnate as famous people, rather than as anonymous types who would create little interest in published memoirs, Ms Reddy has an answer for this as well. It has something to do with "the lesson of the use and misuse of power" which "can take many lifetimes to learn". So, there you have it. A (very) close reading of *The Woman I am* provides some very useful tools in media analysis. As the following examples demonstrate.

MALCOLM FARR'S DELIGHT

Malcolm Farr, the *Daily Telegraph's* chief political reporter, is not one to readily admit that he, or his colleagues in the Canberra Press Gallery, ever get anything wrong. So he will need a special karma to escape unscathed from this particular howler. In a recent comment piece in the *Daily Telegraph* (16 June 2005), Malcolm Farr commented:

Robert Menzies wrote six books, including the memoirs *Afternoon Delight*, and his big fan John Howard is thinking of a volume of his own.

Some (unkind) critics might suggest that Mr Farr misnamed Robert Menzies' book *Afternoon Light*, which was published in 1967, because he confused the founder of the Liberal Party's tome with the 1976 hit song "Afternoon Delight" – which was originally performed by the Starland Vocal Band. As in "Star rockets in flight/Afternoon delight/Afternoon delight". Other (kinder) types might see the answer to Malcolm Farr's (apparent) confusion in karma and all that. Perhaps Menzies' very own book *Afternoon Light* reincarnated as the song "Afternoon Delight" circa 1976. If humans can reincarnate backwards – why can't books and songs reincarnate forward? So maybe Mr Farr was not wrong after all.

The presence of karma, no doubt, also helps explain Malcolm Farr's apparent stumble when on-the-couch during the ABC TV *Insiders* program on 3 July 2005. Discussion turned on Bernard Lagan's book on former Labor leader Mark Latham, titled *Loner*. Labor Senator John Faulkner, when launching the book, had commented that a number of Canberra Press Gallery journalists were heavily into "widespread revisionism" – in that they had said before the election that Mark Latham had won the campaign, only to claim after the election that Labor had run a poor campaign due to, in John Faulkner's words, "Mark's unreliability, his flakiness, his recklessness".

Barrie Cassidy led the on-the-couch *Insiders* discussion on Sunday 3 July 2005, followed by Malcolm Farr.

Barrie Cassidy: *What he [John Faulkner] says is that, once the Press Gallery got the result, the pack mentality kicked in and they changed direction and then the campaign became evidence of Mark Latham's recklessness and so on.*

Malcolm Farr: *I've got to say, I don't know what pack that was. I wasn't running with them because my beloved organ [i.e. The Daily Telegraph] was saying*

the week out that Latham would lose, that he hadn't won the debate, the critical debate – which was himself and the economic debate.

Now, maybe *The Daily Telegraph* was saying, a week before the 9 October 2004 election, that Latham Labor had not won the debate during the campaign. But precisely what was Mr Farr saying? Well, on the Sky News' *The Gallery: Election 04* program, which went to air on Monday 4 October 2004, Malcolm Farr asked his panel the following leading question:

Look, the view coming out – Mark Latham's won the campaign but lost the election. Is that possible?

All three panelists (David Spears, Glenn Milne and Helen McCabe) agreed this certainly was possible. Malcolm Farr then summed up the consensus of *The Gallery: Election '04* group, including himself: "Everybody's saying – oh, he's [i.e. Mark Latham] a nice boy, next time it will be his, it will be his turn". In other words, Malcolm Farr was running the line that the Coalition would win the 2004 election due to John Howard's experience – but that Mark Latham had done well in the campaign and that he was in with a real chance to win the next election in 2007. Good prediction, eh? – especially in light of Mr Latham's resignation from politics in January 2005.

Malcolm Farr re-stated this Latham-won-the-campaign position in *The Daily Telegraph* on 9 October 2004 – the very morning of the election. He concluded his comment piece with the claim that, despite some errors in the final week of the election campaign:

Mark Latham will still be credited with having won the campaign, which is a strange trophy should you lose the election.

So, despite his assurances to the contrary on *Insiders*, Malcolm Farr did say – prior to the election – that Mark Latham had "won the campaign". So, how come he could not remember this on *Insiders*? Perhaps Mr Farr had a hypnotic regression moment and his very own soul power told him that, in another life, he would not have said that Mark Latham won the campaign. Or something like that.

MATT PRICE'S REACTION

Malcolm Farr is not the only member of the Canberra Parliamentary Press Gallery to have reincarnated their post-election views to negate a pre-election statement.

Consider the case of News Limited journalist Matt Price. Before the election, Mr Price predicted that Mark Latham would win the 2004 election "by a couple of seats". He wrote that, "should Howard lose", the principal reason would turn on John Howard's refusal to be up-front about the war in Iraq which "has damaged the PM's credibility" (*The Weekend Australian*, 9 October 2004). Then, after the election, Matt Price declared that Latham lost the election on account of his decision to withdraw the

Australian Defence Force (ADF) from Iraq by Christmas 2004. Interviewed on ABC TV *Lateline* program on 22 October 2004, Price declared that "just about everyone now accepts" that Latham's "Iraq troops withdrawal comment...was a mistake". In private correspondence with the author of *Media Watch*, Price argued that there was no inconsistency between his two positions. Really.

Now Matt Price is at it again. Writing in *The Sunday Telegraph* on 24 July 2005, he reported that Bernard Lagan had revealed in his book *Loner* that – before the election – ALP foreign affairs shadow minister Kevin Rudd warned Mark Latham against committing a Labor government to withdraw the ADF from Iraq by Christmas 2004. Mr Rudd's advice was rejected by Mr Latham. Wrote Price:

His [Lagan's] book reveals that Latham floated the Christmas withdrawal with Kevin Rudd by leaving a voice-mail message on his foreign affairs spokesman's mobile phone. Rudd panicked, tried to contact his leader, but failed. Rudd left three long messages on Latham's mobile, pleading with him to reconsider what Rudd predicted would be a disastrous strategy. Latham ditched his plan to make the announcement the following day, but went ahead with it a week later. Rudd was furious – and dead right about the disaster. The rest is history.

Well, yes. But it is also history that, before the election, Price described Latham's Iraq policy not as a disaster but, rather, as a winner. It seems that Matt Price has been caught up in the familiar pickle which Helen Reddy described so well – that is when every action has a reaction. As in false prophecy – followed by plenty of fudge.

LAURA TINGLE - RUNNING ON SOUL POWER

And then there's the case of Laura Tingle. Before the 2004 Federal election, Ms Tingle correctly predicted that the Howard Government would be returned to office. But she thought that Latham Labor would do well – maintaining that "a repeat performance of 1969 appears to be a strong possibility" (*Australian Financial Review*, 8 October 2004). In 1969, under Gough Whitlam's leadership, Labor obtained a swing of almost 7 per cent and won an additional 18 seats. In 2004, under Mark Latham's leadership, Labor recorded a swing against it of 1.7 per cent and suffered a net loss of 5 seats.

Then, after the election, Tingle wrote a piece to which a sub-editor gave the heading "Winning was easy. Now it gets tough". Assessing recently released economic data, she concluded that "from a voter's point of view, the Coalition could not have chosen its timing better" since in October 2004 "the political and economic

cycles were in a rare and beautiful harmony” (*Australian Financial Review*, 17 December 2004).

In other words, before the election Ms Tingle predicted that Labor would win votes and seats, albeit not the election. Then, shortly after the election, she opined that the Coalition’s election timing was first-rate in view of the most favourable “political and economic cycles”. So, did the *AFR*’s chief political correspondent analyse her own metamorphosis? Not at all. It seems she was running on soul power and saw no need for self-reflection.

ROBERT MANNE’S (ECONOMIC) REINCARNATION

Then there is the strange case of Robert Manne. The La Trobe University professor was recently voted by his peers as Australia’s top public intellectual. Congratulations and all that. Here’s hoping that someone runs a competition as to who is Australia’s most inconsistent public commentator – for Professor Manne should win this particular gong in the canter, on raw talent alone. It would be yet another well deserved honour.

These days Robert Manne is regarded as an expert on many matters – including HIMSELF. That’s why, over the years, he has devoted considerable resources to examining his own thought processes. Mr Manne’s on-going intellectual inconsistency has been documented elsewhere – see *The Sydney Institute Quarterly*, December 1999. He was once a monarchist, then a republican; once an opponent of multiculturalism, then a multicultural advocate; once a critic of so-called political correctness, then a critic of the use of the term; once a sceptic about reconciliation, then a reconciliation barracker – and so on. Manne’s views on economics are in the news again – due to, yet another, u-turn – following the publication of his collected works *Left Right Left: Political Essays 1977-2005* (Black Inc. 2005).

You only have to read the first line of the *Left Right Left* to realise that Mr Manne, once again, is in the all-too-familiar mode of writing about himself and rationalising his various opinion shifts. *Left, Right, Left*, Robert Manne’s most recent collection of his previously published work, commences:

During the 1990s I found myself in the uncomfortable position of abandoning one of the tribes of the political intelligentsia, the right, and of being embraced, somewhat uneasily, by the enemy tribe, the left.

The first (“I found myself”) sentence in Robert Manne’s preface is followed by many an “I” and a “my”. But the highlight of the preface occurs when Mr Manne refers to “my present self”. Not his past self (like Ms Reddy) mind you, nor his future self. No, just his “present self”.

In his preface, Robert Manne concedes that “on balance” he was “probably wrong” to oppose the

economic reform process in the 1990s. He specifically refers to his past support for “economic protectionism”. *Left Right Left* carries Manne’s collected works over almost three decades on a range of issues – communism, the culture wars, Aborigines, the period from Paul Keating to John Howard, refugees, Jews and Muslims – but nothing whatsoever about his past writings on economics. It is as if Robert Manne never wrote about economics. But he did – for about a decade, at least.

In 1982 Manne contributed an introduction to his edited collection *The New Conservatism in Australia*. Here he declared, truthfully, that he had “no competence in economics whatsoever”. That was then. By the early 1990s, however, Manne had set himself up as a commentator on economics and, in particular, an opponent of economic reform – which he referred to as “economic rationalism”. The 1992 book *Shutdown: The Failure of Economic Rationalism And How To Rescue Australia*, which Manne co-edited with fellow La Trobe University academic John Carroll, bagged the entire economic reform agenda – from the currency float, to financial deregulation, to privatisation, to the reduction in protection and on to freeing-up Australia’s highly regulated industrial relations system.

In their contributions to *Shutdown*, Manne and Carroll (i) declared that the economic reform agenda in Australia had “failed”, (ii) predicted “permanent high unemployment, with real figures in the order of 15 to 20 per cent”, (iii) argued the case for the implementation of “economic intervention” by government – declaring that “the most important contemporary example of economic success is Japan” and (iv) advocated “direct import controls”. In addition, Manne wrote that Bob Hawke’s Labor government had “put Australia in a situation from which it is genuinely difficult to foresee a non-disastrous exit”. And Carroll maintained that “the import of virtually all consumption goods will have to be banned in the short term”. It seems that Dr Carroll even wanted to ban such consumption goods as books and journals and the like – or did he?

In fact, the economic reform process – which was commenced by Labor’s Bob Hawke and Paul Keating in 1983 and which has been continued by the Coalition’s John Howard and Peter Costello since 1996 – has led to a situation where Australia has probably the strongest economy among the OECD nations. The case for economic reform speaks for itself. Take industrial relations, for example. The less regulated OECD economics (the United States, Britain, Australia, New Zealand) have unemployment rates of about 5 per cent while the more regulated economies (France, Germany, Italy) have unemployment rates at 10 per cent or over. Moreover, Japan has been in recession for much of the time since *Shutdown* was published in 1992.

Robert Manne’s reputation as a commentator remained untarnished because neither Labor nor the

Coalition implemented the economic agenda which he and John Carroll advocated in *Shutdown*. If the Manne/Carroll interventionist and protectionist agenda had been put into practice by governments, then Australia would currently have low to negative economic growth (like Japan) along with high unemployment (like France).

Robert Manne has not seen fit to apologise for bagging the proponents of economic reform in the 1990s. Rather, yet again, he has focused on analysing his very own through processes and policy shifts. First up, there was his article titled “Left, right, left” which was published in the *Good Weekend* on 13 November 2004. Here Manne reflected that he should not have participated in “what was essentially an economists’ debate” in the 1990s. You see, Robert Manne has gone back to the position he initially took over two decades ago – namely, that he knows nothing about economics, absolutely nothing.

Interviewed by Phillip Adams on *Late Night Live* on 7 June 2005, Robert Manne repeated his line from *Left Right Left* – namely that he was “probably wrong” with respect to his opposition to economic reform. He spelt this out in much greater length when interviewed by Terry Lane on the ABC Radio National program *The National Interest* on Sunday 26 June 2005. Spoke the La Trobe professor:

I think, I think I made a big mistake in, um, in giving so much energy and time to the argument against economic rationalism. Not because I necessarily think it was wrong. I mean, I think part of what I predicted hasn’t turned out and part of it probably has.

But I didn’t know enough, actually. Um, I’ve never been interested in economics. Um, I have never studied economics formally and I found – pretty quickly when I became, you know, began to argue about economic rationalism or neo-liberalism – I found myself out of my depth. And I knew it in a way as soon as I got into the area (emphasis added). And I, sort of, have learnt a lesson that I should stay with things that I know pretty well. It’s one of the times when I really felt that I’d entered an area which was not my strength.

So there you have it. Not only does Robert Manne now acknowledge that he was out of his depth when he involved himself in the economic debate in the 1990s. But he also confesses that he “knew” at the time he was out of his depth – but continued to attack the proponents of economic reform, nevertheless.

This is an extraordinary admission for an academic to make. What Mr Manne is now saying is that he did not know what he was talking about – but that he continued to talk, nevertheless. There were his comments on radio and television, his newspaper columns and journal

articles, and his book *Shutdown*. Did Mr Manne ever use this material in the cause of his academic promotion? – he was promoted to an associate professor in 1994 and a professor in 2003. Surely Mr Manne would not have listed such works as *Shutdown* on his academic resume when, as he now admits, he knew “as soon as” he “got into” the economic debate in the 1990s that he was out of his depth?

In any event, Robert Manne seems to have reincarnated himself to what he was in 1982 – i.e. a political scientist academic who has “no competence in economics whatsoever”. An unpleasant case of hypnotic regression, alas.

During his (often personal) attacks on economic reformers in the 1990s, Robert Manne was wont to allege that the targets of his criticisms had a “conflict of interest” – of one kind or another. How odd, then, that the *Australian Book Review* featured Barry Hill’s review of *Left Right Left* all over the front page of its June-July 2005 issue – complete with a colour portrait of Mr Manne by commercial photographer Andrew Curtis. Odd, you see, because Robert Manne is chair of the *Australian Book Review*’s board. Odd, also, because *Left Right Left* – apart from the preface, contains only previously published material. Manne’s tome deserved a review, yes. But it hardly warranted a cover story. Especially since *Left Right Left* is the third collection of his collected works in a decade – following *The Shadow of 1917* in 1994 and *The Barren Years* in 2001.

And then there was the choice of reviewer. Barry Hill identified himself as a “left-leaning”, “middle class” *ABR* reader. He was at times critical of *Left Right Left* by the left-leaning Robert Manne – but usually from a leftist perspective. Hill did, however, comment that “Manne is not one to admit error as easily as his biographical pitch would suggest” and that, even after changing his views, gives the impression that “he has been right all along”. Yet, overall, the left-leaning *ABR* reviewer was extremely positive about the left-leaning *ABR* chairman’s collected works. After all, Messers Hill and Manne have acted together in the past. On 9 May 1997, *The Australian* published a letter by like-minded types who urged the Howard Government “not [to] destroy one of the best things we have” – namely, ABC Radio National. Barry Hill organised the signatories for this letter who included Robert Manne. Reminding us that, most of the time, Melbourne left – which Robert Manne has rejoined – is just one big, happy family heavily into mutual (ideological) admiration.

FALSE PROPHECY CORNER

It’s time to “move forward” from Helen Reddy’s lesson. But not before recording that, when it comes to predictions, Ms Reddy’s dictum is invariably true. In that every seer-like action has an egg-in-the-face response.

• Predicting the New Pope

On *Lateline* on 19 April 2005 at 10.30 pm (Australian Eastern Standard Time), Tony Jones interviewed Tom Reese, the Jesuit priest and editor-in-chief of *America* magazine. It was Tuesday evening in Australia and Tuesday morning in Rome – where the cardinals were meeting in conclave to elect the successor to the recently departed John Paul II. Tony Jones asked Fr Reese S.J. why he believed that Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger would not succeed John Paul as pope. Fr Reese had plenty of answers. He maintained that Cardinal Ratzinger (i) did not “want the job” and added that “he has been trying to retire for the last two years”. Fr Reese also said that Cardinal Ratzinger was too old and too sick and concluded: “Finally, Cardinal Ratzinger brings a lot of baggage to the papacy, if he was elected”. A strong prediction, to be sure.

The *Lateline* program had only ended a few hours earlier when news came through from Rome that – despite Fr Reese’s prediction to the contrary – Cardinal Ratzinger had been elected pope, on only the fourth ballot. All hail Pope Benedict XVI. That was on 19 April 2005. On 7 May the *Washington Post* reported that Fr Reese had resigned as editor-in-chief of *America*. It was the case of Ratzinger 3: Reese: 0.

The choice of Benedict’s XVI as Christ’s successor on earth led to a few changed positions. Take, for example, the Australian commentator – and former Catholic priest – Paul Collins, who is much loved by the ABC. Like Tom Reese, he did not believe that Cardinal Ratzinger would get the (papal) gig. So, before the conclave vote, Paul Collins was quite brave in criticising the German theologian. So much so that at an “Awaiting the New Pope” forum, held before the conclave ended, he described Cardinal Ratzinger as a “reactionary” and declared that he suffered from “historical amnesia” – see *Online Catholics*, 20 April 2005.

However, when the Holy Spirit looked favourably on Cardinal Ratzinger, Paul Collins quickly changed his position. Interviewed on *Lateline* on 20 April 2005, Paul Collins stated his (new) belief that Benedict XVI “feels himself as a kind of father of the Church rather than as someone who is, as he used to be called, the Panzer cardinal”. Mr Collins went so far as to predict that the new Pope “may well...act as a reconciling force”. It’s called getting with the strength.

• Predicting The Future of Ahmad Chalabi and John Howard

Remember 21 April 2004 when perennial (false) prophet Alan Ramsey criticised Barrie Cassidy for having interviewed Iraqi Ahmad Chalabi on the ABC TV *Insiders* program the previous Sunday? Ramsay ridiculed follow-up reports of the Cassidy-Chalabi interview in the Australian media – in which Ahmad Chalabi had been referred to as a “key” Iraqi “leader”, a “prominent” Iraqi leader and a “top” Iraqi. So

precisely what position does Mr Chalabi currently hold in Iraq as at August 2005? He’s Iraq’s deputy prime minister – that’s all. Sounds like a somewhat “key”, or “prominent” or “top” leadership position – doesn’t it? Well done, Mr Ramsey.

Then there was Alan Ramsey’s prediction – on Saturday 23 July 2005 – that (on his return to Australia from Britain) John Howard would certainly not visit Australian Defence Force personnel stationed in Iraq. Prophecised Ramsey:

Meanwhile, know that our Prime Minister has another birthday on Tuesday – his 66th. Except he and Janette will likely spend it, in front of the television cameras, with Australian forces from Iraq flown to Oman for the occasion. You can bet he won’t go to Iraq itself. Much too dangerous.

So where was the Prime Minister on Tuesday 26 July 2005? Visiting the democratically elected Iraqi leadership in Baghdad and ADF personnel in Iraq, that’s where. Why, oh why, does Mr Ramsey persist with such (false) prophecies?

CARMEL TRAVERS’ DOCU-SERMON

Your taxes at work. Carmel Travers’ documentary *Truth, Lies and Intelligence*, which aired on SBS on Thursday 23 June 2005, was a throw-back to the ABC at its very worse. Put simply, Ms Travers launched a John Pilger style all out verbal attack on the political leadership in the United States, Britain and Australia over Iraq. So much so that *Truth, Lies and Intelligence* was more of a sermon than a documentary.

Yet Ms Travers’ propaganda tract was not without insights. Consider the clear implication in her docu-sermon that the British scientist Dr David Kelly had been murdered by, presumably, sources close to 10 Downing Street – and the circumstances of his death covered up. This is what Carmel Travers said about the late David Kelly in her taxpayer subsidised docu-sermon:

In Britain Dr David Kelly, who was vilified by the [British] Foreign Affairs Committee, was found in a wood near his home. And despite many questions about the circumstances of his death, an inquiry concluded he’d taken his own life.

The clear implication in Ms Travers’ docu-sermon is that Dr Kelly may not have committed suicide but, rather, was murdered – since (allegedly) there remain “many questions about the circumstances of his death”. Carmel Travers did not spell out precisely what are the “many questions” which, she alleged, remain unanswered about the British scientist’s death. Nor did she inform her viewers that, despite his criticism of the British government, the late David Kelly believed that Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction prior to the invasion of Iraq by the Coalition of the Willing. This is documented in the *Report of the Inquiry into the*

Circumstances Surrounding the Death of Dr David Kelly C.M.G. by Lord Hutton.

It may, or may not, be that, sometime in the future, new evidence will emerge about David Kelly's death. In the meantime, Carmel Travers' prophecy remains a leftist diatribe of the kind, come to think of it, that is found increasingly in *The Age* – since Andrew Jaspan became editor of what has become a version of the British leftist broadsheet *The Guardian* – on the Yarra.

ANDREW JASPAN – A (DELIBERATE) MISTAKE

Meet Nigel Henham, *The Age's* communications director. According to Mr Henham, *The Age's* new editor Andrew Jaspan (who not so long ago arrived in Melbourne from Glasgow) has decided to “refresh” the newspaper in order to modernise the paper.

So, how is the very British Andrew Jaspan, who came to Australia after a stint as editor of the low profile *Sunday Herald* in Glasgow, going about refreshing and modernising *The Age*? Well, the evidence suggests that Mr Jaspan is turning *The Age* into “The Guardian-on-the-Yarra”.

- **Circa April 2005.** Mr Jaspan decides it would be a you-beaut idea to refresh *The Age* by junking the paper's traditional business section and placing it in the middle of the newspaper's first section after the obituaries but before the classified advertising and the editorial and opinion pages. The result is that anyone looking for the business section in its traditional place cannot find it. And anyone opening *The Age* from the front of the paper reads news followed by obituaries, followed by business, followed (incredibly) by classifieds and, presumably, comes to believe that the influential editorial and opinion pages have been relegated in importance or dumped.

Good modern idea? Well, not really. Mr Jaspan's idea to modernise *The Age's* format by downgrading business lasts less than a month – the business and classified pages are soon returned to their traditional places.

- **16 April.** *The Age* devoted the first two pages of its Saturday “Review” section on Saturday to a reprint of a John Pilger article, titled “Farewell, Saigon”, which was originally published in *The Independent* – and which, in turn, was a reworking of a Pilger essay first published as long ago as 1986. Pilger recounts – yet again – his experience of being in Saigon just before the capital of (then) South Vietnam fell to the communists on 30 April 1975. He refers to his “graceless exit” from Saigon but does not fess-up to precisely how graceless it was, especially in view of Pilger's anti-American ideological stance. What John Pilger does not tell his *Age* readers is that – rather than remain in Saigon to meet the “liberating” communist forces – Mr Pilger did a bunk to the US Embassy, from where he was evacuated by the US military in what he has called elsewhere a “Jolly Green Giant” helicopter and placed on the USS *Blue*

Ridge, the command ship of the US Seventh Fleet. The detailed story of Pilger's rescue from Vietnam by the very same US Forces which he so despised – from the so-called communist “liberation” forces which he once supported – can be found in John Pilger's 1986 book *Heroes*. But not in *The Age*.

- **23 April.** Leftist *Age* cartoonist Michael Leunig – who is very much *The Age's* poster boy – makes a rare appearance (in written format) on the Opinion Page, in the lead-up to Anzac Day. He attacks John Howard (of course). And he accuses members of the Australian Defence Force – who have fought in (unnamed) former conflicts – of “perversity, emotional sickness and a latent murderous impulse”. There is also a reference to the ADF's “murderous violence”. What a way to honour the Anzacs – under Mr Jaspan's fresh/modern *Age*.

- **2 May.** The Sydney based leftist Bob Ellis gets a run on the Opinion Page – no other newspaper in Australia carries his article. Little wonder, really. Ellis refers to the US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's “self-important high-school graduation fustian” and depicts her as “black, female and beautiful, a sort of Foggy Bottom Cinderella”. Ellis describes the US as “a kind of big, bellowing, murderous joke”. Apparently Mr Jaspan believes that it's okay for the Opinion Page to become the Abuse Page.

- **5 May 2005.** Meet *The Age's* new, fresh, modern columnist – London-born Sushi Das. She gives real meaning to *The Age's* new status as “The-Guardian-on-the-Yarra”. Ms Das's inaugural column is headed “There is something rotten in Australia: the smell of racism”. In an attack on John Howard (he is the only person named in the piece), she uses the term “racism” and “racist” over a dozen times – in less than a thousand words. Her point? – namely, that “racism is embedded” in Australia. Her evidence? – namely, two phone conversations with two anonymous real estate agents. Just two property types. But, then, how much research is a fresh columnist expected to do?

- **6 May.** *The Age's* “Metro” section splashes a colour photograph of John Pilger all over its front cover. There follows John Mangan's completely non-critical assessment of Pilger's latest film *Breaking the Silence*. Pilger declares that “the greatest political scandal of our time is the intervention in Iraq...”. Okay then – let's bring back Saddam Hussein.

- **20 May.** *The Age* Letters Editor leads with a letter from Zev Ben-Avi (of Woodford, Queensland) who describes Foreign Minister Alexander Downer as a “Vietnam-era draft dodger who skipped off to Britain to study at Oxford and the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne”. In fact, Mr Downer left Australia, with his parents in 1964, at age 12, and went to school – not university. Even a cursory glance at *Who's Who in Australia* would reveal that the Foreign Minister was born on 9 September 1951. As such, he would not have been eligible for inclusion in the national service ballot until September 1971 (which was, in fact, the third last ballot). Even if his birthday had

been balloted-in (it was not, see Peter Edwards: *A National at War* pp. 378-379) – Alexander Downer would have been entitled to the normal deferment to complete a first, undergraduate degree. In other words, in no sense whatsoever was Alexander Downer a draft-dodger. *The Age's* Letters Editor clearly needs, well, an editor.

- **20 May.** The up-graded *Age* Obituaries page publishes an obituary on the late Hugh Slattery (1915-2005), the one-time deputy to the late B.A. Santamaria. Good idea. Pity about the facts. *The Age* depicts Mr Slattery as having worked for the Australian National Secretariat of Catholic Action (ANSCA) in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In fact, he was employed by the Catholic Social Studies Movement (CSSM). Mr Jaspan's laudable attempt to freshen *The Age's* Obituaries page would be enhanced by the engagement of a fact-checker.

- **28 May.** *The Age* is the only newspaper to run a long article by Mark Latham biographer, the Sydney based Criag McGregor. In a confused ramble, the Latham-admiring McGregor maintains both that Mark Latham "destroyed himself" but also presents the view that Mark Latham was the "the victim". How about that? McGregor also describes Mr Latham, who led the ALP to one of its worst defeats ever in October 2004, as "undoubtedly the best Labor leader Australia had produced in years". Fair dinkum.

- **3 June.** In the wake of the decision of a majority of French citizens and Dutch citizens to vote "no" on the proposed European constitution, Associate Professor Judith Armstrong gets a run on the Opinion Page. She condemns the "supposedly civilised French and Dutch" and concludes her diatribe with the observation: "If, as the adage goes, education is wasted on the young, it is tempting to wonder whether democracy is not wasted on voters". A good/fresh/modern question – to be sure. Why not hand over all power to Associate Professor Armstrong and her "civilised" comrades at Melbourne University?

- **7 June.** The fresh/modern *Age* Opinion Page runs an article by law academic Joo-Cheong Tham who makes the following claim: "...it is seriously arguable that the use of military force in Iraq is a 'terrorist act' under the [Australian] criminal code. If so, an organisation that fosters such conduct, such as the Liberal Party, is a 'terrorist organisation' under this law with the consequence that membership of the Liberal Party is illegal." Well this is seriously a "fresh" view. It is also seriously absurd. Didn't anyone tell Mr Jaspan?

- **12 June.** The fresh/modern *Age* Letters Page publishes a total of 15 letters. Four of the correspondents are from New South Wales, two from South Australia (one of whom is disguised by the fact that there is a like-named place in Victoria) and one from Tasmania. In other words, around a half of the letter writers to *The Age* do not live in Victoria and, presumably, do not actually buy the paper. It's much the same on 2 July when five out of 14 letters are

written by correspondents who live outside of Victoria and, presumably, read the fresh/modern *Age* on-line. Then on 9 July, even in the wake of the London terrorist bombings, *The Age's* Letters Editor has to rely on contributions from Maryborough (Queensland), Elizabeth Downs (South Australia), Meroo Meadow (New South Wales), Tinderbox (Tasmania), and Fremantle (Western Australia) to fill the page. Have fresh/modern *Letters Page*: need Victorian readers.

- **22 June.** *The Age's* editor Andrew Jaspan appears on ABC Radio 702 in Melbourne. Mr Jaspan claims that recently freed Australian hostage Douglas Wood was "treated well" by his kidnappers in Iraq. If Mr Jaspan had bothered to read his own newspaper, he would have known that Mr Wood was kidnapped, blind-folded, beaten, threatened and made to deliver false confessions during his seven weeks of captivity – and that two Iraqi associates were murdered in his blind-folded presence. How "well treated" can you get?

- **4 July 2005.** Meet *The Age's* new, fresh, modern columnist Alan Taylor who was introduced to *The Age's* readers as "a British author and columnist". In fact, he is a journalist on – guess what? – *The Sunday Herald* in Glasgow. Alan Taylor is also, according to *Crikey Daily*, a personal friend of Andrew Jaspan. Mr Taylor writes for *The Age* on the topic of the British Broadcasting Corporation (6 June) and the Scottish town of Auchterarder (28 June). What could be fresher than this? Now, on 4 July with his column sub-titled "Eye on Britain", Mr Taylor writes about the proposed identity card in Britain. In the process, he recalls an encounter in his (British) bank with a (British) female teller: "This was a girl of tender years wearing disco clobber, numerous piercings and a lurid tattoo, part of whose message was buried in her bosom; when she bent over, it was like looking down the Grand Canyon". Which gives a new meaning to *The Age's* fresh direction.

By the way, Jaspan is yet to advise *Age* readers why *The Age* – which already has two Australian journalists based in London (James Button and Annabel Crabb) – needs to run an "Eye on Britain" column written by a mate in Glasgow.

- **Apparently, it's Saturday 16 July 2005.** Yet, according to *The Age's* Page One masthead, it's actually "Saturday, July 18, 2005". What a (potential) scoop. But, turn to Page 3 and it really is "Saturday, July 16, 2005". So, can this be what John Laws used to rationalise as a "deliberate mistake"? Perhaps. How daring is this Mr Jaspan? He is so keen to freshen and modernise *The Age* that he has even tried to put the wrong date on the first page. Just under the newspaper's "Dieu Et Mon Droit" motto – as in "God and my rights". Reminding us all that – before Andrew Jaspan – *Age* readers had the right to expect that *The Age's* editor knew what day it was.

