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Cover Design by D T Graphics

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Tel: (02) 9150 9466 Fax: (02) 9150 6663  
Website: www.dtgraphics.com.au

The views expressed in *The Sydney Institute Quarterly* are those of the designated authors. They do not necessarily reflect the views of The Sydney Institute or of its governors.

Registered Print Post No : PP255003/02934

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# THE BBC AND BIAS

*Media Watch*, on ABC1, resumed on 18 February with Jonathan Holmes as the new presenter. Mr Holmes, an experienced television journalist, is well qualified for the position. It just happens, however, that he is the most recent of *Media Watch's* left-liberal presenters since the program commenced in 1989. The complete list is Stuart Littlemore, Richard Ackland, Paul Barry, David Marr, Liz Jackson, Monica Attard and Jonathan Holmes. All seven have a predictable and fashionable set of leftist or left-liberal positions on a range of issues from foreign policy, to the environment and on to social policy. Mr Holmes' attitude was illustrated when, during the media forum on ABC Radio 702 on 29 November 2007, he described American conservative Michael Ledeen as "the looniest" of the neo-cons. In other words, the position of *Media Watch's* presenter is that is that the neo-conservatives in the United States are lunatics and that Michael Ledeen is "the looniest" of the lot.

Jonathan Holmes is entitled to his opinion. The problem is that he is the latest in the long line of *Media Watch* presenters who is committed to what the British journalist Robin Aitken has described as public broadcasting "group-think". Mr Aitken recently retired from the BBC after a quarter of a century on radio and television. In an interview with the London *Daily Telegraph* on 14 May 2005, he referred to the BBC's "unconscious, institutionalised Leftism". Aitken spelt out his views in his book *Can We Trust the BBC?* (Continuum, 2007) and on the *Wall Street Journal's* Opinion Page on 2 July 2007. Aitken's book was virtually ignored by the BBC – demonstrating the validity of his view that "the Beeb has never been distinguished by a culture of robust self-criticism". Reviewing *Can We Trust the BBC?* in the London *Sunday Times* (26 February 2007), Rod Liddle wrote that the author's "central thrust – that the BCC has a left-liberal bias which the executive refuses to acknowledge – strikes me as unequivocally correct".

What distinguishes the BCC from the ABC is that the former's management is at least willing to acknowledge that some serious problems exist. In September 2006 the BBC sponsored a seminar titled "Impartiality: Fact or Fiction" which included key contributions by BBC presenter Andrew Marr and *Daily Telegraph* columnist Janet Daley. In June 2007 the BBC Trust released the report *From Seesaw to Wagon Wheel: Safeguarding Impartiality in the 21st Century* – which was signed by Richard Tait, a BBC Trustee and chairman of the Impartiality Steering Group. *From Seesaw to Wagon Wheel* at least acknowledged that, within the BBC, "individuals exercise on occasions a largely unconscious self-censorship out of a misguided attempt to be 'correct' in their thinking". Antony Jay, the former BBC journalist who wrote *Yes Minister*, recently commented that *From Seesaw to Wagon Wheel* "effectively admitted to an institutionalised 'liberal' bias among [BBC] programme makers" (*Sunday Times*, 12 August 2007). Meanwhile, in Australia, ABC management does not acknowledge that such a problem exists. Which helps to explain the fact that seven out of seven *Media Watch* presenters have been left-of-centre. The ABC's group-think is such that an evident lack of plurality seems normal.

# JOHN MORTIMER'S LOOK BACK WITH NOSTALGIA

Anne Henderson

There's to be a new film version of the 1971 *Oz* magazine obscenity trial in London, complete with English actors and funded by General Electric. And the outcome has caused a stir among some of the now ageing group of "Australia's hippie intelligensia".

Germaine Greer has said the script writers have created her character "out of their own excreta" and Martin Sharp, after counting out the 55 scenes "he" is in, was outraged saying, "It was complete fiction. It is not even about mere historical accuracy. ... it is theft of one's own life and is a very uncomfortable feeling".

*Oz* began in Australia with, then undergraduate, Richard Neville and mates Martin Sharp and Richard Walsh giving voice to left wing rat bags, most at taxpayer funded universities, who thumbed their noses (and more besides) at public opinion and establishment mores. Historical accuracy, in the case of those they lampooned, was not one of their considerations. Porno politics it was called.

*Oz* magazine faced an obscenity trial in Australia in 1964. After moving to the UK, Neville began a London *Oz* with Jim Anderson and Felix Dennis. Their problem came in 1970 with issue *Oz* 28 or the *Oz School Issue*. It had been put together by a bunch of school aged students at the invitation of *Oz* editors who, in their advancing twenties, felt the magazine could be invigorated by a more youthful editorial team for this one edition.

As a way to get noticed, it was a brilliant idea – except for the cover which had come from Amsterdam and featured four naked females posing, lesbian style, with dildoes and strings (some called them rats' tails) emerging from vaginas. The *Oz* office was raided in June 1970 by the obscenity squad; the trial of the *Oz* editors began in June 1971 and lasted for six weeks.

The three *Oz* editors were found guilty on the obscenity and indecency charges and sentenced to

between fifteen and nine months jail, but the verdict was overturned on appeal. In spite of the flood of free publicity and a momentary increase in circulation, the magazine went into liquidation within two years with crippling debts and its editors moved on.

The real winner out of the trial was barrister and writer John Mortimer, now Sir John Mortimer, who was then yet to invent the character that would make him internationally famous - Horace Rumpole of the Bailey. Mortimer had been approached by Geoffrey Robertson, at the time a young Australian Rhodes Scholar reading jurisprudence at Balliol, who came in to help Neville and his colleagues.

By 1971, with his success as a writer coupled with his rising legal career, John Mortimer had become a notoriety around London, as well as gaining a reputation as a "Casanova of the sixties". In the fifties, Mortimer and his first wife writer Penelope Mortimer (Penny 1) had come to prominence with successful novels and for over a decade were often featured together with their large family (Penelope had four children of her own when they married) as the first sophisticated literary couple London had seen.

By the time of the *Oz* trial, Mortimer was living with Penny Gollop who would become his second wife (Penny 2) in 1972 and the story of his (by then) dysfunctional marriage to Penelope (Penny 1) had become a benchmark of everything that could sink a modern marriage – thanks to Penelope Mortimer's brilliant portrayals of their relationship in her evolving stories and novels.

## THE OLD DEVIL

Penelope Mortimer revealed her husband as deceitful, contradictory and certainly indifferent to historical accuracy. A fact further elaborated on and endorsed by two recent biographies - Graham Lord's *John Mortimer – The Devil's Advocate* and Valerie Grove's *A Voyage Round John Mortimer – The Authorised Biography*. Yet, Mortimer's image remains a charming genius much loved by an international fanclub.

Mortimer's double standards reflect much of what has been a moral dilemma for the West, where intellectual opinion has so often favoured leftist positions. As once liberal permissive Malcolm Muggeridge put it to Mortimer, in an interview in the early 1980s, the big mistake liberals always make is to see good in everything. "That has been of great assistance to the devil," said Muggeridge.

John Mortimer QC, a proud socialist and defender of free speech, often spoke of being brought up on "middle class idealism" which he said "believed that

money wasn't the most important thing in life". In fact he made a vast fortune defending pornography against censorship and criminals against jail.

His writing likewise brought him wealth, and he was often paid for scripts never used. In the case of Evelyn Waugh's BBC TV adapted novel *Brideshead Revisited*, not only was his script junked after he collected a considerable fee but he continued to receive royalties as part of his contract, even though the script was written entirely by Derek Granger and Martin Thompson with suggestions from Michael Lindsay-Hogg. At no stage did Mortimer either fess up or even give part of his take to charity. And since the series producers left his name in the credits, he did interviews about the script as if it were his own for years.

In fact money and what it could buy has been very important to John Mortimer. At first he could justly say he needed to support a large and growing family but long after he no longer needed the income he made from the bar he continued to take cases in spite of his weariness at the job. He took on more writing contracts than he could sustain, just because the advances were too tempting. Much of his writing suffered as a result. As Graham Lord found in his research for *The Devil's Advocate*:

**Even though writing a film script was often a waste of time and too many came to nothing, John enjoyed working for Hollywood producers because they paid him a great deal, flew him first class to exotic locations, provided limousines and lavish entertainment, and showed him the sort of lavish lifestyle he relished.**

Mortimer told the *Mirror* in 1979 that films were like mistresses, glamorous but finally unsatisfying. Which, maybe, is why he had experienced so many of both.

Not surprisingly, John Mortimer was often tagged a champagne socialist by his critics. And when he thundered against the Thatcher government for bringing on "the worst decade since I've been alive. Very selfish, very money oriented," he was clearly blind to his own weakness and double standards. When he became depressed after Mrs Thatcher went on to win the 1987 election with an even bigger majority, he couldn't understand that this may have been simply a case of ordinary Britishers wanting to keep the government who had helped them make money. If he could do it, why not them?

## GROWING UP "A JOKE"

Never a good looking child, Mortimer was raised by parents who regarded him as a "joke", something

well recorded in both Penelope Mortimer and John Mortimer's writing. His blind father Clifford, also a barrister, was immortalised in Mortimer's play *Voyage Round My Father*, a voyage that never actually discovered the key to fully explain John's cantankerous and mystifying old man.

Clifford Mortimer, even before he became blind, was an angry man and took out his anger on his wife Kathleen, often physically. Kath became his constant companion after his sight failed, reading his briefs aloud, accompanying him to the courts and caring for his personal needs. John Mortimer was sent to boarding school and often when at home, in spite of outings to the theatre and such, he was very lonely. He admitted to not becoming friends with his mother until she spent a holiday with him and the family in Italy at the age of 82.

John Mortimer's growing up soon made him a hater of authority; first there was God whom he disliked intensely, followed by schoolmasters, the police and eventually Tory politicians like Norman Tebbit and Margaret Thatcher. But he loved laughter and believed it the most effective of weapons, using it unscrupulously in the courts to belittle witnesses, prosecution cases and to melt hardened attitudes among jurors.

This combination of anti-authoritarian socialism crossed with a tendency to mock whatever he did not agree with has made John Mortimer a hugely successful writer and entertainer with a large following. But it all glosses over a hypocritical reality, dependent on fabrication.

Fabrication is the art of the fiction writer, and surprisingly also that of many a successful barrister. During the Oz trial, on a number of occasions Judge Argyle would be forced to bring the court to order saying, "Once again I have to remind people that this is not a theatre." But of course, in many ways, that was exactly what it was, especially to John Mortimer.

But Mortimer's fabrications in his writings would eventually be more serious. Renowned for telling rollicking anecdotes, numbers of his acquaintances were surprised, at times shocked, to read his embroideries of their realities.

His famous story of Winston Churchill's visit to Mortimer's school, Harrow, in 1939 did not happen – much less, as Mortimer told it, did Churchill have to be helped onto the platform, have a voice that quivered from too much drink or appear so old that if he were to take charge of the war it would be a disaster. Old Harrovians there at the time simply said Mortimer made it up and that when Churchill came in 1940, after Mortimer had gone on to Oxford, he gave a speech to warm the hearts of socialists.

But the Mortimer stories, read widely in his memoirs and repeated in performances of his one man show *Mortimer's Miscellany*, often perpetuated myths and caricatures of conservatives he disliked, and even friends and colleagues. Penelope Mortimer explained the style when she reflected that Clifford Mortimer and John never said anything serious to each other but "hid their feelings by making jokes, telling stories and playing silly games".

Unlike Penelope, who found it a serious character flaw, other Mortimers saw it all as part of dear John's quaint personality. Even as he disseminated untruths and character assassination. His actress daughter Emily Mortimer once told an interviewer, "He'll always tell a lie if it makes things more interesting. He fibs and never feels bad about it." One wonders what Richard Neville or others from the *Oz* group might have said had he done it to them.

## PORNOGRAPHER'S FRIEND

But it was Mortimer's belief that a writer should be free to publish anything at all, no matter how shocking or indecent it might seem. This was a principle he used often in his highly successful defences in obscenity trials. His friend Neil Kinnock saw Mortimer and Labour's Roy Jenkins, who relaxed the divorce and censorship laws in the sixties, as merely "codifying conditions that had long existed". Jenkins and Mortimer were often regarded as midwives to the permissive society.

In all of Mortimer's championing of what some regarded as obscenities, he did not himself ever claim to be interested in the works he defended. In fact, increasingly, he deliberately avoided reading or watching the material which of course helped him hugely in his unwavering defence of the right for such material to be available to the public. As his wife Penny 2 put it, "If John doesn't want to know something, he doesn't know it."

Colleagues such as Ann Mallalieu QC would read or watch whatever it was they were defending and if asked to look at pornography, Mortimer would take off his glasses so he couldn't see the offensive material. This enabled him to continue to assert, "I think pornography is the most harmless form of literature." Adding, "Once you surrender your freedom of choice to some central authority you are surrendering your freedom to people like the police and politicians."

In time, however, the case for pornography became less fashionable. No longer was it merely conservative operative Mary Whitehouse, whom the left could pillory as a fanatic with a very narrow mind, who led the charge against the permissive society.

After Mortimer successfully defended *Inside Linda Lovelace*, letter writers to *The Times* pointed out that while the great socialist defended pornography as a right of free speech, he never once considered the exploited and even criminally abused Asian children and other young people, and women, Asian and otherwise, used by a growing and lucrative industry to produce titillation. In the *Guardian*, Geoffrey Wheatcroft wrote that *Inside Linda Lovelace* was "a work of pure commercial pornography produced under particularly loathsome circumstances".

Much later, Linda Lovelace herself came out against pornography and refuted Mortimer's claim in the trial that she had indulged "cheerfully in all sorts of sexual shenanigans" saying that she had been a frightened sex slave, badly abused and exploited and had been forced to become an unwilling prostitute. She also added that her husband had forced her at gunpoint to make *Deep Throat*. Mortimer's theme continued to be that obscenity was simply fun.

## CHAMPAGNE SOCIALIST

Muggeridge was wrong on one thing. As a socialist or liberal, Mortimer did not see good in *everything*. He particularly loathed the Thatcher years. And his mouthings against the Thatcher era saw him make wildly alienated assertions characteristic of those on the left who feel helpless against a popular conservative government. This was also true in the last years of John Howard's Government.

Apart from a caustic fictional portrayal of Margaret Thatcher's close ally in Cabinet Norman Tebbit, in his novel and subsequent TV series *Paradise Postponed*, Mortimer judged everything about Britain to have declined under Thatcherism to the extent that he believed the country was no better off than in 1945 after the Second World War. Describing the setting of *Paradise Postponed* Mortimer said, "It begins after the war when everyone was looking forward to a wonderful new world which never came about. We ended up with the same old world." The exaggeration was almost funny, in that his alienation ignored not only the the huge economic growth of the Thatcher years but also the prosperity and free nature of Britain from the sixties that had contributed not only to his wealth but also to his indulgent lifestyle.

Mortimer disliked Thatcher's lower middle class government, "the first time that people haven't paid lip service to what, to me, are the real English values, the values of Dickens – the idea that you should try to improve society, that you should feel compassion for the less fortunate, and that this should be your predominant political feeling". Mortimer also admitted to being a snob. But he never seemed to question his view that helping the less fortunate

should always be achieved by having government simply hand out taxpayers' money. The idea of government, such as the Thatcher Government, enabling conditions where more people were employed or self sufficient escaped him.

Mortimer's alienation at Western or capitalist values echoed many leftist commentators. However, it was his response to Graham Lord's question on communism and Russia which took that alienation to a farcical level. Asked whether it bothered him, in the 1990s, that most Russians had rejected socialism he replied:

**We know all the disadvantages of communism but the advantage was that there was full employment if you didn't get into political trouble. You lived a very secure life from cradle to grave, everything was found for you, even your holidays.**

Obviously Mortimer was talking only about members of the KGB and their families. One wonders how Mortimer might have taken to life in the gulag if sent there for being an anti-authoritarian writer criticising his government.

In most other matters, however, Mortimer continues to embody the liberal view Muggerridge described. On criminals, Mortimer holds views so tolerant they are, at best, irresponsible. Asked by writer Freddie Forsythe what he would do with the burglar who had committed his fiftieth burglary, Mortimer had trouble reconciling his belief in freedom with the need for punishment.

Forsythe saw Mortimer as representing a "coterie" in the legal profession who had a benign view towards the professional underworld. "John's never been beaten up or robbed!" said Forsythe. "Turville Heath [his home] is a rather low crime area, and he's never been duffed up or his wife raped."

New Labour's Jack Straw once took Mortimer to task regarding barristers over a Sunday lunch, writes Valerie Grove in her authorised biography. Straw gave it to him frankly, "You lawyers! You want to blacken the character of some unfortunate woman and yet you keep all the details of your client's past a secret from the jury."

Grove asked Mortimer for an opinion on a particularly brutal case where a family had been butchered by an axe-man who then raped the sole survivor, an 18-year old daughter. In the court, the defence had accused the girl of inviting the man into the house for sex. Grove put it to Mortimer that it was outrageous for the defence counsel to have done this even as he admitted he knew his client to be a liar.

Mortimer was not moved. He simply replied, "However horrible, the criminal must be defended. And the more horrible, the more important the principle is. Even if it causes the witness pain and embarrassment."

Mortimer told Graham Lord in 1993 of how he had "cross examined some solicitor until he fainted in the witness box". His view of murderers was that they were much nicer than clients who fought over wills or hostile partners getting divorced: "[M]urderers – because they've killed the one person who was really bugging them – have a certain peace about them."

Life did in fact become more and more Mortimer's canvas, to use as material in his fiction or reworked for his so-called non-fiction, or as reconstructed anecdotes in his one man shows. The world was simply a stage, and he had a major part on that stage describing what he thought he saw or imagined. His sexual dalliances were legendary and increasingly exposed, including his weakness for mistresses to smack his buttocks with a hairbrush. Although his recollections of being a "ladies' man" while at Oxford were not authentic. There he had still to graduate.

## ROMANCING THE RECORD

His double standards were never better illustrated than in his behaviour after Graham Lord set out to write the Mortimer biography. In spite of his professed great passion for free expression, Mortimer behaved with extraordinary censorship. First he agreed to co-operate with Lord for an authorised biography. But, within three months, he had reneged on the agreement and had his literary agent Michael Sissons send a biting fax to Lord which Lord found to be "astonishingly offensive" and "libellous". And the fax was sent to Lord's club which meant it could have been read by a number of others. But, if Mortimer meant to frighten Lord off, he had chosen the wrong man.

Lord went on to write his book in record time, getting *The Devil's Advocate* out well before Valerie Grove's biography, which had been authorised by Mortimer after he dumped Lord. This forced Grove to produce a franker account than she might have otherwise been allowed by the great champagne socialist. Lord also revealed that Mortimer was the father of an illegitimate son with actress Wendy Craig.

When news of the revelation about the illegitimate son leaked before publication, Craig rang Mortimer, whom she had not had contact with for decades, and warned him. Immediately, Mortimer briefed the press, stealing the story for himself and taking

control of it and arranging a welcome home style meeting with his (by then) 42-year old son.

Mortimer protested that he had never known the existence of such an offspring. Yet numerous accounts from others, including some of his step children and long term mistress actress - Shirley Anne Field - confirmed Mortimer had always known of his child with Wendy Craig. And Mortimer had let Wendy Craig and her husband Jack Bentley raise his son in spite of knowing that the cuckolded Bentley had said he would make the child and mother pay for the deception. Ironically, of all Mortimer's children, Ross Bentley looks most like his father.

From Lord's account, it is clear that had Lord not put the matter on the public record, Mortimer would never have acknowledged his son's existence, although, not to miss an opportunity, he had already used the circumstances of the affair and conception as material in his writings.

One bitter twist from the Lord book came for Penny 2. Lord revealed that her devoted husband of over three decades had continued his extra marital affairs after their marriage. To this point, Penny 2 had defended John, even convinced herself that he had never known of his illegitimate son. With Lord's book she faced humiliation, although John told her the Lord book was "all complete lies". But when she suggested he sue Lord, Mortimer replied it was impossible. As she told Valerie Grove, "I suddenly realised how much he had lied."

But none of the revelations have put a dint in Mortimer's popularity, the socialist who who keeps a row of Christmas cards from Prince Charles on his mantelpiece. Consoling Penny 2 was good friend to the Mortimers Kathy Lette, wife of barrister Geoffrey Robertson. Nothing could harm the funny, genial John in her eyes; woman to woman she advised Penny to "be a little more French now, about these liaisons" and told her to comfort herself by spending John's money on luxuries.

Auctioning lunches with John Mortimer continues to raise large sums for various causes. Eating, drinking and falsifying the truth for a good story and a laugh have been Mortimer's regular passtimes over most of his life. With his now obvious talents for rewriting history, it's surprising he hasn't been asked to tackle the script for the Oz movie.

Anne Henderson is editor of The Sydney Papers



*“Being fifty and over is anything but easy - certainly not for wimps - but not as bad as you might think.”*

SPEAKERS: *Comedian & actor-*  
**GERRY CONNOLLY**

*Film Producer-*  
**MARGARET FINK**

*Columnist, The Australian -*  
**PROF ROSS FITZGERALD**

TOPIC: **GROWING OLD (DIS)GRACEFULLY**

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# KIRSTIN McLIESH - 96 PER CENT FOR THE ABC

Page 61 of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's 2006-2007 Annual Report tells the story.

**During 2006-07, 15,309 written complaints were finalised by Audience and Consumer Affairs, of which 554 (3.6%) were upheld.**

**All upheld complaints are brought to the attention of the senior editorial staff responsible and corrective action is taken when appropriate. In 2006-07, actions taken in response to upheld complaints included written apologies to complainants; on-air corrections and apologies; counselling or reprimanding staff; removal of appropriate content or correction of material on ABC Online; and reviews of and improvements to procedures. All upheld complaints are reported in detail to the ABC Board.**

So there you have it. Kirstin McLiesh, the Head of Audience and Consumer Affairs at the ABC's Canberra office, upheld only 3.6 per cent of all complaints received by the ABC during the financial year ending 30 June 2007. Put it another way, Ms McLiesh and her staff rejected 96.4 per cent of all complaints received by the ABC. Note these were not only complaints which, if upheld, might have led to a written apology or on-air correction or removal of material from the ABC's Online website – but even complaints which would merely have led to counselling of staff or to reviewing of procedures.

In short, it is very, very difficult to get the ABC Audience and Consumer Affairs department to accept the legitimacy of a complaint. The following example provides a case study of just how difficult this is.

## **MEDIA WATCH AS BARRACKER**

In its programs of 28 August 2006 and 4 September 2006, the ABC TV *Media Watch* program bought into the argument about the decision of the Victorian Supreme Court in *The Queen v Joseph Terence Thomas* (VSCA 165) Joseph Terence (Jack) Thomas had been convicted by a jury on two terrorism related

charges – one count of receiving funds from a terrorist organisation and one count of possessing a falsified Australian passport. In *The Queen v Joseph Terence Thomas*, the Court of Appeal in Victoria (comprising President Christopher Maxwell, Justice Peter Buchanan and Justice Frank Vincent) decided that Jack Thomas' admissions – given in Pakistan to the Australian Federal Police – were not admissible. Since Thomas' conviction turned on his record of interview being admissible, the case against him collapsed. Consequently, the Court directed that verdicts of acquittal be entered. The ratio of the Court of Appeal's decision is contained in Paragraph 94 of the judgment:

**Admissions made in the circumstances we have described could not, in our view, be held to be voluntary. It follows that the evidence of the interview of 8 March 2003 should not have been admitted. This application should be allowed and the convictions set aside.**

The obiter of the Court's judgment included a comment that Thomas' admissions could also have been ruled inadmissible on account of the fact that, when interviewed by the AFP in Pakistan, he did not have access to a lawyer.

Gerard Henderson criticised the Court of Appeal's decision in his *Sydney Morning Herald* column of 22 August 2006. Among others, he was attacked by *Media Watch* presenter Monica Attard on both the 28 August 2006 and 4 September 2006 programs.

Gerard Henderson initially took up the issue in private conversations and correspondence with *Media Watch* after the 28 August 2006 program. He wrote to (then) *Media Watch* executive producer Peter McEvoy on 31 August 2006 and Monica Attard phoned in response on 1 September 2006. In the course of this conversation, Ms Attard conceded that *Media Watch* was "barracking for Thomas' civil liberties". Henderson's report of this conversation has never been challenged by Attard or McEvoy or by senior members of ABC management who were made aware of it. Clearly – in 2006 at least – the ABC thought it appropriate that one of its key programs should barrack for one side of a two-sided debate.

## **MEDIA WATCH AS JUDICIAL INTERPRETER**

Monica Attard returned to the topic on 4 September 2006 – making the following comment to *Media Watch* viewers:

**The *Sydney Morning Herald's* Gerard Henderson also complained to us:**



“As last Monday’s program demonstrates, the essential problem with *Media Watch* is that it is light on considered analysis but heavy on barracking. As is often the case with barrackers, there is a tendency to inconsistency.”

We think it’s worth reiterating that *Media Watch* wanted to highlight the facts of the judgment [in *The Queen v Joseph Terrence Thomas*] and the misreportage of those facts. The Court quashed the charges against Jack Thomas because his confessions – contained in an interview with the Australian Federal Police in Pakistan – were tainted by threats of torture. *Media Watch* did not say it was wrong to question the judgment. Merely that it was important to report the facts correctly.

*Media Watch*’s use of emotive language is noteworthy. In the relevant case there is no mention of Jack Thomas having made “confessions”. Rather the reference was to admissions.

Henderson wrote to Attard on 6 September 2006 – this time asking her to provide evidence to support *Media Watch*’s assertion that he had engaged in “misreportage” with respect to the Victorian Court of Appeal’s decision. Ms Attard declined to respond. On 12 September 2006, Henderson was advised that, without consulting him, McEvoy had referred his note to Attard (dated 6 September 2006) to the Head of Audience and Consumer Affairs. In other words, Henderson did not lodge an official complaint about this matter. Rather, *Media Watch* put his correspondence into the ABC complaints system. This effectively meant that both Attard and McEvoy could ignore Henderson’s request that they support the *Media Watch* assertion with evidence. Moreover the time delay involved in the issue being considered by Audience and Consumer Affairs meant that no immediate correction could be made.

The fact is that, contrary to *Media Watch*’s claim on 4 September 2006, there has never been any finding by any court that Jack Thomas’ conviction was quashed because his admissions to the AFP “were tainted by threats of torture”. Such a finding was not made by the Court of Appeal in *The Queen v Joseph Terrence Thomas* – which was decided on 18 August 2006. Nor did the Court make such a finding in its subsequent decision *R v Thomas* (No 3) – which was decided on 20 December 2006. Justice Michael Kirby referred to this matter in his judgment in the High Court case *Thomas v Mowbray* in the following terms:

On 18 August 2006, the resulting convictions of the plaintiff were quashed by order of the Court of Appeal of Victoria (Maxwell P, Buchanan and Vincent JJA). That order was made on the basis of admissions, attributed to the plaintiff during an interview with AFP officers and others in Pakistan in March 2003, should not have been admitted in the trial.

If Justice Kirby had believed that Thomas’ admissions were found to be inadmissible on account of threats of torture, he almost certainly would have said so. The obvious fact is that statements by an accused can be ruled inadmissible for reasons other than threats of torture – and this was the case in *The Queen v Joseph Terrence Thomas*. *Media Watch* simply invented the claim that what Attard (wrongly) called Thomas’ “confessions” had been found by the Court to have been tainted by threats of torture.

The essential reasoning of the Court of Appeal turned on the judges’ finding that Thomas had been subjected to what the Court described as emotional inducements which were of such a kind as to make his admissions inadmissible. Essentially the inducements related to Thomas’ wish to escape possible indeterminate detention in Pakistan, to return to his family in Australia and not be sent to Guantanamo Bay.

The only reference to the word “torture” in the decision turned on a hypothetical discussion as to whether a “confess or to torture” inducement could ever be consistent with a free choice. Obviously, the judges said that it could not. But there was no finding that Thomas had been tortured – or threatened with torture. His statement was found inadmissible for other reasons. Likewise, if the Court of Appeal really believed that Thomas had been tortured it would be most unlikely that it would have ordered a re-trial – based on the accused’s admissions subsequently made to the ABC *Four Corners* program and *The Age*. Yet in *R v Thomas* (No.3) the Court ordered Thomas to be re-tried on the charges of receiving funds from a terrorist organisation and possessing a falsified Australian passport.

## ENTER KIRSTIN McLIESH – AND PLAGIARISM

During her time as *Media Watch* presenter, Monica Attard loved to criticise others for plagiarism. But she said nothing when Kirstin McLiesh, the Head of Audience and Consumer Affairs, engaged in an act of plagiarism to defend Attard’s comments as *Media Watch* presenter.

Here's what happened.

On 22 September 2006 Kirstin McLiesh replied to Henderson in response to what she described as his "complaint about *Media Watch*". McLiesh made it clear that she was writing on behalf of the ABC and claimed that she personally had "reviewed" the matter. Her penultimate paragraph read as follows: "For these reasons, the ABC is satisfied that *Media Watch*'s brief explanation of the Court's decision in its 4 September episode was accurate".

The clear implication of McLiesh's letter was that she had reviewed the matter herself and had come to her own conclusions which she then proclaimed on behalf of the ABC. On reading McLiesh's letter, Henderson became suspicious of its authorship. On 26 September 2006 he wrote to McLiesh requesting a copy of any correspondence which Peter McEvoy or Monica Attard forwarded to her in relation to her investigation. On 6 October 2006 McLiesh advised Henderson that he should approach McEvoy for a copy of *Media Watch*'s "defence of the program". Eventually McEvoy forwarded this material – on 18 October 2006. That is, Henderson received this material some three weeks after he requested it.

It turned out that McLiesh had received a report on the issue from McEvoy's team and presented this to Henderson – almost in its entirety – as her own findings. At best, this raises serious issues of transparency – in that McLiesh presented the work of others as her own. At worst, it raises the spectre of plagiarism – which Attard, McEvoy and the *Media Watch* team had always condemned when engaged in by others. If McLiesh had advised Henderson that she agreed completely with *Media Watch*'s defence of itself and simply passed on McEvoy's statement to Henderson – there could have been no query about propriety, even though there could have been a dispute about her actual decision. But, instead, she implied that *Media Watch*'s document was her own.

A comparison of the two documents reveals that McLiesh's letter to Henderson was no more than a cut-and-paste version of McEvoy's letter to her. As the following example demonstrates:

- **Peter McEvoy to Kirstin McLiesh (undated)**

**The Court of Appeal held that Jack Thomas' admissions in his AFP interview on 8 March 2003 were involuntary (Judgment par 94 "Admissions made in the circumstances we have described could not, in our view, be held to be voluntary"). They found that the interview during which he made these admissions was held against a background of**

**previous interviews and experiences at the hands of the authorities, and his state of mind had to be viewed in that context. (par 91 "In our view, the Judge fell into error by divorcing the interview from the context in which it occurred,")**

- **Kirstin McLiesh to Gerard Henderson (22 September 2006)**

**The Court of Appeal held that Jack Thomas' admissions in his AFP interview on 8 March 2003 were involuntary (Judgment par 94 "Admissions made in the circumstances we have described could not, in our view, be held to be voluntary"). The Court found that the interview during which Thomas made these admissions was held against a background of previous interviews and experiences at the hands of the authorities, and his state of mind had to be viewed in that context. (par 91 "In our view, the Judge fell into error by divorcing the interview from the context in which it occurred")**

And so it went on. Plagiarised comment after plagiarised comment. In her letter to Henderson dated 22 September 2006, McLiesh also wrote:

**As you say in your email, the Court's decision was that the confession was involuntary. However, it is also a fair and accurate summary of the Court's decision to say that the confessions were tainted by threats of torture:**

Once again, McLiesh followed *Media Watch* by using the emotive term "confessions" – when the Court of Appeal had actually referred to Jack Thomas' admissions. Moreover, it is not a fair and accurate summary of the Court of Appeal's decision to claim that it found that the admissions "were tainted by threats of torture". The Court of Appeal did not say this in either *The Queen v Joseph Terrence Thomas* or in *R v Thomas* (No. 3). And Justice Kirby did not say so in his reference to the case in *Thomas v Mowbray*. It seems that the only persons to have made this claim are Monica Attard, Peter McEvoy and Kristin McLiesh.

## **YES, SHE HAS NO LEGAL QUALIFICATIONS**

The fact is that Kirstin McLiesh – who told Gerard Henderson in a phone conversation that she has no legal qualifications – simply accepted *Media Watch*'s defence of its own claims without checking with any

independent legal authority, including the ABC's in-house lawyers. Since McLiesh has no training in law and declined to check her views with anyone who has – on what basis did she come to a finding to completely accept *Media Watch's* self-interested interpretation of *The Queen v Joseph Terrence Thomas*?

The answer seems to be that McLiesh, an ABC employee, was happy to accept the ABC *Media Watch's* defence of itself – and to present it as the ABC's defence of *Media Watch*.

The ABC's complaints process is seriously flawed. The intervention of Audience and Consumer Affairs creates a buffer between those who make ABC programs and those who criticise them. The resultant time delay works in favour of ABC presenters and producers since it means that those responsible for programs do not have to respond directly to their critics but can divert the matter into the public broadcaster's bureaucracy. Even in the minute number of occasions where a correction is deemed necessary, by the time such a decision is made the impact of such a correction is almost completely diminished.

In the above case, Peter McEvoy did not write to Gerard Henderson until 27 October 2006 – some two months after Henderson had raised the issue with him. His response ran for fewer than ten lines and the message was that Henderson was “wrong”. That, after all, was the *Media Watch* style – to dismiss its critics as simply wrong. Yet Kirstin McLiesh was prepared to go along with this approach.

In view of Kirstin McLiesh's behaviour in this instance, it is scarcely surprising that her Department of Audience and Consumer Affairs rejects out of hand over 96 per cent of complaints received.

## POSTSCRIPT

### Ms McLEISH'S 11 WEEKS

*The Australian* journalist Dennis Shanahan objected to Monica Attard's criticism of him on the *Media Watch* program which aired on 10 September 2007. Put simply, *Media Watch* bagged Shanahan for his report of an interview which he obtained in Iraq with General Petraeus. The matter ended up with Kirstin McLiesh on 5 October 2007 and she completed her report on 20 December 2007. In between the commencement and conclusion of her investigation, *Media Watch* wound up for the year and its presenter and executive producer resigned. A complaint system which takes so long is completely ineffectual.

# BROADBAND AND COMMUNICATIONS UNDER LABOR

Senator Stephen Conroy is the new Minister for Broadband and Communications. Labor has promised to have a high-speed broadband network working by the end of the year - Prime Minister Rudd's \$8 billion proposal. Hear how the roll-out will happen and why.

SPEAKER: **SENATOR THE HON. STEPHEN CONROY**  
(Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate; Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy)

DATE: Tuesday 6 May 2008  
\*\*Bookings from 22 April\*\*

TIME: 5.30 for 6 pm

VENUE: “The Forum” Level 23,  
Westpac Banking Corporation,  
Westpac Place, 275 Kent Street,  
Sydney

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

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



# GEORGE BURCHETT ON WILFRED BURCHETT

Bruce Watson

On 10 December 2007 Phillip Adams interviewed (on ABC Radio National's *Late Night Live*) George Burchett, son of the communist propagandist Wilfred Burchett in a promotion of the former's collection of his father's writings – George Burchett and Nick Shimmin (eds) *Rebel Journalism: The Writings of Wilfred Burchett*.

The interview presented Wilfred Burchett as a kindly, avuncular and principled figure championing the cause of truth in the face of mendacious Western governments. There was no critical examination of Wilfred Burchett's activities over the years, activities that saw the Australian Government refuse to re-issue his lost passport and the subject of allegations of a shocking nature concerning his involvement in the mistreatment, interrogation and torture of Commonwealth and United States servicemen during the Korean War.

Early on Adams stated that Wilfred Burchett had consistently sought to expose "political lies from above...again and again". This certainly would come as a surprise to anyone who read, for example, his coverage of the communist Show Trials in Hungary in *Peoples' Democracies* (1951). Here he enthusiastically supported the trials of Cardinal Mindszenty, Laszlo Rajk and others – where compulsory convictions and sundry executions took place as a matter of routine off the back of confessions both crude in their creation and in the manner of their extraction from the victims.

Or we could look at Wilfred Burchett's 1952 description of North Korean Prisoner-Of-War camps – with a massive mortality rate due to starvation, torture and mistreatment – as "like a holiday resort in Switzerland" where the POWs were getting "fat and brown" due to their lazing around with "swimming, fishing, sports, reading, writing", on meat rations many multiples of that in England. The reality of life in a Kim Il Sung camp was rather different. One Australian prisoner, Robert Parker, who had

complained to Wilfred Burchett about poor treatment (reaction: shrug of shoulders), had clearly been tardy at table given his weight had fallen from 82kg to a mere 38kg.

Nothing of this nature was put to George Burchett by Adams. And it should have been. In relation to the aforementioned Show Trials, Adams noted that, with the benefit of hindsight, Wilfred Burchett's "convictions were sometimes misguided." To be fair to Adams, he did describe the trials as "notorious". George Burchett responded that, in this case, Wilfred Burchett "was taken by the youthful enthusiasm of the 'new lives' that were emerging in the so called Peoples Democracies.". Adams, helpfully, interposed: "So he wanted to see the best of them which meant he saw the worst in any enemy."

This in itself is a damning admission that Wilfred Burchett's writings were never anything more than Stalinist propaganda. They could never be considered objective, accurate or truthful – but merely the sprouting of whatever line he felt his masters would approve. Wilfred Burchett's views on "bourgeois democracy" were set out in *Peoples' Democracies* where he describes the Western democratic process as "the theoretical liberty of the ballot box to decide between two groups of political parties both bent on maintaining the privileges of one tiny group of people".

The period during which the Iron Curtain was imposed on much of Europe was described by George Burchett to be a "time of enthusiasm" for which, "a lot of people are still nostalgic". The military suppression of the Hungarian Uprising in 1956 by the Soviet Union would not have been remembered by those present with either enthusiasm or nostalgia. Likewise for those with the misfortune to reside in Bulgaria (where Wilfred Burchett lived and ultimately died), with its brutal hard labour camps for political opponents, which were still operating into the 1970's.

But then, again, we need to understand Wilfred Burchett's attitude to press freedom. In *Peoples' Democracies* he made it clear that individual expression was not to be tolerated – damning it as "a liberty of the press to promote religious and racial hatreds...for publishers to flood bookstores with pornographic literature". Similarly, the incarceration of half of Europe is breezily dismissed by Wilfred Burchett in *Peoples' Democracies* as a false "liberty" with the freedom to travel being only of theoretical use to a peasant to "visit Monte Carlo" – or, in the case of those who have got their comeuppance under the new order, "to live in Italy" and escape whatever socialist justice was to be visited upon them.

These clearly written and undeniable statements by Wilfred Burchett do not sit well with the word picture generated in the Adams interview – namely a (false) picture of a man of prodigious work; of principle; of peace; and of humanity. There was an attempt to bolster Wilfred Burchett’s credibility. Adams stated that “Kissinger calls him in for a chat ‘cause he wants his help in negotiating with the North Vietnamese.” In fact, rather than the US Secretary of State seeking out Wilfred Burchett, it was the other way around. Wilfred Burchett lobbied for a meeting, falsely promising new information from North Vietnam as to how the war might be ended. Kissinger’s attitude to Wilfred Burchett was clear. As he stated when quizzed later: “I’d talk with the devil if I thought it might end the war in Vietnam.”

The *LNL* interview drew to a close with Adams asking George Burchett about the “allegations” that Wilfred Burchett “interrogated Australian and American POW’s in North Korea”. George Burchett replied that this had “been totally debunked by serious historians...”. Adams then closed the interview with that issue seemingly resolved.

The facts, tested in court and not shaken by Wilfred Burchett’s own counsel in the 1974 New South Wales Supreme Court defamation case *Burchett v Kane* and in other forums, have Wilfred Burchett actively engaged in the interrogation and mistreatment of Commonwealth and US servicemen in North Korean POW Camps.

Adams could have presented George Burchett with the names of those who made specific allegations against his father Wilfred. Namely:

- Englishman Derek Kinne GC, whose citation for the George Cross expressly mentions one period of torture he endured as a punishment imposed by the Chinese for “insulting” Wilfred Burchett.
- USAF Lt Paul Kniss, whom Wilfred Burchett interrogated both in person and by proxy (in that WB drafted questions and edited false confessions);
- Australian POW Tim Hollis, whom Wilfred Burchett failed to get to collaborate while he was assisting interrogators in Camp 5 at Pyoktong.
- Paul Enoch, for whom Wilfred Burchett wrote the script for the filming of his false confession – a confession which Wilfred Burchett had also drafted.

The *LNL* interview would surely have gained had these specific details about Wilfred Burchett been put to his son. But they were not. Had Wilfred Burchett merely kept to his core task of promoting totalitarian regimes, then he would have passed unnoticed into history. What differentiates him from other propagandists is that he took the fatal step of moving

from the world of words to that of active participation. This is why Wilfred Burchett remains remembered today and why the Adams interview was such a failure as an exercise in extracting objective facts.

***Bruce Watson is a lawyer and corporate advisor based in Sydney***

## CORRESPONDENCE

In the interests of freedom of information, openness, intellectual honesty, free inquiry – along with a touch of retribution – *The Sydney Institute Quarterly* publishes some recent email correspondence between Gerard Henderson and leftist luvvy radio presenters of both taxpayer funded (Phillip Adams on ABC Radio National) and private enterprise (Mike Carlton on Sydney Radio 2UE) genres.

As followers of the ABC TV *Australian Story* will be aware, Phillip Adams AO (well done) is married to Patrice Newell. They live on a biodynamic farm near Scone in New South Wales where they produce biodynamic (methane emitting) cattle and grow biodynamic trees. The *Australian Story* program, titled “A Place in the Country”, went to air on 4 October 2001. The farm, titled Elmswood Farm, also produces Virgo Extra Virgin Olive Oil Soap With Honey. A pack of six is available for a mere \$81. How about that.

Mike Carlton’s recent (second) marriage was (almost) exclusively reported in the social pages of *The SIQ* in Issue Number 30.

Here we go.

### **GERARD HENDERSON/ PHILLIP ADAMS**

The following email correspondence commenced when Gerard Henderson responded to a comment made about him by Phillip Adams on the ABC Radio National *Late Night Live* program on 26 November 2007.

#### ***Gerard Henderson to Phillip Adams 27 November 2007***

Good morning Phillip

Guess what? I was walking my (deaf) dog Nancy last night and I happened to turn on *Late Night Live* in time to hear your introductory remarks. As I recall, you suggested that I – along with a number of others – should undertake grief counselling following Kevin Rudd’s victory over John Howard.

I was quite touched, of course. However, your evident concern is not warranted – in my case at least.

The fact is that I get on very well with Kevin Rudd. Kevin Rudd and Therese Rein have been to our house for dinner, my daughter works for the Prime Minister Elect and he has addressed The Sydney Institute twice in the last year. As you may recall, I also enjoyed good relations with the Hawke and Keating governments.

In view of this, your concern would be better focused elsewhere – perhaps on the Senate candidates for the Climate Change Coalition whom you publicly endorsed on *YouTube* in the 2007 Federal Election campaign.

I note that the team led by Patrice Newell and Karl Kruszelnicki scored a mere 27,000 votes – around 0.83 per cent of the total vote in New South Wales. This should cause such high profile types some real grief. Especially since the Democratic Labor Party (remember it?) scored 1.22 per cent of the total vote in New South Wales. Note that the DLP was formally wound up nearly three decades ago – and the current organisation is the extant rump of the official rump. Or something like that. If Ms Newell and Dr Kruszelnicki cannot out-poll the DLP then they should need grief counselling. Why not get in touch? Come to think of it, you may need some grief counselling yourself.

Correct me if I happen to be wrong. But, as far as I recall, you were the only ABC presenter to formally endorse a political party in the 2007 Federal election. How about that?

Best wishes

Gerard Henderson

**Phillip Adams To Gerard Henderson  
28 November 2007**

Getting close to Kev are we Gerard? Surprise surprise. You cling to the lower limbs of the powerful like a mussel to the pier – grovelling is just one of your many charming characteristics – I wrote a column about you before the election (in response to yet another gross misrepresentation of my political involvements) but decided it would be, like you, a waste of space – but I'll forward it so that you can update your famous files – even better, you could run it in your silly self-serving little mag – feel free.

**Gerard Henderson To Phillip Adams  
28 November 2007**

Dear Phillip

Thanks for your note. And, yes, I would really love to receive a copy of your (unpublished) column about me which you apparently wrote before the election. After all, it is less than a year since your last (published) column devoted to me. As you will recall, *The Weekend Australian* graciously gave me some 400 words to reply to your howlers – remember my letter which was published on 3-4 March 2007?

As usual, your most recent note is fact-lite. I am not, as you claim, suddenly “getting close to Kev”. Kevin Rudd and Therese Rein came to our house for dinner in late 2000 and he addressed The Sydney Institute in July 2000, October 2002, June 2004, September 2006 and July 2007. Come to think of it, I became close to Kevin Rudd around the time that you were one of The Sydney Institute's associate members. It's that long ago.

By the way, your email sounded somewhat angry. I seriously suggest that you – or a failed Climate Change Coalition candidate – take up any available grief counselling.

In conclusion, I should say that I just loved your *YouTube* gig – spruiking for the Climate Change Coalition. It was a wow. There you were in your Woollahra pile sitting between valuable antiquities dug up from Old World times (with resultant New World carbon emissions due to excavation and transport) before heading off in your motor to Climate Change HQ circa Scone (with even more carbon emissions). It was oh-so-touching.

Keep morale high.

Gerard Henderson

**Phillip Adams To Gerard Henderson -  
11 December 2007**

*LNL's* podcast figure – quite extraordinary – the presenter may be in poor working order but the program is in excellent health. We finally have the MP3 downloads for the first eight months of this year. The ABC dominates this new world, both in terms of local and international reach. Radio National is the great success story – with 21,000,000 downloads from February 1 to September 30, covering the 48 programs in the weekly schedule. Both *Life Matters* and the *Science Show* have topped the million. *All in the Mind* is close to 2,000,000. But *LNL* gets 8,229,489! By year's end, that will exceed 13,000,000 – and there's a strong suggestion that even that figure is an underestimate – that the real number is 2,000,000 higher. Aren't we clever?

**Gerard Henderson To Phillip Adams -  
12 December 2007**

Dear Phillip AO

Thanks for your note of 11 December advising how “clever” you are. I never would have known. Just joshing, of course.

Congratulations on *LNL's* podcast success. I'm not surprised. Radio National focuses very much on this area and *LNL* has a substantial and highly efficient staff who do much of your work – none of whom are acknowledged in your recent email. The Cult of Phillip AO prevails, okay?

There are a couple of matters to clear up concerning our recent correspondence before the Festive Season formally commences.

- I heard your request on *LNL* last Tuesday for those listening to call me at *The Sydney Institute* and to tell me personally that there had been some 8 million *LNL* downloads. Your evocation had the following effect. One *LNL* listener phoned my office. Just one. Perhaps he is "The Listener" to whom you regularly refer. He gave the name as David Langsam. If he is the person I believe he is, then Mr Langsam is the only self-proclaimed anarchist around who follows orders. Clearly, the Cult of Phillip AO can achieve (secular) miracles.

- I received your (unpublished) article of no particular date which you maintained you had written about me. Not so. When I read it, I realised it was really about You Yourself – like most of your *Australian* columns.

In this (unpublished) piece you commented as follows: "This columnist was the first to support Kevin Rudd's Prime Ministerial ambitions repeatedly begging caucus not to confirm Beasley's [sic] leadership, let alone loony lethal Latham." There were three additional references to this "Beasley" fellow. I assume you meant Kim Beazley. By the way, you also misspelt the name of leftist hero Jim Cairns. I can only assume that much sub-editorial work is done on your columns before they are published in order to correct such howlers.

Your (unpublished) article did not state precisely when you publicly stated that Kevin Rudd was the best equipped to take over the ALP leadership. I suggested a Kevin Rudd/Julia Gillard ticket in my column on 12 October 2004. I would be interested in when you made your proposal.

Best wishes. I hope my proposed grief-counselling – in the wake of the Climate Change Coalition's failure to outpoll the Democratic Labor Party in New South Wales – is working for you and yours.

Lotsa love for the Festive Season.

Gerard Henderson

### **MIKE CARLTON/GERARD HENDERSON**

The following email exchange commenced when Mike Carlton became annoyed at a reference to him in Gerard Henderson's *Sydney Morning Herald* column published on 25 September 2007.

#### **Mike Carlton to Gerard Henderson – Tuesday 25 September 2007**

Dear Gerard Henderson.

There you go, doing your poisonous little toad act again. My piece on Peter Shergold did not, as you

claimed yesterday, *equate* his views with the position of Hitler, Stalin and Pol Pot. I made it plain in the column that I had invoked those names as "the reduction ad absurdum of his facile bluster." Either you do not understand the debating concept of the *reductio ad absurdum* or – as I believe more likely – you chose to ignore my use of it.

If it be the former, then in the interests of your continuing education I shall explain: it is the disproof of a principle or assertion by showing that it leads to an absurdity when followed to its logical conclusion. Not too hard to comprehend, surely. The key word is "absurdity". If it be the latter, then it's the sinuous old trick of the ratbag Right: cherry pick the facts to fit the narrow frame of your prejudices.

Sincerely,

Mike Carlton

#### **Gerard Henderson to Mike Carlton – Wednesday 26 September 2007**

Good afternoon Michael

I do not know what kind of invective won debates at Barker College four decades or so ago. But where I went to school, labelling someone with whom you disagree as a "poisonous little toad" did not do the trick. By the way, thanks for the compliment – for the truth is that I am not little.

From recollection, I learnt about what you term the *reductio ad absurdum* "debating concept" during first year at university. Or perhaps it was at school. I have always held the view that this concept encourages exaggeration, even hyperbole.

Here are the facts. This is what you wrote in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 30 June 2007:

**But more worrying still was a quote from Canberra's most senior mandarin, the head of the Prime Minister's Department, Peter Shergold, who was reported in the News Ltd press on Thursday as saying that "public servants do not have a moral responsibility to act on their own judgment of the public interest when they assess the government has got it wrong". Hitler, Stalin and Pol Pot would have applauded that one. Auschwitz? None of your business, dear boy, the government knows what it's doing. The Gulag Archipelago? The Khmer Rouge Year Zero? Not your moral responsibility, old chap. That is the *reductio ad absurdum* of Shergold's facile bluster....**

Leaving the pretentious Latin aside, clearly you were equating Peter Shergold's attitude to the proper role

of public servants in Australia in 2007 with the stance taken by public servants in Hitler's Germany and other totalitarian regimes.

This is how most of the readers would have interpreted your column – with or without reference to, say, *A Dictionary of Foreign Words & Phrases in Current English*. Certainly this is how Peter Shergold interpreted your column – as is evident in his letter published in the current issue of *Quarterly Essay*. Perhaps you also regard Dr Shergold as a “poisonous little toad”.

In conclusion I, once again, reflect on the fact that you love criticising others but you are extraordinarily sensitive when anyone criticises you.

Best wishes

Gerard Henderson

cc: Peter Shergold

**Mike Carlton to Gerard Henderson –  
Friday 28 September 2007**

Gerard,

That simply will not do. You are disingenuous.

As for the ad hominem stuff (dear oh dear, *more* Latin), I rather think you started it by sneering at my marriage, my wife, and her family, in your quixotic defence of Alan Jones a while ago. Once on *Crikey*, once on your website. That was ungentlemanly.

Take me on by all means, but do have the grace to lay off an elderly, retired officer of the Black Watch who fought at Monte Cassino. If you are not going to play by the Queensberry rules it is hypocritical to expect others to.

Do have a good weekend.

Michael Carlton



**Gerard Henderson to Mike Carlton –  
Friday 19 October 2007**

Michael

I saw you on the telly last night supporting *The Chaser* – and I recalled that I had not responded to your email of 28 September 2007. You told me to “have a good weekend” – and, in fact, I had two good weekends.

I note, once again, that you like sneering at others but get terribly upset when anyone laughs at you or the people you support. Unlike *The Chaser*, I do not make fun of the poorly educated or the evidently disabled or pre-teenage girls who were sexually abused and then murdered or recent victims of malignant cancer. Who knows? Perhaps this kind of adolescent humour appeals particularly to the likes of

you and the so-called Chaser “boys” who, as I understand it, were educated in the Sydney Protestant or non-denominational private school culture. I went to a Catholic school where we were encouraged not to kick down at those who are less educated or less well-off or recently departed.

In relation to your email, I make the following comments about what you claim is my “ungentlemanly” behaviour with respect to your (second) wife and your (latest) father-in-law.

The fact is that you have engaged in on-going homophobic attacks on Alan Jones – particularly on your 2UE program. When I pointed this out in *Crikey*, your response was to defend yourself by referring to Jones’ interest in young men. I replied that you had recently married a young woman. Consequently, your complaint against Jones could not have turned merely on the fact that he is a 60 something man who is allegedly interested in young males (who are over the age of consent). My point was that you are a 60 something man who is interested in one young female (who is over the age of consent). Only homophobia could explain such an inconsistency.

For making this tough – but true – point, you complained to *Crikey* that I was a “poisonous little toad”. Shucks. Following this, I wrote the “Heterosexual Granddad’s Homophobia” piece which appears in Issue 30 of *The Sydney Institute Quarterly* – and, as you point out, is on the Institute’s website.

How about this? You – who love mocking others – are deeply wounded that I laughed about your very Eastern Suburbs fashionable wedding. In the process, I referred to your father-in-law as being “decked-out in a kilt”. That’s all I said of him. Yet in your email of 28 September 2007 you made the following comment:

**Take me on by all means, but do have the grace to lay off an elderly, retired officer of the Black Watch who fought at Monte Cassino.**

So, according to you, it is out of place to even refer to your father-in-law as decked out in a kilt – because he was an officer in the Black Watch who fought at Monte Cassino and so on.

There is an evident double standard here. For example, in your *Sydney Morning Herald* column on 30 June 2007, you wrote the following send up of what you predicted would be the Howard Government’s national history curriculum, viz:

**In 1788, Captain Phillip arrived in Sydney to civilise the grateful Aboriginal tribes and discover gold. Then came World War I, in which our brave Aussie diggers fought**



**Muslim extremists at Gallipoli to keep the world safe for Phar Lap to win the Melbourne Cup during an economic depression brought on by the NSW Labor premier Jack Lang and militant trade bullies. Shortly afterwards, we won World War II to make the world safe for Sir Donald Bradman, the greatest ever Australian after Sir Robert Menzies and Kerry Packer who, in 1977, invented cricket. God save the Queen.**

So, you can laugh at the dead and wounded from the 1914-1918 and 1939-1945 conflicts and demean the causes for which they fought. However, you maintain that it is ungentlemanly for me to mention that Colonel Donald Ramsay wore a kilt to your recent marriage. You take yourself – and your family – far too seriously. Especially for a professional humourist.

Have a good weekend – as the saying goes.

Gerard Henderson

**Mike Carlton to Gerard Henderson –  
Saturday 20 October 2007**

Gerard,

I am beginning to think you are just plain silly. And to invoke the supposed failings of a protestant education is sectarian nonsense at best, and barking mad at worst.

You will be disappointed to learn that Julian Morrow, the executive producer of *The Chaser* was taught by the Jesuits at St Aloysius.

I have no problem at all with Jones's homosexuality. Some of my best friends, etc. What I despise is his hypocrisy.

Mike Carlton.

**Gerard Henderson to Mike Carlton –  
Tuesday 23 October 2007**

Michael

Good point. The correspondence started off silly. As in your claim that my reference to the fact that your father-in-law wore a kilt in 2006 somehow or other demeaned his role in the Battle of Monte Cassino some six decades ago. Some mistake, surely.

As to the other matter. My understanding is that most of the Chaser boys are privately educated types from the Protestant non-denominational system. Thanks for the information re Julian Morrow. He was at my table at the Andrew Olle Dinner on Friday and I suggested to him that Chris Taylor might like to do a song about Andrew's malignant brain tumour. Julian did not take to the idea. It seems that there is one rule for the late Andrew Olle and another for the late Stan

Zamaneck. The Chaser boys can laugh about Stan's malignant brain tumour – but not about Andrew's.

I doubt that there were many Jesuits teaching at St Aloysius when Julian Morrow went there. In my view, my point holds – there is a difference between the kick-down humour of the Chaser team (which you support) and that of Barry Humphries on the one hand – and that of the likes of Gerry Connolly and Max Gilles on the other. Connolly and Gilles have not built their careers on laughing at the poorly educated and the less fortunate in our midst.

As to Alan Jones, contrary to your assertion, I have never seen any evidence that he is a hypocrite with respect to his sexuality. As to your claim that you have no problem with homosexuality – how do you explain the fact that you sent me the following email on 22 July 2003 viz:

**Gerard, I did enjoy your column today. I do think David Flint should make clear his stance on sodomy.**

**Best wishes**

**MC**

This sounds rather homophobic to me – and rather hypocritical, as well. For example, have you ever expressed the view that, say, Justice Michael Kirby “should make clear his stance on sodomy”?

As far as I am concerned, this correspondence is concluded.

Best wishes

Gerard

PS: By the way, I will not be removing the reference to your somewhat pompous wedding from the website. If you are going to make fun of others you should assume that others may make fun of you.



**Mike Carlton to Gerard Henderson –  
Tuesday 23 October 2007**

Gerard

And point taken. I would be pleased to resume the correspondence in the event – remotely unlikely – that you write, do, or say something with a glimmer of humour. Or even a vague notion of irony or the absurd. That would mean an end to bombast which, on all the evidence, is beyond you.

I must say I am amazed at the Protestant bee in your Catholic bonnet. I had thought that such sectarian bigotry had died with the unlamented B.A.

# MATT BAI

## Reporting on the 2008 US Presidential Campaign

Matt Bai writes on national politics for *The New York Times Magazine*, where he is currently covering the 2008 presidential campaign. He is the author of *The Argument: Billionaires, Bloggers, and the Battle to Remake Democratic Politics*. The book, which chronicles the rise of the first Internet-age political movement and the people who built it, was honored as a *New York Times* Notable Book for 2007. *The Economist* called *The Argument*, “engaging and painstakingly reported,” and *The Washington Post* called it “unsparing, incisive, and altogether engaging” and “a must-read.”

SPEAKER: **MATT BAI** (US journalist & National Politics writer, *New York Times*)

DATE: Monday 23 June 2008  
\*\*Bookings from 9 June only\*\*

TIME: 5.30 for 6 pm

VENUE: To be advised

RSVP: (02) 9252 3366 or email  
mail@thesydneyinstitute.com.au

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

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



Santamaria. Plainly not. I wince when I contemplate what sort of “history” you and your fellow, white armband Howardistas are trying to force upon young Australians.

Best wishes (etc)

Mike Carlton.

PS. Zamanek is spelt Zemanek. Gilles is Gillies. Do try harder. But then accuracy has never been the strong point of you soi disant cultural warriors of the right.



### Gerard Henderson to Mike Carlton – 30 October 2007

Good afternoon Michael

I note that in your *Herald* column on Saturday you quoted our recent email correspondence.

I was not troubled by this – since I expect that anything I write in private correspondence may be leaked. However, in order to put this matter in context, I have decided to place the entire correspondence on our website. This will record – for posterity – your evident homophobia (i.e. your reference to male-to-male sodomy) and your sensitivity to criticism (i.e. your concern about my laughing at your pompous fashion-conscious wedding).

Meanwhile keep laughing – along with the Chaser boys – about the disabled in wheelchairs.

Best wishes. Keep morale high.

Gerard Henderson

### Mike Carlton to Gerard Henderson – 31 October 2007

My dear Gerard

Holier than thou, as ever. You reek with the stench of sanctimony. It’s your DLP background, I assume.

However. It was you who began the leaking – as you absurdly call it – by forwarding, without permission, one of my early emails to Peter Shergold at PM&C. A small but typical piece of brown-nosing you have conveniently overlooked.

As for placing the correspondence on the website, well, publish and be damned. I couldn’t care less. You can display this letter as well.

In the meantime, perhaps you had better turn your attention to Robert Manne who, I see in *Crikey* today, has called you a liar. I can’t imagine why.

Carlton.



# ROBERT MANNE – THIS IS YOUR (ACADEMIC) LIFE

Professor Robert Manne spends a lot of time writing about himself – his life story, the development of his opinions and so on. So it came as no surprise when, in response to an editorial in *The Australian* which criticised Manne for being a member of the “daydreaming Left”, he responded by writing to the editor about his life story and the development of his opinions and so on. On 30 October 2007, *The Australian* carried a letter by Manne in which he wrote:

**I was an anti-communist at a time when, among the intelligentsia, there was a social cost to pay...**

This surprised Gerard Henderson – who first met Manne at Melbourne University some four decades ago. On 31 October 2007 *The Australian* published a letter from Henderson in which he wrote:

**The fact is that, early in his academic career, Manne was on the Left and paid no social cost for political views.**

## MANNE’S “SOCIAL COST”

This brought an over-the-top reaction from Manne who wrote to the *Crikey* newsletter on 31 October 2007: “There are lies, damn lies, and Gerard Henderson”. Manne provided “two examples” of how he had paid a social cost for being an anti-communist, viz:

**In 1977 I attended a very large conference on human rights in Asia held in Hobart. I was the only person at the conference who spoke about the crimes of the Khmer Rouge. After I had debated Ben Kiernan on the question of the crimes of Pol Pot, I was treated as a pariah. The session ended when the audience applauded a young Cambodian woman who said I would not be welcome in People’s Kampuchea.**

**At this time I began to write regularly for *Quadrant* which was, at that time, no more popular on the Left than it is now. Most**

academics treated me with considerable suspicion. In 1985, Richard Krygier, the publisher of *Quadrant*, asked me to write a piece on Wilfred Burchett. I researched the article for several months concentrating on Burchett’s role in the defence of the postwar Stalinist regimes and support for the communist side in the Korean war... In this article, as a result of his Korean war activities, I described Burchett as a traitor to his country. On the Left, at this time, as Henderson knows, I was thoroughly detested. In some circles, despite everything that has happened since, I have still not been forgiven.

Henderson replied to Manne in *Crikey* on 1 November 2007. On the same day *Crikey* published the following note from Anthony Casey, viz:

**I am left wanting after Robert Manne’s defence of his position in your latest edition. He clearly believes that he did pay a significant cost for his principled beliefs against communism. But I struggle to understand the size of the cost: “After I had debated Ben Kiernan on the question of the crimes of Pol Pot, I was treated as a pariah.” By whom was Robert Manne treated as a pariah? By anyone important? How did this affect his career or other aspects of his social welfare? Also – “a young Cambodian woman who said I would not be welcome in People’s Kampuchea”. Had Robert Manne previously attached a great value to his being welcome in the People’s Kampuchea? What was the value of his forgone appointments there? I would be grateful for any information you can provide.**

Manne wrote again to *Crikey* on 2 November 2007 but declined to respond to Anthony Casey’s questions. The issue remains – how did Manne pay a “social cost” for his political views? And precisely what is/was this “social cost”? Let’s go to Professor Robert Manne’s curriculum vitae.

## CAMPUS YEARS

Robert Manne commenced his studies at Melbourne University in 1966 and completed his BA (Hons) in 1969. At the time there were three clubs which were broadly on the left. Namely the ALP Club (which, in today’s parlance, would be classified as right-wing Labor), the Social Democratic Club (which, in today’s parlance, would be classified as Labor left) and the Labor Club (which, at the time, was close to the Communist Party). There was also the anti-communist Democratic Labor Party (or DLP) Club –

Gerard Henderson was president of the DLP Club at that time.

On arriving at Melbourne University, Robert Manne joined the Labor Club. He now claims that he “left the Club after a few weeks” (*Crikey*, 31 October 2008). However, he has declined an invitation to state precisely when he joined the Labor Club and when he resigned from it.

The issue is important since, in July 1967, the Labor Club collected funds to support the Communist National Liberation Front in South Vietnam. The NLF was the political wing of the Viet Cong and both organisations were controlled by the North Vietnamese communist regime in Hanoi, led by the totalitarian dictator Ho Chi Minh. In July 1967 the North Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong were engaging Australian troops in the field. Manne maintains that he had quit the Labor Club by the time it advocated forwarding aid to the NLF. However, he has not provided any evidence to support his claim. On 12 September 1994, *The Age* published an article by Henry Rosenbloom, who was one of Manne’s contemporaries at Melbourne University, in which he consciously referred to Manne and the issue of aid to the NLF in 1967 – viz:

**Manne is biting about Frank Hardy’s passing infatuation with Stalin. As it happens, Hardy later recanted his position with care and thoughtfulness. Lots of people have at some time said silly things and adopted positions they would rather forget. What if Robert Manne himself, as an undergraduate, once supported sending aid to the NLF? Would we be right to remind him of this in public every time he referred to Vietnam?**

Rosenbloom has since claimed (*Crikey*, 2 November 2007) that this was a mere “rhetorical point” and that in his 1994 article in *The Age* he did not intend to make any allegation about Manne and the NLF. However, it is not clear why Rosenbloom consciously chose to make such a “rhetorical point” in the first instance – unless, of course, it was not mere rhetoric and Rosenbloom actually believed that Manne was a member of the Labor Club when it advocated sending aid to the NLF.

These days Robert Manne is highly critical of the (alleged) mendacity of others and very quick to brand those who disagree with him as liars – or worse. So it is interesting to note that Manne’s recent claim that he resigned from the Melbourne University Labor Club “after a few weeks” is not consistent with what he claimed a couple of years ago.

On 26 June 2005 Manne was interviewed by Terry Lane on the ABC Radio National program *The*

*National Interest*. Manne volunteered the following comment about his time in campus politics:

**I was on the committee of the Labor Club – which was the extreme left-wing club. It had been connected with the Communist Party earlier. The ALP Club was more or less for DLP types – it was a strange situation. And I was on the committee of the Labor Club and one of the committee members displayed a poster of Stalin – partly ironically, partly not. And I then, in a sort of fit of anger, resigned my position there. And then, you know, I began drifting in a sort of what was, in a context, a rightwards direction.**

Manne may have resigned from the Labor Club within a few weeks of joining it (as he claimed in October 2007). Or he may have resigned when he was on the Club’s committee (as he claimed in July 2005). But both statements cannot be true.

Manne’s earlier claim that he had been elected to the Labor Club committee is consistent with him being a member of the Club for some time – certainly up until mid 1967 when the Club decided to support the NLF. This is also consistent with the contemporaneous record. Writing in the Melbourne University student newspaper *Farrago* on 4 July 1969, Jennifer Walsh listed Robert Manne as one of the Labor Club members who had “drifted away” since the “beginning of the year” – i.e. since the beginning of 1969. If Manne left the Labor Club in early 1969, 1968, or late 1967 – following a period on its committee – his comment in *Crikey* (31 October 2007) that the NLF aid issue “only arose” after he “had quit the Club” cannot stand.

Once again, it is up to Manne to clarify the issue. Did he resign from the Labor Club within a few weeks of joining it? Or did he remain a member long enough to be elected to the Club’s committee?

As Henderson himself has acknowledged, by late 1968 – following the Soviet Union’s invasion of Czechoslovakia – Manne was firmly an anti-Stalinist. Manne himself has dated his conversion to anti-communism as having occurred by 1969 – i.e. his last year on campus. In his book *The Shadow of 1917* (Text Publishing, 1994) Manne wrote: “I discovered in 1969, in my final undergraduate year at the University of Melbourne, that I had become an anti-communist.”

The fact is that by late 1968/early 1969 there was little support for the Soviet Union among the left intelligentsia in Australia and other Western democracies – except France. Some members of the left intelligentsia left the Communist Party in 1939 (at

the time of the Nazi-Soviet Pact) while others quit in 1956 (following the Soviet Union's invasion of Hungary). After 1968 there were few supporters of Soviet communism. So it was hardly unfashionable to be opposed to Stalinism at universities in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The totalitarian dictators who were fashionable in leftist circles at the time were not Stalin and his heirs in Moscow but, rather, Mao Zedong in Beijing and Ho Chi Minh in Hanoi. It was communism in China and Indo China – not Soviet communism – which enjoyed a following among the intelligentsia.

While Manne had become an anti-communist by 1969 he remained on the left and was a fan of the ALP's Federal leader Gough Whitlam. In *The Shadow of 1917* Manne wrote:

**In 1969 I still thought of myself as a leftist and a democratic socialist and would have been as likely to vote for the Liberal Party as to aspire to a career in real estate. Neither did the recognition that I had become an anti-communist have anything directly to do with the debate about the Vietnam War which was raging at the university at the time.**

At Melbourne University in the second half of the 1960s Manne would not have experienced any social cost for being a self-declared Gough Whitlam voting leftist and Liberal Party hater who opposed Australia's commitment in Vietnam. In an article which he wrote in the 1968 edition of *Melbourne University Magazine* titled "The Three Faces of Anti-Communism", Manne specifically declined to "enter into the debate about communism". Yet he was critical of anti-communism, which he assessed as if it were some kind of ailment.

Manne edited the 1969 issue of *Melbourne University Magazine* along with fellow leftists Michael Liffman and Catherine Lowy. It contained a soft interview with Manning Clark along with articles by such campus leftists as Peter d'Abbs, Harry van Moorst, Michael Hamel-Green and Geoff Sharp. The editors specifically rejected a critique of the New Left written by Gerard Henderson – which was later published by the *Quadrant* editor James McAuley in the magazine's November/December 1969 edition. Manne himself contributed an article on George Orwell – but declined to use the opportunity to revise his critique of anti-communism in the previous year's *MUM*.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s intellectual fashion on campus very much turned on where individuals stood on the Allied commitment in Vietnam rather than their attitude on Stalinism. Some on the left advocated that the Allies (i.e. primarily the United

States and Australia) should withdraw their military forces from Vietnam immediately – while others openly advocated a communist victory by the North Vietnamese and its NLF and Viet Cong puppets. Manne is on record as stating that he marched in the May 1970 Moratorium – the specific aim of which was to secure the withdrawal of Allied forces from Vietnam. In other words, Manne was with the left on Vietnam and, clearly, he did not pay any "social cost" on account of this political activity. It is a documented fact that the left intelligentsia supported the Moratorium and that the Communist Party was deeply involved in organising the Vietnam protest movement.

## AN UNINHIBITED ACADEMIC CAREER

The truth is that Robert Manne enjoyed a brilliant and seamless career from the time he graduated from Melbourne University in 1969 with a First Class Honours degree and as the recipient of a Shell Postgraduate Arts scholarship. This was a most generous award which paid travel expenses and an annual stipend for two years study at Oxford or Cambridge. The fact that this prestigious scholarship was won by Manne is a further indication that, by 1969 at least, he had paid no social cost for his belated anti-communism.

In fact, Robert Manne's CV demonstrates that he did not pay any social cost for his political views during his entire academic career.

- From 1970 to 1972 Manne completed a B.Phil in International Relations at Oxford University.
- In 1973 Manne held the position of History Master at Dulwich College in London.
- In 1974 Manne was appointed Tutor in the Department of History at Melbourne University.
- In 1975 Manne became a tenured academic at age 27 when appointed a Lecturer in the Department of Politics at La Trobe University. At the time he had a B.A. (Hons) and a post-graduate B.Phil degree.
- In 1984 Manne was promoted to Senior Lecturer position in Latrobe University's Department of Politics.
- In 1994 Manne was promoted to the position of Associate Professor. It so happens that, at the request of La Trobe University, Gerard Henderson wrote a reference in support of his application.
- In 2003 Manne was appointed Professor of Politics with a Personal Chair at La Trobe University – a position which he retains today.

Manne, a fine teacher with a good publication record, is one of Australia's leading historians. He is entitled

to his considerable academic and other professional successes. However, on the evidence of his career – from a lectureship in 1975 to a full professorship in 2003 – he is not entitled to claim that he paid a “social cost” on account of his political views, including his anti-communism from late 1968 on.

Indeed, the only career disappointment which Manne ever suffered turned on his resignation as *Quadrant* editor in 1997 – following a falling-out with his fellow anti-communists on the *Quadrant* board. He was replaced by Paddy McGuinness, another anti-communist. In other words, Manne’s fall-out with *Quadrant* had nothing whatsoever to do with his anti-communist views and, consequently, was not part of any (alleged) social cost he may have paid for such views.

Certainly Manne may have been treated as a pariah at conferences in Hobart and elsewhere circa 1977. And he may not have felt welcome in Pol Pot’s Cambodia circa 1977. Also, some continuing leftists may have thoroughly detested his critique of Wilfred Burchett – and, as a result, he may not have received invitations to some dinner parties in Melbourne. Or he may not have felt completely comfortable in the Humanities Department tea-room at La Trobe. But this does not mean that he paid a “social cost” for his views. The anti-communists who paid a real social cost for their anti-communism at the time were those such as Dr Frank Knopfelmacher – who were deprived of academic promotions – and others who were denied positions to which they should have been appointed. In any event, Manne always retained some stances which were embraced by the left. Including on such key issues as Vietnam and economic policy.

## WITH THE LEFT ON THE ECONOMY

In his introduction to his edited collection *The New Conservatism in Australia* (OUP, 1982), Robert Manne wrote:

**The contributors to this volume discuss Australian politics and society and international relations. At one time I was tempted to include a section of that tension between Keynesian and libertarian economics but quickly lost heart. I must admit to having no competence in economics whatsoever (emphasis added), and little sympathy for some of the social consequences apparently acceptable to the more doctrinaire enthusiasts of monetarism and the unshackled Free Market.... To those for whom the central question for an Australian “new conservative” ought to be tariff barriers,**

**money supply, tax levels, rural subsidies and “small government” I can only offer apologies and suggest they turn to the occasional publications of the Centre for Independent Studies.**

Yet Manne’s 1982 confession to having “no competence in economics whatsoever” did not prevent him from taking a high profile role in the economic debate in the 1980s and 1990s.

Economic reform in Australia began during the final years of Malcolm Fraser’s Coalition government when John Howard was treasurer. The Fraser Government introduced a tender system for the sale of Treasury notes in 1979 and Treasury bonds in 1982 and set up the *Australian Financial System: Committee of Inquiry* (the Campbell Committee) in 1979. However, the economic reform agenda was comprehensibly embraced by the Hawke Labor Government after its election in March 1983, with Paul Keating as treasurer, and continued by the Howard Government after its election in March 1996, with Peter Costello as treasurer.

The economic reform agenda comprised financial deregulation, the floating of the currency, reductions in industry protection, tax reform, industrial relations deregulation, compulsory superannuation, the privatisation of government owned enterprises along with the introduction of competition policy. This essentially bipartisan agenda received wide ranging support – in that around 80 per cent of electors continued to vote for Labor or the Coalition. Those who broadly opposed economic reform consisted primarily of small groups on the far left (e.g. the Greens) and far right (e.g. Pauline Hanson’s One Nation). On the left, opposition to economic reform found strong expression among tenured academics in the humanities departments of taxpayer funded universities – like Robert Manne and John Carroll.

In 1992 Manne co-edited, with fellow La Trobe University academic John Carroll, *Shutdown: The Failure of Economic Rationalism And How to Rescue Australia* (Text, 1992). In the preface to *Shutdown*, Manne and Carroll maintained that the economic reform process had “failed” and they predicted “permanent high unemployment, with real figures in the order of 15 to 20 per cent”. In his essay in *Shutdown*, titled “The Rift in Conservative Politics”, Manne claimed that “the Hawke government’s debt delinquency of the 1980s has put Australia in a situation from which it is genuinely difficult to foresee a non-disastrous exit”.

In *Shutdown*, Manne and Carroll advocated that Australia should follow the economic policies of

Japan. Around the time *Shutdown* was published, Japan went into a decade long recession. Australia, on the other hand, commenced a 17 year (so far) period of economic growth with declining unemployment. In a little reported interview with fellow leftie Terry Lane on *The National Interest* program on 26 June 2005, Robert Manne admitted that when he wrote and spoke about economics in the 1980s and 1990s he literally did not know what he was writing/talking about. Manne's true confession to Lane is quoted below:

**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 (emphasis added). 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.**

Despite Robert Manne's acknowledgement that he participated in the debate on economic reform when he was not only out of his depth, but also knew he was out of his depth, this did not prevent him from citing *Shutdown* under the "research and scholarship" section in his application for promotion to an associate professorship in 1994. Nor did this eventual true confession prevent Professor Manne from being judged by his academic peers as top of the (intelligentsia) pops. The reference is to Manne's listing as Number One on the "Roll of Honour" of the "Top 40 Australian public intellectuals". (See *The Australian Literary Review* October 2006). He was so chosen by some 200 members of the one thousand strong Australian Public Intellectual Network who responded to a questionnaire.

There is no evidence that Robert Manne paid any social cost for his economic views in the 1980s and 1990s which, at the time, were broadly in line with the position of the left – as distinct from social democrats like Bob Hawke and Paul Keating and political conservatives like John Howard and Peter Costello.

## WITH THE LEFT ON VIETNAM (MOSTLY)

Then there is the issue of Vietnam. In *Crikey* on 31 October 2007 Robert Manne wrote:

**It is true that I opposed the Vietnam War, as I still do. Nothing of value was achieved. Perhaps three million Vietnamese people died. The indifference of people like Henderson and Greg Sheridan to the futility of the suffering inflicted by the side they supported is morally shocking and connected to the support they gave to the illegal and immoral invasion of Iraq. Although I opposed the US war in Vietnam, I never supported the communist side. In 1970 I marched in the anti-Vietnam Moratorium under the banner "Neither Washington Nor Hanoi".**

There is no extant evidence that there ever was a "Neither Washington Nor Hanoi" banner in the May 1970 Moratorium march in Melbourne. In his *Crikey* article, Manne said that he "marched" under such a banner. The implication of this claim was that Manne and some fellow demonstrators arranged to assemble and march under this "Neither Washington nor Hanoi" banner. Yet in his 2001 Alfred Deakin Lecture, which was first published in *The Age* on 27 May 2001, Manne wrote: "When I marched in the Moratorium of 1970 I gravitated towards a banner which read 'Neither Washington Nor Hanoi'."

So did Manne march under such a banner, which he had organised? Or did he merely gravitate to such a banner, which someone else had organised? And how does someone gravitate to a banner in a protest march involving tens of thousands of fellow protestors?

Clearly Manne marched in the May 1970 Moratorium – the aim of which was to secure the immediate withdrawal of all Allied forces from South Vietnam and during which some marchers chanted the "Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh" refrain while others carried NLF flags. It was widely understood at the time – by both opponents and supporters of the Allied commitment in Vietnam – that the withdrawal of the US from Vietnam would inevitably lead to a military victory by North Vietnam, which was supplied by the Soviet Union and China. In 2007 Manne wrote that, over a quarter of a century after marching in the Moratorium, he still opposed the Allied commitment to South Vietnam.

So in 1970 Manne opposed the Allied commitment in Vietnam. Ditto in 2007. But what about, say, 1981? In August 1981 Manne addressed a *Quadrant* seminar at the Australian National University – his speech was subsequently published in the March 1982 issue of *Quadrant*. At the *Quadrant* seminar, Manne not only supported the Allied commitment in Vietnam but also

failed to mention that he had once opposed it when at Melbourne University. One-time Labor senator John Wheeldon criticised Manne during the question/discussion period for supporting Australia's Vietnam commitment. The concluding paragraph of the published version of Manne's speech gives a flavour of Manne's position on Vietnam circa 1981-1982, viz:

**If the Vietnam question were to be honestly raised I have no doubt that wounds which are extremely painful to the Right would be reopened, but I also suspect that much of the left-wing mythology concerning the war, which now goes virtually unchallenged, would be ultimately forced into retreat. In particular I believe it would eventually become clear that in 1975 the Vietnamese people were not liberated from foreign aggression, but rather subjugated to a Stalinist regime, from which an enormous number of Vietnamese have already, and will in the future, risk their lives in order to escape... However misguided the Vietnam war appears in retrospect I cannot bring myself to submit to a revised version of history in which ultimately thoughts, such as mine concerning the totalitarianism of "post liberation" Vietnam, have been culturally censored.**

Then there was Manne's critique of the traitor Wilfred Burchett which was published in the August 1985 issue of *Quadrant*. In this essay, Manne criticised Burchett's support for the communist side in the Vietnam War. As Manne later acknowledged (*Good Weekend*, 13 November 2004): "No one reading the essay would have known that I had once been opposed to the American side in the Vietnam War and that, even in 1985, the war still seemed to me, on balance, a grave mistake, if not a crime."

It seems that when writing for *Quadrant* in the early 1980s Manne was intent on (i) implying that he was sympathetic to the Allied commitment in Vietnam and (ii) avoiding the fact that in the late 1960s and early 1970s he had publicly opposed the Allied commitment in Vietnam. The tactic seems to have worked. At the time, Manne managed to keep the anti-communist *Quadrant* set on-side. So much so that he was appointed *Quadrant's* co-editor in 1989 (along with Peter Coleman) and became the magazine's sole editor in 1990 – an appointment which he retained until 1997.

To summarise. The evidence suggests that when Manne was with the left – i.e. when at Melbourne University from 1966 to 1970 and over the past decade – he demonstrated his opposition to the Allied

commitment in Vietnam. But when Manne was with what he himself has termed the right, he did his best to hide this fact or to indicate belated support for the Allied commitment in Vietnam. At the time, he certainly did not publicly accuse such supporters of the Allied cause in Vietnam as Richard Krygier or Peter Coleman of advocating a crime of being indifferent to suffering.

## ONCE A HOWARD VOTER

Certainly Manne has suffered no social cost whatsoever for his political beliefs over the past decade – since he led the intelligentsia's opposition to John Howard and the Coalition government, writing or editing a series of books with such titles as *The Barren Years: John Howard and Australian Political Culture* and *The Howard Years* in addition to numerous articles and appearances on the electronic media.

Writing in *The Monthly* in February 2008, in praise of Kevin Rudd and Labor's 2008 election win, Manne declared:

**Rudd spoke about asylum seekers, the challenge of global poverty and of our generation's moral obligation to ensuring the wellbeing of the planet with a moral directness that we had not heard from a senior Labor figure since the fall of Keating.**

This comment gives the impression that Manne was an admirer of the Keating Government and regretted Paul Keating's defeat by John Howard in March 1996.

Readers of Manne's *Left Right Left: Political Essays 1977-2005* (Black Inc. 2005), would have reached a similar understanding when they read Manne's assessment of Paul Keating (which was initially published in *The Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 13 May 2002) viz:

**In essence, what Keating hoped to achieve was the creation of a fully independent republican Australia; freed from the subliminal influence on our thinking of the British colonial inheritance; truly multicultural in sensibility; truly at home in the Asia-Pacific region; where the terrible injustices done to the Aborigines had been unambiguously acknowledged and the indigenous and non-indigenous peoples reconciled. Keating's social vision for Australia seems to me both noble and right....**

What Manne did not tell the readers of *The Monthly* or *Left Right Left* is that he actually voted for John Howard – not Paul Keating – in March 1996. Indeed Manne has frequently seemed reluctant to



acknowledge this fact. This was evident when he debated Gerard Henderson on the ABC TV *Lateline* program on 6 October 2006 – as the transcript demonstrates:

**Gerard Henderson:** The fact is that there's a whole lot of mythology. John Howard is not as powerful as many of his critics think. Robert Manne voted for John Howard in 1996 and told everyone about it. Since then, he's done little except criticise John Howard. I mean, John Howard is not as good as Robert Manne thought he was in 1996 and he's not as bad as Robert Manne thinks he is now. He makes a contribution –

**Robert Manne:** What do you know about what I thought about in 1996?

**Gerard Henderson:** Well, you wrote about it in your newspaper column on more than one occasion and I happened to read it.

In his newspaper column on 4 March 1996, written just after Keating's defeat, Manne wrote positively about Howard and maintained that "for the first time since 1983, it was the leadership of the Liberal Party, not the ALP, that touched more closely the nation's mood". Writing in the April 1996 issue of *Quadrant* he went so far as to praise John Howard's handling of Pauline Hanson – who was disendorsed as a Liberal Party candidate during the 1996 campaign. Manne rejected the view that the Coalition's victory was either "a manifestation of new racism" or "a repudiation of political correctness".

Two years later, on the eve of the 1998 election, Manne fessed up that he had actually voted for Howard in 1996, viz:

**At the last federal election I voted for the Howard coalition. This time I will not (*The Age*, 31 August 1998).**

Manne repeated this true confession over lunch with Maxine McKew when he declared: "I voted for John Howard in 1996; something I deeply regret." (*The Bulletin*, 16 May 2000). However, on *The National Interest* in 2005 and on *Lateline* a year later he was reluctant to acknowledge this fact.

## CONCLUSION

The evidence suggests that – in so far as his professional career is concerned – Robert Manne has not paid any social cost for his political views. Why, he even managed to receive kudos from the intelligentsia for leading the opposition to John Howard in spite of the fact that he had voted for him in 1996. Quite an achievement, surely. Worth a pro-vice chancellorship, perhaps.

# DOCUMENTATION

## ALLAN MARTIN ON JUDITH BRETT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL HISTORY

The following letter was forwarded by the late Professor Allan Martin to Gerard Henderson on 16 August 1997 – following a column which Gerard Henderson wrote in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on Saturday 16 August 1997 which was critical, inter alia, of Judith Brett's analysis of Liberal Party founder Robert Menzies in her book *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People* (Macmillan, 1992).

Allan Martin's letter is printed in its original form – except that some small typographical errors have been corrected. Also, the final paragraph relating to Professor Martin's second volume on Robert Menzies has been cut since it relates to administrative matters only. Gerard Henderson's reply is also printed below – here, the only change has been to delete an administrative reference to the launch of *Robert Menzies: A Life Volume 2*.

The full names of the historians cited by Professor Martin are Judith Brett, Alan Davies (1924-1987), Graham Little (1939 - 2000), Mark McKenna, David Marr, Angus McIntyre, Manning Clark (1915 - 1991) and Don Watson. The books cited are Judith Brett's edited collection *Political Lives* (Allen and Unwin, 1997) which included chapters by Judith Brett, Graham Little and Angus McIntyre; Allan Martin *Henry Parkes: A Biography* (Melbourne University Press, 1980); David Marr *Patrick White: A Life* (Random House, 1991), Mark McKenna *The Captive Republic: A History of Republicanism in Australia, 1788-1996* (Cambridge University Press, 1996); Angus McIntyre *Aging and Political Leadership* (State University of New York Press, 1988) and Allan Martin *Robert Menzies: A Life* (Melbourne University Press, 1993). Judith Brett refers to Gerard Henderson: *Menzies Child: The Liberal Party of Australia* (Allen & Unwin 1994 – new edition Harper Collins, 1998).

Since *Robert Menzies's Forgotten People* has recently been re-issued by MUP in unamended form – with a new introduction by Judith Brett – it is appropriate to consider what Allan Martin, one of Australia's foremost empiricist historians, thought of her work. Especially since Dr Brett is critical of Dr Martin's empirical approach to biography. This dispute extends beyond the grave – since in her new introduction to the 2007 re-issue of *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People* Judith Brett makes the following comment:

**Martin wrote in full awareness of a fact of which I was careless: that many of his readers had no memory of Menzies as an**

active politician and only the sketchiest knowledge of Australia's political history. So he wrote carefully researched and contextualised history on which one could rely absolutely for a factually based account of Menzies' life and political career. I wrote as if I were having arguments with people who already knew the facts and would be impressed by the synthetic power of my interpretations. I admire enormously Martin's achievements, and I could never have done it. Even so, I think he fudges some of the most difficult questions about Menzies...

Pondering the limitations of Martin's biography of Henry Parkes, and his turning away from the "murk of the personal" when earlier in his intellectual life he had been more daring, Inga Clendinnen argues that, in the end, with his self-effacing moral temperament, he could do no other. In the case of the Menzies biography I think there was another reason. The project was initiated by Menzies' family and they made various family papers available. Menzies' daughter Heather Henderson and her husband, Peter, read the manuscripts. Martin makes clear that the family made no attempt to influence his interpretations, and I am sure this is so. However, imagining them reading his words could not but have inhibited Martin's interpretation, and strengthened his decision to limit himself to the observable public life. The children of politicians have a difficult lot sharing their parents with the public, and if they want to protect their memories and idealisations, this I respect. It is a reason, though, for historians to be wary of getting too close to their subjects' families. I doubt that Martin gained much not already available on the public record from his closeness to the family, and he told us virtually nothing about Menzies' family life.

So there you have it. Allan Martin's approach to history is flawed – according to Judith Brett and her colleague Inga Clendinnen – essentially because it was fact-based and because it eschewed the personal. Allan Martin's position was that he did not want to come to conclusions about his subject's personal lives because they were personal and the facts were not established. It is worth noting that when writing *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People* Dr Brett did not interview any surviving members of Menzies' family – not even his wife Dame Pattie Menzies. Nor did she interview any of Menzies' friends or one-time colleagues.

In her new introduction Judith Brett acknowledges that the publication of *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People* in 1992 drew some criticism at the time on account of her "use of psychoanalysis". While defending this approach, she does concede that she may have erred in the way she presented Menzies:

**My use of psychoanalysis drew some criticism at the time. Although the name of Freud does not appear until page 212 of a 274-page book, and the name of Oedipus until 213, some critics reviewed the book as if it were a psychobiography of the crudest and most impudent sort. It seemed that the names of Freud and Oedipus triggered such powerful responses that they swamped the first part of the book, which owed nothing to psychoanalysis, as well as grossly distorting the way the psychoanalytically based arguments were read... Although in hindsight I perhaps should have removed the names of Freud and Oedipus from the text (as my friend and colleague Graham Little advised me), I still stand by the general shape of the argument.**

In a footnote to this part of her new introduction Dr Brett writes:

**The worst offender [i.e. among the critics of her use of psychoanalysis] was Gerard Henderson, who mocked the book in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (5 September 1992) and recycled the mockery in *Menzies' Child*. I would not be at all surprised were he to do it again with this new edition.**

## ALLAN MARTIN'S LETTER

However, as the attached correspondence demonstrates, in private the normally self-effacing Allan Martin was highly critical of the use of psychoanalysis by Judith Brett and her colleagues. Professor Martin also criticised the way in which they used the research of empirical historians as a base from which to develop their psychoanalytical theories about the likes of Henry Parkes and Robert Menzies.

16 August 1997  
Dear Gerard,

Please don't spend time answering this: you have much more important writing to do. But I want to say that it was nice to see you today striking a blow against the Brett/Davies/Little campaign. I don't mind Judith giving her opinion about how lives might be understood, but I don't like the arrogance with

which it is said that there is no other way of understanding them except according to her precepts. Mark McKenna, to whom I've lent my copy of the new book [Judith Brett ed. *Political Lives*] – hence I can't give you exact chapter and verse – was as cranky as I was with that bit in the preface in which she says David Marr's *White* and my (of course she spells my name wrongly) *Parkes* are simply extended narratives without analysis. As Mark says, they are not that, but the analysis that *is* there does not follow her restrictive formula (so it isn't, really, analysis). Mark, as the author of a distinguished book on republicanism, has read *Parkes* very carefully: perhaps I'm doing J.B. an injustice, but I doubt if she has ever opened it.

Not like her acolyte, Angus McIntyre, who in 1988 edited an OUP volume entitled *Aging and Political Leadership*, which included a paper by him, "Precipitate politics in the face of death: the case of Henry Parkes". He had already given it, unknown to me, in 1984, at a conference of the Australasian Political Studies Association, but before he published it in this book he had the grace to send it to me for comment. If I'd objected I expect he would not have gone ahead, but I didn't: just said that his assumptions were different from mine but that was a matter of opinion, and suggested a few factual corrections. He absolutely acknowledged his source with the footnote, "The account of events in Parkes's life, and contemporary quotations, are drawn from A.W. Martin, *Henry Parkes: a Biography* (Melbourne, 1980), unless otherwise stated".

I was a bit taken aback by the thoroughness with which he gutted the book in the preparation of which, over many years, I had tried to tease out Parkes's relationship with his wives and children, as well as his political career. This produced, as you'd guess, many wonderful quotes, for the Parkes Papers are very revealing, as long as one is prepared to spend a great deal of time on them. Needless to say, all the best of them find a place in the paper. I don't mind that, since it proves at least Angus McIntyre read the book, and that even the pseudo-Freudians recognise evidence when they see it! But oh dear, I found it hard to recognise my 'Enery! [i.e. Henry Parkes]. I seem to have missed altogether the facts that he was narcissistic, had a mid-life crisis which he failed to weather and was led in the end, as death loomed "to embark on what might be called an old-age immortality project" Federation). Do have a look at it, for laughs.

Last week Judith was interviewed by Geraldine Doogue on *Life Matters* about the new book [i.e. *Political Lives*] and I heard the programme by accident as I was driving in to the University (that's

how I know of it – the book's – existence). There was one bit I particularly liked. Geraldine remarked that there wasn't a chapter about Howard, and Judith replied yes, that the book was put together last year when she still didn't have a clear idea about John Howard. But she has now, and regrets he is not there. What made her suddenly come to grips with him psychoanalytically was his performance at the Reconciliation Conference and she had been thinking a good deal about him since. Obviously, like Robert Menzies and Paul Keating, he had grown up in a stable family home, and had the balance that brought. However she suspected that, however stable, it was not a home in which there was much feeling, much affection - but then, at that point something in her must have said "hey! hey!" and a trifle sheepishly she added "of course I suppose that's rather an impertinent assumption". I think this is one of the nubs of the matter: the assumptions, being theory driven and not evidence based, *are* often simply impertinent.

Anyway, the theorists won't like my vol.2 [*Robert Menzies: A Life Volume 2*]. I'm trying to make it as simple and accessible as possible – for that very wide audience who weren't born or were not in Australia in Menzies' day, but who have no other picture of him than that that comes through the writings of Manning C and Don Watson, not to speak of the ravings of Keating. Perhaps I won't bring it off, but I'll try...

Cheers  
Allan Martin

26 August 1997  
Dear Allan

Many thanks for your letter of 16 August 1997. Your supportive comments were both interesting and appreciated. I was not aware of the Angus McIntyre incident. It's not surprising that you find the habit of psychoanalytical historians "piggybacking" on the works of empiricists frustrating.

I had noticed Judith Brett's dismissive comment re you and David Marr in the introduction to her *Political Lives*. It seems that La Brett is good at dishing it out but all too sensitive with those who disagree with her. I understand that she has sought a "right of reply" to my *Sydney Morning Herald* piece of 16 August 1997. The attached correspondence may be of interest.

It's great to hear that Volume 2 of *Robert Menzies* will be "as simple and accessible as possible". Now – here's a suggestion. Why not launch this at The Sydney Institute...

Yours sincerely  
Gerard Henderson

# BOOK REVIEWS

**John McConnell**

**A FINANCIAL TALE OF TWO CITIES: Sydney and Melbourne's Remarkable Contest for Commercial Supremacy**

By Jim Bain

UNSW Press

pb 2007, rrp \$39.95

ISBN 9780868409634

Choosing names can be a fascinating process. Sometimes, the mind connects seemingly disparate areas. Personal and professional interests play their part in such connections, of course. In *A Financial Tale of Two Cities* Jim Bain, for example, refers to a boutique investment management company called 452. Why 452? It represents Don Bradman's highest first-class cricket score. But that is not all. Paul Kelly's song about Don Bradman runs for – you guessed it – 452 seconds. This is how Peter Morgan arrived at the name for his company.

One of the strengths of Jim Bain's book is that it conveys an insider's knowledge of the finance industry, especially in regard to individuals and firms involved in the capital market. Jim Bain enjoyed a most distinguished career in stock broking over a period of four decades. Indeed he became a legendary figure. His previous book *The Remarkable Roller Coaster: Forty Years in the Australian Finance Industry* (HarperCollins Publishers) was reviewed in *The Sydney Institute Quarterly* in July 2001 (Issue 14, Vol.5, No.2).

In his new book, Jim Bain addresses a broader canvas. He devotes the first half of *A Financial Tale of Two Cities* to the workings of the capital market. He discusses the development of the financial services sector in the second half.

The transformation of the finance industry during recent decades has been extensive. So extensive that it is not easy to stay on top of it all. This is where Jim

Bain's book comes in handy. He surveys the selected material in less than 300 pages. His insightful discussion is set within a contextual theme of Sydney Melbourne rivalry. A succinct epilogue (pages 265-266) summarises the present state of play in the quest for the title of the nation's financial capital.

Jim Bain begins his discussion with the founding of Sydney and Melbourne in 1788 and 1835 respectively. The 1850s Victorian gold rushes ushered in Melbourne's financial supremacy for 130 to 140 years. Today, Sydney reigns supreme once more in the financial stakes. It is home to major resource companies, many insurance, stock broking and merchant banks, most of the top ten fund managers, the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX), the Sydney Futures Exchange and the nation's central bank, the Reserve Bank of Australia.

Jim Bain joined the family firm as an office boy in 1948 when L. P. Bain & Sons had a staff of five. When he retired in 1986, approximately 800 employees and 30 partners were working for a highly profitable Bain's. Between 1987 and 1996, Deutsche Bank acquired the equity in Bain & Co.

Right from the beginning of his working life, Jim Bain was alert to the precarious and volatile nature of the equities market. He understood the wisdom of guiding the firm into areas beyond stock broking – such as underwriting, asset financing and fixed interest trading. This broader role, he realised, would produce both stable profits and stable employment.

"When I was admitted as a partner of the firm in January 1955," Jim Bain writes, "I was determined to build up the institutional business." He served on the committee of the Sydney Stock Exchange for three terms – from

1968 to 1987 – and as chairman – from 1983 to 1987. He served also as a special adviser on the banking and finance industry to the NSW government.

*A Financial Tale of Two Cities* examines a number of stockbrokers including J.B.Were & Son, Ian Potter, A.C.Goode, Ord Minnett as well as a number of specialist and family firms. Jim Bain discusses the merger between the two very different cultures of J. B. Were & Son and Goldman Sachs. He refers also to former Treasury economist, Ian Potter and his entrepreneurial skills.



In part two of *A Financial Tale of two Cities*, Jim Bain considers the roles and characteristics of merchant banks. He examines the expansion of the Merchant Banking sector from the 1960s to the 1990s and the arrival of foreign banks. He notes the strong leadership that Chris Corrigan and Rob Ferguson provided to BT.

In part three, Jim Bain examines Westpac, the Commonwealth Bank, ANZ, NAB, St. George and Macquarie Bank in addition to a number of finance companies. He views Macquarie Bank as “arguably Australia’s most successful locally-owned investment bank”. The author then proceeds to examine the roles of the Reserve Bank, the Australian Bankers Association, fund managers – both of the large and boutique variety, futures trading and key regulators in part four.

*A Financial Tale of Two Cities* describes the activities of a selection of firms and institutions with particular emphasis on the stock broking and merchant banking industries. A critical element of the story is the influence exercised by Jim Bain’s firm and Ord Minnett in challenging Melbourne’s former supremacy in underwriting and fixed interest dealing. Jim Bain has included photographs of individuals central to his story throughout the book.

At one point in *A Financial Tale of Two Cities*, the author refers to Geoffrey Blainey’s observation that it is rare for two large cities such as Sydney and Melbourne to have competed so strenuously, so evenly, for so long. Sydney undoubtedly holds the financial title for the foreseeable future. Jim Bain concludes that Sydney is a convincing winner.

**NATIONAL MARKET  
NATIONAL INTEREST:  
The drive to unify  
Australia’s securities  
markets.**

**By Edna Carew**

**Allen & Unwin**

**pb 2007, rrp \$60**

**ISBN 9781741145939**

Australia’s equities exchange is the seventh largest in the world. Australia ranks first in the world on share ownership employing a per capita calculation. And Australia’s financial markets rank highly today in sophistication. It was not always so.

Edna Carew begins her story in *National Market National Interest* in the 1960s when there were six

stated-based stock exchanges and a few smaller regional exchanges. It was a time when stock exchanges were privileged clubs. “Elitist cartels” as Edna Carew observes. They amounted to cozy bastions of privilege. Then a mining boom came towards the end of the 1960s. The share market went into frenzy mode. There were plenty of rumours – along with malpractices, inefficiencies, chicanery and insider trading.

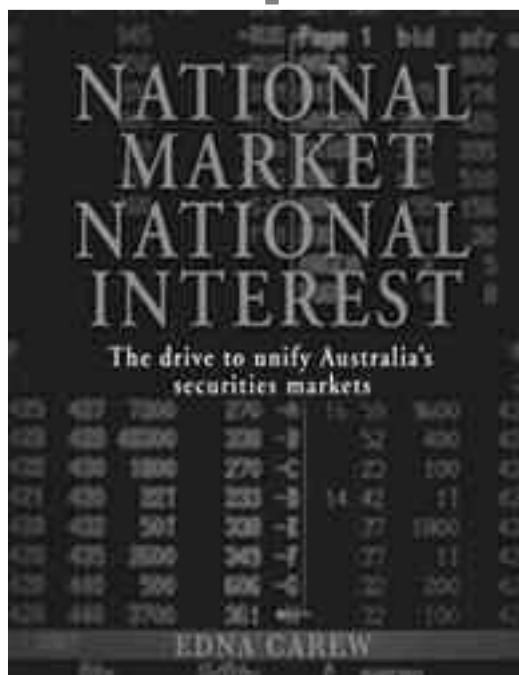
Of all the dramas played out on the stock exchange stages at that time, nothing was as dramatic as Poseidon. Within a period of a few months, the price of Poseidon shares rose by a factor of almost 200. Was there a more valuable hole in the ground anywhere in the world at that time? Alas, it wasn’t long before Poseidon’s price tumbled as dramatically as it had risen.

Thereafter, public accountability of stock exchange practices rated much higher in importance. The Poseidon episode would lead to an inquiry (the Senate Select Committee on Securities and Exchange chaired initially by Sir Magnus Cormack and subsequently by Senator Peter Rae) leading eventually to national securities market legislation and a national stock market.

An interesting variety of influences added to the mix with the passage of time - Sydney and Melbourne rivalry and animosity, federal state conflict, harsh legislation prepared under the guidance of Lionel Murphy (before he became Justice Murphy of the High Court) that was halted owing to the dismissal of the Whitlam Government, procrastination, computerisation, globalisation, information technology, deregulation, demutualisation, an expanding proportion of shareholders among the Australian population and market activities that were outpacing the regulators.

“The central theme of this book,” writes Edna Carew, “is the story of an unruly child - Australia’s securities markets - moving into truculent adolescence and experiencing an early taste or threat of discipline, while it experiments

with several new directions before finally, after much argument, a few failed attempts and considerable cajoling, agreeing to bury long-held, deep-seated but petty jealousies and accept the mantle of maturity for the good of the nation.”



Edna Carew has written more than a dozen books including the *Fast Money*, and *Language of Money* series, *Paul Keating*, *Prime Minister* and *Westpac, the bank that broke the bank*. Carew's story of the maturing of Australia's financial sector is constructed on thorough research. The author covers the period from the 1970s to the early years of the twenty-first century. The roles played by four individuals – known variously as G4 or the “Four Wise Men” – were central to the outcome.

The four – Ronald Coppel, Peter Marshman, Ralph Lee, and Graeme Chapman – were crucial to the development of a new securities markets regime based on:

- 1) a national exchange (ASX)
- 2) an electronic share-trading system (SEATS)
- 3) an electronic system to settle share transactions (CHES)
- 4) uniform national legislation.

The national exchange was formed in 1987. In 1996, ASX members voted to demutualise. Subsequently, the ASX became a company limited by shares.

Edna Carew covers the Campbell Report (the Australian Financial System Inquiry), the Wallis Inquiry (the Financial System Inquiry), Corporate Law Economic Reform Program (CLERP) and the regulating roles exercised by APRA (the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority), ASIC (the Australian Securities and Investment Commission) and the Reserve Bank (systemic stability and payments).

Edna Carew has included a chronology of key events as well as many photographs in *National Market National Interest*. The book concludes with the emergence of internationalised securities markets that are electronically sophisticated and which offer a diverse range of products in an environment that reflects efficiency and integrity.

The “ASX entered the twenty-first century,” notes Edna Carew, “as a pioneer of stock exchange structural reform and a highly regarded organisation operating world-class systems.” Edna Carew's comprehensive (almost 500 pages) and carefully researched *National Market National Interest* enlightens readers as to how this came to pass. It is an important story in the nation's financial history.

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



# REVIEW OF THE REVIEWERS

**Stephen Matchett**

***Has Hillary had it? If she has, two big biographies explain why***

There is something almost Shakespearean in what politics has done to Hillary Clinton. But only almost, because rather than a great woman with a fatal flaw Carl Bernstein's *A Woman in Charge: The Life of Hillary Rodham Clinton* (Random House) and Jeff Gerth's and Don Van Natta jnr's, *Her Way: The Hopes and Ambitions of Hillary Rodham Clinton* (John Murray) demonstrate the junior senator from New York has no identity at all outside the pursuit of power

And where Shakespeare's heroes are for all ages, Hillary Clinton's tragedy is one of her own transitory times. In the earlier stages of her career, she was in politics by proxy. Only when her husband left office could she finally fight to become president in her own name. But instead of the coronation she undoubtedly expected in the primaries, the times have changed to the extent that only the most doctrinaire of seventies sisters support her simply because she is a woman.

The enduring lesson of both these books goes far beyond their chronicle of a woman who is remarkable only in her ego and obsession with power. It is the way the political process can possess people. To understand Hillary Clinton requires a grasp of modern American politics. The reverse also applies. And if there is any work of fiction that explains her world it is less Shakespeare than *The West Wing*.

It certainly seems that the people who wrote the series prophesied this year's Republican and Democrat primary playbooks. In the last series of the show, Senator Arnold Vinick (played by Alan Alda) wins the GOP nomination. Vinick is an old fashioned Republican of the Reagan or Ted Roosevelt kind, a questioning conservative who believes government governs best when it governs least but that it exists to assist ordinary people, not to pander to plutocrats. And he has a code that places the national interest above almost all, and personal honour above that.

The search for a candidate divides the Democrats more deeply. Former vice president John Hoynes, as smart as he is salacious, sleazes around in the hope of back door dealing his way to the nomination. His

replacement at Number One Observatory Circle “Bingo” Bob Russell, as ordinary as he is honest, also wants the job.

And then there is handsome young congressman Matt Santos who comes from nowhere to win the nomination, thanks to personal decency, policy savvy and political nous.

Whether or not the *West Wing* writers worked out how the real primaries would play a couple of years back they pretty much picked the players. Vinick is a less ballsy version of Senator John McCain a Republican realist who is politically credible and personally admirable to the extent that while his party’s religious right dislikes him his stature is sufficient to blind the electorate to the fact that as a Republican he is the heir to the last floundering months of the Bush tenure.

The writers did equally well in portraying the Democrats. In the way Barack Obama presents himself as the acceptable face of change and the personification of the American ideal of the nation as melting pot, without actually saying all that much he is a real-life version of Santos

But which of them is Hillary – the character with inadequacies cloaked by knowledge of the way politics works or the brilliant but flawed operator, disqualified for high office by an absence of ethics? The answer is both, demonstrated by these two substantive biographies of the most senior female Democrat since Geraldine Ferraro ran for vice president in 1984.

Like Bob Russell, Hillary Clinton’s ambitions outweigh her achievements. Both these books make it clear that while she is an intelligent woman her real political skill is in schmoozing and campaigning rather than administering. And, like Hoynes, she is her own worse enemy (and given how Hillary is hated by Republicans that is saying something). This is not to suggest a record of wrongdoing curses her campaign. One of the most important aspects of both these books is that they dismiss all the allegations of illegality against her.

From White Water to Travelgate and on to the sleaze of her husband’s presidential pardons there is absolutely no evidence that she did anything wrong. But the books also demonstrate she has a tin ear for human relationships and a personality so saturated in solipsism that she appears incapable of recognising people around her have any purpose in life other than to serve her ambitions. These biographies record a

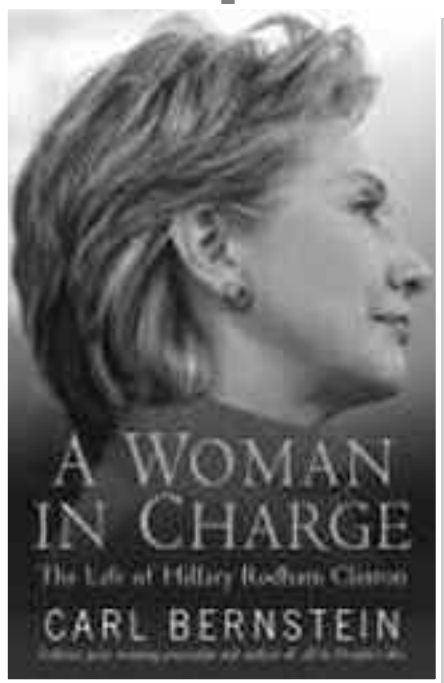
career of unforced political errors, the sort that come from knowing a great deal about how to cajole and connive, how to hunt for votes and hustle for position and sod-all about getting on with people.

Perhaps both books will appear in second editions in time for the inauguration of the second President Clinton, perhaps not. But whatever happens they have both already written her personal epitaph. Whether she wins or loses either the nomination or general election, politics has extracted an appalling price from Hilary Clinton.

And they do it in alarmingly endless detail. Both are like the political process they describe, weighty to the point of being ponderous, detailed to the point of being petty, the work of authors obsessed with everybody understanding just how many of the players they know and their comprehensive grasp of the way politics is played.

For all but the most addicted of *West Wing* obsessives this makes them hard going. But for anybody interested in the most complex and compelling political culture since the last days of the Roman republic they are excellent guides to the way the factions and families of the American elite slug it out for posts, prestige and pelf.

They are also both outstanding examples of a style of American political biography and campaign chronicles which Bernstein says is best described as the “tick-tock” school, books based on intimate access to the campaign that report in the most minute detail who said what and in which circumstances.



Bernstein argues that the founder of the approach was William White, with his making of the president series, and he is undoubtedly correct. However, the idea of the comprehensive political life, which creates a character from a mastery of detail extends far beyond the campaign quickie, knocked out within a year of an election where the players talk off the record to settle still recent scores. The obvious masters of the genre are Martin Gilbert and Robert Caro whose enormous multi-volume narrative biographies of Churchill and L B Johnson interweave private and public lives to create comprehensive portraits of the whole person. And Doris Kearns Goodwin’s study of Lincoln’s cabinet is perhaps the best contextual biography of any political leader in the last 20 years. In focusing on the way he established and maintained control of his government, Goodwin also provides a comprehensive portrait of Lincoln.

All these authors are credible because of their manifest mastery of the primary sources, which make up the vast documentary records of their subjects' lives. To succeed, this approach needs endless footnotes and analyses of specific events and documents. As such it is out of fashion with the academic biography industry which is more interested in deciding what their subjects felt, or would have felt, if they were not sexist, racist colonialists, than in recording what they did.

And the result, as Caro and Goodwin demonstrate, can be immensely engaging and completely convincing. But there is no doubting that these are hard books to write. For a start they require extraordinary effort, plus a great journalist's ability to recognise and record the stories that matter and a scholar's capacity to put them in context of the times.

Both these biographies have all three attributes. But Bernstein argues that his book and, by implication, his competitor's, is not a "tick-tock" life - because no one other than the participants knows the content of the core conversations in Hillary Clinton's life, the ones she had with her husband. That this argument appears a third of the way into a 600 page plus book packed full of contextual detail makes a case that Bernstein is being too modest. As with his rivals, he includes a great deal of detail about every aspect of Hilary's public life, and a good deal on her private one. Certainly neither his, nor his rivals' book are able to quote what she said to her husband after any of his extraordinary indiscretions, but the authors have talked to enough people sufficiently close to the couple to have a fair idea.

This is, however, both the strength and weakness of the books. A great many of the most important statements in both are sourced to anonymous interviews with Clinton loyalists who did not dare speak on the record. But for readers prepared to take the authors on trust there is a vast amount of information about Hillary Clinton's career. Perhaps too much information. Certainly the way all the authors describe the same events and come to the conclusions means there is no need to read both books to learn as much as any individual needs to know about her. But which one? Gerth and Van Natta have produced a classic reporters' book in which they deliberately demonstrate how much they know, and understand, about Washington. Thus they define the political culture Hillary Clinton claims she can change but plays to her own advantage. "In early 2006, Washington DC was undergoing one of its periodic spasms of self-loathing. This happens every few years. The capital takes a close look at itself in the mirror, blanches at the soiled image and then does virtually nothing to change it." (p 318)

This tone of knowing resignation is used from the very beginning of the book, demonstrating that even

before she was an insider Hillary Clinton acted like one, constantly calculating how events and individuals could advance her interests. And the authors point to the way she assumes that her ability gives her a free pass on everything. Thus they report that in the Senate she simply did what she wanted, a characteristic, "that has long complicated the political and professional careers of Hillary Clinton: an underlying sense that the rules of the game are up to her". (225)

The pair are not unsympathetic to their subject; it's just they find it hard to identify any action of Hillary Clinton which is not calculated. They acknowledge the pain caused by her husband's philandering, but point to the way the Lewinsky scandal helped her establish her own political identity. They show how she developed the thick skin a woman needs to survive in politics, but argue that from Arkansas on she never learned to disguise it; "try as she might, to many she came off as grating, a schoolmarm snapping about undone homework". (86)

Gerth and Van Natta confirm that there was in fact the rightwing conspiracy she always alleged, (although the conservative propaganda machine funded by the eccentric millionaire Richard Mellon Scaife hardly ran to spies in the White House). They make it quite clear the investigation into Whitewater and the Lewinsky affair was a wicked waste of time that caused innocent people inordinate and unnecessary pain. But they also make it plain that in the White House Mrs Clinton was her own worst enemy, that while she acknowledged she tried to do too much too fast, "many of these rationalisations ultimately pointed the finger at others: those who had opposed her and those who were unable to keep up with her. In years to come, those two forces would again and again be blamed by Hillary when things didn't go her way." (131)

But despite all the detail the authors fail to answer a couple of crucial questions - why has she always pursued power with such implacable arrogance and what would she do with it. They try to address them by rhetorically asking who the "authentic" Hillary is. But there are two interpretations to the answer they come up with; either she has no self-awareness beyond her own will to power or, if she does have any idea about who she is, she does not want anybody else to know.

**The strategy that Hillary developed in college to restore her sense of confidence and balance by refusing to look within has helped sustain her through a life of incredible accomplishment and heartbreak. But it has also resulted in a forced, artificial demeanour, a reinforced tendency toward arrogance and a belief that she is immune to the rules, and a sense that anyone who**



**disagrees must be an enemy. It is a challenge to ask Americans to get to know the authentic self of a person who in some ways has deliberately not gotten to know it herself. (345)**

It's a convenient admission for biographers, if their subject does not understand her own identity, how can they? But it inevitably establishes their book's core thesis, that with Hillary Clinton what you see is what you get – a professional politician who is only alive when pursuing power.

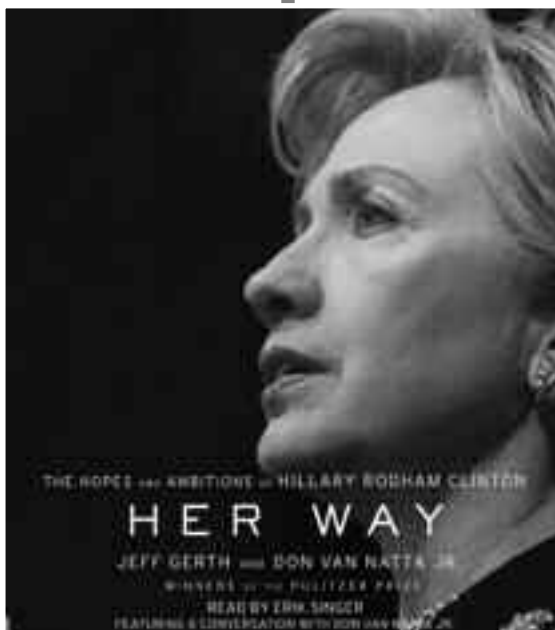
Carl Bernstein faced the same problem and failed to come up with a more convincing explanation of the who and the why of Hillary. Like his competitors he did a good job on the how of her career, in fact, a better one. While Bernstein asserts that the unique interface of Hillary Clinton's public and private lives makes it impossible to rigorously report, and accurately assess, her political career he still gives it a pretty good go.

This is not a definitive political biography, but it is a good first draft of one. Bernstein provides a comprehensive description of Hillary's childhood and family life. In his desire to demonstrate that he has done the work he provides more information about Hilary's demographically average and psychologically dysfunctional upbringing than anybody other than her most devoted allies or enemies could need.

And he continues the detail in his coverage of her university years and struggle to decide on the way she would rule the world - with Bill or by herself. While he covers the same ground and reaches similar conclusions to Gerth and Van Natta - in the way the pair ran Bill Clinton's Arkansas and national campaigns - Bernstein has a more coherent and polished approach. And his description of Hillary's behaviour in power, or close to it, in Little Rock, the White House and the Senate is all the more damning for the detail.

Bernstein offers no evidence of any illegality in his analysis of the many faux scandals. But he demonstrates in depth how Hillary Clinton uses people, without knowing how to hide her assumption that everybody in her orbit exists only to assist. One simple example demonstrates her extraordinary ineptitude.

In the first days of her husband's first term Hillary Clinton closed off the corridor that gave the 200 member White House press corps direct access to the West Wing and when the world's most self important reporters kicked up she left communications director George Stephanopoulos to carry the can. (He describes the difficulty of being left to explain this idiotic move in his memoir *All Too Human*). Stage two of this plan was even worse. Hillary Clinton wanted to move the press room out of the White House altogether, converting the space into a swimming pool for the first family.



Perhaps Hillary Clinton could have gotten away with abusing the trust of long-term loyalists like Vince Forster, who cracked under the strain and killed himself. And Betsy Foster who was stuck with a \$650,000 legal bill from defending the Clintons in various inquiries. But in burning the press corps in the first days of the first term she ensured the enmity of the very people in the best position to do the most damage to her husband's government. It was an unforced error of such stunning stupidity that when it was immortalised in *West Wing* it would be presented as an idea by a relatively

junior staffer that is never taken seriously.

And on and on it goes, as Bernstein does a job less on Hillary Clinton's competence than her character. There is a reasonable case to make that this is all unfair. There is not a person in public life whose career is not free of professional blemish and personal error. In her defence, he makes the important point that when she looked at her worst during her husband's two terms she was running interference for him. (350)

But the book does call into question whether she has the personal skills to lead and whether she is interested in anybody beyond their capacity to assist her cause, which is focused as much, probably more, on personal power than it is on policy.

Bernstein is polite and in a book published many months before the primaries started he was not prepared to write her off politically, or personally.

**Great politicians have always been marked by the consistency of their core beliefs, their strength of character in advocacy, and the self-knowledge that informs bold leadership. Almost always, Hillary has**

**stood for good things. Yet there is often a disconnect between her convictions and words, and her actions. This is where Hillary disappoints. But the jury remains out. She has time to prove her case, to effectuate those things that make her special, not fear them or camouflage them. We would all be the better for it, because what lies within may have the potential to change the world, if only a little. (554)**

It is a nice, but unconvincing attempt at appearing neutral. But anybody who has read his book will wonder if Hillary Clinton has really spent decades pursuing power while caring all that much about those who suffer in her cause.

Just who Hilary is and what she wants fascinated many of the reviewers who focused on the subject of the biographies rather than the books themselves. Some of the supposed reviewers were partisan in their assessment. Douglas Brinkley (*Boston Globe*, 17 June 2007) was for her, although he had a funny way of expressing it.

**The irony of these biographies is that they unintentionally elevate Hillary Clinton's gravitas. Because what comes across most, beside the opportunism, is that the senator is extremely disciplined and unflappable in a crisis. Not bad recommendations for a president. These three journalists have taken their best shots at Clinton and scarcely made a dent in her Joan of Arc armor (sic). Forget rhinoceros hides. This woman can out-steel Margaret Thatcher. Indeed she is becoming a folkloric figure: a female roadrunner, minus the charisma of the cartoon character.**

Barbara Ehrenreich (*The Guardian*, 16 June 2007) was against, an opinion she sold stridently:

**In the end, the question of who Hillary is seems almost too anthropomorphic. Surely she has loved, laughed and suffered in the usual human ways, but what we are left with is a sleek well-funded, power-seeking machine encased in a gleaming carapace of self-righteousness. She's already enjoyed considerable power, both as a senator and a "co-president" and in the ways that counted, she blew it. What Americans need most, after 15 years of presidential crimes high and low, is to wash their hands of all the sleaze, blood and other bodily fluids, and find themselves a president who is neither a Clinton nor a Bush.**

Even some of the supposedly impartial analysts did themselves a disservice by criticising the biographers for describing and analysing a life, rather than breaking

a news story. Thus Michiko Kakutani (*New York Times*, 5 June 2007) dismissed Bernstein: "(he) has written a serious, energetically researched and largely fluent book, but there is very little new in this new volume: its disclosures amount mainly to embroiderings on already well-known aspects of the Clinton's lives."

As did Peter Preston on Bernstein (*The Observer*, 17 June 2007);

**He's kind to Hillary; he's on her side; he's certainly chatted interminably to her friends and admirers. But what does almost a decade's toil produce? Mostly the views of others, sometimes different, sometimes the same. ... Do we know or understand her better at the end? No.**

Demonstrating just how ordinary ostensibly great newspapers often are, Peter Barker and John Solomon (with the assistance of two staffers) produced a long summary of both books in the *Washington Post*, 25 May 2007) but only offered an anodyne assessment:

**The Hillary Clinton who emerges from the pages of the books comes across as a complicated, sometimes compromised figure who tolerated Bill Clinton's brazen infidelity, pursued her policy and political goals with methodical drive, and occasionally skirted along the edge of the truth along the way.**

Anne Summers did not do much better (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 July 2007) but at least offered distinct judgements on the two books. She dismissed Gerth and Van Natta ("even the most avid Hillary-hater will find it tedious") but liked Bernstein, "it is well-written, meticulously researched and sourced and contains much we did not know before".

Not according to Fred Siegel (*New York Sun*, 11 June 2007) who argued, "inside dopesters make for bad biographers" and defined the problem for political biographers who think like journalists:

**... because both books are written by investigative journalists, they confuse the requirement of a biographer for what Max Weber called *verstehen*, the ability to put yourself in your subject's place, with snippets of new material calculated to create headlines. Mr Bernstein, famous for his Watergate journalism for the *Washington Post* and Mr Gerth who made his reputation covering Whitewater for the *New York Times*, approach their subject as if she were a scandal whose secrets still need to be unlocked.'**

Siegel set the tone for the more astute analysts. Jennifer Senior (*New York Times*, 15 July 2007) suggested that journalists were obsessed with Hillary Clinton precisely

because she is impossible to understand, “a biographical subject who appears, at both first and 50th blush, to offer few rewards”. The result was two biographies that “both practically narcotise readers when they descend into rote recapitulations of the Clinton scandals”.

Elizabeth Kolbert (*The New Yorker*, 11 June 2007) made the same point; “if so many Americans, including some of Clinton’s biographers still feel they don’t know the real Hillary, then surely that must say something about who Hillary really is”.. So did presidential biographer Robert Dallek who especially hopped into Gerth and Van Natta (*International Herald Tribune*, 6 June 2007).

**The book’s greatest flaw is its flogging of all the Clinton scandals, not simply because they are so familiar and ultimately came to so little, but also because they give us insufficient clues to what sort of president Clinton might be.**

And Michael Tomasky (*New York Review of Books*, 19 July 2007) argued that in fact both books tell us more about the authors, especially Gerth and Van Natta and their milieu than they do about Hillary.

**Gerth and Van Natta impute to the Clintons a deep cynicism that they see as the inevitable result of their quest for power. They rarely acknowledge, as Bernstein does, that the Clintons’ ambition was not only for power but for public service and a desire to change the country for the better as they saw it. In this sense, it’s Gerth and Van Natta who are the real cynics and they are all too representative of the political and journalistic cultures that have spent most of the past decade telling citizens that failure to admit an affair was an impeachable offence while a war launched on cooked intelligence was the only patriotic course of action.**

It was an argument that revealed more about Tomasky’s politics than it did about the biographies and as such it summed up the problem in writing about Hillary Clinton, and why she did it tough in the primaries. Because nobody really knows who she is, authors colour in her character to suit their own political preconceptions and prejudices – which gets us nowhere nearer to understanding her as a person rather than a public figure. As Kolbert put it, “so many pages, so little progress.”

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# WOMEN AND THE CONSTITUTION

**D**r Helen Irving is an Associate Professor at the Sydney Law School and was the historical consultant for Film Australia's documentary *Federation 1999*. She has written widely on constitutional issues and her two earlier books were *Five Things to Know About the Australian Constitution*, Cambridge University Press (2004) and *To Constitute a Nation: A Cultural History of Australia's Constitution*, Cambridge University Press (1997 & 1999). Her latest book, just out, *Gender and the Constitution: Equity and Agency in Comparative Constitutional Law*, Cambridge University Press, New York (2008).

**SPEAKER: DR HELEN IRVING**  
(Associate Professor, University of Sydney. Author *Gender and the Constitution*, [CUP])

**TOPIC:** *Why Constitutions Matter to Women*

**DATE:** Wednesday 14 May 2008

\*\*Bookings from 30 April only\*\*

**TIME:** 5.30 for 6 pm

**VENUE:** 41 Phillip Street, Sydney  
[LIGHT REFRESHMENTS]

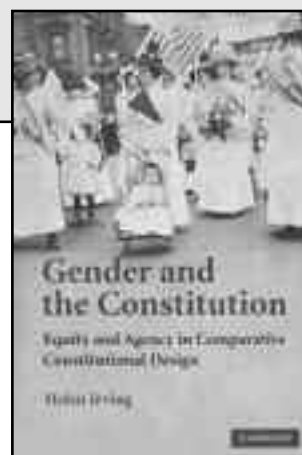
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# OBITUARY

## Kenneth Gee QC, 1915-2008

In March 2006 Ken Gee QC addressed The Sydney Institute on his memoir *Comrade Roberts: Recollections of a Trotskyite*. He had recently been released from hospital when it had been expected that he might die. So arrangements were made that the speaker should talk seated, in front of the audience. But, when Gee saw the format, he declared that he wanted to speak standing up. So the configuration was rearranged and Gee, who was about to turn 91, put in a fine performance – even if, towards the end of question-time, he seemed somewhat unsteady on his legs.

Ken Gee was born on April 15, 1915 in Auburn. His father, Dion, was a relatively well-off solicitor who, like many of his generation, regarded himself as British. His mother, Emmeline Grenville, was one of six sisters from Braidwood. Gee attended Homebush Primary School and Fort Street Boys' High where he met John Kerr (later to become Governor-General Sir John Kerr). They both studied law at the University of Sydney. Gee graduated with an LL.B. in 1937 and was admitted to practice as a solicitor the following year.

Gee worked initially with his father but became bored with the drudgery of conveyancing and set up his own office in Auburn. Having become radicalised on campus, he soon joined the Communist League – that group of committed Marxists who swore allegiance to the Bolshevik revolutionary Leon Trotsky. Trotsky had been exiled from the Soviet Union in 1929 and was murdered in Mexico on the orders of Josef Stalin in 1940.

Gee always detested the mainstream Communist Party which obeyed Stalin. However, he was a committed Marxist. So much so that in 1941 he left his legal practice, adopted the surname Roberts and commenced work as a boilermaker's labourer on the Sydney waterfront. During this time he became an organiser for the extremely small Trotskyist group, whose leaders were Nicholas Origlass and Jack Wishart. During his brief career as a Trotskyist, Gee became friendly with two fellow comrades – the working class Laurie Short and the middle class Jim McClelland. All three dumped their secular religion around 1944. Gee's tale of his three years as a revolutionary is amusingly told in *Comrade Roberts*. He and some comrades were intrigued by what was said to be Trotsky's directive that female members of

the movement "should be rooted on the workshop floor". Another lost-in-translation message, it seems.

In 1940 Gee married Isobel Russell, a pharmacist. They had three children – the late Christopher Gee, Stephen Grenville and Kate Grenville. There was a family tradition that the Gee children could choose a surname on leaving school. The first born stayed with his parents' name; the second and third born took the name of their paternal grandmother. Gee himself used the name Grenville on occasions. It appears on the title page of his 1966 novel *A Maid From Heaven* and his 1972 book *The Saving of South Vietnam*. The marriage ended and Gee married Elaine Hearn. They had one child, Emma.

After his time as Comrade Roberts, Gee joined the ALP and in 1949 stood, unsuccessfully, against former prime minister Billy Hughes in the safe Liberal seat of Bradfield. Gee had gone back to the law in 1945 and took on much trade union work. He joined the bar in 1947, then became crown prosecutor and then returned to the bar specialising in criminal law and common law. He became a QC in 1973 and was appointed a District Court judge in 1975 – retiring at age 70 in 1985. Subsequently Gee worked on the Serious Offenders Review Board and as a consultant to the Judicial Commission. When this consultancy finished, Gee accepted a generous offer of office accommodation and attended the Commission daily. He was not the retiring type.

Gee regarded his career as encompassing "as wide a sweep of life's pendulum as any man can achieve". By any measure, he led a diverse life. Gee also built two houses for his family, engaged in bricklaying and ran cattle on a hobby farm in Robertson. In his final decades, he reverted to the political conservatism to which he had been born. Gee supported South Vietnam against the communist regime in Hanoi and he backed the anti-communist regime in Taiwan.

Gerard Henderson once asked John Kerr why, in view of his obvious talents, Gee had not proceeded beyond the District Court. He replied that Gee did as well as a man who had once dumped his middle class allegiances, and embraced Marxism, could expect. In *Comrade Roberts* Gee depicted his friend Kerr as "a lover of pomp, ceremony, the top hat and a chest heavy with baubles". There was always a bit of the "comrade" in Gee – his irreverent nature reflected his time when, in Trotsky-speak, he had been rooted to the workshop floor.

[This obituary first appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald*].



# GERARD HENDERSON'S MEDIA WATCH

The inaugural issue of *Gerard Henderson's Media Watch* was published in April 1988 – over a year before the first edition of the ABC TV *Media Watch* program went to air. Since November 1997 “Gerard Henderson's Media Watch” has been published as part of *The Sydney Institute Quarterly*.

## ANDREW JASPAN'S LA OPINIONISTA

What a you-beaut idea. And what fodder for The Sydney Institute's very own “Media Watch”. In early 2007 *The Age's* editor-in-chief Andrew Jaspán decided to spice up his newspaper's staid leftist Opinion Page by giving a weekly gig to the not so staid leftist Catherine Deveny. At the time Deveny had a background as a stand-up comedian and TV writer. On joining *The Age*, she became a sit-down comedian and TV writer.

When the left-liberal *New York Times* was accused of lacking balance on its Opinion Page, it contracted initially David Brooks and, more recently, William Kristol to write columns. When the left inclined “Guardian on the Yarra” was accused of lacking balance on its Opinion Page, *The Age's* editor-in-chief Andrew Jaspán commissioned two more leftists – Catherine Deveny (who has been dubbed by *The Age* as “The Opinionista”) and Tracee Hutchinson (whose work will be analysed in a later edition of “Media Watch” – so stay tuned).

Catherine Deveny's column commenced on Tuesday 6 February 2007. Initially there was no introductory note about who this new columnist was. But by 28 February the following by-line appeared: “Catherine Deveny is a Melbourne writer” – which, come to think of it, is a rather crowded profession these days. Especially in Melbourne. By this time this particular Melbourne writer's column had been moved to Wednesday – where it has remained. It seems that Mr Jaspán was so happy with Deveny that he gave her another weekly column entitled “On The Couch” each Saturday – where she writes what is supposed to be television criticism. Or comedy. Or whatever.

In January 2008, (*the age*) *Melbourne Magazine* nominated Ms Deveny as one of the most influential one hundred Melburnians – describing her as “the opinionista”. She gave the magazine an insight into her Opinionista style, declaring that she has:

....a naughty opinionated eight-year-old girl sitting on my shoulder when I write. Then I open up the page and go: “Oh, what have you done this time?” My writing is untameable.

She told much the same story to the “Yartz” program, which can be found on *You Tube*. She claimed that an eight year old girl in her head writes her column and she is invariably surprised to find out just what she has written. Quite so.

So there you have it. Naughty Catherine (call me Opinionista) Deveny cannot remember on a Wednesday or a Saturday what copy she submitted to *The Age* on a Tuesday or a Friday. This is surprising, really. Because CD usually writes about the topic she knows best – namely, HERSELF. In view of CD's apparent short-term memory loss, “Media Watch” is providing a public service to CD by reminding her of her most significant past untameable thoughts about HERSELF – and, on occasions, some others – over the past year.

## CATHERINE DEVENY – WEEK BY WEAK(LY)

- **6 February.** CD praises the “lollipop people” who supervise school crossings. She warns of the dangers to road users, young or old, posed by her “21 year old cousin Gazza's car...on his way to work as a plasterer”. Good start, eh? Clearly Mr Jaspán has employed a deep thinker – with a cousin named Gazza.

- **13 February.** CD is not married. Having just spent four hours at the Bridal Expo in Melbourne, she depicts marriage as boiling down to “slut for a night, princess for a day and slave for the rest of your life”. CD reflects: “I remember seeing a photo taken inside the Exhibition Building when it was turned into a hospital during the [1919] Spanish flu pandemic. The people on stretchers looked happier than the people visiting the Bridal Expo.” In other words, the dying were happier circa 1919 than those contemplating marriage circa 2007.

- **21 February.** CD reveals that, “when a teeny bit drunk” she told a “good mate” that would she “have sex on a church altar”. It is not clear with whom, alas. How about that? CD tells readers that she doesn't believe in God anymore – despite her Catholic background. She declares “I'm not married” but her

children are baptised. This is the second time CD has reported on her marital status in just three columns. Stand by for many more references.

- **28 February.** The topic is marriage. Again. Already. CD alleges that “marriage is a car up on blocks in the front yard”. Okay – but has she got any other topics?

- **3 March.** CD commences her television column with the declaration: “I don’t watch daytime television”. Thanks for telling us so soon.

- **7 March.** CD declares: “I have three boys”. What’s more, they “have hyphenated surnames” and “all three have worn pink”. Go on.

- **10 March.** Just having arrived home from shopping at Northland, CD sees fit to inform her readers that her partner and two of her children have synaesthesia. Essential information, don’t you think? For those readers who have read enough of CD’s family for this week, she concludes her column by declaring: “Everything I know about politics I have learnt from Billy Bragg.” Right on. Clearly CD’s a philosopher, in the Andrew Jaspan tradition.

- **14 March.** CD tells us that she lives in the “People’s Republic of Moreland” – read fashionable Brunswick in inner-city Melbourne – and proclaims that her love for past Labor leaders Paul Keating and Gough Whitlam. Except for their position on East Timor, of course. By the way, the Liberal Party is just not “her team”. We should know this – after all, she writes two columns a week in “The Guardian on the Yarra”. CD bags blue-collar Australia – maintaining that “blue-collar Australia has no imagination”. Oh yes – she also bemoans what she describes as “the Bogan Belt”. It seems that CD, who resides in the fashionable inner suburbs, detests lower income earners and working class types who live in outer suburbs.

- **21 March.** CD reflects: “It’s no wonder I drink.” And so say all her readers. This week she is busy “hosting the Sydney Road Bakery Tours as part of the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival”. Sydney Road runs though the People’s Republic of Moreland. And the Festival is sponsored by *The Age*. No surprises here.

- **24 March.** In reassuring her readers that life is getting better for women in Saudi Arabia, CD preaches: “I have experienced far more decent behaviour from Muslim men in Sydney Road than I ever experienced from the leering and threatening bogans I grew up with in Reservoir. And far more decent than the born-to-rule private school boys reeking of misogyny and entitlement pressing up against me at the bar of the Geebung Polo Club.” It seems that *Age* readers are expected to know that

the Geebung Polo Club, in fashionable Hawthorn, declares itself to be one of “Melbourne’s iconic bars”. By the way, what has all this got to do with women in Saudi Arabia?

- **31 March.** CD reassures her readers that “Saudi Arabia doesn’t look that extreme after all.” It’s okay for Sydney Road types to bemoan alleged sexual leering at the Geebung Polo Club in Hawthorn but women in Saudi Arabia should put up with their lot. This seems to be La Opinionista’s opinion for today.

- **11 April.** CD and her partner, who were both “hit as children”, made the choice not to smack their offspring. Well done. But she confesses: “I’m not the perfect parent; ask my kids. I give the three kids two Freddo frogs and tell them to fight it out between them.” Followers of CD’s work will soon learn that in April 2007 her children were aged nine, five and two months respectively. Which seems to make this match-up somewhat unfair to junior. A case for child protection, perhaps? Certainly reason to beware Jaspanism.

- **18 April.** CD advises that two of CD’s kids are aged five and nine. Thanks for that. She states: “There’s plenty of time to sleep when you’re dead.” Yet more evidence of The Thought of Jaspan here. Come to think of it, there is also plenty of time to stay awake when you’re alive.

- **26 April.** CD is against caesarean sections: “For many women, having a caesarean birth is like going to France and not seeing the Eiffel Tower.” How profound can you get?

- **28 April.** CD mentions that she watched *Neighbours* “naked and wet”. In the bath. Worth reporting, surely.

- **3 May.** CD tells us that she “grew up on Struggle Street”. And that she opposes caesareans. Thanks for the reminder. And that the births of her “three children cost \$18, \$14 and \$8; that money was spent on parking.”

- **5 May.** *Home and Away* is “the biggest threat to the fibre of our society” and “anyone who watches this show must be brain dead already”. CD confesses that her writing “relies heavily on crude generalisations”. Yeah, we know. No doubt that’s why Andrew Jaspan employed her.

- **9 May.** CD informs her readers: “My name is not in the phone book, but my partner’s name is”. Wow. Hold the front page. And search for the phone book.

- **19 May.** Following Richard Dawkins, the world’s best known vet, CD theorises on “what a destructive force religion is”. She contends: “Atheism is, it seems, the new black.” The cliché reigns free in the Republic of Moreland.

- **23 May.** CD indicates that she has “wanted to write about the social apartheid and false economy of private schools for a while”. Alas, it seems that she has been just too busy writing about HERSELF to get around to the topic. So what does the spokesperson for the Republic of Moreland think about the matter? Well, “private schools should not receive funding” and parents who send their children to non-government schools are insecure with chips on their shoulders. That’s all. Even those who read Andrew Jaspan’s *Age*, apparently.
- **30 May.** Ditto. CD writes about her opposition to private schools. Again. She tells us that she went to Reservoir High. Well done.
- **9 June.** CD and her partner have just returned from her first visit to New York – after a trip celebrating his 50th birthday. The news from Brunswick is that CD is “now shagging a 50-year old”. Well, someone’s got to do it. The news from New York is that “none of the cab drivers can speak English”. Some insight, surely.
- **13 June.** CD believes that Australia should become a republic. Right on. But she seems to believe that only constitutional monarchies can be part of the Commonwealth of Nations. Well, who’s got time for research where there is SELF to write about? CD asserts: “I’d be happy with a benevolent socialist dictatorship, but that’s what happens when you have a columnist from the People’s Republic of Moreland”. Well, yes.
- **23 June.** CD continues her obsession with the poorly educated, whom she describes as bogans. This time she informs readers: “If I want to see self-obsessed bogan root rats, I’ll just visit my cousin Kaiden and his wife Bree (don’t worry, they can’t read).” Alas, the reader is not told whether cousin Kaiden (who cannot read) is related to cousin Gazza (who drives fast).
- **27 June.** CD announces that she doesn’t believe in God. Again. And that she doesn’t “believe in chastity”. How about that? And she maintains that “if marriage were a car, we would have taken it to the wreckers and started using taxis”. Hang on a minute. Isn’t marriage-as-car up on the blocks in the front yard? And are not taxis also cars? Please explain.
- **4 July.** CD’s car “doesn’t have air-conditioning”. Now we know.
- **25 July.** According to CD: “Bicycles are the new cars.” She admits that she has no facts to back up a particular theory but proudly states: “I suppose that’s why this page is Opinion.” As in: “Look Mr Jaspan, no facts.”
- **4 August.** CD describes her own columns as “badly written” and consisting of “half-baked smug rantings”. Behold the emergence of self-awareness.
- **8 August.** CD has “a good rant” about private health insurance. It’s as bad as private insurance and she’s against it. But CD confesses that she recently paid for private treatment for a painful ailment in order to “jump the queue”. That’s what benevolent socialism in the People’s Republic of Moreland is all about, apparently. From each according to their means; to each well-off inner-city socialist *Age* columnist according to their queue-jumping ability.
- **15 August.** CD advises that she is one of Kevin Rudd’s *Facebook* friends. Wacko. However, she will be voting for the Greens. We’re not surprised. Also, she described herself a Jedi in the last Census. How frightfully exciting. And there’s more: “I don’t believe in the secret ballot. I believe that we should all have who we vote for tattooed on our foreheads, so that when we’re at parties we know where to go for a good rant, and where to go to punch someone’s head in.” Imagine CD, if you will, with “Greens” tattooed on her forehead. What a turn-on.
- **18 August.** CD admits: “As we all know, I’m not a proper television reviewer.” Yes, we know. She’s just Mr Jaspan’s television reviewer of choice. Once again, CD bags bogans – declaring “the bigger the telly, the bigger the bogan”.
- **29 August.** This time CD bangs on about the likes of “Keith”, with a wife called “Cheryl”, who “has a car in their front yard ‘up on blocks’”. The car’s location would be bad enough but the arrangement is made worse by the fact that Keith and Cheryl are married. In CD’s terminology, how bogan can you be? Shame Keith/Cheryl. Shame.
- **1 September.** CD has a go at Liberal Party deputy leader Peter Costello. What’s new? And she states her love for the public broadcasters ABC and SBS. What’s new?
- **5 September.** Another BIG TOPIC. CD condemns women who take their husband’s surname on marriage. Like world champion athlete Jana Pitman who became Jana Rawlingson. Shocking. She describes women in this predicament as “deeply insecure, deeply conservative or deeply stupid”. Like, er, Hillary Clinton, Australian High Court judge Susan Crennan and Nancy Pelosi – no less.
- **8 September.** Yet another CD cult of personality moment: “Real estate is not hot. Real estate is boring. You know what is hot? Me.” What about Mr Jaspan as well?
- **12 September.** Responding to criticism of her recent column about women who change their name on marriage, CD opines: “I don’t give a stuff what you do. I’m just paid to write what I think.” She depicts every one of her critics on this issue as exhibiting “a

stunning lack of clear rational thinking". Andrew Jaspan thought so much of CD's logic in this instance that he highlighted CD's column on Page One.

- **15 September.** A change of topic. At last. CD proclaims: "My Mediterranean partner has more body hair than one of those 1970 porno wogs." Something we need to know, apparently.

- **19 September.** CD advocates a Labor victory and reflects: "If I were John Howard, I'd be praying for a terrorist attack." Just as well she isn't. In any event, CD does not believe in God – thanks for telling us, again. But she does believe in her (hot) self.

- **26 September.** CD condemns consumerism: "Middle-class whingers complaining about how hard they are travelling need a good slap." But refer to 11 April when CD condemned smacking.

- **29 September.** CD's partner is named Mario. Moreover, CD drives a Volvo. More need-to-know material.

- **3 October.** According to the Thought of CD: "If Jesus Christ were alive today, he'd be a vegan who looked like Rod Quantock, and you'd find him up at your local polling booth handing out how-to-vote Socialist Alliance cards with a baby strapped to his back." Very Sydney Road, Brunswick. In any event, why is this up-front atheist interested in Christ?

- **6 October.** CD announces to readers she is an atheist. Yet, again. God help us all.

- **10 October.** CD is 39 years old. Congratulations. And a "tight-arse" who loves *The Monthly*. And she detests "bogans" (yes, we know).

- **17 October.** CD calls on her readers to defeat the Howard government. Again.

- **31 October.** CD looks forward to the defeat of the Howard government. Again. Once more, with feeling: "The lefties I know who are holding election night parties are extending the invitation to Liberal voters in the hope that we'll get to see them cry." How frightfully cunning.

- **7 November.** CD declares her belief that John Howard is "a weasel". Yes, we know.

- **14 November.** CD criticises Lucy Turnbull for calling herself Turnbull. It's her husband's name, you see. What's more, CD is short on topics.

- **21 November.** CD calls for the defeat of the Howard Government. Once more. She tells us about her life on Struggle Street (again) and declares: "Over the past 11 years, I have lost faith in the Australian people." Including *Age* readers, it seems. Shucks. What does Mr Jaspan think about this?

- **28 November.** CD raises a deep philosophical question, following the defeat of the Howard Government. Namely: "Who are we going to hate now?" Good question. She could have added: "What am I going to write about now?" And CD tells her readers about her response to Kevin Rudd's victory: "On Sunday morning I woke and felt like a woman in love; I felt buzzy and post-coital." Fancy that. Or perhaps not.

- **1 December.** CD pontificates that: "Smart, attractive people certainly shit me." But Mr Jaspan is just fine.

- **5 December.** CD tells readers: "If people try to identify me to other people it's always by using words like bossy, noisy and overrated." Particularly the latter.

- **12 December.** CD has "a 10 month-old half-Italian son." Which raises the question – how is he faring in The Battle for the Two Freddo Frogs with his older brothers? Re which, see 11 April.

- **26 December.** CD says she is the mother of three boys (again) and not married (again). Still, it's a public holiday. So why should she think of a new topic when others are at the beach?

And so the year ended and readers of *The Age* were left to await yet more opinion pieces from Catherine Deveny in 2008 on such issues as women who take their husband's name, caesarean births, the Liberal Party, private education, marriage, atheism and, of course, HERSELF and HER family.

### **OH NO! NOW A BOOK OF COLUMNS**

In the meantime, anyone who missed the views of Naughty Opinionista Deveny can read them again in her book *It's Not My Fault They Print Them*, which was self-advertised in her column on 17 November. Needless to say, Catherine Deveny's tome was launched at the Brunswick Bound Bookshop on Sydney Road Brunswick. *It's Not My Fault They Print Them* was published by Morry Schwartz at Black Inc. in cooperation with *The Age*. Catherine Deveny thanked Andrew Jaspan at the front of the book.

There are a few additional pieces in *It's Not My Fault They Print Them* which did not appear in her regular column – according to the cover blurb, they were previously regarded as "unpublishable". Yet this material reads as if it has already been published.

In a "Q&A" interview at the front of the book, Catherine Deveny declares her love for Paul Keating (again), her detestation of the Liberal Party (again) and her contempt for the citizens of Reservoir (again) – "the only place in the world where people get married wearing tracksuits" – along with her admiration for the leftist Noam Chomsky. There is



also a piece on her partner's vasectomy and the birth of her youngest child. Enough said. And yet another attack on John Howard as "a small-town boy" who should have "run a newsagency, not a nation". Which raises the point – what's wrong with newsagents? After all, don't they keep the likes of Catherine Deveny and Andrew Jaspan in employment by selling copies of *The Age* each day?

In reviewing *It's Not My Fault They Print Them* in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 2 February 2008, the left-inclined Bruce Elder described CD's book as consisting of "much unmitigated drivel". Mr Elder happens to agree with the author on her opposition to private schools. But he objects to CD's "cheap gags and bad jokes" and describes her work "as poorly argued and not very funny". This is a bit harsh. "Media Watch" believes that La Opinionista does Andrew Jaspan proud.

## THE HISTORY WHORES (JUST JOKING)

Enough of the self on self. Let's focus, for a while, on history – where the struggle between non-fiction and fiction continues apace. Alas.

### DR SUMMERS AND JOHN CURTIN

Readers of the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 25 June 2007 were moved when Anne Summers praised (then) Opposition leader Kevin Rudd for announcing that he would create what was termed a national war cabinet to oversee the emergency resulting from the sexual abuse of young children in indigenous communities.

Mr Rudd had in mind a body consisting of both Labor and Coalition leaders to resolve a crisis – along the lines of the national governments which were formed in Britain during the Depression and the Second World War. Dr Summers thought that this was a great idea – advising her *SMH* readers.

**The last Australian political leader who invited the opposition to help handle a national crisis was John Curtin, who persuaded Robert Menzies to join his wartime cabinet. Is Rudd once again adopting the mantle of prime minister, telling Howard how it should be done?**

The only problem with Summers' analysis is that it was completely false. John Curtin did not persuade Robert Menzies to join his wartime cabinet. Indeed, Curtin's period as Labor leader was distinguished by his refusal to agree to any kind of national government. Let's go to the facts.

John Curtin became leader of the Labor Opposition on 1 October 1935. Robert Menzies became prime

minister on 26 April 1939 and left office on 29 April 1941. Curtin became prime minister on 7 October 1941. Curtin had opposed a war-time national cabinet at the beginning of the Second World War when he was Opposition leader and refused to countenance such an idea as prime minister.

In mid 1940 Menzies proposed a national government to Curtin – he rejected the concept. Curtin's decision reflected the resolution of a special ALP national conference held to discuss the issue. Curtin proposed, instead, the creation of an Advisory War Council. Menzies accepted this but regarded such an idea as an entity worth "little or nothing" (See A.W. Martin *Robert Menzies A Life: Volume 1 1894-1943* p. 308). Menzies repeated the national government offer twice more in 1941 – but was twice rejected by Curtin. Labor's refusal to enter into a national government was a factor in Menzies' decision to resign as prime minister.

It seems that Dr Summers became confused following the showing of the docu-drama *Curtin* on ABC TV on Sunday 22 April 2007 which was directed by Jessica Hobbs and written by Alison Nisselle. This excessively sympathetic portrait of John Curtin attempted to present him in the best light possible – including his friendship with Robert Menzies. It is true that Curtin was friendly with Menzies. And it is true that Menzies was invited by Curtin to continue on the Advisory War Council after he became prime minister. But the Advisory War Council was, as its name implies, an advisory body only – it was not part of the Curtin Government's Cabinet. In February 1944 Menzies retired from the Advisory War Council – primarily because it was an inadequate substitute for a proper national government.

### GERARD McMANUS AND MR KILLEN

While on the topic of Robert Menzies, it is notable that the concoction about his victory over Labor in the 1961 Federal election continues to persist. This is perhaps the hoariest myth in Australian political history. Writing in the *Herald-Sun* on 4 August 2007, Gerard McManus threw the switch to mythology when he declared:

**The 1961 poll was the closest since World War II and was decided by the last seat to be declared – Moreton – won by Liberal MP James Killen. Killen scraped home with 93 votes, ironically courtesy of preferences from the Communist Party. The result gave Sir Robert Menzies a two-seat majority to govern for another three years.**

Robert Menzies called a Federal election for 9 December, 1961. The Coalition just survived, winning 62 seats to Labor's 60. Moreton (in suburban Brisbane) was the last electorate decided. After a

protracted count, the sitting Liberal, Jim Killen, won by 130 votes following the distribution of preferences. Had Killen been defeated, Menzies would have been forced to another election which he could have lost to Arthur Calwell. For years the myth prevailed that Killen had been re-elected due to preferences of Communist Party of Australia (CPA) candidate, Max Julius. In 1971, this theory was trashed by Adam Graycar and Joan Rydon. But the mythology prevailed.

Now for some facts. The primary vote in Moreton was as follows: C. J. Hagen (Democratic Labor Party) 3,882; M. N. Julius (CPA) 676; D. J. Killen (Liberal) 22,667 and J. E. O'Donnell (ALP) 25,123. At the time, places on the ballot paper were determined alphabetically.

Max Julius was eliminated first - 193 preferences went to Hagen, 390 to O'Donnell and 93 to Killen. The Communist Party how-to-vote ticket put O'Donnell ahead of Killen and Hagen. It is likely that some of Julius's preferences which went to Killen resulted from a "donkey vote" down the ticket. In any event, after Julius had been eliminated from the poll, O'Donnell was still ahead of Killen - i.e. any leakage of preferences to Killen came as a result of voters for Julius not following the CPA's how-to-vote card. Then it came time for the DLP. Killen obtained 85 per cent of Hagen's preferences and O'Donnell a mere 15 per cent. As a result, Killen obtained 50.7 per cent of the two-party-preferred vote.

Clearly Killen was re-elected, and Robert Menzies saved, by DLP preferences. How did Menzies react to his narrow survival? The word, according to Killen, was that the Prime Minister sent a "Killen, you're magnificent" telegram to the member for Moreton. In fact, no such message was ever dispatched. As Killen later admitted, he just made it all up.

In fact Menzies never spoke to Killen about his victory. And Menzies had the good sense not to put the excessively loquacious and prolix Member for Moreton in his ministry.

### **STEPHEN CRITTENDEN AND ARTHUR CALWELL**

Followers of "Media Watch" are not surprised by the ABC Radio National house-style. You know, where each morning on *Breakfast* Fran Kelly invariably agrees with Michelle Grattan in a left-of-centre way and where on *Late Night Live* the leftist Phillip Adams agrees with Bea Campbell (*LNL's* commentator on Britain) and Bruce Schapiro (*LNL's* commentator on the United States) - both also in a leftist way. No other regular commentators on the UK and the US are heard on *LNL*.

So it came as no surprise when, on ABC Radio National's *The Religion Report* on 13 June 2007, presenter Stephen Crittenden lined up not one, not even two, but three like-minded souls to criticise Cardinal George Pell, the Catholic Archbishop of Sydney. All on the one program. First up it was the former Catholic priest John Challis. Followed by Anglican minister Gordon Cheng. Followed by Australian Catholic University academic Fr. Dan Donovan. Challis, Cheng and Donovan were encouraged by Crittenden to get stuck right into the Cardinal. No one was allowed on to the program to defend Pell or even provide a neutral view. How very Radio National.

But let's get back to history. During the Crittenden/Challis discussion, both the interview and interviewee ran the line that Cardinal Pell in mid 2007 was behaving a bit like the Catholic operative B.A. Santamaria (1915-1998) in the late 1940s and early 1950s - the allegation being that Pell was attempting to involve the Catholic Church on one side of the party political debate. Declared Crittenden:

**Of course those were the days when Arthur Calwell was humiliated by his parish priest who denied him communion and Archbishop Mannix's Auxiliary Bishop in Melbourne, Arthur Fox, declared that it was a mortal sin to vote for the Labor Party.**

Interesting allegations. But where is the evidence?

The Catholic Arthur Calwell was leader of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party from March 1960 to February 1967. Certainly Calwell was in political disagreement with Archbishop Daniel Mannix (1864-1963) and Bishop Arthur Fox (1904-1997) - both of whom supported the Democratic Labor Party, which broke from the Australian Labor Party in the mid 1950s. That's a fact. Then there is the embellishment.

Where is the evidence that Arthur Calwell was ever humiliated by being denied communion by his parish priest? There is no such claim in Arthur Calwell's biography *Be Just and Fear Not* (Lloyd O'Neil, 1972). And there is no such claim in Colm Kiernan's sympathetic biography titled *Calwell: A Personal and Political Biography* (Nelson, 1978). Certainly Kiernan quotes Calwell as saying in 1967 that he had to leave his own Church in Flemington because he feared that he "might be insulted from the pulpit". Calwell attended mass at St Francis Church in the Melbourne CBD. But there is no evidence that Calwell was ever denied communion at Flemington.

So, how about the allegation that Bishop Fox once declared that it would be a "mortal sin" for Catholics

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- SPEAKER:** **TONY MOORE** (Commissioning Editor, Pluto Press);  
**PRU GOWARD MP** (Former ABC Presenter; Shadow Minister NSW Liberal Opposition);  
**PROF DOUG KIRSNER** (Deakin University)
- TOPIC:** *Reforming the ABC – It's not Just About Money*
- DATE:** Tuesday 1 April 2008      \*\*Bookings from 17 March only\*\*
- VENUE:** Mallesons Conference Room, Level 61, Governor Phillip Tower,  
1 Farrer Place, Sydney
- TIME:** 5 for 5.30 pm  
*[Please note early start]*
- 
- SPEAKER:** **PROF ROSS FITZGERALD** (Columnist, *The Australian*;  
contributing ed – *Growing Old (Dis)gracefully*[ABC Books]);  
**MARGARET FINK** (Film Producer);  
**GERRY CONNOLLY** (Comedian & Actor)
- TOPIC:** *Growing Old (Dis)gracefully*
- DATE:** Wednesday 9 April 2008      \*\*Bookings from 28 March only\*\*
- VENUE:** Clayton Utz Boardroom, Level 35, 1 O'Connell Street, Sydney
- TIME:** 5 for 5.30 pm  
*[Please note early start]*
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- SPEAKER:** **THE HON JOHN HATZISTERGOS MLC** (NSW Attorney General  
and Minister for Justice)
- TOPIC:** *A Charter of Rights or a Charter of Wrongs?*
- DATE:** Thursday 10 April 2008      \*\*Bookings from 28 March only\*\*
- VENUE:** NSW State Parliament House Theatre, Macquarie Street, Sydney
- TIME:** 5.30 for 6 pm
- 
- SPEAKER:** **SHELLEY GARE** (Editor, Writer and Columnist)
- TOPIC:** *Chasing Ishmael - Truth, racism, blockbuster publishing and the US media*
- DATE:** Tuesday 15 April 2008      \*\*Bookings from 1 April only\*\*
- VENUE:** Clayton Utz Seminar Room, Level 30, 1 O'Connell Street, Sydney
- TIME:** 5.30 for 6 pm
- 
- SPEAKER:** **SENATOR THE HON. STEPHEN CONROY** (Deputy Leader of  
the Government in the Senate; Minister for Broadband, Communications  
and the Digital Economy)
- DATE:** Tuesday 6 May 2008      \*\*Bookings from 22 April only\*\*
- VENUE:** "The Forum" Level 23, Westpac Banking Corporation, Westpac Place,  
275 Kent Street, Sydney
- TIME:** 5.30 for 6 pm
- 
- SPEAKER:** **DR HELEN IRVING** (Associate Professor, University of Sydney.  
Author, *Gender and the Constitution*, [CUP])
- TOPIC:** *Why Constitutions Matter to Women*
- DATE:** Wednesday 14 May 2008      \*\*Bookings from 30 April only\*\*
- VENUE:** 41 Phillip Street, Sydney      [LIGHT REFRESHMENTS]
- TIME:** 5.30 for 6 pm
- 
- SPEAKER:** **PROFESSOR CATHARINE LUMBY** (Director, Journalism &  
Media Research Centre, UNSW; Author, *The Porn Report*  
[Melbourne University Press, 2008])
- DATE:** Tuesday 20 May 2008      \*\*Bookings from 6 May only\*\*
- VENUE:** Corrs Chambers Westgarth, Level 32, Governor Phillip Tower,  
1 Farrer Place, Sydney
- TIME:** 5.30 for 6 pm
- 
- SPEAKER:** **MATT BAI** (US journalist & National Politics writer, *New York Times*;  
Author *The Argument: Billionaires, Bloggers and the Battle to Remake  
Democratic Politics* [Penguin Press, 2007])
- DATE:** Monday 23 June 2008      \*\*Bookings from 9 June only\*\*
- VENUE:** to be advised
- TIME:** 5.30 for 6 pm

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