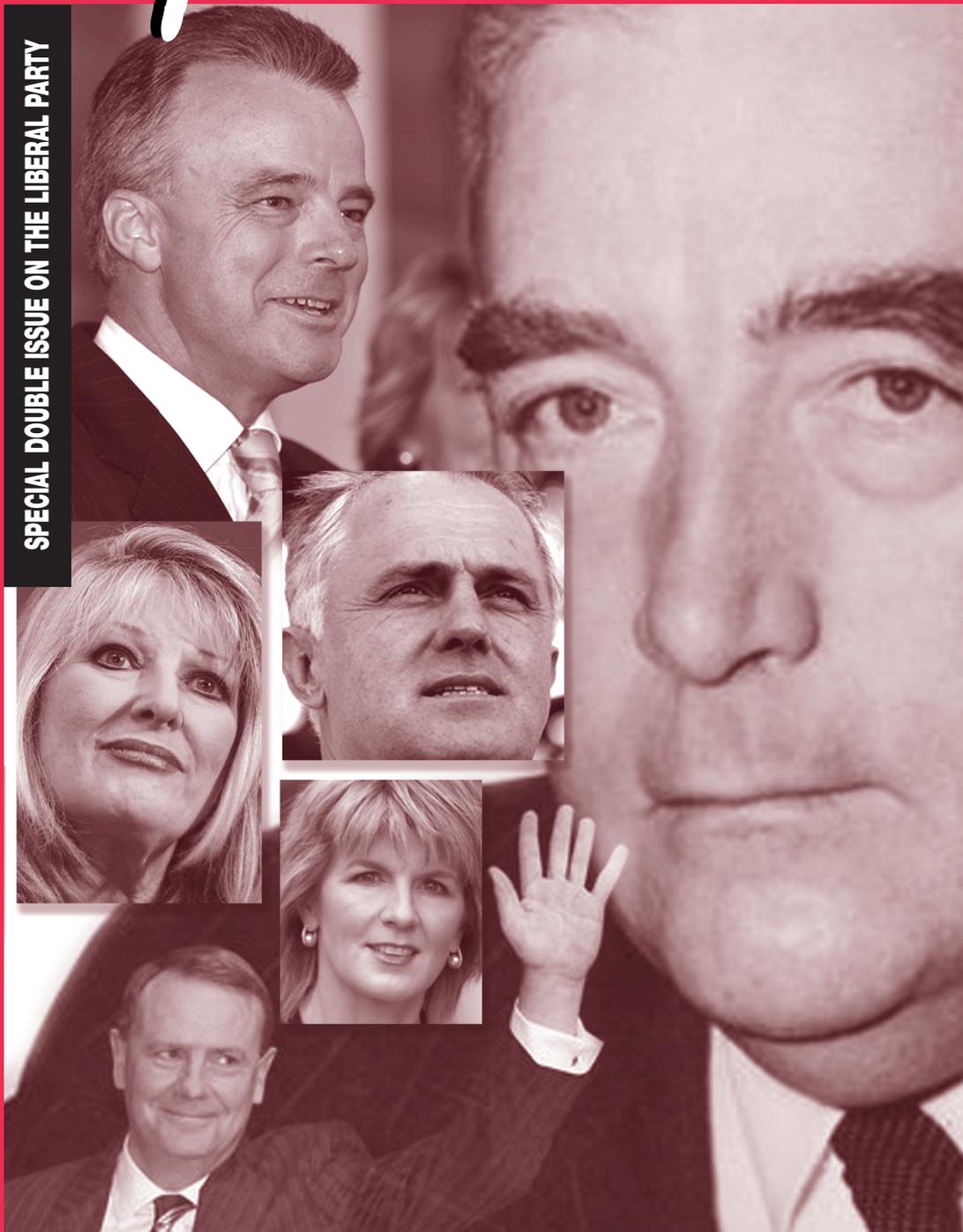


THE

# Sydney Institute

## QUARTERLY

SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE ON THE LIBERAL PARTY



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**THE LIBERALS –  
what happened?**

**GERARD HENDERSON** on  
Costello versus Howard

**JOHN KUNKEL** on Michelle  
Grattan's revisionism and  
the Howard years

**ANNE HENDERSON** on  
the Liberals' problem with  
empathy

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**MEDIA WATCH** tackles  
Julia Zemiro, Jason  
Koutsoukis, Phillip Adams,  
Rose Jackson, Paul Sheahan  
and Catherine Deveny

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## MUCH OF THE (ABC) SAME

The more things stay the same – well, the more things continue to stay the same. The ABC1 *Media Watch* program demonstrates the point. Since its commencement in 1989, *Media Watch* has had a series of leftist or left-of-centre presenters. From Stuart Littlemore, to Richard Ackland, to Paul Barry, to David Marr, to Liz Jackson, to Monica Attard and on to the current incumbent Jonathan Holmes. In almost two decades, the ABC has not been able to find one conservative or right-of-centre personality to present the program. Not one. *The News Watch* program on Rupert Murdoch’s Fox Channel in the United States presents a greater plurality of views than *Media Watch*. *News Watch*’s forum involves a chairman and a panel which consists of both conservatives and left-liberals. *Media Watch* is the preserve of the Down Under left.

In his address to The Sydney Institute on 16 October 2006, ABC managing director Mark Scott declared that he had “encouraged the Director of Television [Kim Dalton] to work with the *Media Watch* team to review their format and content next year to ensure there is more opportunity for debate and discussion around contentious and important issues”. Fine sentiments. However, *Media Watch*’s format has changed little since 1989 – in that a leftist, or left-of-centre, presenter continues to lay down the line on media behaviour and there is virtually no role for debate and discussion during the program and no opportunity of any kind for an on-camera right-of-reply. In 2007 (when Tim Palmer produced the program) on occasions some of *Media Watch*’s targets were interviewed on camera. But this practice seems to have ceased in 2008 now that Jo Puccini is executive producer. When he got the gig as *Media Watch* presenter, Holmes told *The Australian* (29 November 2007) that he hoped that he would not be prejudged as “just another ABC pinko”. Yet the day after this comment was reported, Holmes appeared on ABC *Radio 702* and described the American commentator Michael Ledeen as “the looniest” of the “neo-cons”. Sounds rather ABC pinko, don’t you think? Holmes was asserting that all the American neo-conservatives are lunatics and that Ledeen is “the looniest” of them all.

As *Media Watch* presenter, Holmes has continued in the tradition of his predecessors Marr and Attard in rushing to defend leftist journalist comrades whose work has been spiked by their editors. Marr and Attard criticised (then) *Age* editor Michael Gawenda and *Sydney Morning Herald* editor Alan Oakley for refusing to publish cartoons by *The Age*’s house pinko Michael Leunig in 2002 and 2006 respectively. Presenting *Media Watch* on 10 May 2008, Holmes also bagged Oakley for having declined to publish in the *SMH* the final report by Fairfax Media’s (then) Middle East correspondent Ed O’Loughlin. O’Loughlin had been a constant critic of Israel and his final column was more of the same. Oakley exercised his editorial right not to publish the piece. But Holmes suggested undue influence “from one quarter in particular”. There followed a reference to Labor Jewish MP Michael Danby and to the *Australian Jewish News* – read the familiar Jewish/Israel lobby conspiracy theory. Sounds predictably ABC pinko. In other words, more of the (*Media Watch*) same.

# JOHN HOWARD, "DOCTORS' WIVES" AND EMPATHY

Anne Henderson

As far back as December 1949, after the fledgling Liberal Party won its first Federal election, Liberal MP for Darwin Dame Enid Lyons believed her party's ethos discouraged empathy, or feeling, in policy making. In spite of Dame Enid's impeccable record after winning her seat in 1943, and against the odds, she was made the only member of Cabinet not to hold a portfolio. In an interview for the Australian National Library (1972) Dame Enid reflected that this was perhaps because her Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, had believed she was "a person with a rather soft heart and he'd think my heart would overrule my head".

Flash forward almost half a century and the election of John Howard as Liberal Prime Minister in March 1996 seemed to bear out Dame Enid's judgement. Elected in a landslide, the new Howard Government quickly set in place an administration that would define its character for over a decade. The message was direct and strong; Labor had squandered Australia's good fortune leaving a Budget deficit for 1995-6 of \$10 billion dollars (Kim Beazley's "black hole"). Thrift and Budget cuts would need to be the order of the day. Labor, recalling the Whitlam years, had once again shown it could not be trusted to handle taxpayers' money. A Howard Liberal government would be dedicated not only to a Budget surplus but also the philosophy of individualism; the nanny state would be wound back and, with the Budget in surplus, taxpayers could eventually look forward to income tax cuts and bonuses as reward for a boom time economy. This would be a government based on the best business practice. Economics, not empathy, was the new way forward.

The backdrop for this new national mood in favour of good old fashioned efficiency and pragmatism, somewhat Calvinistic in its approach, was an upsurge of tedium, even anger, with the Keating years from late 1991, when high levels of unemployment remained and high interest rates still hurt family

budgets. Many Australians now saw immigration and immigrants as a threat to their jobs and their children's future. At the same time, Prime Minister Paul Keating seemed more interested in a broader canvas, his big picture, tagged by the Opposition as "elite" issues, matters touching what many struggling Australians saw as minority causes rather than mainstream ones - reconciliation for Aboriginal Australians, multiculturalism, an Australian republic and extravagant gestures and offerings to the Arts community.

By the time John Howard's Liberals had won the 1996 election with a very small vista of election promises, some of which they would junk in government, Keating's big picture had become its own negative as Howard and the Liberals taunted their opponents with claims that Keating had been pandering to elites with their "political correctness", and become a government out of touch with ordinary Australians. In a hectic beginning, with electoral goodwill at their backs and to prune government spending, the new Howard Government brought down a horror Budget of cuts, acted on the findings of its National Commission of Audit to wind back government services in favour of the private sector (contracting out) and, with the appointment of hardliner Max Moore-Wilton as head of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, overhauled the public service with the sacking of six heads of department and made it clear that tenure for departmental heads would be dependent on the satisfaction of the Prime Minister.

## "DOCTORS WIVES" VERSUS HOWARD BATTLERS

This firm centring of Howard as the driver of all policy and image for his government soon saw a hardening of tolerance for differing views in the party room. Howard had a sensitive antenna for the mood of his "Howard battlers", those ordinary Australians who felt left behind by the Keating years. It seemed to party colleagues that Howard's experience of Australia gave him a special understanding of the mood that had made him prime minister - Anglo, suburban centric, middle class and domesticated. His wish to leave Australians "relaxed and comfortable" encompassed his pragmatic and material view of Australian life.

At first it was easy to go along with the flow; electoral success compensation enough. Philip Ruddock would make a quick reversal of character, going from human rights supporter as an opposition MP to hardline advocate and enforcer of a tough mandatory detention policy on asylum seekers and boat people. Staying on message with Howard was the only way to promotion or even notice. Christopher Pyne who, as a rookie opposition MP on arriving in parliament in 1993, had told Howard to give it away, was not rewarded with a ministry until the last year of the Howard Government, in spite of a strong

performance for over a decade. "While being a Parliamentary Secretary for three years was interesting, it was interesting in the way being Governor of Syria in the Roman Empire was interesting - you wouldn't knock it back, but you could think of postings to which you would rather be appointed!" says Pyne.

Senator Marise Payne, a supporter of an Australian republic and strong on human rights, made her first speech in the Senate in September 1997. She recalls being pressured by various colleagues not to rock the boat in her speech: "People were making subtle and not so subtle remarks about what they worried I would speak on - Indigenous Australians, Hanson politics, I was getting messages left, right and centre about what I shouldn't say. I was being warned, effectively."

Over time, some Liberal MPs noted how the need to toe the Howard line suffocated debate and fresh ideas; the small minority who might take a more sensitive, less pragmatic position on controversial issues like Indigenous affairs, boat people, Iraq and so on - MPs like Judi Moylan and Bruce Baird - were labelled in the party room as soft, disloyal or predictably heart on the sleeve.

With this came the derisive term "doctors' wives", a reference to well-off Liberal voters, stereotyped as women (ie emotional and without economic credentials) at home in suburbia while a husband toiled in the professional world, people with enough money to afford a conscience. To pragmatic Liberals, the issues that concerned "doctors' wives" (as a metaphor it also applied to many men) were simply a re-run of the Keating agenda. Howard loyalists remained confident, however, that the majority of hard working and ordinary Australians preferred government to make the tough decisions needed for the nation's economic and national security. At election after election such loyalists were vindicated.

The term "doctors' wives" in the Liberal Party room became a way of putting down those who might argue for a more compassionate look at controversial issues - asylum seekers in detention ("illegals"), an apology to the Stolen Generation, Australian soldiers in Iraq, David Hicks and so on. And so it was that, from the outset, an intolerance of views which did not subscribe to the leadership's sense of justice for traditional (Anglo) Australian values also defined the Howard Government. Christopher Pyne says he would often become quite angry with colleagues who sneeringly used the term to denigrate such Liberal voters, "I remember upbraiding Wilson Tuckey in a party meeting and standing up and saying that these people you are talking about are Liberal voters and yet you continue to insult them and want them to vote for us."

Pyne's understanding was that Tuckey defined a "doctor's wife" as "a reasonably affluent, inner city, cafe latte type of woman who was voting with her

heart not her head". In Pyne's view, judging by his own electorate of Sturt (one of the best educated and affluent in the country and taking in an inner city area) the Liberal Party was ignoring "doctors' wives" at its peril. Research on voting intentions done over a number of recent elections, both state and federal, in Pyne's electorate showed that during the Howard years the Liberal vote eroded most significantly in the more affluent and better educated areas - suburbs most likely to accommodate "doctors' wives". Says Pyne of the 2007 election, "I hung on by the skin of my teeth." He retained his seat by 1711 votes.

The ferocity of Howard's first Budget, with its nursing home bonds for the elderly, would need softening as voters protested. But the government persisted in its reform of government services, introducing work for the dole and the contracting out of services to the unemployed provided by the Commonwealth Employment Office. Liberal Jackie Kelly easily won the Lindsay by-election in October 1996, after she was forced by a High Court decision to re-contest the seat on the grounds that she had still been employed by the RAAF during the 1996 election campaign.

In many ways Jackie Kelly came to symbolise the type of voter that had swept Howard into government, a woman who in spite of her higher education began as a political novice and was entirely ignorant of Canberra politics - admitting when arriving at Parliament House after her election that this was the first time she had ever been there. But Jackie Kelly had heaps of confidence. She was ready to put the case for ordinary battlers such as those in her seat of Lindsay. Kelly had gone along to her local Liberal Party branch, furious at Keating's political correctness, and put her hand up for the nomination when nobody came forward. She had not the least interest in issues such as multiculturalism and indigenous issues. All that mattered was to see the voters of Lindsay get a better deal - basically this amounted to improved government services and tax relief.

In a speech to The Sydney Institute in February 1997, on the implications of the Lindsay by-election, Kelly captured the mood in her electorate which despised politicians and saw her as an ordinary voter like them: "When your country is broke, and you are paying tax you cannot afford to pay, and you see your government squandering money, then you get very angry and an angry electorate does what it did to Labor on 2 March [1996] and again on 19 October [1996 by-election]. It kicks them while they are down." Jackie Kelly spoke as if she wasn't really a politician at all.

## ANTI-ELITE UNDERBELLY

The 1996 election produced a number of political novices as Liberal candidates in the Kelly mould. Among these were Danna Vale, once a Democrat

voter, who became the Liberal candidate for the seat of Hughes, in southern Sydney, which she won easily from Labor, and Trish Draper who triumphed in the Adelaide seat of Makin with little political experience. They would hold their marginal seats through three more Federal elections before Kelly and Draper retired, while Vale hung onto Hughes in spite of the large swing to Labor in 2007.

But one such inexperienced candidate in 1996 would also win the seat of Oxley from Labor. This was Pauline Hanson, forced to resign as Liberal candidate during the election campaign because of her racist sentiments about Indigenous Australians in a letter to her local newspaper. Her name, however, remained on the ballot paper as the Liberal candidate because it all happened too late for the party designation to be withdrawn.

Pauline Hanson would come to represent the underbelly of anti-elite sentiment that had grown in the Keating years and which had swept Howard into government. This was an underbelly of anger and frustration in an older white Australia, materially still comfortable although lacking tertiary education, self-made Australians watching their nation become a melting pot where many of the newcomers, those usually cast as the struggling migrant, were in fact better off and educated than many with five generations of Australians in their families. As well, to Pauline Hanson and others like her, Indigenous Australians on government welfare were simply living off government largesse to the detriment of hard working taxpayers. Pauline Hanson's first speech in parliament, on 10 September 1996, took debate over multiculturalism, Asian immigration to Australia and Indigenous Australians and their place in the nation on a spiral downwards.

In this speech, as the Independent Member for Oxley, Pauline Hanson referred to "a type of reverse racism" which she saw as being "applied to mainstream Australians by those who promote political correctness and those who control the various taxpayer funded 'industries' that flourish in our society servicing Aboriginals, multiculturalists and a host of other minority groups". She cast Asian Australians as outsiders saying, "I believe we are in danger of being swamped by Asians. Between 1984 and 1995, 40 per cent of all migrants coming into this country were of Asian origin. They have their own culture and religion, form ghettos and do not assimilate."

The speech shocked better informed Australians but it also contained many views that had made Howard's victory possible. John Howard, after all, had ceased to use the word "multiculturalism". Howard himself had voiced reservations about the rate of Asian immigration to Australia in 1988, and his government had cut immigration levels by 10,000 on coming to government from a very low annual figure of just

76,000. Howard also spoke of an Aboriginal "industry" and he was not convinced about the value of reconciliation. In the aftermath of the Hanson speech, Howard remained silent. And silence implies consent. It was not until May 1997 that Howard found words to criticise Pauline Hanson's views, stating that she had been wrong.

But such views were also prevalent among an intellectual few like Sydney journalist Paul Sheehan who, on returning from the US, wrote in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (25 May 1996) that multiculturalism was threatening Australia's egalitarian culture "built through trial and error, and fought for and protected with blood and suffering of millions of Australians". He continued with: "Australia was going to be colonised. And if it had been occupied by one of the imperial cultures of Asia (with their long record of fratricide, liquidation of dissent and ethnic chauvinism), there would probably be no revival of Aboriginal culture today owing to a shortage of Aborigines." In his book *Among the Barbarians* (1998), which sold 20,000 copies in a few weeks, Sheehan further developed his thesis that Chinese immigrants to Australia were incapable of integrating in Western society and were a threat to Australian values. He used the views of anthropologist Richard Basham and China scholar Jamie Mackie to support his claims. On talkback radio, radio shock jock Alan Jones sung Sheehan's praises.

The same month that Howard finally criticised Hanson, however, his views on Indigenous matters became notorious, a result of Howard's own beliefs, long held, that "reconciliation required a condemnation of the Australian heritage I have always owned" and because "Indigenous identity politics is part an artefact of who I am and the time in which I grew up". This explanation from Howard would only come late in his final year of office in a speech delivered to The Sydney Institute the week before he called the 2007 federal election.

In May 1997, the tabling of the *Bringing Them Home Report* (Stolen Generations) and the Reconciliation Convention occurred on the same day. After the Report was tabled, Howard addressed the Reconciliation Convention and argued against any apology to Indigenous Australia. Many in the audience stood and turned their backs on him. Howard may have found a way to say Pauline Hanson was "wrong" but his stand on many of the issues that stirred Hanson appeared to reflect her outlook.

## **SYMBOLIC POLITICS - WHOSE SYMBOLS?**

The Howard Government could not understand the importance of symbolic politics beyond the symbols Howard himself held dear. Over the years of the Howard Government, the symbols of security and

traditional military heroes were often invoked - the diggers of past wars, the diggers of Iraq or Afghanistan protecting the nation from terrorism. Often it seemed as if the Howard Government was a government on a war footing, holding the nation together under protective symbols and actions.

Looking back on those years in government, Senator Marise Payne recalled writing a report that argued for symbolic recognition which came to little. Said Payne, when I spoke with her in March 2008, "Who are we to say what is symbolically important to someone else? We work in a place that is redolent with tradition and symbols and we use those every single day. But I am not going to be the sort of person who says, well that's symbolically important to you but I don't agree. They [Howard leadership] were very cognisant of their own symbols but it's about having the capacity to think laterally enough to see what might be important to other people ... and I think we failed to do that." Senator Payne believes politicians should be naturally empathetic as part of their profession. But in the Howard years there was little empathy for those who stood outside Australian traditions as John Howard saw them. The word "un-Australian" became common as a put-down during the Howard years.

Reflecting on the new Rudd Government in March 2008, Senator Helen Coonan told me, "You can be as empathetic as you like, you can have any amount of listening tours and you can invite everyone to say something. The perception will be that you listen, but eventually you have to make a decision, a decision that might alienate half the people you've listened to." This is undoubtedly true. And, whatever its limitations, the strength of the Howard Government was to get things done. Overwhelmingly, this was the key to its success after the Keating years of perceived malaise. As Howard put it himself, "Like me or loathe me, you know what I stand for."

Joe Hockey believes Howard's success was his being predictable and stable - "he offered middle Australia the opportunity to get financial security and, after Port Arthur [the massacre] which had a huge impact, personal security". In 2008, Howard loyalist Tony Abbott saw the loss of the election in 2007 as a result of the government having achieved too much: "The roadmap, the agenda if you like that we came into government with in 1996 had almost been fully realised ... there was a sense the government had run out of inspiration." From gun reform to the GST, from national security legislation to industrial relations reform, John Howard and his team knew what they wanted to do and did it. And, for most of its time in office, the Howard Government's success relied heavily on being able to put offside only those voters whose vote it never hoped to get.

Various arguments have and will be offered for why John Howard's Liberals lost the 2007 election - John

Howard stayed leader too long, the government lost touch with the electors and so on. There were many factors - some very similar to the reasons for Paul Keating's loss of government in 1996, a government also criticised for losing touch with ordinary Australians. For all that, the Howard era did see a recognised improvement in the material lives of ordinary Australians.

When the figures settled, Howard's record proved to be one of successful economic management. In March 2008, just months after Rudd Labor had won the 2007 election with its multimillion dollar campaign against WorkChoices and claims that John Howard had made the rich richer and the poor poorer, labour economist Mark Wooden produced the "Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia" survey of 14,000 people. The survey showed that, with regard to income, the lowest 10 per cent of income earners had gained increased incomes of 29 per cent while those in the highest 10 per cent had fallen slightly, by 2.5 per cent. And Professor Wooden added, "If you factor in non-cash benefits provided by the government, the figures would tilt even more in favour of the poor."

## THE CONSCIENCE OF AFFLUENCE

All this begs the question, in a country that does like to be relaxed and comfortable, just why was it John Howard's Liberals managed to throw away government? The answer is not hard to find. The problem for many Australians had become one of empathy, and the Howard Government's inability to understand or appreciate the interests of Australians who could be described as different from the Howard perceived mainstream. As Christopher Pyne had warned his colleagues, they would ignore the protests of so-called "doctors' wives" at their peril.

While making himself something of a political legend in winning four successive elections as leader of the Liberal Party, John Howard underestimated change in the electorate. By increasing the living standards of average Australians, John Howard had added to the numbers of those capable of a "doctors' wives" mindset - albeit at the same time as the Howard Government was benefiting from the electorate's feelings of national insecurity with terrorism after the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington in 2001 and the Islamic terrorist bombings in Bali in October 2002. Liberal hardliners like Wilson Tuckey would continue to deride appeals for empathy and understanding from their more sensitive colleagues over the plight of those at the margin of society and "outsiders" like refugees and people who continued to fall through gaps. But, as ordinary Australians gained financial confidence, many of them could - as Tuckey might have said - "afford" a conscience. And it was these voters who began to empathise with those they saw threatened or less fortunate as they

found an appetite for policy beyond the delivery of their own material well being.

As Tony Abbott describes it, "All the things we fretted about ten years ago, like unemployment, the collapse of traditional industries, multiculturalism, immigration, we had moved on from, partly because government policy had changed things in ways that made people feel better. These were not a problem anymore. But this means that other issues come up for people to be less contented about." Indeed, as if to make this obvious, by the time John Howard lost the 2007 election Australia's intake of immigrants was at an all time high.

However, it would not be refugees or marginalised outsiders who would initially prick Australian consciences in this value driven sea change. Instead it was the plight of a deported Australian citizen (Vivian Alvarez) and the shocking treatment in detention of an Australian resident of European background (Cornelia Rau). These national scandals in 2005 shook the Howard Government into action over the bleeding sore on the national psyche of mandatory detention. For those who had scoffed at the "doctors' wives", accusing them of exaggerating the conditions of mandatory detention, suddenly the reality showed much of the criticism had been understated. Then, within a year, came the introduction of WorkChoices, put into law by a government controlled Senate in 2006 - the Howard Government's overhaul of industrial relations. This finally gave the Opposition a lasting moment of traction against the superiority of the Howard Government.

With the government boasting of Budget surpluses while continuing to call for moderation in its spending, young people and workers on Australian Workplace Agreements could now be forced into negotiations with employers as to the nature of their employment conditions. Studies since have showed that WorkChoices was in fact the start of an employment surge in retailing, restaurants and other such casual and full time jobs - an employment boom to die for. But, in the propaganda stakes, the Howard Government's pragmatic and economic revolution was lost in a wave of feeling that Australian workers were being cheated. An advertising tsunami against the Howard Government's WorkChoices legislation, backed by lucrative Trade Union funds, painted an image of the government as mean and tricky, an image reinforced by years of government sophistry. As people began to doubt the justice of the government's new industrial relations legislation, many Liberal MPs spoke of being approached by people in their electorates, people who disagreed with the legislation not for what it meant to them so much as how it might affect their children or grandchildren. The objections to WorkChoices became a protest largely out of empathy.

Suddenly, earlier campaigns against the Howard Government had meaning for ordinary Australians - mandatory detention of children, the cry of "children overboard" (where Howard had believed - wrongly - that refugee boat people from the Middle East would throw their children overboard in order to gain entry to Australia) and Aboriginal reconciliation. What had happened to others could happen to their children or grandchildren with a mean spirited government.

Mandatory detention of boat people had not stirred a majority of Australians over decades - the policy had been introduced by the Keating Government. Unlawfuls (often referred to as illegals) were queue jumpers. But in the last years of the Howard Government, it was an Australian detainee, David Hicks, incarcerated at Guantanamo Bay prison in Cuba as a terrorist supporter, who attracted the sympathy of many Australians. Denial of justice and mandatory detention finally had meaning for average Australians; one of their own had waited long years for release from a US military prison, a prison increasingly stereotyped in the media as a gulag of horrors.

The image that best represented David Hicks, in the media, was his father Terry Hicks, an Aussie dad from Adelaide pleading for his son's release, the image of an Australian parent, decent and hard working, begging for a fair go for a son who had been enticed in the wrong direction. As Senator Helen Coonan puts it: "[David Hicks'] Dad, who stood there and told it like it was. He usually didn't overstate it. There was an identification with a parent who could be any parent, any one of us, who could have a misguided child and face a government, as it was put to me, who appeared not to even take the basic steps to see that justice was done. It didn't come up in the election; when Hicks was released it was away overnight. But it fed into a perception that we lacked compassion. Like multiculturalism, some of our reactions to terrorism, security legislation and not signing Kyoto." This was undoubtedly true, and a reaction encouraged by a decade's experience of a government with form in its lack of compassion.

In March 2008, former Queensland Labor senator John Black released the findings of his demographic research and marketing group, Australian Development Strategies, on voting profiles for the 2007 federal election. According to Black, where former Howard battlers overlapped with churchgoers the Liberals were big losers. The most significant seats that fell to Labor from this were Queensland seats in Kevin Rudd's home state.

Ironically, it was the Howard Government's lack of empathy with its own that began to erode its support. Issues, beyond material comfort and the economy, had begun to impact on middle Australians. Climate change, with former US Vice President Al Gore's doomsday film *An Inconvenient Truth* and a back-on-

back Australia-wide drought, pricked Australian consciences about global warming and saving the planet. John Howard was a climate change sceptic and, while Australia had met all its Kyoto targets, it had refused to ratify the Kyoto Agreement. As Malcolm Turnbull explained to me, "The fact that we didn't ratify Kyoto was interpreted by a lot of people as meaning we were blind to the serious dangers confronting us in the future which would impact on our children." Many of his constituents, though, had queried why the Liberal government was happy to take political pain for not ratifying Kyoto when Australia was meeting its targets anyway.

Hugh MacKay, from research for his *Advance Australia Where?* (2007), offered a picture of an Australia very much changed from 1996. Howard battlers were no longer battling. In fact, among most there appeared to be an optimistic outlook about job prospects. There had been an increase, over three decades, of females aged 45-54 in the workforce - up from 52 per cent to 76 per cent. But, at the same time, there had also been an upsurge in employees who felt they were "profit fodder". In February 2007, John Howard had celebrated the fact that the number of owner-managers now exceeded the number of trade union members, but an ABS survey in May that year showed that 37 per cent of employees worked overtime and half of them received no extra pay for doing so. All of this reflected an upheaval in Australian workplace traditions and a backdrop for new dissatisfactions.

## GOOD HEAD - SUSPECT HEART

As much history has demonstrated, revolutions do not occur when the downtrodden are in chains. Mood for dramatic change is more likely to happen with a financially liberated class - let's say an enhanced middle (read ordinary Australian) class - as it opts to push over an intransigent conservative ruling elite. By late 2006, John Howard had become that elite, an elite that had no room for emotion. Yet, in an eleventh hour attempt to put his government on an empathetic footing, John Howard gave his October 2007 speech to The Sydney Institute on a "new reconciliation" for Australia with its Indigenous citizens. In this speech, John Howard came as close to he ever would to a Catholic confession of guilt over his relations with Australian Aborigines. But, as Helen Coonan and many of her colleagues would say afterwards, it was all too late.

"We hit them [electorate] three ways," says Joe Hockey, Liberal MP for North Sydney. "We hit those families, particularly the single mums, with the child support changes which come into effect on 1 July 2008, which is basically a reduction in the money to be paid by the father. It's terrible and I fought against that. Welfare to work was the right thing to do but it was severely affected by the timing. And the third

issue was WorkChoices. The ads were deceitful but it didn't matter."

Hockey also believes, like many other Coalition MPs, that Howard erred in not making an apology long before to Indigenous Australians. "He got it wrong and he knew he got it wrong," says Hockey on John Howard's last minute attempt to play catch-up in his Sydney Institute speech the week before he called the 2007 election. "Not even Mal Brough [Minister for Indigenous Affairs] knew about that speech. It was a desperate attempt to correct history."

Tony Abbott conceded to me, talking of the Liberal Party, that "as a political movement we are thought to have a good head but a suspect heart". Malcolm Turnbull, also a Catholic, looked at the failure to say sorry another way. He recalled using the story of the Pope going to Athens in 2001 and apologising for the crimes the Latin Church had done to the Greek Orthodox Church over the centuries. "Do any of the parishioners of Mary Magdalene Parish in Rose Bay feel they are jointly and separately liable for the sacking of Constantinople? Of course they don't." Turnbull then went on to explain to his party colleagues the Pope's phrase "the purification of memory" where the first step is to acknowledge what really happened.

Perhaps the increasing sentiment that an apology was needed helped Howard in his last months in office to come to an acceptance that his semantics and rather Calvinistic lack of understanding over apologising to the Stolen Generations had been a blindness. And hence his attempt to inch his way forward at the last minute in his October speech. By then, however, it was all too late. It would be left to the Rudd Government in its first months in office to say sorry to Australia's indigenous people, allowing an outpouring of national feeling and empathy to saturate media, homes and institutions for days. Howard had ignored the doctors' wives at his peril.



### \*Note on Sources

*The quotes used in this chapter from The Hon Helen Coonan, The Hon Tony Abbott, The Hon Joe Hockey, The Hon Malcolm Turnbull, The Hon Christopher Pyne and Senator Marise Payne were taken from interviews Anne Henderson conducted with them in March 2008.*



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# THE HOWARD GOVERNMENT SUCCESS BUT NOT SUCCESSION

Gerard Henderson

*I*t seems that wisdom - just like beauty - frequently resides in the eye of the beholder. Even when it comes to the Liberal Party leadership. What was wise in, say, 1983 can be forgotten a quarter of a century later.

In 1983 John Howard told journalist Paul Kelly about how he learnt that Bob Hawke had replaced Bill Hayden as Labor leader on the eve of the March 1983 Federal election. At around 12.20 pm on Thursday 3 February 1983, Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser arrived unannounced at Government House and requested that Governor-General Sir Ninian Stephens approve a double dissolution election to be held on 5 March 1983. As it turned out, Stephens sought additional information and, consequently, formal approval to dissolve both houses of Parliament was not granted until nearly five hours later. In the meantime, Hawke replaced Hayden as Opposition leader. Hayden announced his resignation to the ALP Executive, which was meeting in Brisbane, at 12.40 pm - and informed the media at a press conference around 1.25 pm. News that Hawke was Labor's new leader got out at around 1.30 pm but Fraser was not able to announce the election until 5 pm.

Around midday at the time of these historic events, Howard was driving his wife Janette and young family in the vicinity of the Myall Lakes - near the New South Wales coast, north of Newcastle. The (then) Treasurer was on leave but discussion in the car turned on the political situation in Canberra and on the expectation that Fraser would call an early election in order to take on the ALP while Hayden - who had already been (unsuccessfully) challenged by Hawke - still remained leader. Howard later reported that Janette had said to him at the time: "Are you sure they won't switch leaders on you?" Howard responded that this was unlikely. Soon after they turned on the car radio and heard that Fraser had visited Stephens and that Hawke would lead Labor to the next election. Howard later recalled that he

immediately knew that his days as Treasurer were numbered. Not only had the Opposition replaced Hayden with the extremely popular Hawke. But Fraser had lost what benefit there might have been in surprising Labor by calling an early election - the normal time for going to the polls would have been around October 1983.

And so it came to pass that Hawke Labor comprehensively defeated the Coalition at the March 1993 election. The ALP polled 53.2 per cent of the total vote after the distribution of preferences - a Labor record. Howard was devastated by the result. However, both in public and private, he registered pride in his wife's evident wisdom and political acumen - in that she had anticipated Labor's winning leadership change strategy to overturn some seven years of Coalition government.

## HOWARD'S FATAL MISCALCULATION

Around a quarter of a century later, Howard led the Liberal Party to a devastating defeat - with Labor attaining 52.7 per cent of the total vote after the distribution of preferences. This was the ALP's second highest vote ever - only exceeded by Hawke's victory in 1983. Howard lost not only the prime ministership but also his marginal seat of Bennelong in suburban Sydney. The Liberal-National Party Coalition's defeat, along with Howard's personal loss, tarnished the record of Australia's second longest serving prime minister and the government which he led.

Robert Menzies was United Australia Party prime minister for two and a third years (between mid 1939 and mid 1941) and Liberal Party prime minister for 16 years and one month (between December 1949 and January 1966). Howard served around eleven and three quarter years in Australia's top political job. Hawke's eight and three quarter years makes him Australia's third longest serving prime minister.

Menzies stepped down on Australia Day 1966 at age 71. Howard hinted at a forthcoming resignation on several occasions during his prime ministership but never made an unequivocal decision to retire. It turned out that his fatal miscalculation - along with that of his key backers and advisers, including Janette Howard - was to fail to anticipate that Labor would change leaders. On 4 December 2006 the Labor Caucus voted, by 49 to 39, to replace Kim Beazley with the 49 year old Kevin Rudd. Despite being behind in the polls throughout most of 2006, Howard always believed that he could defeat a Beazley-led ALP in 2007 - as he had done in 1998 and again in 2001. Howard did not anticipate that he would have to contest a Labor Party led by Rudd - or that Rudd would prove to be so popular as Opposition

leader. Also Howard failed to anticipate that, by late 2007, the electorate might have grown tired of a 68 year old prime minister who had already served four terms.

By the time Labor replaced Beazley and Jenny Macklin with Rudd and Julia Gillard, Howard's fate was sealed. He was never likely to be willing to appear a coward by running before a Rudd Labor assault - and his parliamentary colleagues had never had the wisdom nor the courage to insist on a leadership handover before Labor exercised the option of changing leaders. Howard was one of Australia's most able leaders. Yet, like so many of his predecessors, he failed to leave politics at the time of his choosing or to negotiate a successful hand-over which would be of long-term benefit to the party which he led.

## LEADERSHIP DEAL - OR NO DEAL?

Negotiations about Howard's political longevity commenced even before he resumed the Liberal Party leadership in January 1995. Alexander Downer had replaced John Hewson as Opposition leader in May 1994 and Costello took over from Michael Wooldridge as Liberal deputy leader. Downer's leadership soon faltered and, towards the end of the year, discussions took place as to who might succeed him. Howard, who had led the Liberals from September 1985 to May 1989, wanted another shot at the job. But Costello, who turned 37 in August 1994, was also a possible contender.

What Costello had going against him was his relative youth. If elected in early 1996, he would have become the second youngest prime minister in Australian history - only behind Labor's John Watson, who was 37 when he became prime minister in April 1904. Also, it was not clear that Costello had the numbers to defeat Howard. In the event, Costello decided not to run for the Liberal leadership and to remain deputy when Downer stepped down in favour of Howard on 30 January 1995.

The conversations which took place in December 1994 and January 1995 were to hang over the entire Howard Government - from the time of its election victory in March 1996 until its defeat on 24 November 2007 - even though they remained a relative secret for almost a decade. There were numerous discussions in December 1994/January 1995 but one has assumed considerable significance. Liberal MP Ian McLachlan was involved in arranging a meeting between Howard and Costello at the latter's office in Canberra on Monday 5 December 1994. They were the only three people in the room. Some days after the meeting, McLachlan wrote a note of his understanding as to what had been agreed to between the two men. It read as follows:

### Meeting Monday Dec 1994

**Undertaking given by J.H. at a meeting late p.m. in P.C.'s room that if A.D. resigned and Howard became P.M. then 1½ terms would be enough and he would hand over to P.C.**

**IMcL.**

In a statement dated 10 July 2006, following the leaking of this note to journalist Glenn Milne, McLachlan wrote:

**There was no doubt in my mind Peter Costello would have contested the leadership had the above arrangements not been in place. He was after all the Deputy Leader at the time.**

In an interview conducted on 15 April 2008, I asked Howard about his version of the December 1994 meeting. He replied:

**I have a very clear recollection. I certainly said to Peter that if I were elected - I could easily have said one-term, two-terms, one-and-a-half terms. I certainly would have given a clear indication to him that, if I became prime minister, I wasn't going to stay forever and that he would have a reasonable expectation. But what I rejected completely was that it was a sort of done deal. Because, at the time that that discussion took place, the question of whether Peter was going to run himself was still quite inconclusive and weeks were to go by before Peter, finally, indicated he was not going to run.**

So Howard does not deny that he may have told Costello and McLachlan that he would be happy serving one-and-a-half terms, around four and a half years, as prime minister. But he does deny that there was any done deal and maintains that, if there had been, he would have been constantly reminded of it. As the former Prime Minister put it to me:

**That discussion took place in December of 1994. And we were to have - I've got notes of this - we were to have subsequent discussions. And as late as early-to-mid-January, Peter was still reserving the right to run. Which was his perfect right. If we'd made a deal, how is it that weeks later he was still reserving the right? Ian was only involved in one discussion.**

Interviewed for *John Winston Howard: The Biography*, Janette Howard told authors Wayne Errington and Peter van Onselen that the December 1994 discussion did not amount to much in terms of future commitments:

**You talk about a whole lot of things when you're trying to convince people to do things. But you don't go back and honour every single one of those unless you have made a firm commitment about it and John wasn't into making firm commitments.**

## **WHEN HE TURNED 64**

Howard maintains that Costello did not mention the one-and-a-half terms issue when, in 2003, he raised the leadership with him directly for the first time during Howard's prime ministership. Nevertheless the fact remains that it was Howard who first introduced the issue of his political longevity - in private in early December 1994 when he was aged 55. He was also the first senior member of the Liberal Party to raise the matter in public - when interviewed by journalist Philip Clark on the ABC 702 *Morning Show* on his 61st birthday. On 26 July 2000, which just happened to be one-and-a-half terms into his government, Howard was asked a vague question about his work intentions well into the future. He replied that this was a "fair question" and that he would be "very frank in answering it". The Prime Minister repeated an earlier assurance that if the Liberal Party wished him to lead it to another election he would be happy to do so. After that, he reflected, it would be his "63rd or 64th year" and then the question would arise about whether that would be "fair enough" since "nothing is forever".

At the time some commentators, myself included, formed the view that Howard had been simply musing in public about his future and that his comments were not premeditated. However, it was subsequently revealed that long-term Howard confidant Grahame Morris told Errington and van Onselen that he had advised Howard to use this line as a means of killing-off any leadership speculation before the 2001 election. So, Howard's comment to Clark was premeditated. In any event, Costello and McLachlan would have had reason to believe that Howard was extending his one-and-a-half term promise by a term and both might have accepted such a new arrangement. Howard was to turn 64 on 26 July 2003 - around eighteen months before the election which was scheduled for late 2004.

Howard's interview with Clark was not the only hint he dropped at the time suggesting that, if he won the 2001 election, he would retire before the following poll. On 13 October 2001 *The Weekend Australian* published an article on Howard by journalist Paul Kelly in which the Prime Minister criticised Labor's failure to manage a hand-over from Hawke to Keating in December 1991 and praised the way in which Menzies had stood down in favour of Harold Holt in January 1966. Howard told Kelly:

**I think the way Hawke and Keating ended up was just so undignified. It was terrible. I don't think it served their party well and I don't think it served the country well.**

In the same interview Howard acknowledged: "If I go Peter Costello will become the leader; I accept that." Certainly Kelly interpreted Howard's comments as sending out a clear message about his leadership intentions. He wrote that Howard's reference to Menzies was "a significant comment since Menzies retired undefeated but Hawke stayed in office to fight and lose a challenge from his deputy and treasurer Keating". Certainly Howard convinced Kelly that he believed in an orderly Liberal Party leadership succession. Others were not so sure.

The Coalition was returned with an increased majority at the election on 10 November 2001. In 2003, half way through the Coalition's third term, Costello fronted Howard and told him that he should step down as prime minister. The unpopular Simon Crean was Opposition leader at the time but Costello was of the view that the ALP would change leaders before the next election and that he was best equipped to lead the Coalition in the campaign. Interviewed on 19 March 2008, Costello recalled the events of the time:

**Gerard Henderson: You thought that John Howard should have stepped down before the 2004 election. You thought that he should step down on his 64th birthday.**

**Peter Costello: He said he was going to consider his position on his 64th birthday, which was July of 2003. I thought that it was a very sensible thing to do. And July 2003, of course, would have been eighteen months before the 2004 election. My view always was you have to give a new leader eighteen months - maybe twelve months but preferably eighteen months. So in the lead up to the birthday - when the speculation was reaching feverish pitch - we had a discussion then. I said to him then, I thought he should pass on the leadership. I gave the reasons....And I said to him that I thought Labor probably would get its house in order - you couldn't guarantee that he would be running for election against Crean and it was time for the Party to renew itself. We had a number of conversations around that time. Well as it turned out, you know, he said he wasn't going and he entered the formula that he put down for a long time which was: "I will stay as long as it's in the interests of my Party and my Party wants me to stay." So that became the mantra for a very long time.**

One of the problems with the mantra was that it implied that Howard intended to stay leader until his colleagues suggested that it was in the interests of the Party that he should retire. This was not consistent with the view that he had expressed to Kelly in 2001 that the leadership handover should be dignified.

For his part, Howard maintains that when the leadership was discussed in 2003 Costello did not refer to the meeting of December 1994 or make any allegation that Howard had broken a promise to hand over to him after one-and-a-half terms.

On Tuesday 3 June 2003 Howard told the Liberal Party room that he would stay on in the job and contest the 2004 election as prime minister. At a press conference around midday, shortly after the Party meeting had concluded, Costello fronted a media conference at Parliament House. He advised assembled journalists that he would continue to serve the Party as Deputy Leader and Treasurer. Asked by Matt Price if he was disappointed, Costello responded: "Well, it wasn't my happiest day. Put it that way, Matt." Asked by Michelle Grattan whether he could ever rule out, under any circumstances, challenging the Prime Minister for his position, Costello responded that someone with his track record of loyalty to the Party that he had shown "doesn't have to answer questions like that". This was a deliberate re-working of the comment which Howard had made concerning the then Liberal Party leader Andrew Peacock following the December 1984 election. Howard replaced Peacock as Liberal leader the following September.

### **"YES, I MADE NO FINAL DECISION"**

Mark Latham took over from Simon Crean as Opposition leader on 2 December 2003. Howard comprehensively defeated the erratic Latham at the 9 October 2004 election. The return of the Howard Government did not resolve the leadership issue. In October 2004 Howard was 65 - by the time of the 2007 poll he would be 68. During our interview Howard told me that, shortly after the 2004 election, he reached the view that he would retire "sometime during this term". He recalls "having discussions with people" on this issue - adding, ironically: "I don't talk about discussions with my family anymore". He added: "But in all of these things, you know what politics is like, you always keep your options open."

And that was the problem. Howard did consider the possibility of retiring before the 2007 election. It's just that he did not make a final decision to do so. Consequently, he did not keep Costello in the loop about his intentions. And the Treasurer and his supporters grew increasingly frustrated. This

frustration was evident in the number of leaks from some Costello supporters about the leadership issue.

Frustration increased shortly after the election, following what became termed the "Athens Declaration". On 30 April 2005 the *Daily Telegraph* ran a Page One story headed: "I'll Beat Kim Again - Howard's vow for fifth term" while *The Australian* headed its article: "PM: I won't make way for Costello." Journalists Malcolm Farr and Steve Lewis interviewed Howard in Athens shortly before he returned to Australia. Asked whether he could beat (then) Labor leader Beazley at the next election, the Prime Minister replied: "Yes, I hope so. I'll try." He was also reported as saying: "I'm not about to find another job. I'm not planning on going anywhere."

In view of the leadership's tensions, Howard's comments were indiscreet at best, self-indulgent at worst. Howard realised that offence might be caused and Costello was contacted before the story appeared in the press. But unnecessary provocation had occurred. Yet, even today, Howard does not fully understand the reasons for Costello's frustrations - as the following segment of our interview indicates:

**Gerard Henderson:** You've described the "Athens Declaration" incident as ridiculous.

**John Howard:** Well it was ridiculous because it wasn't - as represented by Lewis and Farr and co. - some declaration of my intention to stay. I was asked whether I thought I could beat Beazley again. The answer to that was yes I could. That didn't mean that I had made up my mind to stay.... What other answer could I have given? "Oh no, no, I can't beat him again"? I mean, ridiculous. And I did indicate to Peter before any of this story [was published]. I rang him and told him that the conversation had taken place and he shouldn't read anything into it. It didn't mean that I'd made up my mind to stay.

**GH:** How did he accept that?

**JH:** Well I'm not sure that he did. But you'd have to ask him whether he accepted it or not.

Well, he didn't. So it should have come as no surprise to Howard when tension erupted again - just over a year after the so-called Athens Declaration. In the first half of 2006 there was gossip about whether there had been some kind of leadership understanding between the Liberal Party leader and deputy leader which had been dishonoured. Costello was asked by Farr and Samantha Maiden about this while on a visit to the Solomon Islands. His answer was newsworthy on account of its ambiguity.

Maiden's story in *The Australian* on 6 July 2006 was headed: "Costello coy over PM pact." Costello's response as to whether he had had an understanding with Howard about the leadership, as reported by Maiden, was as follows:

**Look, these things have worked in the interests of the Australian people and the Liberal Party and the people concerned and there's no point speculating on it.**

For his part, Howard told the media on 6 July 2006: "There's no deal".

## **BLACK TIES AND DOLLAR SWEETS**

In early November 2005 I received an invitation from Melbourne businessman Michael Kroger to attend a black-tie dinner "to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of the judgement in the case of *Dollar Sweets Pty Ltd v Federated Confectioners of Australia*". The guest of honour was Fred Stauder and "The Hon Peter Costello MP, Federal Treasurer, will propose the toast". Invitations were limited to 30 but the actual turn-out at The Australian Club in Melbourne was more than double that. Most of those attending had been involved, since the early 1980s, in the campaign to reform Australia's centralised and highly regulated industrial relations system.

The invitation was accompanied by a photo of Kroger (then a solicitor) and Costello (then a barrister) outside the Victorian Supreme Court during the Dollar Sweets Case in December 1985. This was an historic case in which confectioner Stauder (who died on 23 July 2006) stood up to the left-wing militant Federated Confectioners' Association which had engaged in an unlawful and violent picket of Stauder's Dollar Sweets factory in Melbourne - and won a case at common law. At the commemorative dinner, Costello was at his witty best. Later, in an obituary on Stauder published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, he recalled that this was a "wonderfully happy evening". And so it was.

It was also the occasion on which News Limited columnist Glenn Milne, who was one of the guests - even though he had no record as a long-time advocate of industrial relations reform - became aware of McLachlan's note concerning the December 1994 meeting. McLachlan (who left politics in 1998) was also a guest at the function - along with Liberal parliamentarians David Hawker, Rod Kemp, Christopher Pyne, Andrew Robb and Santo Santoro.

It turned out that McLachlan had been carrying this December 1994 note in his wallet for over a decade - and showing it, on occasions, to friends and associates. Robb maintains that he had seen the document on at least five occasions before the story broke. Someone at the dinner briefed Milne on the December 1994 meeting and the existence of the

note. Interviewed on the ABC TV *Lateline* program on 11 July 2006, Milne explained that he had had a conversation with a person after the dinner who was "adamant that a deal had been done on the succession" but also advised Milne that his comments were off the record. Around six months later, that person subsequently gave Milne permission to run the story provided there was no attribution to the source. Milne said that when he approached McLachlan in July for confirmation of his story, he received a "no comment" response - but that McLachlan subsequently phoned back and confirmed the story.

On 9 July 2006 *The Sunday Telegraph* led with a Page One lead "PM Broke His Secret Deal." McLachlan made a brief statement to Milne: "The essence of what you have described to me about what happened in that [December 1994] meeting is accurate. I have told certain people about that meeting and that has been relayed to you." Costello declined to comment.

## **SHOW-DOWN ON PHILLIP STREET**

On Monday 10 July 2006 Howard denied that there had been any deal made in December 1994 with Costello. He declared: "There were lots of discussions at that time, including one at which Mr McLachlan was present, that did not involve a conclusion of a deal. Perhaps the best evidence of that is that discussions about the leadership of the Liberal Party went on for weeks and weeks after that particular discussion took place in December of 1994."

Later that day Costello opened a media conference in Melbourne with the following comment:

**Well there's been a lot in the papers the last couple of days and I've never spoken about these events before, but, since others have, the public is entitled to know the full truth. What happened was that Mr McLachlan and Mr Howard sought a meeting with me. The meeting took place on the 5 December 1994. There were only three of us there. Mr Howard asked me not to nominate for the Liberal Party leadership because he did not want a vote in the party room. He told me that he intended to do one-and-a-half terms as prime minister and then would hand over. I did not seek that undertaking. He volunteered it and I took him at his word. Obviously that did not happen. I didn't stand on my digs. I continue to work for the Government to the best of my ability in the interests of the Australian public. And whilst this country can be improved and whilst there are still things to be done to make it better, I intend to give it every**

**ounce of energy that I have. I did not ask Mr McLachlan to relate these matters but his account is entirely accurate.**

And so it was. What Costello refrained from saying was that he had not attempted to stop McLachlan from confirming the details of Milne's story. Interviewed on the ABC TV *Four Corners* program on 18 February 2008, Costello said: "It wasn't up to me. It was up to him." Costello's position was that this was McLachlan's story and he was not going to stop him from revealing the content of his note, if this is what McLachlan wanted to do.

Events reached a crescendo on Tuesday 11 July 2006. The Sydney Institute is located at 41 Phillip Street - diagonally across the road from the Commonwealth Parliament Offices in Sydney. On Tuesday 11 July 2006, just after 9.30 am, I watched a huge media scrum follow the Treasurer down Phillip Street and into the CPO where a Cabinet meeting was scheduled. This was the door-stop interview where Costello (famously) said: "I spoke yesterday and gave you the full details. My parents always told me - if you've done nothing wrong, you've got nothing to fear by telling the truth."

Following the Cabinet meeting, Howard and Costello met for about half an hour concerning the leadership. This time, of course, the December 1994 meeting was raised. After the meeting, Howard told the assembled journalists at around 3.30 pm that he would remain as leader and contest the 2007 election. The next day, Costello accepted his decision. The road to the election was set in concrete. Or almost.

## THE NO-OPTION OPTION

John Howard's failure to anticipate Labor's leadership change from Beazley to Rudd had left the Liberal Party with few realistic options. As the months progressed through 2007, Rudd Labor remained well in front in the polls and Howard failed to make any impact - despite a popular budget and numerous policy initiatives. The Prime Minister addressed the Liberal Party's Federal Council Gala Dinner on 2 June 2007. Some delegates and guests observed that his speech focused more on past achievements than future goals. This was the Liberal Party's essential problem. It was not clear why - having achieved his central aims with respect to such matters as tax reform, privatisation and industrial relations reform - Howard wanted another term.

On Friday 1 June 2007 I had appeared with Michael Costello on *Lateline*. Michael Costello had argued in *The Australian* that morning that Peter Costello might replace Howard as prime minister before the election. In reply to a question by presenter Virginia Trioli, I expressed a long-held view that there "was

reason for change" in the leadership in 2006. However, I maintained it was now too late because Howard's sudden resignation would indicate that the Liberal Party was in "total panic" and this would make a Costello led victory most unlikely. The Treasurer approached me at the National Council Gala Dinner and said that he had watched the *Lateline* interview. To my surprise, he said that there was a chance that his colleagues would ask Howard to step down before the election.

## HOWARD'S DOUBTS

Around this time reports began to emerge that Howard was beginning to have doubts about the election and himself. On 19 July 2007 Dennis Shanahan reported in *The Australian* that, at the previous day's Cabinet meeting, the Prime Minister had "bared his throat" and asked his colleagues whether he was "the problem". This report was contested. But there was no doubt that Howard threw the switch to agitated in September 2007 - on the eve of the APEC Leaders Meeting which commenced in Sydney on 7 September.

On 4 September Newspoll put Labor ahead of the Coalition by a massive margin of 59 per cent to 41 per cent. Howard met with Downer in the CPO that morning. It was at this meeting that Howard set in place the process which was to lead to a majority of his Cabinet colleagues expressing the view that it would be best if he handed over the leadership to Costello. It was then that Howard re-defined what he meant by the mantra that he would remain leader for as long as his Liberal Party colleagues wanted him to.

Following the meeting at the Prime Minister's Phillip Street office, at Howard's request Downer set about contacting all the members of the Cabinet to ascertain if they believed that Howard should continue to lead them to the election. It soon happened that Abbott was involved in a similar enterprise.

On Wednesday 5 September Tony Abbott sat next to the ABC board member and *Australian* columnist Janet Albrechtsen at a lunch organised by the Liberal Party's Forestville Branch in suburban Sydney. She was the guest speaker. He was the local Federal MP for Warringah. Albrechtsen told Abbott that she was inclined to write a column for *The Australian* on the following Friday arguing that Howard should step down for Costello. Abbott begged her to desist. The columnist said that she would like to talk direct to the Prime Minister. On returning to his office, Abbott phoned Howard and had a long conversation about the leadership and related matters.

At the end of the discussion, Howard told Abbott that he had asked Alexander Downer to take some soundings about his leadership and that he would be

happy if Abbott did so as well. Albrechtsen spoke to the Prime Minister by phone the following day and advised him of her intentions. He listened courteously but indicated that he would not be standing down.

Following his conversation with Albrechtsen, Abbott was inclined to the view that Howard should step down. He subsequently phoned Downer and Nick Minchin. Minchin maintained that it was now too late to change the leadership and that this should have happened twelve to eighteen months before. Abbott phoned Downer and, then, Costello. The latter advised that he would certainly accept the job if Howard retired. Costello gave the same message to Downer.

Abbott later discussed the issue with two friends - one of whom he described as a Coalition voter, the other as a Labor supporter. Both of them expressed the view that the Coalition would have a better chance with Howard than Costello. Abbott had flirted with the idea of a leadership hand-over but changed his mind following the conversations with his friends. So he contacted the Prime Minister again and said that he should stay in the job.

## **STORMY SEAS AT THE QUAY GRAND**

On Thursday 6 September 2007 Downer convened a meeting of Cabinet members who were in Sydney. It was held at his room at the Quay Grand Hotel, commencing at around 10.30 pm. The Immigration Minister Kevin Andrews was present and he compiled the following note soon after the meeting concluded in the early hours of the following morning. It reads as follows:

**Thursday 6 September 2007, Quay Grand Hotel, Sydney, 10.30 pm - 12.30 pm. Present: Alexander Downer, Philip Ruddock, Julie Bishop, Joe Hockey, Malcolm Turnbull, Chris Ellison, Brendan Nelson, Ian MacFarlane, Kevin Andrews.**

**Alexander Downer opened the meeting, which we had been informed about that afternoon, by thanking us all for attending and indicating that Tony Abbott and Nick Minchin, Helen Coonan and Mal Brough could not be present, but he had spoken to them. He also reported that he had spoken to Peter Costello about the matter he wished to raise. He indicated that he had had conversations with the Prime Minister over the past two days. These discussions had been initiated by John Howard. The PM had discussed the Coalition's poor standing over the course of the year and had asked whether he (the PM) was the issue. Hence Downer had called this meeting, as we were all in Sydney for**

**APEC. This was done with the PM's knowledge.**

**The discussion was broad ranging. Philip Ruddock was against any change. Downer reported that Tony Abbott was of a similar mind. On the other hand, Joe Hockey and Malcolm Turnbull were in favour of immediate change. Hockey argued that the Bennelong campaign would be a distraction throughout the campaign for the PM. Hockey was pessimistic about the PM's chances of retaining his seat.**

**There were very mixed views about the alternative to Howard, namely, Peter Costello. Some were of the view that he would be the best bet, while others were more sceptical. Some recounted negative experiences in dealing with the Treasurer. Downer also indicated that Nick Minchin was of the view that unless the PM was prepared to go voluntarily, a change would not be workable. There was much discussion about this issue.**

**Downer summarised the PM's view: Howard was prepared to stay and fight, but if the majority of Cabinet said he should go, then he would - but on the clear understanding that Cabinet had taken that position and he had been requested by his senior colleagues to stand aside. This was a sticking point. In the end, we decided that unless the PM would say that he had decided to stand down, then there would be no change. (In my shorthand notes: "Unless PM says he has decided to go, not on.") The meeting broke up about 12.30 am. Downer indicated he would talk to the PM that day and report back. I wrote notes of the meeting after I had walked back to my hotel.**

It seems that this note is essentially accurate - with a few exceptions. Brough was not phoned by Downer before the meeting but found out about it the following day during a discussion with Minchin. He thought it was unwise to have held the meeting but believed that Howard should step down. Ruddock maintains that his opposition to the leadership change was not as strong as presented in Andrews' note - and that his primary concern was that Howard should not be publicly dragged down by his colleagues. The evidence indicates that Ellison was closest to the Ruddock view and also opposed leadership change.

Albrechtsen's article titled "Pass baton to Costello" appeared in *The Australian* on Friday 7 September. It

caused considerable interest - and was quoted in the international media. But if it had any impact on Howard, this would have been counter-productive. Howard is a stubborn man and does not react well to public pressure.

Albrechtsen's public humiliation of Howard, while many world leaders were in Sydney, almost certainly increased the determination of the Prime Minister and his wife that he would not be driven from office. That night Downer met with John Howard and Janette Howard at Kirribilli House in Sydney to report on the previous night's meeting at the Quay Grand Hotel. Downer discussed the occasion in an interview on 12 March 2008:

**Gerard Henderson:** So when you go and talk to John Howard at Kirribilli House - he having always said that if the Party thought he should go, then he would go - how did he explain his own change of mind?

**Alexander Downer:** He said that there were two things. One was he didn't want to run away from a fight. If he left now (as in then) he would be seen by history as being a coward who feared losing his seat and losing the election and wouldn't stand and fight. And he wasn't prepared to do that and his family felt very strongly about that as well. Mrs Howard was there and she made that patently clear: "You can't ask him to walk out of a job, after all he's done, as a coward." And the second thing to say is that it was his view - and he might have been right about this - that while there was no basis for optimism about winning, he believed he was our best chance.

## **A "PROBABLY" - NOT "CERTAINLY" - DECISION**

On Sunday 9 September Howard advised that he would remain Liberal leader. This was confirmed the following evening when he appeared on Channel 7's *Today Tonight* and declared that he had discussed the leadership issue with his family and that "they want me to continue to contribute". This interview was to irritate some of the Prime Minister's senior colleagues who believed that it was inconsistent with his long established mantra that he would remain Liberal leader for as long as his colleagues, rather than his family, wanted him to stay in the job.

On Tuesday 11 September, Howard appeared at a media conference with Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper and declared: "I have never run from a fight before and I don't intend to do so now."

On Wednesday 12 September, Howard finally decided that he should stand down as prime minister - at some time after the 2007 election. One Cabinet minister recalls a leadership meeting immediately after APEC where a couple of ministers put the view that, having decided that the Liberal Party would go to the election with Howard and Costello in their existing positions, it was not realistic to continue to leave Costello in the lurch and that there had to be an indication that there would be a hand-over during the next term.

This was the approach adopted by Tony Blair with respect to Gordon Brown in the lead-up to the 2005 British election - but this move had previously been disavowed by Howard. The minister recalls that the position was arrived at after a fairly terse discussion within the leadership group.

The Liberal Party meeting which had been scheduled for 11 September was postponed until the following day to accommodate for Mr Harper's visit. Liberal parliamentarians met alone early in the morning and they were later joined by National MPs for a Joint Party Meeting of the Coalition. John Howard spoke at length about the leadership issue at the Liberal Party meeting - but did not repeat his comments during the subsequent Joint Party meeting.

Howard told his fellow Liberals that he believed that the leadership had been resolved in 2006. He said that he had asked Downer recently to canvass the issue with Cabinet members and that there had been no disloyalty in the subsequent discussions. He advised that the matter was now settled and commented that he wanted to stay as prime minister until he had completed his program. Howard said that time specific longevity declarations mean nothing. However, he added words to the effect: "If we win, it will be an orderly transition." He went on to say that he had no doubt that Costello would be his successor.

Some Liberal MPs interpreted Howard's less-than-explicit comments to mean that, if the government won, he would step-down before the 2010 election. Others failed to pick up the message and did not become aware of the Prime Minister's decision until that evening.

Howard's diffidence in telling the Party Room of his long-term leadership intentions explains why there was no leak from the Party Room - and why only one journalist obtained the story for the evening news, apparently with the consent of the Prime Minister's Office.

On the Channel 9 News on Wednesday 12 September, Laurie Oakes reported that the Prime Minister had

decided that he “won’t serve another full term...if he wins the election” and would “quit politics as soon as his election program is implemented”. Howard had planned to elaborate on his decision during a pre-arranged interview with Tracey Grimshaw on Channel 9’s *A Current Affair* program - but she was unaware of Oakes’ report and did not raise the issue with Howard. So the Prime Minister’s Office hastily set up an interview with Kerry O’Brien on that evening’s *7.30 Report* - where Howard volunteered a statement about his political future:

**Can I just say something about it? I’ve given a lot of thought to this, and my position to the next election, and this is what I’ll be telling the Australian people is, is very simple. If the Australian people are good enough and kind enough to re-elect me again, there are a lot of things I want to do, and I would want to approach those things with enormous energy. But I would expect well into my term - and after those things have been implemented and battered down - I would probably, certainly, form the view well into my term, that it makes sense for me to retire. And in those circumstances, I would expect - although it would be a matter for the Party to determine if - Peter would take over.**

As the transcript indicates, Howard’s performance was uncharacteristically nervous. More significantly, he had trouble actually announcing his pre-determined position to step down well into his next term. Hence the reluctant use of the word “certainly” immediately after the manifestly inadequate “probably”. The *7.30 Report* interview was the first occasion on which some of Howard’s colleagues became aware of his intention to hand-over the Liberal Party leadership - at an unspecified date before the 2010 election.

I had never expected Howard to retire before the 2001 or 2004 elections even though I thought there was a case for a leadership handover on both occasions. But I believed it was possible - perhaps even likely - that he would retire before the 2007 election. However, I came to the view that the leaking of the McLachlan note had made such an eventuality unlikely, if not impossible - since Howard was never going to be driven out of the job. Yet, when watching his performance on the *7.30 Report*, I realised that I had been mistaken and that Howard had never really intended to resign before the 2007 election. If Howard had so much trouble announcing that he would probably/certainly step down in mid-term if he won in 2007 - even after he had reluctantly come to this decision at a time of crisis - then it was most unlikely that he would have voluntarily quit when he

felt that he could win. This was all the more so since in 2005 and 2006 there was widescale support within the parliamentary and organisational wings of the Liberal Party for Howard to stay on. This position was supported by large parts of the business community - led by BHP Billiton chairman Don Argus.

## **COSTELLO’S NUMBERS**

There has been considerable criticism of the fact that Costello never challenged Howard for the leadership. The fact is that he never had the numbers. Downer maintains that Costello’s support at any time was “20, 22, max. 25”. This view is not seriously contested within the Liberal Party. In view of this, the only way for a leadership hand-over to be implemented was for Howard to step down. Yet the fact is that before the commencement of 2007 only one Liberal had told Howard he should quit. Just one. And that was Costello himself - on a number of occasions but specifically and directly in 2003 and again in 2006.

## **THE NEW DISSENTERS - TURNBULL, HOCKEY, BROUGH AND ROBB**

Around the middle of 2007, Turnbull - who had not favoured a leadership change in 2006 - let Howard know that he believed he should step down but also indicated that this was Howard’s call. Turnbull then believed that if the Prime Minister did not want to go there was no way he could be pushed.

At the time of the leadership crisis, during the APEC Leaders Meeting, Brough and Hockey advocated that Howard should step down. The former phoned Howard during the early evening of Friday 7 September; the latter on the night of Sunday 9 September. Both discussions were courteous and professional. However, at the end of the conversation, Hockey came to the conclusion that Howard never had any real intention of handing over to Costello. In other words, in 2007 only three Cabinet members told Howard directly that he should quit in favour of Costello - Turnbull, followed by Brough, followed by Hockey.

There was one other advocate of this position in the outer ministry - in addition, of course, to Christopher Pyne who was widely regarded as a Costello supporter. Andrew Robb had initially opposed any pre-election change-over - believing that the issue had been settled in July 2006. However, he was dismayed by Howard’s revelation on the *7.30 Report* that, if re-elected, he would not see out a full term. He found that Howard’s supporters within the Liberal Party’s branches in his electorate of Goldstein had shifted their support to Costello, once they knew that Howard would retire mid-term.

So Robb arranged a meeting with Howard at The Lodge in Canberra on the evening of Sunday 16 September 2007 and argued the case for leadership change. Robb explained his position in an interview on 12 March 2008:

**Gerard Henderson:** I just thought by the time you got to August/September it was too late. Maybe I was wrong.

**Andrew Robb:** It could well have been. We don't know. But my view is, with these things, if you're heading for a train wreck - do something. You might still have a train wreck but you've got nothing to lose...

**GH:** What did John Howard say to that logic when you told him?

**AR:** Well, he spent thirty minutes telling me why Peter couldn't win - he had more show of winning than Peter. And I found none of it compelling.... I spent thirty minutes putting my case and he spent thirty minutes responding. And that was it. And then I said, "Well, I think you're wrong and I'm going to talk to your colleagues." He said: "So you're asking me to step aside?". And I said: "No, I wouldn't do that. You're not going to resign because it would look like you're running away. Your colleagues have to ask you to leave. That's the only way it's going to happen - not give you the discretion". And I said: "I'll talk to your colleagues tomorrow". Basically, that was it.

Robb recalls that on the Monday there was a lot of interest in his proposal among his ministerial colleagues. But it dissipated the following day when the Coalition's position improved in the Newspoll - from 41 per cent to 45 per cent.

## NICK MINCHIN'S POSITION

Then there was the case of Nick Minchin, Leader of the Government in the Senate. Interviewed, after the election, by Virginia Trioli on ABC Radio 702 on Monday 26 November, he said that he had believed that Howard should have stepped down in March 2006 - on the tenth anniversary of the Coalition's election. He did not clarify Trioli's assumption that Minchin had communicated his view direct to Howard.

On 27 November 2007 *The Age* reported that, well before the 2007 election, Minchin had told Howard that he needed to go. Howard phoned Minchin and reminded him that he had never spoken to him about the leadership succession. Minchin subsequently

said this was a misreport and that, while he had believed that Howard should step down, he did not tell him so directly. Rather, he spoke to Downer and Arthur Sinodinos (Howard's chief-of-staff), and asked them to tell the Prime Minister of his position. As Minchin put it in an interview on 19 March 2008:

**I always take the view that you need to determine how best you achieve your objectives. And it did not seem to me that the objective would be best served by me just confronting John Howard. I took the view that the objective would certainly not be achieved if I couldn't persuade his two chief advisers, lieutenants, comrades - Downer and Sinodinos - of the virtues of this course of action. If I couldn't persuade them, it was all over. I knew John would not want to go, that he would resist advice of this kind... Our relationship wasn't as strong as it might've been at the point. I was worried if I just confronted him he'd see me as a flag-waver for Costello and dig in. John Howard, that's one of his virtues, he digs in when confronted. So it seemed to me that my best role was to convince those closest to him, much closer than me, of the virtues of this course of action. And, regrettably, I wasn't able to do that.**

Howard and Minchin had had a difficult relationship for some years. The Prime Minister believed that the Senator was too close to the Liberal Party right-wing and he resented the fact that this group had denied pre-selection to the able Senator John Tierney and replaced him with Concetta Fierravanti-Wells. For his part, Minchin maintains that he did not have such influence over the New South Wales right.

Sinodinos does not recall such a conversation with Minchin in late 2005 or early 2006 but maintains that Minchin expressed the view to him that Howard should retire in early 2007 - after Sinodinos had stepped down as the Prime Minister's chief-of-staff. This message was not passed on since Sinodinos believed that the Liberal Senate Leader should communicate any such message to the Prime Minister direct.

It is not clear whether Downer passed on Minchin's view to Howard. He believes that he definitely would have told Howard of Minchin's position. Howard is of a different view. Howard certainly does not recall being advised of Minchin's position at any time before 2007.

**John Howard:** Nick Minchin never approached me.

**Gerard Henderson:** But he said he spoke to...

**JH:** My recollection is that he may have spoken to Arthur [Sinodinos] very late in the piece. But he never spoke to me. And, quite frankly, with something like that, you don't speak to the Prime Minister's chief-of-staff. You talk to the Prime Minister....

**GH:** But he did speak to Alexander Downer.

**JH:** Well, I mean, I don't know.

**GH:** Did Downer pass that on, do you recall?

**JH:** No. He certainly didn't pass it on in 2005 and 2006.

**GH:** So Downer didn't speak to you around that time.

**JH:** No. Well, he did. I mean Downer wanted me to stay.

**GH:** Yes, that's true. But he didn't pass on a message that Minchin wanted you to go?

**JH:** I don't recall that.

It is not as if Minchin specifically asked Downer to raise the leadership issue with Howard and that Downer sought an appointment for his purpose. Rather, in late 2005 or early 2006, Minchin simply expressed the view to Downer on a number of occasions - and assumed that Downer would take the matter directly and unequivocally to Howard. The problem with this tactic was that, in late 2005/early 2006, Downer was of the view that Howard should not rush to a decision but should wait and see what the future offered.

## COONAN'S REGICIDE REJECTION

Liberal Senate Deputy Leader Helen Coonan admired Costello and was loyal to Howard. Her position epitomised the impasse in which the Liberal Party found itself. Howard would not depart voluntarily and it was all very late. As Coonan told me on 19 March 2008:

**Helen Coonan:** It was more a timing issue and, you know, what are the practical implications? So it was the principle of a regicide that really bothered me. And the second thing was the practical side of how you'll do it all.

**Gerard Henderson:** When you look back - in retrospect on it now was it a mistake of John Howard's not to step down?

**HC:** Look I think it played a significant part in us looking like we were out of puff and we'd run our race. I think it did really. It made us look like we were there for an eternity - the fact that we comprehensively mishandled a transition and how we would go forward and how we'd mark out an agenda for a new term. So it all just stymied. And it got stymied, in my view, because I do think the PM had largely implemented his agenda and I think Labor had very successfully, with all sorts of slogans and perceptions, managed to mark him out as someone who couldn't move off his old settings into the new world of climate issues and technology.... So it fed into the perception that we'd run our race.

## JOHN HOWARD'S LAST STAND

When Downer met the Howards on the evening of Friday 7 September 2007 he advised the Prime Minister of what he believed a majority of his colleagues had decided the previous evening. As he put it to me:

**It wasn't a consensus. The majority of them thought that we were going to lose and he would lose his seat and the public weren't listening to John Howard at all anymore - they were over him and they'd just tuned out... The vast majority of them thought that we were going to lose and there was nothing John Howard could do to turn it around and on balance, but with a lot of reservations, it might be better if Costello took over. Although we could do worse with Costello there was also a possibility that we could do a lot better depending on how he went in the transition - which is what there'd be.**

But Downer's request, on behalf of a majority of his Cabinet colleagues, failed because the Prime Minister was not prepared to resign his office - but only to be driven from it. As Howard put it to me:

**My position, Gerard, was that if my senior colleagues were, as a group, prepared to "own" a request for me to go, I'd have gone. But I was not going to, out of the blue, go - because I didn't think that would have produced a different result and that I would have rightly been criticised for cowardice. ...What I, in effect, was saying to them was: "Look, if as a group you're**

going to say to me we think it's in the Party's interest that you go, well I'd go". But if they're not sufficiently sure of that, not willing to do that, I wasn't going to be in a situation where I went, they say "Oh well this is a big surprise but we'll have to do our best." Peter takes over and we lose the election. There would have been justifiable criticism of me for cowardice and I wasn't going to accept that.

Howard discussed his position with his wife Janette and adult children Melanie, Timothy and Richard. But it would be inaccurate to believe that Janette, or the children, decided the issue for him. Howard always made his own decisions and resents the fact that there has been an over-emphasis of the role of his family in his final decision:

**John Howard:** Can I say I'm staggered at the emphasis that's put on the fact that I talked to my family. Maybe I should never have disclosed the fact that I discussed things with my family. But I'd taken it as read that you talk about important things affecting you with your family.

**Gerard Henderson:** But here I want to be fair to both sides. And the criticism from some people is you said you would do what the Party wanted you to and then...

**JH:** My answer to that is that the Party never told me what it wanted me to do. I mean, individual members and junior ministers even in September [2007] were ringing me saying: "We don't want you to go." But what I put to Downer was a very simple proposition that if, as a collective, the senior members came to me - and I actually in conversation used the analogy of that group that went to see [Bob] Hawke [in 1991] - came to see me, I'd have responded to that. Because they'd have been "owning" the request. But what I didn't want was a situation where I resign and people say "Oh it's his decision but we'll make the best of it" and we lose the election and I'm regarded as a coward. I wasn't going to do that.

**GH:** Is it true that you thought you couldn't win at the end?

**JH:** Well, certainly in September, I was certainly feeling pessimistic. Yeah, I was feeling quite pessimistic. Because the polls had been so relentlessly consistent.

## PETER COSTELLO'S REALISATION

Howard's position was understandable. The same can be said for Costello. Costello had handled Howard badly by confronting him publicly in July 2006 and in 2007 speaking indiscreetly on-the-record to Errington and van Onselen and (supposedly) off-the-record to journalists Michael Brissenden, Paul Daley and Tony Wright who subsequently revealed details of their conversation with the Treasurer. But Costello's exasperation was driven by Howard's indecision and by the fact that he no longer believed Howard would retire. This was evident when, four months after the election defeat, I raised the matter with the (now) Liberal backbencher, as to how it came about that Howard finally had agreed that he would step down some time after an election victory.

**Gerard Henderson:** How did you get to that formula that he would say that he would lead to the election and step down after?

**Peter Costello:** Well by this stage, Gerard, he'd been told that with the exception of, say, Tony Abbott everybody at the Cabinet thought he should go. And this had now become more or less public. Howard had asked his Cabinet - should he go or should he stay? And his Cabinet had said: "You should go." I just thought it was a doubly untenable position now, now that it was known. He'd raised it; he'd invited it; he'd got this view.

**GH:** So, did he discuss this with you? Was it discussed at Cabinet

**PC:** Look, it was discussed. Now the public knew that his own Cabinet had told him to go - the idea that not only he was going to stay, but that he was going to stay for another three years was ridiculous. So he decided that he would have to make it clear that he wasn't going to stay the full three years. Nobody thought he was going to, anyway.

Costello observed the trouble experienced by Howard in getting out his (eventual) retirement message on *7.30 Report*. Moreover, he noted that during the election campaign, the Prime Minister had spoken about serving an additional year-and-a-half - then a couple of years. As Costello reflected: "As the campaign wore on, the departure was getting further and further extended." Howard had never reconciled himself to life outside Kirribilli House and The Lodge - and Costello knew it.

## WHAT IF?

In the end John Howard simply ran out of steam. In its last term, the Coalition's stances on WorkChoices, Australia's commitment in Iraq, climate change and broadband technology were unpopular. Yet, beyond that, the Prime Minister looked old - and his age was emphasised on the evening news due to his insistence on taking a morning walk, which proved to be a ready picture opportunity for television crews and the print media. A further problem turned on the fact that, as he sought a fifth term, Howard no longer had a simple, sellable message about why he should be re-elected. He had run out of time. But, stubbornly, he refused to recognise the reality.

If Costello had replaced Howard in early 2006 it is impossible to say what would have been the political outcome. Certainly Costello would have taken the essentially symbolic steps of ratifying the Kyoto Agreement and apologising to Aborigines who had been separated from a parent or parents a generation or more ago. Also, it is impossible to predict how Labor would have responded to a Costello Government and, in particular, whether it would have replaced Beazley with Rudd.

In early 2006 Rudd, despite his evident ability and popular appeal, remained unliked within the Labor Caucus. He prevailed against Beazley in December 2006 because a majority of his parliamentary colleagues thought they had no choice. Who knows? It may be that Labor might have kept Beazley as leader in the belief that he could defeat Costello. And it may be that this judgment could have proved incorrect and that Costello could have won in 2007 against Beazley. Or, perhaps, even against Rudd. Again, who knows?

Senior ALP figures believe that Rudd could have defeated Costello. But they concede that he would have been a more difficult target than Howard and that Labor's strategy - essentially based on the theme that Australians should replace a 68 year-old prime minister with a man, full of new ideas, who was just 50 - would have had to be substantially re-worked. Whatever the outcome, the legacy of the Howard Government would have been different.

## LIBERAL LEGACIES - HOWARD, FRASER AND MENZIES

John Howard, along with the politically conservative Stanley Melbourne Bruce, are the only incumbent prime ministers to lose their seats. In 1929 Bruce lost a safe conservative seat which he regained in 1931. Howard lost a marginal Liberal seat on a swing to Labor's Maxine McKew which reflected the swing against the Coalition in New South Wales.

Nevertheless, Howard's defeat in Bennelong tarnished his record.

Beyond that, the Howard Government's economic legacy will prevail. The Prime Minister and Peter Costello oversaw the move from budget deficits to surpluses and abolished the Commonwealth Government's net debt. The Howard Government instituted substantial tax and industrial relations reforms and privatised Telstra and the Commonwealth Employment Service (leading to the establishment of the job network). It also created greater contestability - or competition - within the health and education systems. And Costello enshrined in legislation the independence of the Reserve Bank of Australia to determine monetary policy. All this occurred within a time-span where economic growth favoured those on low incomes and unemployment fell to around four per cent. Despite his efforts, Howard had little impact on what have been termed the culture wars - for example, the ABC's fashionable leftist culture was all but untouched. However, the Howard Government's appointments to the High Court are likely to have a long-term beneficial effect in at least slowing the growth of judicial activism.

In other words, Howard and Costello were able to achieve what Fraser and Howard were not able to do in the previous Liberal government - i.e. introduce and sustain change. As Patrick Weller documented in his book *Malcolm Fraser PM*, the "Fraser cabinet took about 19,350 decisions". For all that, little change - still less reform - was achieved. When it was, Howard was usually involved. He was the relevant minister when the Fraser Government outlawed secondary boycotts in industrial relations - thus preventing Union-C taking action against Employer-A who was in an industrial dispute with Union-B. This was the only significant industrial relations reform of the Fraser years. Howard was treasurer when the Fraser Government introduced the tender system for the sale of Treasury notes in 1979 and Treasury bonds three years later. As Ian Macfarlane pointed out in his 2006 Boyer Lectures *The Search for Stability*: "This change to the method of selling government securities was a major reform, which has not been accorded the recognition it deserves. It was second only in importance to the float of the Australian dollar in 1983". Certainly, the Fraser Government restored stability after the erratic three years of Gough Whitlam. But, beyond that, it left little legacy.

And then there was Menzies. Menzies' key political achievement was to create the Liberal Party of Australia out of numerous disparate conservative parties and organisations. He both believed in and

implemented political reform. As prime minister during the 1950s and first half of the 1960s, Menzies' prime contribution lay in what he did not do. Namely, he declined to take Australia down the path of nationalised industries and the cradle-to-grave welfare state - which had been followed by both Britain and New Zealand.

Menzies and Howard are entitled to be regarded as the Liberal Party's most significant leaders. The former showed better judgment than the latter because he realised that there was a time to go - even though he remained in office until age 71 - and arranged a transition to Holt, who led the Coalition to an all-time winning election margin in December 1966. As Costello commented in August 2005, when launching Tom Frame's biography *The Life and Death of Harold Holt*, "the succession of Holt to the leadership...gave the Liberal Party an opening to modernise in response to changing social and economic factors at work in Australia". Costello was not given such an opportunity.

When I worked for John Howard between January 1984 and December 1986, I noticed that he was, at times, indecisive. This appears to have also been the case when he was a minister in the Fraser Government. By the time Howard became prime minister, this indecision was gone. It was replaced, at times, by a determination not to make decisions until they had to be made. For much of his time as prime minister, this tactic worked well. Yet it was inconsistent with the resolution of an orderly leadership succession.

Unlike Menzies, Howard never made an unequivocal decision to leave. He failed to take account of Costello's understandable frustrations. And Costello failed to realise that public provocations of Howard would be counter-productive. The Liberal Party's structure failed in that there was no one ready - or able - to negotiate between the Leader and the Deputy Leader. Howard's principal political failure was not to learn from Menzies on leadership succession. His immediate error was to fail to anticipate that Kevin Rudd might become Labor leader. The wisdom evident near Myall Creek in early 1983 had deserted John and Janette Howard two decades later.



*This article will be printed in a collection of essays - edited by Peter van Onselen - which will be published by MUP in late 2008.*



# MICHELLE GRATTAN, JOHN HOWARD AND A FAILURE OF INTELLECTUAL IMAGINATION

John Kunkel

*Australian Prime Ministers* (New Holland, 2008, 2nd edition) explores the political lives of the 26 men who have led the country since Federation. Edited by Michelle Grattan, a revised edition has just been released, the main additions coming from Grattan herself - an update of an earlier chapter on John Howard to take account of his political demise and an essay on Kevin Rudd's rise to the prime ministership.

The book makes an important contribution to Australian politics. Many of the essays are original and first-rate. It will likely remain a standard reference on school and university reading lists for years to come. It is unfortunate, therefore, that things have turned out the way they have. In many ways, the last two chapters tell us more about Michelle Grattan's view of the world than they do about John Howard's or Kevin Rudd's. The book's claims to be "authoritative" are correspondingly reduced.

The chapter on John Howard is not without merit. Clear prose and considerable breadth - trademark Grattan strengths - are there in abundance. And her summary judgment of the former prime minister - that "circumstances, his own energy and his passion for politics prevented him from walking away from a career that would have been judged better if it had ended a little earlier" - is a fair cop. Yet for the serious student of Australian politics - anyone actually interested in understanding Howard and his government - the overall result is disappointing.

Early on, aware of where she is heading, Grattan gives herself a free kick. "Inevitably," she writes, "the

manner in which a political career finishes affects how its whole is viewed, especially in the near term.”

That may be fair enough if the reader is being offered the musings of a political outsider or a Gen Xer at *The Age* news-desk, but why this should “inevitably” be so for Grattan – who has reported on national politics for several decades – is not at all clear.

Why a Ben Chifley or a Bob Hawke (both of whom had less than glorious exits from politics) should receive more rounded and thoughtful treatments because they’ve been out of office for longer is left unstated. Given the chapter on Chifley is written by the sympathetic Labor historian Ross McMullin and the Hawke chapter by the former Hawke Government Minister Neal Blewett, the cards seem to be stacked against Howard from the get-go.

Grattan’s focus on the “final days” of Howard also makes for some bizarre inclusions. There are cameos for *The Chaser* and a group of young women called the “John Howard Ladies Auxilliary” (who bobbed up for two days during the 2007 election campaign). By contrast, the reader searches in vain for anything of substance on the relationships Australia’s second longest serving prime minister developed with world leaders through a tumultuous decade. There are the obligatory sneers about Howard’s friendship with George W. Bush, but that’s about it.

The jaundiced eye Grattan brings to her task is betrayed by other examples. John Howard, it’s alleged, had an “anti-public service attitude”. This claim is based principally on the 1996 decision to replace a number of departmental secretaries and some remarks by Bob Howard (the former PM’s Labor-aligned brother) that the Howard household of the 1940s and 1950s had little time for public servants.

For someone with even a passing knowledge of John Howard’s dealings with the public service, this is crushingly superficial. The former prime minister certainly had strong views about the respective roles of elected politicians and public servants. Among other things, he believed strongly that no government can operate effectively over a long period of time without relationships based on mutual respect between ministerial offices (especially that of the Prime Minister) and the public service.

It may not fit the Grattan script, but the John Howard I saw in numerous meetings with public servants was courteous, professional, appreciative of good advice and keen to hear alternative policy views. And whatever the merits of the actions of 1996, there is a long list of public servants who were promoted handsomely by the Howard Government after having worked intimately with former Labor Prime

Ministers and Ministers – Ken Henry (Treasury), Dennis Richardson (ambassador in Washington and former head of ASIO) and the late Ashton Calvert (DFAT) to name just three.

Incidentally, for someone who supposedly had an anti-public service attitude, John Howard employed a sizeable number of senior staff (including long-time chief-of-staff Arthur Sinodinos) from the ranks of the public service. This is just one area where readers are served up a caricature to fit the prejudices of Howard opponents.

A second example concerns the Howard Government’s decision not to ratify the Kyoto Protocol on climate change. According to Grattan, this can be sheeted home to the former PM’s overweening desire to please George Bush. This might be a good fairy-tale for the left-leaning readership of *The Age*, but it is a fairy-tale nonetheless.

The Howard Government’s reluctance to embrace Kyoto was based, first and foremost, on a view of Australia’s national interest. Al Gore and Tim Flannery may not have been impressed, but the view that a resource-rich country highly dependent on cheap fossil fuels might be disadvantaged by Kyoto is at least plausible, especially given Australia emits just over 1 per cent of global greenhouse gases.

Yet for Grattan any attempt to understand the former government’s position, let alone the complexity of the issue, doesn’t even enter the frame. It’s just Kyoto critic equals George Bush toady. In fact, there is a veritable conga-line of Kyoto critics who have highlighted the weaknesses of an instrument that was written largely with European interests in mind and that has delivered no binding commitments from the world’s biggest carbon emitters.

When former Clinton Administration Treasury Secretary Larry Summers likened Kyoto to the League of Nations (well-meaning but ineffectual), he was hardly signing up to the George Bush fan-club. And it’s not as if the structural weaknesses in the Kyoto Protocol have mysteriously disappeared after 24 November 2007.

A third example of Grattan as “journalist on a mission” is her take on the Howard Government’s indigenous policy, especially the Northern Territory intervention. For this, you only need to know one word: the ubiquitous Howard “wedge”.

Interestingly, in the Howard chapter Grattan makes no mention of the *Little Children Are Sacred* report on child sexual abuse that precipitated the intervention. This appears only in her chapter on Kevin Rudd, whose support for the intervention is ticked as a sign of his political cleverness. In other words, the proximate cause of the intervention is simply not

recorded. More sinister motives have to be unearthed.

Students of politics interested in one of the more significant policy initiatives in recent years are offered a pantomime of nasty conservatives trying to wedge the good-hearted folk in the Labor Party.

Nothing on the appalling initial response of the Northern Territory Labor Government to the report. Nothing on the frustrations of a Commonwealth Government spending an awful lot of money on very difficult problems. Nothing on the views of indigenous leaders fed up with progressive mantras on indigenous policy. So congratulations to *The Chaser* and the “John Howard Ladies Auxillary”: you are part of the Howard story. Bad luck Noel Pearson and Sue Gordon: you don’t rate.

Indigenous policy has a wider significance as part of Grattan’s over-arching assessment of the Howard prime ministership. To give Grattan her due, she states this explicitly, arguing that John Howard “changed the country for the better, economically, and the worse, culturally”. The sub-text is clear enough. It’s that by the end of 2007 Australia and Australians had become richer, but also nastier and generally backward-looking by failing to embrace touchstone progressive views on the Republic, Reconciliation, border protection, multiculturalism and the so-called “history” and “culture” wars.

What are we to make of this?

In the first instance it neglects the demonstrable link between economic progress – in the Howard Government’s case, almost 12 consecutive years of strong economic growth – and various improving socio-cultural indicators.

A higher birth rate, lower divorce rates, more volunteering and increased charitable contributions may not recommend themselves to Grattan as signposts of cultural improvement – but that again says more about her world-view than anything else. For anyone with a genuine policy interest in “culture”, these indicators really do matter.

Other social indicators also challenge Grattan’s easy moralising about the Howard years. How is it that a culturally regressive society was able to absorb almost 1.5 million migrants from all over the world under Howard? How come there is ample survey evidence which shows that Australian attitudes towards high immigration improved markedly over this period?

This is more than a failure of balance based on selective treatment of the facts. It’s a failure of intellectual imagination. For a journalist like Grattan, there is only one legitimate type of Liberal – a small l,

progressive one. Any reasoned inquiry into (let alone sympathetic understanding of) a liberal conservative world-view like Howard’s is out of bounds almost automatically.

Take, for example, John Howard’s reservations about signing on to the Reconciliation process as it was defined in the Keating era. Grattan writes that: “for Howard reconciliation remained a challenge to which he could never rise. ... he lacked that special quality of imaginative empathy that would allow him to enter the minds and souls of those whose experience is totally outside his own”.

What’s missing is any attempt to grapple with what Howard actually said on the issue: that part of the problem with the 1990s Reconciliation process was that it let too many white Australians “off the hook” by focusing too much on symbolic measures without grappling with the proximate sources of indigenous disadvantage.

Grattan’s criticism might have more force were it not for the fact that she herself seems to suffer in spades from an equivalent syndrome. The “imaginative empathy” required to write about a political conservative is simply not there. And in this, she is basically representative of the Canberra press gallery. What happens, then, is virtually everything gets interpreted as “wedge politics” – whether it be John Howard’s concern about the teaching of Australian history in schools, his views on the importance of shared national values or his profound reservations about making white guilt the foundation of progress in indigenous affairs.

More generally, what strikes you about the Grattan chapter on Howard (when set beside her rather gushing essay on Kevin Rudd) is the lack of any sense that diverse and clashing world-views and ideologies are part and parcel of a strong, vibrant and robust democratic society.

This is an idea with a long history, going back at least to John Stuart Mill who celebrated the healthy tension that arises from competing ideas and what, in his own time, he referred to as “a party of order” and “a party of progress”. Michelle Grattan, it seems, like many of her colleagues in the gallery, would be happier if conservatives just went away.

- *John Kunkel was John Howard’s speech writer from 2004 to 2007.*



# “YES, DIRECTOR” - AN ANTHRO- POLOGIST ON THE BOARD OF THE ABC

Ron Brunton

In the last couple of months of my term on the Board, I told a number of ABC people that I was preparing a paper about my experiences titled “Yes, Director”. In most instances, the response was a knowing chuckle, one that seemed to bespeak acknowledgement of the ABC’s attitude towards members of its governing body, as well as appreciation that I had not been fooled by all the duchessing that Board directors receive.

The Chairman Maurice Newman and the Managing Director Mark Scott were exceptions to this response, although they did not raise any objections to my intended paper. In any case, in the farewell speech he made at my final Board meeting, the Chairman said that I was an eccentric who frequently came out with-off-the-wall remarks. Nevertheless, he did add that there often seemed to be some substance behind my statements. My optimistic interpretation is that he was also acknowledging that the relationship between Sir Humphrey Appleby and Jim Hacker could help us to understand our experiences as ABC Board directors. But, without any evidence, this may just be wishful thinking. It is no surprise that in a large hierarchically organised cultural institution such as the ABC, structural tensions should exist at many different levels. But there are particular tensions between the governing group, whose members are appointed by an often hostile government, and the rest of the organisation, many of whom see themselves as true guardians of the public interest. Discussions I have had with government-appointed Board members from other major cultural institutions indicate that their experiences have been comparable.

Nor should it be surprising that various forms of deception would come to the fore in the playing out of

these structural tensions. By deception, I mean something broader than deliberate lying, although that can certainly occur. It can also involve the withholding of important relevant information, or the cynical advocacy of the most self-serving of a range of possible interpretations - in other words, spin. In his recent book, *From Hire To Liar*, the American sociologist David Shulman argues for the prevalence of non-criminal deception in all organisations, contending that it is an integral aspect of everyday work, “a routine form of administration, culture, and management in the workplace”. He defines deception as the intentional attempt to manage activity so that others will be induced into a false belief about what is actually going on.

As a relevant illustrative example, some years ago my wife worked in the Secretariat of SBS. There she was involved, amongst other tasks, in putting together papers for the SBS Board. A superior told her that she should not include anything in these papers which might lead Board directors into making “the wrong decisions”. She was not asked to lie, but rather to act in such a way that the Board would not have all the information that it might reasonably expect to be given.

Another illustrative example came out of interviews I conducted in 2003-2004 with senior people associated with the Victorian Arts Centre, as part of a project for the Pratt Foundation. When Richard Pratt was made President of the Centre’s governing body - the VAC Trust - by Premier Jeff Kennett in 1993, he appointed, at his own expense, a representative to spend a few days a week at the Centre. Two early appointments did not stay long, but then a Pratt employee named Ian Allen took on the position. Allen had had three decades of experience in the Victorian Public Service, and was familiar with its ways. He had a very broad brief to learn as much as possible about the VAC by speaking with staff at every level, and to act as a channel of communication between the Centre and Pratt. Allen soon discovered a number of critical matters which could have serious consequences for the Arts Centre, but which, for whatever reason, had not been brought to the attention of the Trust. So successful was he in uncovering such information that some senior staff saw him as a grave threat. A group of prominent arts people were mobilised to complain to “dual management” at the Arts Centre, and pressure was put on the Premier to prevail on Pratt to withdraw Allen.

## JOINING THE ABC BOARD

The ABC employs more than 5,200 people, spread over 62 locations in Australia and 14 overseas. The dispersion of employees across a large number of offices, and the extent to which staff in regional areas are embedded in their local communities, makes it

difficult to speak of a single “ABC culture” across the organisation as a whole. Nevertheless, more than half of the ABC’s employees work at one of the two main offices - Ultimo in Sydney and Southbank in Melbourne - and there is a low level of staff turnover: two years ago I was told that the average length of employment was around 11 years. Both of these circumstances are conducive to the existence of a prevailing culture or ethos in significant sections of the ABC.

Certainly, there seems to be a strong pride in working for the corporation, and an equally strong commitment to the concept of “public broadcasting”. When challenged on some matter, staff frequently invoke the ABC Charter as their dominant motivation for action. This comprises Section 6 of the *ABC Act 1983*, and states, amongst other requirements, that the Corporation should provide “programs that contribute to a sense of national identity and inform and entertain, and reflect the cultural diversity of, the Australian community” and which “provide a balance between broadcasting programs of wide appeal and specialized broadcasting programs”.

The widespread commitment to public broadcasting is accompanied by a hostility to anything that hints of commercial advertising. Sometimes this has been taken to risible levels, such as news readers refusing to refer to the former Sheffield Shield cricket competition as the Pura Cup, even while speaking over shots of play which are saturated with advertising logos. Cultural products, such as books or films, are usually exempt from these concerns, and the ABC provides a great deal of what is effectively free advertising for publishers, authors and film distributors. Once, in an argument about this with an ABC staffer, I was told that the audience is usually not given information about where to buy the books or see the films!

I have long been a critic of the ABC; indeed, I am probably more critical of some parts of the organisation now than when I joined the Board in 2003, although I hold other sections in high regard and think that some areas have certainly improved. I have little doubt that it was my criticisms of the ABC in opinion columns that I wrote for the *Courier Mail* and other publications that led to my appointment. Some of my negative views were based on personal involvements with the ABC which I made public in my columns.

Nevertheless, my appointment to the ABC Board came as big a surprise to me as to anyone else. Despite a seemingly widespread view to the contrary, I was not a crony of the then Minister for Communications, Richard Alston, nor of any member of the Howard Government. Furthermore, given that

I was approached some weeks after the retirement of Michael Kroger, the director I replaced, I suspect that I was not the government’s first choice, a suspicion reinforced by comments I heard from others after my appointment was announced.

While I cannot say that it played an important part in my initial decision to accept the position, the prospect of being able to observe the workings of the ABC at close quarters was appealing. As an anthropologist, I was familiar with long-standing discussions within the profession about the opportunities and problems involved in carrying out research into corporate and other elites, and frustration that such research still constitutes only a small proportion of anthropological endeavour. One of the more significant reasons for this dearth relates to problems of access, and I thought that as a director of the ABC I would at least have the advantage of being an insider.

I was particularly interested in why a Board, all but two of whose nine members had been directly chosen by the Howard Government, had not been successful in bringing about the reforms that the government - and presumably the Board members themselves - thought necessary. (The two who were not chosen by the government were the Managing Director, who is appointed by the other members of the Board, and the Staff-Elected Director.) I considered that the government was fully justified in believing that the Board had failed to ensure the appropriate level of impartiality and intellectual diversity in ABC broadcasts, particularly on certain topics such as the environment, national security and the US alliance, industrial relations, and indigenous issues. But the explanation for this failure that was invoked by many conservatives, that Board members had been “captured” by the ABC, seemed too simplistic.

I should stress, however, that I never intended to carry out a proper anthropological study of my fellow directors and their relations with the other parts of the organisation. Clearly, it would not have been possible to undertake even the minimal amount of necessary research without jeopardising my ability to fulfil my statutory obligations as a director. It would be fanciful to suggest that my appointment was universally welcomed, and I certainly did not want to give anyone grounds for questioning my commitment, or suggesting that I might have conflicts of interest.

But in the weeks between being approached for the position and attending my first Board meeting, I read books written by previous ABC directors. These included former staff-elected directors Tom Molomby’s *Is there a Moderate on the Roof?*, and Quentin Dempster’s *Death Struggle*, and former Managing Director Geoffrey Whitehead’s *Inside the ABC*, all of which contain detailed and seemingly

candid accounts of particular incidents involving Board members and ABC staff. I thought it might be possible to produce a comparable work at the conclusion of my own term, which would at least be anthropologically informed - considering the ABC's culture or cultures, and the ways in which the Board operates in the context of an environment that was not necessarily friendly or co-operative.

## AN INTENTION THWARTED

However, once I began to attend Board meetings, I came to realise that I could not hope to write the kind of account I had originally envisaged. Apparently as a result of certain incidents involving other directors, the Board had begun developing a protocol which would bind all its members. Although it was not formally adopted until September 2004, over a year after my appointment, the protocol included the provision that any information obtained as a result of Board membership could not be released without the permission of the Board as a whole. This included Board agendas, papers, minutes and discussions. The protocol further stated that legal action could be taken against any Board members acting in breach of this duty in order to protect confidentiality.

I tried a couple of times to get a clarification as to whether this actually precluded directors from writing generally about their experiences once they had left the Board, and received somewhat equivocal answers. In the event, I abandoned my own writing plans. I only decided to prepare this paper a few months ago, partly as a way of dealing with my sense of frustration about the gap between public perceptions of the Board's supposed influence and power, and what I believe is the reality. So this paper involves something of a grey area. A strict reading of the clause "information obtained as a result of Board membership" would prevent an ex-director from writing *anything* about his or her time on the Board. However, I have chosen to interpret the absence of any objections from the Chairman or Managing Director as an indication that I could go ahead with this paper, although I did assure them that I would not be revealing confidential information about Board discussions or papers. Certainly, I do not see how it would be possible to publish accounts such as the books by Molomby, Dempster and Whitehead, and still abide by the present protocol. So my ability to capitalise anthropologically on my insider status is limited.

Although I have substantial notes and recollections of a number of key incidents I was involved with, and which contributed to my assessment of the Board's situation, I can at best provide information only about those that did not directly involve the Board. And quite apart from the legal and ethical constraints the Protocol imposes on me, to reveal some of the

information I am privy to could have unwelcome consequences for some individuals whose identity could readily be deduced. In other words, I am asking people to trust my assessment without offering very much data on which to base such trust. And given the salience of the ABC in political debate in Australian society, and the lip service given to the Board's supposed power, particularly by ABC staff and supporters who are always happy to blame it for controversial decisions they don't like, it would be naive to think that my view that the Board is largely irrelevant would not be contested.

Furthermore, while a request for trust without much supporting evidence might be problematic coming from any commentator, in my case people might find it particularly difficult to grant. As someone who is often described as a "right-wing culture warrior", my views about contentious matters relating to the ABC, such as its bias and lack of intellectual and social diversity, can readily be dismissed by the ABC's apologists.

I do not intend to engage in a lengthy defence of my views about the ABC's partiality here. Readers might see staff and management as consummate professionals working in an under-resourced organisation and who are engaged in justified resistance against conservatives such as myself, or as left-leaning people who frequently fail to insulate their private sympathies and preferences from their professional obligations, giving the lie to the stated principle that "the ABC takes no editorial stand in its programming". But irrespective of readers' agreement with my opinion that the ABC has serious problems with partisanship on certain issues, and that it is insufficiently committed to political and social diversity amongst its broadcasters and program makers, the question still remains as to how an organisation resists reform attempts initiated by directors who believe they are acting in accordance with their legislative obligations.

## DIRECTORS' DUTIES

Nevertheless, there are some points that I should make. In the Annual Reports issued during the first two years of my term, i.e. 2003 and 2004, the Board of Directors' statement concluded with the assurance that the Board was "satisfied that it has fulfilled its duties as laid out in Section 8 of the ABC Act". One of the most important duties of the Board specified in this section is "to ensure that the gathering and presentation... of news and information is accurate and impartial according to the recognized standards of objective journalism".

However, despite these assurances, it is my firm belief that up until now the Board has not had a proper basis for knowing whether this obligation has

in fact been met. In the past, directors have relied on three sources of information to assess editorial performance - the annual Newspoll survey which, amongst a number of other issues, tries to measure public opinion about balance and even-handedness; the number of upheld complaints about accuracy and bias; and the results of program reviews undertaken by editors and executive producers.

Each of these sources has serious limitations. Thus the Newspoll survey is really measuring reputation rather than actual performance, and asks people questions about which they cannot possibly have an informed opinion, such as whether the ABC is efficient and well-managed. After five years on the Board I am still unsure about the appropriate answer to this question, yet in the most recent survey, 71 per cent of respondents thought it was, with less than a quarter being candid enough to say they didn't know.

Around 80 per cent of the Newspoll respondents - apparently including those who never form part of the ABC's audience - thought that the ABC did a good job of being balanced and even-handed, and this figure is frequently invoked in response to critics. As a counter, I liked drawing my colleagues' attention to the results of a 2004 survey of media professionals, mostly from newspapers, carried out by the journalism program at RMIT, Melbourne. Asked "which is the most politically partisan media organisation in Australia?", 25 per cent said the ABC, second to News Limited which received a combined total of 52 per cent - including 12 per cent for *The Australian*, which was identified separately from other News Limited publications. (I took some mischievous pleasure from the fact that the results of this survey appeared in a little book called *From Barons to Bloggers: Confronting Media Power*, which was published in 2005 with the ABC Books logo on its cover, and an Introduction by the ABC's then Chairman, Donald McDonald.)

While the level of upheld complaints might be taken to offer a better guide, there is no appropriate benchmark as to the number of complaints that would indicate whether the Board is actually meeting its obligations. Furthermore, at least on anecdotal evidence, I suspect that all but the most persistent and committed individuals are discouraged from making and pursuing complaints by a belief that the steps required, and the consequences for offenders, simply do not justify the effort involved. I should add that, in spite of many attempts by myself and other directors to obtain clarification, I am still unclear about aspects of the process that is followed when individuals are found to have breached editorial policies. Despite assurances from management to the contrary, I am not confident that the supposed reprimand - or "counselling" as it used to be called

until senior managers seemingly got tired of our ridicule of this term - does not come with a wink and a nod to favoured staff, and as an excuse to demote dissidents and troublemakers, or to lever them out of the organisation.

As to the third source which the Board might use to judge the ABC's editorial performance, my attitude towards the program reviews carried out by editors and producers is similar to my attitude towards internal investigations by a police force - the reviews are being conducted by the very people who are responsible for the programs they are assessing. And having asked for and examined the minutes from some of these reviews, I have not seen any evidence that serious consideration is given to issues of balance or bias.

In the future, the Board may be in a better position to know whether its statutory obligations are being met, as the occupant of the recently created position of Director of Editorial Policies is carrying out research on the accuracy and impartiality of a sample of key programs aimed at providing Board members with the necessary information. But it has taken 25 years from the time that the ABC was brought into being in its current form for such steps to be taken. Geoffrey Whitehead, the Corporation's first Managing Director from 1983 to 1986, had proposed such a position, but as a result of strong internal opposition, it was never filled.

## ON BEING SNOWED

Given that my name appears on Directors' Statements in Annual Reports whose assertions I do not accept, an explanation of how this occurred is instructive. Under the circumstances, I think that I can provide this information with a clear conscience.

The Directors' Statement is not prepared by the Board sitting down to work through various drafts, but by some combination of the Chairman, staff and senior executives from Corporate Affairs, and the Managing Director. In 2003, my first year at the ABC, the statement was circulated to directors to read during the course of a somewhat tense and hurried Board meeting in Ballarat while other business was being discussed. This struck me as odd, but as no-one else objected, I did not say anything. In any case, I had only joined the Board at the tail end of the 2002-2003 year to which the statement applied. I was still very much in the position of learning the ropes, and did not feel confident about challenging anything in the statement, or the process whereby it was being "reviewed".

I felt differently a year later. At the Board meeting in September 2004, as we had not yet seen the Directors' Statement, I asked the Chairman if it could

be circulated in advance of the printing deadline, so we would all have sufficient time to read it carefully, and to request amendments if necessary. Donald McDonald apologised, but said it had already gone to the printer. I do not think this failure to show directors what they had supposedly signed up to was deliberate, but to me it was an oversight that encapsulated the cavalier attitude towards the Board.

In the following year directors were given sufficient opportunity to read and request modifications to the statement, and it did not contain the offending assurance. A former head of the Public Service Board, Sir William Cole, with whom I had discussed my concerns about having my name on a statement which I did not believe was correct, told me that he thought that a difference from the previous years' reports on such an important matter would be noticed by government officials, and that it would be commented on. But if this was the case, I did not hear about it. Standards of accountability may well have deteriorated between the early 1980s, when Sir William was with the Public Service Board, and the present

## UNKNOWN UNKNOWNNS

A further problem that may raise doubts about my assessment of the Board's relationship to the ABC is that it might be interpreted as being largely self-serving. Clearly, the Howard Government appointed me to the Board in the expectation that I would be a force for reform, and although my understanding of the desirable reforms was not necessarily congruent with the intentions of Richard Alston or John Howard, I cannot claim to have been particularly successful. As Gerard Henderson has often noted, Howard's "appointments to the ABC board did not change the national broadcaster's prevailing leftist culture".

When one has supposedly played a major part in the governance of an organisation, it can be very difficult to provide - or to be accepted as providing - an honest assessment of one's own contribution to the organisation's performance, or lack of it. By invoking structural considerations, and other forces beyond the agency of the Board itself as an explanation, I can plausibly be accused of attempting to downplay my own failings, or to excuse my lack of suitability to the task I was appointed to perform, and to which I was fully committed.

Certainly, looking back, there were a number of occasions where I wish I had responded more forcefully to situations which I found objectionable, or taken a more obviously incredulous and forensic approach to a senior executive's seeming efforts to snow the Board. To some extent I assured myself that it was necessary to be collegial and to compromise, and that if I always sounded like a broken record, continually harping on the same matters which were

being inadequately addressed by management, I would be even less effective than might otherwise be the case. I note that in his account of his Board experiences, Tom Molomby expresses somewhat similar concerns, referring to the danger of alienating "other Board members where there might be a chance of persuading them". And from the beginning, examples of supposedly "bad directors" and their counterproductive actions were drawn to my attention as a part of my socialisation by some other directors, who clearly feared that I might be tempted to behave in a comparable fashion. These examples were regularly rehearsed, presumably for the benefit of potentially difficult directors who were appointed after me.

Realistically, I cannot offer a compelling refutation of the possibility that my account is self-serving. Even were I able to ignore the legal and ethical constraints, and provide detailed examples of the kind of evidence I have drawn on in coming to my views, a sceptic might still counter that I am just doing what I would accuse ABC News and Current Affairs of often doing - selectively using evidence in order to advance a particular agenda. I have to acknowledge that such a suspicion is not unreasonable, but add that I have attempted to present an honest portrayal.

There is one other issue that could be thought to vitiate my assessment of the Board's relationship to the ABC, and paradoxically, it becomes increasingly salient to the extent that I am correct in my belief about attempts to conceal information from the Board, and to otherwise manage and contain its effectiveness. As a Board member I often worried that we would suddenly be confronted with what former US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, called "unknown unknowns" - and for which he was ridiculed by the ABC, even though it was a concept that the corporation should certainly have understood.

## DECEIVING THE BOARD

Before I became a director, I had an experience that demonstrated how staff and management were quite prepared to deceive members of the Board if they thought it necessary to protect an individual or program unit. After I wrote a *Courier Mail* column about having been invited, and then suddenly disinvented, to appear in a television debate on Aboriginal issues, the Prime Minister's Office contacted the ABC for an explanation. The incident itself was not particularly important, and the actual details are too involved to recount here. However, in the correspondence that followed, which came to involve the then Chairman, it was clear that Donald McDonald had been given information that I knew to be false.

In my time on the Board, previously “unknown unknowns” did surface on a number of occasions, and I encountered many instances where I had reason to believe that I and other directors were being deceived on important issues by one or more levels of management. In a small number of cases the deception eventually came out into the open, and involved extremely tense Boardroom episodes. In some others, I was given the relevant details privately by ABC staff. For present purposes it is unnecessary to consider whether the claims were accurate. If they were true, they indicated that the Board was being deceived, not necessarily through deliberate lying, but by the withholding of information that it needed to be apprised of in carrying out its duties. If they were false, then the person giving me the information was attempting to deceive a director or directors, presumably in pursuit of his or her own interests.

A couple of revealing and interrelated incidents which I can recount occurred in 2005. In July, partly at the suggestion of the Queensland State Director, but also because I wanted to learn more about the ABC’s regional network, my wife and I travelled north to visit the ABC’s Rockhampton and Bundaberg offices. These visits, particularly to Rockhampton, appeared to be successful. The staff, perhaps under the illusion that directors really were important, seemed pleased that we had come, saying that it was the first time they had ever met a Board member. During our discussions, two matters of concern were raised, neither of which seemed particularly controversial - one relating to archival resources, the other to the provision of adequate and appropriate promotional material for regional ABC stations. I promised to bring these to the attention of Russell Balding, the Managing Director, which I did at the following Board meeting.

On the Wednesday after this Board meeting, I contacted the ABC Secretariat, asking if they could arrange meetings with the Director of Radio, the Director of New Media and Digital Services, and the head of Radio Australia, all of whom were based in Melbourne, which I was planning to visit on private business in the middle of August. Usually, such requests were arranged through the Secretariat rather than the person concerned. This was done as a courtesy, so that Board members would be seen to be open about their contacts with senior management. However, on this occasion the Executive Officer said she would have to run it past the Managing Director. When I had heard nothing by the Friday, I rang the Secretariat again, because I needed to finalise my appointments for Melbourne. The Executive Officer told me that the Managing Director Russell Balding wanted to discuss the matter with the Chairman Donald McDonald. This

struck me as being very odd, and I asked her, half jokingly, whether they were trying to hide something. But I had no ulterior motive in requesting these meetings. In fact, I had intended two of the meetings to be little more than social calls - and one of these was in response to a prior invitation - and the third to obtain completely uncontroversial technical information. The following Monday I received a fax from the Chairman saying that he and the Managing Director did not want me to meet with the executives, and that such meetings would go against Board protocol.

Had I been determined, I doubt that they could have prevented me from arranging the meetings myself, but I did not want to put the executives concerned in what would have been a very difficult position. So I waited until later in the year, when the composition of the Board had changed, and I was confident that I could get majority support for a resolution that would allow individual directors to meet with anyone in the ABC. I should note that Mark Scott, who replaced Russell Balding after Balding resigned in January 2006, did not seem to have any problems with Board members talking privately to ABC staff, at least while I was on the Board.

I told a number of ABC people about the peculiar response from McDonald and Balding to my intended meetings, including the Queensland State Director. In turn, he told me that he had been carpeted by the Director of Strategy and Communications - who reported to the Managing Director - because of my visits to Rockhampton and Bundaberg, and had been asked to explain why he had allowed me to go. This was clearly a Sir Humphrey moment, with the State Director being asked why he had not prevented a Board member from ‘going walkabout’.

## THE ABC’S MACHIAVELLIAN SIDE

But while I believe that deception - in the sense explained earlier - is a major component of the ABC’s attempt to ensure that the Board does not act so as to jeopardise key interests in the corporation, I cannot say how extensive such deception might be, or whether it is initiated by some, or all levels of the organisation, and whether it is more characteristic of some sections than others. I can make statements no stronger than those of David Shulman, who concludes his book by stating “I make no claims of knowing the ratio between the honest and Machiavellian aspects of working. I do know that the Machiavellian side exists, and is overlooked far more than it should be...”

As a director, or former director, I am probably in a much worse position to obtain detailed information about the strategies used to manage the Board, the

extent to which they are brought into play, and other data relevant to a comprehensive account of Board-ABC relations, than an outsider social scientist might be. If my assessment of the situation is correct, and if the Board is indeed held in various degrees of disdain by many strategically placed people in the ABC and manipulated accordingly, I would in effect be inviting many of the individuals I would need to interview to admit to their own duplicity or hypocrisy towards me. On the other hand, if it could be demonstrated that I am misguided, and that the Board is highly regarded, with the great majority of ABC personnel making every effort to keep it properly informed and to implement its decisions, then I would have to admit that my own judgement is seriously flawed, and that I cannot really make credible comments about these matters.

Nevertheless, my confidence that I am not completely off the mark is enhanced by the similarity between at least some of my observations and experiences and those of other ex-directors who have written about their time on the ABC Board, even though their political outlooks are different to mine, and they dealt with different personnel, and described earlier time periods. Certainly, they all seem to think that the Board has more influence than I do, but perhaps there have been changes over time. Alternatively, some self-delusion may be at work.

In his book, Tom Molomby, the first Staff-Elected Director of the Corporation, from 1983 until 1988, writes how, as a member of the NSW branch of the ABC Staff Association (in the pre-Corporation days), he found that senior managers “tended to accept without question whatever filtered or laundered version of events was passed to them up the managerial chain, and then refuse to budge from it”. He found it hard to believe the behaviour of some management personnel, with their “adamant resistance to truth, their deceit and evasion”. Referring again to pre-Corporation days, he quotes from a lengthy speech drawing on information provided by a Staff-Elected Commissioner, which discussed the “fiction assiduously cultivated” by the then General Manager that the Commission really runs the ABC, “when it doesn’t”, being little more than a rubber-stamp for “submissions that management puts up to it”. Molomby argues that the change from a governing Commission to a governing Board, which occurred in 1983, “was a cosmetic change of no real substance, as events since have shown”. He notes how senior managers withheld information that would have assisted Board members in their deliberations, and how they worked to undermine superiors whom they disapproved of.

Molomby writes that he warned fellow Board members to be wary “of being given the revolving

door treatment - coming into the foyer, being distracted by a few drinks, a few jokes and a few pats on the back, and then being sent out through the revolving door again” at the end of their term, “having changed nothing in the real life of the organisation”. (To which I would add that it can be a lot more than a few drinks and pats on the back. The duchessing I experienced was something to behold, and involved various forms of deference and status markers, including wonderful boardroom lunches served by a uniformed waiter - after which non-Board members were allowed to pick over the leavings - and evening meals in some of the country’s finest restaurants.) Molomby refers to the Board’s inability to really know what was going on behind the scenes during certain events, and an incident where someone in the corporation provided false information to Parliament in the apparent belief that this was necessary to protect senior executives.

In his book, Geoffrey Whitehead, the first Managing Director of the Corporation from 1984 to 1986, discusses the structural tensions between Board and executive, and how they played out through particular events. He says that while he did not believe that he was ever deliberately misled by his senior staff when he tried to obtain information he needed, he did think that some did not bother to draw highly relevant information to his attention. He also describes how sectional interests in the ABC worked with both internal and external allies in attempts to get unwelcome decisions by senior management reversed.

Quentin Dempster, who was a Staff-Elected Director from 1992 till 1996, notes that ABC management was contemptuous of the Board - referring, I should add, to a Board whose members were all appointed by Labor, not the Howard Government - and gives instances of how this contempt was manifested, as well as examples of where he believes the Board was misled on major matters. And although he doesn’t use the term “rubber stamp”, he points out, in a discussion of the conflict that occurred between Managing Director, Brian Johns, and the rest of the Board in the late 1990s, that “the ABC board had endorsed every major policy and government submission proposed to it by the MD and his executive”.

## A HISTORY OF FAILURE

So why have ABC Boards comprising a majority of directors who are supposedly committed to reforming the organisation been so unsuccessful in bringing this about? While one or two of my fellow directors may well have been “captured” by all the feigned deference and the fine foods and wines, I believe that most were too astute to have been

seduced in this way. I think that the explanation centres on the ambiguities and tensions in the relationship between the Board and the Managing Director - who, as noted earlier, is a member of the Board - combined with the enormous difficulties that the MD faces in carrying out the wishes of a reforming Board in a refractory organisation such as the ABC.

The *ABC Act* imposes a number of duties on the Board, three of which I think are particularly important. I have already referred to the obligation to ensure accuracy and impartiality; the other two are to ensure that the ABC performs efficiently and with maximum benefit to the people of Australia, and to maintain the independence and integrity of the ABC. These are very broad requirements, although it is widely accepted that Boards should not involve themselves in the day-to-day operations of their organisations. Rather, Boards should formulate and approve the strategies and policies which management - headed by a Managing Director or CEO - is expected to implement, and monitor the organisation's performance in terms of these policies.

There have been instances where the ABC Board has directly intervened in programing matters and overruled management in order to meet what it has seen as its legislative duty, but these are exceptional. One early instance, which had widespread staff support, and is discussed at some length by Molomby, Whitehead and Ken Inglis (in his recent history *Whose ABC?*), occurred in 1984, when a majority of the Board decided that the *Four Corners* program "Borderline" could include an interview with a Papuan independence leader. This was despite the strong objections of the Managing Director, who was supported in this by the Chairman.

But what sanctions does the Board have if it is unhappy about aspects of the ABC's performance, especially when in other aspects it is going well? This is particularly problematic when the laudable performances are in areas which can be assessed using fairly unequivocal indicators, such as ratings, or operating within financial budgets, whereas the areas of concern cover matters which are far more difficult to measure and therefore open to considerable disagreement, such as integrity or impartiality.

The Board's greatest power lies in hiring and firing the Managing Director: it can refuse to renew his contract, it can force his resignation - as has happened with a number of MDs, most recently with Jonathan Shier - or it can sack him. But these are thermonuclear responses, occasioning enormous internal upheavals, external ructions, and headlines around the country. Board members, all of whom are

part-time and who have other major professional commitments, do not embark on such steps lightly, because at the very least, they then have to go through the difficult and exhausting process of finding a new MD. Having been involved in choosing a new appointee in 2006, I can say that while many may apply, the pool of really suitable applicants is very limited, partly because the salary that can be offered is only a small fraction of what the CEOs of commercial, more manageable, and less politically exposed media organisations can receive.

In theory, the Board can provide a more calibrated measure of its satisfaction with the MD's performance through the mechanism of performance pay, which is determined at the end of each year of service, and which forms a significant component of the overall salary. But in practice, I think any meaningful reduction in performance pay would be interpreted by the MD as an indication that he should start looking for a new position, and that the Board itself would fear that this is just how a reduction would be interpreted. If the straightforward indicators of the corporation's performance were poor, and/or if there were a number of obvious attractive alternatives for the MD's position, this might not be such a problem. But unless one or both of these conditions are met, I suspect that a Board would be wary of using performance pay to bring about reform in politically contentious areas.

In other words, provided that he is generally competent, the ABC's finances are in order, and the organisation is running on an even keel, the Board needs the Managing Director more than the Managing Director needs the Board. And however much an MD may agree with a Board's desire for improvements in contentious areas which are hard to assess unequivocally, in terms of rational self-interest, the MD's orientation needs to be towards the objectives of his executives and the ABC's broadcasters. They are the ones who can make or break his performance in terms of the more easily measureable indicators, they can mobilise a great deal of external support to protect their interests, and they can rarely see the need for any culture change. Indeed, as far as most of them are concerned, the ABC Board's only legitimate role is to lobby its mates in government for more money.

*Ron Brunton was a member of the ABC Board from May 2003 to April 2008. A Queensland based anthropologist, he is presently an Honorary Research Fellow in the School of Social Science at the University of Queensland.*



# CORRESPONDENCE

## GERARD HENDERSON ON MARK SCOTT AND KIRSTIN McLIESH

The article "Kirstin McLiesh - 96 Per Cent For The ABC", which appeared in Issue 32 of *The Sydney Institute Quarterly*, was reported in the "Media" section of *The Australian* on Thursday 3 April 2008. After reading *The Australian's* report, ABC managing director Mark Scott sent Gerard Henderson an email dated 4 April concerning a planned review of the ABC's complaints process. Later, after he read the entire article in *The Sydney Institute Quarterly*, Mr Scott phoned Margaret Simons at *Crikey* and provided an interview in which he criticised Gerard Henderson's critique of Kirstin McLiesh. The Scott interview was published in *Crikey* on Wednesday 9 April 2008. Following his return from an overseas trip, Gerard Henderson wrote to Mark Scott on 2 May 2008 - see below.

Dear Mark

Thanks for your email of 4 April 2008 concerning Maurice Newman's forthcoming review of the ABC self-regulation processes. I hope it goes well. As requested, I will treat the content of your letter as a personal note and not for publication.

I would have let this matter rest here. Until I saw the report of Margaret Simons' interview with you in *Crikey* on 9 April 2008. I understand that the ABC arranged for you to phone Ms Simons, at a designated time, when you were on your recent overseas visit. In other words, your message to Ms Simons was considered and deliberate.

I have no complaint about the content of your message to *Crikey*. However, I was surprised about the tone of your comment with respect to me. Ms Simons quoted you as saying that you were "dismayed" by my article titled "Kirstin McLiesh - 96 Per Cent For The ABC" which is published in the March 2008 issue of *The Sydney Institute Quarterly*. I understand that you read the full version of this when you were overseas in early April. According to Ms Simons, you made the following comment to her:

**One of the things that worries me about Gerard Henderson's critiques is that he personalises them. I worry when criticism about policy gets caught up in attacks on the individual whose job it is to implement that policy.**

The fact is that, in my article in the current issue of *The Sydney Institute Quarterly*, I did not personalise

my criticism of Kirstin McLiesh. And I did not attack her as an individual. Moreover, my criticism was directed at *the way* in which Ms McLiesh implemented existing ABC policy. It is disingenuous to claim otherwise.

All I did was to criticise a decision which Ms McLiesh had made with respect to me - in her capacity as Head of the ABC's Audience and Consumer Affairs department. I pointed out that Ms McLiesh had made a decision about the interpretation of a legal case without possessing legal qualifications and without acquiring legal advice from the ABC's in-house lawyers. I also documented that she had taken three weeks to reach a decision from the time the issue was put in to her hands by *Media Watch*. I pointed out that there had been an even longer delay concerning Ms McLiesh's handling of the Dennis Shanahan matter.

To make these true statements does not amount to a personal attack on an individual who is merely implementing policy. Unless, of course, it is consistent with the ABC policy to make decisions on legal matters without possessing legal qualifications and/or without seeking legal advice and to pass-off the findings of someone else as your own work

It would have been misleading for me to write a critique about the ABC's complaints procedures without mentioning the fact that Ms McLiesh heads Audience and Consumer Affairs. After all, this is what the taxpayers pay her to do - and this is why she signs off her correspondence in her role as "Head, Audience & Consumer Affairs". And it would have been inaccurate for me to claim that I was only critical of the fact that Ms McLiesh implements the ABC's complaints policy - when, in fact, I was critical of the way she had personally handled my case.

The fact is that - due to your own inaction with respect to this matter - I have been falsely accused by the ABC's *Media Watch* program and Ms McLiesh of misrepresenting the Victorian Court of Appeals decision on *The Queen v Joseph Terrence Thomas*. You declined to intervene in this matter in your capacity as ABC editor-in-chief. In particular you neither responded to, nor acknowledged, my detailed letter to you dated 5 January 2007. You were content to leave this matter with Ms McLiesh - but now you are "dismayed" when I defend my reputation by criticising Ms McLiesh's decision.

I will not repeat the content of what I wrote in *The Sydney Institute Quarterly* on this matter. However, I invite you - or Kim Dalton or Kirstin McLiesh - to write for the next issue of the *SIQ* - if the ABC wants a right-of-reply. Unlike the ABC, The Sydney Institute does allow a right of reply in the same format as the contested material appeared. As you are aware, I was

not allowed to state - or defend - my case on *Media Watch*.

As the record demonstrates, the background to Kirstin McLiesh's finding that *Media Watch*'s interpretation of *The Queen v Joseph Terrence Thomas* was accurate - and that my interpretation was inaccurate - is as follows:

- In late 2006 Peter McEvoy, the then executive producer of *Media Watch*, forwarded an undated memo to Ms McLiesh. This included a note prepared by an anonymous *Media Watch* "senior researcher" concerning the proper interpretation of *The Queen v Joseph Terrence Thomas*. The unnamed ABC *Media Watch* "senior researcher" comprehensively bagged my interpretation of the Thomas Case and supported Monica Attard's criticisms of me on the *Media Watch* program.
- Kirstin McLiesh accepted the finding of the anonymous *Media Watch* senior researcher word for word - and passed it off to me (in an email dated 22 September 2006) as her own finding. Ms McLiesh has advised me that she does not have legal qualifications - and she did not check *Media Watch*'s assertions with anyone inside or outside the ABC who does have legal qualifications.
- On 20 December 2006 you wrote to me supporting McLiesh's finding accepting *Media Watch*'s interpretation of *The Queen v Joseph Terrence Thomas* and rejecting my interpretation of this case. At a lunch on 14 March 2007 - which was hosted by Maurice Newman - you acknowledged that neither you, nor anyone in your office, had read *The Queen v Joseph Terrence Thomas* before you signed your letter dated 20 December 2006 in support of Ms McLiesh's decision in this case.
- This led to the unprofessional situation where you, as ABC editor-in-chief, supported the interpretation of a legal case without reading the case or without asking anyone within the ABC to check Ms McLiesh's finding - despite the fact that you should have been aware that Ms McLiesh has no legal qualifications. To this day, I do not know who was the said "senior researcher" who wrote the opinion which both Mr McEvoy and Ms McLiesh accepted without question - and whether he or she has legal qualifications. It would be appreciated if you could provide this information to me.
- At our lunch on 14 March 2007 you did not accept my use of the word plagiarism to depict the fact that Ms McLiesh had passed-off the work of the *Media Watch* team as her own. However, in the presence of Mr Newman, you did express concern that Ms McLiesh's behaviour in this instance had lacked transparency. You have never indicated your private view in public.

- As you will recall, at this lunch you expressed doubts about whether you should have signed the letter dated 20 December 2006 which you sent to me and which was drafted for you by your staff. In this letter you supported Kirstin McLiesh's decision to incorporate "identical material provided by the Executive Producer of *Media Watch* in defence of the program" and to pass this off as her own work. In this letter you also stated that I had lodged a "complaint about *Media Watch*" when, in fact, I have never lodged a formal complaint about any ABC program. As ABC management is well aware, Peter McEvoy placed my correspondence with him and Monica Attard into the ABC's official complaints handling process - without my knowledge and against my wishes.

I did not mention either your letter to me - or our subsequent luncheon conversation - in my article in *The Sydney Institute Quarterly*. However, now that you have publicly condemned my behaviour in this instance, I no longer regard this material as confidential.

Your position seems to me that *Media Watch* and Kirstin McLiesh (in her capacity as head of Audience and Consumer Affairs) can declare that I cannot read a legal decision - but if I defend myself I am engaging in a personal attack on an individual who is merely implementing ABC policy.

For the record, I note that in your comments given to Ms Simons you did not refer to even one error of fact or interpretation in my *Sydney Institute Quarterly* article. Not one. You just maintain that I should not have criticised Ms McLiesh. This is unacceptable.

In conclusion, I repeat my offer to run an article by you - or any other ABC staff member - identifying and correcting any errors in my *Sydney Institute Quarterly* article concerning Kirstin McLiesh. Such an article should also document precisely in what sense I personally attacked her and should document precisely when the Victorian Court of Appeal (allegedly) found that Jack Thomas' statement was inadmissible because he had been "tortured".

Best wishes  
Yours sincerely  
Gerard Henderson

PS: I would have responded earlier to your comments as reported in *Crikey*. However, I have been busy of late with the Prime Minister's address to The Sydney Institute, my attendance at the 2020 Summit and a (just completed) visit to the United States.

cc: Maurice Newman AC  
Chairman, ABC

On 22 May 2008 Mark Scott forwarded a brief, courteous reply to Gerard Henderson in which, inter alia, he declined the offer that the ABC write to *The Sydney Institute Quarterly* identifying and correcting any errors in the article titled "Kirstin McLiesh 96 Per Cent For The ABC". For the record, it should be stated that no one at the ABC - absolutely no one - has challenged any statement made by Gerard Henderson concerning Kirstin McLiesh's handling of the ABC Audience & Consumer Affairs department. And no one at the ABC has been able to document *Media Watch's* claim that the Victorian Court of Appeal found that Jack Thomas was tortured in Pakistan.

As the ABC chairman heads a review of the ABC's complaints procedures, the following statistics reveal the dimensions of the problem.

- According to the ABC's *Annual Report 2007*, ABC Audience & Consumer Affairs upheld (in whole or in part) a mere 3.6 per cent of the written complaints received during 2006-2007.
- According to the Australian Press Council's *Annual Report 2006-2007*, the Press Council upheld (in whole or in part) 47.5 per cent of written complaints received during 2006-2007.

This is a huge discrepancy - especially since it would be expected that complaints to both ABC and the Press Council would come from similar cases. It can only readily be explained by the fact that the ABC's own staff review complaints made against the ABC in the first instance - whereas the staff of the independent Press Council are not employed by the major Australian newspapers whose work they oversee.

This problem would best be addressed by the ABC Managing Director acting as editor-in-chief and resolving serious complaints himself in the first instance.

## JUDITH BRETT, SIR ROBERT MENZIES AND FREUD

Email from Gerard Henderson to Judith Brett - 2 April 2008

Dear Judith

You may - or may not - be interested in the current issue of *The Sydney Institute Quarterly* which contains material on the late Allan Martin and yourself. As a former speaker at the Institute, you are on our mailing list and should receive the March 2008 issue of the *SIQ* within a few days.

For the record, I should make a couple of points about the references to me in the 2007 edition of

*Robert Menzies' Forgotten People* which I received some months ago and which is referred to in the *SIQ's* current issue.

On Page 8 of the "Introduction to New Edition" you write, with reference to the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the Liberal Party in 1994, that:

**We heard time and again in the media that "Menzies had founded the Liberal Party". Gerard Henderson even called his book on the Liberal Party *Menzies' Child*. To be sure, Menzies had a big hand in it, but as historian Ian Hancock has argued, it defies commonsense to think that one man could found a party. Menzies may have been the new party's most prominent spokesman, but its successful formation out of a score or so of other organisations depended on a huge amount of organisational work by many people. Commonsense, however, is no match for people's need for heroes, and the identities of these organisations and people have all but disappeared from Liberal Party memory. Only Menzies remains. The myth of the party's origins had thus become the myth of leadership.**

If you have read *Menzies Child*, you would be aware that I did not argue that "one man could [or did] found a party". What I maintained was that only Robert Menzies in 1944 had the stature and political skills to bring a group of disparate politically conservative parties/organisations into one new political party. Also, in *Menzies' Child*, I cited all the parties and organisations which formed the Liberal Party along with the names of the key identities involved. It is disingenuous for you to imply otherwise.

It is true that Ian Hancock argued in *Voices* in 1995 that the Liberal Party was not Menzies' child - and criticised those who held the view that it was. I spoke to Professor Hancock at the time about his essay - and asked the question as to whether he believed that a Liberal Party would have been founded, circa 1944, without Robert Menzies. He replied in the negative. That's why I have called the Liberal Party of Australia Menzies' child. I note that in his entry in *The Oxford Companion To Australian History* - which was published in 1998 - Ian Hancock wrote that "R.G. Menzies...is usually credited with bringing some 18 non-Labor parties and groups together to form a national and permanent organisation subordinate to the parliamentary leadership". This was the point which I made in *Menzies' Child* in 1994.

- In the "Notes" at Page 219 you wrote:

**The worst offender 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.**

As you are aware, the reference is to the use of psychoanalysis with respect to Robert Menzies in *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People*. I will not go over old ground here - except to record that in your "Introduction To New Edition" you acknowledge that, in *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People*, you overdid the use of "psychoanalysis to understand Menzies' political life". You also made the following concession:

**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.**

All I can say is that, if you had followed Graham Little's advice in 1992, I would not have been so critical of your use of psychoanalysis with respect to Robert Menzies. As you will recall, my critique of your psychoanalysis in *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People* focused on your use of Freud and your reference to Menzies' (alleged) "Oedipal desires".

Best wishes  
Yours sincerely  
Gerard Henderson

**Email from Judith Brett to  
Gerard Henderson - 3 April 2008**

Dear Gerard,

Thanks for taking the trouble to write to me. I will read the current issue of *The Sydney Institute Quarterly* with interest, as I always do.

I have noted that you think me unduly harsh in my comments on *Menzies' Child*. I realise that the body of the book tells a more complex story about the origins of the party than the title suggests, but it is the title I am talking about.

On our continuing differences about my uses of psychoanalysis in *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People*, my point is that my argument would not have been altered by the deletion of the words Freud and Oedipus - this was still the basic form of the argument.

Look forward to seeing you at 2020.

Best wishes,  
Judy Brett

**Email from Gerard Henderson to  
Judith Brett - 7 April 2008**

Dear Judith

I refer to your email of 3 April 2008.

I am quite surprised by the intellectual dishonesty in

your note. You state that, in your criticism of my book *Menzies' Child* in the new edition of *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People*, you were merely "talking about" the "title" of my book. It is just unprofessional to judge the book by its title.

In the new introduction to your book, I was the only name associated with your claim that the individuals and organisations involved in the formation of the Liberal Party in 1944 "have all but disappeared from Liberal Party memory". Yet, as you concede in your email, the individuals and organisations concerned are all listed in *Menzies' Child*. In other words, your comments about *Menzies' Child* in the introduction to the 2007 edition of *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People* are completely disingenuous.

As to your uses of psychoanalyses in *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People*, you now concede that you should not have mentioned Freud and Oedipus in the text. Yet, in your email of 3 April 2008, you assert that deleting any reference to Freud and Oedipus would not have "altered" your argument. If this is the case - why did you put them in the first place? For example, without reference to Oedipus, what is the sense of the sentence which appears at Page 273 of the first edition of *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People*? viz:

**Menzies' inner emptiness was the result of his avoidance of the truth of the Oedipus complex that a boy learns the substance of manhood in an acknowledged, ambivalent encounter with his father.**

Finally, I ask you the same question which I asked Ian Hancock in 1995. Do you believe that the Liberal Party of Australia would have been founded circa 1944 without Robert Menzies? Professor Hancock has conceded that the correct answer to this question is in the negative. What do you think?

Yours sincerely  
Gerard Henderson

**Email from Judith Brett to Gerard Henderson -  
7 April 2008**

Dear Gerard

I've noted your views.

Best Judy

## **ROBERT MANNE SANS EVIDENCE**

**Email from Gerard Henderson to  
Sally Warhaft (Editor, *The Monthly*) -  
5 June 2008**

Sally

It was good to meet you at the 2020 Summit.

As I have said in the past, *The Monthly* is perhaps the

only serious journal of opinion in the English speaking world which does not carry a correspondence page in its printed edition. This implies that *The Monthly* is not really interested in the views of its readers. More seriously, this policy prevents those who are criticised or attacked in *The Monthly* from obtaining access to any adequate right of reply.

Not for the first time, Robert Manne has made an untrue statement about me in *The Monthly*. And, not for the first time, I have no adequate right of reply. In view of the fact that Professor Manne is chairman of *The Monthly's* editorial board, this involves your journal in a conflict of interest situation. Your chairman can write what he likes in *The Monthly*. And those whom he criticises have no right of reply in *The Monthly*.

In his article "Agent of Influence: Reassessing Wilfred Burchett" in the June 2008 edition of *The Monthly*, Robert Manne makes the following claim:

**Many of Burchett's enemies seem incapable of reassessing their support for indefensible causes, like the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Indonesian communists in the mid '60s, or the war in Vietnam, where opposition to American behaviour turned out to be right. The unwillingness of politicians like John Howard, or journalists like Greg Sheridan or Gerard Henderson, to confront the military failure and the human cost of Australia's earlier involvement in Vietnam helped make possible our enthusiastic participation in the even more disastrous invasion of Iraq.**

This is a wilfully false statement. Robert Manne alleges that I lent "support" to "the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Indonesian communists in the mid '60s". The fact is that I have never supported massacres in Indonesia or anywhere else.

I ask you, in your capacity as *The Monthly's* editor, what evidence does Robert Manne have to document his claim that I lent "support" to the "massacre of hundreds of thousands of Indonesian communists" in 1965?

I am not aware that anyone in Australia supported these killings. Not even the likes of Professor Heinz Arndt and Paul Keating who were the strongest supporters of the Soeharto regime in Australia.

Robert Manne is on record as claiming that I made inaccurate comments about him in the current issue of *The Sydney Institute Quarterly*. He has not stated what the (alleged) errors are. If Professor Manne

chooses to document his allegation, I will publish his response in the next edition of *The Sydney Institute Quarterly*.

*The Monthly*, on the other hand, does not carry letters-to-the-editor page in its print edition and does not employ a fact-checker to vet articles before publication.

Please advise how I can correct Professor Manne's untrue claim with respect to me in the current edition of *The Monthly*.

Yours sincerely  
Gerard Henderson

cc: Robert Manne, Chairman, Editorial Board  
Chris Feik, Board Member  
Morry Schwartz, Board Member

***Email from Robert Manne to Gerard Henderson - 5 June 2008***

Dear Gerard, Can't you read? The comment about you OBVIOUSLY refers only to Vietnam, best wishes, Robert Manne

***Email from Gerard Henderson to Robert Manne - 5 June 2008***

Dear Robert

If this is what the words you wrote really meant, you can't write. Or perhaps your sophistry has simply got the better of you. I (along with John Howard and Greg Sheridan) am the only person referred to in the paragraph where you describe Burchett's enemies as having supported the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Indonesians in 1965. On any reasonable interpretation of the paragraph, your reference is to me and Howard and Sheridan. If it wasn't to us, then who are the "Burchett enemies" who supported the massacres? Precisely who do you have in mind? Please name names - if you have names.

I have yet to hear from the editor on this matter. I trust she has the autonomy to make her own decisions in such instances and is not overridden by the chairman of the editorial board.

Best wishes  
Gerard Henderson



***Email from Gerard Henderson to Sally Warhaft - 13 June 2008***

Sally

I note that you have not replied to my email of 5 June 2008 - although *The Monthly's* editorial board chairman Robert Manne responded in his capacity as contributor to *The Monthly*. I remain interested in your own response as the editor of *The Monthly* who

decided to publish Professor Manne's article in the first place.

As you know, Robert Manne commenced his piece in the June 2008 edition of *The Monthly* with reference to the support which Wilfred Burchett has received from "Australian left-wing academics" and "prominent expatriate left-wing journalists". He named names - viz. Stuart Macintyre, Gavan McCormack, Ben Kiernan, John Pilger and Phillip Knightley. There followed, soon after, a reference to "Burchett's enemies". The clear implication was that this reference turned on Australian academics/journalists who were not on the left. However, in this instance, no names were named.

Professor Manne made the most serious charge:

**Many of Burchett's enemies seem incapable of reassessing their support for indefensible causes, like the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Indonesian communists in the mid '60s....**

As a Professor of Politics, it is all but inconceivable that Robert Manne would have made so serious an allegation without supporting evidence. So, who does he have in mind?

Burchett did not have many enemies in Australia who wrote or commented about him. As far as I am aware, the following list includes Wilfred Burchett's known enemies who publicly criticised his views and actions viz:

**Peter Coleman  
Brigadier P.J. Grenville  
Gerard Henderson  
Jack Kane (Deceased)  
Richard Krygier (Deceased)  
Peter Kelly  
Robert Manne  
James McAuley (Deceased)  
John Paul  
Roland Perry  
Peter Samuel  
B.A. Santamaria (Deceased)  
Greg Sheridan  
Denis Warner  
Bruce Watson**

Robert Manne did not support the massacres in Indonesia in 1965 and beyond. Moreover, in his email to me dated 5 June 2008, he has acknowledged that I did not do so.

The question remains - who of the remaining names on this list does Professor Manne maintain supported the Indonesian massacres? Or are there other people that he has in mind?

I know that *The Monthly* does not run a letters-to-the-editor page in its print edition. Consequently, there is no way that I can ask Professor Manne in *The Monthly* to document his evidence. However, *the Sydney Institute Quarterly* is prepared to run correspondence (including critical correspondence). You, as editor of *The Monthly* - or Professor Manne - are welcome to provide supporting evidence for the serious allegation contained in the June 2008 issue of *The Monthly*. I will publish such material (if, of course, it exists) in *The Sydney Institute Quarterly*.

It is all the more important for Robert Manne to provide evidence for his assertion since some of his (apparent) targets are dead and cannot defend themselves.

I have followed Australian history for the past four decades and I am not aware of anyone in Australia who lent support to the massacres which took place in Indonesia in the mid 1960s. Not a single person. However, I am willing to examine any evidence Professor Manne may have to support his (so far undocumented) assertion.

Best wishes  
Gerard Henderson

cc: Greg Sheridan  
Bruce Watson

***Email from Sally Warhaft to  
Gerard Henderson - 13 June 2008***

Gerard,

I have been overseas working on a story, hence the delay in responding to your email. As I have said before, we do have a letters page - online, it's the modern age - and you are welcome to write a response, which we will post. It can be any length and we will not edit it. We would welcome your contribution.

Best  
Sally

***Email from Gerard Henderson to  
Sally Warhaft - 13 June 2008***

Sally

Thanks. Modern age or no modern age, a reply online does not adequately address an unproven allegation published in a print edition. If *The Monthly* is as modern as you suggest, why bother with the print edition at all? Why not put all the magazine online? But since you have a print-edition what's the policy of refusing to run a Letters-to-the-Editor section in it?

If I make an unproven allegation in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, the Editor or the Letters Editor or

the Opinion Page Editor can run a reply on the Letters Page or the Opinion Page. Alternatively, errors can be corrected in the Correction section - both in hard-copy and on-line. The *SMH* would never advise someone seeking a redress that it would only be published on-line.

So, I will not be submitting a letter to *The Monthly's* on-line edition. However, I still believe that you - as editor - have a duty to ensure that your contributors provide evidence for assertions made in articles which you have chosen for *The Monthly*. I ask again - where is the evidence for the allegation made by Robert Manne that enemies of Wilfred Burchett supported the massacres in Indonesia in the mid and late 60's?

I look forward to you providing this material in due course.

Best wishes  
Gerard Henderson

**Email from Gerard Henderson to Sally Warhaft - 8 July 2008**

Good morning Sally

My copy of the July edition of *The Monthly* has just arrived. As far as I can see, Robert Manne has not provided any material to document his allegation in *The Monthly's* edition of June 2008 that "many of [Wilfred] Burchett's enemies" supported "the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Indonesian communists in the mid '60s".

Since *The Monthly* refuses to run letters from its readers in the print edition, there is no way that I can request this information in *The Monthly's* print edition. In view of this, it seems to me that - as editor - you have a professional duty to ask your contributors to document the evidence they have to support serious allegations of this kind.

It is very simple. All Robert Manne has to do is to name the enemies of Wilfred Burchett whom he alleges supported the massacres which took place in Indonesia in the mid 1960s. The task should take no more than five minutes - assuming, of course, that Professor Manne does have evidence to support his allegation.

I note your recent claim that "it's the modern age" and I should be satisfied with responding in *The Monthly's* on-line edition, which does run a letters page. Your email of 13 June 2008 refers.

I note that *The Monthly's* editorial board chairman is not so committed to the "modern age". When he alleged that I had "misread" an article of his which

was printed in *The Monthly*, Robert Manne sought to have a reply published in the print edition of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. The *SMH* Letters Editor ran Professor Manne's letter on 14 April 2008 - it was also published in the *SMH's* on-line edition.

To repeat, I would like to receive the same treatment in *The Monthly* as Robert Manne receives in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

In the meantime, I look forward to Robert Manne naming the names of those enemies of Wilfred Burchett whom he alleges supported the massacres which took place in Indonesia in the mid 1960s.

Best wishes  
Gerard Henderson

cc: Robert Manne  
Morry Schwartz  
Chris Feik

**Email from Sally Warhaft to Gerard Henderson 8 July 2008**

I am out of the office until Monday, 21 July. If you have an urgent *Monthly* enquiry, please email enquiries@themonthly.com.au or call Elizabeth McKenzie on (03) 9654 2000.



**Email from Robert Manne to Gerard Henderson 8 July 2008**

Dear Gerard, If you write a letter to appear on *The Monthly* website outlining (a) your question to me and (b) your own view on the issue at stake ie what you think to have been the response of the anticommunist politicians and intelligentsia to the Suharto-et al-inspired massacre of between 500,000 and 1,000,000 Indonesian communists or suspected communists after 1965, I promise to reply in detail. I do not intend to waste my time replying to you privately. I want the dispute to proceed in public. Sincerely, Robert Manne

**Email from Gerard Henderson to Robert Manne 8 July 2008**

Robert

You seem somewhat confused.

- I have already been refused the right to have a letter published in *The Monthly's* print edition. And I have already indicated that I do not regard a letter published in *The Monthly's* on-line edition as an adequate response to something which has been published in *The Monthly's* print edition. My recent email correspondence with *The Monthly's* editor refers. You should be aware of this in your capacity as chairman of *The Monthly's* editorial board.

- All I have asked you to do is to name the names of the enemies of Wilfred Burchett whom you allege supported the massacres which occurred in Indonesia in the second half of the 1960s. That's all. It's called supporting assertions with evidence.
- Contrary to your claim, I am not seeking to have a private debate with you. All I have asked you to do is to provide evidence in support of your serious allegation.
- *The Monthly* is perhaps the only serious journal of opinion in the English speaking world which refuses to publish the views of its readers in its print edition. This policy seems designed to protect contributors to *The Monthly* (yourself included) from any criticism - including a request that they support undocumented assertions with evidence.
- I look forward to hearing from Sally Warhaft when she returns to the office in response to my note sent to her this morning.
- Unless you name the names of those enemies of Wilfred Burchett whom you allege supported the killings in Indonesia, I do not intend continuing this personal correspondence with you.

Best wishes

Gerard Henderson

cc: Sally Warhaft

Morry Schwartz

Chris Fiek

**Email from Robert Manne to  
Gerard Henderson 8 July 2008. 4.54 pm)  
(Opened 9 July)**

Dear Gerard,

I intend to write on this issue.

If you're interested in this issue you could read the Ph D by Karim Najjarine, "Australian Diplomacy Towards Indonesia 1965-1972". Najjarine argues: "From the time of the attempted coup until March 1966, Canberra's efforts were focused on gauging the transfer of real authority in Indonesia and doing everything in its power to assist the Army in its drive against both the PKI and Sukarno..." He argues that the CIA and ASIS were "involved in efforts before September 30 [1965] to destabilize Sukarno's leadership and encourage senior Army officers to seize power. Such evidence also implicates these organizations in the attempted coup and assistance to the Army throughout the period. This assistance included providing material assistance to the Army in the purge of hundreds of thousands of suspected PKI members and sympathizers following the coup." He also argues that Canberra "assisted the Army at this

crucial stage by failing to openly criticize or attack the Army for massacres which left hundreds of thousands of people dead."

You could also examine Harold Holt's remark on the massacres reported in *The New York Times* on July 6 1966. This is what Harold Holt said about the post-massacre situation in Indonesia: "With 500,000 to one million Communist sympathizers knocked off, I think it is safe to assume a reorientation [in Indonesia] has taken place." What, Gerard, would you think of a Western statesman who, following the Holocaust, said: "With six million Jews knocked off I think it is safe to assume a reorientation in Europe has taken place" ?

For an article that pretends without a skerrick of evidence that Suharto was opposed to the massacres you could look at Heinz Arndt in *Australian Outlook* of April 1968. Here is what Heinz says three years after the murder of hundreds of thousands: "Indonesia now has a very much more moderate, more rational, more pragmatic leadership than for many years". Concerning "acts of oppression, even persecution of real or suspected enemies...most of this reflects, not the will of the Suharto Government, but its inability to assert its will..."

You might also look at BAS's *Point of View* article on the Indonesian 'coup' which speaks with great feeling of the atrocities committed against a handful of Army officers but says not one word about the hundreds of thousands of communists murdered. (I haven't yet read *News Weekly* systematically, to see whether the murders were ever condemned. If you are aware of articles condemning the murders, Gerard, I'd be grateful for your advice.)

You could also look at James McCauley's Note in *Quadrant* of March-April 1966. which also condemns the communist coup and bemoans the continued imprisonment of a handful of anticommunist writers but says not one word of condemnation or regret re the killing of hundreds of thousands of PKI members. McCauley summarized post-massacre Indonesia like this: "The coup and its bloody aftermath had resulted in a stalemate at the time of my visit." You could also take a look at an article in *The Australian* of March 17 1992 which quotes with apparent approval the results gained by the massacre of hundreds of thousands: "During his period as Minister for Defence in the Hawke Government, Kim Beazley...reflected that 'if the PKI had been victorious in the mid-1960s, our security prospects over the last two decades would have been very different from the favourable circumstances we enjoy today.' Regrettably, this attitude is not widespread in Australia." This article was written by you

**Email from Gerard Henderson to Robert Manne 9 July 2008**

Robert

At long last, some names. But still the same sophistry and intellectual dishonesty. Your email of late yesterday afternoon refers.

I note that you intend to write about this issue. I assume you will do so in *The Monthly* where, once again, you will be protected from criticism or query due to *The Monthly's* refusal to publish letters-to-the-editor in its print edition.

The problems with the individuals you have mentioned is that the quotes you have provided do not support your assertion in *The Monthly* (June 2008) viz: "Many of Burchett's enemies seem incapable of reassessing their support for indefensible causes, like the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Indonesian communists in the mid '60s...."

In your email of 8 July 2008 you named just five names - the late Harold Holt, the late Heinz Arndt, the late B.A. Santamaria, the late James McAuley (whose name you misspell) and Kim Beazley (whom I quoted in a newspaper column).

You provide no evidence whatsoever that Arndt or Santamaria or McAuley or Beazley actually *supported* the massacres of hundreds of thousands of Indonesian communists in the mid 1960s. Rather, your accusation now is that they did not speak out against the massacres. In Arndt's case your additional criticism is that he said that the massacres took the form they did because of the inability of the Soeharto regime to assert its will within the Indonesian archipelago to stop them. This is hardly consistent with an assertion that Arndt supported the massacres.

It is hardly a revelation that successive Australian governments - led by Robert Menzies, Harold Holt, John Gorton, William McMahon, Gough Whitlam, Malcolm Fraser, Bob Hawke, Paul Keating and John Howard - broadly *supported* the Soeharto regime and were pleased that the communist PKI did not come to power in Indonesia in 1965. This was widely known at the time. You are on record as supporting Paul Keating (who attended Soeharto's funeral) and Malcolm Fraser - so you might like to check with them. For my part, I am not aware that any of the above *supported* the massacres which occurred after what was widely regarded as a failed PKI-initiated coup.

You were also a leading supporter of B.A. Santamaria and you spoke at the National Civic Council's 50th Anniversary celebrations in October 1991 - without

raising the issue of Santamaria's support for the Soeharto regime. You also praised Santamaria on his death in 1998 - without raising this issue. Indeed, you reproached me for being critical of Santamaria at the time and you described Mr Santamaria as "utterly admirable" (*Radio National* 27 February 1998). As Patrick Morgan documents in *B.A. Santamaria: Running The Show* (MUP, 2008), you were actively cooperating with Santamaria, in what Morgan terms the "Malcolm Fraser group", as late as 1992.

From my personal recollection, I do not recall that Santamaria wrote about this matter. However, I have a recollection that he privately expressed concern about the widescale killings in Indonesia which he regarded as driven by racial and clan rivalries unrelated to the dictates of the Jakarta regime. Unlike you, I do not make allegations without evidence - so I would not assert this publicity without the qualifications set out above. From my personal recollection, you did not condemn the massacres in Indonesia in the late 1960s, the 1970s, the 1980s or the 1990s. Feel free to correct me if I am mistaken on this.

I am surprised by the Harold Holt quote and have never seen it previously. If Mr Holt did make this statement about those whom he allegedly described as "500,000 to 1 million Communist sympathizers" of the PKI, it was a reprehensible comment to make. Even so, the text makes clear that he was talking about the consequences of what had happened and not supporting what was happening at the time.

Even so, contrary to your claim, there is no valid comparison between this apparent statement about a revolutionary situation in Indonesia in the mid 1960s and the Holocaust in Europe in the early 1940s. Just as there is no valid comparison between failing to speak out about Nazi killings of Jews and Gypsies and actually supporting such murders.

In any event, this is a long way from your original assertion - no doubt deliberately so. The question remains: Who were the enemies of Wilfred Burchett who actually *supported* the massacres which occurred in Indonesia during, and following, the attempted coup of 1965? Just the names will do - along with documentary evidence (if you have any) of the manner in which they indicated such support.

Best wishes  
Gerard Henderson

cc: Sally Warhaft  
Morry Schwartz  
Chris Feik

**Email from Robert Manne to Gerard Henderson - 9 July 2008**

For the sake of completeness...your view on the Ph D?

**Email from Gerard Henderson to Robert Manne - 9 July 2008**

Robert

I do not know about you, but I do not comment on material which I have not read.

For the sake of completeness - when do you propose to provide the evidence that many of Wilfred Burchett's enemies actually *supported* the killings in Indonesia in the second half of the 1960s?

Gerard

**Email from Robert Manne to Gerard Henderson 9 July 2008**

In what sense have you read the comment from Holt and not read the quotes from the Ph D? Do you think I have made them up?

**Email from Gerard Henderson to Robert Manne 9 July 2008**

Robert

I have read the entire article in the NY times which reports Harold Holt's comments. I managed to obtain this around lunch time today. I have not read Karim Najjarine's thesis and I am attempting to obtain a copy of this.

I know enough about your recent work not to accept your claims about the work of others without having read this material myself.

I repeat, for the record, my earlier comments that none of the quotes you have cited from Heinz Arndt or B.A. Santamaria or James McAuley or Kim Beazley backed your assertion that they actually *supported* the killings which took place in Indonesia in the second half of the 1960s

I repeat, after over a month I still await the evidence to support your claim that Wilfred Burchett's enemies *supported* these killings.

Best wishes

Gerard Henderson



Robert Manne sent Gerard Henderson a 3539 word email at 12.40 am on 11 July 2008. It did not break any new ground and is too long to publish here. Robert Manne's email, Gerard Henderson's response along with any follow-up material can be obtained at request from *The Sydney Institute Quarterly*.



# BOOK REVIEWS

John McConnell

**ON BURCHETT**

By Tibor Méray

Callistemon Publications

pb, 2008, rrp \$24.95

ISBN 9780 646 477 886

A former communist friend of Wilfred Burchett has confirmed that Burchett was a secret member of the Communist Party of Australia, worked for the Chinese Communists during the Korean War, obediently followed "the party line" and subordinated his reports to the propaganda interests of communism.

Tibor Méray, a distinguished Hungarian-born author, details these allegations in *On Burchett*. Callistemon Publications has just published the book in Australia. During the 1980s, Tibor Méray read Wilfred Burchett's second autobiography (*At the Barricades*, 1981). He encountered "malicious lies" about the Hungarian Revolution (p 18), and was offended in particular by "the filth" that Burchett had thrown at the name of Hungarian reformist communist Miklós Gimes (p 126).

Méray decided to check the notes and diaries he made during the Korean Armistice talks period. He also examined Burchett's books and articles on Eastern Europe, deciding not to generalise to the point of commenting on Burchett's writings on Angola, Vietnam and Portugal, areas with which he lacked familiarity. *On Burchett* is the result.

Published overseas in 1987, *On Burchett* sets out, convincingly, the argument that Wilfred Burchett was anything but independent. Tibor Méray and Wilfred Burchett first met in August 1951 during the Korean War. Both were "convinced believers" in communism. They were to form a close friendship.

Wilfred Burchett told Tibor Méray that he was a secret member of the Australian Communist Party. Tibor Méray learned that Burchett was acting on instructions from the Australian Communist Party to obey the Chinese Communists, at least for the duration of the Korean War. As a fellow communist working for the Hungarian Communist Party's daily newspaper, Méray understood that secrecy magnified Burchett's usefulness to the communist cause.

During the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, however, Méray supported reformists associated with Prime Minister Imre Nagy. Following intervention by the Soviet Army and the crushing of the revolution, Tibor Méray escaped to Paris. Tibor Méray's notes and observations from the early 1950s (he is willing to make his notebooks available to anyone wishing to check their authenticity) provide the basis for the early chapters of *On Burchett*:

- Wilfred Burchett was “attached to the Chinese” delegation during the Korean Armistice talks (p 90). Burchett received daily briefings on what to write in Kaisong from a Chinese government official (Shen Chen-tu). He submitted his reports to Shen Chen-tu daily for vetting purposes. Only when the Chinese had censored Burchett's copy was it forwarded to telegraph operators for international distribution. Wilfred Burchett followed Chinese directives obediently. “Every single report by Burchett on the armistice talks was instigated by Shen Chen-tu and he was also Burchett's censor” (p 99). Méray says that Burchett was a Chinese mouthpiece during the Korean War. Wilfred Burchett never referred to Shen Chen-tu's name in his reports.

- The real nature of the relationship between Wilfred Burchett and the Chinese delegation in Korea was that of employee and employer. The Chinese paid Wilfred Burchett (not the newspaper *Ce Soir* in Paris to which he was sending reports). At Chinese direction, Burchett fraternised with Western journalists. He sought information, spread views, floated “kites”, worked on impressionable journalists and provided cadre reports on Western journalists to the Chinese.

- Although Wilfred Burchett helped to spread the lie about germ warfare, he was not responsible for inventing the story. Burchett never admitted that the germ warfare story was false. He simply omitted all mention of the allegation in his second autobiography (*At the Barricades*, 1981).

- It is well-known that Burchett played a significant role in obtaining and editing “confessions” from US air force personnel who were prisoners-of-war. In the forward to *On Burchett*, former prisoner-of-war and retired Australian Brigadier P. J. Greville writes that

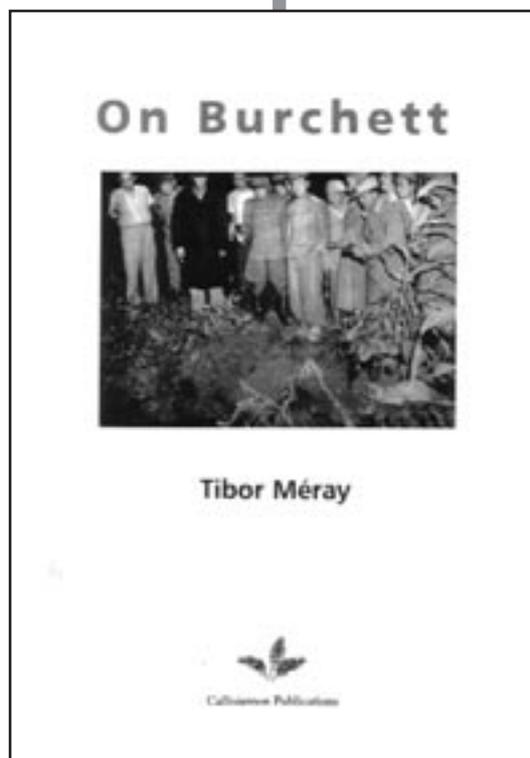
Burchett sought to undermine the morale of allied prisoners. Wilfred Burchett, he says, attempted to persuade Australian servicemen and their allies “to betray their nation's trust” (p 12). John Pilger claimed that Wilfred Burchett visited the POW camps at the request of Western journalists. Not so, Tibor Méray insists. Wilfred Burchett visited the POWs because the Chinese communists instructed him to do so. These visits were not motivated by humanitarian considerations. Rather, they were part of the plan to propagate the germ warfare lie.

- Tibor Méray hones in on the biased nature of Burchett's reports from Korea. Burchett reported American atrocities he had never witnessed. He denied North Korean and Chinese atrocities against allied prisoners-of-war that he had witnessed. He likened a Chinese-run POW camp to a Swiss holiday resort (pp 174 – 5). He withheld the identity of the real boss of the Chinese delegation (Chiao Kuan-hua) for a long time. He concealed the roles the Soviets were playing in Korea – providing arms, flying some of the North Korean fighter planes, and running North Korea's air defence – while he wrote in 1953 in *This Monstrous War* that the Soviet Union had been “scrupulously neutral” in Korea (pp 177 – 8).

In the latter chapters of *On Burchett*, Tibor Méray subjects Burchett's writings on Eastern Europe to a meticulous examination. It amounts to a devastating indictment of a journalistic career some

members of the Australian left continue to portray in heroic and independent terms. One recent book nominates Wilfred Burchett as one of the most important, pioneering Australian journalists of the twentieth century. An internet entry refers to Burchett as “a one-man truth brigade”. Other writers discuss Burchett as a radical or dissenting voice. Tibor Méray demonstrates convincingly that Wilfred Burchett was first and foremost a communist propagandist who placed ideology above friendship and compassion.

Wilfred Burchett supported communist dictators including Joseph Stalin, Mao Tse-tung, Kim Il Sung and Pol Pot. He did alter his view of the Khmer Rouge, denouncing them later as worse than the Nazis. When he did so, he failed to mention his



previous support for the murderous Pol Pot regime. Burchett wrote sympathetically about the Stalinist purges and show trials. Typically, he portrayed the accused as cold, ambitious and undeserving figures. Burchett “always sided against the defendants” (p 152) He persecuted the persecuted (p 227).

Tibor Méray says he could fill pages with the names of those that Burchett slandered or whose executions he applauded (p 197). Burchett’s lack of compassion even extended to a personal friend, North Korean officer, Sul Chang-sik, executed in 1953. Yet he described Andrei Vishinsky, the Chief Public Prosecutor at the Stalinist show trials, as having the appearance of “a Presbyterian moderator opening a synod” (p 231). Wilfred Burchett then moved in line with the altered communist line as many of the executed were later ‘rehabilitated’. Usually, he would adopt the pretence that he had always thought they were innocent. Typically, there was no accompanying admission about a change of view.

In 1951, Burchett wrote that Traicho Kostov – the Bulgarian Deputy Premier - possessed such a lust for power that he could not be trusted. Three decades later, he referred to Kostov’s “honesty and courage”, expressing doubts about how confessions had been obtained and the validity of the charges (pp 183 - 4). These contradictory interpretations stand in isolation of each other. The trials of László Rajk and of Cardinal Mindszenty reveal a similar modus operandi. Burchett even wrote a play about Cardinal Mindszenty which Méray depicts as “a party brochure in dialogue form” (p 136). Burchett’s reports to the West on the Mindszenty, Rajk and Kostov trials, Méray writes, were based on lies (p 159).

Wilfred Burchett ignored the sufferings and deaths of millions of individuals in communist countries, including around 20 million Soviet citizens whose deaths were caused by Stalin. The prison camps, the labour camps, the “mental” institutions escaped his examination. He ignored the plight of Solzhenitsyn. In supporting Mao Tse-tung, he ignored the chaos and victims of the Cultural Revolution. Mao’s willingness to use nuclear weapons seemed not to concern him. He thought it reasonable that his Vietnamese comrades held more than fifty thousand in re-education camps.

Méray criticises the Australian government for withholding Burchett’s passport. However, he contrasts Burchett’s sensitivity to this personal injustice with the terrible suffering of countless individuals in communist regime. Burchett expressed concern for “the people” and “the colonised” (western, not eastern) but the plight of

suffering and persecuted individuals in the name of the communist cause appeared to leave him unmoved.

The Sino-Soviet split could have been Burchett’s greatest scoop. Burchett knew about this rift from the beginning – in 1959 (p 180). He understood its serious nature. Not a word for years. Burchett, Méray observes, “remained constantly in the service of any one of the various communist governments and parties”. Méray believes that Burchett’s time in the Soviet Union proved to be deeply disappointing. Rather than being an independent investigative journalist, Tibor Méray demonstrates that Burchett’s writings abound with wilful misrepresentations, inconsistencies, contradictions and a lack of independence.

Méray believes that Burchett was a communist informer and propagandist rather than a KGB spy in the classic sense. A go-between. Wilfred Burchett, Méray writes, had a desire to become a significant figure in history. He wanted to help shape a communist world. Self-promotion was very important to him. He exaggerated the role he played while downplaying others’ roles. Burchett needed regimes to support and admire him for him to support and admire regimes (p 218). Burchett’s ego influenced his changing allegiances within the broad communist movement as he swapped primary allegiance among the Soviet Union, China and Vietnam. Méray concludes that Wilfred Burchett destroyed his own sense of honesty and professionalism (p 179). His “on the spot” observations were subordinated “to his previously formed judgement” (p 159).

Wilfred Burchett’s greatest sin, Méray argues, was betrayal of self (p 226): “Self-censorship and what goes with it – mendacity and manipulation – became Burchett’s second nature” (p 179). He saw only what he wanted to see. Rather than independent journalism, Tibor Méray’s book reveals selective inclusions and selective omissions governed by ideology and self-interest.

*On Burchett* elevates discussion on Burchett to a qualitatively new level. It represents a serious challenge to those on the left who continue to portray Wilfred Burchett as an inspirational independent journalist, a guide to future generations of journalists. Tibor Méray nominates Burchett’s chapter on crime and punishment in *Come East Young Man* for inclusion in any anthology of writings for trainee journalists. It represents “accomplice journalism”, Méray warns. It is journalism in the “be sure to avoid” category (p 228). *On Burchett* deserves a wide readership, a place on library shelves and inclusion on reading lists for aspiring journalists.

## **ON BURCHETT by Tibor Méray**

Burchett's claim (1970):

"There is no one in the wide world that can tell me where to go and what to write, no editor or publisher, no political organisation, no government".

Wilfred Burchett

Letter to the Melbourne Age

16 March 1970

Quoted in Tibor Méray *ON BURCHETT* (p 27)

The reality according to Tibor Méray:

- "Was Burchett a communist party member?"

"Wilfred Burchett told Tibor Méray when they met in 1951 that he was a secret member of the Australian Communist Party disguised as an independent. (p89) Méray recorded this information in his notebook.

Méray writes that Burchett "had been given two party directives. First: to pretend - for reasons of convenience - to the outside world that he was a non-party independent; second: to obey the Chinese communist party, at least for the duration of the Korean war". (p 95)

- "Did Burchett serve any foreign government?"

Wilfred Burchett told Tibor Méray during the period of the Kaesong - Panmunjom conference that he was employed by the Chinese state.

"Burchett made no secret of the fact that he 'together with (Alan) Winnington were in reality employees of the Chinese State' and 'belonged to the delegation' (of the Chinese in Kaesong)". (p 95)

- "Was Burchett given money by foreign government or party organisations?"

Burchett informed Méray that he received his pay from the Chinese.

Burchett "told me quite clearly, that together with Winnington they received pay from the Chinese state, and not from those newspapers to which they sent their reports: the Paris *Ce Soir* and the London *Daily Worker*". (p 97)

- "What was Burchett: journalist or propagandist?"

There is no difference between the two in communist ideology and practice, Méray observes.

"...Wilfred told me during one of our conversations that he and Winnington worked as *propaganda advisers* to the Chinese delegation in Kaesong...As propagandists they were indispensable for the Chinese...They were well-prepared, ready to work, reliable and obedient...Burchett had the extra advantage that he could be presented as an independent...every single report by Burchett on the armistice talks was instigated by Shen Chen-tu (a member of the Chinese delegation) and he was also Burchett's censor." (pp 98-99)

During Burchett's court case against Jack Kane in Sydney in the 1970s, Wilfred Burchett was asked the following four questions:

"Were you ever a member of the Australian Communist Party?"

"Did you ever serve the Communist Party of China?"

"During that period (of the Korean war) were you getting paid by the Chinese government?"

"Were you doing any work for the Chinese government?"

Burchett replied "No" to the first question, "Never" to the second and "Certainly not" to the last two questions.

Tibor Méray states that Wilfred Burchett lied in answering all four questions. (p 234)

**THE ST THOMAS MORE'S FORUM PAPERS  
2005-2007**

**St Thomas More's Forum  
pb 2007 rrp \$19.95  
ISBN 9780 646 478 227**

Feel in the mood to reflect on religious and moral issues? Well, the *St Thomas More's Forum Papers* may be just what you need. Twenty contributions address such weighty issues as separation of Church and State, conscience, public ethics, faith and marriage in public or business life, Vatican diplomacy, political lobbying, peace-making, plus religious challenges in policing and in the media.

A variety of people – including some who the media would label as “devout Catholics” – contributed their thoughts to the St Thomas More Forum at the Catholic parish of Campbell in Canberra between 2005 and 2007. In the foreword, Murray Gleeson, Chief Justice of the High Court, informs readers that St Thomas More is the patron saint of lawyers, politicians and statesmen. Talk about drawing the short straw.

Cardinal Pell expresses doubt about the wisdom some allow to the primacy of informed Christian conscience. No surprise there.

Fr Thomas Cassidy explores faith and conscience.

Kevin Rudd moves down a partisan path while defending the right of the Christian churches to be active in public life. He glows positively about the 1907 Harvester Judgment. Labour market flexibility is much less appealing – or was in 2005. It may just offer in 2008 the potential to avoid a damaging inflationary wage-price spiral as surges continue to occur in national income due to rising commodity prices amidst supply constraints.

Fr Frank Brennan SJ examines legal and policy challenges associated with cloning and experimentation on human embryos. Archbishop Mark Coleridge argues the case for the continuing involvement of the Holy See in world diplomacy. Peter Garrett considers Christians and peacemaking. Kevin and Margaret Andrews discuss dilemmas in balancing family and political life.

A chapter by Angela Shanahan and Dennis Shanahan refers to the unrepresentative nature of many feminists interpreting women and family's needs. It

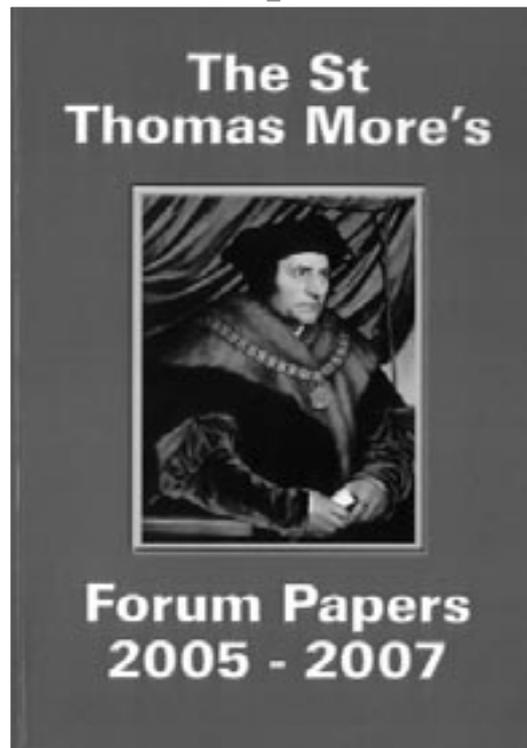
also claims that journalists are infected more by ideology since the advent of communications degrees. Duncan MacLaren explores reconciliation as a new name for development. Jim Wallace addresses principles to guide Christians engaged in politics and political lobbying. Amy Banson speaks about the significance of a walk from Canberra to Brisbane. Br. John May SJ discusses faith and wine. Paul Monagle sets out a detailed approach to positive parenting.

The culture of victimisation, Bill Muehlenberg cautions, undermines personal responsibility and marginalises people holding traditional moral and religious values. Instead of allowing self-interest and personal financial gain to envelop us, Tim Kirk of Clonakilla Winery recommends striving to become a force for social good. Mick Keely provides some interesting reflections as Australian Federal Police Commissioner on the implications of religious faith in policing. Tony Abbott points towards possible contradictions in the Christian message for an individual compared with a government formulating public policy. This may displease some Christian lobbyists. What constitutes “acceptable” public policy is often defined very narrowly.

Patrick Morgan initially contrasts European views on Catholic Action between the two World Wars with the interpretation B A Santamaria applied in Australia. He provides a concise account of the rise of the “Movement”. Patrick Morgan refers to how success led B A Santamaria to speculate about using the ALP as a vehicle to implement Catholic social teaching. He then steps into the contemporary notion of separation of Church and State. The dominant secular humanist view is not receptive to religious disposition, he argues, despite frequent references to tolerance and inclusiveness. Professor John Warhurst discusses how long term demographic trends may impact on Catholic influence in politics.

The St. Thomas More's Forum Papers provide plenty to think about in around 170 pages. They raise views and values found infrequently in the mass media.

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



# REVIEW OF THE REVIEWERS

Stephen Matchett

If countries get the political writers they deserve then Australians are intellectually indolent, self-indulgent and incapable of distinguishing between policy analysis and our own opinions. At least this is an easy impression to have after reading three of the first round of books on the last election, Nicholas Stuart's, *What Goes Up: Behind the 2007 Election*, Margot Saville's *The Battle for Bennelong: The Adventures of Maxine McKew, aged 50 something* and Mungo MacCallum's *Poll Dancing: The Story of the 2007 Election*.

Perhaps things will improve as more considered commentators, who have taken time to analyse the election, begin to publish. Howard biographer Peter van Onselen is editor of an imminent essay collection and Christine Jackman's very recent *Inside Kevin O7*, looks like a serious study, of the journalism as first draft of history kind. Professor Judith Brett's essay on the change in government, "Exit Right: The Unravelling of John Howard", also points the way.

But the three books that were first off the blocks were petty and two of them were partisan. To describe them as mediocre is an affront to mediocrity, to call them ephemeral is to allow them a longevity they entirely lack; to suggest they are inane is to give them a gravitas which in truth is utterly absent.

The only worthwhile thing about them is what they tell us about journalists who only talk to other journalists and kind ones at that – kind enough at least not to warn these authors that they should have waited until they had an argument worth presenting before letting fly with books that add nothing to our understanding of the politics that saw the Liberals lose in 2007.

In fact, the most useful thing about the three – and it is something only of interest to obsessive observers of political culture and media power – is what they tell us about the authors and their milieu, and none of it is encouraging.

On one level these books are the last hurrah of a decade of Howard-hating in Australian debate. But they also demonstrate something deeper than

loathing for a brilliant politician but poor policy thinker. They illustrate a mindset held by people who consider themselves superior to everybody who does not think the way they do.

Work by La Trobe academics Robert Manne and Judith Brett, best define the mindset that saw Howard hating as a sign of superior sophistication and morality. In 2004 Professor Manne defined the goodies in an essay on the wickedness of the Howard Government, during the unlawful immigrant crisis

**Ministers of religion, artists, academics, journalists, welfare agencies, virtually every association of doctors and psychiatrists, opposed the manner in which asylum seekers were being treated. Opposition is not really the right word. For many of these people the government was behaving, in regard to asylum seekers, with a level of cruelty and indifference they had once assumed no Australian government ever would. John Howard's Australia was becoming unrecognisable to them. (*The Howard Years*, 2004)**

Professor Brett had gone further the year before with an extraordinary example tribalism, which marred the otherwise fine scholarship of her *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class: From Alfred Deakin to John Howard* (2003) While she did not sneer at less educated people whose ignorance ensures they do not share her ideals and ideas, she came close to it in describing differences between the cosmopolitan "educated elites" and other Australians with narrower visions of life, "who learn their skills and knowledge in the university of life through hard knocks, practical experience and submission to authority":

**Cosmopolitans have the social skills and attitudes that enable them to move among people of different cultures with confidence and purpose, where locals, even when they travel, are more attuned to the familiar than the different.**

And in line with Manne's argument that the elites speak for all that is good and true, she wrote: "one aspect of globalisation is the development of human rights as a universal language which creates a universal human moral community co-extensive with the cosmopolitan's potential field of knowledge. Locals still live inside much smaller moral communities." (210-211).

These are arguments that were helpful in explaining how Howard got away with political murder for so long. As Professor Brett once put it "the opinions of the ignorant or uninvolved are given equal weight to

those of the passionate and knowledgeable". (*Howard Years* 92) They are also the arguments that set the context for Stuart, Saville and MacCallum and their collective view that ordinary electors were idiots because they voted Tory for so long. But, finally, last November they grasped what smart, sophisticates had always known and flicked Howard. As Stuart puts it, by the end of 2006, ordinary people were finally waking up to the Liberals' false certainties and joining the ranks of the Howard haters:

**The worry for Liberal strategists was that the ranks of this group were growing. At one time it had simply consisted of past-over lefties, "cultural warriors" and the literati, who were bitter because their vision for Australia was being ignored and superseded. (*What Goes Up*, 127)**

Stuart then goes on to nail why Howard had lost the election months before it was held: "He was beginning to lose touch, particularly with the sort of people who'd once been described as 'Howard's battlers'" But the reality is that these people needed neither advice from, nor alliance with the Howard haters, to make up their own minds.

There is more of the same from Margot Saville, who comes right out and takes the sneering superiority of the Howard haters to its unavoidable end when she writes that "doing any sort of vox pop among the Australian public" is enough to make anyone agree with an American academic who argues, she writes, "that the average US voter knows little about politics; their opinions are not based on information or derived from a coherent political philosophy. In fact, they are largely 'attitudinal and ad hoc'. There are plenty of studies to show that Australians are no better informed, but we have compulsory voting". (*Battle for Bennelong*, 34-35)

If Saville has any better ideas on how we should select governments (say, restricting the franchise to smart people like her), she is smart enough not to outline them. But the implication is obvious – governments rise or fall according to the whim of the ignorant.

And while MacCallum tells us a great deal about what the patrons of the Billinudgel Hotel (where he

drinks) think, he does not have much time for people who are not as politically astute as the people in his pub. Thus he describes Kevin Rudd's skilful use in opposition of "the silly media" (which is, "by definition, silly"):

**The shows were full of people called Kochie and Mel and Daffy and Muffy. Few had a clue about what happens in Canberra, and even if they had, they wouldn't let on for fear of offending their dumber-than-a-dumb-bell audience, who just wanted to be entertained. (*Poll Dancing*, p 79)**

For these three authors, the 2007 election was less about a change of government as a setting of the world to rights, when the dopey voters finally did what their betters wanted.

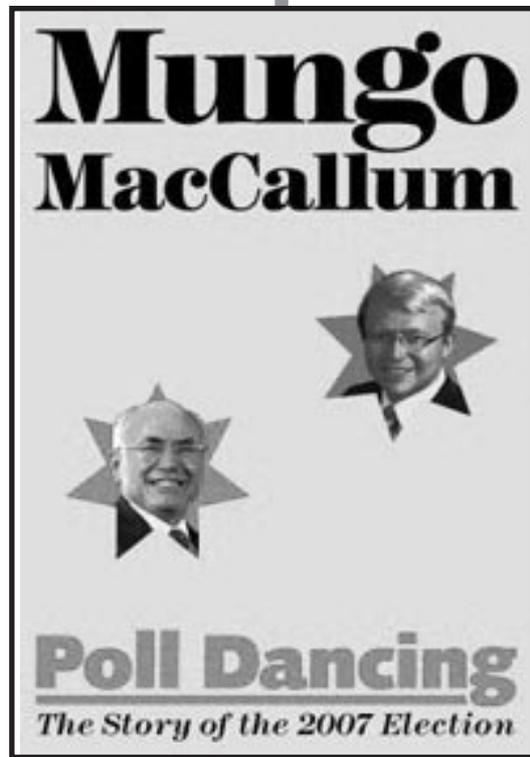
Saville's is the easiest read of the three, its ideas less thin than translucent. Admittedly campaign diaries are not written for the ages, but a better book would have explained, rather than just described, the campaign. And

less of Margot's opinions and more of Maxine's would have been good.

As it stands, this is a colour magazine profile in book form. It seems as if it was written to appeal primarily to people who write for the Saturday supplements and who have somehow acquired the idea that the only worthwhile audience is people who already agree with them. Thus Saville tells us early in the story that she is McKew's friend and how Maxine is in turn friends with Geraldine Doogue, with whom she shares, "the 'X factor', a personal warmth and animation that draws people to them like moths to a light".

This sets the tone for the tale, which tells us more about McKew's milieu than it does about the campaign that tossed an Australian prime minister out of parliament for only the second time, ever. And aren't moths drawn to flames? But using the old expression accurately implies immolation for Maxine's pals, and that would never do.

And, as is inevitable in this style of story, Saville can't resist demonstrating the merry sophistication of her circle. Thus she writes that McKew's partner, Labor stalwart Bob Hogg, "is a passionate cook and can



spend as much time analysing the elements in a pasta sauce as a political scandal". And she pokes fun at people who do not measure up. She runs an extract from the speech Elaine Nile, a former Christian Democrat MP in NSW, made when leaving the upper house – in 2002! She describes the mayor of Ryde's robes as "trimmed with a kind of brown road kill", a Howard staffer "looks like one of those red-faced jowly men who sell yachts". And when Saville has to cover a Liberal fundraiser at a suburban rugby club, she writes, "strangely, sports-club-cocktail-party appears to be a major gap in my wardrobe".

Harmless stuff; after all this book is written for people who think like Saville and want to have their sense of superiority to everybody else affirmed. But there is not a thing in it that anybody interested in the practice of politics needs to know. However, for all the foolish flummery Saville's superficial stories demonstrate something significant about the Howard haters. Thus she ends the book:

**There are 97,573 voters in the electorate, and on 24 November, faced with a contest between John Howard and Maxine McKew, they made the right choice. Living through this has given me a new respect for democracy, although I still don't know how we ended up with Philip Ruddock. No system is perfect.**

Anybody who develops a new respect for democracy when people agree with her could do with a crash course in the principle of politics - that you respect the will of the electorate, whatever the voters decide. (And a suggestion for Saville: the bloke who won Eden Monaro was Lieutenant Colonel not Captain Kelly).

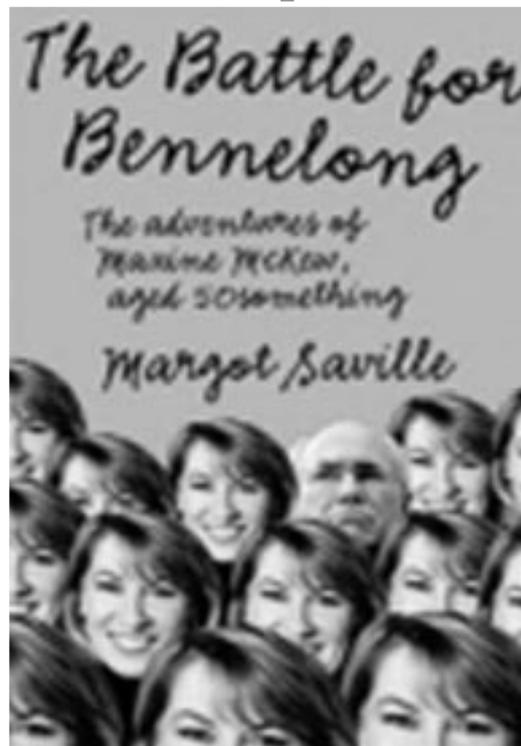
Nicholas Stuart did a better job, with even less to work with. Without apparent access to people and records, Stuart has assumed what people were thinking, solely on the basis of his own observations – and imagination. Thus:

**Earlier, just before he walked out, Howard had glimpsed his reflection in the mirror. He knew he still basked in the people's respect. After all, he was still prime**

**minister. It was very difficult to believe that the old magic had completely gone.**

It is also very difficult to believe that, without a source to cite, this demonstrates how Stuart knows what Howard was thinking rather than what Stuart thinks Howard would have told Stuart about what he, Howard ... you get the idea? And then there is:

**Luke Foley picked up the phone just after lunch. "Hello?" he said. Almost immediately, as he tuned in to what he was was (sic) being told, he realised he was being offered gold. Pure electoral gold.**



How does Stuart know? After all Foley might bark "what?" or sing *The Internationale* when he answers a call. This is the fatal flaw in a work which begins:

**This book opens at Kirribilli House, yet clearly I haven't ever been invited there. I have taken the licence of interpreting responses to events and emotions based on information from various sources.**

Stuart certainly knows his way around Australian politics but without exposure to the insiders he has written a narrative off the clips. Regular readers of the broadsheet press will close this book knowing nothing that they did not know before – including the bits the author imagined.

There are other failings. As with Saville, Stuart has signed on to the Howard hating agenda. The reality is that the Howard Government stayed in power because it bribed, in Labor's famous phrase, working families and the elderly. The Liberals lost when WorkChoices pushed the working poor back to Labor. And Stuart knows it, writing: "it appeared as if there was something in this legislation that people felt directly attacked the idea of a 'fair go', which was central to Australia's ethos."

But while Stuart understands this, it appears as if he wants to believe that Howard was some economic rationalist – despite all the evidence. A recurring theme in the book is the way Howard lost when the voters realised they were not getting their share of prosperity. Thus he talks about the way increasing national wealth hurt the Coalition: "this extra wealth wasn't being shared in the same way that it used to be, and it wasn't just the poor who were feeling

increasingly left out. ... Everybody was getting richer, but some people were becoming far more moneyed than others”.

This entirely misses the core point of the Howard years; the way he won the working poor from Hansonism by spending vast amounts of money on welfare payments for the old and low-income families with dependent children. And, while Stuart argues that people were cross, that “nothing was being done (quite deliberately) to redress the inequities of wealth distribution”, he ignores the fact that for much of the Howard era the wealth of all income groups grew.

Stuart also expresses the standard distaste for ordinary electors, at least until they came to their senses and elected the Rudd Government. Thus Stuart describes the standing of the environment in the 2004 election, “(the mortgagees) may have wanted the wilderness, but they wanted their big houses more”. And, in an aside of a kind calculated to cripple the credibility of any book on an Australian poll, Stuart adopts the all-electors-are-idiots position.

**... it is, of course, a (very remote) possibility that the voters carefully scrutinised and weighed up the main parties’ rival policy positions before deciding that they preferred Labor’s. But the chances of this appear to be so highly unlikely that a normal political analyst can dismiss the idea out of hand.**

Which ignores the obvious question, has Stuart got any better ideas on to how to pick a government? (And, note to Nicholas: Labor minister Ross Free was never in Cabinet).

Mungo MacCallum is the most politically experienced of these authors and undoubtedly the most aggrieved and arrogant. *Poll Dancing*, he begins “was always intended as a personal memoir, and while I have tried to be as accurate as possible on the facts, the opinions should be treated as strictly impressionistic.”

So much for backing your arguments up with evidence. It’s not that MacCallum does not know his stuff; it’s just that his prejudices are predictable. He hates the conservatives and comes too close for comfort to suggesting they share characteristics with the Nazis. Thus he says the Liberal launch was like the last one, sharing “the same Nuremberg-style setting”. Like Stuart what MacCallum does not know for sure he assumes, at least when it suits his Howard hating:

**One morning in his tenth year as prime minister, John Winston Howard awoke in**

**the master bedroom of Kirribilli House to realise that he had become not only omnipotent but invincible.**

(As opposed to those easily knocked off omnipotent beings).

And MacCallum buys every left line, from the Murray Darling water buy-back, to the war in Iraq (“it was all about oil”). As for the Northern Territory intervention, he rhetorically suggests, “the real purpose of the exercise was to eradicate Aboriginal culture completely and assimilate the survivors into the mainstream” – which makes one wonder why Labor has not unwound it.

This is not election analysis but campaign bluster. And, as with Stuart, there is no information that people who read the papers last year did not already know. MacCallum writes like a bloke arguing in a pub, a pose he actually adopts. And it goes on and on for 300 odd pages. (And, memo to Mungo, the “Joh for Canberra debacle” was in 1987, not 1974, as he writes).

But the reviewers loved them all, especially marvellous Mungo.

According to Ray Cassin, MacCallum is “a political writer of rare brilliance” (*The Age*, 22 December 2007). Wayne Crawford calls him “colourful and idiosyncratic” (*The Mercury*, 22 January 2008). Tony Graham, agrees, calling *Poll Dancing* “a hilariously, even outrageously, irreverent look” at the election, (*Sun Herald*, 17 February 2008) while Kate Rose admires the way “he has maintained his passionate, clear voice and is still delivering standout commentary on the hyperbole and hypocrisy of the campaign trail”. (*Herald Sun*, 9 February 2008).

And Suzanna Clarke appreciates his “typically acerbic” telling of Rudd’s rise:

**Some critics have sniped at *Poll Dancing* as being a collection of secondhand (sic) media stories, while MacCallum nary ventures beyond the front bar of the Billinudgel pub. But the overall effect of reading the key political incidents as a sustained narrative – instead of having it dished up as daily news fodder – emphasises how ludicrous much of it was”. (*Courier Mail*, 9 February 2008).**

They like Stuart as well, even if he wasn’t as amusing. Cassin compliments Stuart for having “the greatest attention to detail” in his contribution to the first wave of election books, and to prove the point went on to use a swag of his space to summarise the author’s argument, (*The Age*, 22 December 2007). And

Crawford calls Stuart, “the leading independent authority on the new Prime Minister” – no mean feat given Stuart had no access to Kevin Rudd in writing either this book or his previous biography of the Labor leader. (*The Mercury*, 22 January 2008).

Paul Sheehan thinks Stuart’s is a pretty good book as well, although it’s hard to see why. First Sheehan writes it “is the best and most ambitious instant history, full of good detail” but adds, “even so, most of Stuart’s material is second-hand”. And Dennis Atkins (*The Courier Mail*, 9 February) likes Stuart, thinking it will do, until the real thing comes along.

**Like all “quickies” this instant history falls short. It misses significant events. The 2007 Budget is hardly mentioned, let alone examined in any political context, despite the significance the Howard Government placed in it. The necessary early deadline creates omissions such as incomplete electoral data and no index.**

But apparently not wanting to hurt the author’s feelings, Atkins then minimises his own criticism: “Despite these small quibbles, Stuart’s book is the best on offer so far. But the looming crop of election books by journalists and academics looks set to swamp it.”

Saville cops some of the same sort of criticism, with Cassin wondering why she bothered, “although the attention given to the contest in Bennelong was inevitable, the results need to be understood in a wider perspective”. (*The Age*, 22 December 2007)

And Suzanna Clarke thinks the book, “comes across as rushed, and more time spent would have offered the opportunity for greater depth and analysis”. Perhaps like the point Clarke thinks important enough to mention, “Although she’s a friend, Saville does not shy away from criticising McKew’s penchant for wearing her cardigan draped over her shoulders”. (*The Courier Mail*, 9 February 2008).

Imre Salusinszky’s considered review placed Saville’s story in the broader perspective of the 2007 election, before setting an impossibly high bar for the author, one he accepts she had no hope of meeting.

**Saville displays a wicked sense of humour; I only wish she had let it out of its cage a little more. She compares herself a couple of times to Hunter S Thompson, pointing out wittily that while he spent the 1972 presidential campaign on acid, she spent the struggle for Bennelong on antacid. But the point about *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail* is that, however strung out and crazed Thompson became, he was strung out and crazed at the epicentre of epochal events. The struggle for an Australian parliamentary seat, even Bennelong, is mainly a humdrum affair of doorknocking and church fetes and visits to nursing homes. In the absence of either [McKew’s partner Bob] Hogg or Janette Howard getting caught distributing bogus Muslim propaganda, it needed just a touch more stylistic oomph than Saville was prepared to give. (*The Weekend Australian*, 5 January 2008)**

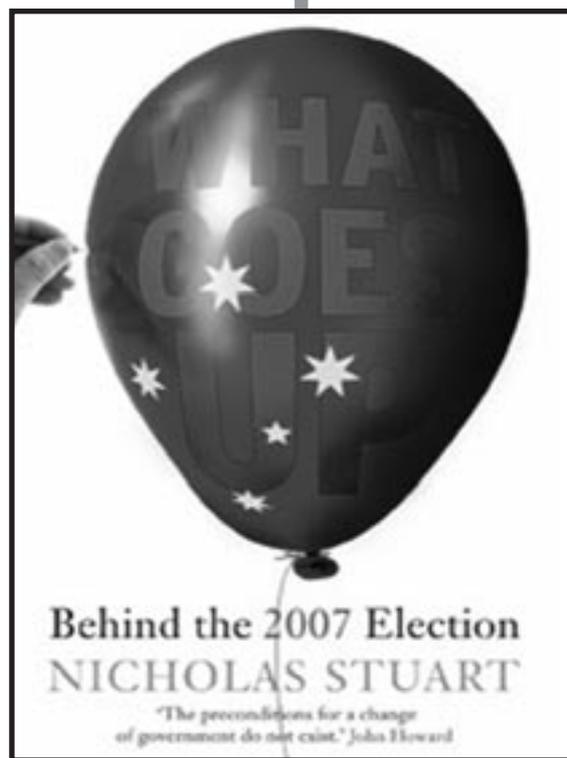
Not so, says Paul Sheehan, “good journalism and good scholarship share a common characteristic: they combine telling detail, new material and a lucid narrative, which Saville provides”. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 December 2007). But even with this unlikely exercise in generosity, Sheehan still made the most important point about all these books.

I was left with the overwhelming impression that anyone who followed the 2007 election keenly has already been well served by a strong, diverse and informed

coverage by the quality media. The story has already been told. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 December 2007).

Too right. These three books will be quickly forgotten and Australian political history will be none the poorer for it.

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# AMUSEMENT CORNER

This issue's editorial refers to ABC1 *Media Watch*'s (undocumented) implication on 10 May 2008 that the decision taken by *Sydney Morning Herald* editor Alan Oakley to spike an Ed O'Loughlin column was due to influence "from one quarter in particular". According to presenter Jonathan Holmes, this "quarter" consisted of (i) Labor Jewish MP Michael Danby, (ii) *Australian Jewish News* columnist Tzvi Fleischer and (iii) NSW Jewish Board of Deputies president David D. Knoll. Get the idea?

*Media Watch* refuses to allow a right-of-reply on the *Media Watch* program. Yet the *Media Watch* team sometimes demand a right-of-reply when their program is criticised by others. And so it came to pass that *Media Watch* presenter Jonathan Holmes and executive producer Jo Puccini sought, and received, a right of reply to criticism of the program published in the *Australian Jewish News* (6 June 2008). The response was of the predictable: "I'm right; you're wrong" genre. Holmes and Puccini defended their decision not to contact Danby before the program went to air along with their decision not to report the statement by Vic Alhadeff (the CEO of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies) that his organisation was completely unaware that the Ed O'Loughlin piece had been spiked before *Media Watch* raised the issue.

And then came the amusing bit. Holmes and Puccini triumphantly declared that "the ABC Audience and Consumer Affairs Department has rejected his [Alhadeff's] complaint against *Media Watch*".

Wow. Hold the front page. And so on. What Holmes/Puccini failed to mention was that Kristin McLiesh and her team in the ABC Audience & Consumer Affairs department reject 96 per cent of all complaints made against ABC programs. So it was hardly news that the ABC's Ms McLiesh found in favour of the ABC in this instance. That's what she does – 96 per cent of the time.

The fact that ABC Audience & Consumer Affairs upholds (in whole or in part) a mere 4 per cent of all complaints might be the subject of an insightful analysis by Holmes and Puccini on *Media Watch*. Especially since the Press Council upholds some 47 per cent of all complaints made to it. But don't hold your breath on this one.

By the way, Jonathan Holmes has form in focusing on the (alleged) influences from a Jewish "quarter". Remember his *4 Corners* program on 10 March 2003 where Mr Holmes sought to explain United States policy in Iraq as influenced by a group of neo-conservatives who are "almost all Jews whose parents have emigrated from Eastern Europe"? If not, check out the full story in the *SIQ* Issue 20, July 2003.

# VALE MAX SANDOW (1921-2008)

Max Sandow AM was one of The Sydney Institute's inaugural directors. He commenced on the board in 1989 and remained a director until 1995 – after which he continued as one of the Institute's members until recent years.

Max Sandow was educated at Wesley College in Melbourne and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT). He served with the AIF during the Second World War, mainly in New Guinea. He held numerous positions in business – including as state manager of the ANZ Banking Group in NSW and the ACT from 1974 until his retirement in 1981. During the funeral service at the Uniting Church in Crows Nest, Sir Eric McClintock commented that Max Sandow retired "ridiculously early at 60". However, he had a very busy retirement from full-time employment and served as a director of a number of significant companies and as chairman of some. Max Sandow was also a strong supporter of the visual arts, music and the opera.

As Sir Eric has pointed out, when chairman of Australia Day Council in New South Wales Max Sandow "worked tirelessly – and successfully – to change national attitudes from a chance to have a long weekend to something which matters to all Australians". During his time on The Sydney Institute's board, Max Sandow was a strong supporter of the concept that the Institute should be a leading forum for debate and discussion. Along with his wife Alison, Max was a regular attendee at Institute functions over the years. He was a good supporter – and he will be missed.

# 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*.

## THE BARE ADAMS

Phillip Adams, who writes a column in *The Australian*, is very much the public face of ABC Radio National – where his *Late Night Live* program appears four nights a week (not counting repeats).

Your man Phillip also happens to be one of the leading sneering secularists Down Under. So it came as no surprise that he used his column in *The Australian* to mock the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Sydney on the occasion of World Youth Day. Even so, the nature of Mr Adams' mockery was somewhat unexpected. Writing in *The Australian* on 15 July 2008, Adams called on his supporters to join him in protesting the Pope's visit by “walking around Sydney naked from the waist down”. The 69 year old continued – making the point that he and his fellow protestors would wear something, er, small, in their get-together outside St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney:

**The item of apparel is so small you have to look twice. It's a condom. While the more modest of us have chosen to flash the traditional flesh-coloured design, a bolder splinter group is bearing arms in brighter ones. Polychromatic, ribbed and even flavoured. But tonight we'll be united! We'll stand as one! For our mass march on St Mary's we'll be wearing the popular luminous variety. It'll look almost mythical, like a parade of pilgrims carrying candles. Ours is an ecumenical movement. You'll see the fluorescent frangers on Proddy prodders, Mick dicks and atheist appendages while our women-folk will brandish shimmering sheaths on erect middle fingers. And we'll be making a very serious point.**

Adams went on. And on – in his familiar undergraduate tone. His “serious point”, for want of a better term, was that the Catholic Church – due to its teachings prohibiting artificial contraception – was killing Africans. Specifically, Adams condemned:

**....the quasi-genocidal impact of the Vatican's policy on condoms in Africa. Vast numbers have died, are dying and will die because of this insane and utterly reprehensible prohibition....The Vatican's condemnation of the condom is on the short list of the cruellest, most appalling pieces of public policy in human history. It is a death sentence passed on millions, including millions as yet unborn.**

Adams has a point. But not a very strong one. The fact is that if the Catholic Church's teaching were followed – advocating abstinence before marriage and fidelity during marriage – there would be no explosion of HIV/AIDS in Africa or anywhere else. Also, the Catholic Church is not strong in Sub-Saharan Africa and, even if it were, many Catholics do not follow the Pope's teachings on contraception. However, even if Adams' argument is accepted – at least Benedict XVI is not telling anyone, in Africa or anywhere else, that unsafe sex is, in fact, safe. Unlike Mr Adams, circa 1988. Now – let's flash back to the past.

In the late 1980s in his column in *The Australian* and elsewhere – Phillip Adams was wont to argue that HIV/AIDS was overwhelmingly a disease which afflicted, and was spread by, male homosexuals. For example, in *The Australian* on 24 December 1988 Adams declared:

**Unless you're living in Africa, Haiti or a United States ghetto, where the circumstances and the epidemiology of the disease are very different, you're about as likely to die the death of Eschelus – that is, by being hit on the head by a failing tortoise. In the western world, and particularly in Australia, the number of heterosexuals who have caught AIDS through conventional sexual intercourse are few and far between.**

Adams, who has no medical or science qualifications, challenged the view on this matter by leading medical specialist Professor John Dwyer. Wrote Adams:

**Professor Dwyer will, of course, trot out the African experience or present case-studies from the US ghettos. I'd be more impressed if our AIDS authorities presented local case-studies. If they can show that a significant number of women have been infected through conventional intercourse, I'll eat my hat. And if they can show cases of men catching AIDS from women, including**

**prostitutes, I'll bare my bum in Bourke Street, which, all things considered, would be a highly appropriate gesture.**

And there was more. Adams, in 1988 mode, took a Vatican-like stance on condoms:

**Relying on condoms is nonsense, given that so many of them will fail, just as they fail as a contraceptive in heterosexual relationships.**

So there we have it. In 1988 Adams declared that relying on condoms to prevent AIDS was a waste of time. Yet in 2008 he declared the Vatican view that it is nonsense to rely on condoms to prevent AIDS amounted to quasi-genocide.

Then there is the matter of, well, disclosure. In 1988 Adams promised to bare his bum in Melbourne's Bourke Street if there was even one case of a man catching AIDS from a woman. Then two decades later he promised to walk nude outside St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney – clad only in an item which he had once declared as nonsensical. This from a man who has already reached pensionable age. Oh Lord – spare us the sight of the (bared) Adams' posterior or the (sheathed) Adams phallus.

## **ROBERT MANNE – ONCE A HOWARDITE**

Phillip Adams' scribbles of two decades ago serve as a reminder that Robert Manne also had a column at the time. Just like Adams, he has walked away from some of his positions. Including Manne's one-time support for John Howard and the politically conservative wing of the Liberal Party and his opposition to the likes of Ian Macphee and the small "I" Liberals in the Liberal Party of the day.

In the late 1980s, Manne wrote a weekly column in *The Herald* (the then Melbourne afternoon newspaper). On 21 April 1989 he weighed into the argument within the Liberal Party – which had led to Liberal Federal MP Ian Macphee being challenged in a pre-selection ballot for Goldstein, in south-east Melbourne, by David Kemp. At the time, Dr Kemp had the support of both John Howard and Peter Costello – even though neither Howard (who was Liberal leader at the time) nor Costello (who was a barrister at the time) took a high profile on the issue. Macphee was the best known of the left-of-centre or small "I" Liberals in the Liberal Party.

First up, in his *Herald* column Manne referred to the divisions within the Liberal Party between Howard and Macphee and indicated that he was supporting the former. Manne bagged Macphee as "every anti-Liberal's favourite Liberal". Quite a put down, to be sure. Manne also depicted Macphee as "a man of the Left" and "an ideological wet". But there was more. According to Manne, circa April 1989:

**The Howard Liberals are enthusiastic privatisers and determined opponents of**

**the industrial relations status quo. Mr Macphee is a rather determined anti-privatiser and an enthusiast for the centralised wage-fixing system. Mr Howard is a One Australia man; Mr Macphee a multiculturalist. The Howard Liberals speak of a revival of the traditional family. Mr Macphee describes himself as a feminist. The Howard Liberals are concerned with the economic inefficiencies of regulation; Mr Macphee with the monopolistic possibilities of deregulation, especially in the media.**

But there was more. Manne lined up with Howard's stance on Asian immigration, in support of Rupert Murdoch's takeover of The Herald and Weekly Times group and as an advocate of the Australian-American Alliance:

**Last year, during the immigration debate, when John Howard was under severe pressure, Ian Macphee crossed the floor. In a letter which leaked to the press he described his leader as "politically stupid and morally wrong".... Dismissal from the Shadow Ministry allowed Ian Macphee to speak his mind. Odd things emerged. Mr Macphee revealed his "profound respect" for Gerry Hand, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and his admiration for the patriotism of our leading anti-American activist, Brian Toohey. His mood became very sombre. He spoke of Australia entering a new dark age, where freedom of speech and parliamentary government were under threat. Mr Macphee began to accuse his own party machine of totalitarian tendencies. He began to speak of cigar-smoking capitalists, and of his conservative Brighton constituents as old biddies out of touch with life.**

So what did your man Manne suggest should be done with Ian Macphee? Well, Manne advocated that Macphee should leave the Liberal Party and join the fashionably leftist Democrats. In other words, circa 1989, Professor Manne did not believe that left-liberal types should remain within the Liberal Party. Spoke, the Robert:

**Mr Macphee is a man of good heart and of talent. He would make an excellent leader of the party of the "caring" middle class – the Australian Democrats.**

So there you have it. In 1989 Manne was with John Howard and against Ian Macphee and had little time for what he mockingly described as "the caring middle class". Within a decade, Manne had become one of the leading Howard-haters in the land. By the way, Robert Manne's 1989 column was titled "Try the Democrats, Ian". Sadly, he did not see fit to publish this particular wisdom in his book *Left Right Left: Political Essays 1977-2005* (Black Inc. 2005).

## PAUL SHEEHAN AND ISRAEL

When it comes to changing positions – with attitude – Paul Sheehan can give even Phillip Adams and Robert Manne a run. Take, for example, Mr Sheehan’s attitude towards Israel. Or, rather, attitudes to Israel. This is what Paul Sheehan wrote about Israel in his *Sydney Morning Herald* column on 10 July 2006:

**Israel, preoccupied by the battle for its own survival, is hurling fire accelerants into the passions of millions of young Muslims in need of a cause that can give meaning to their lives. It is a phenomenon not confined to the Middle East. One of the focus points for global jihad is Britain, home to 1.6 million Muslims...**

**The moral legacy of the Holocaust has now passed into history. It can no longer be leveraged, in any way, in contemporary politics. The idea that members of the Jewish Diaspora can only be the victims of racism, rather than the practitioners of racism, like every other group, is now a dead letter and untenable. I write this as someone who has given support to Israel, and taken a hard line against Muslim racism, but can no longer draw any other conclusion than that the combustible policies of the Israeli Government have become a danger to Australia and to Australians everywhere.**

In other words, Sheehan’s message in July 2006 was crystal clear. Namely, that Israel was at least partly responsible for the emergence of radical Islamism in the West and that the continued existence of Israel has become a danger to Australia and Australians. Sheehan’s position was so blunt that he appeared to be advocating either the dismantlement of the Jewish state or, at least, the withdrawal of Australia’s traditional support for Israel.

Less than a year later, Sheehan addressed the Women’s Division of the NSW United Israel Appeal in Sydney. His talk was reported in the *Australian Jewish News* on 25 May 2007. After commenting that the Jewish community is “facing intractable, bigoted rejectionism” – presumably from Islamists, among others – Sheehan continued:

**I’m very gung-ho about Israel and the Jewish community; I feel very protective. I think Israel is not the cause of this global clash of civilisations – it is one of the pawns. You have my sympathy, solidarity and support.**

So what’s all this about? Does Sheehan really believe that Israel is (i) a factor in the rise of Islamism, (ii) a practitioner of racism and (iii) a threat to Australia (version 2006)? Or is Sheehan a gun-ho supporter of Israel who maintains that the nation is not in any way responsible for Islamism and who does not regard Israel as a threat to Australia (version 2007)? Who knows?

## THE PROPHET KOUTSOUKIS

Sometimes it does not take even eleven months for it to become evident that a journalist has made a false prediction. Consider the case of *The Age*’s Jason Koutsoukis – who recently stepped down as the reporter on federal politics for *The Sunday Age* in order to take up the position of the Middle East correspondent for *The Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*. In one of his final acts in his Parliamentary Press Gallery role, Koutsoukis had a you-beaut scoop. On 20 January 2008, *The Sunday Age* led with the story that former Labor leader Kim Beazley would replace Major-General Michael Jeffrey as Governor-General of Australia. Wrote Jason Koutsoukis:

**Former Labor Party leader and republican Kim Beazley is set to be offered the job of Australia’s next – and possibly last – governor-general.**

So confident was *The Sunday Age* with Koutsoukis’ tip that it ran a break-out on page one directing readers’ attention to an editorial which supported the Beazley appointment. Also *Sunday Age* readers were invited to provide their opinions on this matter, viz:

### YOUR SAY

**Would Beazley make a good Governor-General? Write to us at 250 Spencer Street, Melbourne 3000 or email to [Sunday@theage.com.au](mailto:Sunday@theage.com.au)**

Any *Age* readers who responded to Your Say certainly wasted their money. Within days of the 20 January edition of the *Sunday Age* being thrown over fences, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announced that Kim Beazley would not be appointed Governor-General.

However, this particular piece of failed sooth-saying did not prevent Jason Koutsoukis from trying his hand again. Interviewed on *Sky News Agenda*, on the eve of his departure for the Middle East, Koutsoukis came up with a number of gems. Included in the JK wisdom was this particular observation concerning Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’s (forthcoming) visit to North America, Europe and Asia. Spoke the Jason:

**I think one thing you can say about this trip is that he – Kevin Rudd – won’t be going to the cricket at Lords.**

Good point. Especially since there was no cricket scheduled at Lords in April. Cricket is a summer game. At the end of the program *Sky News Agenda* David Spears asked Jason Koutsoukis the following straight-forward question viz:

**Jason, as you pack your bags and prepare to take off to the Middle East, what are your predictions for what will happen here in the Liberal Party with the leadership and also for Kevin Rudd?**

Mr Koutsoukis is never one to decline an opportunity for a bit of sooth-saying. So it was no surprise that he jumped at the question about the future of both the

Liberal Party and the Rudd Government. Let's go to the video-tape:

**Well, I think it's pretty clear that Malcolm Turnbull will take over before the next election. I think he'll lose the next election. But I think he might be able to establish enough credibility to win enough seats back for the Liberals to see him through the next three years and perhaps contest the 2014 election. I know that's a long way away but I think that's a, that's a, a pretty, a pretty, safe sort of prediction. I think Kevin Rudd's prime minister for as long as the election, ah, electorate want him to be. I wouldn't see any obvious challenges to his authority unless, unless, unless things went really badly. I can't see that happening. He's done very well so far. He's obviously very capable. I can't see him losing control.**

So there you have it. According to JK in sage mode, Malcolm Turnbull will replace Brendan Nelson before the 2010 election. He will lose this but win enough support to contest the 2014 election. This surely is a scoop worthy of a *Sunday Age* front page. Australian Federal elections usually occur every three years and there are maximum three year terms. There was an election in November 2007. The next election is scheduled for late 2010. So you would expect the election after 2010 to be held in 2013. But JK reckons it will be held in 2014 and will be a contest between Labor's Kevin Rudd and the Coalition's Malcolm Turnbull. We shall see.

## JOHN HOWARD AS EX-BOYFRIEND

While on the topic of *The Age* (editor-in-chief Andrew Jaspan), how is Australia's very own left-leaning "Guardian on the Yarra" going? And, in particular, what with Mr Jaspan's star columnist Catherine Deveny – who writes weekly each Wednesday and Saturday? Andrew Jaspan has ridden *The Age* of its few conservative columnists but enthusiastically runs Ms Deveny bi-weekly.

Catherine Deveny's literary sludge was documented in Issue 32. Has there been significant developments since then? Well, two in fact. On 9 April Ms Deveny threw the switch to the SELF again – declaring that she is dyslexic. In her (very) own words:

**I'm Dyslexic. No secret. No big deal. I saw a T-shirt the other day that said Dyslexics Untie! Took me about five minutes to work it out. I love that joke about the dyslexic devil worshippers who sold his soul to Santa. But I would. Because I can. One of my sons is dyslexic and so, too, is one of my siblings.**

No. Ms Deveny's dyslexia is certainly no secret. On account of the fact that she has mentioned it before. Including in the "Q & A with Catherine Deveny" chapter which appeared up the front of her 2007 book *It's Not My Fault They Print Them* (Black Inc.) – where the following exchange took place:

**Question: What are you working on now?**

**Answer: Teaching my dyslexic son how to read (I'm dyslexic too). I saw this T-shirt the other day and it said DYSLEXICS UNTIE! Took me ages to get it. Seriously.**

So in 2008 Deveny said that she first saw the Dyslexics Untie! just "the other day". And in 2007 she also declared that she first saw it just "the other day". Fancy that. In any event, right now Andrew Jaspan's star columnist has more on her mind than dyslexia. As an inveterate self-declared Howard-hater, she is trying to work out who to hate since John Howard's defeat at the November 2007 election. As Deveny told her *Age* readers on 23 April 2008:

**I'll tell you something for free. The leftie dinner parties aren't nearly as much fun as they used to be. We miss Howard. Sure, we're glad he's gone, but we miss him. We got what we wanted but now we've got bugger all to talk about. Nothing to rail against. Nothing to make us thump our fists on the table and force spit to fly out of our mouths. Nothing to set our eyes ablaze. Last year the left was on fire. This year we're happy. And we're not happy about it. The left loves a whinge, a wine and a rant. As soon as Howard pops up anywhere these days, we're all: "What did he say? That'd be right. Who was he with? Bloody typical. What else did he say? What was he wearing? How did he look? Tell me again." He's like an ex-boyfriend we're over. We don't want him back, but we want to know he's suffering.**

Sure, when you're in grieving for the-meaning-of-life mode, it helps to download constantly. Even so, Ms Deveny's *Age* column of 23 April 2008 merely channelled her *Age* column of 28 November 2007 which also focused on how her "Guardian on the Yarra" *Age* readers were going to find someone to hate now that the Liberal Party is in opposition. At the time *The Age's* in-house intellectual asked the following question: "Who are we going to hate now?" Still, if Andrew Jaspan reckons it's okay for *Age* columnists to re-cycle dyslexia jokes why not re-cycle I've-no-one-to-hate-now-Howard's-gone jokes as well.

In the meantime Deveny – who lives in the fashionable inner-city suburb of Brunswick – has decided to vent her spleen on outer-suburban types. Writing in *The Age* on 9 July 2008, Andrew Jaspan's favourite columnist ran the familiar we-are-not-happy line, declaring: "The more we have, the less we're enjoying it." She ended up with yet another rant at her readers:

**Do what you like, buy what you like, drive what you like and shop where you like. But ask yourself if you are getting value for money. I'm glad the price of petrol is going up and the price of food is rising. It's the only way that we're going to stop, look around and realise what things are really costing us.**

Since Catherine Deveny primarily writes about HERSELF, we know that she lives in inner-city Melbourne, which is well serviced by taxpayer subsidised public transport. Also, she belongs to a two income family which is well off. So, from Deveny's chair, it is nothing but self-indulgence to cheer while petrol and food prices go up. After all, Ms Deveny and her family can avoid buying petrol and can afford to pay extra for food. But can't Andrew Jaspan's favourite columnist do better than this? And what about *Age* readers who live in the outer suburbs and struggle to feed their families with appropriate food?

## WINNING THE ONE

Perhaps Ms Deveny could take a hint from (one-time *Sunday Telegraph* columnist) Jacinta Tynan – see Issue 30. Ms Tynan, who is also an expert on the SELF, tended to write each week about her search for The One. Meaning, of course, a bloke with whom she could settle down. Well, the good news is that the gorgeous, pouting Jacinta finally found her fella.

The first hint that The One had arrived was evident in Ms Tynan's *Sunday Telegraph* column on 16 March 2008 – which commenced:

**If my friend hadn't got the flu, I may never have met the man I love. Instead of spending the day with her, as planned, I went out on a friend's boat – where I met him, and so it began. A chance encounter or a meaningful coincidence?**

Good question. Pity about the answer. JT's response referred to the likes of Carl Jung, Shakti Gawain, the Dalai Lama, Deepak Chopra, Neale Donald Walsch, James Redfield. And so on. Next week there was more. On 23 March 2008, JT commenced her column with an admission:

**What's a girl left to say when she sets off to write a column about the plight of the single girl but no longer is one? It's a chapter I'd always assumed might one day come to an end and so it has.**

And the answer to the question about what can a one-time single girl say when she is no longer single was: NOT MUCH AT ALL. And so it came to pass that Ms Tynan signed-off her final column by – once again – reflecting on her past and looking towards her future:

**I am ending my story here. But I will tell you this: My first love broke my heart by dying and I've been struggling ever since to have the courage to love again. Well, I think I've found it. What more can I say?**

The answer, folks, is absolutely nothing. But Jacinta Tynan's musings – which was the “go to” column in the *Sunday Telegraph* each week – will be missed.

## IT WAS JUST SO ZEMIRO

Still there is something to be said for saying nothing – as against saying something. This was evident

during the performance by two leftists who were on the ABC 1 Q&A program on 19 June 2008 and 17 July 2008 respectively.

First up was Julia Zemiro, the host of the SBS *Rockwiz* program. On 19 June 2008, she was introduced by Q&A presenter Tony Jones as “TV's brainiest star”. Soon after, Jones asked Zemiro whether those Australians who opposed the invasion of Iraq would feel differently about a direct intervention into Zimbabwe. Here is Julia Zemiro's response:

**I don't. I think people, I think people have been frightened by what's happened in Iraq because, because of the war and because of the losses. And in this case [pause]. Oh, I wouldn't. I don't know but, you know, war – I don't know.**

Quite so. By the way, on the Q&A website, it is said of Ms Zemiro that she has also won the coveted title of “Australia's brainiest TV star”. Fancy that. That's just so Australian TV.

Later on, Ms Zemiro confirmed she knew that Australia had recently had an election, declaring: “I know we've had an election. I had a barbecue, I was there.” It's a new form of existentialism as in: “I barbecue; therefore I vote”.

## A PAVLOVA BY ANOTHER NAME

Then on 17 July 2008 young Young Labor activist Rose Jackson answered a question from a disaffected Labor voter who maintained that Australian electors had “substituted a shopping-trip mentality in which people capriciously change their votes in salivating pavlovian responses to policy tweaking”. Ms Jackson responded that she was “not necessarily the right person to answer this question”. This turned out to be a pertinent self-assessment. Rose Jackson continued:

**Whilst I'm a young person – I'm a young person who so obviously nailed my colours to the mast. I sort of passionately believe, um, that young people have an important contribution to make to politics – and that politics can be so much more than a shopping-trip or a pavlova-buying exercise.**

Oh dear. It seems that Ms Jackson confused the Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov (who taught dogs to associate the ringing of a bell with the arrival of food and so salivate on hearing a bell) with the Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova (after whom the saliva-inducing Aussie pavlova dessert was named). Which suggests it's a new form of conditioning – as in “I always eat my pavlova when I hear the bells of alienation ringing”.

## HISTORY CORNER – THE DISMISSAL

Every now and then, when space permits, “Media Watch” seeks to debunk some prevailing mythology which – these days – has a long-life on websites and the like. This time around, let's focus on the dismissal of Gough Whitlam's Labor government on 11 November 1975 by the Governor-General Sir John Kerr.

On 11 October 2005, *7.30 Report* presenter Kerry O'Brien interviewed Sir Edward Woodward following the publication of his memoirs titled *One Brief Interval* (The Meigunyah Press, 2005). Sir Edward was a barrister who became a judge and was appointed director-general of the Australian Intelligence Security Organisation (ASIO) from 1976-1986. He was also a friend of Sir John Kerr, Australia's Governor-General between July 1974 and December 1977. In introducing the *7.30 Report* interview, O'Brien said that Woodward had told his friend John Kerr, weeks after he had sacked Gough Whitlam, that Sir John had done the wrong thing. Let's go to the video tape:

**Kerry O'Brien:** Shortly after the dismissal, you told your friend, Sir John Kerr, that you thought he was wrong to dismiss Gough Whitlam. Why?

**Sir Edward Woodward:** I thought it was for a couple of reasons. One was that I thought he acted too soon. That arose from a conversation I had with Alan Missen – Senator Alan Missen – who's an old friend of mine, just a few days before the Dismissal, in which I got the distinct impression that he and a couple of other senators were very close to defecting.

**Kerry O'Brien:** This is Liberal senators who were part of the blockage?

**Sir Edward Woodward:** Yes, yes. I thought he acted unnecessarily early...

The mythology is familiar. The theory is that a number of Liberals in the Senate – led by the Victorian Alan Missen – were about to break away from the Coalition's position as declared by the Opposition leader Malcolm Fraser and pass the supply bills. The theory runs that this was about to happen when Kerr dismissed Whitlam. Had Kerr delayed his decision for a week or so – then the Coalition's determination to block supply in the Senate would have faltered and Missen and some Liberal colleagues in the Senate would have voted to provide supply to the Whitlam government. Or so the theory goes.

The problem is that this theory is bunk. Absolute bunk. During his interview with O'Brien, Woodward was relying on his recall on a conversation he had with Missen some three decades previously. For his part, O'Brien accepted Woodward's recall without challenge. Both men seemed completely unaware of the fact that Woodward's theory had been rejected by the empirical research by Missen's biographer Anton Hermann – who had access to the private diary of Alan Missen (1925-1986).

If O'Brien and the *7.30 Report* team had done their research, they would have been aware of the fact that, in contemporaneous notes, Missen himself dismissed the view that support for blocking supply among Liberal senators was crumbling in the lead-up to 11 November 1975 (when the Governor-General dismissed the Whitlam Labor government, since it could not guarantee supply).

The facts are set out in Anton Hermann's *Alan Missen: Liberal Pilgrim – A Political Biography* (The Poplar Press, 1993). Turn to Pages 105-106, where Hermann discusses the possibility that some Liberal senators – led by Missen – were prepared to pass the Whitlam Government's supply legislation:

**No less than six Liberal senators – Missen, Don Jessop, Neville Bonner, Eric Bessell, Condor Laucke and Peter Baume – were identified in the press as potential dissidents. Missen assessed that, just two days before the Liberal Party voted to defeat the Budget, "there were some ten senators who were, in differing degrees, hostile to the idea of using the Senate as a means of throwing out the Government and requiring an election."**

Early in the crisis Missen weighed up his options and determined his personal strategy. Outside observers considered that Missen was one of the most likely Liberal senators to defeat Fraser's plan. However, Missen had made a private decision: "I had long since determined that it was not a matter where one person could thwart the whole of the Party and, in fact, there would be a need for a reasonably sized group of Senators before they could take such a traumatic step."

As Malcolm Fraser considered his own position, he initiated four conversations with Missen in which Missen implored Fraser to desist from deferring supply. Missen recalled: "[I]n the earlier conversations I certainly had the impression that he had by no means made up his mind; that he was trying out arguments which people had given him."

By 14 October 1975, the day before the Opposition voted to defer supply, Missen again met Fraser and came away with the view that he "was obviously leaning much more towards an election". On the following day Missen observed the nine other potential objectors at a meeting of Opposition senators and reached a bleak conclusion: "It was very clear to me that I would have nobody who would stand up to the ultimate question of crossing the floor if the proposal was made."

At Page 108 of *Alan Missen*, Hermann wrote that – following a speech in the Liberal Party Room – Missen confirmed his view that his attempts to obtain the support of like-minded senators had been in vain. Herman points out that, subsequently, Missen "adhered to his original strategy by refusing to break ranks on the floor of the Senate". Herman added that "the public did not grasp that Missen had made a firm decision to abide by the Opposition's decision unless a solid core of colleagues were prepared to support him." They were not.

In other words, if Edward Woodward got the impression from Alan Missen in the lead-up to the Dismissal that Missen and a couple of other Liberal senators were very close to defecting from the Coalition's decision to block supply – then Woodward was mislead or, alternatively, he heard what he wanted to hear.

The role of a *7.30 Report* presenter should be to query evidence and to debunk mythology. This is especially the case when discussion turns on the views of a deceased person who, obviously, cannot put his/her position forward. In this instance, O'Brien failed to challenge Woodward's assertion.

Kerry O'Brien invariably calls for full disclosure. Yet he says little – or nothing – about his own past. O'Brien's entry in *Who's Who In Australia* gives only his current occupation and his work address. There is no reference to even a date of birth. Likewise, O'Brien's CV on the *7.30 Report* website is notable for what it does not say. For example, O'Brien does not reveal that he was once a Gough Whitlam's personal staffer when Whitlam was Labor leader. Here again, "Media Watch" remembers.

## MR CRITTENDEN'S NO-SHOW

*The Sydney Institute Quarterly* – and especially this column – has long had an attachment to history, memory and all that. In other words, a commitment to the written record. That's why the SIQ is always willing to provide a right of reply to – or publish correspondence from – anyone who feels that they have been misquoted or misrepresented in these pages. Sadly, very few of this column's targets step forward to claim their right of reply.

Take Issue 32, for example. Stephen Crittenden was offered 500 words to provide evidence for his allegations – made on ABC Radio National's *The Religion Report* on 13 June 2007 – that (i) the one-time Labor leader Arthur Calwell was denied the Catholic sacrament of communion by his parish priest in the late 1950s/early 1960s and (ii) that the Melbourne Catholic Bishop Arthur Fox in the late 1950s/early 1960s once said that it would be a mortal sin for Catholics to vote for the Australian Labor Party. There is no evidence that either event ever occurred and *The Religion Report* has not provided any documentation in support of Stephen Crittenden's assertions.

So, how did Stephen Crittenden respond to a polite request that he provide evidence to support his allegations – which, by the way, remain (undocumented) on the ABC website? Well, he simply refused to answer correspondence. That's how. How convenient. Here he has the support of Jane Connors (the head of ABC Radio National) and Sue Howard (the ABC's director of radio). Both Dr Connors and Ms Howard also declined to answer correspondence on this matter. All three seem to believe that if they adopt a no-correspondence-will-be-entered-into stance, then the issue will go away.

This suggests that it is official ABC policy that ABC presenters should not be required to support their

statements on history with historical evidence. Strange – especially since Jane Connors' Ph.D. is in history. In any event, *Media Watch's* offer remains open to Stephen Crittenden. If he ever finds any evidence to support his (so far undocumented) assertions about the late Mr Calwell and/or the late Bishop Fox – "Media Watch" will give him 500 words to come up with some facts. Alternatively, Dr Connors and/or Ms Howard are invited to stump-up the evidence on behalf of their taxpayer funded employee.

## TEARS OF JOY – OR ANGER?

And then there is the case of Robert Manne, whose (academic) life was documented in Issue 32 of the SIQ. Rather than writing to the SIQ, Professor Manne initially decided to take this matter up with *Crikey* – using the occasion of an amusing cartoon in *Crikey* by the artist "First Dog on the Moon" titled "Breakfast with Gerard Henderson". Manne wrote to *Crikey* on 14 April 2008 in the following terms:

**Congratulations on your Dog on the Moon re Gerard Henderson's breakfast memo to his wife re the problem of the boiled egg. I laughed till I wept. Can I encourage Henderson watchers to try to acquire the latest issue of The Sydney Institute Quarterly where there is a 5000 word or so attack on me. Almost one third is devoted to an inaccurate account of my political record as an under graduate forty years or more ago...**

So, on 14 April 2008 Manne was encouraging *Crikey* readers to acquire Issue 32 of the SIQ and read all about himself. On 5 June 2008 Manne was formally advised that the SIQ would publish a piece by him documenting his claim that the article "Robert Manne – This is Your (Academic) Life" contained an inaccurate account of his political record as an under-graduate. There was no reply and alas, no such material arrived. Then, suddenly, on 15 July 2008 Professor Manne forwarded an email requesting a right-of-reply in the SIQ and claiming that the article in Issue 32 constituted a "defamatory attack" on him. An interesting double-standard – since Manne's articles in *The Monthly* are protected from any right-of-reply in the magazine's print edition.

How times change. On 14 April Professor Manne was encouraging *Crikey* types to read the article "Robert Manne – This is Your (Academic) Life". Yet two months later he was alleging that the very same article constituted a defamatory attack. Work that out, if you can.

Unlike *The Monthly* (editorial chairman Robert Manne), the SIQ does provide a right-of-reply in its print edition. When Professor Manne's belated request arrived, Issue 33 was at the printers. However, he has been offered up to 1500 words in Issue 34 to identify any errors in the article about him and to support such claims with documentary evidence. Stay tuned.

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- SPEAKER:** GREIG GAILEY (President, Business Council of Australia)  
**DATE:** Wednesday 27 August 2008 \*\*Bookings from 13 August only\*\* **TIME:** 5.30 for 6 pm  
**VENUE:** Minter Ellison, Level 19, 88 Phillip Street, Sydney
- SPEAKER:** SHAUN BROWN (Managing Director, SBS Corporation)  
**TOPIC:** *Multicultural Society, Monocultural Media: SBS - more special than ever*  
**DATE:** Monday 1 September 2008 \*\*Bookings from 21 August only\*\* **TIME:** 5.30 for 6 pm  
**VENUE:** TBA
- SPEAKER:** THE HON. BOB CARR (Former Premier of NSW) and  
 PAUL O'SULLIVAN (Director-General, ASIO)  
**TOPIC:** *Spy Fiction : Then and Now* [NOTE CHANGE OF DATE]  
**DATE:** Thursday 4 Sept 2008 \*\*Bookings from 19 August only\*\* **TIME:** 5.30 for 6 pm  
**VENUE:** Mallesons Conference Room, Level 61, Governor Phillip Tower, 1 Farrer Place, Sydney
- SPEAKER:** LISA PRYOR (SMH Columnist and Author *The Pinstriped Prison* [Picador 2008])  
**TOPIC:** *Over-achieving and Self-loathing in Corporate Australia*  
**DATE:** Monday 8 September 2008 \*\*Bookings from 25 August only\*\* **TIME:** 5.30 for 6 pm  
**VENUE:** 41 Phillip Street, Sydney LIGHT REFRESHMENTS
- SPEAKER:** THE HON. ANTHONY ALBANESE MP (Minister for Infrastructure,  
 Transport, Regional Development and Local Government)  
**DATE:** Wednesday 10 September 2008 \*\*Bookings from 30 Aug only\*\* **TIME:** 5.30 for 6 pm  
**VENUE:** Mallesons Conference Room, Level 61, Governor Phillip Tower, 1 Farrer Place, Sydney
- SPEAKER:** THE HON. PETER COSTELLO MP (Member for Higgins and former Treasurer)  
**TOPIC:** *The Costello Memoirs*  
**DATE:** Wednesday 1 October 2008\*\*Bookings from 17 September only\*\* **TIME:** 5.30 for 6 pm  
**VENUE:** to be advised
- SPEAKER:** THE HON. JENNY MACKLIN MP (Minister for Families, Housing,  
 Community Services and Indigenous Affairs)  
**DATE:** Thursday 2 October 2008 \*\*Bookings from 18 September only\*\* **TIME:** 5.30 for 6 pm  
**VENUE:** to be advised
- SPEAKER:** DR ANN GENOVESE (Research Fellow, The Melbourne Law School)  
**TOPIC:** *History and the Judicial System*  
**DATE:** Tuesday 7 October 2008 \*\*Bookings from 23 September only\*\* **TIME:** 5.30 for 6 pm  
**VENUE:** 41 Phillip Street, Sydney LIGHT REFRESHMENTS
- SPEAKER:** CAROL BAXTER (Author, *Breaking the Bank: an extraordinary  
 colonial robbery* [Allen & Unwin 2008])  
**TOPIC:** *Skullduggery in Early Sydney: Australia's Biggest Bank Robbery*  
**DATE:** Tuesday 14 October 2008 \*\*Bookings from 30 September only\*\* **TIME:** 5.30 for 6 pm  
**VENUE:** 41 Phillip Street, Sydney LIGHT REFRESHMENTS
- SPEAKER:** SENATOR CHRISTINE MILNE (Greens spokesperson on Climate Change)  
**TOPIC:** *The Greens and the Balance of Power*  
**DATE:** Monday 27 October 2008 \*\*Bookings from 13 October only\*\* **TIME:** 5.30 for 6 pm  
**VENUE:** to be advised
- SPEAKER:** THE HON. TIM FISCHER AC (Australian Ambassador-designate  
 to the Holy See; former National Party leader) &  
 DR JEFFREY GREY (Professor of History, Australian Defence Force  
 Academy; Author, *A Military History of Australia* [3rd Edition 2008, CUP])  
**TOPIC:** *John Monash-Two Views*  
**DATE:** Tuesday 11 November 2008 \*\*Bookings from 30 October only\*\* **TIME:** 5.30 for 6 pm  
**VENUE:** to be advised

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